



Statements and Speeches

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NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Donald Jamieson, London, May 11, 1977.

This is the last occasion we shall have, as ministers of the Alliance, to exchange views on the Belgrade Conference before it opens on June 15. It is not a conference that will involve ministerial participation. That is what is laid down in the Final Act. There has been a Soviet suggestion that it might make sense to involve ministers at some stage. In the end, however, I imagine that the language of the Final Act will stand.

Even if Belgrade is not to be a ministerial conference, it is bound to be a highly political one. It is also a conference on which a good deal of public expectation is focused in many of our countries. It is important, therefore, that we try to distil from our respective preparations some appreciation of how far we have come and where we should be aiming to go.

The conference is not without posing some problems. We are all agreed, I think, that the process that was set in train at Helsinki involves all the 35 participants in their mutual relations. We have tried to avoid putting either Helsinki or its aftermath in the perspective of a bloc-to-bloc relation. On the other hand, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the Final Act is intimately linked to *détente* and derives its justification from it. We are not really concerned about the way in which one Western country implements the provisions of the Final Act in relation to another. But we must be careful not to take that approach at Belgrade. Because, if we do so, the natural inference that will be drawn by the other side is that it does not matter how one Eastern European country implements the provisions of the Final Act in relation to another Eastern European country or, indeed, whether it does so at all. If we allowed that inference to be drawn, we would be giving unwitting support to the Brezhnev doctrine, which argues precisely that the normal standards of international conduct are inapplicable to relations between the socialist states. That is one pitfall, therefore, that we must clearly avoid.

Another pitfall we must avoid is to appear to be placing selective emphasis on the provisions of the Final Act. The Final Act is a balanced document. Indeed, it would appear in retrospect that it contains much more than we might at one time have thought that is troublesome for the other side. To maintain the integrity of the Final Act is, therefore, in our own best interest. It is a fact, nevertheless, that public opinion in our countries does not take an integral view of the Final Act. Its attention is directed selectively to those aspects of the Final Act that it identifies as being the most likely to bring about real change in the East-West relation, if not in the Eastern European situation itself. In Canada, for example, public concern is overwhelmingly focused on human rights and the reunification of families. Obviously, we shall each of us have to be responsive to these public concerns. But we must also be careful not to