

7. BEYOND RHETORIC: FROM HELSINKI TO BUDAPEST

The time for rhetoric is passed. There are outstanding problems which we have, sometimes under the guise of getting our institutional house in order, neglected.... The experience of the former Yugoslavia has demonstrated the need to address conflicts *before* hatreds and the pursuit of conquest spin out of control.... Persistence and not artificial optimism or pessimism must be our guiding principle.

- *Draft of speech by Foreign Minister André Ouellet to the Fourth Meeting of the CSCE Council, Rome, November 30, 1993*

Prague and Helsinki made considerable strides in rationalizing and developing the CSCE bodies and work methods that had originated in Paris. The challenge facing the CSCE ministerial meeting to be held in Stockholm in December 1992 was not so much to overcome institutional limitations as it was to engender the political will to use the mechanisms already in place. Threats to security in Europe were coming from the fact that participating states were still far from exhibiting a common approach based on CSCE principles, particularly regarding respect for human rights. There were at least a dozen ethnic conflicts raging in the former Soviet Union, from Georgia to Tajikistan. The war in Bosnia had -- rather inaccurately -- taken on a religious aura that pitted Muslims against Christians. Xenophobia and anti-Semitic acts were on the increase in all CSCE countries. Continued economic recession and the threat of uncontrolled mass migration was testing the good will of countries like Austria, Germany and Spain in dealing with asylum-seekers. Instruments available to the CSCE still needed to be improved to be able to adequately meet these challenges. More importantly, they needed to be more frequently and energetically applied, especially in the area of preventive diplomacy.

Canada's strategy was three-fold: 1) to emphasize a return to first principles, i.e. the need to implement CSCE commitments on human rights and the peaceful settlement of disputes; 2) to encourage active use of CSCE conflict management instruments; and 3) to make existing mechanisms and institutions function more effectively and coherently.

Preventive Diplomacy

By the time of the Stockholm meeting, it was becoming clear that the CSCE's real strength lay at the lower end of the conflict management spectrum laid out in the Helsinki Document, namely early warning and preventive diplomacy. Using mechanisms established at Prague and by the FUM, the CSCE had dispatched a number of short-term fact-finding and rapporteur missions to points throughout the CSCE area. These included a fact-finding mission to Kosovo (May-June 1992), a rapporteur mission to detention camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina (August-September 1992), and a rapporteur mission to Croatia (September-October 1992) launched under the human dimension mechanism. At Canada's urging, the CSCE also undertook fact-finding in Nagorno-Karabakh (an Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan) and launched in March 1992 a conference intended to work towards a negotiated settlement to the crisis there, the opening of which was prevented by the escalation of hostilities in the region.