

## Canadian Statement at Helsinki Meeting

*The Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, attended the meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Helsinki, Finland, July 31. Following are excerpts from that address.*

"Ten years ago, the signature of the Final Act evoked a wide range of reactions. Some believed that the hostility and uncertainty which had marked East-West relations for so long would quickly melt away under the bright sun of *détente*. Others viewed the Final Act as a hortatory set of principles which would be ignored and soon forgotten. Most of us, however, viewed the Final Act with both hope and realism. Certainly Canada did.

Hope was essential: Canada has deep roots in Europe; our historical origins are in Europe; and we have shared both the profound benefits of Europe's political and social ideals and the tragic costs of Europe's wars. Experience had shown that even longstanding divisions could

be healed, or at least managed peaceably. We wanted to nurture the hope that solutions could be found to those divisions which still threatened the peace and security of the family of Europe, wherever we might live.

Hope, however, was tempered by realism. The tortuous negotiations which had led to the Final Act made it painfully clear that distrust and hostility were very deeply rooted and that productive dialogue would take time, patience and, above all, commitment.

The Final Act, nevertheless, represented a beginning. A balanced product of compromise, it seemed to express a common determination among the participating states that desire for understanding and cooperation prevail over sterile confrontation. The CSCE had established itself as a multilateral forum in which participating states, without seeking to threaten the systems of others, could seek common ground. It agreed upon a set of norms and principles which, if adhered to in their totality, formed a sound basis for the conduct of civilized relationships not only among governments, but also between governments and their own citizens. Finally, the CSCE provided an opportunity for *all* signatory states to contribute to efforts to relax tensions between East and West.

It was therefore possible, in 1975, to be hopeful without being unrealistic, and Canada was determined to make a constructive contribution to a process which held out the promise of a new and positive approach.

We have maintained that commitment, Mr. Chairman, but when the accomplishments of the past decade are measured against the potential which seemed to exist in 1975, Canadians feel disappointment and concern.

During the review of the implementation of the Final Act in Belgrade and in Madrid, it was clear that there had been very little progress in implementing the undertakings of 1975, and what is worse, that in most fields, there had been a slipping back.

Since then, the situation has become

even less promising. Denial of self-determination to the people of one country began even before the Madrid meeting opened. It continues today, and is intervention in the true meaning of the sixth principle, even if the victim is not a participating state, since we all agreed in 1975 to behave towards states outside the circle of the 35 in the same way we behave towards the states within it. We have seen the fear of intervention affect a participating state during the course of the Madrid meeting. Non-compliance on this scale inevitably corroded the hopes we shared in 1975 and threatened the credibility of the CSCE process.

Canadians have a deep and abiding concern about human rights. The situation in some countries is much worse than it was in 1975. Individuals who believed the assurance of their leaders that they had the right to know and to act upon their human rights have paid for their trust in prison, in labour camps and in exile. In the recent Human Rights Experts Meeting in Ottawa, we did not attempt to expand the human rights which should be assured to all individuals. There is little point in adding new undertakings when some states will not implement the rights which they have already agreed are inherent in the dignity of human beings.

The Ottawa meeting did produce one good result: some states had claimed that the discussion of human rights in all countries of the Final Act was beyond the ambit of CSCE meetings, but made their own claim indefensible by themselves engaging in criticism of practices in other countries. This is a development we welcome. However, those countries — and they included those which maintained that the Final Act was a sacred text which could not be varied, having been signed by the highest political leaders — made an attempt to turn the Final Act on its head by claiming that rights which received only indirect treatment in the Final Act were of greater consequence than those fundamental human rights which were the main object of the seventh principle. It will have to be recognized that certain rights are fundamental and others are goals to be pursued — goals which will be progressively elaborated and expanded. This distinction is found in the language of the seventh principle and also in the United Nations documents to which the final paragraph of that principle particularly refers.



*The Secretary of State for External Affairs addressing the Helsinki Meeting on the CSCE Final Act on July 31.* Canapress