

governmental meeting and more political than expert. It will undoubtedly lead to a further review of implementation under the Final Act but the Canadian government would also hope that the meeting would start a political process which could lead to more common agreement on human rights than now exists between East and West. If this process can be inaugurated, it will undoubtedly be long and slow.

Before that meeting we shall be consulting widely with Canadians, individually and with non-governmental organizations of all types who may have an interest in the issues. I would hope that you, as persons having a real concern in these matters, might now start considering the matter, and in due course give the government your thoughts on how the widely differing concepts of human rights held in the West and in the East might be steered towards some form of reconciliation. If our aim was merely to attack the East European governments on their shortcomings, as we see them, we have already more than enough information to sustain our debate. If we were to do so, we would probably find ourselves left with a certain moral satisfaction, some hotel bills, and little else.

Human rights in bilateral relations

In addition to its continuing activity in multilateral forums, Canada has also been expanding and consolidating its efforts to give full expression to human rights factors in its bilateral relations with other states. It has for some time been established practice for Canadian missions abroad to keep abreast of the human rights situation in the countries to which they are accredited, and to report regularly to Ottawa on any significant developments. Here in Ottawa, all those concerned are ever more aware of the importance of the human rights factor in external relations. It has been the government's objective to integrate human rights into our whole system of relationships, to let the preoccupation permeate the entire structure rather than to highlight the subject by establishing a distinct organizational unit with specialized officers abroad to work exclusively on this subject. I think it would be a mistake to hive-off the subject in this manner, when it is such an important factor running through the political, economic and social fabric of any country.

In our bilateral relations, our main efforts continue to be the persistent expression, most often privately, of Canadian concern over particular cases in which individuals may be subjected to abuse. A typical case is one in which our embassy is asked to make enquiries of the host government about the condition of some prisoner detained for what we consider political rather than criminal reasons. Such enquiries will be made on simple humanitarian grounds, or because Canada has some more specific interest arising for example from the concern of relatives living here or from publicity generated by concerned non-governmental organizations. Whether such an approach is likely to be effective in alleviating the conditions of those concerned will be a consideration. There are cases where raising the matter might well be more prejudicial than helpful to the persons involved. Cases of particular significance may be raised in private talks between Canadian ministers and their foreign counterparts, on the occasion of visits.

It is hard to assess the precise effects of this rather "quiet diplomacy", but I know that it produces results in many cases, and that over time it serves to keep the government concerned fully aware of