

“The Promotion of a Freer Flow of Information since Helsinki — The Canadian View.”

October 31, 1977.

I listened carefully to some of my colleagues from Eastern Europe who stated that their countries imported from three to five times more printed information from the West than *vice-versa*. Keeping in mind the observations of our colleague from Malta that our meeting is not intended only to discuss East-West problems, I can tell him that many of the issues deriving from the fact that some states are bigger than others are not unfamiliar to Canada — I wish to return to the question of the imbalance in the importation of printed information material. I identify this as an obstacle that we have also encountered. Despite the impressive claims of my colleagues from Eastern European countries, I am concerned that, as the Canadian commodity statistics I cited demonstrated, much less printed information material is imported by Eastern Europe from Canada than we import from that area. We suspect that the demand for information about Canada in those countries of Eastern Europe, where many people have relatives in my country, is not being met. We are also concerned about what we have perceived to be a lack of access to information about Canada for the general public in some Eastern European countries

In the context of the diffusion of information, we have run into other problems. The access to our embassies in certain Eastern European countries for people seeking printed information is limited by local authorities. In some cases, their citizens are simply prevented by militiamen from entering the chancery to obtain information about Canada. In other cases, the obstacle is more subtle: people are required to have a letter from the embassy. In either situation there is an impediment. Another problem I mentioned the other day is that in some Eastern European countries we are not permitted to diffuse policy-oriented and genuinely informative printed information by travelling exhibitions. Finally, in the context of our normal diplomatic activity, in some Eastern European countries we are restricted from mailing printed information material in the form of bulletins to the people we believe would be interested to receive it. Since this material is available gratis, surely the