

view, we are not here to arbitrate the differences in approach on human rights — still less to assert the supremacy of one system over another. Rather, we are here to ensure that the Final Act in its entirety is conscientiously implemented, and that individuals in each of our countries are able to benefit thereby.

In the matter of human rights, the Final Act is very clear: all participating states are to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, “including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief”. They are to “promote and encourage” the effective exercise of civil and political, as well as economic, social, cultural and the human rights which “derive from the inherent dignity of the human person”. It is, therefore, quite clear that, whatever political, social or cultural road it may be following, each participating state is obliged to honour all forms of human rights deriving from the dignity of the human person, and not just select those which its ideological system emphasizes. It is, of course, a tall order to implement such a wide range of human rights, and it would be very surprising if any country or society had a perfect record. But what we can expect — what our people have undoubtedly expected since the signing of the Final Act — is an improvement in all areas of human rights, in all participating states.

What, in fact, has happened in connection with the implementation of human rights since Helsinki? One can say that in most participating states there has at least not been a large-scale deterioration, notwithstanding severe economic difficulties and a disturbing upsurge in terrorism.

We must note with real regret, however, there have been developments in some participating states, particularly in the area of religious, political and civil rights, which it would be hard to see as part of a trend towards improvement. It is the more distressing that these developments are coming to the forefront at a time when the political situation in Europe is reasonably stable and there has been an upsurge in interest among our populations in the advantages which *détente* holds for them, both individually and as members of groups sharing a community of interests. Repressive actions against such individuals and groups, who in most cases are doing no more than seeking to make the Final Act work for them, comes as a cruel disappointment to the hopes, entertained by many thousands, and perhaps millions, of private citizens in the participating states, that *détente* can have a human dimension of direct value to them.

Why, for example, is it that in 1977 we are hearing complaints that members of religious groups in a few participating states are constrained from “practising, alone or in community with others, a religion or belief in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience”, as specifically provided