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NOTES FOR THE CLOSING CANADIAN STATEMENT

BY THE HONOURABLE NORMAN CAFIK, MINISTER OF STATE FOR MULTICULTURALISM
AND SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
IN BELGRADE, MARCH 9, 1978

When our meeting began its work here last October, our agenda contained two main items, which were logically linked to each other. The first was to hold a careful and objective review of the current state of implementation of the Final Act. The second was to consider new proposals designed not to re-write the Final Act, but to deepen our collective commitment to its purposes and to improve the quality of our performance. We successfully pursued the first objective by holding a wide-ranging, frank and honest review of implementation. Even if a real dialogue was never achieved between us, the course of our deliberations showed clearly how much still remained to be done. It is all the more unfortunate that we seemingly failed to realize the negative impact resulting from the shortcomings of incomplete implementation and the effect such gaps may have on future expectations and achievement. This is evident from the minimal document with which we conclude our meeting. It is a source of disappointment to my Government that this document does not reflect the vital substantive concerns of participating States, in that we could not agree to express the need for more positive and constructive efforts so as to make the Final Act a more vital and dynamic part of the relationships between us.

It is regrettable that we could not even agree on a factual account for the public record. Public opinion in our countries has a right to expect some commonly agreed assessment of how the Final Act has been implemented and how we propose to meet the commitments we have made in the period that lies ahead. Unfortunately they will not get this. Instead, the meeting has produced only a document reflecting lowest common denominators. We would have hoped that the two and a

half years during which we have worked together to give substance to the provisions of the Final Act would have taken us beyond that. As it is, each of us will have to provide his own explanation of what took place here, with results that will undoubtedly vary with the particular perspective in which we each see the outcome of the Belgrade meeting.

Canada has never had illusions about the obstacles which lie in the way of full implementation of the Final Act. Our review confirmed only too clearly that after only two and a half years we are indeed a long way from improving security and promoting cooperation in Europe within the full measure of our capacities. But we also discovered that there is a deep-seated concern, on the part of all participating States, to seek progress on those parts of the Final Act of special interest to them. Our concern for positive achievement has certainly not diminished since Helsinki and judging by the number of proposals tabled, this increased concern is shared by many undoubtedly because expectations have been raised by the Final Act. This represents a positive potential which must not fail to find expression in Madrid, lest the expectations that have been raised be shattered.

It is evident from our statements over the past months what improvements in implementation Canada hoped to see emerge from Belgrade. There is the vital matter of improving security. In an effort to build on the experience we had gained in the past two and a half years, we tried with others to develop and refine the Confidence Building Measures relating particularly to military manoeuvres and movements. Our aim in this area was greater openness regarding military matters. In our view, this would contribute to increasing confidence as well as to reducing the risks of misunderstanding, if not of miscalculation. Our efforts, while commanding broad support, did not gain the consensus required.

The importance of halting the arms race and establishing more stable relations, particularly in Europe where major military potentials are concentrated, was addressed by the Conference as was the need for progress on arms limitation and disarmament measures in the international organs that are mandated to negotiate these matters. Canada continues to believe that every opportunity must be seized, including those provided in the military provisions of the Final Act, to decelerate the arms race as an essential approach towards the building of greater confidence.

We also had a useful discussion about the many opportunities for greater cooperation in the economic and related areas that the Final Act has opened up. It was our hope that, as a result, agreement could be reached on a certain number of proposals which, by reflecting our common willingness to remove some of the obstacles which continue to impede cooperation, would have enhanced those opportunities. Here, as in other domains covered by the Final Act, it is Canada's objective to reduce impediments to open access to relevant information and to facilitate contacts between those in our countries who alone are in a position to translate the commitments of governments into more effective and more pervasive linkages. We had also hoped that, as we discussed these matters, we could look beyond the particular language of our mandate at the economic problems and responsibilities we share as part

of the industrial community within the larger world system. We regard this as a direction in which our relationships must evolve if the assumptions that lie at the basis of the Final Act are to have real substance.

From the beginning Canada has placed particular emphasis on the humanitarian dimension of our work. We see this as a fundamental, unique and indispensable contribution of the CSCE process to the development of détente. We were heartened that the review of implementation confirmed that these humanitarian questions are a legitimate subject of multilateral discussion. Most of us do not regard such issues as family reunification as being of secondary importance, waiting in the wings while political and military considerations occupy centre stage. If anything, our deliberations here in Belgrade have confirmed us in our view that human rights will remain a central preoccupation of our government and most other governments represented here as we move forward in meeting our mutual commitments.

In approaching this question, Canada proceeded on the basis that relations between States cannot remain unaffected where respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is seen to be deficient. Our discussions have shown that we have a long, long way to go and this will take time before we can feel confident that the inherent dignity of the human person and his prerogative to know and act upon his rights are being respected in all places and in all circumstances. There is evidence that individuals who have tried to exercise rights that are endorsed in the Final Act are still being harassed, exiled, arrested, tried and imprisoned. This has led the Parliament of Canada to adopt resolutions as a unanimous expression of its deep concern in respect of what we see as violations of fundamental human rights. We earnestly hope that the attention that we have focussed on these matters will encourage governments to reflect on the negative impact of their practices.

We had hoped that Belgrade would be the occasion for all signatory governments not only to reaffirm their pledges to respect human rights, but also to act on them. We have never claimed that human rights are all there is to détente. What we have claimed and what we do claim is that, to the extent that détente rests on confidence, we cannot muster that confidence among our citizens unless it is seen to have a human dimension. Respect for human rights is part of the structure and balance of the Final Act. If we want the Final Act to be more than the sum of its parts, we cannot with impunity act as if the societies to which it relates were islands cut off from one another. Our concerns on these humanitarian issues are not motivated by a desire to wage ideological warfare, or to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

In the specific area of human contacts, we tried to get acceptance for the idea that the provisions of the Final Act should be applied in such a way that family contacts - whether involving visits or reunification - would be facilitated as a normal routine so that such cases no longer would have to be the subject of individual negotiation between governments. We also tried to get agreement that governments would facilitate normal communication of

ideas and information between individuals particularly through the freer flow of printed material. For a country like Canada with its close links with Europe, this is a matter of direct and practical relevance. As Canada's Minister of State for Multiculturalism, I am particularly conscious of the degree to which events in Europe have found their way into the consciences of our nation and especially of that large portion of our population who trace their origins to Europe. In a freedom-loving society such as ours, questions of culture, religion and tradition are of fundamental importance and are to be respected along with civil and political rights.

We regret that our efforts to achieve a document of substance on these issues have been unavailing. We had hoped that in this important area, it might be possible to distil some understandings about how the provisions of the Final Act could be carried out more effectively and in a more routine way. Some may be made uncomfortable by a discussion of these humanitarian concerns but distaste for them will not make them go away. Certainly Canadian interest in them will not cease just because this meeting has ended. Our commitment to these goals will be vigorously maintained.

Canada will persist in underlining the importance of the humanitarian objectives for CSCE and détente which we, together with like-minded delegations, tried to advance here at Belgrade. We stand by the approach to détente which we took at the outset of the meeting. In our view it is fundamental that the individual has a central role in the furtherance of détente. Its benefits must be passed along to the individual, so as to give him the widest possible opportunity for living in a safe and humane world, and for enjoying economic security, cultural enrichment and normal human relationships.

We were charged by the Final Act to give consideration to the development of the process of détente in the future. Since the results of the Belgrade meeting are less than we thought possible or desirable, it is almost inevitable that there will be skepticism about the value of the CSCE process, or even conceivably about détente itself. In the view of Canadians, and this probably is true of citizens in many of the other participating States, détente does not have an independent existence. The public will weigh the reality of détente on the basis of results. We suspect, in view of the high expectations of our public, that it will be a source of disappointment in Canada that the ideas that we hold to be so fundamental and which we have advanced so persistently and strongly have not been reflected in the document because of this meeting's inability to achieve consensus. However, we reaffirm our continuing commitment to these concepts and values.

I would therefore urge all delegations to give serious thought to what the meeting that has just taken place may mean for the broader process of détente and the CSCE. Some may argue that détente will not be much affected by this meeting or by public opinion. To some this may be a comforting thought but they should not take it to be a foregone conclusion. The CSCE is not incidental to détente. On the contrary, it is a major international effort focussing on the two vital and complementary aspects of détente - the pressing issues of security

and the effort to map out a broad range of cooperative relationships. To have been unable to record common views on these matters here in Belgrade is in itself a commentary on how little any of us can take détente for granted.

The Canadian government, for its part, remains firmly attached to the policy of détente. But détente, by definition, is a two-way street. It will not exist simply because we say to ourselves that it must. If we want it to be a reality, we must make it a reality. The lesson of Belgrade must not go unlearned. But we must be sure that we understand what it is. That we have not succeeded in putting words on paper is unfortunate. But it is not the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter is that commitments freely undertaken at Helsinki are carried out in practice. For that we should not need verbal reminders. The language of the Final Act is clear. We did not come here to alter it, and its provisions remain an indispensable yardstick against which performance will be measured. At Madrid we shall have a clearer picture of where we stand. It will then be five years from the signature of the Final Act. Public opinion in our countries is not likely to grant us much of a further reprieve if we are not seen by them to have pursued the course we charted together at Helsinki with a greater sense of commitment and with greater imagination. Belgrade and Madrid may be important milestones on that course. But the real test of the CSCE lies in the commitment we are prepared to give to its continuity, and in whether concrete adjustments will be made in our national policies. We should not look to a miracle at Madrid to relieve us of the responsibilities of proper performance between now and then.

Some undoubtedly feel frustrated and disappointed in the concrete achievements to date.

I would ask them whether, a decade ago, they would have even envisaged that meetings such as this would ever have taken place.

Can anyone have doubts as to the value of nations of differing ideologies sitting down together and freely and frankly discussing their mutual concerns?

It is a significant and positive step forward. As long as this process of dialogue continues, we need not be discouraged.