



# Statements and Speeches

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## NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Donald Jamieson, London, May 11, 1977.

This is the last occasion we shall have, as ministers of the Alliance, to exchange views on the Belgrade Conference before it opens on June 15. It is not a conference that will involve ministerial participation. That is what is laid down in the Final Act. There has been a Soviet suggestion that it might make sense to involve ministers at some stage. In the end, however, I imagine that the language of the Final Act will stand.

Even if Belgrade is not to be a ministerial conference, it is bound to be a highly political one. It is also a conference on which a good deal of public expectation is focused in many of our countries. It is important, therefore, that we try to distil from our respective preparations some appreciation of how far we have come and where we should be aiming to go.

The conference is not without posing some problems. We are all agreed, I think, that the process that was set in train at Helsinki involves all the 35 participants in their mutual relations. We have tried to avoid putting either Helsinki or its aftermath in the perspective of a bloc-to-bloc relation. On the other hand, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the Final Act is intimately linked to *détente* and derives its justification from it. We are not really concerned about the way in which one Western country implements the provisions of the Final Act in relation to another. But we must be careful not to take that approach at Belgrade. Because, if we do so, the natural inference that will be drawn by the other side is that it does not matter how one Eastern European country implements the provisions of the Final Act in relation to another Eastern European country or, indeed, whether it does so at all. If we allowed that inference to be drawn, we would be giving unwitting support to the Brezhnev doctrine, which argues precisely that the normal standards of international conduct are inapplicable to relations between the socialist states. That is one pitfall, therefore, that we must clearly avoid.

Another pitfall we must avoid is to appear to be placing selective emphasis on the provisions of the Final Act. The Final Act is a balanced document. Indeed, it would appear in retrospect that it contains much more than we might at one time have thought that is troublesome for the other side. To maintain the integrity of the Final Act is, therefore, in our own best interest. It is a fact, nevertheless, that public opinion in our countries does not take an integral view of the Final Act. Its attention is directed selectively to those aspects of the Final Act that it identifies as being the most likely to bring about real change in the East-West relation, if not in the Eastern European situation itself. In Canada, for example, public concern is overwhelmingly focused on human rights and the reunification of families. Obviously, we shall each of us have to be responsive to these public concerns. But we must also be careful not to

give the impression that our preoccupation with certain parts of the Final Act calls into question our equal commitment to all of its provisions.

Above all, it seems to me important that we do not lose sight of the wood for the trees. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was an important staging point in the *détente* process but it does not, of course, exhaust *détente*. If we agree, as we do, that *détente* is a process, we shall have to be careful how we go about measuring it. Almost certainly, two years is too short a period in which to make judgments about success or failure. In our view, the leaven of Helsinki is working and we must give it time. That is not a prescription for complacency at Belgrade. I do think, however, that we would be wrong to do our sums too precipitately. I also think that we must be careful to conduct our review of what has and what has not been accomplished in such a way as not to impair the prospects for *détente* itself, which remains our ultimate objective.

The key issue in that respect will undoubtedly be that of human rights. I do not think it has come as a surprise to any of us that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is deficient in all the countries of Eastern Europe in greater or lesser degree. We all know what happened, almost a decade ago, when one of the governments of Eastern Europe propounded the possibility of "socialism with a human face". We also know that a good part of the doctrinal dispute between the governing Communist parties in Eastern Europe and some of their fraternal parties in Western Europe is precisely about the extent to which Communism and the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms can be mutually reconciled. For the time being, at any rate, it is fair to assume that most of the governments of Eastern Europe see the human-rights issue as going right to the roots of their social system.

Nevertheless, the human-rights situation in Eastern Europe is not wholly static. It is different today from what it was, say, 20 or even ten years ago. The Final Act is not without exerting an influence on the situation. But there are also other pressures at work and these may be expected to continue as the countries of Eastern Europe come to grips with the problem of managing a modern society. In general, I believe that human rights and fundamental freedoms in Eastern Europe stand a better chance of being observed in an international climate of *détente* than they would if the Soviet Union and the other countries of the area felt their system to be in jeopardy.

What is our best course in these circumstances? It is, I think, to continue to proclaim our own deep commitment to the cause of human rights; to make it clear that the responsibility for ensuring respect for human rights is a responsibility that devolves, in the first instance, on each government on its own territory in accordance with the obligations to which it has freely subscribed; to hold governments to those obligations and to maintain the general right of their own citizens to do so; and, finally, to lay stress, as we did at Helsinki, on the relevance of respect for human rights to "the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation" among the states parties to the Final Act.

The discussion of human rights at Belgrade will be a delicate exercise. There are ex-

pectations we presumably cannot afford to arouse and there are margins of tolerance beyond which we might do more harm than good to the cause of human rights in Eastern Europe. But within those margins we shall be expected to do what we can to give substance to the commitments we collectively undertook at Helsinki. It is we, after all, who introduced the whole human dimension into the Final Act and it remains central to our conception of *détente*.

It is clear that we shall not be going to Belgrade to write another Final Act. The agenda embodied in that document offers us an adequate basis for forward movement. To expand it now would be to put a premium on poor performance. The task of our representatives at Belgrade, as I see it, is to make an objective and dispassionate assessment of how far we have come; to identify the impediments that have stood in the way of more even and more satisfactory progress; and to lay down some guidelines to ensure better performance in the future. The prospect of the Belgrade Conference has already stimulated action in areas where action might not otherwise have been taken and I imagine that, at the end of the day, it will be in our joint interest to provide for a continuation of this multilateral process, if only as an incentive to more faithful implementation.

Of course, even the more faithful implementation of the provisions of the Final Act will not be enough to sustain the momentum of *détente*. The other side tell us that they see *détente* as being irreversible. I am sure that no sane government, in the present conjuncture of forces, would want to have it otherwise. But *détente* will not be irreversible unless it is made irreversible. And it will not be made irreversible unless it is seen as a process that extends well beyond the boundaries of the Final Act.

The attempt is made from time to time to define *détente*. This is useful up to a point, but there is also a danger that to define is to set limits and to set limits is not only to include but to exclude. In the Canadian view, there is no present advantage to us in delimiting *détente* with such sharp precision. We much prefer the very broad definition of *détente* to which we all subscribed in the preamble to the Final Act, which is to overcome distrust and increase confidence.

Many of us have said that *détente* is indivisible. This is because, in the end, confidence is indivisible. The persistent build-up of military capabilities in the Soviet Union is a case in point. We cannot easily reconcile a climate of *détente* with an arms race that shows no signs of abating. Nor can we expect confidence to be established between states in Europe when situations outside Europe are being turned by one of the participating states to its unilateral advantage.

The whole notion of the ideological struggle is another obstacle to *détente*. Sooner or later, it is bound to become intervention in someone's internal affairs. It is not that the notion as such needs to give us grounds for undue concern. Our ideas can stand on their own merits and on the merits of the societies that profess them. But we cannot accept a set of ground-rules by which the ideological struggle waged in one direction is declared outside the bounds of *détente*, whereas the affirmation of our own ideas is condemned, to use Mr. Gromyko's own words, as poisoning the atmosphere and

worsening the political climate.

That is the general perspective in which we in Canada see the Belgrade Conference. It will not be an easy conference. It will be closely followed by our public opinion. It would be a mistake to see it simply as a review conference, because it raises issues that are central to the evolution of the international system. None of us, I believe, see any merit in dealing with those issues in a spirit of polemic or confrontation. It would be idle to look for miracles. The best we can anticipate in present circumstances is probably a renewed commitment to the purposes of the Final Act, with results that, we hope, will benefit not only the East-West relation but ordinary people on both sides of the great divide.

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