



Statements and Speeches

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THE LESSONS OF HELSINKI

A Speech by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Helsinki, July 30, 1975.

...The road to Helsinki has been long. For those who for two years have been actively engaged in the negotiations, it has been an uphill one as well but, in the course of that long journey from Helsinki to Geneva and now back to Helsinki, a number of milestones have been passed:

First -- Having set aside the confrontation and unwillingness to negotiate that are all too common elsewhere, we have provided the world with an example of how a consensus can be reached.

Secondly -- We have accepted as inevitable the factor of change in international relations, but we have nevertheless recognized the danger represented by the instability accompanying it, and we have committed ourselves to doing everything possible to avoid hostility and resolve conflicts. We have, in consequence, reaffirmed the United Nations Charter prohibition against the use of force between nations. In this connection, although we have declared borders to be inviolable, it does not mean that they are immutable; we have specifically agreed that they may be changed by peaceful means.

Thirdly -- We have recognized that security and co-operation are not matters of concern only to governments. To usher in a new era in Europe we need contacts among individuals, exchanges of views and opinions. We must be able to reunite families (and on that point I should add that the efforts of Canada, the Soviet Union and certain Eastern European countries to that end are meeting with increasing success).

These few milestones only mark the beginning of a road with limitless perspectives. The challenge is ours, now, to continue as we have begun, to make this road a permanent route towards security and co-operation. If we succeed, we shall have fulfilled the universal wish for peace and stability. We shall have released energies that can be directed towards other objectives -- to the reduction of military forces and disarmament, for example, to the setting-up of equitable management systems (as in the case of the law of the sea), to the introduction of more effective mechanisms for the settling of disputes. Most important of all, we shall have created a more favourable climate for the battle against the huge disparities

that now exist between the nations represented here and those of the Third World.

The efforts we have expended in reaching this agreement have been prodigious. At some moments in the course of negotiations the difficulties appeared so overwhelming and the progress so slow that we may have had reason to believe we carried on our shoulders the weight of the entire world. In a sense we did, for history has shown us that, all too often, strife and disagreement in Europe have spread rapidly to all other areas. Yet, in another sense, such a belief is arrogant. Europe is not the world. Nor are many of our concerns, vital though they may be, the concerns of others. Whatever stability this conference anticipates in Europe will be short-lived if we do not seize the opportunity now offered to us to create elsewhere the conditions necessary to permit standards of living to be raised, to permit the economies of tropical countries to be improved, to ensure that rural development is encouraged and food production is increased, to provide hope for a better future to the hundreds of millions of people outside Europe now existing at the subsistence level.

We have long recognized, and accepted, that Europe is an environment of interdependence. We are only now beginning to realize that the entire world is equally interdependent, incapable of being divided by continent or physical barrier. The security that we have sought in two years of negotiation must now be extended beyond this region. It can be extended, I am confident, because of the dynamic nature of our agreement and of our attitude. This document we are to sign represents our acceptance of the principle of change, of our awareness of the fluidity of the human condition. It is our personal testament to the maturity of the international community. It is, as well, our recognition of man's irrepressible desire to seek starrier heavens in his quest for spiritual fulfilment.

That quest for peace, justice and individual dignity will require of men and women, as it has since ancient times, stamina and firmness of purpose. Yet, in an age as tumultuous and potentially threatening as this, the quest demands of us especially that we be wise, that we avoid the glitter of false promise and the fragility of haphazard arrangements.

In the nuclear age, wisdom is often caution. Our responsibility as leaders is to express caution in the face of our generals and our scientists, who may make to us extended claims of the benefits of nuclear activity both peaceful and otherwise. Should those claims prove illusory, the responsibility will be ours. Unfortunately, few nations now enjoy the benefits of peaceful nuclear knowledge. Even

more unfortunately, all too few nations are convinced of the irreversible holocaust that will surely follow the irresponsible spread and employment of nuclear weapons. One of our priorities in the immediate future must be to devise and implement techniques that will permit the broad application of nuclear benefits to all nations, while at the same time eliminating the likelihood of weapons proliferation. I implore the General Secretary of the Soviet Union and the President of the United States to continue to work with all urgency toward the conclusion of SALT II and then to commence at an early date SALT III. I invite those of us who maintain forces in Central Europe now to focus our attention on MBFR. I express Canada's continued devotion to it and to the work begun at the recent meeting of nuclear suppliers.

Canada has joined fully in this conference exercise, as it is committed to participate fully in the activities to follow. Though separated from Europe by the breadth of an ocean, Canadians are deeply conscious that the fortunes of this continent have moulded our fate through history and that events here will continue to influence us in the future. Certainly, any breakdown in European security would have the gravest consequences in Canada. For this reason, we have been dedicated participants in this conference from which we see emerging a new European spirit of confidence and co-operation.

It is clear that this gathering in this beautiful city is far from a finality. Though we have come far, we have a considerable distance still to travel. We have learnt that our nations share much in common with one another, but nothing more basic or more widespread than a desire for peace and liberty. We have understood, too, that truth is not singular; in a modern world it embraces a plurality of beliefs, ideals and systems. And we have found that our two paramount goals of security and co-operation are mutually reinforcing and are also related to the world beyond this continent.

These are the lessons of Helsinki, which I am confident will give us the wisdom to tackle with success the problems that still remain.

S/C