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Notes for a speech by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, at the
meeting to commemorate
the Tenth Anniversary of the
Signing of the Final Act
of the Conference on
Security and Cooperation
in Europe

HELSINKI, Finland
July 31, 1985.

Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I should like to thank the Government and the people of Finland for the friendly welcome they have given us in this lovely city, and for the warmth and generosity of their hospitality. I also join my colleagues in expressing to the Executive Secretary, Mr. Palosuo, and his staff, our gratitude for the skill and efficiency they have displayed in the organization of this meeting.

Ten years ago, the signature of the Final Act evoked a wide range of reactions. Some believed that the hostility and uncertainty which had marked East-West relations for so long would quickly melt away under the bright sun of détente. Others viewed the Final Act as a hortatory set of principles which would be ignored and soon forgotten. Most of us, however, viewed the Final Act with both hope and realism. Certainly Canada did.

Hope was essential: Canada has deep roots in Europe; our historical origins are in Europe; and we have shared both the profound benefits of Europe's political and social ideals and the tragic costs of Europe's wars. Experience had shown that even longstanding divisions could be healed, or at least managed peaceably. We wanted to nurture the hope that solutions could be found to those divisions which still threatened the peace and security of the family of Europe, wherever we might live.

Hope, however, was tempered by realism. The tortuous negotiations which had led to the Final Act made it painfully clear that distrust and hostility were very deeply rooted and that productive dialogue would take time, patience and, above all, commitment.

The Final Act, nevertheless, represented a beginning. A balanced product of compromise, it seemed to express a common determination among the participating states that desire for understanding and cooperation prevail over sterile confrontation. The CSCE had established itself as a multilateral forum in which participating states, without seeking to threaten the

systems of others, could seek common ground. It agreed upon a set of norms and principles which, if adhered to in their totality, formed a sound basis for the conduct of civilized relationships not only among governments, but also between governments and their own citizens. Finally, the CSCE provided an opportunity for all signatory states to contribute to efforts to relax tensions between East and West.

It was therefore possible, in 1975, to be hopeful without being unrealistic, and Canada was determined to make a constructive contribution to a process which held out the promise of a new and positive approach.

We have maintained that commitment, Mr. Chairman, but when the accomplishments of the past decade are measured against the potential which seemed to exist in 1975, Canadians feel disappointed and concern.

During the review of the implementation of the Final Act in Belgrade and in Madrid, it was clear that there had been very little progress in implementing the undertakings of 1975, and what is worse, that in most fields, there had been a slipping back.

Since then, the situation has become even less promising. Denial of self-determination to the people of one country began even before the Madrid Meeting opened. It continues today, and is intervention in the true meaning of the sixth principle, even if the victim is not a participating state, since we all agreed in 1975 to behave towards states outside the circle of the 35 in the same way we behave towards the states within it. We have seen the fear of intervention affect a participating state during the course of the Madrid meeting. Non-compliance on this scale inevitably corroded the hopes we shared in 1975 and threatened the credibility of the CSCE process.

Canadians have a deep and abiding concern about human rights. The situation in some countries is much worse than it was in 1975. Individuals who believed the assurance of their leaders that they had the right to know and to act upon their human rights have paid for their trust in prison, in labour camps and in exile. In the recent Human Rights Experts Meeting in Ottawa, we did not attempt to expand the human rights which should be assured to all individuals. There is little point in adding new undertakings when some states will not implement the rights which they have already agreed are inherent in the dignity of human beings.

The Ottawa meeting did produce one good result: some states had claimed that the discussion of human rights in all countries of the Final Act was beyond the ambit of CSCE meetings, but made their own claim indefensible by themselves engaging in criticism of practices in other countries. This is a development we welcome. However, those countries -- and they included those which maintained that the Final Act was a sacred text which could not be varied, having been signed by the highest political leaders -- made an attempt to turn the Final Act on its head by claiming that rights which received only indirect treatment in the Final Act were of greater consequence than those fundamental human rights which were the main object of the seventh principle. It will have to be recognized that certain rights are fundamental and others are goals to be pursued -- goals which will be progressively elaborated and expanded. This distinction is found in the language of the seventh principle and also in the United Nations documents to which the final paragraph of that principle particularly refers.

At the opening of the Ottawa meeting, I said that issues of central importance such as human rights cannot and must not be avoided just because they are sensitive and can sometimes give rise to disagreement between governments. The subject of human rights will remain prominent on the international agenda, because respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential to the development of friendly relations and cooperation among us.

Mr. Chairman, when the Final Act was adopted, nobody expected an instant change in human rights practices, or in other fields. What we expected was a gradual improvement, just as those of us who believe deeply in individual human rights continually try to improve our own performance. It is movement in the opposite direction, inadvertently or deliberately, that we must guard against: non-compliance in one area raises serious doubts about the likelihood that commitments in other fields will be fulfilled.

I recognize, Mr. Chairman, that there is a gulf within the CSCE between two very different approaches to the relationship between the individual and the state. We would be deluding ourselves if we thought these differences in approach would disappear quickly. Others, however, would be mistaken if they concluded that Canada's concerns about human rights, human contacts and freer and wider dissemination of information, arose from a desire to disturb the internal stability of other states; we simply

do not believe that any government represented here is so weak or should feel so insecure that its must treat as criminals or traitors those individuals who believe that we all meant what we said in the Final Act. We take this occasion to affirm that failure to implement the provisions dealing with human rights is related directly to progress on other provisions.

In the field of security, results have been very slow in coming. After more than 18 months, the Stockholm Conference has not achieved any visible progress in concluding the tasks specified in the Madrid mandate. Canada has high hopes that substantive cooperation can emerge from honest dialogue -- that the Conference can make a major contribution to the process of building mutual confidence. But these hopes become difficult to sustain -- and difficult for our people to share -- in the face of an apparent attempt to avoid negotiating a set of confidence-building measures, including a comprehensive programme for cooperation in military affairs. I think it is important to note, Mr. Chairman, that these measures were designed to apply equally to the two alliances in Europe. Security is reciprocal: it does not flow from one side demanding unilateral advantages at the expense of the other. We will go forward together, or not at all. Deeds, not words, are the key to mutual confidence, and we shall therefore continue to press for specific undertakings in the field of information and verification.

In the economic area, a treaty on long-range pollution has been signed, and we hope it will be effectively implemented. In other respects, however, progress has been limited by the outmoded trade practices of some states, and by the difficulty of increasing cooperation in this area with countries which consistently fail to comply with their obligations in other provisions of the Final Act. Obviously, the world economic situation, combined with a variety of marketing problems, presents obstacles to rapid progress. Nevertheless, we oppose any tendency to downplay this area of the Final Act, simply because of these difficulties. We must bear in mind that in this area, as in the other areas covered by the Final Act, our objective should be to break down barriers and to facilitate the freer flow of information, ideas and people.

It is obvious that the CSCE process has not yet fulfilled the promise which so many of us saw in it in 1975. However, despite the lack of measurable progress,

the CSCE provided, and will continue to provide, an opportunity for dialogue. That should not be underestimated, particularly if the many strands of dialogue can be woven into a fabric of greater understanding and broader agreement among all signatory states, regardless of their size. But if the CSCE degenerates further into a dialogue of the deaf; if we consistently talk past each other; if, indeed, the very words we use have different meanings, then what can we accomplish? If we continue to indulge in semantic manoeuvring, and avoid concrete action, how long can the credibility of the CSCE process survive?

The credibility of the process is vital, Mr. Chairman. If we simply keep issuing documents and restating our obligations, without carrying out the undertakings we have committed ourselves to at the highest political level, then we run the risk of destroying faith in the utility of the CSCE system. Moreover, without steady progress towards full implementation of all aspects of the Final Act, it will be impossible to create the confidence which is essential to the improvement of East-West relations, which was our primary goal ten years ago. In my view, unless we can create that confidence, it will be particularly difficult to make progress in the fields of arms control and disarmament.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the people whose representatives and leaders we are, will inevitably -- and justifiably -- question the value of the forms of cooperation spelled out in the Final Act if they do not see concrete and tangible evidence of this cooperation touching their everyday lives. Does cooperation contribute to our sense of security? Does it make it easier for people to get together, regardless of the ideological community in which they live? These are questions for which our people expect more positive answers than we have provided so far.

Fortunately there will be, in the near future, opportunities to reaffirm -- in a number of fields -- the validity of the path we charted for ourselves in 1975. The Cultural Forum will be meeting in October. We shall be able to exchange views on the ways cultural problems have been dealt with since Helsinki, Belgrade and Madrid. I do hope that the opportunity will be used to make a realistic assessment and constructive recommendations.

The Meeting of Experts on Human Contacts, which will take place in Berne in April 1986, will be another important landmark in the CSCE process. Canadians have an

exceptionally strong interest in the subject of that meeting and will measure its results carefully, for although there has been a considerable improvement in implementation on the part of some states, there has been a marked regression on the part of others. Coming so soon before the third Follow-up Meeting in Vienna, the results of the Human Contacts Meeting will be of special significance in our assessment of the utility and future of the CSCE process.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we will all seize the opportunity presented to us by these future meetings to renew the spirit of the Final Act and to initiate the actions which will ensure the survival of that spirit. It will not be easy to overcome the tendency to create more words, more undertakings, without paying sufficient attention to the essential need to implement those already agreed to. It will not be easy to accept the balance which is intrinsic to the CSCE and to the Final Act. We must, however, recognize that although some Participating States are more interested in certain elements of that balance than are others, the process does not envisage that the interests of some states will be served in the absence of reciprocal respect for the justified interests of others. We cannot ignore any aspect of the Final Act, since refusal to implement commitments in one area inevitably undermines expectations that commitments in other areas will be observed, and in the end paralyzes what must be a dynamic and expanding process. Some commitments may not, at a particular time, be convenient to certain signatories, but the broad principles and specific undertakings of the Final Act are goals we all claimed to aspire to, as essential to the creation of a Europe living in peace and security.

Mr. Chairman, we can take pride in the blueprint for civilized relations which was signed in this city ten years ago. We must, however, also assume the burden of its realization. It would be tragic if we failed to recognize the responsibilities we assumed in 1975, and failed to meet the goals we set for ourselves.

If we can now make a new commitment to giving meaning to our words over the coming decade, we will be providing our peoples with renewed hope for a richer and more secure life, and setting an example for the world.

Our task will be as difficult as it is urgent, but I hope that in the coming months we will all make that commitment.