



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI DELLA CONFERENZA
SULLA SICUREZZA E LA COOPERAZIONE IN EUROPA****

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1. I am very pleased to welcome you this evening, at the end of your first day of work. I thank you cordially for agreeing to come here and for taking the time to share some of the concerns of the Pope, who follows with great solicitude the still uncertain steps of the new Europe, of which the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has been a resolute builder.

2. The annual meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the nations which today make up the CSCE offers you an opportunity to take stock of the evolution of this continent, so rich in cultural and human resources. But it is also up to you to forestall, as far as possible, tensions and conflicts, and especially to attempt courageously to resolve the crises which weaken the still unfinished construction of Europe. In seeing you here, it spontaneously occurs to me to say "Europe" means "openness"! In fact, nations belonging to other continents, such as Canada and the United States and some States of Central Asia, are likewise working for security and cooperation in Europe. The CSCE is thus the natural framework for the realization of a broad community of nations open to the other continents, and in particular to the countries of the Mediterranean region.

3. The new Europe envisaged by the Charter of Paris of 1990 is neither the annexation of one part by another, nor the substitution of economic confrontation for ideological confrontation. Europe should be distinguished by the drawing up of common projects inspired by the values which the CSCE has promoted with such perseverance since 1975. Recent experience shows that it is by placing the dignity of persons and peoples at the centre of its concerns that Europe can contribute to the elimination of the various forms of totalitarianism which for too many years have disfigured her.

4. This is why I would like to tell you with what distress I learn of the unremittingly tragic news coming to us from the former Yugoslav Federation, and especially from Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is not possible to assert one's sovereignty or to claim one's rights by trampling upon those of one's brothers! One had thought that war would never again be seen on European soil. Who could have predicted that racist pretensions and evil forms of nationalism would make their slogans echo round this continent? What can be said of the atrocious spectacle of whole villages razed, with their inhabitants savagely mistreated and deported? It is a harsh reminder of a past which has besmirched human history! And yet this is going on from here. Everyone knows it; everyone sees it. It is expedient that the CSCE should continue to express a political and moral judgment about the development of the Yugoslav crisis: in this way, it will avoid the scandal of indifference in the face of inadmissible events, and it will oblige States to realize that they are directly involved as soon as the fundamental rights of a person or people are put in jeopardy.

The greatest calamity which could happen in Europe today would be if people resigned themselves to the situation of war which is bringing torment to millions of men and women, especially in the Balkans and the Caucasus. It is possible to put an end to this state of affairs, by adopting the means which will ensure that the rule of law prevails. The humanitarian aid which is being generously sent to the peoples of Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia and the other former Republics of what was the Yugoslav Federation, does not dispense political leaders from continuing to seek creative solutions aimed at putting an end to these outbreaks of violence and hatred, which lead nowhere and which no cause justifies.

The CSCE has the mission of putting together the conditions for a common security, one which is global and guaranteed. However, it is now clear that this will never occur if territorial conquests achieved by force are rewarded, if "ethnic cleansing" - which is nothing but a form of genocide - achieves the status of a method, and if the most elementary norms of human rights are openly flouted.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina there are men and women of peace, just as in Serbia and Croatia; they are not being sufficiently allowed to speak. These peoples, whom history has accustomed to trial and recovery, have great human and spiritual resources; let us give them the opportunity to express themselves through dialogue and negotiation.

5. Your Excellencies: allow me to repeat once more, and today in the presence of the leading exponents of European diplomacy, that the time has come - let us hope that it is not already too late - to restore a breath of hope to individuals and peoples, to create conditions which will ensure that the principles and commitments happily defined and subscribed to in Helsinki, Vienna and Paris by the participants at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, are really applied by everyone, and have the same value for everyone, in all circumstances.

By reason of its history, geographical extension and great cultural diversity, the CSCE cannot content itself with being, among others, a simple means for contributing to safeguarding peace. It must give a genuine impetus so that all the nations which it includes will be consolidated as a community, sharing the human and moral values which have made this continent a point of reference for so many other peoples. In this way, the peoples you represent will increasingly see themselves united and, in solidarity, responsible for their future. It is imperative that this idea of a "community of nations" should become a reality.

6. Hatred has never had the last word between countries. European peoples once divided have been reunited; countries which yesterday were enemies today work together. Political will, an understanding of history and generosity of heart enable people to undertake together great projects of cooperation and development.

In this regard, one fact must be considered: that of the rebirth of nations which, for many years, were prevented from showing their will to live freely and to express their identity. However, care must be taken lest a society united by fear be followed by one divided by particularisms; lest a falsely united international society be succeeded by one falsely diversified. It is of course fitting to recognize the legitimate aspirations of individuals and peoples to freedom; but it is urgently necessary that - today as yesterday - all should become aware of their duties as well as of their rights, and that they should give priority to solidarity in building a true community of nations.

7. On this vast continent there is room for large and small countries. Each has its rights and its duties. Each must respect the others. It is necessary to educate to freedom. Believers, and the Catholic Church in particular, -desire to contribute to this by forming consciences, especially those of the young, by insisting on the pressing need for reconciliation between peoples, in a word, by fostering the moral and religious values upon which the foundations of the common European home must firmly rest. The Catholic Church strives to carry out this task in close cooperation with the other Christian communities and the believers of other confessions. It is a question of restoring the whole spiritual fabric of Europe!

8. Your Excellencies, I entrust to your reflection these few thoughts which the history of Europe of today and yesterday brings to my mind. I pray that God will grant each one of you the strength and courage needed by those whose responsibility it is not only to guide their brothers and sisters, but also to kindle in them sufficient enthusiasm in order to commit themselves to the path of peace. You have in a way a prophetic mission! Allow me, from this Vatican Hill, to remind you of the words of St Paul, the Apostle to the Nations: "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom 14:19).

May almighty God bless Europe! May he enable her to give the world an example of harmony and solidarity!

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