

**COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

237 FORD HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

(202) 225-1901

THE CSCE HUMAN DIMENSION SEMINAR ON TOLERANCE

November 16-20, 1992

Warsaw, Poland

A Report Prepared by the Staff
of the
U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

I. BACKGROUND

The CSCE Human Dimension Seminar on Tolerance, organized by the CSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), was the first of the four Human Dimension seminars mandated by the Helsinki Document of July 1992. Stemming from an American proposal in Helsinki, the seminar aimed to present practical examples of how relations among diverse groups, including ethnic, religious, and national, can be improved.

Opposition to the entire concept of specialized seminars was strong at the Helsinki Meeting. Many delegations, including West European allies, remained skeptical as the agenda and modalities for the Seminar on Tolerance were reviewed by the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) in the fall of 1992. Some of the important innovations of the seminar, for example, the full participation of non-governmental organizations, the emphasis on practitioners rather than diplomats, and the agreement to forgo a concluding document, were ill-received by dubious member States. The United States, as the main promoter of the seminar concept, had a particular interest in and responsibility for ensuring that the initial seminar be viewed as a success.

II. AGENDA AND MODALITIES

The structure of the seminar was designed to maximize contact and dialogue among participants during the brief week in Warsaw. Modeled after a U.S. proposal, three discussion groups were designed to focus on: the role of educational and cultural institutions, as well as the media, in promoting tolerance; the role of local authorities; and, legal issues and law enforcement. Two groups ran simultaneously at any given time, enabling even the smallest delegations to rotate reasonably efficiently among the different discussions. Moderators from Switzerland, the United States (Colonel Ronald Joe, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, U.S. Army), and the United Kingdom were selected by the ODIHR to manage the three discussions respectively.

III. THE SEMINAR ON TOLERANCE

At least 42 participating States, as well as a broad variety of international organizations and NGOs participated in the seminar. As noted above, discussion groups focused on the role of educational and cultural institutions, as well as the media, in promoting tolerance; the role of local authorities; and legal issues and law enforcement.

The wide participation of member States and the contributions of IOs and NGOs underscored both the urgency of the subject matter and the success of the seminar format in stimulating debate. Even those delegations that had viewed the Human Dimension Seminars with great skepticism at the outset were drawn into the discussions and expressed satisfaction with the way information and ideas were solicited and shared.

As agreed in Helsinki, no concluding document was negotiated at the close of the seminar. Proposals to distribute summaries of the working group discussions were met with mixed approval; on the one hand, participants liked the idea of having a tangible souvenir to carry home, but on the other, they feared wasting valuable time haggling over the text of such a document. In the end, it was decided that the moderators would prepare and deliver summary statements during the final plenary, recognizing that participants were evidently free to take notes as desired. While some participants were disappointed with this compromise, others believed -- especially after hearing the three summary presentations, which varied considerably in substance and style -- that it was better not to allow fixed documents to define the experience of the seminar.

Swiss diplomat Reto Durler, moderator of the discussion group on education, culture, and media, used his summary to catalog the broad spectrum of topics delegates had raised. Common themes included the recognition that multi-ethnic, multi-cultural societies are a reality in today's Europe, and governments, communities, and individuals need to confront that fact without delay; the belief that face-to-face dialogue and contact is the most effective antidote to intolerance (delegates called for a focus on youth exchanges, professional exchanges, sister city partnerships, and so on); and the desire to establish some form of database or information center on multicultural policy developments, teacher training programs, and anti-racism campaigns.

Discussion Group II, on the role of local authorities, was moderated by Colonel Ronald Joe of the United States. Colonel Joe opened by listing the topics the group had covered: the role of local officials; police affairs and training; immigrants; large ethnic concentrations in urban areas; minority representation; racial discrimination; homophobia; and, the role of local officials in housing and employment. He noted the special problems faced by states in transition, and the duties and roles of national governments as agents of positive change.

The conclusions reached by the discussion group were varied, but all viewed two factors as essential: strong leadership from local authorities, and involvement of the community in partnership with local authorities. Examples of community involvement included community relations councils, human relations councils, and programs to link businesses with the schools to provide mentoring, scholarships, and job training. In closing, however, Colonel Joe reminded the seminar that there is a range beyond tolerance to aspire to: acceptance, managing diversity, and valuing diversity.

Richard Kornicki of the United Kingdom moderated the third discussion group on legal issues and law enforcement. In his summary, he identified five central themes the group had covered: the use of law; the value of statistics; police training; public opinion, and alternative approaches. He noted that there was a wide range of problems presented and no single answer or point of achievement, concluding that it was important not to view the law as an end in itself, but rather as part of a larger process. From the victim's perspective, for example, the law is often expensive and slow. Beyond the final sanction of law, communities should explore other options: codes of conduct; advice and help from non-governmental and community organizations, mediation and conciliation boards.

Many delegations, NGOs, and international organizations praised the work of the seminar in the closing plenary, emphasizing the utility of sharing experiences and forging contacts across boundaries, and expressing their satisfaction with the seminar format. As the German Head of Delegation stressed, however, the numerous ideas discussed and the momentum generated over the course of the week needed to be imbued with meaning through the cultivation of political will at the domestic level. The violent explosions of intolerance across the CSCE community, from Bosnia to Georgia to Nagorno-Karabakh, served as grim reminders of the challenges at hand.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE SEMINAR ON TOLERANCE

Much of the credit for the Seminar on Tolerance must go to the participants themselves. Many delegations, including the U.S., favored practitioners over diplomats -- experts with hands-on experience in promoting tolerance in the workplace, the school, and the community. Thanks in part to a grant provided by the U.S. Information Agency, delegates from Central Asia and the Caucasus also attended the seminar. Their comments injected a valuable degree of realism to the discussions, even as they highlighted the vast range of problems confronted by the CSCE community.

While the seminar represented an experiment for the CSCE, its outcome reflected well on what had been an American initiative. Numerous delegations commented on the frank, open, and even self-critical tone of the discussion; moving from prepared texts to spontaneous dialogue enhanced the relevance and improved the spirit of debate. The active participation of NGOs was impressive; their written and oral contributions added perspective and insight to the issues at hand. The flexible framework allowed participants to define the parameters of discussion; migrant workers, non-citizen residents of member States, and gay rights received unprecedented attention. And the CSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which had organized the seminar, demonstrated its competence and potential as a clearinghouse for assistance in democracy-building.

While delegates evidently left Warsaw with a feeling of accomplishment, the results of the Seminar on Tolerance remain difficult to quantify. As agreed in Helsinki, no concluding document was issued, although numerous reports, information packets, written statements and videos provided delegates with materials and ideas to carry home. Responsibility for ensuring that the energy and commitment tapped at the seminar not be lost ultimately fell to the participants themselves, who must promote the spirit of the seminar to capitals, institutions, and organizations at home, in order to generate follow-on activities of an individual, bilateral, or multinational character. The lack of a formal mechanism to track follow-up activities, however, complicates efforts to characterize the seminar's results.

It is tempting, perhaps, to belittle the seminar's lofty ambitions in view of the devastating acts of intolerance that daily continue throughout the CSCE community. In evaluating the seminar, however, it is important to recognize what it was not. It was not a reconciliation forum for bringing hostile parties to the table. It was not a mediation team empowered to resolve conflicts. It was not a one-time venture designed to solve problems over the course

of five short days. And it was not a high-profile political gathering, prepared to issue grand statements of intent or conclusion.

The CSCE Human Dimension Seminar on Tolerance was a first step in an ongoing effort to provide real actors at the national, regional, and local level with tools, ideas, and support for resolving the broad and difficult range of conflicts requiring tolerance. The seminar introduced participants to their counterparts across boundaries. It brought officials, experts, academics, and advocacy groups into open dialogue with one another. It broke new ground for the CSCE in terms of openness and frank discussion. And, as the Russian delegate emphasized in his closing remarks, in serving as part of the CSCE process, it underscored that the issue has implications for all of Europe. Indeed, West European and North American participants clearly profited from the discussion as much if not more than their Eastern colleagues.

V. FOLLOW-UP

One aim of the seminar was to identify needs and generate ideas for follow-up activities, either bilaterally or through the good offices of the ODIHR. A partial list of requests and topics raised at the seminar follows:

- teacher exchanges
- youth exchanges
- developing partnership programs among the business community, community groups, and local authorities
- dealing with violence in the community
- consequences of media bias against gypsies
- state control vs. public ownership of mass media
- reconstructing social and political science departments in former communist higher education systems
- creating a "Valuing Diversity" data bank, to include information and resources from all CSCE states on teacher training, multicultural and anti-racism education programs, curriculum review, policy development, bilingual education, needs of immigrants vs. needs of refugees, etc.
- developing mediation councils
- devising codes of conduct for the press, the police, teachers, etc.
- using theater, art, and sport to promote tolerance
- a CSCE seminar on building civil society and local democracy (a Romanian initiative, to be held in Romania in 1994)

VI. U.S. DELEGATION

The U.S. delegation to the Seminar on Tolerance was headed by Nancy Ely-Raphel, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. It included a variety of public members both from and outside the government, whose expertise in the

issues at hand were an important resource to the delegation and the seminar. The public members were:

- Ambassador J. Kenneth Blackwell, U.S. Representative to the UN Human Rights Commission (former Mayor of Cincinnati)
- Ray Clarke, President and Chief Executive Officer, Tucson Urban League
- Col. Ronald M. Joe, U.S. Army, Commandant, Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute
- Rabbi A. James Rudin, National Interreligious Affairs Director, American Jewish Committee
- Jesse Taylor, Regional Director, Region V, Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice

Members of the U.S. delegation to the CSCE in Vienna, as well as members of the Helsinki Commission staff also served on the delegation to the Seminar on Tolerance.