



# The Holy See

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***LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI  
TO MSGR. AGOSTINO CASAROLI FOR THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE  
ON THE EUROPEAN SECURITY\****

“In June 1975, We decided to lend our encouragement to an initiative which, inasmuch as it was to promote the highly desirable and inestimable boon of peace, was of great importance not only for the peoples of Europe but also for the entire family of nations. It was indeed in this spirit that We accepted the invitation addressed to the Holy See in order to participate directly in its own way in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the first stage of which took place in Helsinki in July of that same year.

“After the laborious negotiations in Geneva which lasted for nearly two years We are now entering the third stage with the signing of the Final Act at the level of the high representatives of these States; it will take place in Helsinki from July 50th to August 1st. We have decided to call on you to take part in it as Our special delegate.

“At the same time We request you to transmit Our greetings and express Our wishes to the high representatives of the participating countries and. to the other distinguished members of the delegations concerned, assuring them of the importance We attach to the work which has been accomplished and. to tell them that Our prayers and. hopes accompany the great expectations the Conference has raised so understandingly.

“This Conference, We might say, is taking place at a turning point in the long history of the European continent, a history which is of a singular nature indeed because of the richness of its human spirit as well as owing to the wealth of important events which it encompasses.

“This long and frequently tormented history, with the variety of unique contributions made by each of the nations of the continent, has given Europe an ideal heritage common to all its people. It is based essentially on the message of Christ announced to all the peoples who have accepted it and made it their own. Moreover, it contains the sacred values of faith in God and the inviolability

of conscience. In addition to this it includes the values of equality and human fraternity, of dignity, the quest for truth and individual and social justice, or as a rule of behaviour governing relations between citizens, institutions and States.

“It is this heritage, this unique indestructible heritage, to which we like to turn our thoughts as to a source of peace at a time when the representatives of the States of Europe, the United States of America and Canada forgather side by side in this beloved country of Finland. Having learned from the tragic experience of two dreadful wars which engulfed Europe in the space of 50 years, taking millions of victims, devastating vast and flourishing regions, and drawing many non-European peoples into fratricidal wars, these representatives now intend to achieve an understanding based on clear and firm principles of international law which would protect Europe and the world from the threat of new destruction and death which would be infinitely more terrifying. At the same time, they want to chart the course for the beginning of co—operation in various fields of human activities, in a limited fashion perhaps, but in a concrete one. They thus hope that in consolidating peace such co—operation will contribute to the intensification of exchanges of values which are the spiritual strength of Europe.

“The Papacy is vested with a universal spiritual mission, but at the same time it has its headquarters in Europe. This links it closely to the history of the continent, and this is why it cannot but wish ardently that this undertaking, true to the commitments which are going to be signed, will produce promising and tangible results. They include the recognition of the interdependence of security amongst States, contained in the commitment to the non—use of the threat of force; the peaceful settlement of disputes; the fulfilment in good faith of international obligations; the determination to develop reciprocal relations which are fair and friendly based on a respect for legitimate sovereignty and the rights of each country to human, political, cultural and social reality, as well as respect for the rights of peoples freely to determine their own institutions; the common interest in development of co—operation in economic, scientific, technological, social, cultural and humanitarian fields. All those would be enough evidence of the significance of the serious, delicate and difficult commitment which is to be the inspiration for the policies of the participating States.

“We use the word ‘States’, because they are the legal subjects of international relations, but We are much more concerned with the peoples who are the living realities of these States, their *raison d’être* and motivation for their action. These peoples, with different languages and traditions, which encompass Europe rather than divide it, look with great expectations at the solemn affirmations to which we are going to subscribe. There are hundreds of millions of men and women, young and old, who aspire to have increasingly peaceful, freer and more human relationships with each other; that is, they wish to benefit from peace in justice. While they no doubt expect to be reassured by the guarantee of security for each State, they are also encouraged by the reaffirmation of respect for the legitimate rights of man and his fundamental liberties. Among these rights, the Holy See is happy to see the specific emphasis placed on religious freedom, and it regards with equal interest the fact that such liberties will afford greater chances of protection, ensuring the human growth of

individuals, communities, migrants, ethnic groups, national minorities, and populations of all regions.

“Special consideration was rightly given to the possibility of facilitating the movements and contacts between persons and institutions or other bodies.

May those who can thus move more freely from one European country to another and meet each other always carry a living and convincing message of friendship and peace. May it be a symbol and guarantee of friendship and peace between their countries; peace in Europe and peace between Europe and the world as a whole.

Considering their historical responsibilities and those which are at present part of the international context, the countries of Europe and with them those of the United States and Canada declare that they are conscious of the close link between the peace and security of Europe and that of the world, with special consideration for the Mediterranean Basin. They also are conscious of their commitment to contribute in a spirit of true solidarity to the solution of the great problems of interdependence and co-operation which haunt the life of the international community.

These are the hopes, these are the desires, We formulate in the name of God, in the light of Our deep concern for peace and reconciliation between all peoples whose cause we have at heart.”

*25 July 1975.*

PAULUS PP. VI

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\*English version of CSCE: CSCE/III/PV.6 p15-21.

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