

July 23, 1975

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

The Soviet Union first proposed a European security conference on February 10, 1954, and periodically reiterated the proposal in subsequent years. It received little initial enthusiasm from Western and neutral nations, but following increased bilateral initiatives toward detente, a renewed Warsaw Pact appeal from Budapest on March 17, 1969 elicited a cautiously positive reaction from NATO. The United States and our NATO allies took the position that such a conference might serve a useful purpose, but only after concrete progress had been achieved on the most sensitive aspect of East-West confrontation in Europe, namely Berlin.

It was specified in successive NATO documents beginning in December 1969 that conclusion of a new Four-Power agreement on Berlin, aimed at effecting practical improvements in relations between the people on both sides of the wall and between Bonn and West Berlin, could lead to allied willingness to participate in a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The allies also increasingly emphasized the importance they attached to improving F.R.G. relations with the G.D.R., U.S.S.R., Poland and other Warsaw Pact countries. The Berlin Accord, signed September 3, 1971 took effect in June 1972 as did the F.R.G. -G.D.R. Basic Treaty normalizing relations between those two states. The Warsaw Pact countries agreed to commence exploratory talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) at Vienna beginning in January 1973. CSCE Multilateral Preparatory Talks thereupon opened at Helsinki in November 1972.

Stage I

Stage I of CSCE opened with a meeting of Foreign Ministers of 33 European states plus the United States and Canada at Helsinki from July 3 to 7, 1973. Ministers approved the "Final Recommendations" of the preparatory phase, which set the agenda and established mandates for committees and subcommittees during the Stage II negotiations.

Stage II

Stage II began September 18, 1973 in Geneva. Senior officials from the 35 participating countries met to work out an agreed final document organized under the four agenda items or "baskets:"

1. Questions relating to security in Europe;
2. Cooperation in the fields of economics, science and technology, and the environment;
3. Cooperation in strengthening human contacts, the exchange of information, and cultural and educational ties (the so-called "freer movement" issue); and
4. Post-conference follow-up arrangements.

Basket 1

Under the first agenda item, conference negotiators have produced a declaration of the following ten principles of interstate relations:

- Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty.
- Refraining from the threat or use of force.
- Inviolability of frontiers.
- Territorial integrity of states.
- Peaceful settlement of disputes.
- Non-intervention in internal affairs.
- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.
- Equal rights and self-determination of peoples.
- Cooperation among states.
- Fulfillment in good faith of international obligations.

The U. S. S. R. viewed this declaration as the central document of the conference. The Soviets were especially anxious to gain Western acceptance of an unambiguous principle on inviolability of frontiers by force. Western participants made clear, however, that their agreement to this precept would not constitute formal recognition of existing European frontiers or imply that present

borders are immutable. The Federal Republic of Germany, with the firm support of its NATO allies, insisted on a reference in the Declaration of Principles to the possibility of effecting border changes by peaceful means. The United States took an active role in negotiation of this key text on peaceful border changes, which is included in the principle of sovereign equality.

Also under agenda item 1, CSCE participants have negotiated limited military security measures designed to strengthen mutual trust and confidence. Specific texts were produced on two modest but significant "confidence-building measures:" prior notification of military maneuvers, and exchange of observers at those maneuvers. Adoption of these measures was urged by the smaller European countries.

Basket 2

Under agenda item 2, the Geneva talks produced a series of declarations, or resolutions, on economic, scientific and technological, and environmental cooperation. The United States did not pursue major economic policy objectives at CSCE preferring to leave them to such fora as the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. We took care to ensure that the CSCE texts would not conflict with the U.S. Trade Act of 1974. We hope the practical understandings in this area will broaden the scope of East-West exchanges, help reduce barriers to trade, and make a useful contribution to detente.

Basket 3

The third agenda item, "basket 3", deals with increased human contacts, flow of information, and cooperation in cultural and educational relations. This item was included on the CSCE agenda only as a result of energetic efforts by the United States, our allies, and the neutral states. At Geneva, agreement was reached on basket 3 texts dealing with such issues as family reunification, family visits, marriages between nationals of different states, the right to travel, access to printed as well as broadcast information, improved working conditions for journalists, and increased cultural and educational cooperation.

Basket 4

Under the fourth agenda item, the conference produced a text on post-CSCE "follow-up" arrangements. Debate focused on the degree of institutionalization and continuity to be accorded post-conference activities. The final compromise text provides for unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral actions designed to carry forward the work of the conference and monitor the implementation of agreed texts. A meeting of experts will be convened in the first half of 1977 to prepare for a gathering of senior officials later that year to review results of CSCE and plan for possible future meetings.

Special Topics

In addition to the primary East-West focus of the conference, a number of the smaller participants had special interests which were taken into account in evolving a CSCE consensus. Romania urged acknowledgment of the special status and needs of developing countries; and Malta, Cyprus and Yugoslavia requested consideration of the interests of non-participating Mediterranean states. Special consideration was given to the concerns of Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. In general, the smaller countries of Europe appreciated the opportunity CSCE gave them to participate in the detente dialogue.

Stage III

Stage III will be held at Helsinki from July 30 to August 1, 1975. The U. S. S. R. through Communist Party General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev requested that Stage III of CSCE be held at the summit level. The United States and its allies maintained that a final decision on the level of Stage III should come after achievement of satisfactory results in Stage II. In intense negotiations during June and early July, all substantive issues were resolved to the satisfaction of all participants and the date for Stage III agreed.

The CSCE final document resembles the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the UN Friendly Relations Declaration. Conference participants view the final document as a statement of political resolve or declaration of intent, not as an agreement legally binding upon governments. However, as a carefully negotiated text, solemnly signed by high-level representatives of the 35 nations involved, it generally will be seen as having considerable moral and political force.

CSCE is sometimes incorrectly compared to the 1815 Congress of Vienna that influenced the political order in Europe for much of the 19th Century, but it is a much more modest event. The results of the conference are but a step in the process of detente, raising the hope of further improvement in East-West relations. CSCE is also the beginning of a new approach to consultations on matters of importance by all European states. The extent to which CSCE agreements are implemented over time will be the true test for judging the success of this conference.

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