

Confidential Memorandum from
US - ambassador in Moscow
to State Department
about Helsinki
June '75

Soviet Policy After CSCE

Soviet Use of CSCE.

The Soviets can be expected to seize on the coincidence of a CSCE Summit with the 30th Anniversary of the end of World War II to proclaim final confirmation of the post-war settlement, which saw the establishment of their control over Eastern Europe. Basket Three, plus their position in Berlin and the GDR, should stop them short of equating the final CSCE instruments with a peace treaty, and this would be especially true if they are compelled to sign a single final document which puts Basket Three on a par with the ten Principles. But they will treat some elements of the Principles -- in particular territorial inviolability, which for them largely means political control of Eastern Europe -- as if they had the force of international law. The Soviets will also seek to use CSCE as legitimizing a greater Soviet presence in Western Europe, through trade union organizations, front groups, and ties with the European left, as well as through government-to-government contacts. Equally important, they will use the CSCE Summit to advertise the success of their detente policies to audiences in the USSR itself, in the West, and in the Communist movement.

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2.

Basket Three and a Tightening Within the Bloc.

Basket Three should have both active and passive specific benefits for the West, for example in making it harder for the Soviets to reintroduce radio jamming, in securing multiple entry/exit visas for journalists, and (more problematically) in facilitating marriages and family reunification. Moreover, even though Basket Three will be only a small piece in the large mosaic of East-West contacts, the long-term effects of the CSCE obligations should help to diminish Soviet nervousness about those contacts. However, in the near term we expect little positive effect from Basket Three in the area of human rights in the Soviet Union, and Soviet hard-liners are likely to seize on the CSCE language on contacts to step up domestic ideological efforts. In Eastern Europe the completion of CSCE is likely to intensify an already apparent Soviet-inspired ideological vigilance campaign designed to ward off the destabilizing consequences of the obligations on contacts. In sum, the completion of a Basket Three document is not likely in the short run to cause much, if any, net improvement within the bloc. As V. Shaposhnikov, a Deputy to CPSU Secretary Ponomarev in the Central Committee's International

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3.

Section, wrote in Pravda April 19, the post-CSCE period will require more rather than less "political vision and vigilance."

Military Detente.

What will they do for an encore? Since the Soviet treat CSCE as the capstone of the process of political detente, its impending conclusion will require another major theme to preserve the momentum and emphasize the infinite variety of their peace policy. In all probability the new theme will be military detente, which Soviet leaders are now routinely calling the appropriate follow-up to political detente. We would expect attempts to get a World Disarmament Conference going; perhaps to reinvigorate such stand-bys as nuclear-free zones, seas of peace, environmental modification, and military budget reduction; and possibly also to develop new proposals (e.g., on naval arms limitation). More solidly, the completion of CSCE should raise the Soviet stake in MBFR and increase their emphasis on SALT (though in SALT we would expect no appreciable increase in U.S. negotiating leverage).

Focus on the European Communist Conference.

CSCE gives the Soviets a launch-pad for summoning the European party leaders, since it completes and confirms the program of the last European Conference just eight years ago: inviolability of frontiers, recognition of the two German states, renunciation of the use of force, and of course achievement of a European Security Conference itself. The Soviets will hope to capitalize on momentum from the CSCE Summit to get

CONFIDENTIAL

an early convening of the East Berlin meeting; to have the correctness of their prescriptions for Europe proclaimed at it; to try to press their hegemonial ideas on the Romanians, the Yugoslavs, and the recalcitrants in Western Europe; and to clear the path to a world conference.

Next Stop Asia: Collective Security Hits the Road.

The Soviets have already drawn on the European parallel in asserting the desirability of an Asian security system. They will hope to improve the prospects for an Asian conference by pointing to the final success of the European one. They will be able to argue that the changed balance of forces in Southeast Asia makes an Asian conference even more timely.

Their basic aims remain unchanged: to have "their" Bandung and to transfer territorial inviolability to the Chinese context. Despite successes at CSCE, they would not expect immediate progress toward convening an Asian conference. The important thing for them is that they now have a new impetus for talking one up, for forcing Asian countries to deal with the issue, and thus for initiating a process which in itself increases their role in Asian politics.

Internal Effects of CSCE: Two Cheers for Brezhnev.

To the extent that a CSCE conclusion will affect the pre-Party Congress jockeying, it will help Brezhnev's position and policies. The Helsinki finale will enable Brezhnev to broadcast

the success of the operative part of the second plank in the peace program he outlined four years ago at the 24th Congress: "To ensure the convocation and success of an all-European conference." The price we will have to pay, unforeseen in 1971, is a modest Soviet obligation to permit greater East-West contacts at all levels. It is an obligation which in the short term will undoubtedly enhance the vocation and sustenance of Soviet ideologues and security organs.

Will the Soviets Meddle More After CSCE?

An uncompleted CSCE is probably a restraining factor on Soviet temptations to probe for advantages in tender spots like Portugal and the Middle East, and to exacerbate Western economic difficulties. Western leverage deriving from CSCE will diminish with the signing of the Helsinki documents. The West will retain some post-CSCE leverage stemming from the Soviet desire for economic contacts with it, but economic leverage is difficult to wield (as the imbroglio in the U.S. on most-favor-nation treatment proved, if any proof were needed) and in any case the Soviets probably believe they can avoid any serious effects by playing their Western economic partners off against each other. Thus, the fact needs to be faced that a post-CSCE climate will give the Soviets more scope for international meddling. Our preliminary speculation -- and we advance it cautiously -- is that there will still probably be enough restraining factors to prevent a significantly more venturesome Soviet policy. For example, in the Middle East, the Soviets are circumscribed by the area's own imperatives and by the dangers of confrontation within the United States; and active Soviet policy of weakening capitalist

economies would be biting hands that feed them; and a Communist and Sovietized Portugal could spur a rightwing swing in Europe and galvanize NATO in the central part of the continent where Soviet security interests are directly affected. Moreover, the success of Soviet post-CSCE policy will depend in part on the continuance of a climate of good feeling between East and West. Still it was not reassuring to read in Pravda and Izvestiya recently that detente is not inconsistent with Soviet support for the course of events in Portugal or in Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn (number 4) that the CSCE principle of sovereign equality works against repeated efforts from outside to impede the establishment and strengthening of new Socialist states.

A Balance Sheet.

Assuming that CSCE finishes successfully with a summer Summit, we would draw the balance sheet approximately as follows: On the minus side, the ending of CSCE will diminish a source of Western leverage and give some weight to those in the USSR who might be inclined to harry the West at points of weakness. It will probably make life rougher, at least in the near term, for people in the Soviet Union and for independent-minded politicians and citizens in Eastern Europe. And it will probably give impetus to a number of Soviet initiatives which we could do without, from Asian collective security to world disarmament. But it should also make it harder in the long run for the Soviets to justify a practice of limiting East-West contacts to carefully monitored official channels. It should reinforce some aspects of Soviet detente

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7.

policy which are important to the West, such as SALT and MBFR. And, more broadly, it should buttress the Soviet leadership in its belief that closer political ties with the West -- even with all their pitfalls for the Communist system of control -- remain a course worth pursuing.

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