

Now this is much less true. President Nixon has been to Moscow and Peking seeking to make a reality of his vision of an era of negotiation. Europe itself is changing. West Germany's *Ostpolitik* has unfrozen its relations with the socialist countries. The European Economic Community is enlarging its membership. In short, the climate has never been more favourable for a settlement of the issues that have divided Europe since 1945.

Traced to 1966

The current initiative for a European security conference can be traced to 1966. In March of that year, Mr. Brezhnev reported to the Twenty-third Congress of the Soviet Communist Party that the Central Committee proposed:

"To enter into negotiations on matters of European security. To discuss the existing proposals of the socialist and other states of Europe concerning a military *détente* and the reduction of armaments in Europe and the development of peaceful, mutually-advantageous ties among all European states. To convene an appropriate international conference for this purpose. To continue to seek ways for solving one of the cardinal tasks of European security — the peaceful settlement of the German question with a view to eliminating completely the vestiges of the Second World War in Europe on the basis of recognition of the now existing European frontiers, including those of the two German states."

Of course, Mr. Brezhnev was motivated by national self-interest. That is natural for a political leader. He wanted to get U.S. troops out of Europe and to bring about the disbandment of NATO, two traditional objectives of Soviet foreign policy. He may also have been anxious to secure his European flank in case of serious trouble with China.

This Soviet proposal was carried a step further at a meeting of the political consultative committee of the Warsaw Pact powers held in Bucharest in July 1966. The declaration issued at its conclusion listed a number of steps considered necessary to establish peace and security in Europe and it said:

"Convocation of a general European conference to discuss questions of ensuring security in Europe and organizing general European co-operation would be of great positive importance. The agreement reached at the conference would be expressed, for example, in the form of a general European declaration on co-operation for the maintenance and strengthening of European security. Such a declaration could

provide for an undertaking by the signatories to be guided in their relations by the interests of peace, to settle disputes by peaceful means only, to hold consultations and exchange information on questions of mutual interest and to contribute to all-round development of economic, scientific, technical and cultural relations. The declaration should be open to all interested states to join."

The next development was a meeting of leading Communist Party officials at Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, in 1967. It was attended by representatives of the Communist parties of some Western countries, but neither Romania nor Yugoslavia was represented. The declaration listed a number of requirements for security in Europe, among them:

Recognition of the inviolability of existing frontiers, particularly the Oder-Neisse Line and the borders between the two Germanies;

recognition of the existence of sovereign and equal German states;

exclusion of any opportunity for the FRG to gain access to nuclear arms;

liquidation of artificially-created barriers in economic relations;

conclusion of a treaty renouncing the use of force or threat of force in the relations between European states;

agreements or partial solutions in the sphere of disarmament.

Harmel study

Meanwhile, the North Atlantic alliance had decided to undertake an exercise in self-examination. In December 1967, Pierre Harmel, Belgium's Foreign Minister, had been asked to study the tasks of the alliance and the procedures for fulfilling them. His report, endorsed by the NATO Council's ministerial meeting in December 1967, said: "The ultimate political purpose of the alliance is to achieve a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe, accompanied by appropriate security guarantees."

This study had been undertaken because of a need within NATO. It was no sense a direct reaction to the proposal of the Warsaw Pact powers for a European security conference, although it obviously had an effect in weighing NATO's response to those proposals. It could be said that the Harmel study recognized the change in the function of alliances that had been defined by Zbigniew Brzezinski as follows: "In the past, they served to wage war; in our age, they deter war; tomorrow, they must shift collectively to the promotion of peace."

There were two obvious gaps in

Climate never more favourable for settlement of divisive issues

Soviet proposal carried further at mid-'66 session of Warsaw Pact