

to reach a consensus on a concluding document of any substance, and the final adoption, after weeks of wrangling, of a brief and eviscerated communique, tended to discredit the entire meeting in the eyes of the world. A comparative analysis of the rival drafts of the final statement clearly reveals the points at issue and the causes of deadlock. The original Soviet draft and its three later versions, each longer than the one before, all embodied a very positive appraisal of the Belgrade discussions and made no mention of sharp differences of opinion or criticisms of shortcomings in the implementation of Helsinki. The Soviet draft was also marked by what came to be called "the escape forward", i.e. an emphasis on positive proposals for future action in fields such as energy, transport and environment, and in disarmament. The draft referred to the ten Helsinki principles governing peace and security, and the necessity of "strict compliance", but made not a single mention of human rights, which constituted the most controversial topic during conference discussions.

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The Western draft, hammered out jointly by the members of the European Economic Community ("The Nine") and the wider grouping of NATO countries ("The Fifteen"), with the exception of France, was much longer and, though it recognized some progress, openly admitted failure to implement Helsinki, including the ten principles. It paid much attention to divergence of opinions, and placed great emphasis on human rights. It included many proposals for improving the procedures for carrying out the commitments of Helsinki in "Basket II" (on economic affairs), and "Basket III" (on human contacts), as well as the confidence-building measures of "Basket I" — especially the reporting of military manoeuvres. A much weaker statement by France was found inadequate by the Western powers, as well as by the "neutral and nonaligned" countries. A compromise, submitted by the latter as a "non-draft", approached Western ideas in its discussion of shortcomings and differences of opinion, and in its proposals for improved implementation of Helsinki, including its human-contacts provisions. Like the Soviet draft, however, it referred only to the need for compliance with the ten principles as a whole, and said nothing of human rights in particular.

The Western delegates eventually came to the reluctant conclusion that a brief communique, avoiding almost all contentious issues, was better than one that concealed the realities of the situation and omitted all references to human rights. As the London *Times* (February 21) said: "Bet-

ter an empty document than a bad one". A third alternative, the breakup of the conference without agreement, was rejected by the *Times* on the ground that it would have marked the end of Helsinki, closed the door on a future conference, and been a serious blow to *détente*. In the end the idea of a terse document, though opposed by some participants, such as Romania and Yugoslavia, prevailed, and a draft, three pages long, submitted in the name of Denmark, became the basis of a final conference statement approved unanimously. This document made only passing reference to the "different views" expressed on the degree of implementation, and the lack of consensus on a number of proposals, but confirmed the Final Act of Helsinki and the necessity of its implementation, and scheduled another meeting in Madrid in November 1980.

Endorsed

Most official observers, and many others, consider that the main achievement of Belgrade was the reassertion by all participants of their commitment to the Helsinki agreement and the endorsement of Helsinki's reference to "further meetings," beginning with one in Madrid. This commitment implied the possibility of a series of regular conferences of the European and North American states (except for Albania and Mexico), initiated in Geneva and Helsinki, and continuing, after Madrid, into the future. Such a series of meetings seemed to represent the gradual institutionalization of a "multilateral process" of European and North American exchanges of views on matters of common concern — something unique in the history of these two continents. This idea, which had been embodied in all the conference drafts, was accepted by the U.S.S.R. and was described in Soviet commentaries as one of the benefits of Belgrade.

This series of conferences is not as formally organized as, for example, the United Nations. The preparatory meeting, however, had adopted an agenda and procedures that assured the fullest exchange of views at Belgrade and were confirmed as the bases for the discussion of the "modalities" of Madrid at the next, briefer, preparatory meeting scheduled for September 1980. Madrid, and future meetings, will be restricted, it is true, to consideration of the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. These were, however, broad and numerous and, in the case of the general principles, elastic enough to justify the inclusion of many matters not specifically enumerated in other clauses, including human rights. Moreover, the exchange of views on the implementation of Helsinki conducted at