

Prospects for the Madrid CSCE

by D.C. Arnould

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan coupled with the new wave of measures against Soviet dissidents including, most prominently, the arrest of Dr. Andrei Sakharov in February, has understandably raised questions about the Madrid session of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) which is scheduled to take place in November 1980 as a follow-up to the Helsinki Final Act of August 1975.

People are asking if there is any point in holding the meeting? Can any positive results be expected or will it simply degenerate into a bout of mutual vituperation even more sterile than the Belgrade Meeting held in 1977-78? These are all valid questions and in looking for the answers one must go back to fundamentals and examine what the 35 Final Act signatory countries see in the CSCE process in the way of advantages and benefits. Of course, the 35 do not by any means see these considerations in the same way. They can be grouped, albeit reluctantly by some, into three categories: the Western allies, the Warsaw Pact and the neutral and non-aligned nations. Broadly speaking, each group has its particular interests, although there are important shades of opinion within each of them.

At the beginning of the process there was reluctance on the part of a number of Western countries to agree to holding the CSCE on grounds that it was essentially designed by the Soviet Union as a substitute for the elusive final treaties for the formal conclusion of the Second World War. It seemed to be a roundabout attempt to achieve the Soviet aim of validating its territorial and political gains in Eastern Europe. But the idea of accepting the status quo in Europe had its attractions for those who believed that a new relationship could be built on it. Viewed realistically, a change in the situation by anything more than a slow historical, evolutionary process can be excluded. The Western nations looked about to see what benefits they themselves could see as coming out of such a conference. The search was made in three major areas: political, economic and what was called human contacts and cultural exchanges.

It was found that there were attractive possibili-

ties in all three areas, notably the third, which could serve as a possible means of assisting in the movement of people caught on the wrong side of ethnic frontiers, family reunification, other types of emigration, the free flow of information and contacts of all types.

As the Helsinki process evolved, these three areas of interest developed momentum. It became apparent that among the neutral nations of Europe outside the two pacts and among the smaller East European countries as well as in the West, great importance came to be attached to a substantial result from the Conference. But no one foresaw the extraordinary spontaneous demonstrations of interest in the Final Act which arose within certain sectors of the public in virtually all the East European countries, and in the Soviet Union itself. While giving the Russians what they wanted in the form of a declaration that there would be no changing of frontiers by force, the political section of the Final Act also included a series of voluntary confidence building measures designed to take some of the tension out of military manoeuvres and troop movements. The measures included in the Final Act under this title were modest but a belief had grown up during the Conference that the drafting of the Final Act should not spell the end of the discussions. A dynamic process had been started in Helsinki upon which one could build over the years.

While some members envisaged a continuing process from the start, it was by no means a foregone conclusion at the beginning of the conference that this view would prevail. But little by little the idea gained acceptance. There were two main purposes for continuity in the process: review of implementation and new proposals. The first was of great value because the Final Act was not a legally binding instrument, but a moral undertaking. Such an undertaking on so great a scale had never been tried before. It seemed essential, as part of the process of examining whether such an ap-

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