

CSCE Review Conference

The Prime Minister said that President Giscard and she had agreed that in present circumstances it would be wrong to allow it to appear that the Madrid Conference had been a success. It might be that there would have to be no final communique. The West had to place its views on record about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and about the Soviet failure to implement the Helsinki Final Act. The French Government would proceed with its proposal about confidence building measures and would insist that the area of application should extend to the Urals. President Giscard said that his Government did not accept the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and was content to be seen to be active in this connection. But he was afraid of the workings of the diplomatic machine in Madrid. Diplomats always wanted agreement. The effect of a multilateral agreement on the continuation of detente would be, in the aftermath of Afghanistan and Poland, to make it look as though the West had been deceived by the Soviet Union. The Russians, for their part, would certainly seek agreement however confused and muddled the text incorporating any agreement might be. Therefore Western participants should think in terms of a detailed discussion; of registering advances where possible; but of making it plain that there would be difficulties in agreeing a joint communique so long as basic issues were unresolved.

M. Francois-Poncet said that he agreed that it would look very strange if, after the recent blows to detente, business was continued as usual. Clearly it must not be allowed to appear that willingness to talk implied agreement. However some countries would wish to see a result. The Nordic neutrals, for instance, would want an agreement at almost any price. Moreover there were specific points e.g., the proposed conference on energy, where agreement had virtually been reached already. There was also the question of the time and place of the next Review Conference. Failing a rendezvous, the whole process might come to a halt. But it would be important to hold on to the French plan for military detente; if this was maintained in full, it would guarantee that there would be no progress on the main issues. The Prime Minister said that she

agreed about the need to arrange a further meeting. The Review Conference seemed to her valuable as a forum for criticising Soviet shortcomings. But she agreed with President Giscard about the need to avoid a final agreement. The Lord Privy Seal thought this would be one of the best ways of avoiding any impression of "business as usual".

President Giscard said that he did not see how one could reconcile "kissing in Madrid" with a hard line on Afghanistan. He did not believe that the Russians would try to sabotage the Helsinki process by refusing a further conference. They needed the conferences for their own purposes. But a joint document at the end of the Madrid meeting would not be acceptable unless it contained real concessions. There seemed to be no prospect of such concessions being forthcoming. This need not be taken too tragically. After all, the Belgrade Review Conference, which had taken place in much more normal times, had been a failure.

President Giscard asked about the attitude of the German Government. Might they not be in favour of an agreement? M. Francois-Poncet said that the stakes were much higher for the West Germans. For them the relationship between the two Germanys might seem to be at issue. But his own assessment was that they would go along with their allies. They were very strong adherents of the French plan for military detente. President Giscard said that if the Russians refused to accept the French plan it would be a major propaganda point for the West. He did not think the Russians would accept. M. Francois-Poncet said that there had been no sign whatever that they would.

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