

EUROPEAN SECURITY CONFERENCE

Donald Brandon

President Nixon's call for an "era of negotiations" to replace an "era of confrontations" between the West and some Communist nations has been responded to with a vengeance. America and Russia are engaged in SALT and Middle East talks; a Big Four round of negotiations on Berlin is in progress; Bonn has signed accords with Moscow and Warsaw, and is continuing exploratory talks with Prague and Budapest; other Western nations have signed or are seeking to negotiate trade and other deals with the Soviet Union and East European countries. The logjam in Western-Communist Chinese relations has been broken by Canada and Italy, and America publicly moves toward a "two China" policy. The peace talks on Vietnam continue in Paris.

Moscow has sought for the last several years a so-called European security conference, and has consented to an American and Canadian presence at such an affair. In June, 1970, Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers met in Budapest and renewed their call for a "European Conference." They said in a communique that such a conference "would be essential for reaching a *détente*, consolidating security and extending cooperation." The Foreign Ministers suggested three questions to be considered at a conference between West and East: ensuring security via "the renunciation of the use or threat of force" in European relations; the expansion of "commercial, economic, scientific-technical and cultural relations" in order to develop "political cooperation" in Europe; and the establishment of "an organ for questions of security and cooperation in Europe."

NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Brussels in December, 1970, responded to the Warsaw Pact proposals by calling for a satisfactory agreement on Berlin prior to moving forward toward a European conference or conferences. The NATO countries want the Soviet Union—and East Germany—to guarantee unhindered Western access to West Berlin; improvements in opportunities for West Berliners to visit East Berlin and East Germany; and Soviet Bloc acceptance of existing ties between Bonn and West

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Berlin. The Western Foreign Ministers also stated that other "ongoing" East-West talks, especially SALT, must proceed "favorably" in order to make a European security conference possible. The NATO countries pointedly noted that the Brezhnev Doctrine is incompatible with genuine security and national integrity in Europe, and called for discussion of the subject of balanced and mutual reduction of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces. President Nixon pledged no unilateral cuts in American forces in NATO prior to 1972, and ten European members of NATO pledged to spend one billion dollars over the next five years above their regular contributions in order to strengthen various aspects of NATO's forces. Secretary of State Rogers and Secretary of Defense Laird said, after returning to Washington, that NATO intended to enter any European conference or conferences from a "position of strength."

A number of Western commentators have reminded us that the Soviet idea of a European security conference is, in Michel Tatu's words, "a retreat from the Cold War years." The last time Moscow broached this idea was in 1954. Stalin's successors were interested in blocking the proposed European Defense Community and West German rearmament. They were also trying to forestall progress toward West European political and economic integration. Today the possibility of British and other EFTA nations' entry into an expanded EEC confronts the Soviet Bloc, which now as in the past is hostile to Western strength and cohesion. The NATO decisions to reinforce the alliance's military posture were denounced by the Soviet press agency, Tass, as "dangerous for the cause of peace"—standard Soviet commentary on any and all Western efforts to maintain the balance of power.

The Soviet effort to obtain a European security conference has to be related to the Kremlin's view of the current world scene as well as to long-standing Russian objectives in Europe. Many Western observers have suggested that Moscow believes that Soviet power is on the rise while that of America is on the decline. The Nixon Administration is adjusting this country's priorities in the direction of a reduction of foreign policy efforts and a corresponding increase

in attention to America's many domestic ills. As Malcolm Mackintosh put it: "The Russians have reached what they regard as a state of strategic nuclear parity with the United States. And this basically stable strategic relationship with America provides them with an umbrella under which they can pursue a number of probes designed to expand Soviet political, military and economic influence and power all over the world and weaken the position of the United States."

Given this appraisal, it seems clear that Russia is not interested in genuine security and reconciliation in Europe. To the contrary, as Mackintosh has said, Moscow's basic aim is to "become the preponderant power in all of Europe"—both Western and Eastern Europe. Russia wants the West to emulate Bonn's example and agree to accept the *status quo* in Central Europe. Moscow also wants to obtain Western trade and loans to help the Kremlin and East Europe handle pressing economic problems. Moreover, Brezhnev and Kosygin want to convince West Europeans that there is no necessity for either integration of free Europe or concern over the state of the Western alliance. Russia seeks ultimately to separate America from Western Europe and to promote "Finlandization" of Western Europe, pending communization of that area at some later date. The effort to establish a "political organ" at a European conference is designed to pave the way for Soviet pre-eminence in the councils of Western as well as Eastern Europe.

Anthony Hartley, commenting on the present deterioration in American-Soviet relations, recently said, "President Nixon's administration is going through all the pangs of disillusionment over the ultimate intentions of Russian policy, and Mr. Brezhnev and his colleagues seem to have decided that toughness is the answer." Russia flagrantly cheated on the Middle East agreement; attempted some maneuver in Cuba which obviously irked Washington; flatly rejected the latest American offer on Vietnam; has so far been unbending on West Berlin (although Russia's eagerness for Bonn's ratification of the renunciation-of-force agreement and for a European conference may lead Moscow and East Berlin to make some modest concessions regarding that Western outpost); and has been sticky, to say the least, in the SALT talks.

Max Frankel and perhaps several thousand other old hands in the cold war have pointed out that the Nixon Administration's slogan of "an era of negotiations replacing an era of confrontations" is shallow

and worse. There have been, are now, and will be confrontations alongside negotiations between the West and the Soviets. Given the fact that Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger are also old hands, it is difficult to believe that they really are as disillusioned as some say, or that they have had very much confidence in the slogan about a new era in East-West relations.

The U.S. and NATO position taken in December, 1970, suggests that a healthy realism pervades the Nixon Administration, at least regarding U.S.-West European and Western-Soviet relations. In his "State of the World Message" of February, 1970, Nixon summed up this country's posture in Europe as embodying the "three principles of a durable peace: partnership (between America and Western Europe), continued strength to defend our common interests when challenged, and willingness to negotiate differences with adversaries." And in that document it is recognized that, "In the last analysis, progress does not depend on us and our allies alone. The prospects for durable agreement also involve the attitudes, interests and policies of the Soviet Union and their allies in Eastern Europe."

It is perhaps worth recalling that Chancellor Willy Brandt, as well as President Nixon, has underscored the connection between Western strength and cohesion on the one hand, and East-West negotiations on the other. In a recent speech to the West German Parliament, Brandt put it this way: "German policy . . . has not lost its balance. We have sought a better relationship with our neighbors in the East and we intend to keep on doing so . . . But by now the word should have got round that all our efforts to achieve *détente* with Eastern Europe (and the Soviet Union) have been launched from the solid basis of the Atlantic Alliance and the widening West European Community." Brandt has repeatedly warned against the sort of substantial and unilateral reduction of American NATO forces which Senator Mike Mansfield and others are proposing. The West German Chancellor shares the Nixon Administration's concern for negotiating from a "position of strength." He has also warned against great expectations of an early thaw in the cold war. The West need not fear a European security conference or any other negotiating forum with the Soviet Bloc. But it is necessary to bear in mind the persistent Soviet aims in Europe recalled in this essay. President Kennedy once aptly summed up the Russian approach as "what's mine is mine, and what's yours is negotiable." This attitude has not yet changed.