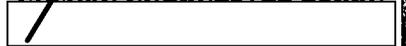


~~Secret~~



Soviet Objectives and Tactics at the Belgrade Conference

~~Secret~~

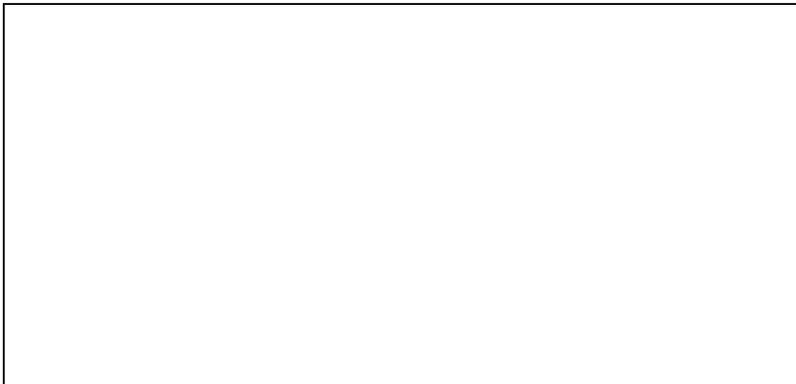
May 1977

Copy

126



NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal Sanctions



Classified by	
Exempt from General Declassification Schedule of E.O. 11652, exemption category: Sec. 58(1), (2), and (3)	
Automatically declassified on date impossible to determine	

Soviet Objectives and Tactics at the Belgrade Conference

*Central Intelligence Agency
Directorate of Intelligence*

May 1977

Summary

- Moscow is on the defensive as preparations for the Belgrade follow-up conference to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) get under way.
- The Soviets misjudged the impact of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki agreement in Eastern Europe and at home, where they credit the Helsinki agreement with contributing to their recent difficulties with dissidence.
- The Soviets are anxious to prevent further Western exploitation of their weakness in the area of human rights.
- Moscow is seeking to head off a renewal of the Western human rights campaign at Belgrade with preemptive diplomatic efforts employing both persuasion and pressure.
- If these efforts fail, the Soviets will be prepared to defend their record on human rights (Basket III) at Belgrade and to attack the Western record on implementation, focusing on areas such as racial discrimination and unemployment in the West.
- The Soviets can also be expected to arrive prepared with a full set of proposals in the general area of detente and security (Basket I) and economic, scientific, and technological cooperation (Basket II).

Soviet Objectives and Tactics at the Belgrade Conference

On June 15, representatives of the states that took part in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) will gather in Belgrade to prepare for the first follow-up meeting to the Helsinki conference. The Belgrade session—which is expected to last about six weeks—will determine the opening date, duration, agenda, and other modalities for the full meeting, which will take place in the fall.

Moscow is clearly on the defensive as preparations for the full Belgrade meeting get underway. Signs of this defensiveness are visible in the USSR's repeated warnings that the meeting must not be turned into a tribunal, and in earlier diplomatic hints that Moscow might move to postpone the conference.

Results of the Helsinki Conference

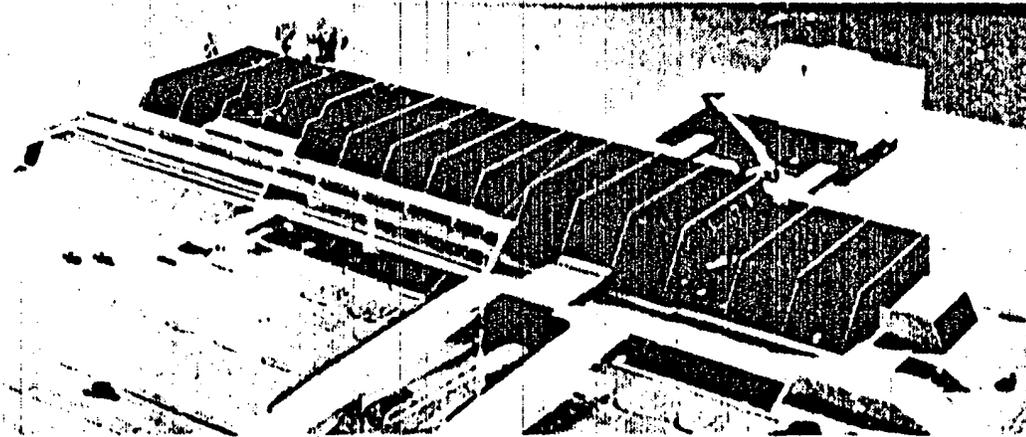
The present Soviet mood is markedly different from that with which the USSR entered the negotiations leading up to the CSCE summit in 1975. The Helsinki meeting represented the successful culmination of a long Soviet diplomatic offensive. The immediate origins of this campaign can be traced to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev's proposal for a European security conference at the Karlovy Vary conference of European Communist parties in April 1967. In its inspiration, however, it is even older, deriving from various Soviet proposals for an all-European collective security agreement current in the 1950s.

Moscow had high expectations for the conference. It was intended to produce a surrogate for a European peace treaty, a document which would contain full and binding Western recognition of the postwar borders in Europe and of the territorial and ideological dividing lines between East and West. Beyond this, the Soviets intended to use the conference to win acceptance of the idea that the Soviet Union had a legitimate right to participate in the resolution of "all-European" issues—that is, a right to be heard in the councils of Western Europe as well as those of the East. Finally, Moscow hoped to use the conference to establish a pattern of bilateral and multilateral economic and technological cooperation which would facilitate the USSR's access to the coveted technology of the West.

The Final Act of the CSCE satisfied all these objectives, at least in part. The signatory states pledged to recognize the existing borders as inviolable and to refrain from interference in the internal affairs of any other signatory state. The accord contained a lengthy list of recommendations intended to

promote economic and technological cooperation of the sort desired by the Soviets. Finally, although the Final Act did not provide for the permanent institutional structure that the Soviets had originally wanted, it did provide for a series of follow-up conferences that the Soviets could hope to use to make their voice heard in Western Europe.

Moscow has no such expectations for the Belgrade meeting. To the contrary, it finds itself on the defensive. It faces a situation in which it can at best reap only modest gains, but at the risk of taking a severe propaganda beating, and in the process further souring East-West relations.



The conference will be held in the new Belgrade Congress Center, shown here as an architectural model.

Sources of Moscow's Present Difficulties

Moscow's present difficulties stem from its failure to assess accurately the significance of the concessions it made to attain its ends at Helsinki. The Soviets gave ground on two fronts: in accepting a number of measures providing for prior notification and observation of major military maneuvers—the so-called confidence building measures (CBMs)—and in accepting the various human rights guarantees contained in Basket III and Principle 7 of the Final Act.

It is the concessions in the latter area which have proved most troubling for Moscow. In Principle 7, the Communist states pledged themselves to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms," including the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, and belief. Moreover, they promised to "promote and encourage" the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural freedoms essential for "the free and full development" of the individual. In Basket III, they expressed their "intention" to facilitate specific forms of

contact between individuals. These included family visits, the reunification of families, marriage between individuals of different nationalities, and personal and professional travel.

Against the expectations of many Western—and presumably Soviet—observers, these pledges have not proved to be a dead letter in Eastern Europe. They have been seized upon by dissident individuals and groups throughout Eastern Europe—particularly in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia—and in the Soviet Union itself. These groups have differing objectives which reflect local circumstances, but they share a willingness to demand that their governments live up to the obligations that they assumed at Helsinki. At the same time, the ability of these governments to repress dissidence through coercive means is hampered by the spotlight of publicity thrown on their actions by the Helsinki accord and by their knowledge that draconian actions could undermine Western support for detente.

Moreover, there is evidence that, at least in Moscow, the unrest to which the Helsinki accords have contributed is viewed as much more than a minor irritant. In addition to indications of concern over the situation in Eastern Europe—particularly in Poland—[redacted] reports that in February the Soviet leadership was worried about the implications of the "human rights" issue for the Soviet Union. According [redacted] the Soviets feared that any relaxation of the restrictions upon dissidents could give rise to a wave of criticism which could create an explosive atmosphere in the USSR.

It is undoubtedly this perception of vulnerability to pressure from within—however much it may exaggerate the reality of the threat—which underlies Moscow's sensitivity to criticism from without. It is this sensitivity, in turn, which is responsible for the strikingly defensive cast of Soviet diplomacy as the June 15 opening of the preliminary phase of the Belgrade conference draws closer.

Soviets Hope to Defuse Human Rights Issue

Moscow's main objective at Belgrade will be to forestall or limit criticism of its failure to implement the human rights clauses of the Helsinki accord and to prevent any expansion of the Final Act's provisions for facilitating the exchange of people and ideas in Europe. This objective takes precedence over any hope for gain which the Soviets may entertain through the consideration of proposals for political or economic cooperation which they find more to their liking.

The present emphasis is revealed by the fact that Soviet diplomatic efforts to date have been devoted to telling Western interlocutors what the Belgrade meeting should *not* consider, rather than what it should do. Soviet diplomats making the rounds of Western capitals in the past few weeks have all carried essentially the same message: the Belgrade meeting must not be turned into a "tribunal" which would pass judgment on how the signatories have carried out the provisions of the Final Act. To do so, they warn, would risk precipitating a "confrontation" which would frustrate the purposes of the conference, and could even revive the tensions of the Cold War.

The Soviets have pitched their message to suit different audiences. They have warned some—like [redacted] of their unwillingness to tolerate "interference" in their internal affairs at Belgrade. Others—like [redacted] have been cautioned against permitting the Americans to "dictate" the shape of the conference and obscure the "real" issues with others of "secondary" importance.

In still other instances, they apparently have resorted to threats and arm-twisting to make their point. According to [redacted] the Austrians have been repeatedly reminded of how essential it is for Austria to maintain good relations with the Communist countries, and warned that the adoption of a "negative" stance on issues of interest to the Soviet Union—particularly human rights—would have a detrimental effect on these relations.

Moscow's efforts are aimed at heading off criticism of the Soviet performance in implementation of the Final Act *before* the convening of the Belgrade meeting. Even if they cannot realistically expect to block all such criticism, they can hope to promote divisions between Western governments over how far to press the human rights issue.

The Soviets can be expected to accompany their diplomatic campaign with efforts to cripple the dissident movement before the beginning of the Belgrade meeting. The approach of the meeting at least partly accounts for the campaign of intensified arrests, harassment, and exile of leading dissidents which has virtually decapitated the Soviet human rights movement since the beginning of the year.

There are also unconfirmed reports that the Soviets in recent meetings have pressed their Eastern European allies to stifle their own dissidents. The Soviets presumably favor carefully graduated measures which would minimize the risk of a popular backlash and unfavorable Western press attention.

This line will be difficult to apply, however, particularly in Poland. An active dissident movement exists there in an unusually volatile political atmosphere. Any effort at repression stringent enough to seriously damage the Polish dissident movement would risk touching off an explosion that could destroy both Eastern and Western plans for the Belgrade meeting. The dangers involved are not lost on the Polish Government, which has launched no major action against its dissidents, despite reported Czechoslovak and Soviet expressions of unhappiness about the internal situation in Poland.

It is unlikely that the Soviets assume their efforts will fully defuse the human rights issue before the Belgrade session opens on June 15. They can therefore be expected to come to the preparatory meeting armed with organizational proposals that will help protect Moscow from attack on these points.

Organizational Objectives

The Soviets have already signaled their organizational objectives. Almost certainly they will push for a meeting of limited duration and one confined largely to generalities. They have insisted that the Belgrade meeting cannot entertain any proposals that would modify the Helsinki accord in any way. They are especially intent on heading off Western efforts to expand upon the human rights guarantees contained in the Helsinki agreement. Accordingly, their preference will be for a short agenda, and one emphasizing principles above specifics.

In their preliminary diplomatic spadework, the Soviets have stressed the importance of arriving in Belgrade with a "positive political concept." They have not spelled out what they have in mind, but presumably they are thinking of a generalized reaffirmation of detente and East-West cooperation. They would no doubt be quite satisfied if the principal achievement of the Belgrade meeting were a general agreement to settle for this.

If they cannot prevent a review of implementation, they will push for closed-door sessions and for strict limitations on discussion. Their record is wanting both in regard to the human rights and informational questions covered in Basket III, and in facilitating the commercial procedures and exchanges of scientific, technical, and economic information provided for in Basket II. They will resist being held to account on these points, and have made clear their opposition to any "line-by-line" review of implementation.

They will continue to insist that Basket III cannot be singled out for attention, and that all parts of the Helsinki accord must be treated "equally." Beyond this, the Soviets will insist that the conferees should look forward rather than backward.

Soviets Prepared To Counterattack

If all their efforts to shunt aside Basket III issues prove unavailing, the Soviets will be prepared to defend their record in implementation and attack those of their critics. To accomplish this, they presumably will rely on the statistical data they have already developed to defend their record. These statistics are heavily weighted in favor of such categories as number of book titles translated and published, films imported, and so on. These are all categories in which the Soviets have an undeniable advantage over the West, where the tastes of the consumer impose a distinct limitation on the ability of the market to absorb the products of Soviet culture.

If pressed into an exchange, they probably would concentrate on such Western policies as the West German bars to employment of Communists in government and American visa and immigration restrictions.

They may arrive in Belgrade prepared to attack the US record on race relations as a violation of the Helsinki agreement. Criticism of racism in the US has become an increasingly popular theme in Soviet propaganda. Cases such as the "Wilmington 10"—a group convicted of arson in North Carolina—have been specifically mentioned and may be brought up in Belgrade.

It is also likely that they will argue that the West has failed to live up to the economic provisions of Basket II, citing such omissions as the American failure to grant most favored nation treatment to the USSR and alleged restrictions on the establishment of Soviet commercial establishments in the West. They can also be expected to dwell on those "social rights"—such as the right to education and employment—which they charge are neglected in the West but guaranteed under their system.

Nevertheless, the Soviets would prefer to avoid such exchanges—in which they are likely to come out second-best—by diverting the attention of the conferees to the consideration of more "positive" matters. By this they mean proposals that fit loosely into the categories of Baskets I and II, which the Soviets see as being in their interest. These include measures designed to promote political and military detente in Europe, as well as

measures designed to facilitate economic, technical, and scientific cooperation. The Soviets have developed a lengthy list of suggestions in both categories, and may come up with still more before the June meeting.

Possible Basket I Proposals

Among the likely Soviet security proposals are the proposals for agreements to refrain from the first use of nuclear weapons in a European conflict and to prohibit the admission of new members to NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Both were put forward at the Warsaw Pact summit in Bucharest in November 1976 and were communicated to the Western signatories of the Helsinki agreement. Both are heavily weighted to the Soviet advantage. The former would nullify the edge in tactical nuclear weapons which the West enjoys in Europe, and the latter would bar Spanish accession to NATO.

Both were rejected at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in December, but the Soviets have persisted in bringing up the non-first-use proposal. They have repeatedly urged Western capitals to reconsider the proposal on the grounds that their initial rejection was hasty and ill-considered. It seems likely that the proposal will appear before the Belgrade conference in some form.

There are other possibilities. The Finns, who in the past have been well attuned to Soviet thinking on CSCE, have suggested that mutual force reductions will probably be raised at Belgrade in some form. There is a possibility that the Soviets may choose to permit the East Europeans to introduce this subject. The Romanians have broached the idea of a 5- to 10-percent cut in military forces stationed in Europe. This is an idea which they claim as their own and which they contend would not affect the force reduction negotiations in Vienna because the cuts involved are too "small" to be significant. However, it closely resembles the basic Soviet position, which is to push for reductions that would preserve the existing balance—one that is favorable for Moscow. Moreover, the cuts involved would be more than symbolic.

The Soviets may also propose that the conferees at Belgrade address themselves to the Cyprus problem. The idea that a resolution of this problem is essential to reduce European tensions has surfaced sporadically in the remarks of Soviet officials. Foreign Minister Gromyko told the Turkish foreign minister in March, for example, that the decisions of the CSCE made it "obligatory" to take steps toward resolving the Cyprus problem.

Moscow and Basket II

The Soviets will also be well prepared to talk about Basket II issues. The proposals for all-European conferences on energy, transportation, and the environment advanced by Brezhnev at the Polish Party Congress in December 1975 are likely to be reiterated. Even though the Soviets acquiesced to the Western demand that these topics be considered by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its mid-April meeting rather than be the subject of special conferences, it seems highly unlikely that they would refrain from bringing them up at Belgrade. This is all the more probable as the proposal for a conference on the environment has aroused some interest in Western Europe. Another possible subject of Soviet attention at Belgrade will be the proposal made in February 1976 by the Council for Economic and Mutual Assistance to establish formal relations with the European Community.

Beyond this, the Soviets are likely to advance a number of proposals aimed at eliminating alleged economic discrimination against them in Western Europe and the US. The Finns have indicated that the East Europeans are unhappy about continuing vestiges of "economic discrimination" and the lack of any progress of extending most favored nation treatment. In better times, Moscow probably would have considered progress on some or all of these proposals as sufficient justification for the conference. The climate has changed, however, and Moscow now sees these proposals primarily as a means of deflecting the conference from consideration of Basket III issues.

Other Possibilities

Soviet attempts to shift the focus away from Basket III are reflected in Moscow's hints that it might consider improvements in areas in which it previously had no interest. The most conspicuous example of this apparent change in Moscow's diplomatic posture—if not in its actual attitudes—concerns confidence building measures. Although the Soviets resolutely opposed such measures at Helsinki, they now have hinted at least once that they might be prepared to consider some improvements in procedures for the notification of military maneuvers. Similarly, the Soviets have indicated interest in the Swiss proposal for the peaceful arbitration of disputes in Europe, which failed to arouse their enthusiasm when it was originally advanced at Helsinki.

There is also a good possibility that the Soviets may attempt to disarm Western critics by proposing a ban on "inflammatory" propaganda—in all likelihood focusing on Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. If so, they

would no doubt cite the Final Act's prohibition of intervention, "direct or indirect," in the affairs of other signatory states. Moscow has repeatedly made clear that it regards foreign criticism of its handling of internal matters as impermissible interference and an incitement to subversion.

As matters now stand, the Soviets are unlikely, at least initially, to introduce any of these proposals for the direct consideration of the conferees at Belgrade. To do so would open the way for Western counterproposals on Basket III, and this is something which they are most anxious to avoid. They have firmly insisted that new proposals are completely out of order at Belgrade. Presumably they would prefer to suggest other means of handling these questions, such as the establishment of specialized working groups to consider these questions after the conference.

After Belgrade?

The Soviets have been deliberately vague on the question of a follow-up to the fall conference. They have stated that they will develop their position on the basis of the results and atmosphere at Belgrade. There seems little reason to question their reluctance to submit themselves to the uncertainties of another open-ended conference if their situation remains as difficult as it is now. There is always the possibility, however, that they may succeed in mastering dissidence within the bloc, or that significant differences may develop in the Western camp, in which case their attitudes could change.

It must be emphasized that this analysis is necessarily short range. Moscow's strategy and tactics are largely reactive. As such, they are subject to quick shifts to meet significant changes in the underlying situation. For example, serious disturbances in Eastern Europe would force the Soviets to reconsider their attendance at Belgrade. Soviet officials raised the possibility of postponement earlier this year when their anxiety about developments in Eastern Europe was apparently greater than it is now and while they were reacting to the criticism of the new administration in Washington.

Even without such major developments, the Soviet delegation at Belgrade will inevitably find itself having to react to Western strategy and tactics. Since the US delegation will be emphasizing the need to review implementation—a course most distasteful to Moscow—the odds are that the Soviet delegation anticipates rough going during its stay in Belgrade.

~~SECRET~~



~~SECRET~~

~~Secret~~

~~Secret~~