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Cheddi Jagan and the Guianese Sugar Workers’ Strike of 1964

The foundation for Vienna: A reassessment of the CSCE in the mid-1980s

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This article analyses the interim Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) interim meetings held from 1984 to 1986 in Stockholm, Ottawa, Budapest, and Bern and reassesses previous characterisations of this period as one of stagnation in the CSCE. It demonstrates that the significant groundwork laid at these meetings later manifested itself during the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting. The two most important shifts in the CSCE during these years were an increased Western and neutral emphasis on compliance with existing CSCE agreements at the expense of achieving new concluding documents and a slow evolution in Soviet thinking on its role in the Helsinki process.

Historians increasingly are examining the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the long-term significance of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), yet many important elements of the Helsinki process remain unstudied. Although there is abundant scholarship demonstrating the significance of the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting (1986–89) as a clear turning point in the Helsinki process, the CSCE meetings between 1984 and 1986 have largely been overlooked or considered unsuccessful because all but one ended without a substantive concluding document.
Closer analysis of these meetings, however, suggests the lack of concluding documents was the result of a deliberate strategy by the United States, and at times its allies, to focus on insufficient compliance with previous agreements rather than to release new texts that could create a false impression of Eastern European progress. Additionally, despite seemingly unchanged public stances by Soviet and Eastern European diplomats, Mikhail Gorbachev’s reform efforts, which came to fruition during the Vienna Review Meeting, took root in the preceding period.

The interim meetings agreed to at the Madrid CSCE Review Meeting (1980–1983), and in particular those that would address human rights and human contacts, resulted in part from increased American activism in the Helsinki process. The Nixon and Ford administrations had not regarded the CSCE negotiations that produced the Helsinki Final Act as having much significance. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger supported United States participation in the talks only to avoid damaging Soviet-American détente, as the Soviets were the main proponents of the agreement, and to prevent dissent within the Atlantic alliance given Western European interest in the CSCE. Ford signed the agreement on 1 August 1975 and spent the remainder of his short presidency defending the decision in the face of considerable domestic criticism. Both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan criticised Ford’s signature during their 1976 election campaigns, but each shifted their position once in office, transforming the United States into a key player in all of the CSCE meetings that followed. The assertive American approach during the CSCE Belgrade Follow-up Meeting (1977–78) fit with Carter’s emphasis on human rights in United States foreign policy. Surprisingly, United States activism within the CSCE and strong advocacy for implementation of the Act’s human rights and human contacts provisions continued in the Reagan years despite his earlier scepticism. During the Madrid Meeting, the United States, together with its allies, worked not only to highlight human rights violations but also to press for concrete examples of compliance as opposed to new agreements that Eastern European leaders would never implement. To this end, Max Kampelman, the United States ambassador to the Madrid Meeting, emphasised the need for the Soviet Union and its allies to make specific improvements in order for the United States to agree to include a mandate for a meeting on security and disarmament issues in the concluding document.

The relatively ambitious agenda of six interim meetings scheduled to be held between 1984 and 1986 were agreed to as part of the concluding document of the Madrid Meeting. Western states, in particular Canada and the United States, pressed for and secured one meeting in Ottawa on human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as one in Bern on human contacts in exchange for agreeing to a conference on confidence and security building measures (CSBMs). The increased number of meetings reflected the desire among the Madrid delegates to reinvigorate the CSCE after the Belgrade Meeting had ended with a document of little substance and tense East–West relations raised concerns about the longevity and efficacy of the process. The range of issues CSCE delegates were set to debate at the six interim meetings after Madrid meant that the CSCE would continue as a forum for broad East–West discussions and, diplomats hoped, possibly offer opportunities for improved
relations. Such hopes remained unfulfilled as American–Soviet relations were complicated by a range of issues in these years, including the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, Poland’s imposition of martial law in 1981, the Soviet downing of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983, the repressive nature of the Soviet regime, a continuing arms race, Reagan’s anti-communist rhetoric, and the lack of a stable negotiating partner in the Kremlin.

The perceived failure of the 1985 Ottawa and 1986 Bern meetings, however, led many observers at the time to argue that the paucity of clear results from the interim meetings raised questions about the efficacy of the Helsinki process. The few scholars who have subsequently analysed the Helsinki process between the close of the Madrid CSCE Review Meeting in 1983 and the opening of the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting in November 1986 have offered divergent appraisals. One observer echoed popular consensus, describing the time as one of ‘parallel monologues’ in which each side pursued its own interests and made little progress on bridging the East–West divide. Others have evaluated the period more positively, suggesting the meetings between Madrid and Vienna facilitated the continuation of the Helsinki process by offering regular forums to address monitoring and review implementation.

Analysing the three years of interim meetings in isolation does not allow for a complete evaluation of the meetings’ importance. Instead, one must consider the period in the context of the review meeting that followed as the Vienna Meeting led to significantly improved human rights practices in Eastern Europe and a substantive concluding document. Given the considerable achievements of Vienna, the popular characterisation of the years from 1984 to 1986 as an unproductive period of stagnation in the Helsinki process needs reassessment, since two trends essential to later progress at Vienna developed in these years and contributed to the Vienna Meeting’s success. First, the United States advocated for increased Western and neutral emphasis on compliance with existing CSCE agreements rather than negotiating new formulations. Second, though the full degree of evolution was not clear until later, Soviet leaders such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Anatoly Chernyaev rethought the Soviet Union’s role in the Helsinki process in response to developments at CSCE meetings such as those in Stockholm and Ottawa. Thus the years from 1984 to 1986 should be seen as a time of greater communication and negotiation than the ‘parallel monologues’ characterisation might suggest. Furthermore, the meetings held significance beyond merely acting as forums for regular discussions as they served as incubators of new Western, neutral, and Eastern strategies toward the CSCE.

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The Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE) opened in Stockholm on 14 January 1984, at a time of political paralysis in the Soviet Union due to General Secretary Yuri Andropov’s ill health and in the context of heightened East–West tension over North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deployment of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces in Europe. The Stockholm Conference was charged with discussing ‘the negotiation and adoption
of a set of mutually complementary confidence- and security-building measures designed to reduce the risk of military confrontation in Europe.\(^{11}\)

Relatively quickly, the NATO states made an initial proposal with respect to CSBMs; the package included proposals for exchanging military information, developing an annual calendar of military activities, providing notification of military actions, allowing observers at military exercises, verifying such measures, and improving interaction among the parties to foster confidence.\(^{12}\) The NATO proposal indicated the allies were unified in their approach to the meeting, but its distance from Eastern European thinking foretold the years of negotiations that would follow.

Soviet diplomats pursued a range of tactics to regain the initiative from NATO in the Stockholm discussions, including seizing control of the pace of the talks by slowing them considerably. The Soviets took a year and a half to offer a substantive proposal of their own, though infirm leadership, as General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko was ill for most of his time in office after succeeding Andropov in February 1984, may have also contributed to the delay.\(^{13}\) The Warsaw Pact states disagreed with the Western interpretation of the nature of CSBMs and eventually countered with a proposal regarding ‘non-use of force’, ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons, military budget reductions, the elimination of chemical weapons, and the creation of nuclear-free zones in Europe.\(^{14}\) Though the United States did not necessarily oppose these measures per se, it viewed the Soviet proposal as neglecting the fundamental underlying problem of mutual distrust that characterised the Cold War. Nevertheless, in an effort to facilitate progress at Stockholm, United States President Ronald Reagan offered in a 4 June 1984 speech to consider the Soviet non-use of force proposal; the Soviets did not respond to his efforts, highlighting the lack of productive dialogue between the two sides.\(^{15}\)

The most significant and contentious issue throughout the Stockholm negotiations was the Western requirement that the CSBMs be ‘verifiable’, which was consistent with Reagan’s long-held concerns about Soviet willingness to adhere to agreements; Reagan was fond of quoting the Russian proverb, ‘trust, but verify’. Given the secretive nature of the Soviet regime, especially on military matters, the USSR strongly opposed on-site inspections and, Soviet negotiators claimed repeatedly that the United States and the West were using the Stockholm negotiations to gain ‘unilateral advantages’.\(^{16}\) Soviet delegates were dissatisfied with what they perceived to be an imbalance in the territory to which conference decisions would apply because the conference’s mandate addressed forces based in Europe, exempting a significant percentage of American and Canadian militaries. The Soviets opposed the idea that the United States could visit the Soviet Union for inspections but that the USSR could not reciprocate.\(^{17}\) Similarly, the Soviets expressed frustration with the emphasis at Stockholm on land-based forces, seeing that as another advantage to the United States as most of its naval and air forces would not be subject to the Stockholm provisions since they were based largely outside of Europe.\(^{18}\) The Soviets’ attempts to shift the focus of the negotiations to their advantage, such as resurrecting older ‘non-use of force’ proposals, prompted a few observers to allege that the Soviets were trying to rewrite earlier CSCE meetings and finally hold their long-sought European Security Conference (ESC) in Stockholm.\(^{19}\)
The United States was opposed to such efforts at revisionism and engaged in its own campaign to ensure the Stockholm deliberations advanced its CSCE objectives. To that end, United States Delegation Chief James Goodby and Secretary of State George Shultz emphasised that the Stockholm negotiations could not be separated from the human rights aspects of the Helsinki Final Act. Indeed, the United States made repeated efforts to maintain connections between human rights and security issues at Stockholm, where Goodby said the United States believed ‘that human rights, peace and security are inseparable and that it is only on this basis that the spirit of the Helsinki accords truly can be realized’. American efforts to draw links between the Stockholm Conference and broader CSCE issues began during the opening session when Shultz raised missing Swedish citizen Raoul Wallenberg’s ‘active and selfless dedication to the cause of peace and human rights’. In a number of instances, the United States addressed human rights or human contacts issues that were outside the scope of the conference mandate. Western and neutral discussion of human rights violations at Stockholm undermined what Goodby regarded as a key motivation for Soviet involvement in the CDE: to limit discussion of the human rights aspects of the CSCE. After months during which the plight of exiled Soviet human rights activist Andrei Sakharov hung over the Stockholm Conference, Goodby directly addressed his case in a plenary statement, drawing links between confidence building within the context of the Stockholm Meeting and other areas of Helsinki compliance. At Stockholm and throughout the CSCE process, United States negotiators emphasized that Soviet respect for human rights and all provisions of the Helsinki Final Act was necessary to achieve a greater degree of security and cooperation in Europe.

The 1985 Ottawa Experts Meeting, which was held concurrently with the stalled Stockholm meeting and focused solely on human rights, offered the first opportunity to discuss the issue and review Eastern European compliance after Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power. The Ottawa Meeting was charged with examining ‘questions concerning respect, in their States, for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in all their aspects, as embodied in the Final Act’ and also provided the United States an additional forum in which to press its emphasis on compliance with existing CSCE agreements. When the meeting opened in May 1985, Western states submitted proposals that addressed the plight of Helsinki monitors, religious freedom, legal observers, trade union rights, freedom of movement, torture, psychiatric abuses, and the conditions of political prisoners. In contrast, Eastern states tried to shift the debate by introducing numerous proposals on access to better health care, combating homelessness, and freedom from hunger. In addition, the Soviets launched their first human rights assault against the West at Ottawa, focusing on social and economic problems that they considered abuses of human rights. Importantly, the Soviet tactic tacitly conceded that one CSCE state could comment on the human rights situation of another, belying long-time Soviet opposition to discussion of human rights practices as interference in its internal affairs.

The stark differences between the Eastern and Western proposals were shaped by the CSCE delegates’ different ideologies and political systems. Western states emphasised...
political rights in part because they saw those as most essential and concomitantly most lacking in the East, but also as the result of their views on the role of the government in society, namely that democracies could not legislate the end of social ills. Eastern European states, however, claimed to have achieved such perceived social goals and wanted to draw contrasts with Western failures. Most importantly, Eastern governments were unwilling to support Western-desired political freedoms, believing such rights would undermine the stability of their system. Given this reluctance, Eastern diplomats tried to obscure their unwillingness to compromise with the West by introducing an increasing number of proposals. According to one observer, ‘The Eastern delegations tried to match the Western proposals, if not in substance at least in quantity’.30

NATO states focused on the lack of substance within the East’s proposals, as they had agreed among themselves to accept only a substantive concluding document.31 The shift within NATO to emphasising the content of the agreement as opposed to valuing any agreement with the East as evidence of relaxing tensions in Europe marked an important change for East–West relations as well as intra-alliance unity.32 In the view of Richard Schifter, who headed the United States delegation in Ottawa, failing to reach a concluding document was the most effective way to demonstrate the lack of Soviet progress. As an outgrowth of this new emphasis, the United States began to adopt the position that reaching agreements was no longer as significant as achieving compliance with previously negotiated documents, leading the United States to be hesitant about making new commitments. In the end, no agreements on human rights were reached at Ottawa, and it became the first CSCE meeting to adjourn without any concluding document.33 In the recriminations that followed, Soviet press accounts blamed ‘the obstructionist stand taken by the NATO countries led by the United States’ for failing to produce a concluding document.34 The United States, of course, attributed fault to the East; in his closing statement at Ottawa, Schifter declared a ‘gap between commitment and conduct’ had characterised the meeting.35

Observers, both at the time and in later years, have disagreed as to the extent that a lack of concluding document meant that Ottawa was a failure. In the view of one observer, the Ottawa meeting was ‘badly prepared, poorly negotiated, and its political importance misunderstood by the West’.36 In a more moderate appraisal, Italian CSCE delegate Giulio Tamagnini asserted the lack of concluding document was ‘not a failure but an unsatisfactory conclusion’. Others, including the United States negotiators, argued that they achieved broader goals at Ottawa, including discussion of human rights with a more engaged Soviet delegation.37 Dutch delegate Harm J. Hazewinkel maintains Ottawa should not be viewed as a disappointment because, as the first meeting devoted only to human rights, it was important for dialogue on that issue within the CSCE.38

Notwithstanding Soviet criticism of Western human rights records, the course of the Ottawa Meeting suggested the Soviets continued to view evaluation of their human rights record as ‘interference’ in domestic affairs. Though the Soviets engaged in discussions on human rights, the talks did not prompt greater compliance with
existing accords and Western and Eastern human rights practices remained far apart. Schifter remembers a Hungarian representative making a point to tell him there was a ‘new spirit in the hall’ in Ottawa, that of Mikhail Gorbachev, but according to Schifter, ‘for quite some time, I didn’t believe it’, as Soviet actions did not yet indicate a new Soviet approach to the CSCE and human rights.39 Near the close of Ottawa, Gorbachev wrote to Reagan, reasserting Soviet intransigence:

There should be no misunderstanding concerning the fact that we do not intend and will not conduct any negotiations relating to human rights in the Soviet Union. We, as any other sovereign state, have regarded and will regard, these questions in accordance with our existing laws and regulations.40

Despite Gorbachev’s letter to Reagan and Soviet conduct at Ottawa, evidence from his foreign policy adviser Anatoly Chernyaev’s diary suggests that the meeting spurred a re-evaluation of Soviet human rights policy. Chernyaev’s notes indicate conflict between new political leadership in Moscow and officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) over the Ottawa Meeting; specifically, Chernyaev reports that a Soviet diplomat communicated concerns that MFA bureaucrats in Ottawa were ‘afraid’ of the idea of human rights and reluctant to shift the Soviet stance there. Hearing of problems in Ottawa, Gorbachev demanded the Soviets raise their ‘own banner of human rights’ at the meeting. Subsequently, Chernyaev began drafting a Soviet human rights policy.41

Nonetheless, new thinking in Moscow did not translate into modified stances at CSCE meetings for many years.42 The first CSCE meeting held in a Warsaw Pact country, the Budapest Cultural Forum, opened on 15 October 1985 and similarly ended without a concluding document. The Budapest Cultural Forum was to be attended by cultural figures, not diplomats, who would discuss ‘interrelated problems concerning creation, dissemination and co-operation, including the promotion and expansion of contacts and exchanges in the different fields of culture’.43 Dissidents such as Vaclav Havel were pessimistic about the potential for change at the Budapest Forum: ‘I expect that the Cultural Forum will pass resolutions, no less beautiful than those passed in Helsinki or Madrid. Unfortunately, resolutions can neither feed a man, nor set him free.’44 Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) nevertheless mobilised for the meeting, hoping to effect greater Helsinki adherence and new commitments on cultural freedom.

The Budapest Forum was most noteworthy for the decision of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), an international human rights organisation, to organise a parallel forum to test Hungarian claims that private individuals would have freedom of assembly during the meeting, significantly raising the group’s stature and winning international attention for its cause. The Hungarian authorities, in response to Soviet pressure, prevented the IHF from meeting in its reserved hotel conference room, though it was able to reconstitute in a private apartment.45 The IHF’s conflict with the Hungarian government garnered considerable press coverage to the extent that Austrian delegate to the subsequent Vienna Meeting Stefan Lehne suggests the IHF Forum ‘had an impact on the international debate on reform in Eastern Europe that equaled or even exceeded that
of the official forum. The controversy in Budapest raised awareness of human rights abuses and dramatised the often-obscure interim CSCE meetings. As one of the least repressive and most liberal states in Eastern Europe, that Hungary would be the site of such problems was surprising, but Hungary proved susceptible to Soviet demands.

Failing even to meet Havel’s humble expectations, the Budapest delegates could not agree on a concluding document, and the United States again was part of a decision to end the meeting without one rather than sign a weak agreement. Explaining the decision later, head of the United States delegation Ambassador Walter Stoessel echoed Havel’s underlying sentiments, saying, ‘I trust you will agree that the major obstacle to progress in the CSCE process is the lack of compliance with existing documents, not the lack of new ones’. According to Stoessel, the United States and its NATO allies were in agreement on strategy at Budapest, although Warsaw Pact states tried to blame the United States alone for the lack of consensus on a final document.

Consecutive CSCE meetings ending without agreements, which in conjunction with unrelenting Soviet repression of Helsinki monitors, dispirited many interested in the process. The stalled Stockholm discussions and arguably failed meetings in Ottawa and Budapest resurrected an earlier debate about American withdrawal from the CSCE. Though Gorbachev took a number of steps on human rights issues, including granting exit visas for eight divided spouses and releasing human rights activist and Jewish refusenik Anatoly Shcharansky and other dissidents from prison, there were no indications of a broader shift in Soviet strategy, presenting an inherent conflict between the Western and Eastern approaches to the CSCE.

In Madrid, the Swiss had proposed hosting a meeting on ‘the development of contacts among persons, institutions and organizations’, which was held from 16 April to 26 May 1986. At Bern, Eastern and Western delegations remained far apart on the types of proposals they wanted adopted, and similar to previous meetings, the negotiations at Bern created considerable Western frustration as the Soviet Union seemed uninterested in resolving individual cases. The United States continued to emphasise implementation over reaching new agreements with United States Ambassador to the Bern Meeting Michael Novak asserting the meeting should focus on improving the lives of ‘ordinary people’ and pointing out that Soviet exit visa policy was not in line with Gorbachev’s assertion that those denied for security reasons five to ten years ago would now be permitted to leave. Novak pressed the Soviets to make further progress, reiterating Reagan’s message that ‘the American people judge a regime by the quality of the human contacts it permits’. Soviet intransigence was in contrast, however, to the real strides made by Poland and Hungary to resolve visa and consular issues, leading one observer to discern a ‘thaw in East–West relations’.

The neutral and non-aligned states were unsuccessful in their efforts to bridge the differences between East and West through a draft concluding document that more explicitly laid out rights to travel, family visits, and other contacts but preserved qualifications such as ‘when personal and professional circumstances permit’. The United States regarded these conditions as a retreat from the Helsinki Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document and worried Eastern states would interpret
personal and professional circumstances’ broadly to prevent anyone from travelling abroad. Faced with concerns about the strength of the document, the United States surprised many, including its allies, by vetoing the agreement.\textsuperscript{56} The action startled delegates, although Washington’s action remained consistent with its previously articulated view that the United States would rather have no document than a weak one.\textsuperscript{57} In Novak’s words, ‘Having weighed it, I said, we found it a weak document, given the pattern of noncompliance with existing documents so amply documented during our discussions at Bern’.\textsuperscript{58} The United States veto was not part of a broader NATO strategy; in fact it was the only delegation to reject the compromise concluding document, indicating a lack of coordination with its allies and raising concerns about an erosion of allied unity that had proved effective for the achievement of Western objectives at Madrid and other CSCE negotiations.\textsuperscript{59}

As with Ottawa, there was considerable debate as to whether the lack of a concluding document signified failure following the end of the Bern meeting. The \textit{Los Angeles Times} wrote, ‘If an aim of Soviet diplomacy is to separate America from Europe, then the Reagan administration performance [at Bern] . . . must look to the Kremlin like the beginning of a dream come true’.\textsuperscript{60} The overriding reaction, however, was supportive of the United States strategy. The \textit{Wall Street Journal} regarded the veto as ‘courageous’, arguing that it signalled the ‘Americans are serious enough about negotiations to reject language that doesn’t represent progress’.\textsuperscript{61} The \textit{Washington Post} echoed administration explanations, writing ‘there are already plenty of agreements on paper: compliance is the crying need’.\textsuperscript{62} Some regarded the United States refusal to sign a concluding document at Bern as an indication of strong American principles.\textsuperscript{63} According to Novak, the Soviet dissident Alexander Ginzburg later told him that the United States non-signature of the Bern document ‘had saved the Helsinki process’.\textsuperscript{64} The American decision may have been principled, but tactically it raised the possibility of divisions within the NATO alliance and eased pressure on Eastern Europe by shifting attention away from non-compliance and to the United States veto.

Many observers saw Bern as successful despite the American veto because Eastern states had made advancement on Helsinki implementation over the course of the meeting, including the Soviet resolution of 36 divided family cases. Of the progress, Senator Alfonse D’Amato (R-NY) said, ‘This is the first time that the Soviets have resolved such cases in the context of a CSCE meeting’.\textsuperscript{65} Others interpreted the lack of new human rights commitments and the lonely veto by the United States as signals of a failed American strategy at Bern, in particular in the NATO context, as one of the overriding goals of the United States throughout the Helsinki process was to preserve allied unity.\textsuperscript{66} Novak and the Reagan administration had failed to consult the United States’ allies adequately, which to some extent eased the pressure on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to comply with their Helsinki commitments; the international spotlight, usually focused on their non-implementation, was instead directed at the American veto and questions about American dedication to the CSCE. Bern, sought by the West and particularly the United States in exchange for agreement to hold the
CDE, should have been an opportunity to pressure East European governments to comply with human contacts provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, but instead the United States stole headlines as the impediment to progress.

After repeated failed efforts to reach a concluding document at meetings on culture, human rights, and human contacts, many observers tried to identify flaws in the Helsinki process. Some Western governments pointed to the short duration of the Ottawa and Bern meetings, while others in the United States argued it was easier to achieve progress on humanitarian issues when they were discussed in conjunction with security questions to offer more opportunities for compromise. In their view, the separate meetings deprived CSCE delegates of an opportunity to trade concessions on human rights and human contacts for progress on security provisions as they had in previous meetings. Likely, both the short duration and the narrow focus of the meetings inhibited substantive results. Furthermore, the Soviet and American approaches to the meetings were highly contradictory at this time, making productive concluding documents difficult to achieve regardless of the length or agenda of the meetings.

In an important shift for the Helsinki process, however, after a long stall, negotiators at the Stockholm Conference were able to reach a concluding document, an achievement fuelled in part by the change in Soviet leadership, the many years devoted to the talks, and the significance of the CSBM s under discussion. That such an agreement would be possible had not seemed likely for many years. Decrying the lack of substance in the proposals earlier at Stockholm, United States Ambassador Robert L. Barry employed a popular advertising slogan at the time asking, ‘Where’s the beef?’ Barry warned that the delegates needed to work hard to achieve a final document to avoid dampening the upcoming Vienna Meeting and the CSCE in general. According to Goodby, there was not an immediate Soviet shift at the negotiations after Gorbachev came to power. Yet, Polish CSCE observer Adam Daniel Rotfeld suggests that Gorbachev’s actions later in 1985 and early 1986 indicated heightened Soviet interest in concluding the Stockholm Conference. Eventually, the Soviets began making compromises at Stockholm, with Gorbachev first agreeing to release an annual calendar of planned military actions.

Reagan’s approach to the Soviet Union in his second term and Gorbachev’s rise to power both enabled a shift in East–West relations, facilitating a CSCE agreement at Stockholm. By mid-1986, the negotiations at Stockholm became more promising because Gorbachev had pressured the Foreign Ministry to develop new ideas, leading to new instructions to the Soviet delegation. As was the case with the Ottawa Meeting, Chernyaev brought to Gorbachev’s attention the fact that the Stockholm negotiating team was not in line with Moscow’s revised policy on negotiations with the United States. In reaction, Gorbachev spoke to the Politburo about his concerns: ‘A gap has emerged between our political declarations and our stance at the talks. Why has this occurred? That is the question. Since policy decisions have been made, we have to follow up on them.’ As a result, in the summer of 1986 Gorbachev and the Politburo approved more flexibility in the Soviet negotiating position at Stockholm.
In contrast to the controversy surrounding Bern, the Stockholm Conference ended with a substantive concluding document, due significantly to Gorbachev’s personal investment in the results of the meeting. A key point in the negotiations was the Soviet announcement on 19 August 1986 that the East would accept mandatory on-site inspections. For Soviet CSCE ambassador Oleg Grinevsky, it was a ‘profound breakthrough psychologically’ when the Soviets recognised that having United States inspectors visit the Soviet Union was not threatening. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze sees the acceptance of verification measures such as on-site inspections as crossing a ‘historical threshold’. According to Goodby, Gorbachev had a major impact on the Stockholm Concluding Document because he personally wanted an agreement and saw on-site inspections as necessary to achieve consensus.

The United States delegation had high praise for the content and significance of the concluding document, which addressed notification, observers at military exercises, exchange of schedules for military activities and inspections, and devoted considerable space to the non-use of force. For Reagan, the Stockholm Concluding Document signalled ‘that East and West, with seriousness of purpose and hard work, can establish common ground on which to build a more secure future’.

Notwithstanding the successful end to the Stockholm Conference, in light of Ottawa, Budapest, and Bern, many observers maintained pessimistic attitudes toward the Helsinki process. It was not clear at the time that the series of interim meetings were building a foundation for future progress on a range of issues including the release of political prisoners, an end to radio jamming, and the resolution of divided families at Vienna. In retrospect, the decision by the United States and its allies to shift toward emphasising implementation rather than reaching new agreements was significant to later compliance with Helsinki agreements, as the Soviet Union increasingly recognised that meaningful reform – not simply new agreements that would then be ignored – was a prerequisite for productive relations with the West. Partly due to the Western position and partly due to the new approaches formulated by Gorbachev and his aides, the period before the Vienna Meeting laid the groundwork for a new Soviet attitude toward the CSCE, setting the stage for far-reaching Soviet and Eastern European concessions in Vienna.

Beyond the dialogue among the delegates and the first signs of progress toward resolving individual human rights and human contacts cases, the interim meetings also contributed substantively to the specific agreements reached in Vienna in that each side had a stable of previously formulated proposals to deploy at the review meeting. For example, in Vienna the NATO states drew upon their earlier efforts at Bern, introducing a proposal that focused on the right to emigrate and to return to one’s country that stipulated all CSCE states should issue their citizens passports and abolish the need to secure an exit visa. Similarly, Austria and Switzerland submitted a proposal, based on an earlier formulation, which laid out specific timetables to address those petitioning to travel abroad.

The Vienna Meeting, held from November 1986 to January 1989, represented a period of fundamental change in the Soviet Union and considerable progress in the
Helsinki process, which rapidly accelerated the momentum of reform that would eventually lead to the end of the Cold War. The close of the Vienna Meeting represented an end to the traditional East–West divide that had characterised the CSCE and Europe, and participants in the Helsinki process have long pointed to the significance of the Vienna Meeting and its concluding document. The United States Ambassador to the Vienna Meeting, Warren Zimmermann, characterised the concluding document as ‘the most comprehensive statement of human rights commitments that has ever existed in the East–West framework’.84 Similarly, Shevardnadze later described the Vienna Meeting as a ‘watershed’. According to him, ‘Europe had never known such a dialog-intensive, at times dramatic, but purposeful and democratic in a way that was without precedent’.85

The far-reaching transformation of Europe, fuelled in part by the Vienna Meeting and the Helsinki process more broadly, was achieved partially due to the foundation laid at CSCE meetings in the previous years. The years from 1984 to 1986 seemed at the time to represent a period of stagnation in the Helsinki process that raised questions about the continued utility of the CSCE. In retrospect, however, it is clear that the experts meetings in Ottawa, Bern, Budapest, and Stockholm contributed in significant ways to the later efficacy of the Helsinki process.

Notes

[1] The 1975 Helsinki Final Act was the culmination of three years of negotiations at the CSCE and contained principles to govern East–West interactions in Europe. In addition to reaching an agreement on the inviolability of frontiers, which was the original impetus for the Soviet desire to hold the conference, the Helsinki Final Act committed the CSCE states to respect human rights and facilitate human contacts across East–West borders. See for example, Thomas, The Helsinki Effect; Wenger et al., Origins of the European Security System; and Nuti, The Crisis of Détente in Europe. The term ‘Helsinki process’ refers to the CSCE meetings that followed the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.


[4] Proposals in Ottawa would deal with gender equality, access to health care, the right to participate in religious education, and freedom from torture, whereas those at Bern would address such issues as family visits, postal communication, access to a passport, exit visa fees, and facilitating tourism. Lehne, The Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 23; Millicent Fenwick Papers, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Box 112, Helsinki/Madrid, CSCE Staff to CSCE Commissioners, 27 May 1981; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Archives, Prague, Czech Republic, Book 38, CSCE/RM.16, 12 December 1980; ibid., CSCE/RM.48, 9 November 1982; ibid., CSCE/RM.49, 9 November 1982; and Sizoo and Jurrjens, CSCE Decision-Making, 260.

Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev died in 1982 after years of infirmity. His replacement, Yuri Andropov, only lasted 15 months in power and died in 1984.


Leatherman, *From Cold War to Democratic Peace*, 20.


Although the meeting recessed a number of times, the Stockholm Conference technically was ongoing throughout the years between Madrid and Vienna.


For further discussion of the Soviet Union’s original objectives for an ESC, see Snyder, ‘The U.S., Western Europe, and the CSCE, 1972–1975’.


Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 168; and Interview, James Goodby, 1 April 2005.

OSCE Archives, CSCE/SC/R.2, George Shultz (USA) Statement, 17 January 1984. Wallenberg’s fate remained unknown, and some believed he was languishing in a Soviet prison.


Goldberg Papers, Part I: Professional File, 1793-1987, n.d. Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Box 142, Folder 3, *CSCE Digest*, 2 November 1984. The cases of Sakharov and his wife Yelena Bonner occupied the American imagination in the months that followed as Americans struggled to learn if Bonner had been arrested and sentenced to exile, if Sakharov was hospitalised and subject to force-feedings, or if they were enjoying domestic
life as one videotape from the USSR suggested. Throughout this period, the United States government worked to secure Sakharov and Bonner’s release from exile. Dante Fascell Papers, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, Box 2442, Memos, Memorandum, Fascell to CSCE Commissioners, 16 May 1984. Shultz developed a plan for American action including raising Sakharov’s case in meetings with Soviets, releasing public statements, exerting pressure through American embassies, raising United States concerns with foreign leaders, corresponding with the American Academy of Sciences, developing a public diplomacy strategy through the United States Information Agency, communicating with Sakharov family members in the United States, and working with prominent Americans who might be able to help. The mystery concerning the Sakharovs’ fate and the American efforts on their behalf make up one of the most dramatic elements of the CSCE in this period. Mazewski Papers, Box 138, Folder 4, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Activities Report: 98th Congress; Open Society Archives, Budapest, Hungary, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Box 974, USA: Diplomatic Relations, 1984–1984, ‘Group Asks Soviets to Reconsider Human Rights Issue’, 18 July 1984; and Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California, Matlock CHRON, Box 90887, May 1984 (2), Memorandum, Shultz to Reagan, 18 May 1984.

[25] Gorbachev became Soviet General Secretary after Chernenko’s death on 13 March 1985. The Ottawa Preparatory Meeting was held from 23 April to 6 May 1985. The Experts Meeting opened the following day and ended on 17 June 1985.


[27] Helsinki monitors observed governments’ compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE agreements.


[31] Ibid., 70. Eight Western states submitted a draft concluding document, OME.47, on 14 June. The Western draft protected freedom of movement, religious freedom, gender equality, trade unions, and legal observers. In addition, it called for the redistribution of the Helsinki Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document as well as the prevention of psychiatric abuse. OSCE Archives, 14 June 1985, CSCE/OME.47. In Ottawa, Schifter argues the United States tried to push for ‘concrete accomplishments rather than just having another piece of paper’. Richard Schifter Interview, 5 May 2008.
The delegations did not accept the East’s final attempt to reach a concluding document – OME.50. The proposed agreement addressed only social and economic rights in a vague way and lacked any proposals from the Western draft document. OSCE Archives, 14 June 1985, CSCE/OME.50.


[42] A celebration to mark the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act was held in Helsinki, Finland. As no proposals were submitted at the foreign minister-level session, I have not addressed it in this article. In addition, I have not addressed the Venice Seminar on Economic, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation in the Mediterranean given its narrow geographic focus.


[44] Heneka, A Besieged Culture: Czechoslovakia Ten Years After Helsinki, 74; and Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, ‘Human Rights and the CSCE Process in the Soviet Union’, 27 February 1986. Eastern and Western diplomats pursued different cultural agendas, as the Eastern states were concerned with cultural cooperation whereas the West was committed to securing protections for freedom of cultural expression, freedom of information, and international cultural contacts. Lehne, The Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 30–1.

[45] Open Society Archives, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Correspondence and Memoranda, Box 20, Memos, 1982–85, Projected Activities, 1985; and Memorandum, Nagler to National Committees, 14 June 1985. The IHF later issued a statement about the Hungarian restrictions: ‘The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights regrets that the Hungarian authorities have forbidden us to use public facilities for a citizens’ cultural forum … In our view, the Hungarian government’s action violates the 1975 Helsinki accords’. Open Society Archives, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Project Files, Box 2, Cultural Forum: Budapest: General Information, 1985. United States Ambassador Walter Stoessel condemned the Hungarian authorities’ prevention of the IHF parallel forum from taking place in its reserved space. He noted that the Hungarian action went against its commitment to follow CSCE


[48] Prompted by the deaths of a number of Helsinki monitors in prison, several exiled Soviet dissidents argued in a Wall Street Journal op-ed that Western states should withdraw from the CSCE because the agreement was not working. Op-Ed, ‘Exiles: Nullify Helsinki Pact’, Wall Street Journal, 8 May 1985. Reagan’s election in 1980 had previously raised the possibility the United States might withdraw from the CSCE.


[50] The term refusenik referred to those, usually Jewish, who had been denied permission to emigrate. Anatoly Shcharansky changed his name to Natan Sharansky upon his emigration to Israel. I have chosen to use the original spelling of his name when discussing his activities in the Soviet Union.


[55] OSCE Archives, CSCE/BME.49, 23 May 1986; and Novak, Taking Glasnost Seriously, 172. This was a traditional role of the neutral and non-aligned delegations. Fischer, ‘Bridging the Gap Between East and West’. The Warsaw Pact draft concluding document emphasized co-operation as well as person-to-person contacts, although it had many qualifications such as allowing family members to travel together only ‘when possible’ that could weaken the contest of the proposals. OSCE Archives, CSCE/BME.48, 23 May 1986.

[56] In a letter to a Canadian ethnic group, Bauer, Canada’s CSCE ambassador, indicated that the decision to veto was ‘taken at the last minute (and rather unexpectedly)’, clearly indicating poor communication between the NATO allies. Canada thought that the draft concluding document ‘had only marginal utility and was only just acceptable’. Joint Baltic American
In Heraclides’ view, the American decision to turn against the agreement ‘has remained one of the mysteries of the CSCE’; the Swiss, on the other hand, blamed Novak’s ‘amateurism’ for the collapse. Heraclides, Security and Co-operation in Europe, 80.


Lehne, The Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 33; and Korey, The Promises We Keep, 209.


Novak, Taking Glasnost Seriously, 173.


Korey, The Promises We Keep, 436.


Interview, James Goodby, 1 April 2005.


The Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, reached in December 1987, committed the United States and Soviet Union to destroy all of their intermediate and short-range missiles within three years. Matlock, Reagan and Gorbachev, 209; and Roth, ‘From Madrid to Vienna: What Progress in the Helsinki Process?’, 3–16.

Chernyaev, My Six Years with Gorbachev, 60.


Leatherman, From Cold War to Democratic Peace, 17.

Interview, James Goodby, 1 April 2005.

Provisions in the agreement included notification 42 days in advance for military actions involving more than 13,000 troops or 300 tanks. CSCE states agreed to offer notification two years in advance for activities involving more than 75,000 troops. In addition, the parties agreed to exchange annual calendars of such actions. There were provisions for mandatory observations of exercises involving more than 17,000 and a system of ground and air on-site inspections. Bloed, ‘The CSCE Process From Helsinki to Vienna: An Introduction’, 18; Joint Baltic American National Committee Records (JBANC), Box 6 Unprocessed, CSCE London Meeting 1989, GIST, ‘Confidence- and Security-Building Measures Negotiations’, March 1989; and Robert L. Barry Statement, 22 September 1986, US Department of State, *The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*.


In addition, the proposal offered guidelines for how states should respond to exit applications. OSCE Archives, CSCE/WT.22, 10 February 1987. In a sign of the changes underway in Eastern Europe, Hungary submitted its own proposal on travel for business purposes that addressed shortening the wait for entry visa applications. OSCE Archives, CSCE/WT.103, 6 March 1987.

OSCE Archives, CSCE.WT.9, 19 December 1986. There followed a range of Western proposals addressing freedom of movement as related to human contacts. OSCE Archives, CSCE/WT.23, 10 February 1987; ibid., CSCE/WT.24, 10 February 1987; and ibid., CSCE/WT.53, 17 February 1987.


References


