

Foreign Ministry
28/15/NJ/1972

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Report

On the Consultation of the Warsaw Treaty Countries' Deputy Foreign Ministers Held in Moscow on 15 November 1972

I.

On the initiative of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the Warsaw Treaty countries held a consultation between their deputy foreign ministers in Moscow on 15 November 1972. At the consultation Bulgaria was represented by Nesterev, Czechoslovakia by Ruzek, Poland by Bisztyga, Hungary by János Nagy, the GDR by Kohrt (undersecretary of state), Romania by Ecobescu, and the Soviet Union by Deputy Foreign Minister Rodionov. The consultation's agenda featured the political and, most notably, the tactical/practical issues related to the multilateral discussions held in Helsinki with the purpose of preparing the conference on security in Europe.

II.

At the invitation of several delegations, the Hungarian included, Comrade Rodionov held the expose. He explained that the purpose of the present consultation was to agree on the tactical and practical cooperation at the Helsinki conference.

Comrade Rodionov's speech essentially contained the following:

- 1) As of late, the socialist countries' initiative to hold a conference on security in Europe has been making progress. Today the western powers better understand our position. They can envisage the possibility of accepting one document at the Helsinki meeting, which would contain the points agreed in connection with the conference on security in Europe. There is a great deal of work to be done before the document is accepted, as the western powers could not agree between themselves on all the fundamental questions.
- 2) The few days before the start of the Helsinki conference should be used to explain some of our ideas on organizational matters to the Western partners in bilateral talks. For instance, there are the ideas regarding Finnish chairmanship, deputy chairmanship, the duties of the secretariat and the secretaries.

On the subject of the conference's official languages, we could voice our support for English, French, German and Russian, but if the participants of the conference so wished, we would not object to the inclusion of the Italian language.

Our joint position on the procedural rule for passing resolutions should be in favor of a consensus. We should try to refrain from compiling a list of procedural issues, such as the one prepared by the Americans. The chairman should proclaim the agreements based on consensus in the course of a simple work routine.

3) The preparatory rounds of talks should be concluded as quickly as possible.

In general, we should not object to the formation of work or editing committees.

Provided they keep to the subject and do not transgress the bounds of the competency, these committees can save a lot of time.

At the appropriate time during the conference, the socialist countries should submit draft proposals. We must take care not to submit them too early, but at the same time we must not allow other countries to beat us to it. We should make up our mind about this in Helsinki. The location, timeframe and agenda of the conference on security and cooperation in Europe must be agreed upon as quickly as possible, fending off efforts that try to turn the multilateral preparatory talks into a preliminary conference. The preparatory talks cannot substitute the conference on security in Europe. In its first speech, the Soviet delegation will speak on the matter firmly.

4) As the Soviet comrades have already indicated this during the bilateral talks, it seems highly unlikely that the Helsinki conference would end by Christmas. We anticipate that it would drag on into early next year, as the western powers would try to link it to the discussions on troop reduction. The socialist countries should support the view that the conference takes place in Helsinki in June 1973. It is true, however, that several of the states concerned do not, as yet, want to commit themselves.

5) The list of participants of the European conference has now been clearly established. It will be attended by all the European states plus the United States and Canada. Neither side supported any initiative to expand the list.

6) As to the scheduling of the work, we ought to come down in support of a three-stage conference, which we know and accept.

7) In general, the sides concerned received favorably the socialist countries' proposed agenda, accepting it as a basis for discussion. Nevertheless, huge efforts are still ahead of us to have them accepted. Several countries support the view that the second item of the agenda, the issues of cooperation, be discussed as separate points. The aim of the socialist countries is to defend to original proposal and these issues be discussed as one item of the agenda. Should it become expedient in the course of the debate to revise our position on tactical considerations, we could assent to certain clarifications and modifications in phrasing.

(Comrade Rodionov handed out to those present at the consultation a new draft proposal discussing the various forms of cooperation as regards the second item of the main conference's proposed agenda, compiled according to the viewpoint of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. A copy of the draft proposal supplements the report.)

All efforts to make the issue of the free movement of people, ideas and information a separate item of the agenda should be fended off.

Naturally, we should express our willingness to develop and broaden relations between European states on the basis of sovereignty and nonintervention.

As to the third item of the agenda, our proposal to establish a permanent organization, the western powers are still wavering. They will formulate their position depending on the outcome of the first conference on security in Europe. For us the establishment of a permanent organization has great importance, because it could function as a link between the first European

conference and the ones that will follow. For that reason, we must persist in adding the issue to the agenda.

III.

The debate that followed Comrade Rodionov's address – with the exception of the Romanian speech, which was at variance with the position of the Soviet Union and the rest of the socialist countries in many fundamental issues – revealed that a general agreement prevailed among the socialist countries regarding both the analysis of the existing situation and the assessment of the possibilities and the tasks. Furthermore, almost every speech contained certain new elements, which, if taken into account in the further work, could be useful.

The Polish speaker pointed out that the western powers lately wanted to assign some unique role to the doyen of diplomatic corps at Helsinki. This could be dangerous. We must limit the role of the doyen to the submission of the proposal about the election of the Finnish chairman at the first session. He recommended that the heads of the socialist delegations refrain in their respective speeches from a thorough analysis of the European situation, because that would offer the western powers a chance to start political debates. Since the work of the various committees could entail similar dangers, everything must be done to keep to the tasks of preparation, avoiding discussions on questions of substance. In the subject of the free movement of people and ideas, he recommends that we overcome the difficulties posed by the western powers by references to increased cooperation and the expansion of the title of the second item of the agenda.

The undersecretary of state of the GDR's foreign ministry, Comrade Kohrt, informed the panel about the negotiations between the GDR and the FRG on the fundamental treaty between the two countries, but did not expand on the information given earlier. He announced that the GDR's delegation, just as the FRG's delegation, was going to be led by their Helsinki trade representative.

They expect the FRG and the other western power to attempt to discriminate against the GDR's delegation by questioning the latter's equal status. Although the signs of such discrimination are already evident, they do not want to spoil the atmosphere by registering a protest. However, if they experience such discrimination at the negotiations, they will appeal for the socialist countries' support to fend off such attempts.

The head of the Czechoslovak delegation called attention to the point that during the Helsinki conference we should continue, and if possible intensify, the work in the area of social organizations. Also, even if the media fails to cover the speeches and debates of the preparatory talks, it cannot ignore the political problems related to the security and cooperation in Europe.

These means should also be used to bring the Helsinki conference under public control.

The deputy foreign minister of Bulgaria, Comrade Nesterov, warned that the procedural questions of the Helsinki meeting were far from being settled and that hard work lied ahead of us in this regard, also, both during the days before the multilateral talks and at the conference itself.

The Hungarian speech briefly assessed the socialist countries' successes in the preparation of the conference on security in Europe. The speaker noted that one of the main source of the results achieved so far had been the harmonized political direction and the close cooperation between the socialist states. He underlined that most of the attention now had to be directed at the multilateral talks preparing the Helsinki conference, making every effort to keep them professional and to the point. On the subject of tactical and practical issues, he agreed with the Soviet deputy foreign minister's report. The Hungarian delegation made three proposals:
- recommended to agree to the inclusion of environmental questions as a separate item for agenda, so as to avoid confrontation with the western powers and to prevent the prolongation of

the preparatory talks;

- first we should firmly reject the western states' proposal to allow the free movement of people and ideas. But should the western powers later use this as an excuse to prolong the preparatory talks, then a vaguely phrased half-sentence could be added to the title of the second item for the agenda;

- finally, the Hungarian delegation recommended that, in addition to holding consultations and coming to prior agreements, the socialist delegations working in Helsinki should divide the workload in a rational and efficient way.

IV.

The Romanian deputy foreign minister Ecobescu's speech substantially differed from the views of the rest of the delegations. He pointed out that the socialist countries should act independently in every stage and on every platform of the conference. They should protect the interests of the socialist countries, but not according to the bloc's narrow interests and framework. It has been seen as one of the great successes of the socialist countries that the idea of refusing to think in terms of blocs took root in Europe. Placing the negotiations on the footing of blocs is wrong, because it preserves and furthers the division of Europe into three parts (the two military blocs and the neutral countries).

Romania shares the view whereby we should protect our proposals for the agenda vigorously, the speaker said. We must forestall the imperialists' attempt to drop the reference to the denouncement of violence and of the threat to use violence from the title of the first item and to leave off the clause in the second item whereby the various forms of cooperation between the European states must serve their political cooperation.

(Note: the socialist countries themselves decided to drop both clauses from the last draft proposal.)

Speaking on the military aspects of security, he pointed out that, although it is possible to address these issues on various other platforms, we should devise a method of covering them at the security conference. For example, if one touches on these issues in one's speech, the chair should not have the authority to gag that person.

Furthermore, all the countries concerned should attend the separate talks on troops reduction and these talks should serve the interests of all the European countries. The results accomplished at the separate talks should be submitted to the next European security conference.

In the Romanian delegation's view, work on the various documents to be submitted to the main conference should begin already prior to the preparatory talks of Helsinki. Every country should take part in drafting these documents and every country should have the right to submit documents approved by its own authorities. The Romanian side has already started to prepare several documents and the other socialist countries are welcome to read these draft before Romania submits them.

As regards to the scheduling of the conference's work, they support the three-stage structure, although their concept does not agree entirely with France's. (He pointed out that the French proposal had not been approved yet.) In their opinion, the heads of states and governments should open the conference, the foreign ministers should finalize the documents, while the ceremonial approval of the documents and the closing session should, again, be attended by the heads of states and governments.

They in fact envisage the system of European security meetings as a permanent or continuous conference broken up by intermissions.

They attach utmost importance that the observation of the principle of rotation is

observed at the preliminary talks, the plenary sessions and the committees. This stems from the principles of fairness and equality. They believe it is unfair to allow the same person or the same country to take chair or carry out secretarial functions for any length of time. The same should apply to the location of the conference. They accept that the first conference is held in Helsinki, but the successive ones should be moved to different towns.

On the subject of decision-making, they support full-scale consensus. In this area, too, we must not give the impression that we vote en bloc. He warned that by acting as a bloc, the socialist countries might provoke similar reactions from NATO, and could even drive the neutral countries into some sort of a group. For this reason, the Romanian side is against the idea that the socialist countries jointly submit a draft document to the Helsinki conference.

Without actually referring to the Romanian comments, in their subsequent speeches the German, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Bulgarian delegates all underlined the need for the socialist countries to cooperate, while also voicing their respective views on the most expedient tactics to follow. This response eliminated the acrimonious debates of earlier times, while also demonstrating the diminishing significance of Romania's opposition.

V.

By way of a closing speech, Comrade Rodionov summed up the views presented by the speakers (essentially leaving aside the Romanian comments), drawing a number of conclusions that could be viewed as agreements forged by the consultation.

1) He observed that the socialist countries were interested in making both the Helsinki talks and the conference on security and cooperation in Europe a success.

2) Great care must be taken to ensure that the Helsinki talks stay within the framework of preparation. Provided they do not transgress their competence, i.e. they confine their tasks to editing the texts of reports and communiqués, the work groups can form useful supplementary organizations and, therefore, their establishment must not be opposed.

We cannot prevent some of the speakers from stepping out of the framework of preparatory talks and addressing issues of substance. It is imperative that we do not allow ourselves to be dragged into such debates.

3) Our position regarding the agenda's phrasing must be defended keeping close contact and maintaining an active and constructive attitude. But if the western powers exert too much pressure (for example, on the point of reserving a separate item for environmental issues), we shall not go into confrontation but find ways of accommodating their views.

As to the free movement of people and ideas, the western states are not unanimous on this and know exactly how far we are willing to go. We do not accept their formula but maintain that we are interested in forging various ways of cooperation.

4) With regard to the structure of the conference, we should stick to the three-phase arrangement, demanding that the level of representation for the third phase of the conference must be raised. The majority of the western states are willing to accept this; also, if the level of representation is raised for the third phase, the western will be working harder in the final phase in order to achieve success.

5) It would be inappropriate to start working on the documents to be submitted to the conference on security in Europe already in Helsinki or immediately after the Helsinki talks. This would make it possible for the western powers to prolong the preparatory talks. The documents should be submitted either immediately before or during the conference. The documents must be finalized only after the general debate, in the second phase of the conference.

6) All the socialist delegations should see to it that they advance arguments, which can be

used in the debate at the Helsinki conference to defend our position.

VI.

The decision to hold this consultation, as well as its content, revealed that the Soviet comrades primarily called this meeting because they felt it was their duty on the one hand, and the members of the Warsaw Treaty demanded it. They were not interested in a comprehensive debate, especially not after they confronted the Romanian position.

The consultation proved useful primarily in directing attention to the preparatory talks in Helsinki, clarifying certain points in connection with it and summing up the tasks;

- with the exception of the Romanian comrades, the participants laid much emphasis on the requirement to develop close cooperation between our delegations in Helsinki;
- we received the latest draft proposal regarding the second item of the agenda;
- personal contacts were established between the members of the delegations.

Budapest, 17 November 1972

[Translated by Ervin Dunay, Central European University]

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