

## **Book Reviews**

Vladimir Bilandžić, Dittmar Dahlmann,  
Milan Kosanović (eds.), *From Helsinki  
to Belgrade – The First CSCE Follow-  
up Meeting and the Crisis of Détente*,  
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After more than thirty-five years it is rather difficult to imagine or – if one is old enough – to recall how the world looked like between 1975 and 1978, the years between the signing of the Final Act of Helsinki and the adoption of the short concluding document of the first Follow-up Meeting, which took place in Belgrade in 1977/78. The Belgrade meeting is in the recollection of even those who were engaged in the CSCE in those early years easily overshadowed by the Final Act on the one side and the Follow-up Meetings at Madrid and Vienna on the other. The latter lasted for years and resulted in substantial documents, the result of long and often tedious negotiations. So Belgrade, with its relatively short duration and certainly short document by any CSCE standard, was generally neglected or even forgotten. Still, the Belgrade Meeting deserves attention and that was given thirty years later in an academic conference conceived and organized by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the Zikic Foundation, which took place in March 2008. The papers of this conference were collected in a book that was published last year and now lies before us.

In 1975 the Final Act may have been a high point in détente, but already at that time opinions on its value, expectations and aims were greatly diverging. Nobody could foresee how – even if – the CSCE would develop further. As the Follow-up Meeting in Belgrade was the first of its kind, no experience of such meetings existed. What was to be expected of it, or indeed, could one expect something of it? Cynics at that time even pointed to the infamous Holy Alliance of the early nineteenth century and its subsequent meetings, from Aix-la-Chapelle to Verona. In the years following 1975 disillusion soon set in and in many circles feelings about the CSCE were mixed, to say the least. And also for those who believed in the future of the CSCE, the Final Act may have been the gospel of détente, but like in the Good Book, all could find in it what they were looking for. With the benefit of hindsight we now know how the fledgling CSCE developed into the international organisation presently known as the OSCE. And the first Follow-up Meeting is now if not completely forgotten then at least overshadowed by the more spectacular developments which took place in subsequent years.

But still the Belgrade Meeting was an element in this continuing process and the various articles in “From Helsinki to Belgrade” give an interesting insight into the international situation in the late seventies. In the little more than two years between the departure of the heads of state and government from the Finnish capital in 1975 and the arrival of the delegates in Belgrade for the preparatory meeting, the world had changed considerably. In “The Cold War as Détente”, the opening contribution, Klaus Hildebrand describes how in those years the two blocs still confronted each other in a divided Europe, but also how in the world as a whole a new triangle was evolving since the opening towards China made by the United States at the time of Nixon and Kissinger. And although détente may have existed in Europe, the Cold War was continuing unabated in its periphery. But, as Hildebrand concludes when addressing the question of what should be understood by détente, “large-scale war now became a shade more improbable than before, a touch more possible than it had been – this is, if we wish to give a critical appraisal of the statesmen concerned – both a lot and little at the same time.”

After this more general introduction, the focus in the book moves to the various players in the CSCE of that time. In the recollection of many, their division will be easy – there were the Western and Eastern Blocs and then the Neutral and Nonaligned (N + N) in between. Of course, it was never as simple as that. Even among the Warsaw Pact countries different views existed, though of course it was easier to reach consensus there. The West, on the other hand, was certainly not a united whole. The views from Washington more than once differed from those of its European allies, and also here different opinions existed. France more than once had the tendency to go alone, and Belgrade was certainly not the last occasion. “What is good for France is good for Europe”, as I once heard from a French delegate, summarizes this well. But the European Community only

counted nine countries and the European Political Co-operation had only started a few years earlier, though it had indeed received an important impetus exactly at the CSCE Geneva talks. The N + N were not a coherent group either and there were some others, like Spain, which had only shortly before this time returned to democracy (and was to join, if not yet NATO, in any case the NATO co-ordination meetings only in 1980 at the Madrid meeting), and mavericks like Malta and to a lesser extent Cyprus.

It is impossible to understand the Belgrade meeting, or more generally the state of détente, without taking a close look at the American policy of that time. The Final Act had been signed by President Ford and although feelings towards the CSCE were at the time in the USA not always sympathetic, to say the least, Secretary of State Kissinger had a, one might almost say, nineteenth century view of international relations. For the Soviet Union this was somewhat reassuring. But by the time of the Belgrade meeting, the Carter administration had taken over, with an important role for Security adviser Brzezinski. Human rights now were – partly for internal political reasons not only to become a focal point of American policy, but also a weapon in the Cold War. Brzezinski was often at odds with the State Department and its head, Secretary of State Vance, with as a clear example the replacement of career diplomat ambassador Sherer by Judge Goldberg as head of the American delegation in Belgrade. It would be going too far to describe this all here, but it has been done in some highly interesting contributions by Harald Biermann (“U.S. Perceptions of the CSCE Process”) and Breck Walker (“‘Neither Shy nor Demagogic’ – The Carter Administration Goes to Belgrade”). This American position did not just lead to confrontation with the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. At times it also led to little fondness between the USA and its NATO partners or, for that matter, some of the N + N countries.


Nor were the NATO countries, both members and non-members of the European Community, always following the same path or having similar aims. For the Federal Republic of Germany and for its Chancellor Schmidt and Foreign Minister Genscher the relation with the German Democratic Republic and more generally the division of Europe was the main focus. For them, the Final Act was a way of improving contacts and getting Germans out of the East, developments which they did not want to jeopardize by turning the Belgrade meeting into a confrontation. Oliver Bange (“‘The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number...’ The FRG and the GDR and the Belgrade CSCE Conference”) gives a clear impression of both the FRG and GDR sides in the preparations and in the conduct of the Belgrade meeting. But although Germany was of course at the heart of the Cold War, and of détente, in Europe there were other players within the European Community. One of them was the United Kingdom, which had joined only very recently, and the chapter “Britain, East-West Détente and the CSCE” by Robert Gerald Hughes gives an extensive overview of the British policies with regard to détente and the CSCE. It was a period in which the United Kingdom had to adjust itself to a new position in the world and in Europe, no longer as a world leader, but as a medium-sized European power. This contribution is therefore much broader in scope than just the period 1975-1978 and it gives an interesting insight into the views on détente in that period, which were at the time not limited to London. The EC was of course not limited to the FRG and the UK, but the reader who expects to find more on the various views of the EC’s member states in “The European Community and the Belgrade CSCE” by Angela Romano will be disappointed. The EC Nine are here represented mainly as a united whole, and the discussions within the EC are to a large extent passed over in silence. The position of the European Commission was also within the EC at that time sometimes controversial. This contribution is mainly based on historical archives; the author would have been well advised to consult some of the direct participants.

An important role in the CSCE has always been played by the Neutral and Non-Aligned countries and they, in particular Yugoslavia and Finland, get a well-deserved share in this book. Rinnaa Kullaa (“The Birth and

Development of the CSCE: Finnish and Yugoslav Models for Neutrality in the Early Cold War”) sketches how these states found their way in a world largely dominated by two blocs, not only in the CSCE but in a wider context. More specifically devoted to the host country of the conference are “Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslav Policy and the Formation of the Concept of European Security 1968-1975” by Ljubodrag Dimić and “On the road to Belgrade: Yugoslavia’s Contribution to the Defining of the Concept of European Security and Cooperation 1975-1977” by Jovan Čavoški. The way the N + N states operated up to and at the Belgrade meeting is well described by Thomas Fischer (“Getting to Know Their Limits: The N + N and the Follow-up Meeting in Belgrade 1977-1978”). Taken all together these contributions present a clear and useful view of the positions of the N + N countries, their aims and the way they tried to put this in practice. That in the end the role of the N + N in Belgrade proved to be limited does not mean that they did not try.

It would have been interesting if there had also been a contribution from, or at least covering the policies of, the Soviet Union. But we have to be satisfied with Jordan Baev’s “Bulgaria and the Warsaw Pact consultations on the CSCE Process: From Helsinki to Belgrade”. It gives some interesting insights into the Warsaw Pact views and positions, but of course Bulgaria was then in the CSCE only a minor player. The other former Warsaw Pact country represented – apart from the GDR as already mentioned is Poland, with a contribution by Wanda Jarzabek (“Lost illusions? The Polish government and human rights issues from Helsinki to Belgrade”). Of course, events in Poland were to play a much larger role in the CSCE in 1980-1981, during the Madrid Follow-up meeting, and it is difficult to read this contribution without the benefit of hindsight, but it does make interesting reading. The growing importance of human rights in the wake of the Final Act found perhaps its first clear expression in Poland.

The Final Act, and generally the CSCE, played a major role in the origins and growth of the human rights movement in Eastern Europe. This finds a special place in Wolfgang Eischwede’s contribution “...but it must be détente with a human face’ Helsinki and the human rights movements in Eastern Europe.” And, more restricted to a single state, in Joachim Scholtyseck’s “GDR Dissidents and Human Rights Issues.” This special treatment is of course well deserved for it is in particular in the field of human rights that the Final Act and the CSCE have had their largest impact. That was not so much foreseen at Helsinki, but it had already become clear in Belgrade and thereafter it grew, with ups and downs, gradually culminating in the events of 1989/1990. The Belgrade Meeting played its role in this respect, and therefore deserves not to be forgotten.



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