Managing the Cold War

Acclaim for Michael Alexander

The Lord Kerr of Kinlochard, Head of the UK Diplomatic Service, 1997-2002

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Sir Rodric Braithwaite, UK Ambassador to the Soviet Union/Russian Federation, 1988-1992

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Professor Christopher Coker, London School of Economics

These are the reflections of a man who for much of his working life found himself at the center of the diplomatic containment of the Soviet Union. His conclusion is that the West played its hand rather well. And he should know for he was one of the principal players. To use his own naval metaphor, he helped steer the alliance on a sensible course to a by no means inevitable conclusion.

Bridget Kendall, Diplomatic Correspondent, BBC

Even for those of us who remember that period, his detailed and frank account of what it was like backstage, battling to overcome bureaucratic and ideological obstacles at some of the key negotiations of that era, is a revelation.
MANAGING THE COLD WAR

Michael Alexander
Michael O’Donel Bjarne Alexander was born on 19 June 1936. He was educated at St Paul’s School, London, and from 1957 to 1960 at King’s College, Cambridge. He fenced for the university, and won a silver medal at the Rome Olympics in 1960. Between school and university he did his national service with the Royal Navy, which taught him Russian and sent him to Germany to listen to Russian military communications at the height of the Cold War. After graduating, he spent two years at Yale and Berkeley on a Harkness fellowship. Alexander entered the Diplomatic Service in 1962 and served in various capacities in Moscow, Singapore and then Geneva, where as Head of Political Section he had a leading role in the complex and gruelling negotiations that led to the 1975 Helsinki Agreement between East and West, which marked the highpoint of détente. From 1982-86 he was British Ambassador in Vienna. During this period he also headed the UK delegation to the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) conventional arms control talks. He also served as Private Secretary for Overseas Affairs to Prime Minister Thatcher from 1979-81. From 1986-1992 he was Britain’s Ambassador to NATO. Alexander retired from the Diplomatic Service in 1992, and began a new career as a founder and director of various banking enterprises in Eastern Europe. In Moscow he became closely involved with Renaissance Capital, one of the most successful investment banks to be set up in the new Russia. In 1993 he became Chairman of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, a position he held until his death on 1 June 2002. He is survived by his wife, Traute, whom he married in 1960 while an undergraduate at Cambridge, two sons and a daughter.
MANAGING THE COLD WAR
a view from the front line

Michael Alexander

Edited and with an Introduction by Keith Hamilton
Foreword by The Lord Kerr of Kinlochard
Preface by Sir Rodric Braithwaite

A RUSI PUBLICATION
Acknowledgments

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Sir Michael wrote about a period when two blocs – East and West – faced each other in an armed confrontation, while seeking the means for a peaceful coexistence. It is, therefore, particularly poignant that the main financial sponsor for his book should be Renaissance Capital, a leading Russian investment bank in Moscow, with whom Sir Michael collaborated immediately after his retirement. RUSI is not only grateful for their financial contribution, but also sees the involvement of Renaissance Capital in the publication of this book as the clearest evidence that the work of co-operation between East and West, with which Sir Michael was so deeply concerned, is now finally flourishing.
Foreword

Michael Alexander was one of our Service’s brightest stars.

We first met in 1972, when I took his place as Foreign Office desk officer for NATO. Desk officers are the Office’s foot-soldiers; but his reputation among our network in Whitehall and Brussels was of a cavalryman’s dash and confidence, and a fencer’s ferocity in debate. Following him, my plodding performance was greeted with sighs, of regret, or perhaps in one or two cases relief, for we were then rather junior, and his infectious delight in puncturing pomposity could outrun his respect for rank. But no-one, however bruised by his brilliance, ever doubted the quality of his contribution, or the seriousness of his commitment. Beneath the Cavalier style lay real Roundhead rigour, commanding respect.

His rise through the Service was meteoric. Lord Carrington, who saw him at close quarters from the dual perspective of Foreign Secretary and NATO Secretary-General, recalls him as ‘admirable in character, and a good servant of this country’. All who got close to him agree; his hallmark was a deep sense of personal responsibility.

Public service is about causes not jobs; and a call to negotiate for one’s country is not lightly accepted. To be responsible for advancing the cause means believing in it, which entails mastering the issues and ensuring proper prior analysis to define the national interest. It means examining the other side’s – or, in a multilateral negotiation, all other sides’ – interests, aims, strengths, vulnerabilities. And, when battle begins, it means doing it all over again, night after night, searching for new tactical openings, or new threats. The task becomes all-absorbing, the best negotiators professionally obsessive. Michael Alexander was just such a man. Ever musing about motive, he fretted endlessly that a chance might be missed, or an ill-considered course chosen. Challenging unwise instructions, harrying unwise opponents, reflecting on past rounds, predicting and planning for future ones – it all mattered hugely for him. As fighting for any cause should.

Michael’s book, happily now published by RUSI, whose health and standing were one of his last good causes, gives a final glimpse of his true measure. Here we see again the dazzling sheen we so much miss, the agility in argument, the elegance in exposition. And here too we see how
firmly held – though constantly re-tested – were the convictions from which he spoke. Clarity rooted in, and refined from, complexity.

A Diplomatic Service needs both Cavaliers and Roundheads. The classification, matching person to post, can be tricky. But the professionalism, even pessimism, of a Roundhead mind concealed in Cavalier plume is a winning combination, and can safely be entrusted with the most challenging tasks: No. 10, or NATO, or negotiating with Soviet Russia. This book shows why, in tense times, my predecessors had such confidence in Alexander. History shows how right they were.

How fortunate our Service was to be able to call on such zest and commitment. How fortunate we now are to have this private footnote to the public record. Lord Carrington’s judgement is again confirmed.

The Lord Kerr of Kinlochard
Permanent Under Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Head of the Diplomatic Service, 1997-2002
Preface

Michael Alexander was one of the most distinguished public servants of his generation. He had what few officials have: a genuinely creative mind, combined with a determination – within the limits of propriety – to see his ideas on policy adopted by ministers. He was a man of penetrating intelligence, lucid and forceful to an extent that could sometimes seem overbearing to his interlocutors. He took no prisoners in argument, and was never less than formidably effective in action.

Many outsiders missed the other side of Michael’s character. His settled, even grim, belief in the fragility of human affairs, his fear that we are always hovering on the brink of disaster, ensured that in his analysis of policy and in the advice he gave to ministers he never succumbed to facile optimism. This was one of his great strengths as an official. But it reflected something profound and rather unexpected in his character. Despite his apparent self-confidence, and a brilliance of which he had no need to convince his fellow men, Michael was surprisingly uncertain of his own talents. He felt that he could never match the intellectual distinction of his father, the chess grand master who helped to break the Germans’ Enigma code. He would wonder whether all the effort that he put into his life and work was worth it in the end. This lack of confidence in his own star was one of the reasons why those of us who knew him well loved him so much.

The central issues of Michael’s career were the central issues of his time: the confrontation with the Soviet Union, and the instruments of defence and diplomacy by which this could best be managed. These issues are the subject of the book which he left behind him and which is here presented to the reader. The book blends rigorous analysis, personal reminiscence, detailed accounts of negotiations and policy discussions, and original documents, including a series of penetrating private letters on the Soviet Union and the future of the Cold War that he wrote in the 1980s to the then Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher. The book will be closely studied by scholars. But it also has a great deal to offer the general reader.

Michael concluded, perhaps as early as the 1960s when he was posted in Moscow, that the Soviet Union was a deeply flawedcolossus. It was
of course a military giant, though the extent of its military power was often overestimated by Western intelligence and Western politicians. Its leaders were deeply hostile to Western ideals and Western interests, and were determined to make their own prevail. But it also suffered from profound, and in the end fatal, weaknesses. Its system of centralized economic management was deeply flawed and inefficient, and by the 1960s could no longer guarantee the delivery and exploitation of the advanced technology which the Soviet leadership desperately needed if they were to sustain the competition with the West. This fatal weakness was compounded by a stifling political system, which gave insufficient outlet to the energies and creative initiative of the Soviet people. Combined with Russia’s age-old poverty, these systemic defects ensured that the Communists were never able to give their people the kind of prosperity that Western liberal capitalism was beginning to generate at an increasing rate. Driven by ideology and the natural ambitions of a would-be great power, the Soviet Union attempted to match the United States, above all in military power and imperial reach. That was beyond its grasp, even if it had managed to muster the support of like-minded allies. But the Warsaw Pact was a regime of satellites, on which in the last analysis the Soviet Union could not afford to rely.

Michael concluded that the Soviet system would sooner or later fall apart. The issue was: how could this inevitable collapse be managed by the rest of us, insofar as we had any influence. Michael was always acutely aware that if things went wrong the Cold War could – against the wishes of either side – turn hot with disastrous consequences for us all. Successful management depended on two things. The first was a willingness to negotiate with the Russians to manage and possibly slowly dismantle the dangerous confrontation, a matter on which both sides shared an obvious mutual interest. The second was the painstaking and sensitive preservation of a Transatlantic Alliance in which American leadership was both inevitable and desirable, but where the European and especially the British voice could play a significant and occasionally decisive role.

Michael’s understanding of the best way to negotiate with the Russians was honed in the dealings he had with them in Geneva over the human rights provisions of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe which culminated with the Helsinki agreement of 1975. A substantial part of his book is devoted to a description and analysis of these
exchanges. His conclusions are timeless. Russian negotiators proceed from the premise that anything they can get away with is legitimate, and that it is up to the other side to stop them. It is essential to be as tough in negotiation with the Russians as they are themselves. One must never lose sight of one’s own objectives, despite the abuse, mendacity, wedgedriving and occasional crude threats to which Russian negotiators are prone. One should neither overestimate nor underestimate their negotiating skills: a misplaced belief during much of the Cold War that the Russians would always triumph in negotiation helped to undermine Western self-confidence on a number of occasions. Russian negotiators have many skills, including a professionally scrupulous obsession with exact language. But they suffer from several important disadvantages. Fear of their principals in Moscow, particularly acute in Stalin’s time, undermines their ability to manoeuvre flexibly and creatively at the negotiating table. Despite their reputation for the patience of a chess player, they put themselves surprisingly often under debilitating time constraints – as they did in Geneva – because of the demands of their political masters. This particular weakness is not, of course, confined to Russian diplomacy. But Russian deviousness has often been counter-productive. In 1557 the ‘Company of the Merchant Adventurers to Moscow’ warned their agent there that the Russian ambassador in London

is verie mistrustfull, and thinketh everie man will beguile him. Therefore you had neede to take heede howe you have to do with him or with any such, and to make your bargaines plaine, and to set them downe in writing. For they bee subtil people, and do not alwaies speake the truth, and think other men to be like themselves.*

Three centuries later Teddy Roosevelt complained that the Russian diplomats with whom he had to negotiate had lied with ‘brazen and contemptuous effrontery’. All these weaknesses persist today, and they still undermine the effectiveness of Russian diplomacy. Michael argues that they can partly be explained by the Russians’ gnawing inferiority complex in their dealings with the outside world. It may also be due in part to the fact that for much of their history the Russians have had to negotiate with a succession of smaller neighbours, rather than with people of their own weight. There was one compensating advantage, at least in the Soviet

time. Once they had reached an agreement, however painfully, the Russians would observe its letter if not always its spirit. In this their record was probably no worse, and may have been somewhat better, than the record of the West.

Both in the Foreign Office, as ambassador in Vienna and NATO, and as Private Secretary to Mrs Thatcher, Michael was preoccupied with the central issues of defence and security on which he became a recognized authority well outside Britain. In the late 1960s he was already a passionate advocate of an effective European defence organization, not in opposition to America or to NATO, but as a device for making a more equal contribution to both. Only thus, he reasoned, could Europe exercise its full weight and command genuine respect from its main ally in the discussion and execution of policy in the common interest. He was never sanguine that the Europeans would ever devote the resources of men and money that were essential if his dream was to be realized. That in no way lessened his conviction that if the Europeans did not eventually put up, their powerful ally would expect them to shut up, and that this would be in the interests of neither.

During his final posting as ambassador to NATO from 1986 to 1992, Michael was in just the right place to make a major contribution to the Alliance’s faltering search for a new role as the enemy which it had been set up to counter disappeared – as he had foreseen that it would. He is generous – and correct – in his recognition that the end of the Cold War could have been much more frightening without the courage and imagination of Gorbachev, who had come to much the same conclusions as he had himself, and set out to dismantle the Soviet Union’s overextended positions abroad and to transform its sclerotic structures at home. A central event in this historical process was the reunification of Germany. Michael greatly admired Mrs Thatcher. But he is rightly critical of the obsessive and prejudiced blindness which led her – a modern-day Canute – to oppose something that was not only inevitable, but was an essential component in the final stabilization of Europe after nearly a century of bloodshed.

Once Michael’s official career was over he turned, perhaps surprisingly, to banking in Russia and Eastern Europe. He brought to his new tasks the drive, perspicuity, and negotiating skills that had served him so well as a diplomat. His new colleagues from the banking world – both
Russian and English – were among those closest to him in his last weeks and days. That is a measure of his success not only in his new profession, but as a remarkable human being.

Sir Rodric Braithwaite
UK Ambassador to the Soviet Union/
Russian Federation, 1988-1992
Editor’s Introduction

Lord Lyons, Britain’s Minister in Washington at the time of the American Civil War, once remarked that the faculty of influencing others by conversation was the ‘qualification peculiarly necessary to a diplomatist’. He was making an obvious, if sometimes neglected, point. The successful conduct of foreign relations depends to a large degree on the persuasive talents of individual diplomats, their ability to marshal arguments, their choice of negotiating tactics, and their assessment of the aims and predilections of those with whom they are in dialogue. They are skills of which Sir Michael Alexander had a thorough grasp. Their application to the management of the Cold War is one of the main themes of this memoir, the final draft of which Sir Michael completed shortly before his death in June 2002. In it he focuses upon his own role as diplomat and adviser, presenting what he himself describes as a ‘worm’s eye view of the East-West relationship’. Postings to Moscow and Singapore in the 1960s, service as Assistant Private Secretary first to Sir Alec Douglas-Home and then to James Callaghan during 1972-74, two years with the British Mission at Geneva, a spell as Private Secretary to Margaret Thatcher (1979-81), and subsequent appointments as British Ambassador to Austria (1982-86), and as United Kingdom Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council in Brussels (1986-92), nonetheless allowed him to reflect on people and events from perspectives that were very often anything but ground level. They also enabled him to develop his expertise in multilateral diplomacy and his longstanding interest in defence and strategic issues.

Six of the twelve chapters in this book are devoted by Sir Michael to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and the Vienna-based talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in central Europe. During the 1970s these constituted two of the principal multilateral negotiating fora for the achievement of détente in East-West relations. Yet, neither was initially regarded with any enthusiasm by officials in Whitehall, and both were considered likely to work to the detriment of Nato and to the benefit of a Soviet Union set upon the eventual ‘Finlandization’ of Western Europe. The Soviet government had, after all, for some time been pressing for a European security conference which
would endorse the territorial status quo established in the aftermath of the Second World War. And by 1972 the notion of MBFR appeared to respond more to the political preoccupations of an America emerging from the throes of war in Vietnam than to the perceived strategic needs of the Atlantic Alliance. Faced, however, by domestic and external pressures for a more conciliatory approach to relations with the East, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) sought to transform the Soviet rhetoric of pan-European co-operation into practical measures for broadening and ‘normalizing’ relations amongst peoples on both sides of Europe’s ideological divide. British diplomats, along with the representatives of other Western governments, tried to extend the scope of détente beyond the narrower concept of an easing of tensions between blocs, thus shifting the diplomatic agenda by introducing humanitarian issues, and forcing the Russians and their allies to negotiate on an unfamiliar terrain.

Their first major success came in the multilateral preparatory talks for the CSCE which opened at Dipoli, just outside Helsinki, in November 1972. Despite stiff Soviet resistance, they there managed to secure acceptance of a committee structure for the Conference’s second, or negotiating, stage, which would permit the consideration, not only of political and security issues, but also such ‘Basket III’ matters as human contacts (including foreign travel), culture and access to information. This was outlined in the ‘Final Recommendations’ agreed at the Stage I meeting in Helsinki of the Foreign Ministers of the thirty-five participating countries in July 1973. Progress in Stage II, which began in Geneva in the following September, was however painfully slow, though few of the original participants seem to have anticipated that the negotiations would last until the summer of 1975. Warsaw Pact delegations were primarily interested in the early drafting of a Declaration of Principles which would, among other things, affirm the ‘inviolability’ of existing frontiers. They sought, in turn, to qualify such texts as were proposed in the context of Basket III with wording designed to provide them with excuses for maintaining current restrictive practices, and pretexts for insisting that Western governments control media activities. When in September 1974 Michael Alexander joined the British delegation, as Counsellor in the United Kingdom Mission at Geneva, the outlook for the Conference was far from certain. Differences had emerged between the United States and its
European allies over negotiating objectives, and Washington seemed ready to contemplate concessions at Geneva for the sake of improved bilateral relations with Moscow. Toby Hildyard, the new British Head of Delegation, was far from optimistic. ‘There is’, he noted on 12 September, ‘a widespread hope but no general expectation that Stage II will be completed by Christmas.’

Michael Alexander was, like his colleagues, acutely aware of the importance of time and timing in the negotiations. Since the opening of Stage II Western diplomats had, in line with advice offered by Sir John Killick, Britain’s Ambassador in Moscow, been playing the Conference ‘as long and as hard … as necessary’, and in Chapter 3 Sir Michael concentrates on his own part in devising and executing a tactic intended to exploit Leonid Brezhnev’s urgent desire for a concluding summit. His narrative provides an object lesson in the art of diplomatic persuasion. He thus recounts how, in late April 1975, he suggested to London that the moment had come for the West to seek to break the current deadlock over the preparation of texts relating to human contacts and information by offering the Russians a ‘global solution’. They were to be confronted with a choice between making rapid and substantial concessions, but with an assurance that these represented the outer limit of the commitments they were to be called on to accept, and indefinite delay with no assurance that better terms would eventually be forthcoming. The course, which other Western delegations agreed to support, proved highly successful. A package deal was put to the Soviet delegation on 15 May; four days later Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, tackled Andrei Gromyko, his Soviet opposite number, on the basis of notes drafted by Michael Alexander; and on 28 May the Russians signalled their readiness to compromise, and the number of Basket III issues was reduced to manageable proportions. Texts still had to be finalized and in one instance Michael Alexander found himself acting as intermediary in a public lounge of the Conference Centre with the principal Soviet negotiators in one corner, and the Nato caucus in another – a pedestrian process which, in an age of Kissingerian ‘shuttles’, was appropriately dubbed ‘shuffle diplomacy’. But the global solution had achieved its end and made possible the Stage III Summit and the signing in August of the Helsinki Final Act.

The Basket III provisions of the Final Act allowed for the freer move-
ment of individuals and ideas. And, insofar as these created fresh opportunities for diplomats and dissidents to encourage political change in east and central Europe, they represented a considerable concession on Moscow’s part. Soviet conduct at Geneva clearly merited attention, and soon after Stage III Michael Alexander drafted his own analysis. This hitherto unpublished paper, ‘Negotiating with the Russians’, appears here as Chapter 5. Few students of Cold War diplomacy will fail to be fascinated by Sir Michael’s pen portraits of members of the Soviet negotiating team and his reflections on their mannerisms, preoccupations and rivalries. Of greater interest, however, may well be what the paper has to say about the shortcomings of the Soviet system when projected into the multilateral arena. The system’s strengths, Sir Michael thought, included ‘clarity of purpose, persistence and stamina’; but amongst its weaknesses were ‘its remarkable rigidity and unresponsiveness, except for short spasms of crisis, its insensitivity, inability to delegate and poor sense of proportion’. ‘In a world of fast moving and complex multilateral diplomacy’, he concluded, ‘these handicaps could become increasingly serious.’

Soviet diplomacy in the MBFR talks was no less inflexible. But where force reductions in central Europe were concerned there seemed to be little room for compromise on either side. The negotiations were very much an American-sponsored idea, to which the British and other Western allies subscribed in the hope that they could thereby assist the Nixon administration in containing neo-isolationist tendencies and withstanding Congressional pressures for unilateral cuts in United States forces in Europe. At the same time, the British government had to take account of public opinion. During the mid-1970s détente commanded considerable popular support throughout Western Europe, and Nato had to be seen to be active in its pursuit. Unlike the CSCE, however, the MBFR talks or, to give them their full title, the talks on the Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe, offered no scope for expanding the agenda of détente. Intensive study in Nato had revealed that any satisfactory MBFR agreement must require considerably larger withdrawals and reductions by the Warsaw Pact countries than by members of the Atlantic Alliance, and there seemed little chance of Western negotiators being able to persuade Moscow to accept an understanding on such a basis. The West sought
verifiable asymmetric reductions through phased negotiations, and the East began by offering ‘symbolic’ reductions of equal quantity, followed by reductions of equal proportion, all of which was to be achieved through a single negotiation. The result was a diplomatic war of attrition which eventually extended over fifteen years. Indeed, as Robin O’Neill, Britain’s last Head of Delegation to the talks, concluded in February 1989, ‘there was no moment when both sides really wanted an agreement, except on such one-sidedly favourable terms as to be negotiable’.

That the MBFR talks continued for so long was due in part to the mutual interest of governments of both East and West in upholding their public commitment to détente and disarmament. It was also recognized in Whitehall that failure to make headway at Vienna could be used to demonstrate to an otherwise complacent public the need to maintain an adequate Western defence effort. In this sense, an FCO Planning Paper of November 1976 argued that there was ‘a strong case for making MBFR the proving ground for détente’. Yet by April 1985, when Sir Michael Alexander’s duties as Ambassador in Vienna were combined with those of United Kingdom Head of Delegation, the moment seemed right for a fresh Western initiative designed to test the intentions of the recently-installed reformist leadership in Moscow. In Chapters 7 and 8 Sir Michael relates in detail how, working in close co-operation with his West German colleague, he was able to win the support of allied governments for a project which involved their acceptance of the substance of the latest Soviet proposals on force reductions, but which required agreement on the establishment of a workable verification regime. He also describes the tactics adopted for its presentation to the talks on 5 December 1985. Its virtual rejection by the Soviet delegation served, however, only to reinforce him in the view that ‘despite the apparent proximity of the two sides’ positions, the concepts underlying those positions were irreconcilable’. The Russians wished to preserve what they regarded as an equilibrium of forces in central Europe; and the West were putting forward proposals which appeared to threaten, or put at risk, the status quo.

Sir Michael Alexander nevertheless believed that the Western initiative had achieved its objective: it clarified the situation and forced the participants to take stock. Given the nature of the Cold War, it was unlikely that East-West relations in central Europe could ever have been definitively stabilized by negotiated agreements. That, Sir Michael contends, would
have required one or other side to adopt radical changes in its position, and it was to Mikhail Gorbachev’s credit that he came to recognize this. As it was, the talks continued until they were finally wound up early in 1989, to be followed by the more widely-based and ultimately more successful Conventional Forces in Europe talks. From the point of view of Western governments the MBFR talks had served at least one of their main purposes. They were originally perceived as, and in many respects remained, a damage limitation exercise by which they were able to stave off demands for unilateral force cuts while engaging in the search for multilateral reductions. ‘In the last analysis’, Sir Michael observes, ‘the MBFR talks were almost a metaphor for the Cold War itself – a negotiating confrontation for which there was no unilaterally acceptable outcome but whose infinitely tedious exchanges the participants were determined neither to abandon nor to allow to self-destruct.’

Within six years of his taking up his next appointment as Britain’s Permanent Representative to Nato, Sir Michael was to witness the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Yet, as what he had once termed the ‘dangerous decade’ drew to its close, he remained pessimistic about the state of Eastern Europe. While he evidently welcomed the dissolution of ‘an empire of incompetence, dreariness, corruption and frustration’, he was anxious about the disorder that might follow. It was with this in mind that in correspondence with No. 10, extracts from which are reproduced in Chapter 9, he urged Margaret Thatcher to support the idea of intensified European defence co-operation within the Atlantic Alliance. He also sought to persuade her of the importance of Britain adopting a sympathetic attitude towards German reunification. In both instances he was disappointed by a Prime Minister whose leadership and pragmatism he otherwise admired. During the late 1980s, he noted, ‘we missed or rejected, more opportunities than we took’. He likewise regretted his failure to rid the Prime Minister of her prejudices against his profession. ‘Although I tried more than once’, he confessed, ‘I was never able to make a serious inroad on the distaste for diplomacy as a trade and for the Foreign Office as an institution that Margaret Thatcher brought with her on election.’ For his part, Sir Michael felt that British diplomats had perhaps been too successful in serving the national interest, and that they had thereby helped sustain the illusions of politicians and the media about Britain’s capacity to influence world events. He had, however, few
personal doubts about diplomacy’s contribution to the management of the Cold War. Vigilance in reporting and resilience in negotiation had yielded their rewards.

Keith A Hamilton
Historian, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Introduction

The ‘Cold War’ is a shorthand description of the long drawn out confrontation between a group of capitalist democracies, led by the United States and NATO, and a group of state socialist nations, led by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. It lasted, broadly speaking, from 1945 to 1991. It was a confrontation that in those years conditioned every aspect of international relations, including above all the military. It was at times extraordinarily intense. Both sides demonstrated their willingness to use military violence (within Europe in the Soviet case). Many of the proxy wars around the periphery were hot enough and bloody enough by any criterion, the rightly feared superpower conflict in and over Europe never broke out.

The principal reason for the restraint ultimately exercised by both sides was, no doubt, that the strategy of mutually assured destruction (MAD) proved in the end to be just sufficiently sane to be credible and, therefore, stable. The numbers of nuclear weapons systems accumulated by each side were (and remain, despite the reductions now in train) grotesque. So was the scale of the conventional deployments. The intellectual theology underpinning deterrence was remarkably elaborate, not to say esoteric, even if much of the military planning and preparation, particularly for the use of nuclear weapons and for defence against them by, and in, the United Kingdom, was ramshackle in the extreme, notably in the earlier years. But, at least, all this compelled acknowledgement that open warfare on the Central Front would very probably have meant the end of European civilisation – if not much more. Public rhetoric notwithstanding, the private nervousness and extreme caution of most of those anywhere near ‘the button’ has become very apparent with the passage of time.

However, while a necessary explanation, the success of deterrence is not a sufficient explanation. The stakes for humanity may have been higher in the Cold War but societies have in the past destroyed themselves – Nazi Germany being an obvious recent example that Imperial Japan seemed only too ready to follow. There were certainly those on both sides who, mutatis mutandis, thought it would have been better to take the risk of being dead than that of being red. But, however significant in the
calculus of deterrence, such views never determined the relationship.

The saving characteristic of the East-West conflict was that at no point did communication definitively break down. It may often, even most of the time, have been a dialogue of the deaf. But, real though the Iron Curtain was, the Cold War’s front line was also an infinitely permeable zone. It was occupied down the years not only by the familiar politicians and commentators but also by many thousands of ordinary citizens. It was a zone where contacts took place, views were exchanged, negotiations conducted, and deals struck. Many, many people had a vested interest in keeping the show on the road and were in a position to do something about this. Against the odds, despite the extreme sharpness of the disagreements and the nefarious tactics indulged in by many, the zone was managed for most of the time in a relatively restrained and pragmatic fashion. The protracted and vital US/Soviet arms control negotiations are the best known and best described cases. But there were many others, governmental and non-governmental, commercial, academic and private. A significant part of my professional life was spent as one of the many junior, non-American managers involved – in the engine room, so to speak. This book is, inter alia, an attempt to suggest how it was that Armageddon came to be side-stepped, at least this time round. It does so as much through examples as analysis.

My lifelong involvement with the evolution of East-West relations began in the mid-1950s (1956-57) with my National Service as a Royal Navy Coder (Special) at HMS Royal Charlotte in Kiel, north Germany, eavesdropping on the Soviet Baltic fleet. That involvement ran right through to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, when I was lucky enough to be UK Ambassador to NATO. There should be enough material there for at least a monograph. But others, perhaps more ambitious on my behalf, have often suggested to me that I should anyway produce a more general account of my time as a civil servant. This is mainly because I spent a good deal of time as Private Secretary to actual and former Prime Ministers, including at moments of some drama (the 1974 Cyprus crisis, the Lancaster House negotiations on Rhodesia, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the IRA hunger strike etc.). I should, therefore, perhaps explain at the outset why I do not intend to oblige.

In the first place, a contribution to an explanation of why the Cold War did not go hideously wrong is vastly more important than fleshing
out the other episodes mentioned. This is the more so if, as I tend to believe, that explanation retains some still continuing relevance to the solution of current problems. Secondly, I would rather focus on passages for the handling and presentation of which I was myself personally and directly responsible in greater or lesser degree. They did not usually make the news, at the time or subsequently. They are not for that reason the less typical or relevant. They can be based on the record rather than on hindsight or ‘l’esprit d’escalier’. Thirdly, I do not have the ambition to perpetuate my role as a valet to the prominent – the more so since I like to think that my relationships with those for whom I worked involved trust as well as mutual respect. The instinct to ‘kiss and tell’, however useful for the historical record, has always seemed to me rather unattractive. The domestic details of life, of who said what to whom and when, in the Private Offices in the Foreign Office and at No. 10, which seem to fascinate so many, should in my view remain just that – domestic. In any case they have been more than adequately dealt with by others. Finally, I have a poor memory – essential to the enjoyment of a reasonably contented existence, at least for mortals subject to the ordinary vicissitudes of life. I have deliberately never kept a diary. It follows that any attempt on my part to produce a typical diplomatic memoir dealing with one’s role behind the arras – assuming I had thought it appropriate or worthwhile – would be doomed to failure.

As a result of the efforts of authors such as Percy Cradock and Peter Hennessy,¹ the balance in the case of recent UK history is beginning to be put right. But the political account of any period still largely consists, inevitably and rightly, of the memoirs of politicians together with historians’ subsequent efforts to assess and explain their doings. The politicians carry the responsibility for a government’s actions at any given point; they enjoy the praise and suffer the blame. It is inevitable, and probably proper, that they should enjoy the limelight in history as well as at the time. But anyone who has worked in government knows that the reality is very different. The modern world, domestic and more particularly international, is far too complex to be managed, still less dominated, by individuals however remarkable. Of course there are occasions when

¹ Authors respectively of: Know Your Enemy: How the Joint Intelligence Committee saw the World (London: John Murray, 2002); and The Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War (London: Penguin, 2002).
individual leaders have an altogether critical role: the parts played by Mikhail Gorbachev\(^2\) and Helmut Kohl\(^3\) in the final phase of the Cold War and the unification of Germany are obvious examples. In the same way, leaders like John Kennedy,\(^4\) Ronald Reagan\(^5\) and Margaret Thatcher\(^6\) can and do set the tone for a phase in their nations’ histories. That said, the achievements of any given administration are inevitably the product of an immeasurable variety of inputs and interactions, among them those contributed by more or less anonymous government servants. (Just as, the conspiracy theorists notwithstanding, the considered actions of governments, big business, newspaper owners and the rest only provide a very partial explanation for what actually happens in the world!) We all know this to be true but for the most part it is more convenient to ignore it.

Against this rather obvious background, it has occurred to me that it might be of some interest to future students of the years between 1966 and 1992 (over half the whole course of the Cold War) if I were to pull together a number of the letters and articles I wrote in the midst of, or in relation to, major episodes of the War and its immediate aftermath. (If not for the students, at least for my family since they seem concerned that I should leave behind some not entirely ephemeral evidence of my passage between the tides.) Much of the text that follows consists, therefore, not of recollections but of re-prints. Except insofar as it is necessary to set the documents in context, there is little attempt to be wise after the event and none to improve the record. The fallibility of memory, particularly where judgements and predictions are concerned, is unhappily notorious. The pieces are in no way exceptional: that is part of the point. The present selection is in large measure a random sample, reflecting simply the events in which I happened to be involved and/or the texts available for my use either because they were never part of the official record or because they are already in the public domain. As is inevitable, the Official Secrets Act still being what it is, they include neither unpublished FCO

\(^2\) General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), 1985-91. He was Soviet President, 1988-91.
\(^3\) Federal German Chancellor, 1982-98.
\(^4\) United States President, 1961-63.
\(^5\) United States President, 1981-89.
\(^6\) British Prime Minister, 1979-90.
documents nor the advice, mostly oral in any case, I provided as Private Secretary to those for whom I worked in that capacity. These last were Lord Trevelyan, 7 Lord Home, 8 Lord Callaghan 9 and Lady Thatcher (to give them their grandest honorifics, although none of them were so titled when I was with them).

Recounting the incidents and impressions that follow should serve, among other things, to show how a relatively ordinary diplomat was thinking about international security problems in those anxious years. It may suggest how much, or how little, we understood of what was going on around us. The attitudes and views revealed are for the most part, I think, rather typical of those that British officials brought to the confrontation (and that were accepted most of the time by most British politicians). In my judgement they served the country and the international community pretty well. Some of the examples may suggest how much bureaucratic action, not all of it politically insignificant, takes place with little or no involvement on the part of politicians. They will, of course, show how comprehensively civil servants are on occasion ignored – for good or ill. Finally, they may show that civil servants, at least on occasion, are prepared to offer advice they know will be unwelcome and quite possibly, therefore, unhelpful to their careers. However agreeable for the Ministers concerned, it will be a considerable loss to effective governance if the currently fashionable trend for Private Secretaries, including the Prime Minister’s, to be replaced with politically selected Policy Advisers results in more sycophancy and less objectivity or bloody-mindedness.

The selection starts with a talk delivered in Singapore in 1967 about the Cultural Revolution and ends with my retirement, early in 1992, as UK Permanent Representative to NATO. The evolution in the international scene across that period was altogether extraordinary – but not, I shall hope to show, entirely unforeseen or uninfluenced by ordinary

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7 Sir Humphrey (later Lord) Trevelyan was Deputy Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office in 1962, and subsequently British Ambassador in Moscow, 1962-65.
8 Sir Alec Douglas-Home (formerly 13th Earl of Home and later Baron Home of the Hirsel) was British Foreign Secretary, 1960-63, Prime Minister, 1963-64, and Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 1970-74.
9 James (later Lord) Callaghan was British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 1974-76, and Prime Minister, 1976-79.
mortals working behind the scenes – contrary, perhaps, to what many commentators and some memoirists would like to believe.

Students of the period will find no reference whatever in the relevant British political memoirs (e.g. those of Harold Wilson,\textsuperscript{10} Jim Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher and Geoffrey Howe\textsuperscript{11}) to the two main passages of East-West negotiation described in this book. Nor will they find any reference to me personally. The convention that dictates obscurity for civil servants seems to me proper and to be in general worth preserving (even if practice may be taking us in a different direction). Historians struggle against the personalisation of history while recognising that it is unavoidable if the record is to be made at all digestible. But of course it does involve a vast distortion of historical truth. A large part of the activities that determine the strength of societies, and hence their mutual relationships, take place outside the political arena and beyond the direct influence of politicians. Even within that arena, political leaders give direction to, and take advice from, large organisations comprising considerable numbers of individuals with views of their own, engaged in undertakings many of which are brought to the attention of Ministers rarely if at all. Substantial agreements, domestic and international, invariably and unavoidably contain language that has not been the subject of rigorous or detailed reflection at the political level. Equally inevitably such agreements tend to be a product of myriad other events, great and small.

Two Cold War initiatives that I, more or less by chance, found myself in a position to take are dealt with in this book. Arguably, though more evidence is needed from the Russian side, they were eventually of some real importance in the winding down of that war. Objectively speaking they should perhaps loom larger than some incidents to which political autobiographers have devoted a good deal of space. The fact that Ministers were largely unaware of the episodes at the time or, insofar as they took any notice of them, considered them of very limited importance is not a criticism of their judgement. I myself had no clear idea that the initiatives, while very entertaining to assemble and manage, would be of any particular significance. But it may serve to confirm, yet again, the complexity of political reality and the futility of ambitions to write truly

\textsuperscript{10} Prime Minister, 1964-70 and 1974-76.

\textsuperscript{11} Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 1983-89.
accurate or objective, as opposed to persuasive or coherent, accounts of even the recent past!

It may be appropriate to add one specific comment on historical memoirs, including this one insofar as it deserves such a description. By definition, autobiography focuses on incidents concerning the author. It glamorises personal involvement and the personal encounter. At the outset of *The Downing Street Years*, Margaret Thatcher comments that the ‘dryness’ of the official papers she had had to read in preparing her book confirmed in her mind its value. ‘Some stories you have to live in order to tell.’ No doubt. The papers to which she is referring are presumably civil service memoranda, submissions, records of discussions and the like. I daresay they often do less than justice to her recollection. But in fact, these texts in the end usually matter as much as, if not more than, the personal chemistry of and exchanges between political leaders. The texts have a durability, a relevance and a breadth of distribution within and beyond government machines that usually exceeds the grasp of Ministers. (To some extent, the same is true of the civil servants themselves.) The Helsinki Final Act, to which Chapters II – V of this book are devoted, is a classic case in point.

There are any number of examples of this truism. Let me cite a couple of others with which I am personally familiar, but which will not figure much hereafter. The extent to which Margaret Thatcher (or any other individual politician) controlled the content of, say, the communiqués of the NATO Summits in Brussels (in 1988 and 1989), in London (1990) and Rome (1991) was distinctly limited, a few sentences at most. The rest was written by officials in Brussels and in Washington, often pursuing their own agendas, always conscious of the need to carry other governments and their representatives along. Of course, there were arguments when the leaders assembled – sometimes prolonged and bitter. But these were almost invariably focused on one or two sentences or issues. Life was simply too short for everyone present to debate the text as a whole. Whether the sentences that mattered to Margaret Thatcher, with which she deals in *The Downing Street Years*, Mitterrand or Genscher were the

13 François Mitterand was French President, 1981-95.
14 Hans-Dietrich Genscher was Federal German Foreign Minister, 1974-92.
ones that mattered to history is a question for debate.

For the purposes of this volume, the relevant point is that neither the CSCE\textsuperscript{15} initiative nor the MBFR\textsuperscript{16} initiative described in it would have been effective – or even possible – had not every involved Western government supported them. Even the Americans could not have carried them through on their own (as it was, American support in both instances was lukewarm). That consensus was the product of weeks (in one case) and months (in the other) of low or median level discussion and compromise prompted by an out of the way diplomat with firm but essentially apolitical and middle of the road views as to what needed to be done. This sort of reality, which of course applied \textit{a fortiori} to the much better known NATO initiatives described later in the book, is irritating to conviction politicians reluctant to accept that the views of others may have as much or more weight as their own or, still more inconvenient, that medium-sized European powers have not for some time been in a position alone to achieve their national objectives. I am all for political leaders with passionately held beliefs. It is such people who change the world. It is less obvious that they are the people who make the world work or, at least, who keep it going. For most purposes Madison was right (‘compromise, compromise and compromise’ are the three principles on which good government must be based) and Countess Markievicz, as portrayed by Cecil Day-Lewis, wrong (‘an iota of compromise and the cause is lost’).

It follows that more civil servants should be encouraged, after the event or after their retirement, to put on record their personal accounts of episodes with which they have been involved. The question of publication is a separate one, involving obvious security and commercial considerations. But it seems inevitable that current restrictions will be progressively relaxed. Initiatives like the British Diplomatic Oral History Project should be encouraged. I would like to think that this volume might also help to carry the process forward.

\textsuperscript{15} Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.
\textsuperscript{16} Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions.
Chapter 1
Prelude
Moscow, Singapore and the Cultural Revolution

I joined the Foreign Service in June 1962, at the relatively advanced age of twenty-six. By then, in addition to my two years in the Navy, I had had three splendid years at Kings College, Cambridge and two even happier years in the United States (at Yale and Berkeley) as a Harkness Fellow of the Commonwealth Fund. As the Fellowship’s founders intended, I returned from the United States a committed Atlanticist and Americanophile. My father, himself a prominent figure in an important Foreign Office outpost, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), was opposed to my joining the Diplomatic Service and would have preferred me to go into business or finance. I was never quite sure whether this was because he thought that, after generations of Irish and antipodean farmers, academics, country lawyers, clerics and ne’er-do-wells, it was time for a member of the family to make some money; or whether because, despite my having been a scholar at St Paul’s and Kings, as well as a Harkness Fellow, he doubted that I was quite smart enough to compete successfully (his standards were very high!). Anyway, my history studies had left me with an abiding interest in international relations. National Service had left me with a German fiancée, Traute, whom I was anxious to marry. To the surprise of those few dons at King’s in the know, we married in the middle of my final year, a couple of days before the Harkness Awards were announced. The Fund regulations stipulated that if my wife was to accompany me across the Atlantic to Yale we had to be married before the award was announced. So we went to the Register Office (and the Gay Hussar) the previous Friday and spent an agreeably nervous weekend waiting to see whether the envelope the postman
dropped through the letterbox would be thick (lots of forms to complete) or thin (‘sorry to inform you’). Happily it was thick and we remain together to this day. Business did not then appeal to either of us. I saw no point in being an academic unless one was going to be really good at it or in being a politician unless one was prepared to forego a private life. As a result, I cannot now remember ever having been seriously interested in any career other than that of diplomacy. Fortunately, before going to the United States, I passed the much feared civil service entrance exam comfortably enough.

MI6, always with an eye on the main chance, paid me a visit in my rooms at Kings just before the Harkness Fellowships were due to be awarded and while the Civil Service exams were still in progress. They undertook that if I failed in either enterprise they would fund two years in the US in return for a promise on my part to join the ‘Friends’ on my return. To my vast amusement, a group of fellow Kingsmen interrupted this rather fraught encounter when I was engaged in declining the offer. I never knew how, but they sized up the situation accurately and by the evening it was widely rumoured that ‘Alex’, as I then was, had sold out to the spooks. I have often wondered whether it was the sceptical, but well connected Noel Annan, Provost at Kings and member of the Harkness Selection Committee, who tipped off MI6 as to my possible availability. The tentacles of the Cold War reached far and wide in those days!

It is, I suppose, possible that another reason for my father’s doubts about my choice of career may have been that he suspected that I, like he himself, would never succeed in being more than a partly committed and relatively civil servant. He himself always refused promotion up the ladder that would certainly have led to the Directorship of GCHQ. He felt guilty about this (he was aware that my mother would have liked the title) but never seems to have hesitated. Despite his considerable administrative and organisational talents, Director of Research was the job he wanted and the one he held for a quarter of a century. He knew that I had probably inherited ‘awkward genes’ (for lack of a better phrase) from both parents. One of my mother’s grandparents, James McGill, had been a leader of the miners’ ‘rebellion’ in 1854 at the Eureka Stockade in Australia’s Victoria gold fields. The Army put down the revolt with some bloodshed. McGill (or McGillicudy as he actually was, an Irishman who had reached Victoria via California) escaped the stockade disguised
somewhat ingloriously as a woman and settled in Melbourne. His grand
daughter, my late mother, spent her mid-twenties, after Melbourne
University, knocking around the New Hebrides and other Pacific islands
on a tramp steamer – not that belonging to her sea captain father, Ronald
Neate, who had simply disappeared, together with his ship, earlier in her
life! She subsequently spent two years (1928-29) at the Sorbonne. She
always claimed to have lived for a while in the room in which Oscar Wilde
died and to have been pulled to the station in a carriage by lamenting fel-
low students when she returned to Australia. (I still have excellent litho-
graphs by Matisse and Foujita that she acquired then.) Well into her six-
ties she took the six day journey on the Trans-Siberian railway from
Nakhodka to visit us in Moscow. When I went down to Moscow’s Dalno-
Vostochnaya station to meet her, I found a riotous celebration in progress
on the platform, her farewell party!

While at Royal Charlotte, I for my part was heavily involved in what
the Navy knew, without being able to adduce any proof, was a mutiny of
a kind. (We arranged for the Baltic Fleet to go off the air i.e. we ceased to
be able to hear it.) A later intake of national service coders was told to
give me a wide berth on the grounds that I was the ‘rotten apple in the
barrel’. A Chief Petty Officer, having subsequently sent me up a radio
mast in a snow storm to chip free a directional aerial that had been frozen
in place, was heard by a colleague muttering, far below: ‘Fall off, you bas-
tard, fall off.’ I was then, and still am, immensely flattered. He had, it
must be admitted, a good deal of justification for his distaste. The great
thing about National Service, at least on the ‘lower deck’, was that for two
years the identity of the opposition was absolutely clear. It was anyone
in a position of authority, anyone with stripes on their sleeves and officer’s
rank, commissioned or non-commissioned. It was not that our superiors
were unfriendly or unkind. (On hearing that the railway police had
turned up to interview me about a rail warrant scam that our intake had
organised from Cornwall, the only reaction of the elderly Marine major
responsible for camp discipline was to express regret that I had not briefed
him earlier!) The officers’ fault was simply to be on the wrong side.

So why did I end up for two years in the Navy – which I have never
regretted or regarded for a moment as a waste of time. Partly because a
year as the Senior Under Officer in the RAF section of the Cadet Force at
St Paul’s had demonstrated to my complete satisfaction that I was not cut
out to be a pilot – at least of powered aircraft! Why Russian? Because my form master, the greatly admired Philip Whitting whose opinion no-one took lightly, had told me the only sensible way to make use of National Service was to acquire a skill. He favoured joining the Army as a driver in a motor transport pool. There one would presumably have learnt all there was to know about the internal combustion engine. His advice may have been sound. But the Army was out for me because I had been infuriated by an incident when Field Marshall Montgomery had turned up an hour late for an Annual Parade of the same Cadet Force. As a result of the delay, on an excessively hot summer’s day, an acquaintance of mine had fainted face forward on the parade ground and been hospitalised. Unforgivably, in my eyes, Montgomery had failed to indicate the slightest regret. Fifty years on, fairly or unfairly, the incident still irritates me. So Russian in the Navy it turned out to be. My interest in things Russian, which has had such a crucial impact on the rest of my life, dates from that time.

Interestingly, neither MI6 nor the Foreign Office seems to have taken the slightest interest in my deplorable National Service record. (The late John Fieldhouse, when Chief of the Defence Staff and a good friend, once referred disparagingly to it.) After I had been in the Service for some fifteen years, when I was Head of Personnel Operations Department, I found myself giving a job interview to a colleague who, it turned out, had been a year or two behind me at Royal Charlotte. On discovering this shared past, he suddenly said: ‘My goodness, surely you are not the Coder Alexander?’ It turned out that I was. Given the circumstances of the conversation, this unexpected glance over my shoulder was distinctly gratifying.

My first job was in Central Department, where my principal recollections are of the Cuban missile crisis; of struggling to cope with the aftermath of the Skopje earthquake (which, not untypically, I was left to deal with more or less on my own a month or so after I joined the Service); and of senior diplomats, men like Sammy Hood and Nicholas Cheetham, who plainly inhabited a different and older world than me. I

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1 Viscount Hood was Deputy Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign (from 1968 Foreign and Commonwealth) Office, 1962-69.
2 Sir Nicholas Cheetham was Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, 1961-64
was then (October 1963) posted to Moscow as Private Secretary to the Ambassador, Humphrey Trevelyan. Since the Royal Navy had taught me some Russian, this was a relatively rational move on the part of Personnel Operations Department. I was lucky enough to be in the Soviet Union at the time of Nikita Khruschev’s fall from power (and Harold Wilson’s simultaneous accession to power) and to be able to enjoy the short lived thaw which characterised Khruschev’s last years in office and Brezhnev’s first. (Trevelyan was regularly asked whether he had foreseen Khruschev’s fall. He usually said that he had not but that he did not feel too guilty since Khruschev himself had evidently been no less surprised. Not original but a consolation to which I had occasion to revert later in my career.)

The perceptive, and curiously ageless, portraits of my family painted by the now well known artist Andrei Zveriev, during an illegal visit to the Embassy compound, still hang on our walls. Zveriev, who died some years ago, was smuggled past the Soviet guards hidden under blankets in the back of our Ford Cortina. As the afternoon passed and Zveriev became ever more inebriated on our whisky, the question or how to get him out again loomed ever larger. Fortunately by the end he had been more or less tranquilised, or at least stunned.

This is not an autobiography and a blow by blow account of my time on the Naberezhnaya Morisa Toreza would be out of place and of no great interest. (Today the embankment is once more the Sofiiskaya Naberezhnaya. It was always a minor irritant that our splendid Embassy, now Residence, should have been on a street named after a French Stalinist.) But the impressions I brought away from two years in Moscow inevitably shaped in considerable measure the approach to Cold War issues that will be in evidence throughout this book. Of the many such impressions a few, all based on specific episodes that have lived with me ever since, may be worth mentioning in passing. They do little justice to the complexity of the Russian enigma. But whole libraries have been devoted to that subject and in the last analysis the actions of most in-

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1 Khruschev was General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) from 1953. He was forced to relinquish power on 15 October 1964.

2 Leonid Brezhnev was General Secretary of the Central Committee of CPSU, 1964-82. He was also Executive President of the Soviet Union, 1977-82.

3 i.e. Maurice Thorez.
individuals are determined by a few rather simple perceptions, not to say prejudices.

The Russians were, and remain, an enormously friendly, gifted, subtle and intellectual people, more conscious than any other nation with which I have ever had to deal both of their greatness and of the cruelties of history. They are the only people with whom I have ever (at least since I was a student) sat up all night talking – as I did on one memorable evening in Leningrad, during a visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company, with, among others, the actor Nikolai Cherkasov (Eisenstein’s Ivan the Terrible, a role for which he claimed to have received ‘guidance’ from Stalin in person). The fact that my father was a very well known amateur chess player, who had in his day defeated both the world champion, Botvinnik, and the then Soviet champion, Bronstein in over the board play, was a hugely useful talking point with all Russians. I made a point of holding out for some thirty moves in a simultaneous game against Petrosian, the world champion in 1964. It hardly counted, since I only did it by playing to last as long as I could, but it was always worth a mention! (My daughter, a development banker, was astonished to discover recently in a remote corner of Georgia that Hugh Alexander is still a name to conjure with there.) Chess was far more useful, for instance, than the fact that I had myself won a silver medal (with the British épée fencing team and immediately ahead of the Russians) in the Rome Olympics three years earlier and had captained England in the home internationals. (Had we ever discussed the matter, the Russians would certainly have been more interested in the fact that at twenty-seven my grandfather, Conel Alexander, had been in his day the youngest full professor of engineering in Ireland than that he had been a well-known Irish rugby player and President of the Irish Rugby Union. But they might, I suppose, have drawn the not unreasonable conclusion that the Alexanders were a rather competitive clan.)

The Russians, at the same time, are among the most devious, administratively incompetent, authoritarian and instinctively secretive people I have ever encountered. My youngest son was born in Moscow. He was, I have been told, the first child born into a British diplomatic family in Moscow since the end of the Second World War. My wife, very sensibly, refused to follow the recommended practice of fleeing to Helsinki or London, arguing that she was living with her family in a world capital.
But despite the personal kindness and thoroughness of those who had ‘supervised’ the pregnancy, the bureaucracy was clearly inconvenienced by the birth itself. The ambulance ‘got lost’ on the way to the designated hospital (at 3 a.m.) – the Diplomatic Hospital that would normally have been used being closed for repairs. The hospital officials refused to admit my wife, by then well into labour, when we arrived – until I lost my temper with them on the pavement. At least, I thought that was the explanation. In fact, it later emerged that what they were doing was making time, in a peculiarly Russian way, while clearing a six-bed ward so that my wife would not have a chance to swap experiences with Russian mothers. In common with Russian fathers, I was not allowed to visit her in the hospital and had to stand, unhappily, in the street waving to one of a number of tiny figures at a window several floors up. No less surprising, at least to me, was that the embassy doctor was not allowed to visit her either. He only got access when we barred the Soviet embassy doctor in London from visiting Russian patients in hospitals there!

This primitive, tit for tat approach applied to virtually every aspect of the East-West relationship. Concessions and compromises were only extracted with the greatest difficulty and had to be balanced by reciprocal concessions that could at least be presented as being of equal value. In a relationship characterised by a fundamental absence of trust and mutual confidence, this was perhaps inevitable. What made life so difficult for many of those engaged in handling the problems on a day to day basis was the reluctance of politicians and commentators, on both sides, to acknowledge publicly the true nature of the relationship and of the bargains struck. There was the usual mixture of motives for the widespread hypocrisy: cynicism, naivety, opportunism and ignorance as always prominent among them.

The Soviet system was undoubtedly a meritocracy of a kind. The merit that got one to the top of the party was primarily an ability to dissemble and to guard one’s back. Some of the survivors of the Stalin era whom I encountered, albeit at a distance, like Kosygin, Mikoyan and Gromyko, were evidently also intelligent and dedicated men. But too

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6 Alexei N. Kosygin was Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, 1964-80.
7 Anastas I. Mikoyan was First Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, 1955-64, and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, 1964-65.
8 Andrei A. Gromyko was Soviet Foreign Minister, 1957-85.
many of their colleagues were dreary nonentities, ignorant of the world, interested only in self-promotion and the enviable privileges available to the nomenklatura. I remember one Deputy Prime Minister who came to a lunch at the Embassy to celebrate the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963. With the Ambassador’s agreement I had placed Andrei Gromyko, the Foreign Minister and principal Soviet negotiator of the Treaty, as guest of honour. Despite having had the decision carefully explained to him, the Deputy Prime Minister, in protocol terms the senior guest, was furious. He sulked ostentatiously throughout the meal and stormed out before the coffee was served. His fury reached epic proportions when, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the security guard on duty, he discovered at the front door that the official car into which he had dived, slamming the door behind him, belonged to Gromyko!

The ignorance of Western politicians about the Soviet system was, of course, not much less than that of their politicians about us. On one memorable but hardly atypical occasion, an admittedly very tired Rab Butler, conversation flagging during a call on the Rector of Moscow University, asked whether the University received a subsidy from the central authorities and, if so, how large it was! One’s own personal astonishment was, happily, well outdistanced by that of the Rector. He, moreover, had to reply. The outsiders present tended to assume that no British Foreign Secretary could be quite so ill-informed or uncaring as this exchange implied and that the questions must conceal a subtlety beyond normal understanding. More practically if somewhat emotionally, a number of the junior embassy staff, including me, had decided by the end of the visit to vote Labour at the impending election.

The blatancy, inefficiency and incomprehension attendant on running a country as vast as the Soviet Union through a centralised and secretive bureaucracy often had what seemed to the overseas resident bizarre consequences. The authorities were, for instance, reluctant to admit that most of the country was closed to foreigners. To have done so would apparently have conflicted with the image of their state that they sought to convey. We diplomats, irritatingly for our hosts, kept asking for

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9 Richard Austen (later Lord) Butler was Foreign Secretary in Sir Alec Douglas-Home’s Conservative government, 1963-64.
approval to visit towns that were formally speaking open even if all too obviously closed. I encountered an ingenious, but typical, ploy when trying to visit Gorki (now once more Nizhni Novgorod). I was granted approval but discovered when I tried to buy my ticket that the would-be traveller could only leave Moscow if he had a valid return ticket and that the return ticket could only be validated at the putative destination. Catch 22 had a long history in Russia – certainly from well before the October Revolution. (Proportionate percentages of Western countries were closed to Soviet diplomats but one may doubt whether most of our Soviet colleagues experienced any great difficulty in reaching any part of the UK that they really wanted to visit.)

Given that every objective observer outside the Soviet Union who took the slightest interest in such matters knew perfectly well what the reality was, the Party was extraordinarily persistent in promoting and peddling its fairy tales. Perhaps its leaders were taken in by their own ‘fellow travellers’ and thought informed Western opinion had never moved beyond Wells, Shaw and The Left Book Club. More probably they were too disillusioned to care and too entrenched in their system to think it worth trying to change even its most pointless manifestations. The more reflective of them were no doubt always conscious that genuine reforms, even if apparently minor, would have risked unravelling the whole structure. Hence the difficulties, described in the following chapters, of negotiating the CSCE texts.

The inefficiency of the Soviet Union’s internal trading arrangements has often been described. Combined with the consequences of decades of subsidies, it meant for instance that as an internal traveller one encountered traders in markets and on Aeroflot flights for whom it was profitable to fly hundreds, if not thousands, of miles to sell a suitcase full of tomatoes or a consignment of brooms. In retrospect, the surprise is that the whole structure did not collapse far sooner. As for the underlying coherence of the state, I was much struck by a conversation with a Georgian peasant in the back of a rural bus in the foothills of the Caucasus. His Russian was so bad that he appeared to assume that I was a Russian, which did not greatly please him. Groping for something to boast about, he finally pointed to the mountains and said ‘Haven’t got any thing like these around Moscow, have you?’ On my admitting as much, he muttered ‘Thought not’ and lapsed into a rather sulky silence. I did
not know whether to be more startled by his belief that I was a Muscovite or by his ignorance of the Russian heartland. The deeply contrived nature of the Soviet Union has since become only too apparent.

Having said all that, Russia remains one of the very few countries for which I ever feel nostalgic. Partly, of course, this is a function of the point in my life at which my stay in Moscow occurred. Partly it reflects the extraordinary memories one accumulated. Who could resist a country where one had the opportunity to listen to Marlene Dietrich, swathed in yards of white mink, singing ‘where have all the flowers gone’ in a theatre on the ground floor of the apartment block in which Khruschev, rightly or wrongly, was rumoured to be spending his retirement. Or resist a people prepared for year after year to tolerate a system where such a simple transaction as buying a loaf of their excellent bread routinely involved joining three separate queues in the same shop – one to get an appropriate ticket, one to pay, and one to collect the purchase. But the important reason is that Russia is a great and serious nation by any standard. A positive consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union for me personally has been the opportunity to re-engage with the country in a private capacity. Over the last several years I have been a director of various banking enterprises in Moscow (and in Kiev), latterly of one of the most successful, Renaissance Capital. My experience has been, I suspect, not untypical. The Russia that I encountered in the 1960s and across the negotiating table co-exists with that now being driven by a small but rapidly growing minority of dynamic entrepreneurs and bankers. Renaissance Capital, for instance, is staffed by ardent young Russians, highly intelligent, committed and willing to work enormously long hours in pursuit of targets set by the mainly Western partners. The contrast with thirty years ago (‘They pretend to pay us, so we pretend to work.’) could hardly be more dramatic. Of course the gulf between the privileged and the unprivileged, between the metropolitan élites and the provincial masses, is no less great now that was then. But at least it is open and acknowledged. The Soviet dream has evaporated. The gap between it and the underlying realities had been intolerably great from the outset. The collapse of the illusion has been painful and humiliating in the extreme. Recovery has a very long way to go. Russia is not about to become a liberal democracy and may never be one. Much of the old self-serving, bureaucratic mentality survives – it could hardly be other-
wise since someone has to administer the country and one cannot simply discard a generation or more of middle-ranking and junior officials. Consequently the Salvation Army can still be banned on the grounds that it is a para-military organisation. As with Britain, it is likely to be some time before Russia finds its role in the world and the Russians come to terms with it, whatever it is. But, despite the oligarchs; alcoholism, tuberculosis and declining life-expectancy; Chechnya, the Kursk and the rest, the chances of economic growth on a sound basis, of integration with the global community, may be better now than at any point in the last ninety of so years. Let us hope so. The Russian people have long since earned a break.

From Moscow I went, in November 1965, to Singapore to become the diplomatic member of the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS) working in the military HQ at Phoenix Park for the Commander-in-Chief Far East (CINCFE). This was the first of several jobs I was eventually to enjoy during my career that involved close (and for me, notwithstanding Montgomery, invariably fruitful) co-operation with the armed forces and the Ministry of Defence. The change could hardly have been more abrupt or complete: from the gloom, cold and tensions of the Soviet capital in late autumn to the dazzling extremes of a great tropical harbour and city, still trailing wisps of its romantic and imperial past. The Raffles Hotel and the Cricket Club, dominated by Somerset Maugham characters who ordered drinks by shouting ‘Boy’ as loud as they could, without even looking over their shoulder to see if anyone was within earshot. Malaya’s jungle, hills and tropic islands, like Tioman and Langkawi which in those days were completely undeveloped with little on them beyond fishermen’s huts and District Officer resthouses offering mosquito netted bunks and dubious food, seemed inconceivably remote from Suzdal or Yakutsk, from Lakes Sevan or Baikal. And yet in some absurd way they all then represented disparate elements in a single, well-established struggle for ideological predominance. My own abrupt transition from one environment to the other indicated as much. So, more importantly, did the continued murderous activity in northern Malaya of communist terrorists. Globalisation got under way a long time ago.

In plunging from Moscow to Singapore, I also abandoned the endless bureaucratic struggles that constituted the ‘Cold War’ for a ‘Confrontasi’ that was, albeit on a minor scale, a distinctly hot conflict.
During the early months of my two-and-a-half years in Singapore, my principal preoccupation was with the curiously low-key war being fought on Malaysia’s behalf against Indonesia, a country with which we were in full diplomatic relations. The affair was serious enough – a Gurkha won a VC (one of the last ever likely to be awarded) for bravery in Kalimantan not long after my arrival – and would have had major Cold War repercussions had it been lost. But in the event, we were successful and the conflict now looks like a hangover from the past, of limited significance for the future. Its low profile also owes a good deal to the fact that much of the fight was conducted clandestinely, both in terms of the incursions of UK forces onto Indonesian territory and of our efforts to destabilise the Soekarno regime. I played little or no part in the latter. My own daily assessments, mostly delivered orally at morning briefings for the Commander-in-Chief and the single service chiefs, were based on very highly classified intelligence, were unrecorded as well as extremely detailed and would be of little continuing interest. Soekarno’s fall from power in the spring of 1966 and the appalling blood letting that accompanied it brought an end to Confrontasi. (More than half a million people, perhaps a lot more, lost their lives in a few weeks and in one of the worst of the world’s many forgotten post-war atrocities. The victims were said to be members of the Indonesian Communist Party, the PKI, as though that were an excuse. They were in the main, and certainly more importantly, Chinese. A few weeks after the slaughter had subsided, I made a rather fraught tour of Java by car and visited the consulate we then maintained in Surabaya. The consul gave me a graphic description of the numbers of corpses that had every morning floated down the river that flowed past the foot of his garden, attesting to the killings up-river the previous night. I learnt then that the darkness has many ‘hearts’. In 1966, Agent Orange and Pol Pot still lay in the future.)

With General Suharto in control in Djakarta (and destined to remain there for thirty years), attention at the Headquarters in Singapore focussed on the war in Vietnam and the general insurgency situation in South-East Asia. The Communist Terrorist Organisation (CTO) on the Malay/Thai border for instance, had recently killed a dozen locals in a

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10 Ahmed Soekarno (Sukarno) was Indonesia’s radical nationalist President, 1945-66.
11 General T.N.J. Suharto was Indonesian President, 1966-98.
single incident. On these broader issues, my views, like those of other junior UK civilians, were regarded by many of our seniors, particularly on the military side, as more or less heretical. (A copy of a despatch from Bangkok, making it clear that SEATO\textsuperscript{12} had no future, was memorably minuted by the then CINCFE, Air Chief Marshall Sir John Grandy: ‘This is treason.’) I did not believe that South-East Asia could be treated as a unit and considered it ‘very hard to apply experience in one S.E Asian country to another’ (October 1966). The domino theory therefore struck me as unconvincing. I was gloomy (rightly) about the ‘crippling effects’ of the large US military presence in Vietnam and argued that ‘a major military presence [in the region] may retard or entirely prevent the development of Asian self reliance’. Visits to Saigon persuaded me that the American military machine, while staffed by many able and highly professional individuals, was top heavy, over-elaborate and disunited. The intelligence machine had enormous difficulty in coping with the flood of raw material e.g. in getting real time interpretation of photographic material from the analysts to the decision-makers. I was sceptical (wrongly) about the prospects for the region has a whole. I thought it would take some little time for the area to achieve economic take-off and that there would be further trouble in the region from communist insurgency.

A particular source of concern was north-east Thailand. At the end of 1966 I spent a week travelling, north to south, by jeep along the border between that region and Laos, having entered Thailand from Vientiane across the Mekong by dugout canoe. It was an interesting journey that affected my attitude towards insurgency as a manifestation of the Cold War, both then and more importantly subsequently (i.e. when hindsight began to kick in!). Many of the features that had already begun to go hideously wrong in Vietnam were visible in embryo in northeast Thailand: a harsh and impoverished hinterland that had little connexion with the relative prosperity of the capital, Bangkok; an inadequate (in numbers and professionalism) police force, often at odds with the army; an easy infiltration route (the Mekong was a highway not an obstacle); a growing local communist movement; an ever more intrusive US military presence, full of ideas that the Thais did not understand or, in many cases, welcome. It was pretty obvious that the situation could deteriorate rapid-

\textsuperscript{12} South-East Asian Treaty Organisation.
ly and, on balance, I was inclined to think that it would. But at the same
time there were evident countervailing factors, as I recall recording at the
time, which eventually proved more important. Although the monthly
tally of murders was rising, the Thai insurgents did not seem much more
competent or energetic than the Thai police force; they were a very dif-
ferent proposition from the Vietnamese and there were signs that they
resented the interference of their Vietnamese ‘instructors’; the Thai
authorities had grasped the importance of letting the local people take
the lead in dealing with the problem; those American initiatives that
made progress were soon taken over and ‘adapted’ by the Thais – much
to the frustration of the originators. Although I did not follow the story
in detail after my departure from Singapore in 1968, within a few years
the Thai insurgency had proved to be the dog that did not bark, the domi-
no that did not fall. I did not doubt that the important reasons for this
were cultural and economic.

Be all that as it may have been, and fascinating though the challenges
were for me personally as for many of my colleagues, from not long after
my arrival I assumed (rightly) that there was little future for a UK military
presence in South-East Asia. ‘HMG, however much heartache the deci-
sion may cause her Pacific allies, probably has no choice but to go’
(October 1966). The actual decision to withdraw was taken by Ministers
over the following twelve months.

In my time, the JIS (through the Joint Intelligence Committee, Far
East – JIC (FE)) was responsible for providing intelligence to the
Commander-in-Chief about events in the quadrilateral bounded by New
Delhi, Hong Kong, Fiji and Perth. This involved exchanging and co-ordi-
nating views with the Americans as well as the Australians and New
Zealanders, all of whom were more bullish about our immediate
prospects in the region than I was. It also involved an agreeable amount
of travelling and, more importantly, taking a close interest in affairs in
China, which in 1966-67 was in the throes of the Cultural Revolution. My
conclusions about China collided with the need to work closely with the
American military at a Defence Attachés’ (UK, US, Australia and New
Zealand) conference in Singapore in June 1967. The scheduled speaker
from our Mission in Peking was detained there as a result of the Red
Guards’ siege (and destruction) of the compound and I was forced, at
rather short notice, to stand in for him. Several of the participants in the
conference were senior American military officers. At least one of them walked out in the middle of my remarks, having announced to the audience that he was not prepared to put up with any more of this ‘pink nonsense’. The text which caused him such irritation, and me such embarrassment, read, in part, as follows:

**Extract from address to Defence Attachés’ Conference, Singapore, June 1967**

While it is impossible to predict how long the present confusion will last or whether it will become more widespread, I believe that the extremists are in the minority and that, while they may be accorded a paper victory, they are in fact unlikely to gain much more ground. Consequently it is reasonable to hope that more moderate elements, relatively speaking, will gradually be able to assert themselves . . .

The Chinese are a cautious and realistic people. In the words of Confucius ‘the cautious seldom err. I do not want an associate who will attack a tiger unarmed or cross a river without a boat. He must be a man who acts with care, who is fond of adjusting his plans’. Sun Wu’s comment that ‘stupid, quick tempered and courageous generals are a menace’ carries the same message. The Chinese, in modern terms, are experts in brinkmanship: one cannot exclude the possibility that they may fall over the edge but on past evidence it seems unlikely.

Their history has accustomed the Chinese to an essentially defensive strategy where China has been concerned. They have not gone out to meet the enemy but have allowed him into the vastness of China where he has become over extended and beaten piecemeal or, more usually, absorbed. (Their defensive perimeter at present probably extends all or most of the way into North Vietnam: while it is not an area which the Chinese regard as being in any sense their territory, they do regard it is definitely in their orbit and would consider a major ground incursion into North Vietnam as an attack on a vital interest. They offered strong and not unsuccessful military resistance to the French invasion of Tonkin in the early 1880s.)

The Chinese Empire has never been by Western standards territorially acquisitive. It has tended to be content with securing recognition for its suzerainty and receiving tribute rather than with asserting control. The empire stabilized some 1000 years ago. The only former imperial
territories of which the Chinese at present feel deprived are probably Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and the areas in dispute with the Soviet Union.

The Chinese are well aware that, however much they may shout and gesticulate, they will never be able to punch their weight until they have transformed China into a major modern power in terms of economic performance, military technology etc. The Cultural Revolution does not contradict this thesis: it is an attempt, like the Great Leap Forward, to take a short cut to these goals . . .

China has ample reason to know that force and power will be respected by the world but that weakness will be ignored. Experience has conditioned the Chinese to believe that supreme power is their heritage. In recovering this position they see as the primary task the transformation of China itself.

At present China is ideologically and in a general political sense an extremely aggressive power. For both historical and contemporary reasons she is irredeemably hostile to the Western world and probably also to the Soviet Union. She is committed furthering world revolution by all means available to her short of military conquest.

China probably intends to recover the sundered territories traditionally associated with the empire: Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan are perhaps the main ones. It is hard to establish a timescale within which these ambitions are to be realised. The immediate aim is to secure acknowledgement of China’s ultimate rights.

China also hopes to re-establish her suzerainty over the former client states on her periphery and in particular in South-East Asia. There is no desire to include them physically in China and resort to military conquest is therefore improbable. The Chinese are conscious that it is the presence of American power that is frustrating the accomplishment of these aims.

The Sino-Soviet split is permanent, though it may not be formalised by a rupture in party relations for some time, if at all. China has every reason to distrust the Soviet Union on a state level. Ideologically she clearly regards Soviet revisionism as being as big an obstacle as American imperialism. The two countries will continue to compete for the loyalties of the discontented . . .

In implementing these policies, China is unlikely to be rash. Chinese
fanaticism is heavily tempered with realism. This attitude is well exhibited in the revised version of the ‘paper tiger’ doctrine. ‘Imperialism and all reactionaries are real tigers and paper tigers at the same time . . . from a strategic viewpoint they must be seen for what they are, paper tigers. On the other hand they are also living tigers . . . that can eat people. On this we should build our tactical thinking.’ . . .

One should not be too pessimistic: inside China there is a fair chance that the more pragmatic elements will be able from now on to strengthen their position – though it may of course take a decade or more for the results of this to become obvious. The desire to convert the world, being a foreign import, may not have much staying power in China. In any case Mao’s successors will not forget that the Mandate of Heaven doctrine cuts both ways and that the people’s welfare cannot be ignored indefinitely. They are unlikely to have time for Utopian visions or the self-confidence to implement them.

As China grows more powerful, the problem of dealing with her will become more acute. But there is also a chance that she will become more responsible. At the moment, being weak and having little to lose, she can afford to assert that what is right is possible. When she is stronger and has more to lose she may come increasingly to admit that what is possible is right. Assuming they make some progress in coping with their economic problems, the Chinese with any luck will eventually make the same ironic discovery as did the Russians. In the twenties the latter took the view that the Soviet Union was too weak for it to be worth risking the export of revolution (‘socialism in one country’): once the Revolution was secure at home, they concluded that their investment was too large to be hazarded on behalf of others.

In the world at large, events have of late mostly been beyond China’s control or even influence. She has experienced severe reverses in Africa and Indonesia; Algeria and Cuba, whose regimes are the only ones to have been established by Chinese style people’s revolutions, have turned their backs on Peking. The best that the West can do at present is to try to remember that Western policy in the past has fed the pain and insecurity which make China so difficult; and to combine a policy of strength, suitably deployed, with an effort to end China’s isolation, to coax her for the first time into genuine membership of the international community. It will be a long and tedious affair, but not necessarily hopeless, as the case
of Russia shows. Mao himself is evidently afraid that the pressures on China to meet the world halfway will prove irresistible.

I seem to recall that after delivery the full text was sent to both London and the Embassy in Peking without causing much of a stir in either place. Although I did not see the formal JIC assessments and based my analysis on more general data, the Committee had long since concluded that the Sino-Soviet split was irrevocable. A decade turned out to be quite a good estimate, albeit a little pessimistic, for the time needed to bring about the full reassertion of Chinese pragmatism. Much though it may have infuriated the American military in June 1967, a similar analysis to that above was plainly part of the underpinning for the mission which took Henry Kissinger, and after him President Nixon, to China some four years later. Of course there may have been other factors involved, some still then lying in the future. Soviet handling of the ‘Prague spring’ a year later seems, for instance, to have infuriated the Chinese. In the final weeks of 1968, it led them to propose the resumption of Sino-American ambassadorial talks. The complex dance that ensued eventually brought that remarkably atypical pair of American leaders, Nixon and Kissinger, to Peking. Arguably, they were twenty years late. But even in the late 1960s, it was the practical men in Peking who took the lead and enabled Washington’s ideologues to be sidestepped. Deng, the arch pragmatist, assumed full authority after Mao’s death in 1976 and Mao’s widow was finally removed from the scene in 1977.

The same analysis, however jejune and overtaken in its detail, would not be altogether irrelevant even now. Its basic premise, of course, was that while the underlying realities that flow from geography, history and self-interest do evolve for regions and for nations, they generally do so slowly and with difficulty and are almost always more important than ideologies and individuals. Even the most revolutionary of societies are likely to discover before too long both the drag of the past and that they are acquiring a vested interest in the status quo. It remains to be seen how far the technological and communications revolutions, together forcing the

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emergence of a new world community, will invalidate the assumption that evolution is a slow process. My own belief is that the emerging community will for many years have to coexist with an older geography and with assumptions as well as grievances inherited from earlier eras. That coexistence is likely to be deeply uncomfortable since there will be an increasing temptation for those immersed in local rivalries to project their struggle onto the global stage. Middle East terrorists have long since shown themselves adept at this. We can expect their example to be followed by others. Interdependence will turn out to have many facets. The confrontation between the haves and the have-nots has already taken on some of the characteristics of a global civil war.

The text on the Cultural Revolution is the only one I have included that deals with a non-European aspect of the Cold War. My reason for doing so is that its underlying rationale is exactly the same as that governing my approach to the Cold War in general, and indeed to diplomacy, as a whole. Pragmatism and moderation are more important and more fruitful than hyperbole and self-righteousness. Only those not involved in the search for sustainable solutions can aspire to the moral high ground. Similarly, only those who have decided that the opposition is devoid of any redeeming characteristic or prospect of redemption can afford to abandon morality altogether. That is not the least of the paradoxes associated with crusades – from the first in 1202, until the latest.
Chapter 2
The CSCE
A successful, if largely forgotten, negotiation, 1973-75

In July 1973 I had attended, as a Private Secretary to the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the ministerial meeting in Helsinki that constituted Stage I of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). I was intrigued by the event, which marked the agreement of the thirty-five participating states on the terms of reference for the ensuing negotiation (Stage II) among the signatories in Geneva, and took an interest in subsequent developments on the relatively infrequent occasions when they were referred as far as the foreign secretary. A year later, in the summer of 1974 my time with the foreign secretary, by then Jim Callaghan, was coming to an end (amidst the high drama of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus). The CSCE negotiation was still grinding forward. It had been expected to finish long before. A posting to the UK mission to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, even on promotion, was considered distinctly unambitious for a member of the Private Office. But it suited me in family terms and offered the chance to get involved in what was, after all, a major East-West negotiation. So that, to some surprise, was what I requested and what I was offered.

As it turned out, the following twelve months were among the most interesting of my time as a diplomat. They ended with what, with the benefit of a great deal of hindsight, was probably the most significant piece of diplomacy for which I was ever to be personally responsible.

Much ink has been spilled on the Helsinki Final Act and the CSCE process in general (Henrik Holtermann’s 1993 bibliography contains well over 5000 entries). Most of it has been expended from the point of view of
one participating nation or another.\(^1\) I am not aware of any definitive attempt to summarize either the course of the original negotiation or its significance. No attempt to do either will be made here. Gathering the evidence would alone be an enormous task and achieving an objective and generally acceptable assessment of the Final Act’s significance more or less impossible, even now when we are well into the post-Cold War era. Nonetheless the episode with which I was most closely involved gives, in my view, a rather accurate flavour of the underlying realities of a negotiation that has often been misrepresented. But to have any meaning it needs to be set in context, as regards both what went before and what came after.

No peace treaty was ever signed after the Second World War, or now ever will be. The Soviet Union, which in a geopolitical sense had gained more from its enormous sacrifices in the conflict than any state other than the United States, felt the lack of such a treaty acutely. Soviet governments needed to see the post bellum realities formalized. With this objective in mind, the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, first proposed a European security conference in 1954. The idea was repeatedly revived in subsequent years, sometimes by Soviet representatives, more frequently by East European stalking horses such as Adam Rapacki, the foreign minister of Poland. By 1968 an embryonic East/West dialogue on European security issues was under way.

In the spring of that year I returned from Singapore and joined Western Organizations Department in the Foreign Office where, in addition to nuclear planning, my responsibilities included a watching brief over UK arms control proposals. In August 1968, the developing East-West exchanges were savagely interrupted by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. (So was my summer holiday, but less dramatically than the holiday of a colleague on the Romanian delegation in Geneva. He told me that he had heard the news while holidaying on the Black Sea coast. He had immediately ‘taken his sub machine gun from under his bed’ and driven back helter skelter to Bucharest, fully expecting to be facing internal upheaval and/or Soviet incursions within a few hours.) But

by March 1969 the Warsaw Pact had already returned to the charge with its ‘Budapest Appeal’. (Not the last Soviet initiative with this name, but how archaic the phrase now sounds.) NATO responded cautiously but positively in its 20th Anniversary Washington communiqué the following month. At the same time the Finnish government, always sensitive to shifts in the East-West barometer and anxious to accentuate the positive, indicated its willingness to host both the preparatory talks for any conference and the conference itself in Helsinki.

The following three and a half years were taken up with more or less formal exchanges, in various fora, on the desirable agenda for a security conference and with getting out of the way the various acknowledged preconditions (including treaties concluded by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with the Soviet Union and Poland on the renunciation of force, and a four power agreement on Berlin, whose signature in the spring of 1972 I also attended). Other events in 1972 – e.g., President Nixon’s visits to Peking, already mentioned, and to Moscow, and progress towards ending the war in Vietnam – had also eased the way to a European security conference. These and the immediately following years marked, arguably, the high point of East-West détente during the Cold War. Multilateral Preparatory Talks for a European security conference were finally convened at Dipoli, near Helsinki, in November 1972 and resulted in the convening of the Stage I ministerial meeting nine months later.

It is clear that the West’s agreement at this point to meet the Soviet desire for a security conference was regarded primarily as a price that had to be paid for a package of measures to stabilize and improve East-West relations. The later emphasis on a negotiation in which the West sought to implement a substantial human rights agenda of its own was largely absent. The statements of, for instance, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger on the CSCE in 1972, and subsequently, contain minimal references or none at all to human rights. Leaving aside the treaties and agreements just mentioned, the major Western pre-requisite for the convening of the preparatory talks in Helsinki had been Soviet

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2 On 17 March 1969 the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact, then assembled in Budapest, called for the holding a European security conference.
agreement to the holding of separate multilateral negotiations on conventional arms reductions in Europe, the so-called Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks. The Western invitation to the Warsaw Pact participants to join them in exploratory MBFR talks in Vienna the following January was issued on 15 November 1972, the day before the Finnish invitation to CSCE talks in Helsinki was finally accepted. The MBFR talks had for many Western governments a higher priority than the CSCE talks. This was not least because of their perceived utility in restraining pressure in the US Congress for US troop withdrawals from Europe. I had been working on MBFR position papers from 1968 until early in 1972, throughout my time in Western Organizations Department, and recall fearing that Senator Mansfield’s chances of achieving a reduction in US force levels in Europe were a good deal greater than those of the arms controllers! It is not the least of the many ironies attached to the efforts of governments to manage the Cold War that the CSCE negotiations concluded successfully for the West in 1975 while the MBFR negotiations dragged on fruitlessly for fifteen years.

4 These preparatory talks were themselves to play a key role in determining the outcome of the Conference. The British, along with their allies and partners in NATO and the European Community (EC), sought to establish a framework which would permit the fullest discussion of their proposals on such matters as human contacts and information and this, in their eyes, required the drafting of detailed terms of reference for the committees and sub-committees which would constitute the CSCE’s second, or negotiating, stage. Soviet resistance to Western proposals and subsequent wrangling over what the committees might be expected to discuss led the talks beyond the confines of structure and procedure, and only late in January 1973 was progress made towards the grouping of agenda proposals in four numbered ‘baskets’ dealing respectively with: (1) political and security matters; (2) economic and related issues; (3) human contacts, culture and information; and (4) follow-up to the Conference. The Russians also agreed, apparently with a view to increasing the momentum of the talks, to consider draft assignments for Stage II committees, and then proceeded to table these for committees relating to each of the four baskets. Moreover, although they insisted on the subordination of Basket III proposals to the Declaration of Principles to be drafted in Committee I, they eventually subscribed to the preparation of mandates for four Committee III sub-committees covering human contacts, information, culture and education. All this was contained in the Final Recommendations of the preparatory talks (the Blue Book) which were submitted to Stage I of the Conference, the meeting of the foreign ministers of the participating countries, which assembled in Helsinki during 3-7 July 1973. The Stage II negotiations opened in Geneva on 18 September. For the text of the Final Recommendations see ibid., pp. 143-58.
The Stage I ministerial meeting was the occasion for the formal acceptance by the participating governments of the Recommendations that had resulted from the preparatory talks, the so-called Blue Book. These Recommendations, covering both agenda and procedure, defined the content and set the rules for the two years of negotiation which followed – often tedious, sometimes fascinating, occasionally bitter but ultimately, as it turned out, of the greatest importance for Europe’s future. The subjects to be covered were gathered into four baskets dealing with the principles that should govern security in Europe; economic co-operation; humanitarian and other co-operation (Basket III); and the follow-up to the conference. As regards procedure, it was agreed that all decisions should be taken by consensus; that negotiations should be conducted simultaneously in some eleven sub-committees covering the subjects included in the various baskets; and that Stage II, once completed, would be followed by a high-level Stage III meeting, back in Helsinki.

It was recognized from the outset that, although the thirty-five states participated on an individual basis with absolutely equal rights, and that the texts which formed the basis of the detailed negotiations should all be tabled by individual nations, this was in fact a bloc to bloc negotiation. The cohesiveness of the various groupings and sub-groupings varied widely. Overwhelmingly the most important groups were those associating the Warsaw Pact countries; the EC/NATO countries; and, some way behind, the neutral and non-aligned (NNA) countries. Within the EC/NATO bloc, the EC, perhaps uniquely for a major Cold War negotiation, took the lead. This was because the Americans, reflecting Kissinger’s Realpolitik-based lack of interest, sought a back seat and because the Europeans were more persuaded of the relevance of the subject matter. Within the Warsaw Pact group, only the Soviet delegation really mattered. Indeed the Soviet delegation, reflecting the importance attached by Moscow to the negotiation, was by far the strongest in numbers, seniority and quality of those participating. Western delegations, by contrast, were on the whole impressive neither in ability nor in scale. The issues, while often

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5 V. ibid.

6 Strictly speaking, except in the context of Basket II, the EC was not itself responsible for co-ordinating policy towards the CSCE. The nine EC member states sought to achieve a common negotiating stance through the recently-established Davignon machinery for European Political Co-operation.
extremely neuralgic and always infinitely detailed, were not in themselves complex, as compared with, say, those raised by the then recently completed negotiations for the entry of the UK into the EC.\textsuperscript{7} They only rarely engaged the attention of ministers in Western capitals. For prolonged periods the negotiations, focused on the minutiae of obscure texts and almost impossible to explain to outsiders, were largely overlooked both by senior officials in Western capitals and, more particularly, by the media. In Moscow, by contrast, Soviet negotiating positions were regularly scrutinised by a triumvirate including both the foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, and the KGB head, Yuri Andropov.\textsuperscript{8} The Soviet side, of course, regularly raised CSCE issues in Western capitals. But this tended to occasion irritation rather than reassessment of the significance of what was going on in Geneva, particularly given the Soviet propensity for criticising Geneva negotiators to those ostensibly responsible for issuing the latters’ instructions.

When I arrived in Geneva in September 1974, Stage II had been underway for almost exactly a year. The first six months, to February 1974, had been characterized by general exchanges and, in Basket III, by jockeying for position. The West had tabled a variety of detailed proposals. The Russians had indicated a strong desire for a rapid negotiation and the briefest possible negotiation. They had at one point persuaded the Swiss that the conference would be over by the end of 1973. In Basket III, they had declined to discuss the Western proposals unless and until an introductory, and governing, preamble was negotiated first. This preamble was intended by the Soviet side to include language that would justify the continuance, if not enlargement, of their restrictive humanitarian and information policies as well as allowing them to hold Western governments responsible for the performance of the Western media. Only after considerable debate, was it agreed that the preamble and detailed contents of Basket III would be negotiated in parallel.


\textsuperscript{8} In November 1982 Andropov succeeded Brezhnev as Executive President of the Soviet Union and General Secretary of the Central Committee of CPSU.
The ensuing negotiations, throughout the spring of 1974, progressed haltingly. The Russians remained anxious to finish the Conference and hold Stage III that summer. But they seemed to have no clear idea as to how to achieve this. The West was in not much better position. There was a fundamental disagreement between the Europeans and the Americans as to the importance of the CSCE and, more particularly, as to whether what appeared to be achievable in negotiation would justify holding Stage III at summit level, as the Russians wished. The Americans saw the CSCE as a relatively minor element in the broad spectrum of US/Soviet relations. They were sceptical that much could be achieved in Basket III and doubted that whatever was achieved would matter very much. ‘The Americans’, I heard Kissinger tell his NATO colleagues in Ottawa in June 1974, ‘had never wanted the CSCE and regarded it as a mistake. They had gone along with the Conference at the prompting of the Europeans and in order not to be isolated. Against this background, the US expected only modest benefits for the West from the CSCE. The Soviet system had survived for 50 years and would not be changed if Western newspapers were put on sale in a few kiosks in Moscow.’9 Whether or not the Russians got the CSCE summit Brezhnev wanted should, in US eyes, be determined by the Soviet performance in other fora and not by the eventual content of Basket III. The Europeans, on the other hand, increasingly saw the CSCE as a substantial East-West event. They were inclined to argue that if the Soviet side refused to permit substantive progress on human rights, Stage III should either not take place at all that summer or should be at Foreign Minister level.

This transatlantic disagreement ran on for many months, in fact virtually until the end of Stage II. Following a meeting with Gromyko at the end of April 1974, Kissinger wrote to Callaghan and Walter Scheel, the then West German Foreign Minister, proposing, in effect, a summit level conclusion in the summer. He was politely rebuffed. The Americans in Geneva spent a good deal of effort urging the other Western delegations to identify what they regarded as essential in Basket III and in general to be ‘more reasonable’. The Europeans resisted this pressure. There was a noticeable difference in tone between the communiqués issued after the NATO meeting referred to above and after Nixon’s visit to Moscow at the

end of the same month. Kissinger publicly criticized the ‘theological debates’ in Geneva and the multiplicity of Western proposals.

This difference in approach provided the backdrop to most of my own time in Geneva. It did not matter all that much to me since its principal manifestation was not open disagreement but the low profile adopted by the American participants in the Conference. It was indeed the case that had the Americans been playing their usual dominant role, my own part in the final ten months, and particularly in the last three months, would probably have been a good deal more circumscribed than was in fact the case. It is also true that American indifference may have led the Soviet delegation to adopt a more uncompromising posture than they would have done had the Western position been uniformly robust. For instance, Soviet inflexibility in Geneva between April and June 1974, in the lead up to the Brezhnev/Nixon summit in Moscow already mentioned, was assumed to have been motivated by the assumption that it would be easier to get an agreement on Soviet terms in Moscow than in Geneva.

One other consequence of the low level of American engagement was the added emphasis given to co-ordination amongst the nine EC member states. This was where the positions of the West were worked out initially and, for the most part, definitively. It took place at various levels, up to and including ministers, and in various locations, notably Geneva and the capital of the EC country holding the Presidency at any given moment. By and large NATO governments, most importantly the US and Canada, aligned themselves on the policies elaborated by the Nine. Of course we were well aware of the preferences of our NATO allies so the situation was never as crude or as potentially confrontational as a ‘first the Nine, then the Fifteen’ juxtaposition might suggest (or France occasionally seemed to desire). The endless process of co-ordination was vital not only as a means to resolve differences and create group loyalty. It was also as a means to establish positions sufficiently robust to stand up to the eventual stresses and strains of East-West negotiation. In this last sense it was a microcosm of NATO as a whole.

1974 was in any case a year of many dramas – more than enough to push the CSCE into the background in most capitals and certainly in the State Department. The consequences of the 1973 oil shock were being felt by Western economies. (I personally was much impressed by the
mutual antipathy demonstrated by Kissinger and his diminutive but outspoken French colleague Michel Jobert during the Washington energy conference in February. Edward Heath was replaced as British prime minister by Harold Wilson on 4 March; the president of France, Georges Pompidou, died on 2 April; Willy Brandt resigned as West German chancellor on 6 May; the Turks invaded Cyprus on 20 July; and on 8 August, Richard Nixon announced his resignation as US president. (It was in early August that an evidently rather desperate Larry Eagleburger, then Kissinger’s principal aide and later US secretary of state, said to me at the end of a 4 a.m. phone call about some Cyprus problem, ‘Michael, it is a pity that you and I cannot run the world’! A typical private secretary exchange, I fear. My wife, in bed alongside me trying to sleep, was less amused.) In a clash of direct relevance to the CSCE, the Russians and the Americans disagreed vigorously over the Jackson/Vanik amendment linking Most Favoured Nation treatment for the Soviet Union with its policy on emigration. (Early evidence of the tendency, important in the first phase of the follow on process, for the US Congress to take a more robust attitude on civil rights in the USSR than the US administration regarded as politic.) At the end of the year, the Soviet government denounced the 1972 trade agreement.

The CSCE negotiations resumed, after a summer break, in Geneva early in September 1974. On joining the UK team there, I found a conference in a somewhat subdued mood. The Soviet side, having failed to bounce their Western colleagues into a summer summit, were showing few signs of having regained their enthusiasm for the conference as a whole. The splendid Economist gibe of the previous June still seemed rather apt: ‘Awful darkness and silence reign over the Great Gromboilian Plain on which hundreds of negotiators involved in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe have skirmished obscurely for 18 months.’ Even though Gromyko told the UN General Assembly on 24 September that ‘the Soviet Union attach[e]d paramount importance to the successful conclusion of the CSCE’, the Russians spent much of the autumn, until well into November, stone walling.

Certainly as far as Basket III was concerned, Soviet resistance to Western ambitions to promote freer movement of people and information between East and West was constantly in evidence, both in Geneva and at the political level. Having told Sir Terence Garvey, the British ambas-
sador in Moscow, in June that ‘an ant was being turned into an elephant’, Gromyko told the French foreign minister, now Jean Sauvagnargues, at a meeting in July that either Basket III should be ‘filled with mushrooms’ or else it should be filled with what the West wanted and then have its ‘bottom cut out so that everything fell through’. This last phrase is a reference to the Soviet ambition, referred to earlier, to have the Basket III texts preceded by a preamble making clear that the implementation of the undertakings by governments would be subject to ‘mutually acceptable conditions’, such as respect for each other’s ‘sovereignty, laws and customs’, or MAC in conference negotiating jargon. According to Gromyko, what the West was asking for ‘amounted to interference in internal affairs’. With such protection, the texts would have been largely deprived of substance or enforceable content.

The performance of the principal Soviet Basket III negotiator throughout the autumn, and indeed until the end of the Conference, made very apparent the extreme sensitivity of the issues involved for the authorities in Moscow. A gifted diplomat and linguist, whose subsequent career included postings as Soviet ambassador to the UN and at Washington and as Russian ambassador at Kiev (!), Yuri Dubinin was the No.2 in the Soviet delegation. He conducted a forceful and effective rear-guard action throughout my time in Geneva. It must have been for him a pretty thankless task. His aim seemed to be as far as possible to appear reasonable in manner but in substance to resist compromise or concession, to impose his authority on his own side and create dissension on our side. Dubinin left me with the impression that, perhaps alone of the senior members of the Soviet delegation, he would have preferred not to have signed the Final Act in the form in which it eventually emerged. If so, from a narrowly Soviet perspective and given what happened subsequently, he may well have been right. Although he was considerably senior to me in a formal sense, the evolution of the negotiation meant that for the last several weeks of the Conference we were in effect opposite numbers in Basket III. He was a rather formidable adversary.

Whether Dubinin or Moscow was calling the shots, progress in Basket III in the autumn of 1974 was very slow. Dubinin declined to attend many of the meetings of the various working groups, preferring

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to operate behind the scenes. The Soviet delegation reneged on two previously agreed texts, something they did very rarely. Efforts among the delegations of the Nine to carry forward the internal process, begun in September in response to US pressure, of refining our demands made little progress. For too many of my colleagues it was easier to sit tight. The neutrals tried to develop a package deal in the human contacts sub-committee but Dubinin rejected it at an early stage. He told me that if the West had concessions to make ‘let them make them direct to the Russians’. He expressed an interest (unrequited) in talks between the Soviet delegation and one or two Western plenipotentiaries on the contentious issues in Basket III. He may well have considered that this procedure offered the best way to exploit the known impatience of the Americans with European intransigence. He was to revert to the idea from time to time in the following months. But when the moment eventually arrived, the following May, it was under circumstances that were perhaps rather different from those he had anticipated.

The long grind of those months served to bring one point home to me: the importance of the British role in the Conference and the good standing enjoyed by the British delegation. The relative ease with which individuals brought up and trained in the British tradition fit into the role of moderators, facilitators, chairmen etc., of international fora, and the competence with which successive generations have performed in these roles, is something of which we take far too little account. We should, perhaps, be less shy about our assets (and our good fortune) in this respect. There are no doubt any number of socio-cultural explanations to do with ‘fair play’; openness to compromise, built on a record of relative national success; a sense of the possible; a distrust of ideology; and the enormous advantage of working in our own language most of the time. Whatever the reason, it seems to me to be a fact of international life. (It is also a far better explanation of the so-called Foreign Office mentality than the arrogance, class attitudes and world weariness that have been regularly identified and condemned by the tabloids and some politicians, particularly by representatives of incoming governments anxious to cut a dash in the world.) I first became fully conscious of it that autumn when I was appointed spokesman for the Nine (chef de file) in the negotiation on Information within a couple of weeks of my arrival in Geneva, before my personal performance could have had much impact, one way or the other,
on my new colleagues. An internal FCO minute of 11 November 1974, written by Brian Fall after a visit to the negotiation, put the point well and, in the CSCE context, presciently.

We have [Fall observed] a number of important assets: an effective delegation; a reputation for talking sense in the Nine and Fifteen; a reputation for not promising more than we can deliver in discussions with the East; and freedom to look at the Conference as a whole without the commitment to particular hobby horses which distorts the perspective of many other participants. These assets are likely to come increasingly into play over the next few months and we should be able to make an important contribution to the final negotiations.\(^{11}\)

This may be an appropriate moment also to make a larger point about the character of the CSCE negotiation. I was dimly conscious of it at the time but have become much more conscious of it with the passage of the years, and particularly in the light of the dramas of the following fifteen years. The preparatory negotiations at Dipoli and Stage II in Geneva were in a very profound sense emblematic encounters between two incompatible social systems. The West were represented by a large number of junior and middle rank diplomats destined, for the most part, to careers of no particular distinction. In many cases their authorities lost touch (and patience) with the stultifying detail of the negotiations and left the delegations, and relatively junior officials in capitals, to get on with them. (The same, mutatis mutandis, went for much of the media.) The neutrals certainly gave a higher priority to the negotiations than most of the allied governments and this showed in their representation. The Soviet delegation was large, of first-rate quality and in constant touch with the authorities in Moscow at the highest level. Eastern European delegations were also staffed with very senior diplomats who in some cases (e.g., the Romanian, Lipatti, and the Pole, Dobrosielski) had a high profile. But, in the last analysis, they were given as much or as little discretion as Moscow judged sensible.

While far from short of tasking, since most of their governments had particular demands of one kind or another, Western delegations did not require detailed daily guidance. For the most part, they understood

\(^{11}\) The full text of this minute is published as No. 103 in DBPO, Ser. III, Vol. II.
instinctively what was at issue. They had no intention of giving way, unless instructed to do so by would-be strategists such as Kissinger, to Eastern concepts of, for instance, the responsibility of governments for the nature of information being disseminated by the media or for the activities of journalists. For the Soviet delegation, on the other hand, almost every Basket III text was bound to involve some diminution of, or derogation from, state control. The resultant trench warfare, dragging on for month after interminable month, passed well beyond any rational calculation of how diplomatic or political resources should be allocated. It did so precisely because large numbers of individuals, embodying the inherent beliefs and priorities of their respective systems, were determined to get their way or, at least, not to give way. An FCO minute of 20 May 1974 recorded complaints about ‘the prodigious waste of time, effort and resources’ which the Conference already at that date (fifteen months before its conclusion) represented. It also commented that ‘the mixture of general frustration and … personal vanity among those concerned breeds a kind of self righteous bloody mindedness’. Just so. But many of these bloody minded diplomats were, of course, also representatives of democratic societies making the case for democracy. By and large they prevailed as did, fifteen years later, their social system as a whole.

A particular example of this bloody-mindedness was provided, in more than one respect, by the French delegation in December 1974. In the margins of a Franco-Soviet summit (Giscard d’Estaing/Brezhnev) in Paris at the beginning of the month, the French (then holding the EC presidency) and the Russians agreed language for the so-called ‘mini preamble’ to the human contacts section of Basket III. Ten days later, this language was ‘negotiated’ by the French and the Russians in the presence of a group of neutral delegates. The Austrian, Liedermann, then acting as co-ordinator of the human contacts sub-committee, disliked the resulting text but was ‘persuaded’ to table it. (Liedermann, while endlessly well intentioned, was an individual of somewhat nervous disposition!) He did so because, as I reported to London at the time, the French ‘repeatedly

12 This paper was drafted by Crispin Tickell, Head of Western Organizations Department, following a two-day visit to Geneva. It was, ironically in view of their past and future behaviour in the Conference, the Maltese who complained to him about time-wasting in the negotiations. See DBPO, Ser. III, Vol. II, No. 81.
and mendaciously told him that the Nine wished him to table it. At this time the Nine had not seen the text.\textsuperscript{13} Unsurprisingly the rest of the Nine, who in any case were opposed to the concessions being offered, reacted badly to France's handling of the issue. Equally unsurprisingly, the Russians resisted attempts to amend the text. Deadlock, resentment and a good deal of broken crockery resulted. Since it was altogether inevitable that French tactics would be exposed, one could only assume that their assessment of the intelligence and robustness of their partners was extremely low (and that they had lost sight of the bloody mindedness factor described above). Since they frequently tried similar ploys and were as regularly rebuffed, it was difficult at times not to hold a rather low opinion of their own \textit{savoir-faire}. Certainly their credibility as negotiators in Basket III was in tatters by the end of the conference the following July and their usefulness, therefore, at a low ebb. My French colleague's name was Chazelle: it is not altogether to our credit that some of us used it as a verb meaning 'to intrigue unsuccessfully'.\textsuperscript{14}

It has to be said that French exceptionalism wasted a lot of my time both in Geneva and in other phases of my career. While at NATO, years later, I was struck forcibly by the dissipation of effort that France's idiosyncrasies imposed on those of us who were trying to make sense of West European security arrangements. French diplomats in Brussels, as in Geneva, were invariably among the most talented, energetic and personally agreeable of one's colleagues. In any process of debate or negotiation, the elegance of their contribution was rarely equalled and even more rarely surpassed. Equally regularly, those abilities were deployed in pursuit of objectives, or in defence of positions, that were nationalistic in the narrowest sense; that seemed to delight in ignoring, if not humiliating, dissenters; and that were predicated on the assumption that while defeat was probable, France's interests would anyway be protected by her partners, as was almost invariably the case. I hate to think of the number of man hours wasted by France's partners in trying, unsuccessfully, to wean her away from what was, in this respect at least, General de Gaulle's 'heritage néfaste'. I would not, of course, pretend that others, notably the UK, did not also pursue their national security interests.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, No. 107, note 4.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, No. 137, note 10.
vigorously. They did. But while most of us had long since come to see those interests as attainable only in a joint enterprise, France tended to equate its national interest with an essentially solipsistic view of the world. Whatever the short-term calculations, the basic reasons for this are no doubt to be sought in 1870, 1917, 1940 and even in 1954. One can only hope that the ossuaries and the nightmares associated with them are now finally becoming irrelevant. If so, and recollecting long hours in Geneva and Brussels, I can only wish that it had happened sooner. The related paranoia associated with the name of Jean-Marie Le Pen may yet, of course, frustrate or divert the healing process.

In January 1975, French efforts to seize the initiative having back-fired, trench warfare was resumed in Basket III. Notwithstanding the rows, some texts had been agreed in December. But there was no sense that an end before, say, Easter was at all likely. The head of the British delegation, Hildyard Toby,\(^{15}\) felt that the position of the delegation was such that we might attempt some bilateral bargaining with the Russians. (He was motivated in part by a sense that the under strength Irish delegation, holding the EC Presidency from 1 January, were unlikely to give a strong lead.) He was firmly discouraged by London. As it happened, Dubinin took me to lunch in the middle of the month and proposed that the Soviet and British delegations should work together to resolve existing East-West differences on various issues. Dubinin, in altogether typical Soviet \textit{démarche}, told me that the CSCE was regarded in Moscow as ‘the most important single element in the process of \textit{détente}’. He argued that, properly prepared, Prime Minister Wilson’s impending visit to Moscow could be used to accelerate progress at the Conference.\(^{16}\) With the French example to hand I was, while flattered, cautiously sceptical. Bilateral bargains struck by politicians unfamiliar with the detail might eventually be unavoidable but were, in my view, unlikely to be optimal. My ambassador, as already mentioned, was inclined to be more positive. In the event, nothing much in the way of preparatory negotiation took place. There was a good deal of discussion in Moscow during 13-17 February about Basket I topics such as peaceful change of frontiers and confidence building measures (CBMs). But, to my relief,

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\(^{15}\) Sir David Hildyard from January 1975.
there was little about Basket III. Nor were any deals struck. Brezhnev, in conversation with Wilson on 17 February, ‘noted with satisfaction that the British and Soviet delegations at Geneva had been working closely together during the last few weeks and might well have been able by quiet diplomacy to push matters forward on some difficult points in Basket III’. I was certainly seeing a great deal of my Soviet colleagues at the time but I do not now recall that much was ‘pushed forward’ as a result!

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On 10 March 1975 Brezhnev created what came to seem to me to be a major opportunity for the Western side. He wrote to a number of heads of Western governments proposing that the ‘final stage of the conference at the highest level’ should open in Helsinki on 30 June. In his reply Harold Wilson, sensibly and predictably, looked forward to the achievement of ‘balanced and satisfactory results on all the subjects on the agenda’. He said that such results would make possible Stage III. He concluded that it was therefore too soon to fix an exact date although a final stage that summer still seemed achievable.¹ Russian attitudes on Basket III issues in Geneva became, if anything, even tougher. Presumably the Soviet delegation were anticipating the final bargaining phase which was bound to precede a final agreement. A report from the UK delegation on 22 March noted that the Soviet diplomats seemed ‘to be searching rather desperately for ways of moving while making minimum concessions’; that the head of the Soviet delegation, A.G. Kovalev, was ‘in a highly nervous state’; and that bilaterally he and Dubinin were ‘exerting maximum pressure, often disagreeably’, wherever they thought this might be effective. The report added that where Basket III was concerned the Russians had vowed so often that they could ‘never consent’ that ‘if they reach any genuinely final positions while we are still hoping for more, it may not be easy for us to distinguish the signals’.²

By mid April, there was still little or no progress on the outstand-

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² Ibid., No. 117, note 2.
ing issues in Basket III. Toby Hildyard referred in a report to London to ‘a number of total impasses’ in the relevant sub-committees.\(^3\) The FCO’s view, as of 18 April, was that ‘Soviet tactics at this point fit into a classic pattern. The Russians are seeking to generate irresistible momentum towards an early summit Stage III while reducing the number of outstanding issues to which they attach real importance. In this way they may hope to force a showdown in which it is the Western and neutral countries, with most points of importance then outstanding, in particular in Basket III, which have to sacrifice essential objectives.’\(^4\)

On 19 April, Kovalev proposed to Toby Hildyard that Dubinin and I should meet to find a way out. He reverted to the idea ten days later. We did meet but we did not find a way out because I was by then working on an altogether different approach. My analysis started from the assumption, reflected in earlier reports from the delegation referred to above, that the Russians were desperate to stick to Brezhnev’s self imposed deadline. But they feared to take the initiatives necessary to make this happen because they assumed the West would simply pocket any concessions offered to them and go on as before. On or about 17 April, I therefore began to try to persuade other Western delegations, at my own level, of the merits of a package deal solution to the outstanding issues in Basket III. A week later I wrote to London in the following terms:

As far as East-West discussions are concerned, this has been an uneventful week. No new texts have been tabled and, with one exception, no agreements have been reached. If anything positions on both sides have tended to harden.

In large part this has been because the Russians, while continuing to evince anxiety about the rate of progress, have shown no readiness to make the concessions which, as they well know, will alone make progress possible. However, the stalemate this week has also been in part the result of the hard line being taken by the West on all the texts under dis-

\(^3\) *Ibid.*, No. 118. This was particularly true of the sub-committee dealing with information. While Western delegations wanted to ensure agreement on a preambular reference to the desirability of the dissemination of, and access to, information, and the right of individuals to be informed, their Eastern counterparts wanted the text to refer to the content of the information thus covered, and to the responsibility for it of states.

\(^4\) *Ibid.*, No. 118, note 5
discussion. I have been encouraging this latter trend, which has its origin in the American attitude on the journalists text, because, I believe, the moment is approaching when we should offer the Russians the option of a global solution to the outstanding problems in I and J [the sub-committees dealing with human contacts and with information respectively] and because, prior to any such initiative, we should adopt a rather hard attitude.

My analysis starts from the fact that the attitude of the Russians, at least in Basket III, suggests they are still hoping to adhere to Brezhnev’s timetable. If so they must realise time is getting very short. As long as there is a chance of having a Summit in July they may be prepared to pay a relatively significant price for major progress in that direction. (At the point when they abandon hope of meeting Brezhnev’s deadline, their attitude may of course harden significantly.) The completion of work in I and J … would represent major progress by any standard.

I am therefore working to persuade my colleagues, and have made good progress in doing so, that we should give to Dubinin at the end of next week or the beginning of the following week a single document containing all texts on Human Contacts and Information. This would include the chapter headings and sub-titles and would have no square brackets in it. On the outstanding texts I would envisage compromise language on the Human Contacts mini-preamble (text enclosed already discussed with the French, Germans and Americans); a compromise text on travel (text next week); a new text on the Information mini-preamble (copy enclosed already discussed with the French, Germans and Americans); a completed text on radio and TV incorporating the new American language (text enclosed); and a tough text on journalists (copy enclosed). I would envisage telling Dubinin that this document was a response to his repeated (and disingenuous) requests for a clear statement on what the West wanted. We would be grateful if he could study it for 24 hours and tell us what difficulties he saw in it. We would be prepared to consider a reasonable number of amendments but if his demands struck us as excessive we would withdraw the global text and continue with the negotiations on the basis of our existing well-known positions. If, following its withdrawal, Dubinin referred to our compromise text at multilateral meetings, we would respond by tabling ‘maximalist’ statements of Western positions. If, on the other hand, Dubinin’s response was moderate, we would hope to be able to negotiate to a rapid conclusion on the basis of the global approach.

An approach on these lines, while not without risks, would, I

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5 American delegates in the information sub-committee had recently begun to take a tougher stand on the drafting of provisions relating to the working conditions of journalists, particularly in so far as these related to contacts with the nationals of countries in which they were working, technical staff and expulsion. Ibid., note 6.

6 The drafting device used to indicate text on which there was not yet agreement.
believe, place Dubinin in a difficult position. He would have to choose between, in effect, placing the July summit in considerable jeopardy (assuming the Russians still want it then) or making some real gesture towards the West and thereby bringing the July Summit markedly closer to realisation. In either case, it would be more difficult for him thereafter to lay the blame for lack of progress in Basket III on the Western side.

I would be grateful for very early warning if you see any difficulties in this approach. It may fail, before or after the meeting with Dubinin, for all sort of obvious reasons but I think it is worth having a go. The ambassador agrees.7

FCO agreement to attempt a global solution was not forthcoming until 30 April and even then was, understandably, lukewarm. It was pointed out that the West would have to avoid giving ground for neutral or Romanian complaints about a bloc-to-bloc arrangement and to take particular care about timing. ‘From here’, the authorizing telegram stated, ‘it seems best to wait until progress begins on the present cluster of problems in the Declaration of Principles, but you [Hildyard] are the best judge of the tactical opportunities’.8

Andrew Burns set out FCO thinking in a minute of 29 April. He wrote:

I agree with the Delegation that it is worth adopting a … forward approach in Basket III. Mr Alexander tells me that the strategy outlined in … his letter to me of 25 April has not won immediate acceptance amongst Western delegations, but that before addressing the tactics the Nine and the Fifteen are trying to agree upon the kind of texts which might appear in a package deal. This is right since not all the texts Mr Alexander has sent us match up to the need to provide some tangible concessions while preserving some room for manoeuvre. It is to be noted however that the Basket III negotiations are deadlocked. There is no momentum at present and it is far from certain that a take it or leave it package deal will suffice to get matters moving again.

We should recognize that it is probably the Russian strategy to refuse to make effective concessions in Basket III, and perhaps also on

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7 This proposal was included in a letter sent to Andrew Burns of Western Organizations Department on 25 April 1975. The full text of the letter is published as No. 119 in DBPO, Ser. III, Vol. II.
8 Ibid., notes 4 and 7.
CBMs, until the outstanding pieces of the Declaration of Principles have begun to fall in place. We should recognize too that it will not be easy to persuade our partners and allies to take the kind of bold step advocated in … Mr Alexander’s letter to me of 25 April.

There may be little alternative therefore but to sit out the confrontation, making painfully slow progress, but underlining again and again to the East that if they do not adopt a more flexible and constructive approach fairly quickly, the NATO summit [due on 29/30 May] will be faced with a pretty lamentable state of affairs in Geneva; and that this could risk provoking a Western decision that the Russians were not serious in their wish to bring the conference to an end this summer on terms which the West could accept. It would follow from any such decision that Stage 3 could not be held until the autumn at the earliest.10

Even at this range, I am surprised at the degree of discretion for the team in Geneva that this exchange implies. I seem to have carried forward discussion of a substantial initiative, and detailed international discussion of associated texts, for at least a week before even informing the FCO. Be that as it may have been, it was, as Mr Burns anticipated, hard work to gain the support of the Nine, and then of the Fifteen, for the package approach, harder work than I had assumed in my letter of 25 April. Various delegations, but notably the Belgians, Italians and above all the Dutch made difficulties. The head of the Dutch delegation was still arguing at the beginning of May that the West should ‘stonewall’ the Russians with a view to out bargaining them in the ‘marchandage final’ (a mirror image of the strategy which the department in London were attributing to the Russians). As I reported at the time, the Dutchman’s ‘general approach did not get much support but in discussion of the actual texts individual delegations in effect supported his attitude by their

9 Confidence Building Measures (CBM) were one of the few security issues considered by the CSCE. They were intended to reduce the risk of tension and conflict in Europe by providing for the prior notification of military movements and manoeuvres, and were the subject of lengthy negotiations within the second sub-committee of Committee I. The Russians disputed both the area of the Soviet Union to be covered by the projected measures and the force level thresholds at which they would become applicable. Another Basket I issue, the drafting of a declaration of principles, also gave rise to considerable East-West differences, particularly over the exact wording and positioning of a provision providing for the peaceful change of frontiers.

10 The full text of this minute, addressed to Crispin Tickell, is printed as No. 120 in DBPO, Ser. III, Vol. II.
extreme reluctance to give up individual points to which they attached importance’ (the bloody mindedness factor again).11

The arguments within the Nine and the Fifteen ran on through the first ten days of May. I nonetheless held to the view that the global approach ‘correctly and firmly handled’ (I had my doubts as to how firm the French would be in the crunch) provided ‘the best way of smoking the Russians out’.12 The formal discussions in the Basket III sub-committees had by then become more or less meaningless. I commented to London on 29 April that at working level the Russians were taking a tougher line than ever. This led me to wonder whether we might not have missed the chance to make a major breakthrough and whether the Russians might not already be preparing to sit the conference out ‘to the bitter end, even at the expense of postponing the summit until the autumn’. But I argued that it still made sense to adopt the global approach, if only as a means of demonstrating where the blame for the lack of progress lay.13 Dubinin, who must by then have been well aware of the effort to construct a global approach but made no attempt to pre-empt it, asked me ‘more or less openly for Western help in extricating the Soviet delegation from the impasse into which they have got themselves’.14

But it was not until 13 May that the Nine and the Fifteen delegations in Geneva finally agreed the terms of the proposed package deal. At that, we very nearly failed to get agreement. On the same day, during a meeting in Dublin of the Nine’s Political Directors (i.e. the senior professionals dealing with the CSCE), the Dutch, Belgian and Italian Directors all criticized the idea of a global approach and argued against the flexibility which it incorporated. The Belgian and Dutch diplomats both went so far as to tell their British colleague that the UK initiative ‘had been still-born for lack of Western support’.15 I learned subsequently that the Dutch Director had openly criticized me personally for the way I was playing the hand in Geneva and accused me of distorting the views of the Dutch delegation. For various reasons (not least that the Dutch had in fact

11 Ibid., note 11.
13 Ibid., No. 120, note 14.
14 Ibid., No. 121, note 6.
15 Ibid., No. 122.
been present at the meeting at which I was said to have misrepresented their position) this was a rather ineffective assault. But it suggested the depth of the feelings that had been stirred up. In the event, whether because of failures of communication or because of divisions in their own capitals, the critics did not finally attempt to veto the initiative.

On 15 May, therefore, leading a small team whose other members were representatives of the Danish, US and Irish (EC Presidency) delegations, I delivered the package to Dubinin. In doing so, I summarized the numerous compromise solution it proposed. I stressed the time factor and the imminence of various other major meetings, notably the NATO summit. I acknowledged that further negotiations, involving the other delegations, would be required. I stressed that the West was open to such negotiation but that we would not begin it unless and until we had a ‘rather detailed’ reaction to our document has a whole. I went on to say – and this was the core of my entire strategy – that ‘such negotiation would only take place on the basis of this document if the reaction of other delegations (i.e., the Soviet delegation) takes account of the balance which we have already tried to introduce. If too many amendments are proposed, we shall have no choice but to revert to the piecemeal negotiation in which delegations have been engaged since Easter and for which we shall naturally table separate and appropriate drafts, each reflecting in full Western desiderata on that particular subject. On the basis of experience since Easter, the ensuing negotiations will inevitably be time consuming.’ Dubinin undertook to study the text. He knew perfectly well that the end game, which would determine whether Brezhnev got his summit that year, had begun. At the same time, he made it very clear that he felt a gun had been held at his head and that he did not like it at all!

Apart from the NATO summit, the other ‘imminent meeting’ to which I had referred was an encounter between Kissinger and Gromyko in Vienna on 19-20 May. References have already been made to Kissinger’s generally dismissive attitude towards the CSCE. On this occasion, again, it is said that he was tempted to try for a bilateral understanding with the Russians. However his officials warned him, rightly, that this would have been deeply resented by the Europeans. Briefed, the Americans told me at the time, on the basis of the speaking note I had used with Dubinin, Kissinger refused to negotiate with Gromyko. He insisted on the global character of the proposal. He pressed for a
complete Soviet response and argued that the specifics that Gromyko wished to pursue should be taken up in Geneva. This was very different from the line that Kissinger had taken on previous occasions — as was Kissinger’s apparent familiarity with the detail — and presumably had a considerable impact on the Soviet foreign minister. At the very least, it meant that the Russians knew that for once they were faced with a genuinely united Western position.

Two days later, on 21 May, Dubinin and his colleagues delivered the Soviet reply to my team and me. Kissinger’s earlier firmness notwithstanding, they seriously mishandled the whole occasion. Although he had concessions to communicate, Dubinin was critical of me personally and accused me of ‘trickery’. He had his junior colleagues read out ‘long lists of trivial (and occasionally absurd) amendments’ to the Western proposals. He himself ‘tried to score minor procedural points and had a couple of brisk exchanges with me as result’. The Fifteen decided without difficulty and without dissent on 22 May that the Soviet response was ‘highly unsatisfactory’. I conveyed this reaction to Dubinin the following morning. It appeared to make him extraordinarily angry. I pressed him for a more positive Soviet response. At the same time I reported to London that, while I was far from discouraging the Western rejection, I personally found that the Soviet reply contained ‘evidence of a real effort on their part to move’. I said that the West needed ‘to keep the heat on the Russians’ who might well make further concessions if the West could ‘sustain a united display of disappointment. We need to try to get the Russians to impale themselves on the hook a good deal more firmly without provoking them to break the line or allowing our more hot headed colleagues to cut it’.15 I also thought, as did some of those colleagues, that Dubinin might possibly be exceeding his instructions. I was not then aware that on the afternoon of my 23 May meeting with Dubinin, the Soviet delegation leader, Kovalev, asked for an immediate meeting with the American head of delegation, Sherer. Kovalev spent three hours expatiating on the ‘political implications’ of the Western position and of the possible prolongation of the conference. When Sherer expressed

15 In their initial response to the West’s ‘global approach’ the Russians largely accepted the Western draft of a mini-preamble on human contacts, with its emphasis on humanitarian considerations, but adopted a much more negative approach to proposed texts relating to travel and journalists’ rights. *Ibid.* No. 123.
disappointment that the Soviet delegation had not chosen to take advantage of the compromise put forward by the West, Kovalev reportedly lost his temper and described the package deal as an ultimatum rather than a compromise. He was evidently under considerable emotional strain, though it was, of course, true that the package deal was an ultimatum as well as a compromise.

A further five days passed while Moscow, presumably, considered its position. On 28 May, a quadripartite (US, UK, France, USSR) lunch was planned to discuss the language under negotiation to protect quadripartite rights in Berlin. As I wrote to London a couple of days later, my Ambassador was told by [L.I.] Mendelevich [the No. 3 in the Soviet delegation and their representative in Basket I] in the course of the morning that the Russians were expecting new instructions [on Basket III] and that Dubinin’s appearance at the lunch would be a signal that the instructions had been received. Mendelevich asked the Ambassador that Patrick Laver [our representative in Basket I] should attend so that there should be no sign that we had had any advance warning. In the event, Dubinin did appear but the conversation did not turn to Basket III matters at once. It was only after Kovalev had received a telephone call, followed by the appearance of his colleague, Sergei Kondrashev, with a telegram, that the Russians showed their hand. Dubinin was then given what must have been for him the galling task of reading out the list of points on which the Russians are now prepared to accept the language of the 15 May text.16

An American, John Maresca,17 who was present at the lunch, has given a considerably more colourful (and in one important respect different) account of the same occasion:

Discussion focused initially on the quadripartite rights problem, but quickly petered out since there were no new developments on the subject. Conversation then turned to Basket III. Kovalev was nervous and sullen, smoking even more than usual and apparently reluctant to speak. Midway through the main course Kovalev was called away from the table for a phone call. When he returned, he spoke privately to Dubinin in agitated tones. Several minutes later Dubinin’s deputy [Kondrashev] arrived and handed Kovalev a crumpled piece of paper. Kovalev excused

16 Ibid.
17 US Deputy Head of Delegation in 1975.
himself and asked for a ‘recess’ in the luncheon. The Soviet group huddled in a corner of the ornate drawing room in which the lunch was taking place, while the Westerners looked on curiously. After some minutes of animated discussion, the Soviets returned to the table and Kovalev indicated that the lunch could continue.

He began to speak immediately in tones that were a mixture of triumph and spiteful anger. He spoke first of the ultimatum that had been presented and of the unreasonable demands of the Western delegations. By contrast, he said, the Soviet delegation was flexible and accepted the need for compromise. As a generous ‘gesture of goodwill’, therefore, the Soviets were prepared to make several concessions in order to open negotiations on global initiative and thereby conclude the human contacts and information sections of the work of the Conference. Kovalev then rapped out in defiant tones the concessions the Soviets were prepared to make:

(1) The Soviets suggestion for a troublesome addition to the text dropped their on travel and accept the text is pretended by the West, including the key freer movement concept ‘to facilitate wider travel’ and were prepared to reserve a place for a Vatican proposed clause on travel by religious leaders, provided precise language could be agreed.

(2) The Soviets accepted a Western paragraph affirming that journalists will not be expelled from the country in which they are assigned for the legitimate pursuit of their profession.

(3) The Soviets were prepared to accept a paragraph on facilitating the dissemination of radio broadcast information and would not insist on inclusion of language reflecting the concept of government responsibility for the content of programming.

(4) The Soviets accepted the Western proposed sequence of subjects, as well as all Western subtitles except one, which could nevertheless be negotiated, and agreed that the subtitles could be given prominence in the layout and printing of the final documents, as the Western delegations wanted.

(5) The Soviets made a forthcoming compromise offer to settle the one remaining problem in the family reunification text.

Kovalev knew perfectly well what he had done; he had provided the concessions needed to keep the global initiative alive. Not only did this mean the final negotiations on human contacts and information could begin; it also meant a positive signal would be conveyed to the NATO Summit, meeting in Brussels the next day.

The NATO caucus on 29 May decided on the basis of the new Soviet concessions to open negotiations on the remaining thirty-odd
I have, in fact, failed to get either Dubinin or Kondrashev to join with me in a detailed analysis of what happened in the Soviet delegation (or in Moscow) while they considered the global initiative. I do not know for sure whether it was Kovalev or Dubinin who read out the fateful telegram. Be that as it may have been, the meeting of the Fifteen on the morning of 29 May was the scene of one further argument as to whether the new Soviet position constituted a suitable basis for continuing with the global approach. The Dutch, who had throughout taken the hardest line, remained doubtful. But they were eventually persuaded of the significance of the Soviet concessions. I was mandated to open the follow-on negotiations that afternoon accompanied by the same team as had accompanied me when I handed over the global package and when I had received the first Russian response. At the opening three-hour session, attended by a number of heads of mission as spectators, we resolved four further disputed issues – including, importantly, the final problem in the preamble to the human contacts text. ‘This first session’, I wrote on 30 May, ‘also served to confirm that the Russians are willing to negotiate seriously on the outstanding points (i.e., that they are not expecting us simply to accept their proposed amendments) but that, as we had always assumed, everything would have to be negotiated and that the distinction between major and minor points is largely illusory.’ Within a week it became absolutely clear that the Basket III negotiation was going to conclude rather rapidly. No one really thought that the outstanding difficulties would be allowed to delay things unduly. In persuading London to abandon a final refinement in the journalists text, I argued that it was now too late to be perfectionist. I am sure that others were making the same kind of point in their respective capitals.

The news did not take long to reach the media. In a piece in the

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In a major breakthrough at the European Conference on Security and Cooperation, the Soviet Union has accepted Western proposals for settlement of East-West issues in the humanitarian, information, cultural and educational fields. The package deal, which appears to have broken a long diplomatic stalemate here and started the conference on the road to a successful conclusion, should markedly improve working conditions for journalists covering Eastern Europe ... The breakthrough has put the negotiations on the home stretch, but nobody is placing any bets about when the conference will cross leave finish line ... Putting together this package, its timing and its diplomatic presentation to the Russians, has certainly been the most successful piece of co-operative effort the West has achieved since the Security Conference began in Helsinki more than three years ago. The original initiative, it was learned, came from the British in Geneva, with US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger then playing a decisive and somewhat unexpected role. The British document was ready for presentation in Geneva just before Mr Kissinger took off on his European trip to see Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in Vienna last month. By the time he got to Vienna, Mr Kissinger had appreciated the importance of the draft and, to the pleasure and even surprise of some of his State Department aides, he told Mr Gromyko that it was now or never if the conference was to get going. Mr Kissinger even told Mr Gromyko that it was the press which would eventually judge the outcome of the conference, and if he wanted a good press, then he ought to do something for journalists.

There were, as Cook anticipated, great difficulties and numerous noisy rows in the last six weeks of the Conference. Reconciling the conflicting views of the participants on confidence building measures, the Mediterranean, quadripartite rights in Berlin, the machinery for follow-up meetings (of vast importance in the ensuing decade but at this stage suspected by the Russians and openly opposed by the French) etc., consumed vast amounts of diplomatic energy. At times the achievement of a meeting at the end of July, by then in the diaries of the thirty-five heads of government, seemed almost impossible. Indeed in due course the clock in Geneva had to be stopped for several days. At more or less the last moment, the tiny Maltese delegation used the consensus rule to hold the entire conference to ransom. There seemed, briefly, to be a real risk that Kovalev would physically assault the Maltese ambassador. (Kovalev told me that once the Conference was over, he proposed to go to Malta,
take the island apart stone by stone and sink it in the Mediterranean.)  

But re-reading the records, it is apparent that after 29 May it was generally assumed that the Helsinki summit would take place in July. It seems equally clear that had the global initiative in Basket III failed there would have been no summit that summer. Basket III was, after all, the reason the Western European governments were at the Conference. Clause by clause negotiation of maximalist Western texts would have taken a very long time indeed. (The same point was made, with a rather different spin, by the head of the Belgian delegation who, after the Summit, presented me with a book inscribed: ‘For Michael Alexander, who saved us from night meetings.’)

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20 During the summer of 1974 a CSCE working group was established to prepare a Mediterranean declaration. The Maltese sought to make the most of this opportunity and tried to broaden the scope of the document so as to incorporate in it proposals for a Euro/Arab federation and for the withdrawal of the US and Soviet navies from the Mediterranean. They also hoped to extract from the Conference a commitment to promote peace in the Middle East. When the working group’s draft declaration failed to meet Malta’s requirements, its delegation threatened to block all further progress towards a Stage III summit. *Ibid.*, Nos. 129, 130 and 132.
Chapter 4
Why did it work and how much did it matter?

My reasons for attempting a global initiative have already been rehearsed. Immediately after the Soviet capitulation, which was how it seemed in Geneva and which exceeded by some distance anything I had expected a month earlier, I advanced a specific and a general explanation. I argued that:

(a) the Russians ‘must presumably have been impressed by the united front maintained by the West (with the partial exception of the French) in expressing their disappointment at the initial Soviet response. The energetic but fruitless activities of the neutrals may also have been of some help insofar as they helped to demonstrate conclusively that the West was not prepared to move. However, the extreme haste and evident disorder with which the Russians acted on Wednesday [28 May] must, I think, be linked with the NATO Summit [29/30 May] which, we have always assumed, must have loomed large in Soviet thinking from the moment that it was announced.’

(b) I added, a few days later, that Western persistence and unity could not be a sufficient explanation of the Soviet readiness to compromise. I found it ‘hard to believe that anything other than an almost desperate Russian wish to have the Summit in July would have led them to make such abrupt concessions on, for instance, the question of technical staff [in the journalists text]’, which until recently they had attempted to prevent the West raising in any way. ‘Mr

Brezhnev’s health is’, I added, ‘prima facie, the obvious explanation:
the Soviet delegation’s instructions give every sign of originating
with the ‘old man in a hurry’.

It is a great pity that I have been unable to persuade either of my
main Soviet interlocutors in Geneva to let me have a detailed account of
the final phase of the negotiations as they experienced them. It may be
that the detailed records do not exist any more. But that, given Soviet
reporting requirements, seems unlikely. It seems more likely that the
whole Helsinki episode remains of considerable sensitivity, at least in
some quarters in Moscow. Who was responsible for letting the dissidents
get their foot in the door, in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern
Europe? Was it an historic blunder or an unavoidable and justified conces-
sion to reality? It would be hardly surprising if the survivors felt cautious
about putting their views on paper and anxious to keep the process under
tight control.

Would it have mattered if the global initiative had never taken place
or had failed and there had been no summit in Helsinki that summer? I
for one would, at the time, have viewed the prospect of resuming
negotiations in the autumn with disappointment but relative equanimity.
An evident willingness to sit out the Soviet delegation seemed to me to be
an essential card in our hand. But the American commentator, Maresca,
in his book on the Conference, raises a more disquieting possibility. He
argues that if the Final Act had not been signed in the summer of 1975, it
might never have been signed at all. His view is that, although neither the
participants in the Conference nor anyone else could have been fully
aware of it, the window of opportunity was in fact closing fast. In his
words:

The détente ‘window’ available for the Helsinki summit turned out to be
very small. The fall of Saigon left America in a bitter and confused mood.
During the summer of 1975, Portugal teetered on the brink of a
Communist take-over. In October, the US administration became preoc-
cupied with Soviet intentions in Angola. By November, when Angola
became independent, the Cuban presence there supported by the USSR,
soured the whole détente relationship. Faced with the events in Portugal
and Angola, American political leaders of both parties, reflecting public
opinion, questioned the very basis of US – Soviet relations. Had the
CSCE not been completed by the summer of 1975, it is doubtful that the summit would have been politically possible during the remainder of the Ford administration, especially since the President’s latitude for independent initiatives had grown extremely narrow following Watergate. Given President Carter’s emphasis on human rights, one has to wonder whether Helsinki could have taken place at all after his election. The Soviets probably would not have gone to a summit meeting that Carter could have used as part of his human rights crusade.2

It is also now forgotten that even in the summer of 1975 public attitudes in the United States to the CSCE were becoming increasingly hostile. There was a wave of criticism when Gerald Ford went to Helsinki. Those groups, notably those connected with the Baltic states, that had an interest in Soviet and East European issues regarded Helsinki as a sell-out. They felt that it recognized the Soviet hold on Eastern Europe but gained nothing in return. As the shortcomings of the détente policy pursued by Nixon became more evident during the public debate about trade and emigration, but particularly after the final disaster in Vietnam, every aspect of the relationship with Moscow came under scrutiny and suspicion. Any policy that did not show immediate, tangible benefit for the US was liable to be condemned. This period coincided more or less exactly with the run-up to the Helsinki summit. As public attention focused on the CSCE for the first time, the conclusions were in many cases negative. The Wall Street Journal’s headline ‘Jerry Don’t Go!’ summed up the reaction of many Americans to Ford’s planned participation in the meeting. On 21 July, the New York Times said in an editorial: ‘The 35 – nation Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, now nearing its climax after 32 months of semantic quibbling, should not have happened. Never have so many struggled for so long over so little … If it is too late to call off the Helsinki Summit … every effort must be made there, publicly as well as privately, to prevent euphoria in the West.’

Although no more than another of history’s infinite sequence of ‘might have beens’, Maresca’s speculation therefore has a certain plausibility. If things had turned out that way, it seems incontrovertible that a Europe without the Helsinki Final Act and, therefore, without the CSCE follow-up meetings in Belgrade, Madrid and Vienna, would have been an altogether different and probably even more gloomy continent. What

2 Maresca, To Helsinki, p. 203.
gave the follow-up meetings their edge and relevance to the reform process throughout Eastern Europe was the opportunity, built into the Final Act, for governments to monitor each other's implementation of the Basket III provisions – specifically the provisions of the two sections (human contacts and information) covered by the global initiative. These paragraphs provided the truly original element in the Final Act. Although some Western proposals were lost and some restrictive wording proved inescapable, the text as a whole met our desiderata. The inclusion of headlined passages on Reunification of Families; Marriage between Citizens of Different States; Travel for Personal or Professional Reasons; Improvement of the Circulation of, Access to and Exchange of Information; and Improvement of Working Conditions for Journalists, meant that all these subjects became matters for intergovernmental scrutiny and evaluation. They were the yardsticks by which Soviet commitment to détente was henceforward measured. Even if Western governments had been inclined to ignore the dismal Soviet record of compliance in the early years, their public opinions and pressure groups (e.g., in the US Congress) would no longer allow them to do so.

Most important of all, with benefit of hindsight, these texts provided a crucial and perhaps decisive encouragement to the dissident movements in Eastern Europe. Some, such as the Charter 77 group in Czechoslovakia, were directly inspired by the Final Act; others, such as Solidarity in Poland, were based on rights approved in it. Leading Soviet dissidents, including the Sakharovs, Yuri Orlov and Anatoly Scharansky, based their Helsinki monitoring activities on their duty to play their part in ensuring that the Soviet government complied with the obligations it had undertaken at Helsinki. The attempts of the Communist authorities to crack down on the reformers, particularly in the early eighties, served merely to stimulate further Western agitation about the shortcomings of the regimes and about the mistreatment of their opponents. Important as the whole CSCE process was, and remains, it seems to have been the confrontations over the implementation of Basket III that provided the vital focus for reform in the East European states that belonged to the Warsaw Pact and eventually to the erosion of the will to power among the governing élites.

In his massive book Diplomacy, published in 1994, Henry Kissinger is notably, and understandably, silent about his own attitude throughout the
CSCE negotiations. (‘The memory of contemporaries’ attitudes towards the Helsinki Conference has mercifully faded.’) He was far from being the only prominent American to have got Helsinki grievously wrong. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, George Kennan was the most distinguished of all Western Soviet experts. He taught me at Yale (as did Alexander Kevensky), and I have admired him deeply ever since. But in September 1976 George Urban published an interview with him in *Encounter* in which Kennan was savagely critical of the Helsinki agreement and its ‘fatuous declarations!’ But Kissinger is not ungenerous in his assessment of Basket III. He writes:

The most significant provision of the Helsinki Agreement turned out to be the so-called Basket III on human rights … Basket III was destined to play a major role in the disintegration of the Soviet satellite orbit … Basket III obliged all signatories to practise and foster certain enumerated basic human rights. Its Western drafters hoped that the provisions would create an international standard that would inhibit Soviet repression of dissidents and revolutionaries. As it turned out, heroic reformers in Eastern Europe used Basket III as a rallying point in their fight to free their countries from Soviet domination. Both Vaclav Havel\(^3\) of Czechoslovakia and Lech Walesa\(^4\) of Poland earned their place in the pantheon of freedom fighters by using these provisions, both domestically and internationally, to undermine not only Soviet domination but the communist regimes in their own countries.\(^5\)

How far did those of us involved in Geneva at the time really understand the importance of what we were about? The answer has to be ‘only very dimly’. I suspected that at least one senior and very able member of the Soviet delegation, Yuri Dubinin, was profoundly worried about our endeavours. From my point of view, his anxiety had to be a good sign. Some of the journalists, notably Don Cook of the *Los Angeles Times*, already cited, were convinced that the whole venture was worthwhile, told us so and said so in print. A contemporary in the FCO commiserated with me in the summer of 1975 because I had at the age of 38 already, according to him, completed what was likely to prove the most important

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\(^3\) Vaclav Havel was co-founder of Charter 77, the human rights movement in Czechoslovakia, and President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, 1989-92.

\(^4\) Lech Walesa was leader of the Polish Solidarity movement, 1980-90, and President of Poland, 1990-95.

coup of my diplomatic career. As far as I remember, my reaction was that the presumed compliment implied a less than flattering estimate of my prospects in the Diplomatic Service. At this range, of course, the compliment looks a good deal more perceptive! Many years later Jim Callaghan, Foreign Secretary at the time of the Helsinki Summit, said in a letter to me that he ‘recalled a conversation you and I had in which you took the view very strongly that it was well worthwhile for the West to insist on negotiating the contents of Basket III, if we were to get anything from the CSCE agreement in exchange for the political strengthening of East Germany that we were conceding. And of course you were right.’ Sadly, I myself have no recollection of the exchange in question. But it is comforting that Lord Callaghan does! Even more comforting, then and subsequently, was another conversation that I do recall. It occurred late on the final night (in fact about 4 a.m. on 21 July) of the negotiations in Geneva and was with a senior member of the Polish delegation. Learning that I was feeling rather depressed about what had been achieved, he asked me if I knew what would happen when the text of the Final Act was distributed to the provincial party secretaries in Poland. On my confessing ignorance, he said: ‘The party secretary in Cracow will ring the General Secretary in Warsaw and tell him that “you people must have been mad to agree to our signing this thing.”’ It seems clear that some people had a very good idea, even from the beginning, of just how subversive a document the Final Act was likely to turn out to be within the ostensibly monolithic Communist bloc.
Chapter 5
Negotiating with the Russians, September 1975

In the weeks immediately after the conclusion of the negotiations in Geneva, I wrote a personal account of my experience during the previous ten months. It was partly an account of my reaction to the individuals whom I had encountered, partly an attempt to draw conclusions about the business of negotiating with representatives of the Soviet government. It was truly personal in that I consulted no one (and no papers, since these had already been returned to London) in putting the text together. I sent it to various colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at the end of September 1975. My ambassador, Toby Hildyard, was displeased when he learnt of the existence of the paper. As far as I could judge, his irritation reflected disapproval of my irregular procedure rather than violent disagreement with anything I had said. Be that as it may have been, he did lodge a mild complaint with the Permanent Under-Secretary. One or two of the recipients of the text indicated they had read it with interest. But the general enthusiasm of my colleagues for the analysis was perhaps more accurately indicated by my discovery, over twenty years later, that the text had never been entered in the FCO files. I have no idea whether this was a deliberate decision or an oversight. In any case, I had to give the Office’s Library and Records Department a copy in 1997 so that the paper could be referred to in the collection of CSCE related documents then being assembled.\footnote{This paper of 30 September 1975, ‘Negotiating with the Russians: a personal view based on experience during Stage II of the CSCE’ is cited at DBPO, Series III, Vol. II, No. 136, note 6. In 1997, after Sir Michael Alexander drew the attention of the editors of DBPO to the paper, it was retrospectively entered on FCO file ENZ 3/303/1/75.} Hence its inclusion in this volume as a personal document rather than its exclusion as an official paper.
The text is as I wrote it in August/September 1975. A very few phrases have been amended or omitted, as indicated. The imperfections of the paper are manifest. But it is, I think, more interesting as a statement of my attitude at the time than it would be with the improvements of hindsight. If it is in places excessively or wrongly critical of my Soviet negotiating partners, that is because the confrontation was hard-hitting and, at least on some occasions, bitter. This was, after all, an episode in a war – even if a war of a very particular kind.

Paper of 30 September 1975
Negotiating with the Russians: a personal view based on experience during Stage II of the CSCE

Apologia.
1. I am conscious that prolonged, detailed and substantive political negotiation with the Russians, whether bilateral or multilateral, is no longer the rarity it once was. The discussions over Berlin, in Helsinki (CSCE 1) and in Vienna (MBFR) have exposed many to Soviet negotiating techniques. The corpus of knowledge on the subject must by now be considerable. Nonetheless, long hours of discussion and negotiation with relatively senior Soviet diplomats between September 1974 and July of this year, at all times of the day and night and in many different kinds of meeting, have left me with certain strong impressions. At the risk of writing while too close to the event, it seems worth putting these down before they fade. A note of this kind might in any case make useful background reading for those charged with pursuing the follow-up to the Conference in Belgrade in 1977.

2. What follows is entirely personal and has been discussed with no one else from the Delegation, other members of which might well have different and better founded views. It relates to and is based on my own experience in those parts of the negotiations in which I participated. There is as little second-hand information as possible. It has been written without access to the papers, since these have all gone back to London. I apologize in advance, therefore, for any
factual errors that may have crept in. I have used the words 'Soviet' and 'Russian' as though they were interchangeable.

Subject Matter of the Negotiations.
3. The negotiations in which I was involved dealt with:-
   (a) the Human Contacts and Information chapters of the so-called Basket III (11 out of the 15 texts, 4 having been effectively completed before my arrival);

   (b) the Culture and Education chapters of Basket III (to a very limited extent and only in the final weeks when some particularly vexed issues were left);

   (c) the Follow-up text;

   (d) the final paragraphs of the Mediterranean text.

4. All the work of the Conference was multilateral in principle and a very great deal of it was in fact. However, it was also true that in Basket III, the negotiation leading to the finalization of texts was often conducted in very small groups and, not infrequently, bilaterally. Basket III, unlike Basket I, was essentially a bloc to bloc negotiation, the Socialist states being on one side of an invisible line and all the other participants on the other side. (For obvious reasons of principle, the Romanian delegation objected violently to inter bloc negotiations, whatever the subject matter, but were able to do little about it in Basket III.) Provided great care was exercised in coordinating views and clearing lines, it was therefore possible for one or two delegations to present, with some confidence, 'Western' views to the Soviet delegation. Thus it was that much of the serious negotiation at (a) above, and all that at (b), was effectively bilateral. The negotiation at (c) and (d) on the other hand was entirely multilateral, albeit often in very limited groups. The Soviet negotiator for (a), (b) and (c) was Ambassador Y.V. Dubinin, together with in the final weeks his head of delegation, Vice Minister A.G. Kovalev. The Soviet negotiator for (d) was Ambassador L.I. Mendelyevich.
Leading Personalities in the Soviet Delegation

5. The Soviet delegation in Geneva seemed to contain examples of all the standard types of Soviet diplomat, although none of them combined pre-1953 techniques and views to quite the extent that Ambassador Zorin (the Soviet Basket III negotiator in Helsinki) did on the one occasion that I have seen him in action.¹

6. Vice-Minister A.G. Kovalev (born 1923). The head of the Soviet delegation was a slightly puzzling figure. I thought him less able and authoritative than one might have expected given that, as a Vice-Minister and a member of the Foreign Affairs Collegium at 52, he has evidently had a successful career. He is a very heavy smoker and gives the impression of having a rather nervous disposition: this is not only because of a noticeable facial tic. He looks older than his age and was unable to conceal the fact that for the last part of the Conference he was under great strain. Nor was he particularly impressive in discussion or debate. His idea of tactics for most of the Conference seemed to be to alternate flattery with threats, while remaining unyielding on points of substance. It was only in the last few weeks that he entered at all fully into detailed negotiations. Even then he showed little flexibility and imagination, preferring, if he could, either to concede the Western demand or to hold out for his original position rather than to haggle his way towards a compromise. The latter business was left to Ambassadors Dubinin and Mendelyevich.

7. Various factors are perhaps relevant: (a) Kovalev had had less experience of running an international negotiation than his record might have suggested. Although he had attended various international meetings and conferences, his direct experience related to

¹ George Walden, a British delegate to the preparatory talks, subsequently recalled that V.A. Zorin, who was ungenerously known at Dipoli as the ‘poisoned Dwarf’, had evidently been appointed in order to oversee work of interest to the KGB. ‘Needless to say’, Walden added, ‘the interest of the KGB as well as of the Soviet Government as a whole would have been better protected if Zorin had stayed at home. His abrasive style exercised a unifying effect on the West, who also gained from his clumsy negotiating tactics.’ DBPO, Ser. III, Vol. II, No. 37. note 14.
Germany and he had not been posted abroad for twenty years. His qualifications for the position may have been more theoretical than actual; (b) he spoke little if any English or French – a severe and surprising handicap at this conference; (c) he may have preferred to hold himself in reserve, thereby avoiding direct comparisons with his two principal and extremely able subordinates; (d) he was more immediately exposed to the pressures from, and expectations of, Moscow. This last may have been a particularly important element …

8. Ambassador Y.V. Dubinin (born 1930). The deputy head of the Soviet delegation would seem to be a diplomat to watch in the future. He is the youngest member of the Foreign Affairs Collegium and is intensely ambitious. It was easy to see why he has risen so far so fast: he is extremely intelligent, decisive and hard working, speaks perfect French and has much charm (which he is not afraid to exploit). He is also a cultured man who, for instance, has taken the trouble to acquire real knowledge about French wines and cuisine.

9. In all the externals, therefore, Dubinin appeared to be a Soviet diplomat of the new model. And so perhaps he is … It was the more striking that his approach both to the problems of negotiation and to the substance of the questions under discussion was distinctly old-fashioned. While he was careful to observe the diplomatic proprieties, to show concern for the interests of the smaller participants, to give the floor to his colleagues and allies, etc. his negotiating posture was always inflexible and the mailed fist was never far beneath the table. For all his suavity, he was a more ruthless man than either Kovalev or Mendelyevich and correspondingly more widely mistrusted. He was a master of the arts of wedge driving and misrepresentation. Although not given to lengthy tirades in public (another sense in which he represented the new generation), in private he could be impressively rude. I should not have liked to be in a position where he might have thought he could threaten me. Some of the smaller delegations were and did not enjoy it. Ideologically, his views were unequivocally hard line. He
Negotiating with the Russians

was the only member of the Soviet delegation who sometimes gave the impression that the failure of the Conference would not have unduly bothered him.

10. It may be that Dubinin’s toughness in part resulted from the fact that he was dealing with Basket III. Running a damage limitation exercise is always a thankless task and he may have felt that it was safer for him personally to sit things out than to take initiatives. (His colleagues in Moscow probably thought the same.) He had also had little, if any, experience in multilateral diplomacy before Geneva. Another hypothesis is that his ideological rigidity was, whether consciously or unconsciously, a compensation for his obvious attraction to the ‘good things of life’. His clothes were evidently bought in France or Switzerland and he devoted a good deal of attention to his appearance, which at times verged on the fashionable … The striking of a balance between the requirements of acceptability in Western diplomatic and political circles, on the one hand, and in Moscow, on the other hand, must be a permanent problem for Soviet diplomats. Dubinin, having been almost too successful under one heading, may consider that ideological purity is the best way to protect his flank. But this is pure speculation. The important point is that he finds it possible and convenient to combine genuine social ease and savoir-faire with very hard line views. It would be interesting to know how many others, among those aspiring to the highest levels in the Soviet Diplomatic Service, do so and whether there is a growing trend in this direction.

11. Ambassador L.I. Mendelyevich (born 1918), the third member of the triumvirate at the head of the Soviet delegation, offered in almost every respect a strong contrast with Dubinin. He shared the latter’s ability (speaking English rather than French) but little else. He was, for instance, an old hand at multilateral negotiation. Having served at the UN and participated in Phase I of the CSCE, he had far more relevant experience than either of his colleagues, a fact which he did not attempt to conceal. This, no doubt, accounted in large part for his greater flexibility and imaginativeness in discussion. He was very willing to take on Western delegates in
whatever kind of impromptu debate or informal drafting session anyone cared to suggest. He seemed, on the whole, extremely sure of himself, willing to range more widely and settle for novel solutions more readily than anyone else on his team. To some extent this may have been forced on him by the extremely diverse and fragmented interests of the participants in Basket I. It may also have been made possible by the fact that, while the Soviet government had an overriding interest in Basket I, their single most important objective in that basket was achieved at a relatively early stage and a certain amount of freedom of manoeuvre was available in relation to their other goals there. But the most important factor was Mendelyevich’s personal inclination, which was to take Western diplomats on at their own game, to aspire to the same kind of ease and detachment in negotiation.

12. He combined this with a personality that was altogether more traditionally Russian. He is extremely fat but uninterested … in the finer points of cooking. His idea of a good meal was steak. He was much given to negotiating in his shirtsleeves, usually with a belt, occasionally with braces. He seemed to enjoy set piece harangues and delivered them regularly and at length. His appetite for negotiation and his stamina were alike remarkable. He is also extremely vain, a point which those who dealt with him more regularly than I learned to exploit. In this respect, as in others, I thought him on balance a less formidable operator than Dubinin but one who may, seen from Moscow, have been more successful in Geneva. (His status as one of the more senior Jews in the Soviet hierarchy must be an important factor but I was never able to attribute any specific aspect of his performance to it.)

Other members of the Delegation.

13. The rest of the Soviet delegation enjoyed a status markedly inferior to that of leading group. None of them, with the partial exception of Kondrashev in the early stages, appeared to have the authority to conclude an agreement on a text. The most they were able to do was to agree to think something over. On at least one occasion, things went wrong when one of them (Kharlamov) overstepped
this mark. In order of seniority, those with whom I had most dealings were:-

(a) S.A.Kondrashev (Member of the Delegation) born 1923. He started his career on the protocol side of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, perhaps for this reason, was one of the easiest members of the Soviet delegation to get on with. His friendliness went deeper than with most of his colleagues. This had the unfortunate side effect that, despite his seniority, he was also one of the less reliable members of the delegation. His desire to reach agreements seemed to cloud his judgement of what was acceptable to his authorities. Far more frequently than any of the others (which still meant rather infrequently), he floated ideas. Almost as frequently, they led nowhere. Towards the end, his credibility was destroyed and although, as an excellent linguist, he continued to attend almost all meetings his role was a small one. (It is of course possible that he had been assigned the task of drawing Western delegates out and encouraging them to betray fallback positions. But I think this would be to attribute to the Soviet delegation greater powers of forward thinking and deception than they in fact possessed.)

(b) M.A. Kharlamov (Member of the Delegation) born 1913. He is an intriguing figure, now probably drawing to the end of his official career. In the late Fifties, he was Chief of the Press Department in the MFA and acted as Khruschev’s spokesman on many occasions, notably during the Paris Summit and the famous visit to the United Nations. Subsequently he became Chairman of the State Committee for Broadcasting and Television. Presumably, although he never discussed it, his career went into decline after the fall of Khruschev. As a product of the old school, he made an interesting contrast with the younger members of the delegation. The split between his public and private personality was very marked. At meals, he would gossip happily and interminably about his great days, about family matters (mine), about chess, London, Dickens or
anything else. If the negotiations were going well, he would talk about them too and accept, though not proffer, new ideas. His own ideas were fixed long ago. At meetings, likewise, he was perfectly capable of being friendly if garrulous. But once matters became at all complicated, he would retire behind a smoke screen of verbiage, slowly getting ruder if pressed too hard. If frustrated in carrying out some instruction, or crossed in any way, he would undergo an almost physical change and become abusive, shouting and hectoring excitedly to force home his point. In the row over the Easter break earlier this year, he drove at least one Western Ambassador to ask formally for an apology from the Soviet head of delegation – the sort of excess that all his colleagues had learnt to avoid.3

(c) V.F. Petrovsky (Secretary General of the Delegation) (born 1933) … played little part in actual negotiation but appeared regularly at the smaller meetings and meals. Since he had a good deal of UN experience and spoke fair English, it was reasonable to suppose that he abstained from negotiation because he had other duties. I assume that these extended beyond arranging allowances and bag schedules – although it is fair to add that the administration of a delegation as large as that of the Soviet Union must have posed problems.

(d) V.A. Morozov (Counsellor) (born 1928) was another uninspiring figure, with some knowledge of cultural relations and of Scandinavian affairs. He usually took a hard and unimaginative line on any issue but had the merit of being a relatively reliable guide on what might or might not be saleable. He also had the saving grace of being visibly embarrassed by some of the more ludicrous positions into which Soviet policy in Basket III drove all their negotiators from time to time. A sympathetic, if rather sad, aspect of his personality was revealed when, during the period we were working on

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3 During March 1975 the Soviet delegation’s efforts to ‘steamroller’ others into accepting only a short Easter break, was strongly opposed by neutral and non-aligned delegates. See DBPO, Ser. III, Vol. II, No. 115, note 7.
Saturdays and Sundays, he suddenly abandoned his drab suits and appeared in a series of extraordinary outfits which would have looked well on Brighton Pier over a Bank Holiday in the late Forties. He took the inevitable teasing in good part.

(e) Y.V. Kashlev (Counsellor) (born 1934) was expelled from London in 1971, obviously with good reason. He appeared to have no specific function in the Delegation, but worked mostly with Kharlamov.

Relations within the Soviet Delegation.
14. Although the Soviet delegation went to considerable lengths to give the appearance of a united front of the outside world, a good deal of interesting evidence about their attitudes towards each other accumulated as the months went by.

15. In public, the Soviet Delegation were always intensely protocolaire in regard to each other’s rank. They hardly ever presumed the agreement of a senior member of the Delegation without first consulting him. They were very careful about seating and about offering the floor to the senior member of the Delegation present. The junior members of the Delegation (i.e., anyone beneath the top three) were unfailing in this respect and the top three, whatever the private strains, usually tried to observe the niceties. Although Dubinin seemed to have a rather low opinion of Kovalev (making little attempt to conceal his boredom when Kovalev was speaking, e.g., at meals in the Soviet Embassy), he was nonetheless very careful always to go through the motions of seeking Kovalev’s endorsement before accepting any new proposal in negotiation. (One of the few times I saw Dubinin seriously embarrassed was when, owing to a misunderstanding, he inadvertently accepted a meeting which presupposed a minor change in Kovalev’s timetable without first having consulted Kovalev.) Dubinin’s motives seemed to be a mixture of a desire to ensure that responsibility was shared with a desire to preserve appearances. Mendelyevich was similarly careful in public although his private view of Kovalev was probably similar to Dubinin’s. When once I told him, perhaps undiplomatically, that
a proposal I was putting to him had already been agreed by his Head of Delegation, he replied loudly that he, not Kovalev, was responsible for the subject in question.

16. The senior members of the Delegation used their seniority ruthlessly in regard to their more junior colleagues. Kashlev was treated by Dubinin at semi-public meetings like an office boy (and reacted like one). Since the senior member of the Delegation present always spoke first if he so wished, members of the Soviet Delegation never, to my knowledge, disagreed with each other in public. If a difference of view came to light in some other way, the opinion of junior members could simply be ignored. On one occasion, I gave Kharlamov a draft text (of the Mini–Preamble to Information) which he welcomed as constructive and as being a good basis on which to work. The following day, in Kharlamov’s presence, Dubinin described the text as ‘painful’ and ‘provocative’ and refused to discuss it further. Similarly a number of ideas floated orally by Kondrashev at one time or another were subsequently disavowed. He normally defended himself by denying that he had made them and attributing them to Western delegations. Mendelyevich’s lack of interest in the views of his subordinates was legendary, as was the immobility of the latter in his absence.

17. Age was no help, at least where official duties were concerned. As the example quoted above suggests, Kharlamov, despite being a good deal older than most of his colleagues and having had a distinguished career, received no more consideration than anyone else. In the row over the setting of the date for this year’s Easter holiday, already mentioned, he was allowed to take up an extremely exposed position and then cut out of the discussions. In the latter stages of the Conference as a whole, he was completely ignored and became a rather sad figure, haunting the fringes of the Conference, smiling encouragingly but playing no part.

18. Rivalry between Dubinin and Mendelyevich was overt and intense (as, I understand, was that between Mendelyevich and Zorin in Helsinki). Dubinin, who was wont to roll his eyes and study the
ceiling when Mendelyevich was speaking, used to refer in scathing
terms to the ‘orators’ in Basket I. He once suggested to me that we
should do something together about the ‘Suvorovs of the
Principles’. (A similar remark made by Kovalev was the only evidence
I ever had that he favoured one or other of his subordinates. I
imagine that the rivalry between them was in fact triangular. It was
also said to involve Falin, the Soviet Ambassador in Bonn, who had
spoken disparagingly about the performance of the Soviet CSCE
delegation.) Mendelyevich, for his part, said openly that he knew
that his Delegation (i.e., Kovalev and Dubinin) had mishandled the
question of the first, and unacceptable, Soviet response (21 May) to
the Basket III package deal offered by the West on 15 May. He told us
in advance about, and claimed credit for, the second and acceptable
response (28 May). He made no attempt to disguise his enjoyment
of his triumph when he, rather than Kovalev or Dubinin was called
to Vienna to attend the 19/20 May meeting between Kissinger and
Gromyko. On his return, he hastened to describe to us his
discussions with Gromyko of such Basket III details as the technical
staff paragraph in the Journalists text. (All this was the more striking
since Mendelyevich’s star had appeared to be in eclipse in the
summer of 1974.) Dubinin may have made up some ground at
the end since he drafted Gromyko’s message to the Maltese
Prime Minister, Mintoff, about the Mediterranean Declaration
(Mendelyevich’s responsibility). No one who witnessed the final
meeting of the Coordinating Committee, with Dubinin in the
chair and Mendelyevich on his left, seizing every opportunity to
intervene, could doubt that the competition was as intense as ever.

19. Of course, the Soviet delegation was not alone in containing rival-
ries. But in their case, the personal rivalry, normal enough in itself,
was given an additional dimension by the fact that the three men
involved were all of ambassadorial rank and two of them represent-
ed, in a sense, different schools of diplomacy with the third
uncommitted. It can hardly have been accidental that the Soviet
delegation was constructed with an inbuilt set of checks and balances.
It seemed rather as though a test was being run of various possible
approaches to the problems of diplomacy in a multilateral environment.
One could not help feeling that a good deal of mutual reporting back on each other was in progress, not necessarily to the same department, and that a careful eye was being kept on the situation in Moscow. The rather sinister figure of Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the delegation, comes to mind in this connection.

Relations between the Soviet Delegation and Moscow.

20. An attempt to assess the relations between the Soviet delegation and Moscow is unavoidable if any judgement is to be made on the delegation’s performance in Geneva (or, indeed, on the performance of any other Soviet delegation). On a personal level, it seemed obvious that the three principals, and particularly Kovalev, felt that their careers were at stake in a much more acute sense than was the case for any of their Western colleagues. The penalties for making mistakes were presumably very high, particularly if they were mistakes that involved giving something away unnecessarily or without authorization. The penalty for missing an opportunity to extract something from the West, or to close an agreement promptly, must have seemed to them much lower and any case could probably be concealed from Moscow. Except in the last few weeks, the Soviet delegation always took the most cautious available line. They displayed unusual nervousness and irritation on the rare occasions when they were wrong footed. (On the morning when it became clear that Mintoff, was going to insist on a reference in the Mediterranean Declaration to the reduction of armed forces in the region, Mendelyevich told me authoritatively that his government would never accept such a reference. We elaborated some alternative formulae for use in the impending discussions with the Maltese. An hour or so later, he sought me out in a state of evident anxiety, saying earnestly that he hoped I had not mentioned our conversation to anyone and would not do so. He had been speaking for no one but himself! He declined to offer any explanation for his volte-face. Few, if any, Western diplomats would in similar circumstances have felt it necessary to conceal what soon became obvious, viz. that Messrs Gromyko and Kissinger had just met and decided to give in to Mintoff, or been embarrassed by such a happening.) If anyone in the delegation felt inclined to take a risk,
the presence among his colleagues of a man like Kharlamov, who had held far more important posts 15 years earlier, no doubt served as a reminder that the price of error need not merely be slower pro-

motion.

21. Other aspects of the relationship with Moscow may also have mili-
tated in favour of slowness and caution. It is often said, or suspect-
ed, that Soviet delegations do not receive much in the way of detailed instructions from Moscow and that they are given a good deal of freedom of manoeuvre at the tactical level, subject only to the achievement of a satisfactory result. Leaving aside the last two months of negotiation here, this may well have been true also of the Soviet delegation to the CSCE. Detailed negotiating instruc-
tions inevitably involve a good deal of hypothetical reasoning of the ‘if this, then that’ kind. This, one imagines, may be very diffi-
cult for the Soviet bureaucratic machine to cope with because, if such instructions are to be useful, they must involve envisaging compromise and concession. If the performance of the Soviet delegation here is any guide, Soviet bureaucrats are extremely reluctant to take responsibility for floating such ideas, at least in an attributable form, unless and until their acceptance can be shown to be inevitable. Presumably no one in Moscow would wish to be on record as having envisaged concessions prematurely and risk being exposed to the consequent suspicion of ‘defeatism’.

22. It followed that the absence of negotiating instructions did not give the Soviet delegation the flexibility that might be expected of a Western delegation in similar circumstances. Precisely the same problem that may inhibit the drafting of detailed negotiating instructions also inhibits Russian diplomats in much of the normal business of negotiation. Compromises, package deals and the like always placed our Soviet counterparts in a dilemma. On the one hand they evidently longed for them and knew that the problems here could only be solved on the basis of such agreements. On the other hand, so long at least as the negotiations were being conduct-
ed on a routine basis (i.e., without the involvement of really senior figures such as Brezhnev or Gromyko), they were reluctant to initi-
ate such arrangements or even to encourage them in a consistent manner. To do so would presumably have meant asking Moscow for permission to make concessions without being able to demonstrate that those concessions were unavoidable. Hence, perhaps, the tendency to float ideas, if at all, in informal off the record ways and subsequently to deny their origin or to attribute them to other delegations. Similarly, since the Soviet delegation could never be seen to volunteer anything less than their original demands (this might have implied that those original demands had not been justified), on the very rare occasions when they had a fully elaborated compromise proposal to advance, they did it through a neutral. In Basket III, the journalists’ text (tabled by the Swiss delegation before Christmas 1974) was virtually the only example while I was in Geneva. Since it meant that they lost control of the proposal, the Russians only took such a step with great reluctance. They had had a bad experience with the main preamble to Basket III, negotiated in July 1974. In November, when there was much speculation about a Soviet package deal designed to produce a breakthrough in Basket III before Christmas, there seems to have been considerable debate within the Soviet delegation about this dilemma. But in the end nothing happened.

23. The lengths to which the Soviet delegation would go to avoid taking responsibility for compromise texts, even when they had been actively involved in negotiating them, was extraordinary – and occasionally comical. When, for instance, after several weeks of intermittent bilateral discussion an anodyne Anglo/Soviet text on the distribution of embassy information bulletins was agreed, Kondrashev asked me to table it in Russian (agreed with Dubinin) as well as in English. He said that his delegation needed the security of a Russian language version but did not wish to admit to Moscow that they were in any way responsible for its contents! (For some reason, the Soviet delegation had had difficulty with their usual tactic of finding an East European sponsor for such texts.)

24. The inflexibility imposed on the delegation by their relations with
Moscow is also suggested by their reaction to the Western package deal in May. Dubinin had known for some time that it was coming. He spoke to four Western delegates about it in the days immediately before I handed it over, twice appearing to favour the idea and twice to be opposed. This confusion is not surprising since he must have realized that, on the one hand, a package deal was the best hope available of keeping to Brezhnev’s timetable for a July summit but that, on the other hand, it would mean negotiating on Western terms. A Western diplomat in his situation, and with few problems of inter-allied co-ordination, would surely have made an effort to pre-empt the opposition. Dubinin probably considered doing so. He told me immediately after the Western text had been handed to him that he knew preparation of the initiative must have been difficult as he had himself been giving thought to a similar approach. But he did nothing and, according to Bock, the East German Ambassador, the Warsaw Pact powers much regretted their passivity.

This, and other experiences, also led me to wonder how fully the delegation kept Moscow in the picture about the detailed course of the negotiations. Communication was, no doubt, regular. Moscow and the delegation clearly had a good idea of each other’s thinking in one sense at least: the delegation were never, to my knowledge, made to renege on a formal agreement as a result of subsequent instructions from Moscow. (This may, of course, have owed as much to a desire to appear infallible as to the fact that Moscow was invariably content.) But how objective the reporting was is, perhaps, another matter. One may suppose that it would do a Soviet diplomat’s reputation in Moscow little good if he were too regularly asking for agreement to this or that bit of language (and perhaps inflicting on his colleagues the necessity to make awkward decisions) or if he were to describe too truthfully the inevitable ups and downs of negotiation. It was very striking that the Russians were relatively relaxed about oral reservations, informal non-papers and drafts etc., but that they were very concerned about the contents of any formal, numbered document, however low its status e.g., the Secretariat’s journal recording each meeting. I have the impression
that they were scrupulous about sending back to Moscow complete sets of all formal conference documents, and presumably had to explain and justify their contents, but that they considered other events at the conference could either go unreported or could be reported in a suitably partisan manner. (When the Soviet Ambassador complained in London about the UK delegation, the picture he gave was ludicrously distorted.) Once, of course, a document had been agreed, however informally, and been sent back to Moscow for approval (no doubt accompanied by an analysis putting it in the most favourable possible light), it was more or less impossible to get it reconsidered. A few rather minor changes in the December 1974 Franco/Soviet text for the Mini–Preamble to Human Contacts (which was not agreed by anyone else at the Conference but had certainly been accepted in Moscow at a very high-level) required six months of argument. No registered document with which I was concerned was ever formerly reopened by the Russians, although a few secondary improvements were made in the final days.

26. A further factor in the situation, although evidence for this in Geneva was inevitably indirect, must have been the unwieldiness of the central government machine. Instructions to the delegation, and still more changes in those instructions, must have been the subject of prolonged internal debate in Moscow, particularly since Basket III was in large measure a negotiation about the internal policies of the Soviet Government. The obstinacy and inflexibility shown by the Soviet delegation for months on end about, e.g., the question of internal travel for journalists, may well have resulted as much from the difficulty of negotiating on the subject at home as from its inherent sensitivity. The demands of the West were modest enough. We would certainly have settled in, say, March for less than we ultimately achieved. Another pointer in the direction of problems in Moscow was that the activities of the Basket II negotiators, responsible to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, seem to have been poorly co-ordinated with those of the rest of the delegation. The Basket II texts, for instance, included a number of references to ‘contacts’ which were anathema to Dubinin and which he belated-
ly tried to have removed. The argument on reciprocity dragged on, owing to Soviet obstinacy, for much longer than really suited the overall Soviet timetable. Eventually Dubinin intervened to supervise the negotiation of a compromise, possibly after some kind of showdown in Moscow. As the last incident may suggest, the delegation certainly had some influence and were, on occasion, prepared to use it. Dubinin claimed the credit for getting an unhelpful decision on exit visas for journalists reversed a week or two after it had been announced in March of this year. But the delegation were, one suspects, chary indeed about entering the lists too frequently.

27. All, or a great deal, of the foregoing applied to periods of routine (or pseudo) negotiation, when in fact agreements on matters of substance were hardly ever reached except through Western concessions. A new situation was created when, for one reason or another, the interest of those at the highest level in Moscow was engaged. For Basket III, this may well have meant Brezhnev himself, e.g., in the pre-Christmas 1974 period, because of his visit to Paris, and in May/June 1975, because of his messages to Western leaders and because time was running out. In this situation, the failings of the Soviet machine become its virtues and it can operate with great speed. Policies can be reversed overnight and concessions delivered pell mell with no evident sense of embarrassment. From late May onwards, Moscow seemed to be demanding reports of informally agreed texts from the delegation every evening and to be able to give the green light the following day. At moments, the Soviet negotiators almost appeared to have carte blanche to secure agreement. They showed, incidentally, in this period that they were just as prone to human error and miscalculation as everyone else, perhaps more so. Probably because Dubinin and Kovalev were doing the negotiating themselves, they seemed to prefer to let mistakes stand rather than to admit faults by trying to change them. This reluctance to reopen texts gave the negotiations an air of some drama at times. Things were moving very fast and we all knew there would be little or no opportunity ever to reconsider what was being agreed.
28. The moral of all this seemed to me to be that, just as within the delegation one had to push problems upwards until one reached the point of authority, so there were a number of issues which went well beyond the competence of the delegation and of their back up in Moscow and had to be brought to notice at the highest level, effectively Brezhnev himself. Hence the importance of Kissinger’s intervention with Gromyko in Vienna at the end of May. In a sense, the higher one went, the more likely one was to get a positive answer. This was partly because the demands the West was making in Basket III were unprecedented and partly because one was getting closer to people who were politically involved with the success of what was, after all, a Soviet and, specifically, a Brezhnev initiative. (Perhaps one should only negotiate with the Russians on occasions when they have taken the initiative!)

The Soviet attitude towards other delegations.
Warsaw Pact (except Romania).
29. The Soviet delegation all too clearly regarded their Warsaw Pact allies, with the exception of Romania, as of little or no consequence. From time to time, it is true, they had trouble with one or other delegation, the East Germans on occasion proving inconveniently rigid and the Poles, still more occasionally, trying to be too liberal. But such incidents were unusual and Russians seemed confident that if any issue became at all serious everyone would fall into line. When real bargaining was in progress, the other Eastern delegations were effectively ignored, either attending the talks as mute observers or being informed of the results after the event.

30. The Russians nevertheless went to some lengths in normal circumstances to preserve the fiction that theirs too was an Alliance of equals. Dubinin liked to describe earnestly the difficulties he was having with his more recalcitrant colleagues, hinting broadly at the East Germans. We would respond with sympathetic noises. In fact it was clear that in periods of routine negotiation the East Germans did resist even the smallest concession and on one occasion appear to have succeeded in getting Kharlamov overruled (see para 46
More entertaining, but also symptomatic of the Russian concern with appearances, was the occasional charade of joint action by the Warsaw Pact. The first reply to the 15 May package deal was orchestrated in this way. Dubinin led off with some remarks of a general nature and detailed comments on one section of text. The Polish ambassador, Dobrosielski (who always insisted on a role … on these occasions) then said that, while he agreed with his Soviet colleague, he had some comments on another part of the text. The Bulgarian followed suit and then the others, one by one, until the reply was complete, the Russians nodding their agreement with each intervention. It is hard to believe that the East Europeans greatly relished this humiliating farce but perhaps it served some purpose in regard to reporting to capitals. No doubt, they also preferred this approach to that adopted with the second Soviet reply, whose delivery accorded better with the political realities. It was made at a quadripartite lunch, being read out by Dubinin from a telegram from Moscow brought in during the meal. East European delegations were informed later in the afternoon. Similarly, some of the key sections of the journalists texts were negotiated over a period of several hours in a public lounge in the Conference Centre with Kovalev, Dubinin and Kondrashev in one corner, the NATO caucus in another, myself acting as go between (this was known as shuffle diplomacy) and the rest of the Warsaw Pact excluded.

31. It would be outside the scope of this note to consider in detail whether the Russians will always be able to treat their allies like this. It might seem that a chaotic multilateral conference, like the CSCE, would be the most difficult forum in which to preserve discipline. There were, after all, innumerable spontaneous informal discussions which could only be rehearsed in advance to a very limited extent. The façade cracked slightly on occasion. (During the negotiation of the tourist text, a newly arrived Polish delegate made a helpful suggestion for the structure of the first paragraph. The West promptly adopted this. A day or two later the approach, characterized as a Western suggestion, was denounced by Morozov. As far as I can recall, the Pole never opened his mouth again.) But on the whole, the Soviet delegation was surprisingly successful in
enforcing a coherent approach. No doubt the Russians will be care-
ful not to get into CSCE type negotiations too frequently. But even
if there are future similar occasions, I would expect strains among
Warsaw Pact allies to become visible elsewhere before they became
apparent among teams of professional (and, apart from the
Russians and a few individual exceptions, rather second-rate) diplo-
mats, however great the temptation.

Romania.

32. The Romanians posed a tricky problem for the Russians in terms of
conference diplomacy. On one hand, they were a Communist
delegation who, in Basket III at least, were inclined to be more royal
than the king. On the other hand, they pursued as a matter of prin-
ciple a completely independent line, refusing to be associated with
the results of bloc to bloc negotiations, making awkward links
between points in different baskets and generally delaying progress.
The Russians, very sensibly, chose a low-key solution. They tried to
avoid public confrontations and refused to rise to the various
provocations manufactured by the Romanian delegation. But,
when necessary, they were prepared to do what had to be done,
including aligning themselves publicly with the Western
delegations, in order to bring the Romanians into line. At a
remarkable meeting, shortly before Christmas last year, under
Austrian chairmanship, the Russians sat down together with the
Americans, us and others on one side of a table facing the
Romanians on the other side. They proceeded to reject one by one
a list of seven or eight Romanian amendments designed to make
the otherwise agreed text (on marriage) more restrictive. Even on
this occasion, the Russians avoided polemic preferring, when the
Romanians remained obdurate, to take the matter up in Bucharest
where, no doubt, hard things were said.

33. In private, the Russians sometimes allowed their real views about
the Romanians, which were sulphurous, to appear. Once, when I
informed him of a new and potentially time-consuming Romanian
double cross, Dubinin reacted with a memorable assault on their
‘trickery’ and ‘deceit’. I had half suspected Dubinin himself of
being behind this particular incident but his anger was persuasively genuine. Equally revealing was the delight with which Mendelyevich, at the last meeting of the Coordinating Committee and speaking on behalf of the Chairman, savagely demolished a rather incautious draft vote of thanks which Lipatti, the Romanian Ambassador, had proposed should be offered to the host governments, past and future. Mendelyevich was evidently giving vent to much pent up emotion. He and Lipatti increasingly resembled petulant children as the wrangle dragged on into the small hours (4 a.m.) of the Conference’s final morning in Geneva.

Neutrals and Non-Aligned.

34. As the Russians said more than once, ‘there were no neutrals in Basket III’. On the substance of the questions at issue, the views of delegates such as the Austrians, Swiss and Swedes were at least as unpalatable to the Russians as those of the Nine and the Fifteen. Nonetheless the Soviet delegation did not make the mistake, which Zorin is said to have made in Helsinki, of too obviously ignoring the neutral and non-aligned participants. Dubinin was careful to defer, if only in public, to their sensibilities whenever possible. He was also well aware that the *amour propre* of the smaller participants could be exploited to sow dissension in the ‘Western’ camp. In one or two instances, particularly in the second half of last year, he tried to float compromise proposals (weighted in the Soviet direction) through the agency of neutral delegations. This tactic, however, proved subject to rapidly diminishing returns. The Russians discovered that it was difficult to keep control of a proposal once it had been entrusted to the neutrals and that the Fifteen were in any case reluctant to negotiate through third parties. The neutrals, for their part, discovered that the joys of being at the centre of things were outweighed by the discomforts of being bullied by the Russians. (Dubinin succeeded in bringing the, in any case, nervous Austrian delegate – Liedermann – to the verge of a breakdown at one stage.) In the end, only the number two on the Swiss delegation was prepared to play along with the Russians. His credibility was progressively undermined so that ultimately the Russians were unable to make effective use of him, at least in Basket III.
The Nine and the Fifteen.

35. The Soviet delegation appeared to proceed from the assumption that the objectives of the West and of the Soviet Union in Basket III were totally opposed. While they probably accepted that most, if not all, Western delegations genuinely wanted an agreement, they knew that our aim was to get into the text as much language as possible tending to promote individual freedoms and that theirs was to exclude such language. Again and again, we found ourselves negotiating about matters that struck at the roots of communist ideology and of the Soviet system. Consciousness of this basic antagonism, which is no doubt present in any negotiation between Communist and Western governments, was constantly evident in the tactics of the Soviet delegation.

36. It was, perhaps, surprising against this background that personal relations could be as close and friendly as, at least superficially, they were. This may have been due to two factors. Firstly, it was inevitable that some kind of relationship should be created in the many hours delegates spent together. It is easier on the whole to like people than to dislike them (cf. the often reported interrogator/prisoner syndrome – though it would not always be easy to assign roles in this instance). Secondly, most of the Russians were adept at disassociating their professional from their social personalities (it would have been rash to guess which, if either, was the true personality in any given case). This meant that meals, private meetings and the like always went off easily and that a plausible simulacrum of friendship, sometimes unnervingly like the real thing, could be maintained. As soon, however, as the conversation began to go beyond gossip about the remote past, colleagues, tourism and so on, suspicion about one's motives in asking and a cautious desire to keep one at arms length surfaced. (An amusing example occurred in mid-spring when Kondrashev disappeared, without warning, from the Soviet delegation. Since he had had one or two negotiating mishaps and was generally thought to be 'soft', it was widely assumed that he had been posted home in disgrace. His delegation must have been aware of these rumours but did nothing to counteract them. Eventually I asked Kashlev whether his colleague
would be returning and received a thoroughly evasive reply. When, after ten days absence, Kondrashev reappeared, it transpired that his aged mother had died!) All diplomats try to distinguish between their official and private roles and to find out as much as possible about the other side’s hand while revealing as little as possible of their own. The Russians may try a little less hard now than they used to. But they still take these precepts extraordinarily seriously.

37. The lack of communication and comprehension, which flowed from this secretiveness, had many consequences for the attitude of the Soviet delegation towards their colleagues and vice versa. Above all it led to what one might call mirror diplomacy, i.e., the tendency for each side, in the absence of true understanding, to attribute its own instinctive reactions and wishes to the other side. On the Western side, for instance, there was an inclination to forget the ideological gulf and to think that if only one could get the arguments properly balanced and personal relations on a satisfactory basis, the Russians could be brought ‘to see reason’ i.e., to see things our way (23). The French were perhaps particularly prone to this delusion, aided by a related delusion that they were cleverer than their Soviet counterparts. The latter, on the other hand, clearly attributed to us a conscious ideological antagonism at least as deep as that which they themselves felt. All our proposals were examined on the basis that their intent was hostile and with a prejudice, therefore, in favour of rejection. The conspiracy theory of events was very deeply rooted. No Western error, lapse or disagreement was ever attributed to chance or incompetence until it had been demonstrated beyond doubt that it could not have been deliberate. (The Russians at least pretended to be ludicrously impressed when they realized my father had been a well-known chess master and told me, only half in jest, that they would henceforth analyze my actions with particular care.) In short, they assumed that we were as Machiavellian as they would have liked to be.

38. They may well have been encouraged in this view by the difficulties they encountered in dealing with the novel phenomenon of
Western political co-ordination. In one sense, this co-operation suited the Russians since it meant that they were often able to deal with one or two relatively authoritatively interlocutors (paragraph 4 above). But, as Dubinin told me frankly late one night, the disadvantages outweighed the advantages. In the first place, the West’s co-operation, being voluntary, was not always perfect. Although it happened rarely, denunciation of compromise proposals by this or that member of the Fifteen happened just often enough to keep the Russians in a state of continuing uncertainty. (The Russians’ own wedge driving tactics, in which they could not resist indulging, did not help.) The irresponsible activities of the French, who were much given to speaking on behalf of the West without any authority to do so, were annoying and damaging to their allies but must in the end have been almost equally irritating to the Russians. Far more significant, however, than such incidental advantages as flowed from the flaws in our co-operation, was the strength that every Western negotiator derived, if he chose to use it, from having 14 more or less recalcitrant allies alongside or behind him. The Russians knew perfectly well that when one said ‘we’ could not agree to a text, it often meant that only one of two of the allies could not agree and that one was frequently embroidering the truth when one said that, much as one would like to accept a given proposition, ally X (unnamed) would not. But there was nothing they could do since such statements were true frequently enough to be credible and since there were always too many variables in the Western position to allow it to be pinned down by an outsider. The Russians could never afford to throw their weight around with anyone who was speaking authoritatively on behalf of the Nine or the Fifteen. If they did catch a Western ally out of line (e.g., when the Italian delegation, under misguided instructions from Rome, reneged on the tourist text and held out for more), they were quite prepared to use the bludgeon. But the occasions when they were presented with a single, vulnerable target were rare. Usually they found themselves faced by an entity which, having no single decision-maker, was tantalizingly difficult to come to grips with but which at the same time was annoyingly well co-ordinated and had developed a real negotiating personality.
In this struggle, the Russians often evinced attitudes that suggested, as much as anything else, a deep-rooted inferiority complex. They were, for instance, very touchy about their professional skills. They were liable to explode if too obviously wrong footed in a public negotiation. After one disagreeable scene with Dubinin, I came to the conclusion that it was better to avoid laying traps, at least those that might have to be sprung in open session, since there was no way of predicting what might be damaged in the resulting upheaval. The Russians themselves gave no evidence of such scruples. Basket III was of course particularly difficult for them since they could not escape the fact in it that the gap between the image of life in the Soviet Union and the reality was uncomfortably large and was known by every delegation to be so. They were perpetually on the defensive and consistently outpointed, to their evident discomfort, in the freewheeling discussions that developed in informal meetings. (This was particularly the case in the meetings on Information, where Kharlamov rather fancied himself as a debater.) All members of the delegation were extremely sensitive about aspersions cast on the Soviet way of life. They would accept jokes and teasing, but any criticism thought to be serious was liable to provoke an outburst – of a kind of that usually suggested irritation at being caught out rather than indignation at being misrepresented. They had a curious, but regular, habit of rejecting apparently innocuous words on the grounds that they were ‘undignified’ or ‘unworthy of the Conference’. This invariably meant that the word could be read as suggesting that some aspect of life in the Soviet Union was less than wholly admirable. (A major stumbling block in the Human Contacts Mini–Preamble was created by the Soviet insistence on translating a reference to the ‘improvement’ of contacts by a Russian word which meant ‘perfecting’ them. The Russians were quite unmoved by the argument that the text applied to life in 35 nations, not all of whose practices were beyond improvement. In the end, both words had to be dropped.) This did not prevent members of the Soviet delegation telling us privately (as part of a constant effort to get us to accept the promise of jam tomorrow for the substance of jam today) that, whatever the past or present problems in the Soviet
Union, things were now going to get better. Everything agreed by the CSCE was to be overtaken by favourable developments in the near future.

40. These Soviet attitudes did not, however, result in a team of incoherent or overawed negotiators. The Russians were highly conscious of their superpower status and of the fact that they constituted the strongest, and probably the ablest, delegation in Geneva. They were hard working, tireless and professional. They were also more sensitive and suspicious than the realities of the situation warranted, inclined to be ruder than was necessary and maddeningly disinclined to take any statement at its face value. These characteristics inevitably tended to retard and complicate the already sufficiently difficult task of reaching agreement.

Soviet Strategy and Objectives.
41. It seems unlikely that the Russians thought out their objectives or strategy for Basket III in detail (see also paragraph 21 above). Their principal aim appears to have been to ensure that the basket contained as little as possible and that what little it did contain should be in the Culture and Education chapters rather than in those on Human Contacts and Information (25). (On Follow-up, their attitude had by the end of the Conference changed from one of warmth to one of coolness, presumably because of Basket III, so that here also they were as much concerned with keeping things out as with getting them in.) Their strategy seems to have been to sit the West out, hoping that they would get what they wanted in Basket I and then, having offered some minimal texts in implementation of the Basket III mandate, to defy the West to incur the opprobrium of a refusal to go to Helsinki. They probably assumed that Western disunity and the low boredom threshold of Western electorates, as well perhaps as the impatience of Western politicians, would sooner or later play into their hands.

Soviet Tactics.
42. The Russians’ opening gambit in any negotiation, great or small, was to cast doubt on the seriousness of the other side’s intentions
or demands; to decry their motives; and to make a ludicrously inadequate offer or counter-offer. They obviously assumed that we would start in the same spirit. As a result, the opening exchanges were almost invariably futile, at least as far as agreeing language was concerned. At times, one wondered whether what was going on could be described as negotiation at all. It was easy to imagine that it was literally a dialogue of the deaf. Nor was there any way of judging how long this period of pseudo negotiation would last. In the case of some texts in the CSCE, it lasted for a year or more – a dispiriting thought for anyone starting on, or engaged in, negotiations with the Soviet Union.

43. In retrospect, however, it is clear that in Russian eyes these pseudo-negotiations served a purpose. They were an important, probably an unavoidable, prelude to the ‘real’ or final negotiation. In Basket III it was anyway part of their overall strategy to drag out the negotiations. But the same kind of approach characterized their activities in other parts of the Conference. In my view they hoped in the course of these preliminaries:-

(a) to establish how serious their opponents were in pursuing any given objective and to clarify in their own minds, and in Moscow’s, where concessions would have to be made. The more sensitive the subject, the longer this took, see paras 21 – 28 above;

(b) to discover what the other side’s fall-back positions were;

(c) to drive their opponents back as far as possible in order that the final negotiation on any topic could start from the most favourable position;

(d) to prepare for a final negotiation that so often, at least where major topics were concerned, had to be conducted in an atmosphere of haste and confusion;

(e) to produce in the other side a feeling of gratitude and achievement, probably unwarranted, for whatever conces-
sions were eventually produced. (Although one cannot be sure, I do not think that the West fell into this trap last July. But, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that there were occasions during the negotiations when we were in danger of setting our sights too low.)

44. It follows that, throughout the preliminary stages of any negotiation with the Russians, it is essential to be tough as they are; to be careful about what flexibility one shows (while trying to show some); and, perhaps above all, to keep one’s own desiderata firmly in mind. In doing so, or in failing to do so, one is conveying messages to the other side – albeit slowly and seemingly inefficiently. It is not always easy or even possible to pursue these objectives effectively, particularly in a multilateral conference where separate but inter-acting items of text may be in different stages of negotiation, some in the ‘pseudo’ phase and some in the final phase. But the effort should be made. One consolation is that such situations must be nearly as difficult for the Russians to handle as for us.

45. While on the substance of negotiation the Russians were more inhibited than their Western counterparts, in the handling of the day-to-day business of negotiation they were much less so. Their indifference to the impression they create on others has often been remarked. It was apparent in Geneva. Rudeness, particularly in private, undoubtedly had a certain initial effect. It was surprisingly difficult to avoid discomfiture when being harangued by someone with whom one had had a friendly meal a few hours previously and who expected to be just as friendly once the tirade was over. But whatever benefits the Russians may have derived initially vis-à-vis any given victim, those benefits diminished rapidly with repetition. I found that the simplest and least enervating response was to follow suit, allowing my own irritation and disenchantment to show plainly, but cutting the row short as soon as possible and saying afterwards, with a smile, how pointless I found such exchanges. Doubtless there are other ripostes.

46. More disconcerting was the propensity … of the Soviet delegation,
at all levels, for misrepresenting the facts, whether to save face, to
cause trouble or simply to gain some trivial and ephemeral advan-
tage. The naturalness with which this habit came to one’s Russian
colleagues suggested much unavoidable practice at home. On one
occasion, Kharlamov personally agreed with me and with two
other delegates a formula on the not unimportant question of the
publication of the Final Text of the Conference. Since this was the
second time we had ‘agreed’ it, we made him write the formula
down in English and Russian, with the assistance of one of his own
interpreters. We then all shook hands on it. The following day,
probably after Dubinin had accepted a protest from the East
Germans, Kharlamov blandly denied that any agreement had been
made. He came rather close to denying that the earlier discussion
had taken place at all. As in the incident with Mendelyevich (para
20 about), the inability to admit an error or a change of course,
even when caught red-handed, is … very suggestive of the discom-
forts of being an employee of the Soviet government … This affair
also underlined the importance of identifying where, if anywhere,
decisions are taken in a Soviet delegation. Dubinin, who aspired to
such authority, never reneged on any agreement, since to have done
so would have created a question mark over his ability to ‘deli-
ver’ his delegation. Kharlamov’s credibility as a negotiator was
irreparably damaged by the incident described above – which
occurred eight months before the end of the Conference.

47. The Russians also persistently tried to sow dissension among
Western and neutral delegations by misrepresenting conversations
in which they had taken part … Dubinin was particularly adept at
suggesting that delegation X or Y was prepared to make a
concession if only the UK would do likewise; that he had been told
by Z that the UK was the only member of the Nine holding up
progress, etc. etc. His motives in doing so were transparent. He
must have been as aware of this as was everyone else. Nonetheless,
over many months, this trouble making did have an effect and did
cause damage to relations among some delegations. That he, as a
result, became deeply mistrusted may not have troubled Dubinin
greatly. But he should perhaps have been worried that a number of
Western delegations (always excluding the French) were driven to co-operate more closely than might otherwise have been the case …

48. In general, the Soviet delegation proceeded on the premise that anything they could get away with was legitimate and that it was up to the other side to stop them. The notion of ‘fair play’, with its implication that life is a game played according to a mutually accepted set of rules and supervised by a neutral umpire, is no doubt incompatible in Soviet eyes with the existence of a fundamental ideological antagonism between East and West. The Russians’ consequent lack of interest in Western ways of doing business was always in evidence. One could, for instance, place no reliance on a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ with a Soviet diplomat (although they often used the phrase). Nor could one bank good will. Any concession had to be matched more or less on the spot by a counter concession – possibly on unrelated subject. Otherwise it was swallowed up and forgotten. To enter into a vague or imprecise understanding was to court certain disillusionment … No weight could be attached to Soviet offers, which were frequent, to make some gesture in the future in return for a Western gesture now. Plausible excuses for failure to deliver what had been promised always seemed to be available. On the other hand, if an agreement was sufficiently precise and made at a sufficiently authoritative level, it would always stick. This applied, at least in the final phase of the negotiations, to oral agreements as well as to those on paper. Presumably the Russians are as prone as anyone else to second thoughts. But, if so, they preferred to conceal them and to attempt to create an impression of infallibility.

49. Even with agreements that had been struck, there was a final opening for sharp practice which the Soviet delegation never overlooked: the rendering into Russian. Throughout the Conference, they claimed the right to pronounce on and to criticize any text in any language, while trying to reserve to themselves the exclusive right to pronounce on what was acceptable or legitimate in Russian. Western delegations made an error at an early stage in the proceedings in agreeing to negotiate texts in English or French
without simultaneously agreeing the Russian language version or, perhaps even more useful, drafting an agreed lexicon of translations for words such as ‘intend’, ‘agreement’, or ‘arrangement’. In the absence of such an understanding, there was a tendency for the Russians to produce a thoroughly self-serving translation of a text agreed in English or French; to feign astonishment and anger when this was queried; and then to resist all but minor changes in the hope that Western delegations would become bored and would move on to other things. Almost the last serious negotiation in Basket III related to a major mistranslation in the Russian version of a text agreed in English more than a year previously. (The Soviet delegation were much assisted in this tactic by the fact that the supposedly impartial Russian conference interpreters were in all essentials members of the delegation and acted accordingly.) From December onwards, the majority of texts in Basket III were negotiated simultaneously in English and Russian, both texts being original. The Russians could hardly object to this. Indeed by then it suited them since they were becoming increasingly conscious of the time factor. This practice saved much subsequent difficulty and should be the rule in all negotiations of a similar nature.

50. Although there was nothing improper about it in principle, the Soviet predilection for going behind the backs of CSCE delegations to complain to the latters’ political masters in capitals was also symptomatic of their lack of interest in ‘playing the game’. This was the more so since the burden of their complaints was usually distorted and ill founded. After one blatant example (in the course of which Ambassador Lunkov\(^4\) received a particularly satisfactory rebuff from the Secretary of State), I told Dubinin that his authorities’ attempts to appeal issues upwards and to sow dissension between civil servants and their Ministers were, in the case of the UK at least, unhelpful and a waste of everyone’s time. He was unconvinced. He assured me that there was nothing personal in the démarche, but Moscow had regarded the overall situation as unsatisfactory. Since virtually every Western delegation was at one

\(^4\) N.M. Lunkov was Soviet Ambassador in London.
time or another the subject of complaint in their respective capitals, Moscow presumably thought that such approaches paid off, however unhelpful the consequences for relations between delegations in Geneva. (The Soviet assumption that the best way to get results is to go as high as possible and that the reactions of officials lower down the ladder are irrelevant, seems to accord well with the picture of the Soviet machine in paras 26 – 28 above.)

Soviet Performance.

51. There is no obvious standpoint from which to judge the Soviet performance at the Conference. We do not know how much, except in the broadest terms, they were seeking in Basket I nor how little they thought they could get away with in Basket III. Like ours, their final assessment of the outcome of the Conference can hardly be written for some time yet. Nonetheless one can perhaps attempt an interim judgement based on attitudes and expectations revealed in Geneva and relating simply to the negotiating process rather than to the long-term significance of the results. Such an assessment is not, in my view, particularly flattering to the Russians.

52. Leaving aside the more specifically Russian characteristics described earlier, the Soviet delegation – particularly its senior members – displayed throughout the negotiations qualities of intelligence, stamina and attention to detail which, taken together with the scale of their effort and the importance they evidently attached to the result, should have ensured a favourable outcome. But they, or their authorities, made, in my view, a number of major errors: -

(a) they miscalculated the significance of the multilateral character of the Conference. In particular, they underestimated the scope for obstinacy and obstruction which the ability to shelter behind other participants gave to any member state (notably those belonging to formal Alliance structures) when its special interests were at stake;

(b) they underestimated the patience of Western public opinion and of Western ministers; to be more exact, mesmerized by
the importance that they themselves attached to the Conference, they failed to realize that for long periods it would simply be forgotten by all in the West who were not dealing with it directly;

(c) having thus miscalculated the likely duration of the Conference, they allowed the fact they were under increasing time pressure to become apparent, eventually committing the cardinal mistake of tying Brezhnev’s own prestige to the achievement of a Summit by a certain date;

(d) they maintained, until a fatally late stage, a policy of self-defeating inflexibility on a number of major Basket III issues;

(e) their tactics, particularly in Basket III, had the effect of alienating most other delegations and of emphasizing the we/they character of the negotiations. They thereby made it easier for the West not only to maintain its own unity but also to carry the neutrals along.

53. The Russians can hardly be blamed for the first two errors. Most of the other participants made them too. The Soviet delegation at least booked their accommodation initially for a year, whereas Western delegations seem to have thought in terms of six months. The Russians do, however, seem to have been unnecessarily slow to absorb the lessons of Phase 1 in Helsinki and to have compounded this by their inability to adjust their thinking in the light of events in Geneva as Phase 2 progressed. Hence their third error. These three mistakes may all owe a good deal to a fundamental failure to think through the implications of the fact that, taking the Conference as a whole, the Soviet Union was the *demandeur*.

54. To a certain extent, the fourth error belongs in the same category. But I think that, like the fifth point listed and some elements in the second and third, it owes more to the inherent weaknesses of the Soviet system in a fluid bargaining situation. The system’s strengths include clarity of purpose, persistence and stamina, as
well as the ability and dedication (for whatever reason) of many of its representatives. Its weaknesses include its remarkable rigidity and unresponsiveness, except for short spasms of crisis, its insensitivity, inability to delegate and poor sense of proportion. In a world of fast moving and complex multilateral diplomacy, these handicaps could become increasingly serious. Its diplomats may acquire some of the characteristics of their Western counterparts. But this will not necessarily enable them to overcome or ignore the system. They may even become more vulnerable to it.

55. Certainly in Geneva, the system seemed to have the upper hand. This showed in the final results. In Basket I, the Russians only succeeded to a very limited extent in enlarging the gain, admittedly major, they made when the West agreed to attend the Conference. Given that the Principles were going to be written down, little language went into them endorsing Soviet views. In negotiating terms, the result of the haggle over confidence building measures was a victory on points for the West, a more striking result probably having been lost as result of Dr Kissinger’s intervention. (This is a case where Soviet intervention in a capital paid off.) Basket II, whatever its long-term significance, was not the object of high-level attention by either side. In Basket III, the Russians seem to have paid a good deal more than they wished and, indeed, thanks to their own mistakes, more than they need have done. On the Mediterranean, Mr Mintoff won by a knockout (although there will certainly be a rematch). Follow-up was perhaps a draw, although I doubt if the Russians were very happy about it. Overall, in other words, their achievement was unimpressive.

Conclusion.

56. The Soviet approach to negotiation, at least as experienced in Geneva, is different from ours. While the Russians accepted, as a matter of convenience, many of the same customs and conventions as Western diplomats, they were not in fact using the same rulebook. This inevitably resulted in a time-consuming, messy and tiring encounter. But it does not, I think, lead to the conclusion that Western negotiators should have changed their own rules or pat-
terns of behaviour, even supposing they had been able to do so. It was, of course, important to be aware of what one’s Soviet colleagues were doing or trying to do; to refuse to be shocked or discountenanced by their activities; and to be ready to rebuff them whenever necessary. But beyond that, most of the precepts for successful negotiation in any environment seemed to be relevant, albeit in a heightened degree. The most successful of one’s Western colleagues were those who knew what they wanted; were patient and stayed awake; were precise; put things down on paper; were honest and frank most of the time; were blunt when necessary and cheerful when possible. In short, the best way to deal with the Russians seemed to be to treat them as though they were exactly the same as everyone else, while bearing in mind that they were not.
Chapter 6
A very Cold War
Letters to Margaret Thatcher from Vienna, 1983-84

I returned to London from Geneva in 1977 and spent two years in the FCO, first as deputy head, then as head, of Personnel Operations Department. In July 1979, Margaret Thatcher picked me to join her staff at 10 Downing Street as Private Secretary for Overseas Affairs. Two and a half extraordinarily exciting years followed. But while the Cold War loomed large, it was very far from being the only item on the overseas agenda. Rhodesia, the Falklands problem, the EC budget rebate, Ireland, the ‘special relationship’ and the purchase of Trident were among the more obvious subjects of concern. Lady Thatcher has, of course, long since given her own account of those years, as have others.

Extracts from some of the speeches that I drafted for her, in whole or in part, give a fair picture of her attitude at the time to East-West relations. I broadly shared it. The overall situation did seem to me to be dangerous and the threat from the Soviet Union to be a very real one. I was nervous about the years immediately ahead and coined the phrase ‘the dangerous decade’ to describe the eighties on which we were then about to embark. Where the Prime Minister and I did disagree to some extent was that, at root, I thought the problem arose because the Soviet Union, while a military superpower, was a nervous and uncertain giant, doubtful of its ability to compete successfully with the West, rather than because it was indeed an ‘evil empire’. The reason that the problem of stabilizing East-West relations was so intractable was that the capitalist democracies constituted a lethal threat to state socialism by virtue of their successful existence rather than because of any particular policy or
set of policies. I was inclined, for instance, to see the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a reflection of weakness rather than strength. The Prime Minister certainly did not and I recall a vigorous argument on that score (in our Embassy in Luxembourg) when we got the first news of what was happening.

The issue was of considerable long-term importance. It underlies the analyses quoted later in this chapter and is reflected, passim, in the extracts quoted below from speeches I drafted for her, in whole or in part. Subsequent events were to suggest that there might have been some merit in my view. But in relation to the formulation of policy at the time and on the day, the point was rather academic. I entirely agreed with the Prime Minister, not least in the light of my experience in Geneva, about the need to play the hand from strength and to avoid unilateral gestures. As I think emerges from these extracts, her views on how to deal with the Soviet Government became from an early stage in her premiership a good deal more nuanced than subsequent ‘Iron Lady’ caricatures, on occasion encouraged by Margaret Thatcher herself, have tended to suggest.

Delivering the Winston Churchill Memorial lecture in Luxembourg on 18 October 1979, she declared:

Let me be clear. The Soviet armies in Europe are organized and trained for attack. Their military strength is growing. The Russians do not publish their intentions. So we must judge them by their military capabilities. I doubt whether any Russian leader would easily contemplate a repetition of the immense sufferings through which his country went less than forty years ago. But it is up to us to ensure that there is no doubt in his mind that this – and worse – would now be the price of any Soviet adventure. That is what we mean when we talk of maintaining the credibility of our defensive forces.

To do this is well within our economic and technical capacity. Our economies are incomparably more prosperous, more productive, more sophisticated and more flexible than the economy of the Soviet Union. The Alliance can maintain its defences without undue burden. And we have other, less tangible assets. The peoples of Europe decided of their own will to enter the Western Alliance. Unlike the members of the Warsaw Pact, they are consulted about the part defence should play in their national affairs. What they give, they give willingly, however much they grumble. And they will give more, if they believe the need is there.

We therefore face an issue of political will. There is no need to match the sacrifices demanded of the Russian people. But can we match the resolve shown down the years by their leaders? Happily, the Alliance
is bestirring itself. The facts are becoming more widely acknowledged. NATO countries have agreed on a target of annual increases of 3% in defence expenditure. We British are prepared to meet that challenge. We look to our allies to do likewise …

The restoration of a military balance in Europe is not an end in itself. It is the necessary condition for the development of relations between East and West. We may not like the regimes under which the countries of Eastern Europe live. But we neither can nor should ignore the many peoples who in the past have been bound to us by common traditions. They are no less Europeans in spirit than are we ourselves. We should therefore pursue a realistic dialogue with the Soviet Union and nations of Eastern Europe. Of course, the relationship cannot be easy. The Communist governments claim the right to pursue the ideological struggle. We will continue to proclaim our belief in the democratic system; the nervousness which Soviet leaders betray at the thought of ‘ideological contamination’ by the West is a tribute to that system.

We must build on our interests where these coincide with those of the East. We must try to limit the consequences were our interests conflict. To discover where the prospect of agreement, or the risk of conflict, lies we need contacts with the Communist countries at all levels, from the highest to the most humble. Ordinary people should meet – as journalists, as teachers, as businessmen, as men of science and the arts. The statesmen of both sides should meet to explain their policies. All this can only help the atmosphere for actual negotiation on the issues of trade, disarmament, arms control, and world affairs which will determine the issue of peace and war itself.

Two months later, on 18 December 1979, she told the Foreign Policy Association in New York:

We face a new decade – I have called it ‘the dangerous decade’ – in which the challenges to our security and to our way of life may, if anything, be even more acute than in the 1970s. The response of the Western nations and their leaders will need to be firm, calm and concerted. Neither weakness nor anger nor despair will serve us. The problems are daunting. But in my view, there is ample reason for optimism …

The Soviet Union continues to proclaim the ideological struggle. It asserts that the demise of the Western political system is inevitable. It neglects the fact that few indeed who live in the Western democracies show any sign of wanting to exchange their system for that operated by the Russians. In 1919, Lenin said: ‘World imperialism cannot live side by side with a victorious Soviet revolution – the one or other will be victorious in the end.’ The Soviet government have not repudiated this threatening prediction. Indeed, they broadcast their ambitions wholesale. They should not be surprised if we listen and take note.
Meanwhile they expand their armed forces on land, sea and air. They continually improve the quality of their armaments. They and their allies outnumber us in Europe. Their men, their ships, and their aircraft appear ever more regularly in parts of the world where they have never been seen before. Their Cuban and East German proxies do likewise.

We can argue about Soviet motives. But the fact is that the Russians have the weapons and are getting more of them. It is simple prudence for the West to respond. We in Britain intend to do that to the best of our ability and at every level including the strategic. President Carter has shown that he intends to do likewise. And the Alliance last week decided to modernise its long-range theatre nuclear weapons. This in due course will help to balance the new and sophisticated weapons the Russians already have targeted on Europe. The strategic power of the United States of America in the Western Alliance remains paramount but I would underline the contribution of the European members of NATO – a contribution which is never overlooked by the Russians.

Modern weapons are totally destructive and immensely expensive. It is in no-one’s interest that they should be piled up indefinitely. It makes good sense for both sides to seek agreements on arms control which preserves the essential security of each. We in Britain have therefore supported the talks on Strategic Arms Limitation and on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions, and the British government hopes that the SALT II agreement can be ratified.

I have been attacked by the Soviet Government for arguing that the West should put itself in a position to negotiate from strength. But in saying that, I have done no more than echo the constant ambition of the Soviet Government itself. I am not talking about negotiations from a position of superiority. What I am seeking is a negotiation in which we and they start from a position of balance; if both sides can negotiate genuinely, to maintain that balance at lower levels, I shall be well content. It is in that spirit that I approach the proposals which have recently been made by President Brezhnev and others.

Then, on 20 January 1980, she told the Commons:

Last autumn I expressed the view that the West would have to face in the next few years challenges and dangers more testing than any it had faced in the 1960s or 1970s. I called the Eighties ‘the dangerous decade’. But the first challenge has come sooner than many expected.

We face a grave development in East-West relations. Abroad, the Soviet Union has shown that it is prepared to use force to impose its will on a small neighbouring country. At home, by arresting and exiling Professor Sakharov, it has shown once again that it will not tolerate dissent within its own borders. The Soviet Government’s actions reveal a brutal disregard for the accepted norms of international behaviour, for world public opinion and for the principles laid down in the Helsinki Final
Michael Alexander

Act of 1975 – an agreement signed by President Brezhnev himself …

This is not the first time that the Russians have used force to invade a
neighbour, used it massively, swiftly and callously in a pattern that bears the
Soviet hallmark. It is not the first time that they have claimed to have been
invited in by a government who, on closer inspection, turned out not to exist
or whose leaders they subsequently killed. But it is the first time since the
World War that they have sent tens of thousands of soldiers, backed by
tanks and helicopter gunships, into a country outside the Warsaw Pact; an
Islamic country, a member of the non-aligned movement, and a country
that posed no conceivable threat to their country or their interests …

Commentators speculate about the motives of the Soviet Union in
moving into Afghanistan. It is argued that the invasion is a confession of
Soviet weakness; that it reflects a defensive mentality; or that it flows from
a fear of encirclement. But we cannot know the motives of the Russians.
What we know is what they have done …

The actions already announced by the Government will have effects
stretching well into the future. It is important and we and the Allies
should persist in our efforts. We must not give the impression that our
indignation is synthetic or short-lived. The most persuasive evidence of
our determination will be our willingness to sustain our unity and
defence effort. The House will know from last week’s defence debate that
the Government are resolved to do so. Alliance Governments recently
decided to increase their defence expenditure in the years ahead. They
have decided to modernise Nato’s long-range theatre nuclear weapons.
They must now demonstrate that they can carry out those decisions.

The new measures that the West has taken, or will take, do not imply
that there can or should be a complete break with past. The business of
East-West relations must go on. We have to live in the same world …
There are, for example, a number of arms control negotiations in which
the West has a real and continuing interest. They are an integral part of
our efforts to safeguard the nation’s security. We do not propose to aban-
don them. But recent events once more call Soviet good faith into ques-
tion and cast a shadow over the prospects for early progress … We will
persist with our efforts to initiate negotiations with the Soviet Union
about theatre nuclear forces in Europe. Although it rejected the recent
American offer, that offer remains on the table. We will pursue the nego-
tiations in Vienna on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions. Here also
the Alliance took a new initiative last month. We will carry on the nego-
tiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban. We will continue preparations for
the meeting in Madrid in November about the next stage in the process
begun at Helsinki, although of course much will depend on Soviet
actions meanwhile …

I began by speaking about the meaning of détente. If it means any-
thing, it must mean a process whereby East and West move away from the
hostility and confrontation of the years after the Second World War. It is
about the management of East-West relations, so that war is avoided while
the legitimate interests of both sides are protected ... It is absolutely necessary and vital that the unity of the West is retained. The Russians have a view of détente totally different from ours. Our view is that with security the legitimate interest of both East and West must be protected. We should do whatever it is necessary to counter Soviet policies by strengthening our relations with the whole non-communist world and, above all, by looking to our defences. We shall continue to negotiate with the Soviet Union from a position of balanced strength on issues where our interests are mutual. If we are vigilant and steadfast, our democratic values will outlast the sterile dictatorship and spurious theories of Soviet Marxism. We can gladly take on the Soviet Union in the struggle of ideas. This is an arena where the defeat, not the victory, of Marxism is inevitable. Meanwhile, we stand ready for co-operation in a search for mutual benefit in a true détente if, one day, the Soviet Union decides, genuinely, to take the path of peace. The burden of proof now lies with the Soviet Union.

There were many more speeches, and many more drafting sessions, in the two further years that I spent at No. 10. But these extracts represent well enough the basic philosophy on East-West relations, a philosophy that in the context of the international situation then obtaining still looks sensible enough to me. (At least in those early years it owed, I have to say, rather little to the contributions of some, like Robert Conquest and Alfred Sherman, whose names have subsequently acquired a certain notoriety in this regard.) I stayed with the Prime Minister until the end of the UK Presidency of the EC in December 1981 before moving to Vienna, as Ambassador, in January 1982. I spent a good deal of my first year in Austria struggling with the structure of our representation there, establishing new consulates and taking in hand the distinctly neglected, if splendid, Embassy buildings. But, at the same time, I was conscious that Vienna was an admirable vantage point from which to take an interest in the evolution of East-West relations. Driving through Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland in a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce was a surreal but chilling experience. (So was calling on my Soviet colleague three times in the space of some eighteen months to sign a Book of Condolences for a deceased General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.) The fact that my wife had spent part of her childhood (1942-44) in rural Silesia gave me a perspective on what we were seeing that cannot have been available to many British diplomats. The following, entirely personal, letter to Margaret Thatcher, dispatched on the day of her
second General Election victory and at her suggestion not then copied to the FCO, was the result.

**Letter to Margaret Thatcher, Vienna, 9 June 1983.**

When I left your staff 18 months ago, you suggested that I should write to you direct if ever I had any comments about HMG’s policy overseas as seen from Vienna. I said that, while appreciative of the suggestion, I probably would not take it up – partly for the obvious hierarchical reasons and partly because I doubted whether anything sufficiently important to bother you with would come my way here.

Four visits to Eastern Europe (two to Czechoslovakia and one each to Poland and Hungary) have changed my mind. Taken together with my recollections of a ten months’ negotiation with the Russians in Geneva (1974-75) and two years service in Moscow (1963-65), they have left me deeply worried about the prospects for East-West relations in the years immediately ahead. The enclosed paper tries, in somewhat schematic terms, to explain why. It also suggests some consequent modifications of Western policy. These last are addressed to our overall strategy and presentation rather than to pending decisions with the details of which I am completely out of touch.

My main concern is that we in the West take insufficient account of the more or less complete economic failure of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. This failure, combined with the continuing success of the capitalist economies and traditional Russian feelings of material inferiority vis-à-vis Western Europe, has fuelled the Soviet Union’s obsession with military development over the last 15 years and more.

It is of course dangerous to assume that conditions in the Soviet Union are the same as those in Eastern Europe which I have been seeing at first hand. But even if different, I do not think they are better. Khruschev was, in my view, the last Soviet leader who may genuinely have believed that communism could engage successfully in a peaceful and primarily non-military competition with ‘capitalism’. His successors have consistently sought to cloak their basic weakness by ever greater concentration on the military aspects of the competition.

It is a great pity that more Western decision-makers do not have the opportunity to see at first-hand and unescorted the dismaying backwardness of a city like Katowice in Southern Silesia (where I spent 24 hours
The conditions there are Dickensian. This is not a Toxteth or a Pittsburgh, which has been temporarily left behind by industrial and urban change. It lies at the heart of Upper Silesia, one of the most richly endowed industrial regions in Europe. As the home town of Poland’s previous strong man, Gieriek, it has been the beneficiary over the last decade of much of the investment that has now bankrupted the country. The results are grim: air so polluted (on a May morning) that it is uncomfortable to breathe; buildings less than ten years old that are falling down; streets and pavements so badly surfaced that they are difficult to walk or drive on; substantial numbers of men, mostly young, standing around on street corners etc. etc.

The surrounding countryside is picturesque. But it is extraordinary to observed that square mile after square mile of the best agricultural land in central Europe is being tilled in small plots by ploughs with a single ploughshare pulled by a single horse; and that the average dairy herd seems to consist of one or two cattle being led on a string by an old woman. My wife, who spent two years of her childhood in a village in the region during the last war (i.e. 40 years ago), says that nothing seems to have changed.

Similar evidence of the primitiveness of the economies of Eastern Europe occurs again and again. Obviously, the impressions of a three-day visitor have to be compared with those of long-term residents. But the latter, whether journalists or diplomats, too often take the scene around for granted and focus on minor changes upward or downwards. For a visitor from Austria – which, before the last war was by no means wealthy compared with, say, Czechoslovakia or Southern Poland – the comparison is devastating. The East Europeans have fallen a generation behind and are moving backwards. They have joined the Third World.

From one point of view, all this could be said to be reassuring. There is nothing positive to learn from the Communist regimes and our prospects are rosy indeed compared with theirs. But in another sense, the picture has to be a source of great concern. At some point the glaring and growing disparities in prosperity in the neighbouring countries of central Europe will become intolerable for both governments and peoples in the East. With the passage of time, the Soviet and other regimes are going to have ever less incentive to avoid high-risk policies. This is a recipe for instability and irresponsibility.
There may be nothing much we can do about these problems. It may be that we should not even try to do anything. For myself, I think it too soon simply to resign ourselves to a drift into collision. I have drafted accordingly. My suggestions may well be implausible, impracticable or inadequate. They are certainly not exhaustive. What matters is that the implications of the developing situation should be constantly in the minds of those dealing with East-West relations in the years ahead.

You may have discussed all this with Solzhenitsyn when he called on you a few weeks ago. He, so far as I can gather from the press, sees the situation in even gloomier and considerably more apocalyptic terms than me. He appears to regard the West as too slothful and depraved to be capable of resisting the evil emanations from Moscow. Solzhenitsyn is indisputably a great man and a great novelist. He is also a Slav prophet. At heart he wants to believe in the spiritual superiority of the Russians, whether for good or ill, and in the corruption and weakness of the West. I doubt whether either half of his belief was ever justified and I am sure it is wide of the mark now. It may of course be shared by Andropov, but somehow I doubt this.

Enclosure

East-West relations

Some propositions

1. While collapse is not imminent, the economic failure of the state socialist system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is irreversible. After almost 40 years of peace, large-scale investment and individual sacrifice, the industrial, agricultural and distributive infrastructure of the various states remains backward in extreme. In some cases it is decaying. Performance, however measured, is dismal. Except in a few limited fields there is little or no innovation of any significance.

2. The standard of living of the people, relative to those in the capitalist democracies, has been declining for a generation. Latterly many Eastern Europeans have actually become poorer. Some may be worse off than their parents were in 1939.
3. No amount of tinkering with managerial autonomy or computerized planning; of successful industrial espionage; or indeed of overt Western aid will reverse this trend. The system will never work. Given the aspirations of their ideology, it is almost incredible that senior Communist economists should be saying openly that the future role of their countries is as suppliers of raw materials.

4. The political failure is equally comprehensive. There is a universal and palpable withholding of support from the existing political and administrative establishment in Eastern Europe. The epidemic of alcoholism is symptomatic. The present set up is sustained by vested interests, inertia and fear of the Soviet reaction to change.

5. Relationships between member states of the bloc range from indifference through dislike to hostility. Crossing a border within Eastern Europe is barely less time consuming and adversarial, even for local people, than crossing a border between East and West.

6. The system has no capability for peaceful or piecemeal evolution. Attempts at reform have repeatedly revealed the rigidity and fragility associated with rottenness in complex structures. One day the system in Eastern Europe will break down completely. When it comes, the break down may well be sudden, unforeseen and comprehensive. The impact of such a break down on the Soviet Union would be traumatic.

7. It is inconceivable that these facts, evident to any reasonably close observer, should not long ago have become obvious to the men who run the regimes.

8. Contrary to the generally held belief, these leaders are well informed about the West’s performance in all the areas that matter to them. They probably do not believe what they read about our intentions. They have little choice other than to believe what they see and read of our material achievements.
9. Their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, the Soviet leaders know that in a contest for which their prophets laid down the rules and in precisely those areas where they most loudly assert their superiority (social, political, ideological and economic development), they are being comprehensively defeated. They cannot compete peacefully with the West. Their inability to do so will become more marked as we move into the era of commercially applied high technology.

10. The areas in which the Soviet Union is able to compete (by concentrating talent and ignoring cost) are those of military development and prestige research projects such as space exploration. In the absence of an effective industrial and scientific base the quality of this effort can hardly be sustained indefinitely. But in the short and medium term it must be a cause of deep concern to the West.

11. Soviet leaders undoubtedly entertain hopes that internal divisions, social unrest, a banking collapse or some similar self-inflicted setback, will slow the advance of the capitalist democracies. But they also know that in most of these areas their role can be little more than incidental. The trouble they can cause e.g. in the Third World, is serious. But it matters ultimately only to the extent that it affects the central economic, ideological and strategic confrontation.

12. Unfortunately few Western decision-makers, particularly in the United States, have any first-hand knowledge of the state of affairs in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The Berlin Wall and the riots in Poland are real enough but are not the reality. The Soviet system is lawless and morally degrading for rulers and ruled. It encourages and condones evil acts and to that extent is evil. But to talk of ‘an empire of evil’ is to credit the Soviet Government with a self-confidence and a capacity for malefaction outside the Soviet Union that it does not possess. It is an empire of incompetence, dreariness, corruption and frustration.

13. It follows that the Soviet system, despite its leaders’ posturing and their world-wide investment in subversion, is incapable of mount-
ing a credible challenge to the supremacy of the capitalist democratic alternative in any except a military sense.

14. This is not to say that the Soviet leadership want war. They do not. It means simply that they see their best chance of success as lying in a long drawn out confrontation in which their strengths – military capability and continuity of purpose confront the democracies’ weaknesses – popular anxiety about war and reluctance to pay for the means to prevent it.

15. The risks are as obvious to the Russians as to us. But they see little option other than to persist. For the Western democracies, by the mere fact of their existence and by the attractiveness of their material success, constitute a fundamental and inescapable challenge to the survival of the Soviet system. In this most basic sense, largely independent of the actions and intentions of individual leaders, the West shares responsibility with the East for the continuing instability of East-West relations.

16. The men in the Kremlin are the inheritors of centuries-old convictions about Russian material and technological inferiority and about the threat of encirclement. They have built their careers in an environment of intrigue, conspiracy and mistrust. They assume that Western leaders are no less duplicitous. Since they know their empire is essentially bankrupt, Western rhetoric about the threat from the East may often seem to bloc politicians no more than a cloak for our own aggressive intent.

17. Afghanistan encapsulates the dilemma of dealing with the USSR. The Kremlin resorted to military action because of its inability to secure an acceptable regime in Kabul by any other means. In that sense it was an action taken out of weakness, a political setback compounded by the subsequent military failure to subdue the Afghans. Nonetheless the criminality of the invasion, its strategic implications and the continuing barbarity of the occupying forces leave the rest of the world no choice but to interpret the Soviet action as expansionist, destabilizing and threatening
Summary

18. The lack of congruity which has made détente an illusion and which will make a collision between East and West extremely difficult to avoid is clear.

19. On the one side there is a ruling group of long serving bureaucrats, experienced and knowledgeable but also touchy, cynical, inflexible and conspiratorial; whose national and ideological inheritance of inferiority and suspicion towards the West is reinforced by a pressing consciousness of economic and political failure; who know they rule a collection (outside the Soviet Union and in its non-Russian areas) of disaffected and disunited peoples; but whose pride and will to power is undiminished; who have few problems with public opinion; who possess, in their immense and growing military power, one trump card; and who are coming increasingly under the influence of their military colleagues.

20. On the other side, a constantly changing group of elected civilian leaders who, however acute the immediate difficulties, preside over the most prosperous and dynamic society in human history; but whose natural chief does not now have, and has rarely ever had, first-hand knowledge of the situation in the Soviet bloc or of how the world looks through Soviet eyes; who find it difficult to accept that the Soviet colossus marches on feet of clay; who are rightly preoccupied with the need to match, and therefore to focus attention on, the Soviet military threat and whose electorates are betraying increasing anxiety about the possibility that deterrence will break down.

21. On this analysis, it is not easy to be optimistic about the future of East-West relations. But some conclusions can be drawn:

   (a) the idea that a unilateral weakening of our military stance might lead the Soviet Union to follow suit is wildly misconceived. The Soviet leaders do not deal in good will. Anything which allows them to increase their advantage in the military element of the East-West equation will be pocketed by them with relief;
the idea that by making the choice stark enough one can force the Soviet leadership to allocate resources to civil rather than to military development is equally misconceived. Why should they do so if the military race is the only one in which they have a chance of success? There is no evidence that the Soviet leaders have lost the will either to impose economic hardship on those they rule or to deal harshly and effectively with discontent and dissent when they judge this necessary;

in the long run, the amount of Western economic aid they receive will not have a major impact on the functioning of the Communist economies. Their failure is systemic. However attractive – or even necessary – in terms of domestic politics Western sanctions and trade restrictions may be, they serve little purpose. They hurt those who impose them at least as much as the intended victims. The COCOM list makes it a little harder and a little more expensive for the Soviet Union to obtain the information and equipment it wants but eventually it gets both anyway;

it is a truism, but also consistent with the analysis above, that the West’s interest is to conduct the East-West struggle on virtually any basis other than a military one. To tempt the Soviet Union to accept a change of terrain will at best be a long-term process. Western Governments collectively will have to pursue more consistent and pragmatic policies; show more self-confidence about their own position; and take more account of Soviet weakness and paranoia.

Policy implications
22. The Western strategy with which Soviet and East European Governments would find it most difficult to cope would be one which combined:
— a very firm military stance and a consistently robust response, with deeds rather than words, to unacceptable Soviet activity outside the bloc;
— a studied indifference to Soviet bluster and a refusal to respond in kind. Contempt without condescension;
— a low-key governmental reaction to events in the Soviet bloc and an avoidance of public linkages;
— the active pursuit of a sensible relationship with China (easier to achieve than with the USSR). The West should consciously eschew ‘China policies’ directed against the Soviet Union while refusing to allow its policies to be determined by Moscow’s anxieties.
— a willingness to negotiate toughly, persistently and regularly about virtually anything;
— entirely unsentimental commercial and economic relations in which we would make explicit our intention to pursue our own advantage without discrimination and without favours vis-à-vis the bloc as whole or as between its individual members; and
— steady but unspectacular pressure for increased ‘human contacts’ and ‘information exchange’ of every kind.

Put baldly this sounds, and is, cold-blooded. It implies that Governments (as opposed to private citizens, the press etc.) should pay less attention to the Walesas and Sakharovs of the future. It implies a greater degree of co-ordination than Western Governments have succeeded in maintaining in the past. To that extent it may be unrealistic. Nonetheless it is hard to see a better way of bringing the Soviet Government to change its policies and of achieving the dissolution of the Soviet bloc in something like a controlled manner than by increasing the prosperity and information available to the subject peoples and depriving the regimes of excuses for the blatant failure of their economic and social policies.

**Counter-arguments**

23. A number of arguments might be advanced against an adjustment of policy in this direction. These would include:

(i) that if it brings additional prosperity to Eastern Europe, the present regimes will claim the credit and strengthen their positions accordingly.

*Answer:* The benefits will be limited by the inefficiency of the system
and in any case disillusion with state socialism is far too advanced to be susceptible of cure. The much more likely consequence will be to arouse expectations that state socialism is incapable of satisfying. The upheavals in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Poland in 1980 followed periods of relaxation and slightly increased prosperity.

(ii) that extra resources and 'know-how' will be ploughed into defence.

*Answer:* This may well happen initially. But it is doubtful whether at present levels the additional input will make more than a marginal difference. The limiting factors on Soviet military capability are not now those of resource availability or knowledge.

(iii) that while it might eventually undermine the Soviet bloc, it would undermine more rapidly the will of Western electorates to support an adequate defence effort.

*Answer:* What one is now seeing in Western Europe and North America is less a growing reluctance to pay for an adequate nuclear and conventional armoury than a growing fear that the armouries on both sides are going to be used. It is, in part, to this fear that the foregoing recommendations are addressed.

I do not know in any detail what use the Prime Minister made of this paper. But I do know that she read it with care, possibly more than once. We discussed it together in London in the early autumn and I do not recall any violent disagreement! Its relevance to the discussions that she was shortly to hold with Departments about the future of East-West relations, notably at Chequers early in September, and that preceded her groundbreaking visit to Hungary in February 1984, seems clear enough. Her increasing advocacy of the case for dialogue, that dates from about this time and that was deflected neither by the KAL 007 shoot down\(^1\) nor

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\(^1\) On 31 August 1983 a Korean airliner (KAL 007), *en route* from New York to Seoul via Anchorage, was intercepted by Soviet aircraft over Sakhalin island and shot down.
the general coolness of East-West relations at the time, has been remarked on by others. Geoffrey Howe has commented that her success in persuading President Reagan of the case and in turning him away from his ‘evil empire’ rhetoric may come to be seen as ‘her greatest achievement in foreign affairs’.

For my part, I continued throughout the rest of 1983 to reflect on the inherent instability of the East-West relationship and to worry about the difficulty of breaking into the cycle of self-fulfilling prophecies on each side. No one, at that stage, was anticipating the impact of Mikhail Gorbachev’s arrival as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. (The famous visit to Chequers came in December 1984 and he succeeded Chernenko as General Secretary, and later as President, in March 1985. His first major arms control initiatives date from mid 1986.) In the autumn of 1983, I wrote another entirely personal analytical paper for Margaret Thatcher about the East-West confrontation in central Europe, as seen from Vienna. Its contents would have been wildly unwelcome to the FCO and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) had they been aware of its existence, as happily they were not. It was not written with any serious expectation that it would be implemented (see the paper’s final paragraph). But it was intended to encourage the Prime Minister to think about the need to unwind the stalemate and to find ways of avoiding a drift onto the rocks. Although 1990 was the target year mentioned by me, I would have been utterly astonished had I realized in 1983 that within eight years we would arrive at an outcome not altogether different from that envisaged in my paper. Of course, we got there by a totally different route. But there was one crucial point in common. The President of the Soviet Union, presumably in part for reasons not totally dissimilar to those discussed in my two papers, was in the event prepared to accept the complete withdrawal of the Red Army from Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

The paper was completed towards the end of 1983 but not, in fact, sent to Margaret Thatcher until 14 March 1984, immediately after her successful visit to Hungary. It went under cover of the following letter to my successor as her Private Secretary for Overseas Affairs, John Coles.

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2 Konstantin Chernenko succeeded Andropov as Executive President and General Secretary in 1984. He died in 1985.
Letter to John Coles, Vienna, 14 March 1984

When you and I talked with the Prime Minister last November, I mentioned in passing that I thought that efforts to change the present depressing scene in Europe would at some point necessitate reconsideration of the nature and scale of the American military presence here. What I had in mind is outlined in the attached paper. I drafted it some time ago and then pigeon-holed it, mainly out of cowardice …

The paper, like the one I wrote last May and to which it is essentially a companion piece, is written in extremely simplistic terms. There are enough controversial and unsupported assertions in it (as well as omissions) to keep the IISS\(^3\) busy for the rest of the decade. But unless the issues are set out baldly, they rapidly disappear in the fog … You can judge far better than I whether the concerns expressed in it and the suggested course of action come into the category of ideas which are ‘in the air’ but not yet respectable or whether they are still in the realm of the lunatic. If the former, it might be worth showing the text to the Prime Minister for reading over Easter, with a covering note from yourself giving your views and explaining that the paper is a continuation of the last paper and of our talk together in the autumn; if the latter, one had better write ‘BU in a couple of years’ on it.

I suppose the obvious criticism to make of the paper is that it fails to demonstrate that the dangers facing us in Europe are anything like sufficient to warrant stirring up the hornet’s nest of controversy that would result from voicing such thoughts publicly. ‘Is the situation any more dangerous now than it was ten years ago’, ‘why risk complicating things still further’, etc. etc. This line of argument is difficult to counter. It is one reason why so few international initiatives which are genuinely innovatory ever get carried through except during and in the aftermath of wars.

I can only say that I am more and more struck by the fundamental instability of a situation in which, on the one hand, the West’s unchallenged economic, technical and cultural predominance must be seen by the Soviet Government as an over-hanging and ever-increasing menace; while, on the other hand, the collective inconstancy, disunity and unpredictability of the West’s political leadership must appear in Moscow both as a temptation and a danger. The arms race, which on the Soviet side

\(^3\) International Institute for Strategic Studies.
continued unabated throughout the period of détente, is in considerable measure explained by this lack of congruity in the positions of East and West. The arms race itself, of course, exacerbates the problem …

Putting things this way has a tendency to make the Soviet Union appear as the victim of the situation – which is obviously absurd. But insofar as the Soviet Union’s acute sense of its (non-military) inferiority is arguably a prime source of trouble, it seems to me likely that initiatives to try to change matters will always have to come from our side (because initiatives to reduce the level of military confrontation will have an inherent tendency to accentuate the Soviet Union’s disadvantage).

Neither the proposing nor the implementing of a mutual superpower withdrawal from non-Soviet Europe would solve the basic problem. But either would change the terms of the equation in a way which no other initiative that I can think of would seem to do. Given the long lead times and the chance that our hands will be forced in the interim by some unforeseen event, my instinct is that the window for voluntary action will not remain open indefinitely …

Since drafting the above, I have seen an account of the Prime Minister’s recent speech to members of the European Parliament. ‘Seizing the initiative on world problems, not reacting wearily to them; forging political links across the European divide and so creating a more hopeful relationship between East and West.’ I can only say: Amen!

Enclosure
The East-West Confrontation in Europe: the case for an initiative

The Problem
1. In more than one speech in late 1979 and early 1980 the Prime Minister referred to the 1980s as ‘the dangerous decade’. The description seems as valid now as four and a half years ago.

2. The problems of the Soviet bloc and the factors making for a continuing deterioration in East-West relations were summarised in a paper written last May. Events in the interim have been not inconsistent with the paper’s main thesis.
3. The several advantages which the democratic capitalist countries enjoy relative to the Soviet bloc remain as marked as ever. But the West of course has weaknesses. These, particularly in Western Europe, continue to prevent us from either realizing or deploying our strengths fully. The European Community is mired in internal squabbles. Many of the younger generation are disillusioned with the political process. Western Europe is falling behind ‘Jamerica’ economically (the fact that the COMECON countries are falling behind a great deal more rapidly is no consolation). Transatlantic relations are showing signs of strain. The accumulation of armaments continues unabated. The overseas role of Western governments is largely confined to poorly co-ordinated fire fighting – too often in areas which must be taken seriously but which are of essentially secondary importance to the governments not immediately involved.

4. A fresh approach to the central East-West confrontation, that in Europe, is needed. The region may appear calm. But it is the calm in the eye of the storm. If the evident tensions and disparities in Europe get out of hand, the conflagration will be uncontainable. Nor should the relative calm be seen as a reason for inaction: it may be a final opportunity.

5. There is a longing among Europeans, particularly the young, for a new and imaginative strategy, preferably one originating somewhere other than Washington. This is not in itself a reason for attempting to break fresh ground. But it does mean that a different approach, provided it was soundly based, would be widely welcomed.

6. The opening for an initiative, if it were agreed that an initiative was desirable and feasible, might come in the first half of 1985. President Reagan will have been re-elected or his successor will have taken office. The new Soviet Government will have had a year in power – though one may doubt whether the arguments between the old generation and the new will have been resolved. The British Government will have three years of its term to run. Messrs Kohl and Mitterrand should still have two years in hand.
7. No policy or course of action is risk free. That applies to the continuation of existing policies. The risks of the latter may be as great or greater than those of any other course. The fact that it is easier to avoid responsibility for the consequences of continuing an existing policy than of enunciating a new one is not an argument for refusing change.

8. A number of propositions can be made about the present situation in Europe:

(a) the presence of 300,000 American soldiers in Western Europe is legitimate but unnatural. At some point in the future, it will come to an end;

(b) the presence of 550,000 Soviet soldiers in Eastern Europe is both illegitimate and unnatural (though not incomprehensible). At some point it, too, will come to an end;

(c) failing the negotiated, or at least controlled withdrawal of these forces the risk of hostilities in Europe between the two superpowers is bound to grow if there are other factors encouraging a deterioration in the overall relationship. There are such factors. The proximity of Soviet and American forces to each other is a source of concern rather than reassurance if one assumes that the situation in Eastern Europe may at some point deteriorate radically and unexpectedly;

(d) the interests of the United States and of Western Europe are not in all respects identical. In recent years this unsurprising fact has become increasingly apparent – to the extent that a marked acerbity has entered the relationship in recent months (admittedly not for the first time but more strikingly perhaps than at any time since the last war);

(e) it is conceivable that an American President will one day unilaterally reduce or even end the US military presence in
Europe. He might do so in a fit of isolationism, of irritation or of domestic weakness. But if Western Europe were to fall under Soviet influence, the balance of power in an increasingly interdependent world would have been shifted irreversibly and decisively to the disadvantage of the US. It is inconceivable, therefore, for reasons of the purest self-interest, that US Government would ever deliberately ‘abandon’ (i.e., refuse to join in the defence of) Western Europe – always assuming that Western Europe maintains a substantially credible defence capability;

(f) if reductions in the US presence were made as the result of a unilateral decision in Washington, there would be bitter recrimination from the Western Europeans and no *quid pro quo* from the Soviet Union. ‘Neutralist’ tendencies in Europe would be greatly encouraged;

(g) Western Europe’s present defence effort is neither cost effective nor adequate. Western Europe will never make the defence effort appropriate to its economic and demographic strength so long as there is a substantial American military presence in the area. The new generation of ‘emerging technology’ weapons may give European governments, if they are prepared to take the opportunity, a chance to make a quantum jump in their defence capabilities in a politically saleable manner;

(h) for so long as Western Europe lacks some kind of defence identity, the development of all other aspects of European co-operation will be at best stunted. The ability of Western Europe to ‘help’ the Americans in the rest of the world will be equally limited;

(i) there is no longer any rational reason to fear the Germans, even if such fear is an entirely understandable emotion among the older generation. It is doubtful whether the populations of Western or Eastern Europe – as opposed to that
of the Soviet Union – any longer do fear the Germans. Most of them probably also accept – if they think about the point at all – that the division of Germany is an artificial one and that it will come to an end at some point. The attitude of governments – in particular perhaps of the French Government – is more cautious;

(j) it is overwhelmingly in the interests of Western European governments either to get Soviet troops out of Eastern Europe or to force their own electorates and their intellectuals to re-acknowledge the nature of the Soviet military presence there (and its implications);

(k) failing some change in the present situation and in present attitudes, the difficulty of securing adequate public support in Western Europe for a credible conventional and nuclear defence effort is going to grow inexorably;

(l) there is no sign that arms control negotiations in the current format will ever make substantial progress. Partial and limited agreements may be possible. But measures which really bite are in present circumstances always going to founder on the conflicting fears and perceptions of the two blocs (see previous paper). The argument about data in the MBFR Talks is a locus classicus (when Soviet military planners play war games what assumptions do they make about the Polish army?);

(m) there are conflicts of view within the Kremlin, particularly perhaps between the generations. We may not know who is in which faction. But we may assume that some will be in favour of experiments, whether with the economy or with foreign policy, and some opposed and that all can be influenced.

A possible initiative

9. If the argument is to be shifted on to new ground and the present
downward spiral broken, something radical has to be attempted. The policy on East-West relations which HMG has been advocating since last summer is sensible and right so far as it goes. But it is unlikely to achieve a major change in the situation. Ideally we want an initiative which will preserve and ultimately strengthen our own position; appeal to our own electorates; and will put the Russians in a difficulty whether they accept or reject it.

10. One possibility would be for NATO (or the Head of a European member Government of NATO) to state formally its (or her) readiness to see all American troops and weapons withdrawn from Western Europe provided that all Soviet troops and weapons were withdrawn from Eastern Europe; and its readiness to open forthwith negotiations to achieve this objective within a finite time span – say, five years, i.e. by 1990. As an alternative, a good deal less clear cut but still radical, one could propose a reduction to some very low figure sufficient to maintain facilities for exercises and reinforcement but not much more.

11. The details of such an offer would require exhaustive advance consideration – at least nationally. (One of the most difficult points would be to make the offer public before it leaked.) The offer could cover as much or as little as one wanted. But as an outline:

Both withdrawals should be verified (– given the scale of the operation, on site verification would not need to be particularly rigorous).

Both military pacts, and their members’ mutual obligations, should remain in being.

Each superpower should undertake to refrain from re-introducing their forces into the withdrawal area except for annual inspected exercises of an agreed size, say, 30,000 men.

This undertaking should cease to be binding on the one superpower if breached by the other.
Token conventional forces should remain in Berlin until such time as a settlement between the two Germanies, or a peace treaty was negotiated.

Existing national nuclear and conventional capabilities should be unaffected by the agreement.

So should the stationing of forces other than those of the superpowers in the member countries of the two pacts.

But no nuclear weapons should be deployed in either of the two Germanies, etc. etc.

12. A proposition on these lines would have – or should have – the great merit of being extremely easy to understand and relatively difficult to distort or misrepresent. It may be utopian to suppose that it could ever be made or negotiated. But if it were to be made – and whether accepted or not – it would radically change the nature of the political debate about the future of Europe. The mere fact of putting it forward might be expected to have a number of positive consequences:

(i) it would force European electorates (and their governments) to take seriously the need both to provide for their own security and to co-operate effectively in preserving it;

(ii) Western Europe’s acceptance of a much greater degree of responsibility for its own fate would give a new impetus to the European idea. It would force governments to raise their eyes from the (essentially minor) disagreements which have in recent years acquired such overriding significance within the Community;

(iii) it would throw the Soviet Government on to the defensive but with a tactic they could hardly describe as threatening. It would force them to face publicly and privately some very uncomfortable facts about their role in Eastern Europe. It
would undermine their present propaganda campaign in Western Europe;

(iv) it would give rise to acute disagreements between the governments and peoples of Eastern Europe and those of the Soviet Union. Hopefully, it would also give rise to disagreements within the Kremlin. There may be some to whom a measure of disengagement from Eastern Europe would be attractive for economic reasons. There may be others who would welcome the chance of reducing both the risk of conflict in Europe and the influence of the military.

Western Reactions
13. Any attempt to change a strategy which has achieved its main objectives over a period of 35 years is going to be unpopular. Specifically an initiative envisaging the departure of the Americans from Europe will be unpopular:

(a) with most of the military, because the necessity of a strong US nuclear and conventional presence in Western Europe has been the foundation of their strategic thinking since the War;

(b) with all those who doubt that Western Europe is capable of making the necessary effort to cover the gap that an American departure would leave;

(c) with many West Germans because they will feel exposed, threatened and uncertain about the future (and because, presumably, they would lose a good deal of income if the Americans left);

(d) paradoxically – with the French and many of the minor member governments of the Alliance because they would feel nervous not only about the Soviet threat but also about the Germans;

(e) with many Americans because of the need to rethink deeply
entrenched strategic assumptions; because redeployment would no doubt be an extremely expensive business; and because the prospect of a resurgent European defence capability would ultimately, though not immediately, threaten the sales prospects of the US defence industry.

None of these drawbacks, important though they are, would seem to be overriding or to be of similar magnitude to the possible gains. Several of them would diminish rapidly once the initial shock had worn off. They do however mean that it would be extremely difficult to secure agreement in advance from the Alliance as a whole that the offer should be made.

**Soviet Reactions**

14. The least likely outcome of such an offer would be Soviet acceptance and implementation. But were this to happen the prospects for Europe and for the world would have been changed fundamentally. Eastern Europe would remain Communist and allied to the Soviet Union. But Moscow would of course have signalled its willingness to accept far-reaching changes in Eastern Europe as the price of reducing the risk of a direct confrontation with the Americans. Such change would no doubt occur. The situation would still be fraught with considerable danger, particularly in the interim period, but at least the possibility of a controllable evolution in Eastern Europe – which does not at present exist – would have been created. (We should be wary of arguing that the dangers of change would be greater than those we now face because we would then be arguing that in fact we prefer to have the Russians in Eastern Europe. And that is almost certainly a recipe for disaster sooner or later.)

15. What would not be true – or certainly need not be true if Western Europe has any stomach for the future at all – is that the prospects of successful Soviet aggression against Western Europe or of the creeping ‘Finlandization’ of the area would be any greater than they are now. There would no doubt be much talk about credibility, reinforcement times, the difficulty of evaluating Soviet exercises, reversion to a trip-wire strategy etc. etc. But would Western
Europe (and in particular West Germany) really be in a worse position strategically following a mutual withdrawal? It seems very doubtful.

16. A somewhat less unlikely outcome is an outright Soviet rejection of the offer as a trick, a provocation or whatever. This possibility might be said to be a strong reason for making the offer as soon as possible rather than for withholding it. The Russians would have incurred a major propaganda reverse. The firm attribution of responsibility for the US military presence in Western Europe to the Russians will make it significantly easier to defend the former etc. etc.

17. There is the counter-balancing risk that once a Western Head of Government, or group of governments, has advocated the withdrawal of American troops in certain conditions, such a withdrawal may ultimately become more difficult to resist even if the conditions are not met. But this ought not to be a decisive objection. If it is the case that the present disarray in Western Europe is undesirable and if it is also the case that only the prospect of US withdrawal is likely to focus the minds of Western Europeans effectively, then the risk that we may end up with unrequited US withdrawals should be accepted.

18. A much more likely scenario than outright Soviet acceptance or rejection is a prolonged East-West haggle leading, perhaps, to partial withdrawals by both superpowers. But providing Western negotiators start from a publicly stated willingness to envisage the departure of all US forces, then the advantages of discomfiting the Russians, stimulating the West Europeans and making the Americans think anew about where their real interests lie should have been won.

**Conclusion**

19. The idea of proposing a total US withdrawal probably comes into the ‘too difficult’ category. But if so – and if the analysis in the first half of this paper and in last year’s is broadly correct – we need to
think very carefully indeed about where we are headed and how we are going to avoid arriving there.

A few weeks later, John Coles reported back to me that the Prime Minister had read the paper. He wrote as follows:

I did not expect her to welcome the idea, but I was quite sure that she would enjoy being stimulated by it. So it proved.

She has described your proposal as ‘unequal’, going on to say that the Russians could return within 48 hours and that the threat of their return would still be present in every Eastern European country. By contrast, she believes, the Americans would never return to Europe once they had left. She fears that the proposal could lead to the Finlandization of the whole of Europe.

But I have no doubt that she would welcome a talk about it all when she next sees you – and the opportunity will of course occur in the summer.

Margaret Thatcher’s comments were, needless to say, both reasonable and predictable (see paragraph 15 of the paper itself) even if the idea that the Red Army would return within forty-eight hours was a groundless nightmare. Although I did not say so in as many words, it was already clear enough that the Warsaw Pact, and many of the component regimes would disintegrate during or in the immediate aftermath of a Soviet withdrawal (see paragraphs 12 (iv) and 14 of the paper and, more particularly, paragraphs 4-6 and paragraph 19 of the 1983 paper). Be that as it may, I suspect that some of the arguments stayed with her and were reflected, albeit in her own inimitable way, in her reactions to subsequent events and in her relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev. A few years later and altogether independently, of course, others arrived at the same sort of conclusion. Thus by March 1989, Brent Scowcroft, National Security Adviser in the Bush Administration that had just taken office, was arguing for the withdrawal of all US and Soviet forces from Europe. Like me, he seems to have had much in mind the impact of such a proposal in Eastern Europe. His ideas, considerably modified in internal debate, led to the unexpected but successful US conventional arms control initiative at the NATO Summit in May 1989.

John Coles’ reference to an opportunity for discussion ‘in the sum-
mer’ relates to the ten-day holiday which I had arranged for the Prime Minister to spend at Martin Kaindl’s wonderful mountain estate in the Alps south of Salzburg in August 1984 (and again in August 1985). My wife and I spent a lot of time with the Thatchers on both occasions. I set up a number of entirely informal meetings at which the Prime Minister was exposed to central European perspectives on the issues of the day, including East-West relations. But in general the idea, as far as I could tell successfully realized, was to ensure that she had as complete a rest as possible. I certainly did not attempt to bore her any further with my own views! But nor did she try to take exception to the extremely heretical analyses reprinted above. As will become apparent, I reverted in a less stark form to many of the points I had raised in my letters when I became responsible for the Vienna-based MBFR talks on conventional arms reductions in February 1985, and when I went to Nato as Ambassador there in August 1986. On East-West and arms control issues (as opposed to those relating to European Defence and to German unification), I always felt that, while very far removed from the decision-making process, whatever ideas I might have would be heard sympathetically at No. 10!
Chapter 7
Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR)
An ultimately unsuccessful and totally forgotten negotiation, 1973-89

At the end of 1984, essentially as a consequence of an internal housekeeping exercise, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office decided to combine the post of bilateral Ambassador in Vienna with that of Head of the UK Delegation to the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks, which had been in progress, also in Vienna, since January 1973. My own background in arms control and East-West negotiation made it easier to implement the merger but was essentially coincidental. I took over the MBFR post on 8 April 1985. Two or three days later, I wrote a long letter to London saying, in effect, that HMG should either attempt something radical, with a view to making the Russians 'put up or shut up', or move to close down the negotiations as soon as possible. But before describing the thinking that led to this recommendation, and the consequences, it may be helpful to add some detail to the few sentences of background already provided in Chapter 2.

The idea of an East-West negotiation on conventional force levels in Europe first began to be seriously discussed in 1968, in the context of the NATO Foreign Ministers Council at Rejkyavik in June of that year. Writing the MBFR briefs for that meeting was one of my first tasks on joining Western Organizations Department after my return from Singapore. MBFR remained one of the subjects for which I was

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1 The full text of this NATO declaration is printed in Cmnd 6932, pp. 54-55.
responsible, working together with the Arms Control and Disarmament unit, until I moved to Alec Douglas-Home’s office in January 1972. Throughout that period, and into the autumn of 1972, there were interminable discussions – heavily affected by the ups and down of the détente process – among NATO governments and between representatives of East and West as to the purpose, content and format of the mooted talks on conventional force levels. It was only towards the end of 1972, as already mentioned, that the relationship between the CSCE and MBFR negotiations was finally agreed and invitations to preparatory talks issued. The UK was sceptical about both. Neither the FCO nor the MoD liked the MBFR concept and said so regularly. Charles Wiggin, the responsible Under Secretary in the FCO, told the Americans in September 1972 that the UK believed that ‘while the CSCE, properly handled, could be relatively harmless, MBFR were potentially dangerous’.\(^2\) The steering brief given to the UK Delegation in 1973 described MBFR as ‘primarily … an exercise in damage limitation’.\(^3\) We were conscious that the Soviet leadership hoped to present its willingness to engage in force reduction talks as evidence of its commitment to détente and hence as another weapon in its attempts to undermine the West’s political will. Its proposals also demonstrated, naturally enough, that it hoped to use any agreement to contractualize its military superiority in central Europe.

But the authorities in London never considered following the example of the French and disassociating themselves from the exercise as a whole. We, like the Americans themselves, saw MBFR as the best available means of resisting pressure for the substantial unilateral US force reductions in Europe being sought by Senator Mansfield. The talks also, by demonstrating the impossibility of persuading the Soviet Union to make the heavily asymmetric and properly verified force reductions that would alone have been acceptable to NATO, were to be helpful to European governments in sustaining their own defence efforts. Finally, we attached importance to the fact that these were the sole arms control negotiations in which the Europeans were engaged on a formally equal footing. Although we argued from the beginning that the initial phase of any reductions should affect US and Soviet forces only (because of the

need to maintain European force levels), thereby ensuring that the Americans would normally play a dominant role, the fact of European involvement remained important. Long before the 1986 summit in Reykyavik, there was a background nervousness about superpower agreements over the heads of the European allies. Every nuclear missile negotiation which succeeded the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963) was, after all, a bilateral US/Soviet negotiation about which the Europeans were entirely reliant on being briefed by the Americans before and after the event.

The MBFR talks were originally due to have been held in Geneva but, on Soviet insistence, were shifted to Vienna.4 The first Western proposal, in the autumn of 1973, was for an initial phase of verified reductions amounting to Russian cuts of 68,000 men, including a tank army, and US reductions of 29,000 men. The second phase anticipated reductions (10% on the NATO side, 20% on the Soviet side) down to a verified common ceiling of 700,000. Before these ideas had been formally tabled, the Soviet delegation came up with a radically different approach. This covered air and nuclear forces as well as ground forces, a three phase agreement starting with equal symbolic reductions – the reductions to be carried out in formed units of similar type and size – and affecting all the forces of the direct participants in proportion to their respective contributions to the overall force on each side. One effect, among many, would have been to place a cap, at a low level, on European force levels. There would, of course, have been no cap on the level of Soviet forces in the Soviet Union. The proposal said nothing about verification.

The gap was, obviously, enormous and an agreement on anything like the Soviet terms would have been extremely damaging to NATO. In the event, general political developments in 1974 conspired to reduce the threat of unilateral US force reductions and hence the pressure to be seen to be making progress in Vienna. Advances were desultory and the long war of attrition began. Expectations that the successful conclusion of the CSCE negotiations in 1975 might lead to changes in the Soviet negotiation posture were soon disappointed. In December 1975, after long months of reflection, the West offered to negotiate the withdrawal of

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4 The early years of the MBFR negotiations in Vienna are described and analyzed by Sir Michael Rose, Britain’s first Head of Delegation to the talks, in ‘Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions: the first three years’, Détente, Diplomacy and MBFR, FCO Historians Occasional Papers No. 17 (April 2002), pp. 1-12.
some US tactical nuclear weapons as well as the inclusion of air manpower in an eventual common ceiling. The Soviet side rejected this approach early in 1976. Although there was an exchange of military data it was very flawed. The Eastern data purported to show that the forces of the two sides were ‘broadly equivalent’ (which we had good reason to believe was very wide of the mark). The Western side’s figures, on the other hand, were demonstrably inadequate, from an Eastern perspective, because France refused to allow its forces to be included. As a result serious debate on the data exchange never got underway. The MBFR talks had by now, four years on, become a sacrosanct feature of the East-West scene. The Soviet side could not kill the talks lest in doing so it damage its propaganda image as a power committed to détente; the West was reluctant to deprive itself of a useful means of resisting pressure for unilateral force reductions. But however useful it was for both sides to keep the talks going, and even given that a gradual process of mutual education on security issues did take place, the background hardly made for a stimulating negotiating environment. The need for diversion evidently experienced by the hapless negotiators is exemplified by the pastiche of *Paradise Lost* produced in 1977 by Francis Richards,5 in the course of negotiating sessions, and reprinted, with permission, in Appendix III.

In the winter of 1983-4, for a few months when the Cold War was at its frostiest (see previous chapter), the talks were interrupted for the only time.6 But they soon resumed. In 1983 and again in 1984, on either side of the break, East and West exchanged mutually incompatible proposals for a comprehensive agreement and the dialogue of the deaf continued. On 14 February 1985, the East made a proposal for what was known as a ‘first phase’ agreement i.e., one of limited scope (withdrawal of 13,000 US servicemen and 20,000 Soviet) and duration (three years) which would include an undertaking not to increase troop levels while the agreement remained in force but no undertaking, beyond one to continue discussions, in regard to further reductions. The Eastern proposal assumed that most of any reductions would be taken in formed units that would be

5 Second, and then First, Secretary with UKDEL Vienna, 1973-76.

6 This interruption followed an American decision to deploy ground-launched Cruise missiles and Pershing II’s in Western Europe. The history of the MBFR talks is summarized in the UK Delegation’s final report, published as Appendix III in *DBPO*, Ser. III, Vol. III, pp. 475-78.
withdrawn together with their armaments. It continued to reject what had always been a *sine qua non* for the Western side viz. prior agreement between the two sides on the nature and scale of forces already in place in the area to be covered by any agreement i.e., on the data that would constitute the baseline for any reductions. Apart from the common sense reasons for having a ‘prior data agreement’, the West had always assumed that the Warsaw Pact had vastly more men under arms in central Europe than had ever been publicly admitted. We wanted to get this out in the open.

When I took over the delegation, no substantive reply had been given to the Warsaw Pact. Separate, and rather desultory, discussions were in progress in London, Bonn and Washington (also I believe in The Hague) as to what sort of reply should be provided. Bonn and London had different approaches in mind while a number of options were under consideration in Washington. None of them envisaged anything other than effective rejection of the 14 February approach. The proposal that I sent to London in my first week was, in essence, that we should accept the Eastern proposal in every important respect except the inclusion of armaments. (Left to my own devices I would probably have accepted the inclusion of armaments as well and was so arguing, internally, by the time I left Vienna early the following summer. But in 1985 it would have been un-negotiable in London, still more so in Washington.) Specifically, I urged we should abandon our traditional insistence on prior data agreement. The price for our co-operativeness would, I proposed, be acceptance by the other side of a truly worthwhile regime to verify the implementation of the agreement. (This was, of course, virtually a killer condition since it was well known that the Soviet Union had something like 200,000 more troops in Eastern Europe than it had ever been prepared to admit, publicly or privately.)

My reasons for advocating such an abrupt (in the context of this tortoise paced negotiation) change of course were several. It was high time that the West decided whether any conceivably achievable MBFR agreement was of interest to us and, if not, to consider how to wind down the talks. The arrival on the scene of a new and evidently innovative Soviet leader provided an obvious opportunity to test Soviet interest in an MBFR agreement. The best, and quickest, way to face the Russians with the dilemma of having to ‘put up or shut up’ (always my objective) was to get...
as close as possible to accepting one of their proposals. Finally, in an era when the arms control agenda was dominated by bilateral US/Soviet exchanges, there were reasons of general policy for the Europeans to come up with their own ideas in the only serious negotiation in which they participated on an equal footing.

Although my approach was different from that which they had been considering, London (i.e., the FCO and the MoD) must have found my ideas basically acceptable since I recall discussing them later in the month in Vienna with the heads of the German Delegation (Joe Holik) and of the US Delegation (Bob Blackwill). It was self-evident that there would be little or no point in pursuing the matter without their support and, subsequently, that of their authorities. Both these highly professional diplomats, later to go a good deal higher in their respective government services, were interested. Both anticipated problems in their capitals – Holik with his Ministry of Defence on the verification regime, Blackwill with the Department of Defense (notably with Richard Perle), as well as more generally, on the abandonment of the prior data agreement requirement. It was instructive to hear Blackwill say that the only way to get the approach through Washington would be to hit the Administration at a high-level (i.e., Secretary of State) with a comprehensive package. He thought it less important that such a package should be Anglo–German than that it should be politically endorsed and unannounced. Any trailing of the ideas would simply result in the OSD\textsuperscript{7} and others launching a campaign against them – as indeed happened in due course. US Administrations are all coalitions. Anyone seeking to take an initiative jointly with Washington will have, mutatis mutandis, a similar experience.

Since it was clear to me, and to London, that we could only proceed in Washington on an Anglo-German basis – not least because the Germans had to be dissuaded from pursuing their own ideas – there followed a series of meetings in London and Bonn. By mid-July, not without difficulty, we had achieved a bilateral consensus. Perhaps because it had not been easy to reach, our agreement remained absolutely solid through the months of transatlantic argument that followed. The basis of the Anglo-German proposal was essentially the same as that which I had put

\textsuperscript{7} Office of the Secretary of Defense, i.e. the principal staff element of the US Secretary of Defense, responsible for policy development, planning and resource management.
to London two months previously. A summary may be helpful both as background to the following three months of debate with the Americans and, given the intensity of the dispute over these modest proposals, as an indication of how far and how fast we all moved in the following five years. It was a ‘first phase’ proposal (i.e., essentially a test run to be followed by further negotiations if the signatories were content). The reductions would have been in US (13,000) and Soviet (30,000) forces only, without their equipment. There would have been a no-increase commitment, valid for three years, by NATO and the Warsaw Pact, with no sub-ceilings beyond those applying to US and Soviet forces. After the initial reductions, there would have been an exchange of information, self assessed, on the forces remaining in the area covered by the agreement. There would have been verification by ‘national technical means’ i.e., satellites; by on-site inspections; and by permanent entry exit points to monitor troop movements. Extension of the agreement and determination of further reductions would have been subject to the signatories’ satisfaction in regard to implementation of the first phase and to agreement on the scale of forces actually in place. With the exception of the exclusion of armaments and the scale of the verification regime, this outline was extremely close to that put forward by the Warsaw Pact the previous February.

This approach was endorsed by the British Secretary of State, Geoffrey Howe, and by the German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, in late July. Both spoke in support of it to the US Secretary of State, George Shultz, in the margins of the meeting held in Helsinki on 1 August to mark the 10th anniversary of the CSCE summit there. Mr Shultz seemed favourably impressed (although Herr Genscher’s presentation is said to have been so confused that a follow-up message of explanation had to be sent to Washington). The proposal was a little later, and as it turned out importantly, approved by Margaret Thatcher.

A meeting was arranged for mid-September in Brussels between US, UK and Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) delegations to try to develop a joint position. I presented the UK/FRG proposal, and both delegations spoke to the same brief throughout. On the US side there was, by contrast, total confusion. So far as I recollect, four competing and conflicting proposals, each sponsored by a different agency or Service, were put forward by the US and all were easily shown to be unsatisfactory
in one respect or another. I engaged in the demolition with a relatively
easy conscience since I knew that George Shultz had already expressed a
strong personal preference for the UK/FRG approach. At a meeting in
New York later in the month, Geoffrey Howe urged the merits of the
Anglo-German proposal on his US colleague once more. None of this
prevented the Department of Defense in Washington persuading
President Reagan to send messages to Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl ask-
ing them to confirm their support for the proposal. Both heads of govern-
ment replied vigorously and positively. At the ensuing meeting of the US
National Security Council (NSC), in mid October, the President is said to
have relied heavily on the two messages. The NSC eventually agreed that
the new proposal should be tabled in Vienna before Christmas, subject to
some refinement of the verification element and further discussion of the
size of the US force reduction to be proposed. The President so informed
his fellow heads of government. In the background to all this was the
impending Reagan/Gorbachev summit due on 19-21 November in
Geneva.

The trilateral meeting to clear up the outstanding points took place
in Washington in mid-November. It lives in my memory as an example
of the realities underlying the US/European security relationship. There
was a seating plan on the wall outside the conference room. I asked the
orderly who appeared to be guarding it why Richard Perle and I had been
sat opposite each other towards the narrow end of the elliptical table
rather than, as would perhaps have been more usual, in the middle. ‘So
that you can look into the whites of each other’s eyes’ was the (for me)
memorable reply. I think it is fair to say that the UK/German team won
the ensuing debate with ease – which did not prevent the US side from
pulling out every stop to frustrate the decision already, in effect, taken by
their President. They tried, for instance, to insert a break mechanism into
the draft proposal whereby if any participant was caught in breach of the
agreement, all signatories would automatically and at once be released
from their obligations and the agreement would self-destruct. Over coffee,
I expostulated to Perle that, while there would of course be a break clause
(non-renewal), no sovereign government was going to accept a
‘doomsday’ mechanism of the kind he appeared to be seeking. To which
he replied, in more or less these words, ‘You ****s showed in 1938 that
you could not be trusted. Why should we trust you now?’ Perle’s idea
was dropped shortly afterwards but the exchange, however casual, revealed a great deal about one strand in US strategic thinking.

Despite their lack of success in the discussion, the US side refused to go forward with the idea (part of all Western proposals for several years previously) that the initial reductions proposed should be for 13,000 US troops and 30,000 Soviet troops. They insisted, literally, that the figures should be 5,000 and 11,500 – lower even than the figures which SACEUR, the senior US military figure in Europe, had proposed earlier in the year. (By way of comparison, the proposal put forward by the West in 1975, 10 years earlier, had been for Eastern reductions of 68,000 men and 1,700 tanks balanced by Western reductions of 29,000 US troops, 36 Pershing launchers, 54 dual capable aircraft and 1,000 nuclear warheads.) There was no rational basis for these new figures. But those advocating them knew perfectly well that their inclusion would make it easier for the Eastern side, should they wish to do so, to characterize the West’s verification machinery as excessive (which, in due course, is exactly what happened). I seem to remember that the UK Ambassador to NATO at the time said bluntly that the ‘US wanted to kill the proposal’. This was certainly true of at least some members of the Reagan administration. (Many years later a senior American official commented to me on the difficulties experienced by those in Washington involved with East-West security negotiations at this period. Attempts to put together proposals containing any suggestion of compromise usually resulted in doubts being raised about the author’s loyalty – this at a time when the Gorbachev/Reagan summit lay less than twelve months in the future.) Washington (not my US colleagues in Vienna) went on making difficulties until a few hours before I tabled the Western proposal. They insisted (again) on unilateral amendments to my 5 December statement (see Chapter 8) even after it had been formally agreed by all the other Allies and when there was no longer any time for amendments to be discussed by those Allies.

This book is basically about my worm’s eye view of the East-West relationship during the Cold War. But it is difficult to avoid drawing some brief conclusions from the nine months of inter allied discussion summarized above. Any US administration, cobbled together as such administrations unavoidably are and embracing as many political appointees as

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8 Supreme Allied Commander Europe.
they do, is bound to contain a variety of unresolved conflicting viewpoints. When an issue lands on the President’s desk and can be definitively decided there, it may be possible to get a clear policy or decision. *The Downing Street Years* describes a couple of dramatic UK/US examples. The way the Bush administration handled German unification is another. But more usually, the development of an agreed view in Washington involves a dogfight. The dominant consideration will be defence of the US national interest, often defined in rather narrow and populist terms, because that is what motivates the democratic political process in the US. (Wesley Clark’s account of his battles, as SACEUR, with the Pentagon during the Kosovo conflict carries the same message.)

Sentiment – e.g. that favourable to the UK in the context of our collaboration in two World Wars if not in a longer perspective – is as important for the Washington political establishment as, *mutatis mutandis*, for any other. But, in the last resort, it is unlikely to be a determining factor. Leaving aside particular passages, like that conditioned by Ronald Reagan’s admiration for Margaret Thatcher, the ‘special relationship’ has been based, rightly, on a great deal of distinctly selfish calculation. On the UK side, the calculation, both during the Second World War and since, has been self-evident and need not be dwelt on. But on the US side calculation has been at least as obvious. The sharing of signals intelligence is a case in point. The extreme caution, not to say suspicion, shown by many in Washington in Second World War up until, say, 1943 is a matter of record. It was only overcome by the repeated demonstration of just how much the British could contribute, both by way of raw material and intellectual prowess in processing it. The same remained true after the war. (My father was in charge of cryptanalytical research at GCHQ during 1949-72 as well as being, in the words of one historian, the ‘organizing genius’ of the successful attacks on the German Naval Enigma system and subsequently on the Japanese Coral system during the Second World War. He has been described to me as having been for much of the 1950s and 1960s just about the most important individual component of the ‘special relationship’ – in the sense at least of quantifiable value that the Americans could see coming out of the relationship. When he retired, they used the word ‘monumental’ to describe his contribution to the transatlantic partnership. This is one of the best examples known to me of the inevitably unacknowledged role of obscure
civil servants referred to in the Introduction. As sincere a tribute as any were, no doubt, the American efforts to recruit him to work in the National Security Agency. Fortunately, since he fell terminally ill a few months later, he refused.)

In other words, the ‘special relationship’ in the last analysis is like any other inter-state relationship. It will be based, certainly most securely based, on a hard-nosed calculation of mutual advantage, of what each side brings to the table. Favours extended but not based on such a calculation are unlikely to prove permanent. An imbalance in the mutual relationship of power will eventually always be exploited by the dominant partner. There is nothing improper or unreasonable in this. Democracies are at least as prone to the functioning of the mechanism as are authoritarian states. (It has always puzzled me that so many British politicians, living with and often exploiting the little Englandism that characterises a significant percentage of the British electorate, should assume that they can bank on the indefinite prolongation of tolerant, internationalist and multilateral policies in and by the United States, arguably the most democratic of all societies. Any price that we may pay for American ‘insularity’ is of course altogether trivial by comparison with the enormous benefits we have all derived down the years from the success and vigour of American democracy.)

The story of the final Western MBFR proposal is a typical, if very minor, example of the functioning of a power relationship. Individual European governments are unlikely on their own to secure a hearing in Washington for unpopular views on security issues. The Dutch tried to launch their own MBFR proposal earlier in 1985 and got absolutely nowhere despite still being in a position to withhold agreement on US GLCM\(^9\) basing in the Netherlands. The UK/FRG proposal succeeded because it was endorsed, in detail and following intensive bilateral discussion, by both the principal European allies of the US and at the highest political level. It would not have been adopted had it been put forward by either ally alone or at any level other than the most senior. The truth is that it is only if they act jointly and with bargaining chips in reserve that the Europeans will persuade Washington to do something it is otherwise disinclined to do. The greater the military contribution they are able to

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\(^9\) Ground-launched Cruise Missiles.
offer, the more patiently they will be heard. This has only become more obvious with passage of time. The same goes for the fact that the functioning of democratic coalition politics is always likely to lead the US to take the line of least resistance – often unilateral and inward looking – where security issues are concerned. Hence the enormous importance of trying to ensure that steps to enable a European voice to be expressed more plainly are properly presented. They must be seen as, and be meant to be seen as, a means to maintain the effectiveness of NATO – the (literally) irreplaceable international structure that uniquely embodies the hard won habit of multinational security co-operation. The facts that the threat to-day (‘terrorism’) is altogether less well defined and the stage altogether larger will make it more difficult for governments to keep these verities in mind. To maintain NATO’s leading role may become progressively more difficult. But the underlying verities will remain.

I expressed many of these thoughts in internal memoranda in 1985. They will be seen reflected, more or less bluntly, in personal letters written from NATO a couple of years later (see Chapter 9). But back in 1985, the apparently timeless rhythm of the MBFR talks continued in Vienna through the autumn. The two sides (twenty-two states) met formally every week to exchange speeches and informally all the time to try to keep things moving forward. Some of the East Europeans (e.g. Ambassador Wieland of the GDR) were interesting and, one suspected, open minded men. The same, it must be confessed, could not be said of the Soviet Ambassador, Mikhailov, who seemed even by local standards exceptionally unimaginative and unresponsive. Nonetheless an effort was made all round to sustain the dialogue and avoid outright hostilities. It was the only way that the forum, whose fruitless existence had already been prolonged for twelve years, could be kept going. I reproduce below the text of a statement that I made on 31 October 1985 – by which time, of course, the initiative that I had been pursuing since the previous spring was almost ready. The statement is of course jejune. But it is also reasonably civilised in tone, had a certain educational function and summarised accurately enough the basic issues. As in other texts in this book, my concern about the basic lack of congruity in the positions of the two sides, which meant that so much of what passed for negotiation was truly a dialogue of the deaf, emerges clearly.
Statement to MBFR Plenary Session, Vienna, 31 October 1985

Ours is in many ways an archetypal arms control negotiation. It is inspired by the hopes which have inspired many similar negotiations; it suffers from many of the same problems; it contains many of the same pitfalls. There may, by the same token, be lessons that we can learn from those other negotiations. We may glimpse perspectives that could be useful to us.

Historically the typical arms control arrangement has been that imposed by a victorious power on those whom it had defeated. But more recently states have increasingly come to see the attractions of negotiating as opposed to slaughtering their way to the achievement of stability in this or that aspect of the military equation. I do not say that the success rate in these endeavours has been very high. But I would claim that the value of making the effort has been increasingly acknowledged and is now, indeed, almost universally accepted. The fact that our governments have chosen to keep this negotiation going for twelve years, despite the apparent paucity of its achievements, is evidence as good as any.

Arms control agreements are made today between sovereign states or alliances which voluntarily accept certain restrictions upon their freedom of action. They do so on the understanding that matching obligations are also being accepted by the other parties to the agreements. They expect that those obligations will be both adhered to and be seen to be adhered to. Many motives may lead a state to enter such negotiations. Among them might be numbered the wish:

Firstly, to ensure that no rival achieves such a significant military advantage that the launching of an offensive might seem to be an acceptable risk;

Secondly, to eliminate some of the more appalling consequences of war should it occur;

Thirdly, to ban before they become militarily significant some of the more inhumane future means of waging war;

Fourthly, to inhibit or prohibit military activity of one kind or another – or even all such activity in a particular region or globally; and

Fifthly, embracing all the other motives, to release human and material resources for projects more consistent with the dignity of man than the search for improved methods of killing one another.
These are all eminently respectable motives. The fact that the number of successes remains so low is a measure of the inordinate difficulty of negotiating arms control agreements between states with conflicting interests. If people were to bear in mind the historical record and its evidence that the problems and dangers associated with arms control are very great, then they might be less inclined to impugn the motives of their negotiating partners. It is neither accurate nor sensible to claim, as the East has done, that the West, which ‘is reckoning to achieve superiority over the Warsaw Treaty countries, can hardly be seriously interested in the success of the Vienna negotiations’ or that the ‘West has consistently striven to foist conditions on the other side that would be advantageous only to itself’.

Scepticism about the prospects for progress in any given area of the arms control process will usually be justified. But hope should never be abandoned. There have been successful arms control agreements. In each case the parties have taken the view that it would on balance serve their interest to give up present or future military options in return for agreement by the other parties to do the same.

Obvious political, economic and security advantages can accrue to a state which accepts limitations on its freedom of action if it is genuinely confident that other states with which at some time it might find itself in conflict are accepting and adhering to the same limitations. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this point is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty under which a large number of non-nuclear weapon states – including those round this table – have given up the option of acquiring nuclear weapons in return for certain undertakings from the nuclear weapons states. It may seem obvious but it bears restating that they have only done so because they are confident that breaches of the agreement will be identified promptly and that the result of the agreement is an enhancement of their security both individually and collectively. The subject of our negotiation here in Vienna is the densest and potentially most dangerous concentration of conventional military power anywhere in the world. It is hardly surprising therefore that the caution and desire for certainty which has characterised other arms control negotiations, including those which led to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, should be particularly apparent here.

From the outset, it was recognized that the task facing this confer-
ence was difficult and complex. The Final Communiqué of 1973\(^\text{10}\) indicates this clearly. Problems are accentuated by the existence of historical as well as political differences between the two sides. There is an evident lack of congruence in our respective approaches to the issues. The East, for instance, seems to favour declaratory proposals with a minimum of detail about practical implementation. It argues that assertions of political commitment can be as effective as treaty obligations. This has always seemed surprising to us in the West. We, for the reasons already touched on, have wished to be sure that throughout the implementation of any treaty both parties could test what was happening and could be sure that undertakings were being honoured in full. Anything less, in our view, could risk one side – and probably both – abruptly finding itself on the way out of the frying pan and into the fire.

Despite the difficulties, the two sides have over the years moved closer to each other’s positions. We have agreed on the final goal of common collective ceilings; on the form of initial reductions; and on the need for some kind of verification. But within these areas of general agreement and even more outside them – there are still significant differences. We differ, for instance, on the need for a prior understanding about the size of forces within the area. Failing such an understanding, and given that both sides must have confidence that their security would be undiminished, we do not see how either side could accept the limitations on its freedom of action which a genuine agreement would involve. The West has produced procedural and substantive ideas for bridging this gap. Our ideas have not received a constructive response, from the East. In 1983, for instance, the West expressed its readiness to leave discussion of the size of forces in the area temporarily on one side and to explore the possibility of reaching a closer understanding on verification.

For the past two years, we have been attempting to engage the East in a discussion of the practical details of a verification regime. We have had little success. The East accuses us of using the issue of verification as a ‘device’ with which to lose to sight the objective of these negotiations. Nothing could be further from the truth. Verification is the heart and

\(\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\) The Final Communiqué of the MBFR Exploratory Talks, setting out the basis on which future negotiation would be conducted, was agreed on 28 July 1973. See Cmnd 6932, p. 142.
essence of an arms control agreement of the kind under discussion here. It is not an optional extra to be tacked on when everything else has been solved. Without agreement on the establishment of an effective verification regime, including measures which are jointly negotiated and applied, there will be no agreement of any kind in this forum.

On 14 February 1985, the East produced its set of basic provisions for a first-phase agreement. After answering our initial questions the East has declined to take part in a real dialogue on the substance of its proposal or of related matters. The East argues that the West must first accept in principle the approach of the February 1985 draft. But it is not at all obvious how far the West’s acceptance is supposed to go, nor what exactly we are being asked to accept. Why should we, in the absence of answers to the numerous questions which we have raised in the last round and in this, buy a pig in a poke? Why should we follow every twist and turn in Eastern attitudes? I would recall, for instance, that the West’s own first-phase proposal, which was on the table here from 1979-1982, was withdrawn in response to concern expressed by the East about the lack of linkage in it.

Let me be more precise. We, on the Western side, have an uncomfortable feeling that acceptance ‘in principle’ of the 14 February proposal would subsequently be discovered to have meant acceptance of the idea of a first-phase agreement; of the idea of a dataless agreement; of the idea of an agreement including armaments; of the idea of an agreement whose unspecified no-increase commitment would be verified by NTMs\(^\text{11}\) alone etc etc. Acceptance in principle might turn out, in short, to mean acceptance of the 14 February proposal as a whole, followed by discussion of whatever minor amendments its authors were prepared to accept. For that reason, I must emphasise that Western acceptance ‘in principle’, as a precondition to discussion of any Eastern proposal, is distinctly unlikely. But, if I may repeat an old refrain, Eastern acceptance of the need for a detailed dialogue on the fundamental issues would undoubtedly accelerate the appearance of a Western response.

What I have been trying to say here this morning is that successful arms control negotiations and, still more, successful arms control agreements are the exception rather than the rule. Both negotiations and agree-

\(^{11}\) National Technical Means of verification.
ments in this field require, of course, political will and political good faith. But neither of these desiderata, admirable as they are, is sufficient or anything like sufficient on its own. I do not myself believe that anyone round this table really believes them to be sufficient. None of us has forgotten the old aphorism that the ‘road to hell is paved with good intentions’.

What is needed in addition to good intentions are elements which reduce uncertainty and maintain or improve security. We need precision. We need clarity. We need transparency. Arms control agreements which promise more than they can deliver, which arouse false hopes, or which create uncertainty are worse than no agreement at all. This is why we on the Western side will go on asking questions and seeking explanations about the East’s ideas. At the same time we will continue the process of refining our own ideas. It is also why we will refuse to give vague and generalised answers on so-called questions of principle. We believe that vague answers are liable to lead to vague agreements.

We are now entering the 13th year of our negotiations. Those who are superstitious might well consider that the 13th year is unlikely to be an auspicious one. Let them bear in mind the words of a great 18th century parliamentarian from my country: Edmund Burke. He said that ‘Superstition is the religion of feeble minds’. There are, I think, no feeble minds at this table. There is enough ability, and more than enough cause, to enable us to defy the auguries. It would be a brave man who prophesied an agreement in the course of the next twelve months. But perhaps this might be the year when everyone at last accepts that our mutual interest in making progress is stronger than the forces which divide us.
I presented the West’s new (and as it turned out final) proposal to the assembled MBFR delegations in plenary session in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna on 5 December 1985. Precisely because it may now seem incredible both that it proved so difficult to agree its contents within the Alliance, and that these issues baffled the two sides for so long, it may be worth reprinting most of my text. (To put my words in perspective, one needs to recall that within six years the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Eastern Europe had been agreed.)

Statement to MBFR Plenary Session, Vienna, 5 December 1985
It is more than twelve years since these talks began. Throughout that long period we have been trying to find a formula which would permit some reduction of the conventional military forces deployed in Central Europe in order to contribute to a more stable military relationship in the area and to a strengthening of peace and security in Europe as a whole. Limited progress has been registered in a number of aspects of our talks. But real success has remained far out of reach.

A major reason for this absence of results has been the pattern of the negotiations. Ours has been a history of proposal by one side followed, usually at some distance, by a counter-proposal from the other side. Too often proposal and counter-proposal have borne little or no relation to each other. We have for too long failed to get into a position where the two sides were talking about the same kind of approach at the same time.
As I implied in my first plenary statement, in May of this year, it has become a dialogue of the deaf.

On 14 February of this year, the Eastern side tabled a paper outlining what it described as Basic Provisions for a first-phase agreement. The idea of a modest first phase or interim agreement was first put forward by the Western side in 1979. It was subsequently dropped by us, in 1982, not least in response to Eastern criticism of its alleged lack of linkage with follow-on reductions. As in all the Eastern side’s proposals to date, the 14 February text envisages a pattern of reductions and limitations without any prior agreement between the two sides as to the size of forces in the area covered by the agreement. Western speakers have analysed on many occasions in the months since February this and other lacunae in the Eastern text. We have sought clarification from the East on many points. We have received little satisfaction. But despite this disappointment, and in parallel with the discussion here, Western governments have carried through in capitals a review of the situation in the Vienna negotiation as a whole. Bearing in mind the West’s 1979 proposal, they have been considering whether the approach in the East’s 14 February Basic Provisions, their imperfections notwithstanding, might form a basis on which the two sides could work together with some hope of reaching an agreement. Our governments have now concluded that the Eastern framework does offer such a possibility. They have been encouraged in reaching this conclusion by the importance given in the Geneva communiqué of 21 November to these negotiations and by the need perceived there for the achievement of positive results in Vienna.

Difficult decisions were required of Western governments before they could accept the East’s ideas as a framework for the future conduct of the negotiations. That our governments have taken these decisions is a measure of the importance they attach to the talks and to the resolution of the problems which we face. This is, after all, the only negotiation in which an attempt is being made to reduce and to limit conventional force levels in Central Europe. It is the only forum in which the two military alliances, the North Atlantic Treaty organization and the Warsaw Treaty Member States, are talking directly to each other. It is also a forum in which a breakthrough is long overdue.

Let me summarize the points arising from the Eastern text on which, as a result of the West’s review of its position and subject to resolution of
the detail, there would now seem to be broad agreement between the two sides:

(i) The Eastern text sets out what it describes as the Basic Provisions for a first-phase agreement. The West can accept this Concept as providing a general framework for our future work. Either side is of course free to propose alterations to this framework as our negotiations evolve;

(ii) The Eastern text omits any reference to the need for prior agreement on data. In the interest of progress and in the context of a first-phase agreement the West accepts this omission;

(iii) The Eastern text proposes that the United States and the Soviet Union should undertake initial-reductions within one year from the entry into force of the agreement. The West agrees;

(iv) The Eastern text proposes that the reductions be taken in units with up to 10% as individuals. The West agrees;

(v) The Eastern text proposes that the withdrawn forces shall return to within their national boundaries. The West agrees;

(vi) The Eastern text proposes that these withdrawn forces shall not be deployed in new locations in such a way as to diminish the security of any state participant in the negotiations, including those with special status. The West agrees;

(vii) The Eastern text proposes that lists of the military units of the American and Soviet forces to be withdrawn from the area of reductions shall be exchanged. The West agrees;

(viii) The Eastern text proposes that the United States and the Soviet Union shall inform all parties about the start of the practical arrangements to reduce their ground forces in Central Europe, and about their completion. The West agrees;
(ix) The Eastern text proposes that observation points should be established through which withdrawn Soviet and American forces should pass. The West agrees;

(x) The Eastern text proposes that each side should determine independently the location of these points in its own territory. The West agrees;

(xi) The Eastern text proposes that there shall be a no-increase commitment following the period of reductions. The West agrees;

(xii) The Eastern text proposes that national technical means of verification should be used in a manner consistent with generally recognized principles of international law and that each side should undertake not to interfere with national technical means of verification of the other side. The West agrees;

(xiii) The Eastern text proposes that the agreement envisaged in it should be of limited duration. The West agrees;

(xiv) The Eastern side argues that the implementation of a verification regime would also provide most valuable experience in applying associated measures, which would prove useful in the future in the course of more substantial reductions. The West agrees;

(xv) The Eastern side proposes that the agreement be legally binding. The West agrees;

(xvi) The Eastern side proposes that the sides should undertake to pursue the negotiations on the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe with the object of reaching parity at equal collective levels of up to 900,000 men including up to 700,000 men in ground forces. The West agrees that, subject to the successful implementation of a first-phase agreement, this should remain our objective.
The list which I have just enumerated of points on which agreement in principle now exists is impressive. Agreement has been made possible by an imaginative and courageous decision on the part of Western governments. The West has agreed to offer a reduction of American force levels in Europe and to accept thereafter a collective no increase commitment despite the fact that there is no agreement between the two sides on the level of forces deployed in the Eastern part of the area. This is a major move from the West’s traditional stance on this issue. We have taken this step because we believe a first-phase agreement is possible and worth having and because we are determined to make every reasonable effort to reach it.

There are also two topics on which it would be inaccurate to say that there is agreement but on which we in the West anticipate little difficulty in reaching accord:

— We accept that the reductions envisaged should be made mainly in units. However, in order to avoid any argument about definitions and to facilitate an early agreement we would propose that where the Eastern text refers to ‘combat military units’, the reference should simply be to ‘units’;

— The Eastern text does not refer to the need for an agreement of the kind under consideration to take account of fluctuations of force levels resulting from normal military activities such as reinforcement exercises. However, we note the Plenary statement of 21 November by Ambassador Handl to the effect that the East has ‘accommodated Western concerns on this issue’. The West proposes to include a provision to govern these activities.

So much for the areas of broad agreement. But for the West simply to ignore the unresolved dispute about the level of forces in the area would be irresponsible. It would be incompatible with the commitment of both sides to ensure that whatever agreement is reached here preserves undiminished security. In order to ensure that this security is indeed undiminished the West will wish to propose some changes or, as we would see them, improvements to the East’s approach. We call them improvements
deliberately. We on the Western side are convinced that our proposals are in the interests of both sides.

The most important of these improvements are as follows:

(i) We propose that the initial reductions should be 5,000 American and 11,500 Soviet troops. These new figures move the sides out of the deadlock of the last six years about the size of Soviet reductions;

(ii) The East has proposed that troops to be withdrawn should take with them their organic armaments and combat equipment. In order that each side should retain maximum flexibility in planning its own defence, we propose that each side should have discretion to decide for itself how to deal with such armaments. We would be prepared for the East to store in the reductions’ area the organic equipment, in whole or in part, of the troops which it withdraws; or to withdraw that equipment. As regards the application of the no-increase commitment to armaments, we do not believe that this would be meaningful or practicable;

(iii) The Eastern text makes only minimal reference to the question of verification. The proposals which it contains would not, in the Western view, provide the two sides with the necessary degree of confidence that the agreement was being honoured. Western governments have devised a verification regime which should make attainment of that confidence possible for both sides. The major elements of this verification package are:

(a) that the observation points proposed in the Eastern text should be converted into permanent and permanently manned entry and exit points and that all forces – those entering as well as those leaving the area should pass through these points;

(b) that detailed information disaggregated down to battalion level on the forces remaining within the area should be
exchanged when the initial reductions are completed; this will then provide the basis of the no-increase commitment. The information would be updated annually and whenever there was a significant change in personnel strength or structure;

(c) that the inspections regime should verify this information exchange as well as other provisions of the agreement. Each side would have the right to conduct a number of inspections for the purpose of monitoring compliance with the provisions of the agreement. We intend that each side should have the right to conduct 30 inspections in each of the three years immediately following the completion of the initial reductions;

(d) that a Consultative Commission should be established on signature of the agreement. The Commission’s tasks will be inter alia to clarify ambiguities expeditiously and to help resolve disputes;

(iv) The first-phase agreement envisaged by the East in its proposal would last for three years including up to one year for initial reductions. The West, however, proposes that the initial reductions which will occur during the first year should, as soon as they have been completed, be followed by the entry into force of a no-increase commitment on ground forces and combined ground and air forces of all direct participants in the reductions area. The duration of the no-increase commitment would be three years. The West believes that this period is necessary for the two sides to establish with confidence the levels of forces remaining in the area. Such confidence is self evidently a precondition for the success of any further negotiations towards our agreed goal of parity;

(v) The East’s proposal envisages both collective ceilings and national sub-ceilings. The West’s view is that there should be a collective no increase commitment combined with a no-increase commitment on United States and Soviet forces as they are the only forces
involved in the initial reductions process;

(vi) As in any international agreement of this kind, the West will wish to include a clause recognising the right of each side to take steps to protect its vital security interests in the event of activities by the other side which are incompatible with the object or purposes of the agreement or which jeopardise those interests.

The improvements which we are proposing to the Eastern text seem to us on the Western side to be self-explanatory. They correspond to the need which we perceive for practicality, precision and predictability in this, as in any other arms control agreement. All states entering an agreement of the kind we are discussing must have adequate protection against unpleasant surprises. It is essential to emphasise, in this connection, that every clause, every condition in the agreement we have in mind will apply to both sides. Thus, rights for one side will be rights for the other. There will be no privileged participants and no unilateral advantage to be won. Rather there will be a general gain in mutual understanding and therefore in mutual confidence and in the security we are enjoined by the Final Communiqué of 28 June 1973 to enhance.

I hope the East will agree. But it would perhaps be unrealistic to expect that the West’s ideas will altogether escape criticism. We may be told, for instance, that the West has failed to deal adequately with the armaments issue. It seems to us that we have dealt with the question in the only way in which in present circumstances it is possible to deal with it. We have recognized the limits of what is practicable. The Eastern side is well aware of the difficulty the West sees in removing its major organic equipment from Central Europe, given the geographic factor and the massive preponderance of Eastern weaponry in the area. The West seeks no compensation for these disadvantages – as we are so often accused of doing. We merely note the existence of the facts and their consequences.

No less important where the armaments issue is concerned is the difficulty of developing an objective rationale for evaluating either the content or the implementation of a limitation on armaments. The Eastern side has recognized the difficulty of establishing a quantitative yardstick for measuring the equipment of the two sides. It appears also to accept that the two sides must retain the right in the context of an interim and
time-limited agreement to continue with the routine business of modernising their equipment. It will be for the East to say in due course whether I have accurately represented their views. But these are certainly judgements with which we on the Western side would agree. They reflect in part the problems which will render fruitless any attempt at this juncture to draft a precise and quantitatively expressed commitment on armaments.

The Western side expects that the East, even if it does not accept our arguments, will recognize that a decision to leave the present situation on armaments unchanged for the next few years cannot be to the disadvantage of either side; and that it therefore cannot be a reason for foregoing the numerous other benefits a first-phase agreement would bring. The West, of course, does not exclude the possibility of future discussions on armaments. The mandate in the Final Communiqué remains valid in this as in all other respects.

Another criticism which the West may hear is that the verification regime which we propose is excessive in a first phase agreement where the reductions envisaged are relatively modest in scale. From the many counter arguments available to the West let me cite five:

(a) The measures we propose for monitoring reductions are very similar to those the East has suggested. The remainder of the Western verification package has nothing to do with the reductions phase. It is intended rather to monitor observance of the no-increase commitment, which is based on declared levels of forces in the area, and other agreement provisions;

(b) the inspections’ regime is commensurate with the task facing it. The West for instance will be trying to verify force levels in the order of a million men spread over more than half a million square kilometres in more than 2,000 camps and barracks in three large states. Against that background a proposal for 30 inspections per annum is fully in accord with the nature and scope of the agreement;

(c) the security implications of a no-increase commitment under a limited agreement are as significant as those which would flow from fixed ceilings in a comprehensive agreement;
(d) the fact that the agreement is time-limited in no way lessens the need for effective verification. Three years is more than long enough for a major change in the existing military balance to take place. So the agreement must be properly monitored. If at the end of the agreement period one side or the other considers that the verification regime is either ineffective or excessively intrusive it will have an easy remedy. Neither side is compelled to renew the agreement;

(e) finally, as I have already said, the West asks for nothing which it is not itself prepared to accept.

The West hopes that nobody will suggest that the improvements, which we have offered to the East’s 14 February proposal, are incompatible with the principles of undiminished security. We have taken particular note of the agreement in the Final Communiqué that ‘specific arrangements will have to be carefully worked out in scope and timing in such a way that they will in all respects and at every point conform to the principle of undiminished security for each party’. If that injunction is to be observed, in the context of an agreement under which reductions occur and both sides accept limitation’s, on their freedom of action, effective verification is literally vital. Acceptance of the West’s proposal will provide the means necessary to allow the requirement to be met.

The West has made a major move. It has only done so after the most painstaking deliberation. Our initiative represents, or at least will do if the East responds appropriately, a breakthrough which will bring the possibility of a limited agreement in this negotiation within reach. I call it a limited agreement but in fact an agreement between the two alliances to reduce and limit their forces would be an event of very great political significance. There is, or should be, now no obstacle to a detailed and expert discussion of the modalities of such an agreement. We hope there will be no more suggestions from the East that the prior data requirement, that differences of principle, that differences about framework etc etc are blocking the way forward.

The Western side plans to circulate to Eastern delegations later today further information about its proposal. We intend to provide fur-
ther elaboration of our proposal early in the next round beginning 30 January 1986. This will confirm and amplify the statement I have made today. Thereafter it will be for the Eastern side to show that it can match the West in flexibility, in imagination and in pragmatism.

If the East can do this, the long deadlock in Vienna will have been broken. *Per contra* failure to make progress on the proposals which we are now considering will of course mean postponing into the indefinite future any hope of moving towards the more ambitious goals set by our predecessors. The disappointment among all the peoples we have the honour to represent here will then be intense.

I closed my plenary statement on 31 October by expressing the hope that we around this table might at last come to accept that our mutual interest in making progress was stronger than the forces which divide us. Today’s initiative by the West should enable us to find out whether that hope was well founded or not.

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My statement was received with some enthusiasm by the Western side (who had of course seen and approved it several days previously). The recital of the points on which all the participants appeared to be agreed struck them (particularly, I seem to recall, the Italian Ambassador) as an exciting novelty. The Eastern side, by contrast, appeared, both at the plenary session itself and in the subsequent press conference, to be seriously taken aback. The best line that the Soviet Ambassador could come up with was that while the West seemed to have accepted the form of the East’s February proposal, it had filled it with ‘dubious content’. The Western side’s ideas did not ‘give cause for optimism’. They had ‘a different Rh factor’ from those of the East (a simile that the Eastern spokesman was subsequently altogether unable to explain to the assembled press).

As I had hoped, Western news coverage highlighted the dilemma that faced the Eastern side. There was a lot of talk about the ‘spirit of Geneva’ (a reference to the November meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev) and to the possibility of a breakthrough in the MBFR talks. *Newsweek* of 16 December, 1985 was not untypical. In a substantial piece headlined ‘A hard offer to refuse: a new NATO proposal at the MBFR talks’, Scott Sullivan wrote:
Within the tight little arms control community, it is known as 'Sleeping Beauty'. After nearly 13 years of slow motion negotiation in Vienna, the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks, aimed at reducing the number of troops maintained in Europe by NATO and the nations of the Warsaw Pact, have achieved precisely nothing. Indeed the discussions have proved so sterile for such long time that most arms control experts have assumed they were bound to die of old age. Suddenly, however, Sleeping Beauty shows some signs of stirring. Last week, in a move spurred in part by the spirit of the Reagan – Gorbachev summit, the NATO participants in MBFR offered a new proposal that just might lead to the first negotiated reduction of Eastern and Western military forces in Central Europe.

The western initiative at Vienna clearly caught Moscow off guard. In a hastily prepared response, Soviet Ambassador Valerian Mikhailov admitted that it appeared to resemble earlier proposals put forth by the Eastern side. But Mikhailov immediately added that the West had 'filled it with dubious content', a reference to the tough verification clause in the Western proposal. British Ambassador Michael Alexander, who wrote the first draft of the NATO proposal and formally placed the plan on the MBFR bargaining table, told reporters he was disappointed by Mikhailov's curt dismissal. But Western diplomats said privately that the East bloc's negative response was to have been expected. 'They don't know what to make of this, and they haven't got orders from the Kremlin,' said one Western Ambassador. 'What they do know is that the ball is now in their court.'

That, of course, is precisely what Western planners had intended. The NATO strategy was as simple as it was striking. It made the Warsaw Pact negotiators an offer they could scarcely refuse by agreeing to the main point of the Soviet proposal: a quick initial reduction in troop strength with no need for previous agreement on the so-called 'data base' issue. For years the NATO countries have argued that it was senseless to negotiate troop cuts when the two parties could not even agree on the number of soldiers – the data base – actually stationed in Central Europe. Such agreement seemed practically unobtainable because the Warsaw Pact consistently maintains that it has 230,000 fewer troops than Western intelligence officials contend it had ...

Last week the West ... agreed to drop its demand for previous agreement on the size of existing overall troop deployments. It proposed an immediate withdrawal of 11,500 Soviet troops and 5000 American troops from Central Europe, together with a three-year freeze. The Western offer did differ from the previous Soviet proposal in a number of ways, most significantly in the demand that the withdrawals and freezes be verified by frequent on-site inspection – something the Warsaw Pact countries have always resisted. But the new NATO proposal was more similar to the Warsaw Pact offer than it was different. 'We have always said that a database agreement was the central pole of Western policy,'
said a NATO ambassador. ‘Well, the pole has just been uprooted.’

Moscow and its allies may – indeed, probably will – stonewall the Western offer at first. But even if they do, NATO will have gained significant political mileage. It will have demonstrated that it means business about making a ‘fresh start’ in East-West relations. It will have seized the initiative in Vienna and will have put the Soviets in a diplomatic bind. If the East bloc rejects the Western offer, it will look obstructive; if the proposal is accepted, the Easterners will open themselves to frequent on-site inspections that are likely to prove the West’s contention that they have hundreds of thousands more troops in place than they have ever been willing to admit …

In presenting the proposal to the East bloc ambassadors last Thursday, Alexander repeatedly referred to it as an example of the West’s determination to ‘replace words with deeds’ in East-West relations, as both Reagan and Gorbachev pledged to do at the summit. And American Ambassador Robert Blackwill specifically cited a recent speech by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze accepting the principle of on-site inspection – and challenged the East-bloc representatives in Vienna to put that principle into practice.

With that kind of assertiveness, the West clearly recovered the initiative in Vienna – and in the process breathed new life into the MBFR process. If Reagan and Gorbachev were looking for a practical accomplishment to crown their next summit, they could find MBFR a better candidate than a nuclear arms treaty. The strategic arms talks in Geneva are so complicated, and the differences between the two sides so great, that a quick agreement is apparently impossible. After last week’s Western initiative, a small reduction and freeze in conventional forces in Europe looks much simpler and more doable.

With luck and political will, the Sleeping Beauty of Vienna could stir and wake next year from her long coma to find herself at the centre of the world’s stage.

Sadly, at least from the point in view of those who had spent so much time on the MBFR negotiation, it was not to be. The difference in the Rh factor, effectively guaranteeing the failure of any graft or transfusion of blood, was to ensure that MBFR never came out of its coma. The Russians either had to reject our proposal (what price, then, the spirit of Geneva and harmony within the Warsaw Pact); accept it (and either have the gross inaccuracy of their previous data claims exposed or remove 200,000 troops within the following three years, as well as having to accept mandatory on-site inspections); or stall until they were in a position to contemplate a radically different negotiation. Unsurprisingly, Mikhail Gorbachev chose the latter course. But the strains imposed on
the Soviet decision-makers by this situation were visible enough in and from Vienna.

Shevardnadze’s acceptance of the principle of on-site inspection has already been mentioned. In a statement made on 15 January 1986, Gorbachev said that the outlines of an agreement appeared to be emerging in Vienna. He acknowledged that an agreement ‘would naturally demand reasonable verification: we are prepared for this’. He agreed to the establishment of permanent exit and entry points and to their functioning during the reductions phase of any agreement. This contrasted significantly with the previous Soviet position that such exit/entry points would only be established to monitor a no increase commitment after common, collective ceilings had been reached.

But in Vienna there was little or no sign of a more forthcoming Eastern posture. At the first plenary meeting of the new round on 20 January Ambassador Mikhailov stated that ‘in a whole range of respects the ideas and proposals put forward … by NATO countries continue to be of the most one-sided, unbalanced and simply unrealistic nature’. On 20 February, in what was an effect its last MBFR initiative, the Eastern side tabled a draft agreement that was remarkably negative and unimaginative. It contained none of the possible ideas on, for instance, verification that might have injected movement into the situation e.g. by creating disagreement among the Western partners. Egon Bahr, of all leading Western political figures perhaps the most committed to East-West negotiation, happened to be visiting the MBFR negotiations on 20 February. He described the Eastern text as ‘politically inept’. It attracted no favourable attention in the Western media. It was vigorously and unanimously criticised within twenty-four hours by the NATO allies, to the evident discomfiture of most of the Warsaw Pact participants.

My attitude to my Warsaw Pact colleagues at this time was a mixture of irritation and a certain sympathy. On the one hand their leaders, like Gorbachev and Eric Honecker1 (‘We will admit the same kind of verification for ourselves as the other parties to an agreement are prepared to undertake’) were making public statements about their commitment to the proper verification of conventional arms control agreements. On

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1 Chairman of the GDR’s Council of State and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, 1976-89.
the other hand, in the course of February and March 1986, the Soviet
delegation in Vienna made it clear that they would not agree to routine
rotations of personnel in Eastern Europe (i.e. at least 500,000 Soviet
troops each year) going through the proposed exit/entry points (in effect
this meant that after the initial reductions virtually no-one would go
through them!); that there would be no mandatory on-site inspections
(because, it was claimed, they would only provide cover for subversion
and espionage); and that there would be no exchange of disaggregated
(i.e., unit by unit) information.

There was at the time little doubt in my mind that the hard line
taken in Vienna reflected the Soviet mainstream’s assessment of the like-
ly impact of an effective verification regime on the situation in Eastern
Europe. Mikhailov on one occasion said to me openly that, quite apart
from the intelligence advantages it would give us, the operation of a ver-
ification regime on the lines envisaged by the West would ‘destabilize’ the
political situation in Eastern Europe. I then asked the Czechoslovak
Ambassador, with Mikhailov listening, whether he agreed that brief
annual visits by a few inspection teams to separate barracks in
Czechoslovakia would destabilize his country’s government. The unfor-
tunate Handl, holed amidships, stood with his mouth open and said
absolutely nothing. Bearing in mind events three years later, which the
ambassador could perhaps already see coming, one should not perhaps be
too critical of him.

What the 5 December initiative made inescapably obvious – no
doubt in Moscow as well as to me – in the early weeks of 1986 was that
despite the apparent proximity of the two sides’ positions, the concepts
underlying those positions were irreconcilable. I recall reporting to
London, before the end of February, that as things then stood the MBFR
negotiation had no real chance of success. The West was rightly deter-
mined not to enter to action any arrangement that risked degrading our
security. We sought, in other words, greater mutual confidence and
therefore, *inter alia*, a better insight into Eastern force levels. Quite apart
from the views of Western governments, Western media and public opin-
ion would insist on verification machinery that really worked. In Eastern
eyes, on the other hand, the result of installing the sort of machinery that
we required would be the generation of suspicion, dissension and mis-
trust. It could not, to use Gorbachev’s word, be ‘reasonable’. Whereas
the Soviet governments sought the preservation and consolidation of the status quo (in their view of an existing equilibrium), our proposals were in their eyes bound to result in the status quo being overturned, or least placed at risk.

Lack of congruity prevailed once more. There was a real sense in which the great power relationship in central Europe was a zero sum game that could never have been definitively stabilized by negotiated agreements. Resolution was only going to be possible when one side or the other made, or was forced to make, truly radical changes in its position. I was arguing then that a conventional arms control agreement would be much to the advantage of the West and would be worth taking risks to achieve but that sadly the Soviet Union was well aware of this and would therefore set too high a price. The fact was that each side’s perception of the threat from the other was too great (exaggeratedly so, I felt, in both cases) to allow either to make the leap in the dark that would have permitted an agreement. The historical significance of Mikhail Gorbachev is that he recognized this (or recognized that events had left him with no choice) and was willing, by acting in a consequent manner, to prove me wrong. It may be that he started to come to terms with the reality, at least as far as conventional force levels were concerned, in the early weeks of 1986. Obviously, there were many other processes involved, including those triggered by the Helsinki Agreement and particularly Basket III. To that extent, events were already taking over. But his policies in the first half of 1986 also suggest a man who recognized that the Warsaw Pact had allowed itself to be outmanoeuvred but was still looking for a negotiated solution.

Whether or not this was the actual sequence events, Mr Gorbachev’s speech in East Berlin on 18 April 1986, calling for conventional arms control from the Atlantic to the Urals, indicated to me that he had decided that the Soviet Union was in an impossible position in the MBFR forum and that the best way to escape would be, in effect, to start again. The Soviet leader summed up his dilemma concisely enough when he said that ‘the essence of the matter, in our opinion, is that there can be no disarmament without verification and that verification without disarmament makes no sense’. His representatives in Vienna added the gloss that ‘verification had to take account of the realities of the international situation’.
In my last two formal statements to the MBFR ambassadors before my departure in August 1986, I addressed the problems in the following terms:

**Statement to MBFR Plenary Session, Vienna, 18 March 1986**

Mr Chairman, I would now like to raise two points of general importance. Firstly, there is the meaning of the phrase ‘reasonable confidence’. Everyone is aware that an outbreak of hostilities in Central Europe would be a catastrophe; and that there is consequently an overriding need to avoid taking risks or creating uncertainty in matters affecting our national or collective security. Therefore ‘reasonable confidence’ in the context of the Agreement we are discussing must mean a substantial degree of confidence, approximating to certainty, that either side would very rapidly become aware of any action by the other side which breached, or threatened to breach, the Agreement in letter or in spirit. It may be that the Eastern side – relying on the openness of Western societies to reveal anyway what it needs to know – is prepared to take the gamble of setting a lower standard. The West is not prepared to do so.

My second point of general importance relates to the question of good intentions in security matters. We on the Western side are regularly told – most recently on 27 February by Ambassador Mikhailov – that the Soviet Union has never threatened anyone and never will. The implication – sometimes openly stated, as it was by Ambassador Mikhailov last week – is that there is, therefore, no chance of our Eastern partners trying to evade their obligations. The further implication is of course that we can ignore the kind of risk which I described a moment ago in relation to the operation of exit/entry points.

I have no wish whatsoever to question my colleague’s good faith. But I must tell him that this negotiation is not about the ‘intentions’ of the participants. If it was, and if one can judge from the regularity with which the East impugns the West’s intentions, the East would long since have gone home.

Only one thing can ever be demonstrated with ‘reasonable confidence’ about the intentions of individuals or governments. That is that those intentions can change with bewildering and unpredictable speed. This, in turn, is the reason why our governments – all our governments – when dealing with issues of national and collective security are preoccu-
pied with ‘capabilities’ and subsequently with ‘actions’. It is capabilities and actions which we are seeking to verify with ‘reasonable confidence’, not intentions. Nor can such confidence ever be derived from assertions of goodwill.

In his message to the Conference on Disarmament on 20 February, General Secretary Gorbachev said that ‘the Soviet Union is no less interested than other states in being confident of strict fulfilment of agreements’. He did not say that the Soviet Union was interested in whether governments intended to fulfil agreements. He was interested in whether they were fulfilling them. That is also the West’s position.

Statement to MBFR Plenary Session, Vienna, 30 May 1986
Much rhetorical attention has been focused at this table on the 16 points of agreement between East and West which I summarised in my statement of 5 December, and the East now seems to have accepted these. In the same statement, I also reviewed some remaining areas of disagreement. With the benefit of hindsight, I might have been well advised also to summarise the points of disagreement with equal conciseness. It is, after all, on the disagreements which we must concentrate. Let me seek to repair my earlier omission now.

In order to make possible a first-phase agreement which would genuinely enhance the present degree of stability, security and mutual confidence in Central Europe:

(i) The Western side is prepared to see United States and Soviet forces in Central Europe reduced in a balanced manner. The Eastern side has so far not been prepared to agree to this.

(ii) The Western side is prepared to reveal the size and composition of its forces in the area of reductions down to a level at which it will become possible for the other side to verify effectively the information provided, i.e. down to battalion level or equivalent. The Eastern side has so far not been prepared to agree to do this.

(iii) The Western side is prepared to establish permanent exit-entry
points through which all military personnel entering and leaving the area of reductions would pass.
The Eastern side no longer seems prepared to agree to do this.

(iv) The Western side is prepared to allow Western force levels remaining in the area of reductions after the initial withdrawals to be checked as a matter of right and routine by the other side. The Eastern side has so far not been prepared to agree to do this.

More specifically, in this context the West is prepared:

(v) To allow the other side 310 inspections per year as of right and routine on our territory.

(vi) To allow these inspections to be mounted at very short notice.

(vii) To allow the other side to enter our military installations. The East has so far not been prepared to agree to do any of these things.

Furthermore, the West is prepared:

(viii) To envisage the extension of confidence-building measures to territory beyond the area of reductions. The Eastern side has so far not been prepared to agree to do this …

Let me summarise at this juncture some of the questions which in recent months have been addressed to the East by the West and which have received no reply:

(a) How precisely is one supposed to verify information about force levels which is not disaggregated in any significant way?

(b) How does one check a no-increase commitment from which an annual rotation of some 500,000 men is excluded?

(c) How does one check indigenous force levels under the regime envisaged by the East?
(d) How can confidence be generated by a system in which the party suspected of breaching an agreement is the one which decides whether or not the alleged breach shall be checked? ....

This statement does not pretend to be an exhaustive list of the points which divide us. Without wishing to make it so, let me cite, in conclusion, two fundamental differences in philosophy:

(ix) The East claims that the West’s verification proposals are out of all proportion to the contents of the rest of the agreement under discussion.

Ambassador Mikhailov spoke with passion on this subject in his impromptu last week. He called our ideas ‘totally unjustified and deliberately inflated’. I would merely remind the Ambassador, not for the first time, of the fact that our verification regime is primarily intended to verify the no-increase commitment and that this commitment is of essentially the same security significance in a time-limited first-phase agreement as in a comprehensive agreement. The West is not prepared to accept limitations on its freedom of action for a period as long as three years without the assurance that it can check for itself, and in a manner that allows for no argument, whether the other side is observing the same limitations.

Finally, Ambassador Mikhailov also suggested that:

(x) The West’s verification proposals are incompatible with ‘the realities of the present international situation’.

As I have tried yet again to make clear today, there are no political realities in the West, or in our perception of East-West relations, with which an agreement of the kind we wish to see would be incompatible. If I may paraphrase what my Belgian colleague said last week, the West wants to reduce East-West tensions. We do not believe that it is necessary to wait for East-West relations to be perfect before we take steps to improve them.
We in the West can only presume, therefore, that our Soviet colleague was referring to the realities on the Eastern side. If the Ambassador is telling us that the situation within the Warsaw Pact is different from that within the NATO Alliance, whose members are ready to accept an effective verification regime, we in the West can only note the fact with deep regret …

Ambassador Mikhailov’s response to observations on these lines was to describe the West’s approach as ‘fantastic and arbitrary, unrealistic and irrelevant’ (23 May 1986). His line of attack evidently struck some in Moscow as unhelpful since, during a visit to Cologne, the director of the Soviet news agency Novosti, Ambassador Falin, publicly criticised the performance of the Soviet delegation. It seemed clear enough to us in the Hofburg that Mikhailov and his team had been relegated to the sidelines. The only subject they wanted to discuss was verification. The greater the detail into which they entered, the greater the gap between the Soviet position and ours appeared to be. Conscious of this, the Soviet delegation for the most part preferred to talk about the Budapest Appeal of 11 June\(^2\) and the statement issued by NATO at Halifax on 30 May, promising ‘bold new steps’.\(^3\) It was obvious by June that Scott Sullivan’s ‘Sleeping Beauty’ was never going to be awakened. I said as much to London – and in more definite terms than I had used in February. As far as I was concerned, the 5 December initiative had amply fulfilled its principal objective (given that Soviet acceptance had always seemed highly unlikely) viz. to clarify the situation and force the participants to take stock. Certainly

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\(^2\) At Budapest on 11 June 1986 Warsaw Pact members formalised Gorbachev’s latest disarmament proposal by announcing a new plan for reducing conventional forces in Europe. Each side was to reduce its conventional forces between 110,000 and 150,000 troops within the next one to two years. By the early 1990s East and West were each to cut their forces by 25%, or approximately 500,000 troops each.

\(^3\) On 30 May 1986 Nato Ministers, meeting in Halifax (Canada), responded to Gorbachev’s recent expression of Soviet readiness ‘to pursue conventional force reductions from the Atlantic to the Urals’ with a statement of their belief in the need for ‘bold new steps … in the field of conventional arms control’. They also announced that their objective was the establishment of a ‘verifiable, comprehensive and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels’, and that to this end they were establishing a high level task force.
they all spent the middle months of 1986 doing just that.

Having by this time been appointed UK Permanent Representative at NATO, I was preparing to leave Vienna after some fifteen months in charge of the UK MBFR Delegation. Beyond a strong instinct that radical change was in the wind, I had no piercing insight into the way ahead on conventional arms control. It was evident that Western public opinion, notably in the Federal Republic, would insist on a continuing and serious negotiation about conventional force levels in central Europe. It was equally apparent that they would be relatively indifferent as to whether such negotiation continued on MBFR’s bloc to bloc basis or, as seemed increasingly likely, on some broader footing. What was going to matter was that our approach should be new, relatively straightforward and not obviously self-serving – as too many earlier proposals, by both sides, had been. I recall putting various ideas to London in June. These involved much larger force reductions (looking forward indeed to an eventual Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe and, as the probable consequence, US withdrawal from Western Europe), the inclusion of armaments and various options for future negotiating fora. Provided we were unyielding on verification, I saw little risk in being more forthcoming on other aspects of the negotiation. The fact that it was difficult to see how real progress towards an actual agreement could be made seemed to me to ease the problem of thinking radically. We were, after all, unlikely to find ourselves in an end game any time soon. But it also complicated matters in that, in the absence of progress, it was not going to be easy to head off those who wanted to make unilateral concessions. (Another indication of the sensitivity of verification for the Russians was that they never offered the sort of compromise suggestions that, as must have been obvious to them, would have split the Allies – both along intra-European and transatlantic lines.) In the event of course, my proposals, like my concerns, were rather rapidly overtaken by events.

These ‘events’, incidentally, must have been accelerated by another fact which by the end of my posting was becoming increasingly obvious in Vienna – as well, no doubt, as in Moscow. This was the growing divergence between the Soviet delegation and its East European partners. Although discipline was maintained in a formal sense, the East Europeans (notably the East Germans) made little attempt to disguise their opinion that our proposals on verification would have caused them little or no dif-
Honecker had said as much and (as did not seem to be the case with the Soviet delegation and Gorbachev, presumably because of disagreements in Moscow) his delegation was happy to follow his line. This tended to confirm the view I expressed at the time that the *droit de regard* over Soviet forces provided to the West by a conventional arms control agreement, and its accompanying verification regime, would certainly have been welcomed by most East European governments. In any case, their delegations made it plain privately that they were unhappy with the long delays which the 11 June Budapest appeal apparently implied. They only rarely resorted to the kind of polemic indulged in by Mikhailov. Again, presumably, many of them – notably the very sensible East German, Wieland – could already see the writing on the wall. Certainly, they must by then have had a much better idea than I did as to where we might all be headed!

Since MBFR rarely made it on to the radar screen during my time at NATO, this may be the right point at which to bid farewell to an unhappy, if not altogether futile, negotiation. From the summer of 1986 onwards, as interest in conventional arms control grew, it was acknowledged increasingly openly on all sides that the MBFR forum had reached its sell-by date and that the real negotiations would take place elsewhere. But none of the participants wished to be responsible for delivering the quietus, at least until some formal replacement was in sight. The almost entirely pointless talking went on, therefore, until 2 February 1989, a half life of some three years that must at times have been extremely trying for the participants. The CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) talks began in Vienna the following month. While MBFR had been set up as a counter-weight to CSCE, CFE was the child of the third CSCE Review Conference. This had at least one very important consequence: France was added to the list of participants taken over from MBFR. Even in March 1989, three months after Gorbachev had announced his intention of unilaterally reducing Soviet armed forces by 500,000 troops, no one really anticipated the then imminent collapse of the Warsaw Pact. But when it came, it provided us all with the answer to the zero sum game conundrum and the CFE participants with the opportunity for a rapid and successful negotiation that had never been remotely available to their long suffering predecessors in MBFR. On 17 February 1989 my successor as UK Head of Delegation in Vienna, Robin O’Neill, ended the last
The despatch ever sent by a holder of that post with the words: ‘If there is a single personal conclusion I draw from MBFR, it is the need for imagination, and a real will to achieve an agreement which contains a fair balance of benefit to each party. Without both of these, we can well spend another fifteen years without result.’ The iron had bitten deep.

Was MBFR, then, worth the effort and the money expended between 1973 and 1989? Even if one leaves aside the cynical consideration that US force levels in Europe were successfully maintained (something that I was far from assuming in 1969) and that this on its own would have justified MBFR, the verdict is not self-evidently negative. Of course the diversion of resources was considerable and agreement was never remotely within reach. On the other hand, MBFR was the sole multinational negotiation on defence and security that continued virtually uninterrupted throughout an often extremely dangerous period (the only break was for a couple of months at the beginning of 1984). Even if usually dominated by the superpowers, it involved European governments, East and West, in direct discussion of the military confrontation in a way that no other forum did. A great deal of mutual education, and some tacit agreement, was achieved willy-nilly. The mandate for the 1989 CFE talks reflected much, by then, common ground that was in fact a result of the Sisyphean haggling in the MBFR forum. In the last analysis, the MBFR talks were almost a metaphor for the Cold War itself – a negotiating confrontation for which there was no mutually acceptable outcome but whose infinitely tedious exchanges the participants were determined neither to abandon nor to allow to self-destruct. MBFR exemplified the mechanisms by which the Cold War was managed and therefore deserves to be remembered with some gratitude or, at least, a certain respect.

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Early in 1986, I was appointed to succeed Sir John Graham as UK Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. Since I was not yet fifty years old, the fact that I had included the job at all on the wish list that I had submitted from Vienna seems to have occasioned some initial surprise within the administration. But it was the only post I really wanted. Neither my wife nor I had any desire to do another representational job, however grand, nor I, after the excitements of No 10, to return to London in a subordinate post. Defence and security were the subjects that interested me then and, fifteen years later, now. So I thought I might as well ask for NATO. It was much to the credit of the administration that, after certain amount of internal argument (or so I am told), they were able to accommodate me.

I made clear at the time of the appointment that I thought it very likely that the NATO job would be my last post in the Diplomatic Service. This was partly for family reasons but partly also because I was conscious of being somewhat out of sympathy with the thinking at that time on how the Service should be administered. I felt, for instance, that the contribution made by spouses (mainly, of course, women) to the success or otherwise of embassies needed altogether more substantive recognition. (There was a great reluctance even to acknowledge that many wives, senior and junior, suffered very considerable distress as result of the gulf between the popular image of their role and the reality. I was left with the impression that even to draw attention to this was to be guilty of, at best, indifferent taste.) I argued rather strongly in favour of the award of bonuses to staff for exceptional performance, at whatever grade: the Service as a whole, and in particular the senior grades, did not agree, par-
particularly in fact about bonuses for senior grades. I was irritated by the widespread assumption that being in one’s forties was, *prima facie*, a disqualification for a job like UK Permanent Representative to NATO. Partly as result of my time in Personnel Department, I anyway believed in the need for much more flexibility about promotion ages and retirement ages (where I favoured a bracket 55-65 rather than a fixed cut-off point). Happily in most, though not all, of these matters the intervening years have seen a good deal of what I would regard as progress. But at the time it was evident to me that I was uncomfortably, if not dramatically, out of step with those then in charge. I would, naturally, have accepted the top job in London¹ had I been offered it. But I wasn’t! Some passages in this book may suggest, at least in part, why I hardly expected to be favoured. There were in any case several excellent candidates and, for the reasons just indicated, it was probably as well that I was passed over.

Fortunately I was anything but out of step where NATO policy issues were concerned. The one obvious exception, on which it may be worth spending some space at this point, was the need that I saw for closer co-operation with our European partners in the defence/security/East-West context. It seemed to me to be essential that the UK should give a high priority to developing, within the alliance context, much closer co-operation among the main the European players (most importantly France, the FRG and the UK) on defence issues. At Alastair Buchan’s² invitation, I had spoken on this theme to courses at the then Imperial Defence College as early as 1969. Both the CSCE and the MBFR initiatives described earlier in this book were based on prior co-ordination among the Europeans of what became NATO initiatives. It seemed obvious that in the medium/long term a really affective European input was the only way to sustain a healthy Alliance—the latter being the most important single pre-requisite for the successful management of what turned out to be the closing phases of the Cold War.

In 1986 no one knew, although some might have begun to wonder, how close we were to the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. The FCO had for

¹ A reference, presumably, to the post of Permanent Under-Secretary of State (PUS) at the FCO.
² Alastair Buchan was Director of the Institute for Strategic Studies, 1958-69, and Commandant of the Royal College of Defence Studies (formerly the Imperial Defence College), 1970-71.
long been persuaded of the desirability on general policy grounds of closer European defence co-operation. Geoffrey Howe was personally sympathetic, as a speech of his in November 1986 had indicated. The Ministry of Defence was understandably concerned – as it has remained – about the risk of alienating the Americans with institutional initiatives that produced nothing by way of genuinely additional European contributions to the overall effort. But the important opposition to European defence initiatives came, of course, from No 10 and from the Prime Minister herself. This was the more regrettable in that in 1986/87 Margaret Thatcher was arguably at the height of her personal power and influence internationally. A Belgian colleague, who was aware of my efforts to persuade her to be more open minded, commented that only two European leaders since 1945 had been ‘in a position to play the role of Charlemagne in the European Community – Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher. Europe’s tragedy has been that neither of them wanted to take it on.’ An exaggeration, no doubt, but I could see what he meant.

My personal efforts to get Margaret Thatcher to support intensified European defence co-operation began within a few weeks of my arrival in Brussels and very shortly after the Gorbachev/Reagan summit in Reykyavik. The two leaders’ near miss on a bilateral missile agreement had represented something an earthquake in both transatlantic and East-West relations. It had both irritated and alarmed the Prime Minister. It should have had a much more lasting impact than turned out to be the case on inter-European relations. I wrote a personal letter to Mrs Thatcher’s Private Secretary, but for her to read, in the following terms:

I think the moment has come, or is very close, for a major political initiative by HMG to launch a European defence initiative focussed on the need to make real use of WEU and to tidy up the other organizations dealing with European defence. Failing that, if the Prime Minister considers the ideas under discussion do not warrant the description ‘initiative’, a major speech by her on the subject of Europe’s role within the Alliance would be timely. I also think it would be useful for her to discuss the subject (separately) with Messrs Reagan, Kohl and Mitterrand.

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3 Western European Union. The organization resulting from the Treaty of Brussels of 17 March 1948 by which Britain, France and the Benelux countries pledged themselves to assist any one of their number who was attacked. Other Western European nations subsequently became members.
The need for a new move on this front has existed for some time. It seems to me to have been made a good deal more pressing by the post-Reykjavik confusion with all that this implies …For a very useful summary of the present mood you might like to see the enclosed text of a speech which Professor Karl Kaiser delivered here earlier today. Kaiser covers a lot of ground briefly and effectively. The Prime Minister might herself enjoy reading the speech. For purposes of this letter its final paragraph is particularly apt:-

'Most important: rarely has Europe’s weakness been so clearly conveyed as in the Reykjavik summit. For the European members of the Alliance the summit must, therefore, be a signal to further intensify their efforts to strengthen the European pillar of the Alliance. A European sub-structure worthy of its name is not only necessary in order to better safeguard their interests within the Alliance on all questions that concern them, but also in order to make better use of their scarce resources for defence. For the United States such an evolution will require an adaptation likely to be difficult in her operational handling of the Allies. But it should also represent a welcome strengthening of the Alliance which is in American and Western long-term interest.'

In pursuit of representative US reactions I have discussed the idea of a European defence initiative with Rick Burt, the US Ambassador in Bonn (he still has much influence in the State Department) and David Abshire, my US colleague here who is about to return to Washington to resume his true role as an extremely effective Congressional lobbyist. Both are actively in favour of the idea and, specifically, of making use of WEU. Both would argue for it in Washington. Both say that, while care would be necessary over the public handling, the need for action in this area is pressing and is recognized as such by opinion-makers in the United States. (I recorded in earlier correspondence SACEUR’s support for the general idea.)

A more down to earth reason for giving urgent attention to the relocation of WEU and all that is that it looks to me as though the Germans may be in process of stealing our clothes …It may be worth quoting the section [of a reference telegram] which summarises the views of a senior [German] MFA official on one aspect of the WEU meeting 10 days ago, as follows:-

'Location. The Germans welcome the Presidency mandate. Aim now should be to achieve maximum support in capitals for a restructuring of the institutions to combine the Secretariat General and the 3 Paris Agencies into a really good new Secretariat. This should be located in Brussels … On the [WEU] Assembly, the German position is not final … The Germans anticipate firm French opposition to the Assembly joining the other institutions in Brussels but this would be the logical step to take and would make for a better WEU. Von Arnim said we should work for this but consider leaving the Assembly in Paris only as a fall-back. On timing, if Ministers could take decisions at the spring Ministerial, there
would be no reason not to implement immediately after the WEU review period i.e. during 1988.’

In addition to the obvious reasons for a European defence initiative launched from London, I should perhaps add one other which has been pressed on me forcefully by the military here and in BAOR. The influence of the Germans within Allied military structures is growing inexorably. So is the intimacy of their collaboration with the French. Obviously the latter development at least has positive features. But it is time that we underlined effectively the importance of our own role on the European defence scene and the fact that future developments here can only be determined with our participation. We do not want to find ourselves being left out.

My reason for focusing on the Germans in this letter was, plainly enough, to try to stimulate Margaret Thatcher’s competitive urge and to persuade her to see an initiative as a means of pre-empting Bonn. In this I failed utterly. Despite the assurances of Burt and of Abshire, the Prime Minister remained convinced that Washington would not understand a move by the Europeans of the kind I favoured.

Notwithstanding her coolness, but knowing I had the tacit approval of the Foreign Secretary, I argued the case in public at a conference at the Royal United Services Institute in Whitehall in April 1987. I did so in the following terms:

It should … be clear that in my view the European members of the Alliance are going to have to do more to help solve the Alliance’s security dilemmas: to preserve Alliance strategy, to maintain Alliance strength, and to achieve balanced, comprehensive and therefore verifiable arms control. That contribution would be easier made if there were something akin to a European defence identity within the Alliance. The requirement is an old one but it needs to be tackled with new urgency … If the WEU were to move to a site somewhere between Evere and the Berlaymont, the opportunity might be taken to make the Permanent Representatives on the NAC wear two hats. This would save money, avoided duplication of work, ensure a reasonable level expertise and offer the long-term perspective of rationalising the Europlethora [of independent and ineffective defence related European institutions].

We in Britain see no conflict between our membership of the Atlantic Alliance and the requirement to be good Europeans in the collective security field. To proceed on the basis that there is a conflict would be to provoke justified American suspicion and immediate damage to the Alliance’s coherence and purpose. The plain fact is that the revival of WEU, and development of a European defence identity, will require more
than European determination. It will also require American understanding and encouragement. I am confident that the Americans, provided they understand our motives, will recognize that a stronger and more coherent European contribution to the Alliance is as much in their interest as in that of the Europeans...If we Europeans were to underestimate the risks ahead or turn our backs on the opportunities, we should deserve the second rate and supplicant future which would very probably be ours.

Sixteen years later this still looks rather close to the mark. It will be apparent from various comments in this book that I am inclined to see history, including that of the Cold War, as the working out of processes involving societies, institutions and myriad individuals at least as much as the result of the interactions of the temporarily powerful. Individuals can be – and regularly are – de-railed or re-railed by accident and the unforeseen. Margaret Thatcher herself, for instance, owes much to the opportunity created by the extremism and incompetence of the Galtieri regime in Argentina. (It has been largely forgotten how bleak her prospects as Prime Minister seemed – to her among others – in the autumn of 1981 and despite the apparently suicidal impulses of the Labour opposition at the time.) Societies, nations and large institutions, while as prone as other organisms to episodes of vigour and of feebleness, to decay and extinction, are in general less at the mercy of the merely fortuitous. The same goes for their confrontations.

But of course the role of individuals will always be hugely important. It may be that the British government’s, specifically the Prime Minister’s, refusal to seize the opportunity to try to make something serious of European defence in the late 1980s was a decisive mistake from which the project will never fully recover. The objective case for such integration today (2001) is as strong, or stronger, as ever it was. But the distractions and the apparent weakening of any sense of common purpose in the face of the more diffuse threats of the global village may prove stronger still. We are already faced with the substitution of what has been aptly named ‘posse diplomacy’, at the beck and call of a US sheriff, for properly structured international organizations, in which sovereignty can be shared on a rational basis and leadership provided that respects the amour propre of the less powerful, is unlikely to have a happy outcome.

I very much hope it does not come to this. Back in 1987, my concern
about the Germans was exaggerated. They proved unable to pursue even such a modest idea as the co-location of WEU and NATO in Brussels. (Admittedly they had a lot of other things on their minds!) It was not until the few weeks before my own departure, in 1992, and after much agonising in the interim, that it was finally agreed to move WEU from London to Brussels. Even then most of the countries involved declined to double-hat their NATO and WEU representatives. We shall now never know whether, if an effort to make a reality of European defence co-operation had been launched at the highest level in 1986-87, the rather shameful inadequacies of European security policy and performance in the Balkans in the following decade would have been less painfully exposed. Possibly not. But what seems clear enough is that if the effort had begun then, rather than been postponed for well over a decade, we should today be a lot further along a road that needs to be travelled. Failure to do so is likely to cost us all dear.

Having had no success in 1986/87, I made another attempt, in June 1988, to persuade Mrs Thatcher to take up the cause. This time I used another tack, one more directly related to the theme of this book. Like many others, I was deeply concerned about the twin risks of premature euphoria, stimulated by change in Eastern Europe, leading to a premature relaxation in NATO and North American defence efforts, followed by serious and possibly very dangerous instability in and among the members of the Warsaw Pact to which the West would find it difficult, if not impossible, to react. I wrote to Margaret Thatcher as follows.

**Letter to Margaret Thatcher, UKDEL Brussels, June 1988**

I know, both from what you said here on 17 February [when the Prime Minister had taken up my suggestion that she should visit the NATO HQ at Evere and address the North Atlantic Council] and from many previous conversations, that we have very similar views about the underlying realities of East-West relations in Europe. I know therefore that you will agree with much, though not necessarily all, of what follows …

It has been evident for some time that this is a period of historic significance as regards the development of relations between the communist and non-communist halves of Europe. Mr Gorbachev and President

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*United Kingdom Delegation to NATO.*
Reagan have brought the post war era to a dramatic end and set in train a process which, if all goes well will eventually produce a new European order … President Reagan was absolutely right to pay tribute to your own key role. I myself think this goes back beyond your first meeting with Mr Gorbachev to your decision, shortly after the 1983 elections and when East-West relations were close to their nadir, to open up relations with Eastern Europe and to visit Budapest.

What is not, in my view, at all evident is, to quote your words at the Guildhall, that ‘the Summit has brought us closer to the more stable and peaceful relations between East and West that we all want to see’. Peaceful, maybe; stable, hardly.

I recognize, of course, that the only way to achieve enduring stability in Europe is for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to go through – one way or another – a process of radical reform: in this particular sense perestroika and glasnost do bring us closer to stability. I recognize the natural and widely held desire for more stability: several Foreign Ministers echoed here last week George Shultz’s words about there now being more ‘continuity and consistency’ in East-West relations and Genscher spoke of the American/Soviet relationship having ‘a new stability’. I recognize, finally, that political statements cannot deal in nuances and are not always to be taken literally. (The trouble is that audiences do take them literally – the more so when the statements are saying things they want to hear.)

But all this being acknowledged, the reality is … that the stability we all want to see may well be a generation or more away. In the meantime the odds must be that in the years immediately ahead there will be periods of very considerable instability.

The reasons for this go a good deal deeper than the struggle in the Soviet Union and elsewhere between reforming activists and reactionary placemen. They are based on the fact that the Russian people – like their subject peoples inside the Soviet Union and in much of Eastern Europe – have little or no experience of operating either a national political process based on the participation of individuals or a national economy based on the enterprise of those individuals.

History, I fear, has not equipped the Russians well to escape gracefully from the incubus of state socialism: it has not equipped them at all to deal smoothly with the nationalities problem inside and outside the Soviet Union. Their political inheritance is, on the one hand, of mendac-
ity, conspiracy and violence – within and without the government – and on the other hand of indifference or otherworldly anarchism. The acceptance of gradualness, of tolerance and of unwritten rules which is central to the stable management of change in Western societies (and which even here is far from universal) is not going to be learned overnight. The Yeltsin affair\(^5\) presages the sort of thing we can expect, on a larger scale, in the future.

This does not mean that reform in the Soviet Union is a lost cause. Gorbachev obviously has more than his own great talents to rely on. His summons to Moscow in 1978 and his rapid promotion tends to confirm that, as I suggested in a letter I wrote to you from Vienna in 1983 [see Chapter 6 above], the ‘men in the Kremlin’ had recognized well before Brezhnev’s death that the Soviet empire was ‘essentially bankrupt’. With the benefit of hindsight one can deduce that e.g. Andropov knew dramatic measures were required. Gorbachev’s appointment may have been a surprise, but it seems to me nonsense to suggest that the Politburo, who had seen him at work for six years, stumbled on him by accident. The vigour, indeed recklessness, with which Gorbachev is developing the logic of his reforms no doubt appals many of those who appointed him. But they knew that they were opting for a reform programme of one kind or another, an eventuality that – so far as I know – no Western expert was even speculating about in 1983. That is as hopeful a thought as anything that has happened since.

If we were all wrong once we can be wrong again. But any rational analysis of the Russian and Soviet experience must suggest how improbable it is that the path of reform will be smooth. Sakharov described it the other day as dangerous. This in turn implies that the progress of the East-West relationship is going to resemble that of a roller coaster rather than that of a Rolls-Royce.

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\(^5\) In 1985 Gorbachev chose Boris Yeltsin as Secretary of the Soviet Union’s Central Committee for Construction. Six months later Yeltsin was also appointed First Secretary of the Moscow City Communist Party Committee. A radical reformist, Yeltsin soon grew impatient with the slow pace of Gorbachev’s policy of economic restructuring (Perestroika). But when in the autumn of 1987 he verbally attacked the more conservative elements in the Party leadership he was reprimanded by Gorbachev. This in turn led to public questioning of Gorbachev’s commitment to reform and an unprecedented eruption of protest demonstrations. On 12 June 1991 Yeltsin became the first elected President of the Russian Federation, a post he held until his resignation in 1999.
The more Western leaders play down this likelihood, the more exaggerated the peaks and troughs – whenever they come – are going to be. In addition to the basic argument about the long term military and geostrategic realities, people must be encouraged to accept that the ability of Western governments to affect what happens in Warsaw Pact countries – even on human rights – is limited; that the situation there, while more hopeful than ever before, is profoundly unpredictable and unstable; that to recognize the probability of setbacks is not to question the good intentions or the capabilities of the reformers; and that to be strong, predictable and moderate ourselves is probably the best service we can render to the cause of peaceful change. This message needs to be got across consistently rather than being turned up and down as has been the case in President Reagan’s speeches in recent months.

If the message is not conveyed and accepted, it will be very difficult for the West to be strong and predictable in these critical years. There is no way of foreseeing when the first downward swoop of the roller coaster will occur. But if Gorbachev succeeds in delaying it for even two or three years then the challenge to the foresight of Western electorates, deprived of a visible threat, is going to be severe. In the absence of a setback, we can be confident that in this same period:

(a) there will be further major Soviet arms control initiatives (probably including headline catching unilateral reductions) on short range nuclear forces and on conventional forces;

(b) further difficulties with public opinion in every Alliance country – in some no doubt greater than in others – both on nuclear issues and on defence expenditure in general; and

(c) further awkwardness with the Americans as the new Administration, whoever its leader, struggles with changing priorities and the consequences of the dual deficit.

I have to add (and this is the part of the letter with which you may have some difficulty) that the prospects of short term euphoria; static or declining public support for our defence requirements; evolving US attitudes; and medium term instability are making it steadily more urgent
that we develop, within the Alliance, a coherent Western European approach to this whole complex of problems. It is not simply, or even primarily, that we must find ways through closer co-operation to get more defence output from our resource input. It is also that in the uncertain environment ahead, Western Europe is going to need the stronger glue which a developing parallelism between our efforts in the security field and in the economic/commercial field would provide. This is increasingly accepted on the other side of the Atlantic. (I was, incidentally, told more than once on a visit I made to the United States last month, that after 1992 the Americans would ‘of course’ expect the Europeans to take on more of the responsibility of their own defence.)

As you already know, I believe that you can do more than any other individual to accelerate the development of a positive and effective European defence identity within the Alliance. This is as much, if not more, a question of encouragement and support as of specifics. I hope you will take the opportunities which the UK’s presidency of the WEU will offer to give a lead both on this issue and on the question of the prospects for East-West relations as a whole which has been the main subject of this letter.

As it turned out, many of the concerns expressed in this letter about the prospects for the next few years proved overly pessimistic. This was not, in my view, because the analysis was wrong. Much of it, particularly as regards the Soviet Union, still seems to me to have been fair enough. On more than one occasion, the worst case scenario came within a hair’s breadth of being substantiated. Nor, sadly, was it because of Britain’s contribution to events that the worst was avoided. Although our overall strategy was in my view well founded (see next chapter) and deserves much of the credit for the final outcome, in the late 1980s we missed or, or rejected, more opportunities than we took. The basic reasons that Europe emerged with so little damage were that Mikhail Gorbachev turned out to be an extra-ordinarily courageous and opened minded individual; that George Bush⁶ and Helmut Kohl rose to the challenge in an admirable and most unexpected way (not least because both men were prepared to listen to some extremely competent advisers); and that

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⁶ US President, 1989-93.
decades of essentially sound management of the Cold War paid off. The assumption that military conflict was to be avoided at almost any cost had become deeply rooted in all the bureaucracies that mattered, as had the conviction that it was possible to negotiate about virtually anything. The leaders who mattered in the crucial months were briefed accordingly. They were all well aware of the catastrophic consequences of miscalculation. That said, my own final verdict on the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of the Red Army and the success of the reform movement in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is that Europe was exceedingly fortunate to have come through the drama virtually unscathed. I trust that future generations will not come to take our good fortune as preordained.

One of the biggest opportunities missed by the UK was that of playing a constructive role as the German crisis reached its climax in the closing months of 1989 and the first of 1990. I visited East Berlin towards the end of October 1989. It was obvious then that matters were coming to a head. Equally obvious was the resounding silence from London. I thought there was an opportunity, and indeed a need, for a final effort to persuade the Prime Minister to change her stance on Germany and on European defence co-operation. The same went for some senior members of the Conservative Party. As I said in a note to her private secretary, Charles Powell, covering the letter below:

Last weekend (at a seminar in Bath) I had a rather open disagreement with David Howell [former Secretary of State for Energy and for Transport] who was arguing, to a not undistinguished audience, the merits of three or four Germanies as opposed to one or two. I told him that, whatever our private thoughts, this was in my view an inappropriate – and indeed dangerous – line to be taking in public. If repeated at all regularly, it was only too likely to produce exactly the opposite result to that which was sought …I also know how strongly [the Prime Minister] feels on the German issue. But the plain fact is that history is being made around us. As viewed from Brussels, HMG’s silence and apparent non-involvement is becoming uncomfortably obvious.

The following letter was despatched on 3 November 1989 i.e. a few days before the Alexanderplatz demonstrations and the subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall:
Letter to Margaret Thatcher, UKDEL Brussels, 3 November 1989
When I last wrote to you [see text above] on a policy issue, some 18 months ago, it was to make a point about the likelihood of growing instability in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The trend of events since then seems to have been only too predictable even if the pace and detail of the drama could not have been foreseen.

I did not deal explicitly in that letter with the German question. But it was Germany I had in mind when I referred to the need for Western Europe, in the face of the gathering uncertainties, to be held together by ‘stronger glue’. I know from the discussions at Chequers in September how deeply the problem concerns you. Having spent 48 hours in East Berlin earlier this week I venture now to write in greater detail since ‘Germany’ is ever more obviously the critical European issue (apart from the fate of the USSR itself) for the next decade.

Two things must strike any visitor to East Germany today:

(a) the still appalling state of the urban infrastructure and environment once one gets away from the main show places. Life for the average East German may be somewhat better than for his counterpart in Poland or Czechoslovakia. But not much. In any case the contrast with the situation in West Berlin and the Federal Republic is stunning; and

(b) the rapidly accelerating unease in the country. The causes are self-evident e.g. the influence of the reform movement in other East European countries and the gulf between the indigence of the East and the prosperity of the West. In recent weeks the pre-existing problems have been exacerbated by the apparent loss of will on the part of the authorities and by the impact of the mass emigration to the West. It is of course the young and the employable who are leaving – the doctors, the dentists, the technicians and the skilled workers. Their exodus will have an increasingly severe knock-on effect on the quality of life for those who remain in the GDR …

The present situation cannot be sustained for very long – and a self-reinforcing downward spiral may already be in motion.

It would be wrong to assume that an explosion is imminent. The
self-control shown by the East Germans has been remarkable. The street parades and mass meetings have so far revealed a people peacefully taking their destiny into their own hands. It is conceivable that violence can still be avoided. Krenz\(^7\) may prove willing to accept the role of a transitional figure and to be ready to surrender his party’s monopoly of power. On the other hand, he may not. What matters is that in East Germany, even more perhaps than in the rest of the Warsaw Pact, there can now be no going back. Any attempt to reverse course will provoke a massive increase in emigration, an upheaval of some kind and an unpredictable reaction in the Federal Republic.

The implications of this are, obviously, profound. There has been a tendency in recent months to focus on the question of German unity. Whatever one’s private thoughts on the subject, reunification can no longer be ruled out. As I said at Chequers, I do not see how we can deny the Germans the right of self-determination which we accord, indeed urge upon, everyone else. Nor can we now try to obscure the prospect of a unity which Western governments have accepted as the right of the Germans in innumerable public statements over the last generation. To attempt to do so will be to risk triggering off the resentment which has caused so much trouble in the past.

But while reunification is a prospect with which, in my judgement, the rest of Europe is going to have to come to terms in the years ahead, I do not believe it is the immediate problem. No one can be sure. But in so far as the initiative lies with the East Germans they will, I suspect, approach the unity issue with caution – so long at least as a descent into chaos is avoided. The same probably goes for the West Germans.

The immediate problems are those flowing from the rapprochement, short of reunification, between the two Germanies and the need for the rest of us to respond to this. My own guess is that whatever the precise evolution of events in the GDR there is bound to be a quantum jump in the mutual involvement of the two states in the months ahead. Emigration will intensify unless and until some form of democratic government is installed in East Berlin. The progress of events in East Germany will be overwhelmingly more important for the government

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\(^7\) Egon Krenz succeeded Honecker as First Secretary of the GDR’s Socialist Unity Party in October 1989.
and the electorate of the Federal Republic than any other issue. The West Germans will insist on being involved and on helping their neighbours (if only, to be cynical, to stem the flow of emigrants since the Federal Republic cannot absorb them indefinitely). In the slightly (but not much) longer term, and assuming a reforming government in East Berlin, this will mean public and private assistance on a vast scale to help put the East German political and social system, the economy, the environment etc to rights. Whether or not reunification is in prospect, the two countries will become interdependent. Assuming, again, that chaos is avoided East Germany will become more efficient and more productive more rapidly than any other member of COMECON. The weight of the economic and political power of the Germans will quickly make itself felt throughout Eastern Europe – not least by contrast with the situation in the other Warsaw Pact states. I doubt whether there is now anyone who can stop this happening.

You will know at first hand how President Gorbachev views this prospect. I can only draw from the statements of his own spokesmen (as well as from those from official spokesmen in Warsaw and Budapest who presumably know which way the wind is blowing) the conclusion that he is increasingly resigned to letting the countries of Eastern Europe, including the GDR, go their own way. In any case, whatever his intentions, it becomes daily more difficult to see how he could hope to re-impose order on a bloc which is visibly disintegrating. The will and the means to discipline not one but a growing number of recalcitrant allies seems bound to diminish in proportion to the intensification of the Soviet Union’s internal problems. Cohesion in and among authoritarian regimes is not something that is available in moderate doses: either one has it or one does not.

You said to me at Chequers that I was better at identifying problems than at providing answers. I doubt whether problems now presenting themselves in Europe have any answers as such. But it seems to me vital that the German problem is publicly acknowledged by HMG as being of crucial importance and that we make plain our determination to be involved, sympathetically, in the search for solutions. Given the unattrac-

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8 COMECON or CMEA (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) was established by the Soviet Union in 1949 to promote economic co-operation between itself and its East European satellites.
tiveness – not least in its likely approach to the German question – of any alternative government in Bonn, this means indicating understanding for the line now being taken by Chancellor Kohl (who has been careful to play down the reunification issue). It would also seem to mean underlining our welcome for the events in East Germany and our recognition, without too much qualification, that German unity is a possible eventual outcome that we would not seek to prevent.

Our policy in the period beyond the next German election depends too heavily on events which cannot now be forecast to be worth speculating about in this letter. But, for the reasons already stated, I am sure that we should eschew in our statements any suggestion that we hanker after several Germanies instead of one. That may be where we will end up but not if we are actively seen to be seeking such an outcome.

Recognition of the need to support the present Bonn government is a principal explanation of the stance adopted by the Bush Administration towards the Federal Republic in recent months. You may, I imagine, hear more of this during your visit [to New York] next week. If the UK distances itself too obviously from Bonn and the German question in general we shall inevitably diminish our ability to influence events. I doubt whether even the French (whose distaste for the prospect of a central Europe dominated by Germany is great indeed) would at this stage join us in sounding a negative note. The French have always seen their European policy (including their defence policy) as much in terms of coping with the German problem as anything else. It has often seemed to me that we would be wise to think in the same terms.

I would have thought that there was now an opportunity for you to make a major statement on European issues looking beyond the (as they appear for the moment) more parochial issues of the Community. A speech from you describing the need, which I know you feel, for a strong and cohesive association of Western European states within the Alliance to provide stability in the dangerous, if exciting, years ahead, coupled with a sympathetic and generous analysis of the German question as well as a clear presentation of our policy towards Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, would have a very considerable impact throughout all the countries of the Alliance – and beyond. I cannot help thinking – though I am of course less well placed to judge – that it would also have a positive echo at home …
I fear this is a long letter to have stemmed from a mere 48 hours in East Berlin. But the issues are enormously important. Your views on them should be heard.

So far as I can recall, I never received a substantive reply to this missive. Certainly Margaret Thatcher totally ignored the advice contained in it. That, like, but even more obviously than her policy towards our other main European partners, was a substantial policy error and must be weighed against her many successes. I said, in a personal note to Geoffrey Howe, then Lord President of the Council, also written in November 1989:

For the moment what matters is to find a way of sounding more involved with, and sympathetic towards, the predicament in which the two Germanies and the authorities in Bonn find themselves. Leaving aside arguments about Europe’s future, the purest national self-interest points in this direction: 10 or 15 years hence Germany and Berlin may easily loom larger for the UK than the Soviet Union and Moscow … Now is the time to show that we have enough confidence in ourselves and in the Germans to live with the prospect [of greatly increased German economic power and influence throughout Europe] and to help to mould it in the common interest.

The kind of damage that we risked incurring, and probably did incur, from our evident coolness towards events in Germany was exemplified by a conversation I recall having, immediately after the NATO summit on 4 December, with Bob Blackwill, my former colleague at the MBFR talks in Vienna and by this time a key member of the National Security staff in Washington. Blackwill wanted to be briefed on the Prime Minister’s private reaction to President Bush’s statement to the Summit on his policy towards Germany and Europe. (Blackwill knew the Prime Minister had been staying with me.) I disguised as best I could the fact that she had been extremely critical. I told Blackwill I was sure she would take the President’s statement very seriously (!). Blackwill, who had just written on the President’s instructions a memorandum entitled ‘Margaret Thatcher …’, said that she had better do so since the President intended to persist with a policy that he was sure was ‘going with the grain of history’. The Prime Minister could either engage, in which case
she would both enhance the ‘special relationship’ and have a major impact on the future shape of Europe, or she could stand back, in which case she would cut herself out of the game and compel the President to work with others. And so, to an uncomfortable degree, it proved, notably in the negotiations six months later over the London Summit Declaration in the preparation of which, incidentally, Blackwill played an absolutely central role.
Its numerous critics and denigrators notwithstanding, NATO’s existence and success was the indispensable instrument for Western governments in the effective, collective management of the Cold War. It was the vehicle through which was expressed the unity and determination of those governments in the years of East-West confrontation. More than that, it embodied the commitment of the US to Europe and, by providing a forum for mutual education and the exercise of peer pressure, it enabled governments to align their policies and sustain their defence efforts in the face of domestic pressure to desist. In the end it was the peoples of Eastern Europe and of the Soviet Union who, by making it impossible for the state socialist élites to go on pretending even to themselves that they enjoyed popular support, decided the outcome of the Cold War. (Hence the importance of the Helsinki Final Act.) But it was the North Atlantic Alliance that kept the military option out of the reach of the less responsible elements in Warsaw Pact regimes, who might otherwise have been sorely tempted to resort to it to offset their inability to compete economically and socially. To a degree perhaps unique in world history, NATO’s success was the sum of the inputs of a long series of more or less democratic administrations, of widely varying political complexions, in North American and European capitals. It is not essentially a story of brilliant individuals, though there were some, nor of imaginative initiatives, though there were some of those also. It is at root a story of a group of governments acting, over some forty years, on the assumption that the threat they faced required a common response and a voluntary subordi-
nation of differences that might endanger the joint effort. The present
generation will be making a historic mistake if it forgets how very
unusual this sustained collaboration was or if it allows a deeply rooted
habit of co-operation to whither. To preserve it will require a lot of
conscious effort. Once gone, it will be gone for good. The security
problems we now face have changed virtually out of recognition. What
has not changed is the verity that in the long run the transatlantic
community, and in particular its European component, will respond
collectively or not at all.

The Warsaw Pact was, of course, also a vehicle for the projection of
a coherent policy and for the co-ordination of military effort. Like
NATO, it was dominated by a single power. But the contrast between the
two was infinitely more important than any similarity. As the East
Germans, the Hungarians and the Czechoslovaks discovered in turn, the
Red Army in Eastern Europe was an army of occupation. The threat that
mattered to the smaller members of the Pact came from within its mem-
bership not from outside. The Soviet Union treated its Allies, and was
treated by them, in matters great and small, altogether differently than
was the case with the United States. In the one case discipline, at least vis-
à-vis the rest of the world, was involuntary and absolute. In the other it
was voluntary and regularly disputed, leading on occasion to genuine
crises. Each organization had its maverick, but one only has to compare
Romania under Ceausescu with France under any of its leaders to under-
stand the distinction.

It would hardly be worth making the point if it were not for the
extraordinary virulence shown, to this day, towards the Alliance and the
role of the United States in Europe’s post-war history by critics who
should know a great deal better. I have in mind people like Harold Pinter,
John Pilger and Bruce Kent. Many such detractors held deeply felt, unilat-
eralist, anti-nuclear opinions. But NATO seems to have been little more
than an excuse for ceasing to think, a channel through which to vent their
understandable resentment that the world remains a harsh, dangerous
and unjust place. The vision of the Alliance as a politico-military conspir-
acy, manipulated in their own interests by motley groups of office hold-
ing extremists and defence industrialists in Washington, London and

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1 Nicolae Ceausescu was President of Romania, 1965-90.
Bonn, has – at least in my extended experience – no relationship whatever with reality. I may of course have been a mere front man, kept in the dark by the plotters. But having been desk officer, Private Secretary, negotiator and Ambassador, I do not think so. Or I may have been a conspirator myself. If so, I was plotting in my sleep.

The attraction of conspiracy theories, particularly when applied to an organization like NATO or a situation like the Cold War, is obvious. They simplify and render comprehensible organizations and confrontations that are otherwise impossibly complex and confusing. They place all governments and authorities, usually without discrimination, in the same, blameworthy category. They relieve the accusers of any responsibility for what has occurred or is occurring. They foster the comforting illusion that were it not for amoral, self seeking coteries we would be moving briskly towards the peaceful, conflict free world to which we are all entitled.

From my perspective, the larger part of this analysis of world affairs, at least as applied to the interactions of democratic governments in the last thirty years, is myth. Of course individuals and groups behave selfishly. Of course particular governments, political parties and leaders have shown themselves capable of malfeasance, corruption and reprehensible incompetence, occasionally on a grand scale. But even where it has been demonstrated, I remain to be convinced that deliberate evil doing – as opposed to political misjudgement – has made a great deal of difference to eventual outcomes. As Irangate, for instance, showed Western governments are so exposed, the media so intrusive, that it has become extraordinarily difficult to pursue clandestine activities for any length of time in areas of real importance. In general in any case, the intelligence agencies and their product, so often associated by outsiders with these accusations, do not have a central impact on government decision-making in peacetime – even when the peace is a Cold War. There are of course exceptions, like the material produced by Penkovsky,² by overflights of the Soviet Union or Cuba or, in some instances, by communications intelligence. But almost always other factors and inputs are far more important. The bomber gap and the missile gap of the 1950s, like the

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² Oleg Penkovsky has been credited with providing Washington with vital information on Soviet intentions prior to the Cuban missiles crisis of 1962.
decades’ long, almost wilful, exaggeration by Western bureaucracies of the economic performance and potential of the Comecon countries, are striking examples of the limitations on even the most elaborate intelligence gathering and assessing operations. Political leaders, who anyway prefer to think they are following their own instincts and certainly find it easier to indulge their own and their parties’ prejudices, usually find confidential information about foreign governments less persuasive than the need to justify their own policies and to hold their domestic coalitions together. Sometimes, as with Eisenhower’s ignoring of scare stories, it produces better policy; sometimes, as with Kennedy’s ignoring of the by then more realistic intelligence assessments of Soviet capabilities, it produces worse policy. That is the nature of the democratic process. (Northern Ireland is no doubt the exception that proves the rule. The work of the security agencies there is both admirable and indispensable. But even in Northern Ireland it is hard not think that the real motors of progress have lain elsewhere: – in demography; in the existence of a sense of moderation and decency in the London and Dublin governments and in the populations at large alongside a robust determination not to compromise with fanaticism and violence, whether in the prison cells or in city streets across the UK; and in the slowly gathering popular impatience in the UK and in Northern Ireland itself with the cruelties and absurdities of the extremists of both persuasions.)

As for the conspiratorial manipulation of a multi-governmental agency like NATO to force or persuade member governments to pursue policies they would otherwise have been disinclined to pursue, this would have been impossibly difficult. It did not happen. I distinguish sharply between such manipulation and those situations – described earlier and below – where one or more governments/delegations proposed policies or formulated position papers that were subsequently, but very consciously, endorsed by the other member governments. Leadership of this kind, from one source or another but usually in my time from the Quadripartite powers, an informal directorate, offered the only way a large institution with fifteen or sixteen independent government members could have hoped to function in a reasonably timely and effective manner. Obviously individual governments might be more or less happy with the outcome on this or that occasion. But on major issues everyone had the opportunity to know exactly what they were committing them-
selves to and why. Governments that were seeking a collective change of policy in a particular direction or on a particular issue had to argue long and produce the reasons. After all the Allies they were seeking to persuade would eventually have to defend publicly the policy that was adopted. Even the Americans were not immune to this logic although, plainly, their ‘clout’ was vastly greater than that of any other member or, indeed, of the Europeans collectively.

There were elements in the negative picture painted by hostile lobbyists that had substance. But NATO’s utility as a mechanism for harnessing and focusing the defence and security efforts of the capitalist democracies and for managing the Cold War vastly exceeded in importance such few elements in the negative picture painted by hostile lobbyists as can be shown to have any substance. The fact that a good deal of the opposition to the Alliance was, understandably, financed – directly or indirectly – by the Soviet Union as part of its Cold War effort should not obscure the fact that much of the hostility was also perfectly genuine and deeply felt as far as the individuals themselves were concerned. The Cold War was indeed at times acutely dangerous, the stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weaponry were excessive. But the stakes were also very high. It is surely clear by now that, while the activities of CND, the Greenham Common campaigners and the like may have served a useful purpose in reminding governments of the limitations on their popular support, they were of altogether minimal importance in determining the outcome of the East-West confrontation. What counted was the determination of the leading Western governments and bureaucracies to play their hand patiently but from strength and, through NATO, to present a united front to Moscow. There is no correspondence from me to Margaret Thatcher on this topic because, while I may on occasion have found her rhetoric and her devotion to some classes of nuclear weapons uncomfortable, on the basics I thought her instincts were correct. They were also much more in line with classic Foreign Office thinking on East-West relations than either she or the Foreign Office usually felt comfortable about admitting.

My official correspondence, as Permanent Representative, with the Foreign Office and with the Ministry of Defence will not become available

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3 Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.
for some years yet. In any case, others have produced and will be producing balanced accounts covering NATO’s contribution to the last decade of the Cold War, based on extensive interviewing and documentation. What follows, therefore, is a much briefer and more subjective account of my personal involvement and of my impressions as to why, at least in my view, the Alliance worked as well as it did. Continuing my attempt to ward off the seductions of hindsight, I have included extracts from lectures and talks I gave during the years I was in Brussels.

It is as well to be clear at the outset about the limitations on the role of the North Atlantic Council, on which I sat from August 1986 to January 1992 and whose somewhat reluctant Dean I was for most of the last year of that period. The Council, whether in Ministerial or in Permanent session, did not conduct East-West negotiations. These were carried forward elsewhere either in multilateral fora, two examples of which have been described in earlier chapters, or, most importantly no doubt, bilaterally between the US and the USSR. In the former cases, overall guidance would be provided by the Council on matters, like arms control, for which it had an obvious responsibility. But participating delegations in general received their detailed instructions direct from capitals or through groups, like the High Level Task Force (for conventional arms control) staffed from capitals and thereafter co-ordinated policy on the spot. In the case of US/Soviet negotiations, the Council was not in any real sense consulted. But it was briefed with considerable promptness and regularity, usually by whoever was the leader of the US delegation, immediately before and after each session of talks, often during them. For almost all the Allies this was by far the most important means available to them of keeping abreast of developments. It was not much less important for the Americans themselves as a means of preventing their partners from kicking over the traces.

The Council was not a military body. Detailed military planning was responsibility of the military authorities, led by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) – always an American – and the Chairman of the Military Committee – never an American. But the military authorities were, of course, subordinated to the Council and the permanent members of the Military Committee (MILREPS), serving four star officers, were in effect military advisers to the civilian ambassadors. When the Council was dealing with purely military matters, it
met at both Ministerial (Defence Ministers) and Ambassadorial level as the Defence Planning Committee i.e. without the French who had absented themselves from the integrated military structure since 1966. It also met, in still more restricted format, as the Nuclear Planning Group to discuss nuclear policy. In some ways, the Council’s military role, in my time, assumed most substance during NATO’s regular exercises when issues such as a nuclear release generated considerable if understandable passion and, on occasion, transatlantic dissent – notably during Wintex in February 1989. (The Americans refused to ‘play’ an initial nuclear strike on Soviet territory, the Germans one on East Germany.) In the 1990s, thanks to the various Balkan crises, the Council became altogether more directly and actively involved in military matters.

The vastly larger part of day-to-day collaboration among members of the Alliance was carried out in an inordinate number of committees and sub-committees, mostly staffed from capitals, responsible for subjects ranging from high-level planning, through procurement, standardisation and intelligence to, oddly enough, such matters as scientific and environmental problems. Very few of these committees were cost-effective in the usual meaning of that phrase. Many of them were lamentably ineffective. The efforts of those, including myself, who were anxious to improve matters were usually frustrated by special pleading and sheer inertia. There was always some delegation, or someone, who really cared for (i.e. benefited from) whatever committee, meeting or post it was that seemed ripe for rationalisation. I got my fingers burnt on two or three occasions. That said, there was little doubt that this vast and inefficient committees structure (most of whose costs fell directly on the member states rather than on the relatively small central secretariat) served one overriding useful purpose. It created a vast, Alliance-wide network of civilian and uniformed personnel who knew each other; who were accustomed to working together in full knowledge of each other’s prejudices and foibles; and who, again, assumed it would almost always be possible to achieve some kind of compromise consensus whatever the dispute. This was a positive, if unquantifiable, reality throughout Cold War. I imagine it must have been of equal, and more immediate, importance in the decade after I left.

But in the late 1980s, the Council’s most important responsibility, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, was for co-ordination of
grand policy for the Western half of the East-West confrontation. In my
time, it met on five occasions at Heads of Government level, at least twice
a year at Foreign Minister and, separately, three times at Defence Minister
level. It met at least once a week, formally, at Permanent Representative
level and more often in various informal guises. Although many of the
meetings at political level were preceded by internal crises of one kind or
another, and although there was endless argument at the diplomatic level,
not one of these meetings ended in open disagreement among the partic-
ipants. Leaving aside the somewhat cynical manoeuvrings of the French
leadership (Mitterrand and Dumas\textsuperscript{4} made a deplorable impression), con-
sensus was always achieved. This was not because of American bullying
(only the Summit Declaration at London in 1990 could be said to have
been imposed by the US and even that had been the subject of a certain
amount of prior consultation) but because NATO had come to embody
an assumption of unity. Everyone knew that, in terms of the East-West
struggle and of the Allies’ collective and individual security, the penalty of
disunity would far outweigh any possible gain in individual profile. That
was the only reason why, for instance, it proved possible to reach agree-
ment at the 1989 Summit on the Comprehensive Concept for Arms
Control and Disarmament, a subject on which the positions of, say,
Margaret Thatcher and Herr Genscher were a very long way apart
indeed.

Critics will assert that in the 1980s, as before, NATO provided the US
with the means of ensuring that the West European governments
remained harnessed to the American chariot. But that vision is both mis-
leading and grossly over simplified. It would be at least as accurate to say
that the Alliance was the means by which the Americans were (and
remain) harnessed to the European chariot. The Americans were by far
the most powerful horse and perhaps the most likely to bolt. (With ben-
efit of hindsight, a good deal less so than many of us sometimes feared.
As long as the Cold War continued, the United States could not afford to
see Europe go its own way – and vice versa. The danger was always more
that of an inadvertent act setting in train some kind of landslip than of a
conscious decision. The Alliance was an excellent safeguard against such
an eventuality.) As regards who held the reins, the Americans undoubted-

\textsuperscript{4} Roland Dumas was French Foreign Minister, 1988-93.
ly had the strongest grip but they could never ignore their Allies. The attitude of those Allies was understandably schizophrenic. On the one hand, the Europeans had their own priorities and no one wanted to be seen to have been ignored; on the other hand, they often hankered after the strong and creative leadership, as well as the speed of reaction, which as a practical matter only one government (the US), or a very small group of them, could provide. During my time at NATO, the most important initiatives dealt with by the Council (the London Declaration and the subsequent opening up of the Council to the East Europeans i.e. the creation of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council) originated in Washington. But many of the secondary initiatives (the Comprehensive Concept, already mentioned, the new Strategic Concept adopted at the 1991 Rome Summit, etc.) originated with and, behind the scenes, were managed by some or all of the quadripartite delegations (US, UK, FRG and France) with the UK arguably playing the leading role.

If it is to function effectively, a multinational organization of sixteen members, having widely differing capabilities and interests, needs a directorate of some kind. In a supranational organization, like the European Union, the central institutions may to a greater or less extent be able to take initiatives and deliver the larger members. But not in one where the secretariat is relatively weak and decisions can only be taken by consensus, never by majority voting. Far from the existence of an effective, if informal, directorate being reprehensible, it seems to me both practical and desirable. Provided a measure of tact and discretion is observed, it is the obvious way to square the circle of enabling the organization to take decisions and initiatives while ensuring that the interests of smaller members are respected. I am not sure about the practice before and after my time. But for much of the period when I was in Brussels, the four Permanent Representatives, initially at my initiative, met regularly and informally. The 1987 mandate for the Comprehensive Concept was drafted by the US, UK and FRG delegations. The 1991 Strategic Concept was entirely drafted in and by those three delegations plus the French. It was subsequently circulated by the Secretariat in its own name to the official drafting group – a fact that the rest of the Council either did not know or, more probably, preferred to ignore. Since France’s formal position was to stand entirely aside from NATO’s military structures, the full participation of their delegation in putting together the Alliance’s first attempt at a post Cold War
strategy is a tribute to what can be achieved by flexible diplomacy. President Mitterrand’s self isolating and churlish performance at the Rome Summit in 1991, when the Strategic Concept was adopted, was a poor return for the efforts of the French delegation over the previous months.

My sense of the importance of some kind of directorate for the functioning of a body like the North Atlantic Council is, no doubt, highly subjective. But I would be surprised if my two immediate successors, in their challenging periods en poste, did not encounter a similar need. The principal drawback of any directorate is the irritation of those who think they should have been included, too often the Italians but were not. But provided the decencies are preserved, as in the cases mentioned, the problem can usually be managed. The trick is much easier to pull off in a mature, structured organization than in an ad hoc coalition of ill-defined composition. Tony Blair, among others, has discovered this in subsequent years.

From a more general perspective, in any case, the prime requirement for the Alliance was for an effective Secretary-General. He was the public face of the organization, responsible for ensuring that council meetings, at whatever level, went off smoothly; that sensible priorities were set; and, above all, that relationships with and, in an Alliance complex, among the leaders of the member countries were well managed. The incumbent when I arrived, and for two years thereafter, was Peter Carrington, a wonderfully popular and experienced politician. I first encountered him as UK Defence Secretary and later came to know him much better when he was Foreign Secretary and I was at No. 10 (particularly during the Rhodesia negotiations, the lion’s share of the credit for the success of which belongs to him). Although not by nature the most patient of men, he had a well developed sense of proportion which ensured that no troublemaker, set back or disagreement (even those with Margaret Thatcher) ever preoccupied him for too long. As a result, some of my colleagues were inclined to wonder whether he took the job, or the developments in East-West relations at the time, sufficiently seriously. Personally, I thought his good-humoured common sense approach exactly right. It was exemplified in his insistence that the Alliance should never

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5 Lord Carrington was Secretary of State for Defence, 1970-74, and for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1979-82. He was NATO Secretary-General, 1984-88.
again be faced with the situation created by the refusal of his predecessor, Joseph Luns, to leave office gracefully. He ensured that his successors would have a limited term, as he had had, which might or might not be renewed. He set the right example by rebuffing all attempts to tempt him to stay for more than the four-year term that he judged appropriate. It was a pity that he missed out on the excitement of the following years. But I doubt that he lost much sleep over it. I also think it was for the best that a German held the job at that time.

No one could have accused Carrington’s successor, Manfred Worner, of a less than serious approach to the job. If anything his commitment was over passionate, as in the early months of the disintegration of Yugoslavia when he allowed his support for the German perspective, in contrast to that of the French, to be too obvious. He arrived on his first morning well before 8 a.m. and ended, arguably, by killing himself through neglect of his health in favour of his work. I had been in some measure responsible for his appointment since I felt strongly that it would be far better, given the events already beginning to unfold in 1988, to have a German as Secretary-General than, say, a Norwegian. Although some of my colleagues had been inclined to dwell on the controversies that had arisen during Worner’s time as German defence minister, I never had occasion to regret my attitude in the almost four years we were together at Evere. When he first started there, some members of the Alliance were still making difficulties about our having any kind of official intercourse whatever with representatives of Warsaw Pact member states. (On one occasion an official message from the East German government had had to be left at the gate because France took the position that no-one at NATO was entitled to receive it!) By the time a couple of years had elapsed, Worner had paid official visits to Moscow and to most other East European capitals as well as receiving Shevardnadze, Walesa and every kind of East European dignitary at Evere. It is hard to imagine anyone who could have managed and encouraged such an abrupt and climactic transition with more authority, enthusiasm and success than Manfred Worner.

Throughout the early and middle phases of this extraordinary episode in European history, I advocated both inside the Alliance and publicly essentially the same policy on East-West relations as I have already

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6 Eduard Shevardnadze was Soviet Foreign Minister, 1985-91.
described and as I had favoured throughout my career. It was one that
had been consistently pursued by the Foreign Office and by British gov-
ernments of both political complexions. Margaret Thatcher’s rhetoric
(and her preoccupation with the nuclear dimension) may have altered the
tone. Her profile and deservedly formidable reputation certainly altered
the impact. But the substance of the policy changed little if at all. It
consisted of combining a credible and effective military capability and a
strong Alliance built on a close transatlantic partnership, with a robust
but always open-minded negotiating stance. I believed that, provided we
played the hand hard and from strength, we could always afford to
compromise if a worthwhile deal offered. What we could not afford, and
what would not have facilitated the stable and peaceful evolution of the
East-West relationship, were unilateral, unrequited concessions of the
kind advocated throughout my time in the Diplomatic Service by the
peace campaigners and in the second half of the 1980s, when HMG were
unashamedly the ‘anchor to windward’, for many Western governments.

I recall writing to London early in 1989, at a time when Gorbachev’s
fame was at its height, words to the following effect: ‘the Alliance must
accept that, compared with the éclat of the Warsaw Pact’s repentant sin-
ners, its staid virtues will rarely be newsworthy. Sooner or later Mr
Gorbachev will run out of rabbits to pull out of his well-stocked hat. In
the interim, it will be important to try to ensure that the Alliance avoids
the temptation of competitive gesturing – and still more that of compet-
itive strip tease.’ There is little doubt but that, left to their own devices,
the likes of Genscher would have succumbed to both temptations.
Insofar as the efforts of HMG and, less importantly, of the British delega-
tion to NATO were devoted to frustrating him it was then, and still is, my
view that we were right. We were also largely successful. The firmness
and solidarity of the Alliance were key elements in ensuring that events
in the period 1987 to 1991 did not run out of control, as they only too
easily could have done.

Most of us recognized more or less clearly during 1986, certainly by
the time of the Reykjavik [Reagan/Gorbachev] summit in October, that
we were moving into a new era. A little later, in a talk to RUSI on 9 April
1987, I said that ‘we are living through one of the pivotal periods of post
war European history, a time when old concepts must be reviewed, exist-
ing institutions re-examined, new plans drawn up and debated. Mr
Gorbachev is pursuing a remarkably adroit and opportunistic foreign policy, one which is full of risks for both East and West but also, or perhaps therefore, of opportunities.’ I wrote in a letter at about the same time that in the months since my arrival, NATO had crossed ‘the threshold into a period of fundamental change in the Organization and in East-West relations … It is too soon to forecast the length, the scale or the consequences of the turbulence ahead. But the evidence is that the sea is rising.’ Consistent with my goal of being opened minded but cautious, I told RUSI in another talk, on 20 January 1988:

Mr Gorbachev offers a greater hope for positive change in East-West relations than any of his predecessors. But there are a number of caveats to be entered. For instance:

(a) Mr Gorbachev is pursuing the national interests of the Soviet Union not those of the Alliance …

(b) Mr Gorbachev’s success, and hence his survival is far from certain …

(c) the processes of perestroika and glasnost are bound to place stress on the existing structures in Eastern Europe. Taken together with the need for political change at the top compelled by age; with economic and the ideological morbidity; with growing public expectations; and with uncertainty about Soviet intentions, they will constitute a pretty unstable mixture.

One of the early and defining achievements of the new era in arms control had been the INF agreement (eliminating Cruise and Pershing missiles from NATO’s armoury) signed the previous month, December 1987. I commented, in the same talk, as follows:

I should confess to some impatience with the Cassandras, on both sides of the Atlantic and of the Channel, who perceive in the agreement an own goal of epic dimensions … Of course the Russians gained something. If they had not done so, there would have been no agreement … [But] the agreement:

(a) confirms that strength and Alliance solidarity are the keys to successful negotiation with the Russians …

Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces.
(b) establishes the principle of asymmetrical reduction as a basis for East-West arms control agreements …

(c) institutes a stringent and mandatory verification regime

The reference to Cassandra may have been less than tactful. For prominent among the doubters on our side of the Channel had in fact been the Prime Minister. Of course, always pragmatic, she had accepted the agreement in the end.

The most comprehensive statement that I have been able to trace of my attitude to NATO’s role in East-West relations in the days before the wheels finally came off the Warsaw Pact dates from a couple of months later. The relevant article was published in the *NATO Review* in June 1988, so I probably wrote it in April. It read, in part, as follows:

We need to stress that the system of firm collective defence based on transatlantic links, which NATO gives us, has kept the peace for 40 years, during which wars have raged almost everywhere else the world. We must emphasise that this collective defence is a condition of, not a threat to, stable East-West relations. We have to explain that because of Western Europe’s geo-strategic situation, we will probably always need such a system for our own security, whatever happens in the Soviet Union. We need to explain that to be effective, our deterrent strategy will require a nuclear component for the foreseeable future and that, if our weapons are to deter, they must be kept effective and up-to-date. We need to stress that the aim of arms control is not only less weapons but more security, and ensure that our arms control proposals continue to meet these criteria. We have to explain that arms control is not an end in itself: real improvements in Europe require progress across a much broader agenda – human rights, greater transparency, human contacts, freedom of information and so forth.

Nor should we base our policies on the assumption that Mr Gorbachev and the reforms will be with us forever. There have been rapid changes in the Soviet Union in the last three years. But if the pendulum can swing one way, it can swing the other. Many of the current developments could be reversed if the political climate in Moscow were to change. If in the meantime we had lowered our guard, we would find ourselves facing a far more unpredictable and possibly more hostile Soviet Union with, on our side, greatly reduced means of deterring aggression …

Mr Gorbachev’s success in presenting himself as a new style Soviet leader with fresh ideas is an unaccustomed challenge for the West … We cannot afford to disregard [it]. But, in the long run, since societies based
on democracy, human rights and economic freedoms are simply more efficient, the Soviet Union faces a far greater challenge from the West.

The way in which the UK, pursuing this philosophy, acted as anchor within the Alliance in this period (1987 to 1989) is exemplified by the story of the Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament. In the run-up to the NATO summit of May 1989, the Concept was the subject of what was widely described in the press at the time as the most serious crisis faced by the Alliance since its foundation. At the Summit, it became the basis for one of the Alliance’s greatest successes – at least in PR terms – and the crisis was overnight consigned, along with the Comprehensive Concept, to the oblivion in which it remains to this day.

The idea of agreeing a ‘comprehensive concept’ had been dreamed up in the late spring of 1987 when it became apparent that an INF agreement was on the cards. The Germans were understandably concerned about the higher profile Short-range Nuclear Force (SNF) systems would acquire in a post-INF context. The Comprehensive Concept was intended to offer a way to address that concern in a broader context. But from the outset the Germans, and in particular Genscher’s Foreign Ministry, saw the review as an opportunity to rewrite Alliance security policy and thereby to facilitate an SNF negotiation. Such a negotiation would, Genscher hoped, result in a ‘third zero’ and render the inevitably controversial modernisation of SNF systems unnecessary. With the passage of time, many of the smaller NATO members began to evince diminishing enthusiasm for the maintenance of a full range of defence capabilities.

Although, as noted earlier, the US had joined the UK and the FRG in May 1987 in drafting the mandate for the review, they did not take the review seriously until a very late stage. They achieved a re-affirmation of existing military doctrine, which had been their primary objective, at the May 1988 Summit. In the months immediately thereafter, they had sought to drop the exercise. It was only in the autumn that the US accepted that the problem of the FRG’s desire to avoid SNF modernisation had not gone away. By that time they were into the transitional paralysis between the Reagan and Bush administrations. A similar immobilism, but for a very different reason, gripped the Bonn coalition for much of the two-year period, 1987 to 1989. Chancellor Kohl’s government was deeply
divided on the issues involved between, on the one side, the Foreign Ministry who were determined to wait on events i.e. Gorbachev, and, on the other side, the Chancellery and the Defence Ministry who would have preferred the Alliance to re-affirm its strategy. As a result the FRG repeatedly and infuriatingly refused to make any substantive, still less written, contribution to the debate. There was general indignation in the Alliance when a deadline for December 1988, set by the Council in the spring of that year, was missed thanks to the lack of progress that flowed from German disengagement. The deadline was re-set for June 1989.

Throughout this period, therefore, it fell to the UK delegation to try to conjure up a basis for Alliance consensus. Our aim was to use the concept to reaffirm NATO’s basic strategic principles and to ensure that arms control policy, including that on SNF, was consistent with those principles. We submitted relevant papers to the Council in November 1987 and in January 1988. In March 1988 we submitted a draft text for the entire document. Although not itself adopted, this provided a basis for much of the discussion in the ensuing twelve months. But by the beginning of 1989 the situation had become entirely deadlocked. There was a complete absence of input from either Bonn or Washington. Drafts from the NATO secretariat in January and then in February led nowhere. In late February and early March, therefore, the UK delegation re-drafted the entire document once again. Although there was much related language elsewhere in it, the three or four paragraphs dealing explicitly with SNF were omitted. We cleared the resulting text with the US and French delegations but were unable to secure FRG agreement. Nonetheless the draft was circulated, with Manfred Worner’s approval, by the NATO secretariat in its own name. The actual origin of the document was never revealed. It is in all essentials the text that was approved by the Heads of Government in May.8

When the Summit opened, in a frenzy of press speculation, the positions of the principal protagonists (US/UK and FRG) on the SNF paragraphs were far apart indeed. Genscher was seeking an early start to SNF negotiations with the Warsaw Pact; no linkage with the implementation of conventional arms reductions; no rejection of a ‘third zero’ (i.e. the elimination of SNF); and no support for the American SNF development

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programme (an important East-West bargaining counter if nothing else). While accepting that there would be SNF negotiations in due course, the US/UK position favoured opening such a negotiation only after a conventional arms control agreement had been reached and implementation begun; SNF reductions only after such an agreement had been fully implemented; and, meanwhile, endorsement of the US development programme.

In the event, after much behind the scenes rhetoric and drama, the US/UK position (but essentially the UK position) prevailed. The same went for the accompanying Summit Declaration, also based largely on a UK draft and including three initiatives based on earlier UK ideas – for open skies (a US text, however), for improved humanitarian conditions along East-West borders, and for democratic principles and practices in the East (anticipating a more or less identical proposal launched a couple of days later by President Bush in a major speech in Mainz). Of course what made the Summit memorable was the major initiative on conventional arms control, the first result of four and more months of gestatory debate in Washington. Designed to steal Gorbachev’s thunder (or at least his clothes), it did exactly that – being basically an acceptance of adjustments the Soviet leader had already sought in the CFE proposals tabled earlier in the year in Vienna by the UK on behalf of the Alliance. The US initiative had been discussed in great haste in the three main Alliance capitals and cleared, on the telephone, with SACEUR. It gave Genscher (and therefore Chancellor Kohl) the opportunity to extricate himself without loss of face from the dilemma he had himself created. He was able to argue publicly that the accelerated CFE timetable itself created the prospect of ‘early’ SNF negotiations that had been omitted from the Summit documents. Taken together with the rest of the documentation, it enabled the assembled leaders justifiably to claim a triumph. It transformed President Bush, in a few hours, from international zero to hero – rather, it appeared, to his own astonishment. I wondered the next day whether envy, dismay or relief was the emotion uppermost in President Gorbachev’s mind as, amidst the mounting chaos in Eastern Europe, he contemplated the outcome of the meeting.

This was in many ways an archetypal example of how NATO surmounted its difficulties – at least in those days. The success was based on a great deal of discreet hard work by a few delegations, led for much of
the time by the UK (because we very often tended to have a clearer idea than anyone else of what we wanted and how best to achieve it); a general recognition on the part of all those involved that a major NATO meeting could not be allowed to end in failure (Chancellor Kohl said so publicly before leaving for Brussels, thereby putting his Foreign Minister firmly on the spot); and a US willingness at the crucial juncture to take the leading role to which their superpower status entitled them and which the other members expected of them. One reason why the 1989 crisis was so serious (unlike, for instance, the difficulties which preceded the London Summit the following year) was that the transition meant that the US had effectively gone missing for the previous six months. The inexperience of the US participants in their new roles was still very obvious at the Summit itself. President Bush, despite the considerable international experience he brought to the job, made little impression in the private discussions with his colleagues. The contrast with the 1988 summit was considerable. At his only NATO meeting, President Reagan’s impromptu parting tribute to the Alliance had left several members of a singularly hard-bitten audience close to tears. I was sitting four or five feet from him and his performance convinced me, somewhat late in the day, that he had after all been a great politician – certainly a ‘great communicator’. The vast US delegation struck me, as I told London at the time, as being ‘indifferently organized, faction ridden and inexpert where it mattered’. That situation was to change rapidly as formidable talents like Brent Scowcroft, Robert Zoellick and Bob Blackwill worked themselves into the team that was to prove so effective over the next couple of years – notably, as far as NATO was concerned, at the London summit in July of the following year. But on 29 May I found myself for periods of the late night negotiation among Foreign Ministers on the SNF paragraphs of the Comprehensive Concept sitting between Geoffrey Howe and Jim Baker, advising both of them. In a personal minute, of which I saw a copy at the time, Howe’s private secretary observed: ‘It is no exaggeration to say that Mr Baker’s principal official adviser throughout the negotiations was Michael Alexander.’ Arguably, that is how mature international institutions should and do work a good deal of the time: the temporarily more experienced assisting the temporarily less experienced by one means or another. But on this occasion the burden sharing was perhaps a little too obvious for comfort.

9 James Addison Baker was US Secretary of State, 1989-92.
Chapter 11
The End of the Cold War

The May 1989 Summit marked, as it turned out, the mid-point in my time at NATO and, infinitely more important, the mid-point in the Gorbachev era. With benefit of hindsight, we can now see that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact had by then already passed the point of no return. NATO’s role in the successful winding down of the Cold War climaxed at the 1989 Summit in Brussels and at the 1990 Summit in London. Thereafter, e.g. at the Rome Summit in 1991, the Alliance was already dealing with the aftermath of the Cold War. This was, of course, not at all clear at the time. David Abshire, who had been the US Ambassador at NATO, for my first six months at Evere, published a book at the end of 1988 entitled Preventing World War III: a realistic grand strategy. In it he wrote that NATO’s ‘performance had not matched the opportunity’. He cited Alexander, Napoleon and Hitler as men who had pursued grand strategy and argued that the ‘Marxists were better attuned for grand strategy formulation than the rest of us’.

Disagreeing vigorously, I argued in a review, dated 29 April 1989, that NATO remained ‘hugely effective’ after forty years, a length of time that already exceeded the combined periods in office of all three ‘grand strategists’. I continued that ‘what there is by way of deliberate grand strategy is uncomplicated – at least in concept: the firm commitment of the United States to Europe and of all members to each other, to defence and to dialogue … The Alliance might be wise to eschew the ambition to develop de novo a game plan for the Nineties. It must, of course, acknowledge the problems flowing from its own success. It must tackle these problems vigorously, as they present themselves. In doing so it should be open minded, coherent and firm but also predictable. Mutual miscalculation has been the source of many past disasters. If the Alliance can succeed in being a pole of stability in an increasingly uncertain world, it will
The End of the Cold War

be rendering a major service both to the West as a whole and to President Gorbachev. It may also surprise itself along the way by discovering that it has after all evolved new strands to its grand strategy’.

In the event, looking across the Comprehensive Concept (1989), the London Summit Declaration (1990), the new Strategic Concept (1991), the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, the Partnership for Peace and the evolution of NATO’s role and membership in the course of the following decade, this is very much what happened. Through the ending of the Cold War and into the post-Cold War era, NATO – fortunately for Europe in particular and the world in general and despite the gloom mongers – has successfully held the ring. It did indeed adapt incrementally and pragmatically rather than abruptly or theoretically to a constantly evolving situation. I was told at the time (late 1991) that a minute then circulating in the FCO and written by a senior official expressed delight at the ‘honest recognition’ in a departmental submission on the way ahead that ‘for most of Western Europe, NATO is a dead duck’. I commented with some irritation that if this turned out to be accurate, those who held such opinions would come to regret them. Happily the minute writer turned out to be a long way wide of the mark. (Another commentator who was sadly incompetent at reading the tea-leaves, at least in this respect, was the late Alan Clarke. In 1990, when he was Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence, he bet me across my dinner table in Brussels that Eurofighter would never be built and British troops would be out of Germany by 1994. I waited for several years beyond that before collecting my half dozen bottles of champagne. But at least he was trying to look forward in an imaginative if characteristically unrealistic fashion.)

In NATO 1989, all this still lay well in the future. I have related in the previous chapter my attitude at the time to the dramas that brought the year to an end. In the late spring of 1990 (March and May), before the London Summit and the immediately preceding meeting of Foreign Ministers at Turnberry,1 I wrote substantive articles for the NATO Review and for the RUSI Journal which together constituted a rather definitive statement of my attitude on the role of NATO in the management of

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1 NATO Foreign Ministers, meeting at Turnberry during 7-8 June 1990, published a message expressing their determination to seize opportunities resulting from changes in Europe, and their wish to extend to the Soviet Union and all other countries the hand of friendship and co-operation.
international relations as the Cold War came to an end and the post-Cold War era began. The negotiations associated with the unification of Germany and establishment of successor regimes in Eastern Europe did not to take place at Evere. But NATO’s was a constant presence in the background. We experienced the backwash of the revolution in the shape of a succession of ever more mould breaking visitors – starting with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Edward Shevardnadze, in December 1989 and continuing with his Czechoslovak (Jiri Dienstbier) and Polish (Skubizewski) colleagues in March 1990, Hungarian (Jesnesenky) in June and GDR (Markus Meckel) in July. Like the Hungarian Prime Minister (Antell), who also came in July, they all made much of NATO’s importance to them as they struggled with their various futures. By the turn of the year we were receiving visitors like the Chief of the Soviet General staff, General Mikhail Moisyeev, Presidents Walesa and Havel, the Prime Ministers of Romania and Bulgaria and so forth. Taken together with what became for a time regular annual summits of our own Heads of Government, the evidence that the leaders of the time attached central significance to NATO’s role at this moment, as Europe changed course for ever, is overwhelming.

What I said in the two articles just mentioned may go some way to explaining why this should have been so. In that written in March 1990, I argued:

The classic Soviet threat – that posed by an expansionist power with a hostile ideology and enormous forces on the West’s borders – is evaporating before our eyes … Some say that the Alliance should be preserved exactly as it is, arguing that the threat is in essence unchanged. Others maintain that NATO’s raison d’être has completely disappeared, that it is an obstacle to future progress in East-West relations and that the organization should be wound up. Both camps are wrong. NATO remains essential: to preserve its members’ own security and to provide a stable framework in which the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can evolve peacefully. But if NATO is to pursue these ends effectively, it will itself have to change substantially …

I adduced four basic reasons why NATO remained necessary in the new Europe then beginning to emerge:

1. The danger from today’s Soviet Union is … that of fundamental instability. The reform process is putting enormous stress on the
social and political fabric of the USSR. We cannot exclude that this might lead to the violent break-up of the Union. For that to happen to a heavily armed nuclear superpower would be uniquely dangerous, not only for the Soviet people themselves but for all the Soviet Union’s neighbours. It is reason enough for the West to keep its guard well up …

(2) A second, related, reason is to preserve stability. In the short and medium-term the reform process in the East may result in greater instability in that part of Europe. The removal of oppressive regimes will allow expression to be given to long pent up political, economic and ethnic grievances …

(3) We must avoid at all costs … the re-nationalisation of defence – a situation where European states are again driven to seek their security in shifting (and inherently unstable) coalitions. NATO is our guard against that danger …

(4) Finally, it should be borne in mind that many of the risks facing us in the next few years will come from outside Europe. In the late 1990s, the more immediate dangers to the West may come increasingly from the South and from the Middle East. There, demographic trends, economic difficulties and deep-seated political problems are combining with the progressive acquisition of destabilising military technologies to create a pre-occupying and volatile mixture …

What should change?

NATO will operate in future with markedly fewer in place and stationed forces, smaller and less frequent exercises and more emphasis on reservists, mobility, rapid reinforcement and pre-positioned equipment… One key innovation that the Allies will have to pursue is the creation of multinational forces stationed on Alliance territory … Some of these units would clearly be predominantly 'European'. The modalities of NATO’s military role will change but I do not believe that this side of the Alliance will become less important in future. It is NATO’s collective military capability which gives the Alliance credibility and which embodies the principles that have made and will continue to make it a unique institution … It may provide a forum to help devise common responses to new threats, such as the proliferation of destabilising military technologies and other out of area dangers.

In the piece produced in May for the Royal United Services Institute, I returned to the same themes, arguing:
The post-war era is over and the post Cold War era has begun. The new Europe is going to be a more complex, in some ways less comfortable, place than that to which we are accustomed ... Old spectres have re-emerged: balkanisation, border disputes, conflicts between racial and ethnic groups, populism and nationalism. Equally worrying is the prospect of the Soviet Union itself being submerged beneath a wave of disruptive, separatist and possibly destructive impulses ... Where does all this leave NATO? Still in business is the short answer ... The development of CSCE can only be in addition to the collective security represented by NATO, not in place of it. We need to be clear about CSCE's limitations if we are to avoid again falling into the League of Nations trap ... Within Europe there seems likely to be an intensification of contacts between the Alliance and individual member countries of the Warsaw Pact. These might include regular meetings of senior political and military personalities ... Looking further afield, it remains to be seen whether the reluctance of some European allies to discuss out of area issues in the Alliance will diminish as concern grows about e.g. the potential threats to the Southern Flank ... The countries of Eastern Europe are more or less bound to look to the Alliance for reassurance in the years ahead. Will it be enough for our response to be vague and ambiguous?

These references to NATO engagement with out of area threats and to the need to systematise our relationship with the states of Eastern Europe i.e. eventually to enlarge the Alliance, were of course controversial at a time when the Warsaw Pact still existed (although I was pleased that the Prime Minister raised the out of area issue in her speech to the Foreign Ministers assembled at Turnberry). But I was to return to them again, more than once, before my departure from Evere because they seemed to me to flow more or less ineluctably from the situation in which we found ourselves. Out of area threats were bound to loom larger, initially in south-east Europe and then across the Mediterranean and in the Middle East. NATO's reluctance to acknowledge them had never been anything more than a self-denying ordinance. As for enlargement, it would plainly bring real problems, not least with the Soviet Union. I was also much preoccupied at the time with the difficulty for NATO of retaining its decision-making effectiveness when it had twenty or more members. But, in the last analysis and whatever the practical difficulties, it seemed to me politically inconceivable that Europe could or would for long remain divided along an arbitrary line laid down in the closing stages of the Second World War.

NATO itself spent the early summer weeks of 1990, leading up to
The London meeting, trying to come to terms in a practical sense with the revolution in Eastern Europe. There were no fewer than six ministerial meetings in the period 3 May to 5 July. The SNF quarrel began to move towards resolution when the Nuclear Planning Group agreed (on 10 May) that the need for short-range nuclear systems was diminishing. The Defence Planning Committee agreed (on 22 May) to drop the 3% target for defence spending increases, to cut readiness states and to launch a review of NATO’s military strategy. Burden-sharing was abruptly replaced by burden-shedding as the background defence capability issue. Foreign Ministers, meeting at Turnberry (7/8 June) in appalling weather, agreed a sensible posture on the arrangements to be applied to the by then rapidly approaching reality of united Germany. They declared that Germany should be a full member of the Alliance, and that Articles 5 and 6 of the 1949 Treaty should be applied to all the territory of the newly united country. At that point this position was very far from having been accepted by the Soviet government, still less by the Soviet establishment with whom Gorbachev was increasingly at odds. The Foreign Ministers also agreed to extend the ‘hand of friendship and co-operation’ to the countries of Eastern Europe – a phrase, of Canadian origin, that usefully captured the spirit of the moment as well as the headlines.

All this activity showed NATO doing what it did best – reacting pragmatically, sensibly and consensually to events, incrementally consolidating a platform on which more dramatic initiatives, whether in NATO or elsewhere, could be securely based. The Turnberry meeting had marked a significant political advance. But the US Administration had already recognized that the impending summit in London (5/6 July) would need to go a good deal further if the Alliance was to be seen to be seizing the moment. The usual effort was launched in Evere to come up with an appropriate draft for a London Declaration. But there was never any chance that this would meet the requirement envisaged by the Americans. As has been described in other books, the Americans spent the early weeks of June elaborating a radical text, in great secrecy, in Washington. They circulated it at a very late stage (21 June), without even using US embassies as a channel, to the heads of government of the four main allies and then bulldozed their way to consensus. They refused, for instance, to allow any collective discussion of their ideas until the heads of government had actually assembled in London and then insisted that
the draft be negotiated by the Foreign Ministers personally. The permanent
delegations played no part at all in the process. A good deal of diplomatic
crockery was broken, notably in the Elysée. Mitterrand made no attempt
to conceal his pique. Indeed it was still apparent at Rome sixteen months
later. More than anything (or anyone) else, the French resent being taken
for granted.

I was not particularly pleased myself to have been left out in the
cold. But, truth to tell, the Americans were right to see theirs as the only
way a document as ground breaking as the London Declaration could
ever have been achieved. The initial reaction within the Alliance at the
end of June made this very clear. Margaret Thatcher’s own attitude
would have made it impossible for the UK to play a creative role in drafting
a sufficiently forward-looking document. Indeed the US strategy for
the Summit seems to have been in considerable measure designed to
ensure that she was isolated there. Her continued preoccupation with
nuclear issues in general and the SNF issue in particular, even this late
stage, created what I personally found a very uncomfortable situation at
the meeting. The description of nuclear weapons as weapons of last
resort, to which she took such exception, seemed to me to be an inge-
nious and useful ambiguity. In any case the historic importance of the
Summit Declaration (sadly ignored by Margaret Thatcher then and later)
lay elsewhere. It made it possible for the Soviet government to accept the
unification of Germany on a clear-cut basis that largely eliminated future
arguments and uncertainties about the course of that country. The plan
of action so stoutly favoured by the Prime Minister would have post-
pioned unification, perhaps indefinitely, and committed Europe (and the
Soviet Union) to a long drawn out and extremely problematical end game
for the Cold War. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze have both acknowledged
the importance for them in the immediately following weeks of the gen-
erous and imaginative language endorsed by the sixteen Allies in London.

At the opening of the London meeting Margaret Thatcher, in the
gaudy surroundings of Lancaster House and against a background of
nervous laughter, referred dismissively to diplomacy: ‘As colleagues round
this table will know, I never had much use for diplomacy any way and I
have got on very well without it.’ But at London the diplomats (I can’t
think of a better description for the team in Washington who put the
Declaration together) got it absolutely right – not for the only time.
Although I tried more than once, I was never able to make a serious inroad on the distaste for diplomacy as a trade and for the Foreign Office as an institution that Margaret Thatcher brought with her on election. Early in her time as Prime Minister, I persuaded her to venture across Downing Street to the office of the then Foreign Secretary, Peter Carrington. The meeting (to discuss, in effect, the management of the Cold War) involved senior diplomats and seemed to me to go well. The diplomats involved refused to be overawed and, on Carrington’s advice (which he always followed himself), gave as good as they got. It was always the right way to deal with Margaret Thatcher. But the paradox in her attitude was already apparent. She could and did respect individual diplomats but never their business. In her memoirs she refers to ‘the spell of the Foreign Office where compromise and negotiation were ends in themselves’ and to ‘the habits which the Foreign Office seems to cultivate – a reluctance to subordinate diplomatic tactics to the national interest and an insatiable appetite for nuances and conditions which can blur the clearest vision’. It is difficult to know whether to smile or to weep. To smile because of the breathtaking indifference to the views and indeed to the existence of others (in this case, nation states as jealous of their own interests as she was of Britain’s) that was what made Margaret Thatcher a great leader at home and abroad. To weep because of the indifference to realities stronger than herself (or the United Kingdom) that towards the end of her time in office resulted in such major and, as it seemed to me, readily avoidable errors. (Her oft-described treatment of Geoffrey Howe encapsulated the problem. Once, in the course of a Summit in Brussels, I found myself saying to her in the back of a car that how she treated her Cabinet colleagues was none of my business, but that I did not think it was right that she should risk humiliating their ultimate boss in front of my staff. She did not demur but nor did very much change. The price she eventually paid in the House of Commons is only too well known.) It is fortunate that for the larger part of her career, and period as Prime Minister, she was far more pragmatic and aware of the need for compromise (even with the Foreign Office) than her words in Lancaster House suggest. It was only in the final years (and after her retirement) that what I would regard as fantasy began to take over from realism. On the day before she left office she found time to write to me about her dedication to NATO and said, in my view rightly ‘we have achieved great
things by standing firm’. But, indicating that there may have been some points on which she regretted not having taken the diplomat’s advice, she generously added ‘We have been very fortunate to be represented [at NATO] by someone as able and inventive as you: if the advice was not always taken, it doesn’t necessarily mean it was wrong!’

In any case, to accuse the Foreign Office of subordinating the national interest to diplomatic tactics is absurd and unjust, as the politicians and diplomats of many other countries will ruefully attest. It is, of course, the case that the (inter)national interest of a power in Britain’s position will almost always be best secured by reaching agreement with her negotiating partners i.e. by compromise. The French have tried harder than most to side-step this self-evident reality and much good the effort has done them. In the modern world, only the United States and, perhaps, China can effectively ignore it. What really distresses Margaret Thatcher, and those of similar views, is the relative decline in Britain’s power and in our ability to act independently. It was the role of the Foreign Office throughout my time as a diplomat to try to disguise that decline. The right accusation to level at the diplomats in this context (as well as, obviously, against the armed forces) is that we have been, and still are, too successful. In so doing we have sustained the illusions of politicians and of the media in a way that has not always been healthy. The ability to ‘punch above our weight’ is comforting for our leaders and has probably benefited the international community. But British society as a whole might be in better shape today if it had been brought into rather more brutal contact with the facts.

The tendency for the larger European governments, notably including Her Majesty’s Government, to adopt an increasingly presidential style of administration reflects in part, of course, a desire to exploit new technological and bureaucratic possibilities. It is also, more importantly, a reaction to the fact of decreasing real power. In order to retain some sense that they are making an authoritative national input into international policy making, heads of government are driven to concentrate more and more authority in their own hands – a course of action that in any case reflects and reinforces the usually not inconsiderable self-esteem of the individuals concerned. Examples abound. I am not myself convinced that a desire to benefit from the American example has much significance as a motive for this development. Insofar as it is relevant, the imitators
are courting disillusion. They have no hope, at least as national repre-
sentatives, of matching US authority. The power of the US is for the
moment so preponderant that US presidential appointees, despite their
lack of independent clout, retain considerable real weight. This is not
gonna be true of secondary representatives acting on behalf of
European national governments (or indeed for many of the Heads of
those governments). Those same representatives, often of course
Cabinet Ministers emanating from political systems giving them person-
al electoral power bases, are going to resent the devaluation of their posi-
tions and of their ministries. The diminishing authority of those min-
istries may well imply an eventual reduction of their overall quality (as
has certainly been case with much of the US State Department). The
period of transition from parliamentary to presidential structure, on
which the UK has been embarked for some time, seems likely to be
uncomfortable for all concerned.

Reverting to 1990, the events surrounding the London Declaration
say a good deal about the importance of the Alliance in the management
of the East-West relationship and about the way the Alliance itself oper-
ated. Leaving aside its pre-eminent role as a defence organization, the
Alliance was an ideal, custom made vehicle for a major gesture of reassur-
ance to Gorbachev at a critical moment in Soviet history. All the key gov-
ernments on the Western side were involved, as they had been for the
previous forty years. Sceptics and enthusiasts alike were under an almost
irresistible compulsion to associate themselves with the consensus as it
emerged. The British government’s isolated position was not dissimilar
to that of the German government in the run-up to the Brussels summit
the previous year – and the outcome was the same.

As regards the modus operandi, the need for a major gesture was
apparent to everyone. But only the Americans, partly because of their
dominant position and partly because of their insight into the pressures
to which Gorbachev was exposed and therefore into the kind of help he
needed, were in a position to determine the content. The tactics adopted
to secure agreement were unquestionably risky. They also implied
remarkable, if unspoken, confidence in the robustness of the institution.
There are few if any other important multinational organizations with
which a similar risk could have been taken successfully. But the
Americans had the imagination to see what was at stake and the self-con-
idence to act on their insight. Even the Germans, the principal beneficiaries of the Declaration, had much less ambitious ideas up until the moment when they saw the US draft. And no one else could have imposed such a text by such means and in such a short time.

Of course such tactics could only be a one off, the more so since the Americans had already chanced their arm, in a more limited way, the previous year. To have repeated the experiment would have prompted serious disaffection within of the Alliance. The use of the bulldozer gave a stark reality to that US dominance of the organization which NATO’s critics have so regularly decried. It was a pity that those same critics chose not to acknowledge that at this determining moment in European history, it was US leadership that allowed us all to move so far and so decisive-ly. At the same time, the way the US played the hand underlined two hugely important points, both of which have been mentioned elsewhere in this book. Firstly, if the strength of an organization like NATO lies in the habit of co-operation and the assumption of consensus built up over many years of detailed collaboration, its weakness lies in its inability to move really rapidly or really imaginatively other than under the impetus of strong, even ruthless leadership. Secondly, when the stakes are high enough the Americans, even within an Alliance context, will consult their own interest first and those of others later, if at all. (The Germans, of course, did exactly the same with the Russians in the Caucasus later that same July, concluding the historic agreement with Gorbachev and announcing it to a startled world before informing, let alone consulting, the US or their other allies.) However much one may admire the Americans – and I do, very greatly – this is the underlying reality. The proponents of the special relationship would do well to remember that in the last analysis this has for many years been a one-way relationship. The fact that marching in step with the United States has for the most part been rather comfortable for the United Kingdom, as well as flattering to our self esteem, does not mean that it will necessarily remain so.

Most of the eighteen months between the London Summit and my departure from Brussels in January 1992 were spent by NATO in a great range of follow-up activity. The focus of international attention shifted abruptly to the Middle East as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait early in August. (NATO was not directly involved but of course was a vastly important background influence in making it possible for the US
led coalition to function effectively. I well recall being awoken at 3 a.m. to attend a Council meeting at Evere when the news of the Iraqi action first came through. Special ministerial meetings followed more or less immediately and events were closely followed thereafter. The UK Delegation, for instance, maintained a special briefing room throughout the crisis. The deployment to Turkey of the Ace Mobile Force (Air) early in January 1991 was the first time, after almost forty-two years, that NATO forces had ever been employed operationally! But the last remnants of the Cold War still had to be tidied away efficiently. NATO continued to hold the ring while the final scenes of the drama were played out elsewhere. Germany was unified within the Alliance (October 1990); the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty was concluded (Nov 1990) and ratified the following year; the Warsaw Pact was dissolved (July 1991); and, finally, the Soviet Union itself dissolved (December 1991). The Alliance embraced the (soon to be former) members of the Warsaw Pact more and more closely. Increasingly frequent visits were exchanged between the Secretary-General and leading members of East European governments. The visit of the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Moisyeev, to NATO and Shape was balanced by a joint visit of SACEUR and the Chairman of NATO’s Military Committee to Moscow (November 1991). The Alliance itself, meanwhile, pressed along with the essential but less glamorous process of reform and adjustment, the UK back again in a leading role. A review of the organization’s philosophy and raison d’être took place, following an agenda put forward by the UK. A text on the ‘core functions’ of the Alliance was agreed (by Foreign Ministers at Copenhagen in June 1991) having been pre-negotiated within the informal quadripartite directorate. As mentioned earlier, a new Strategic Concept for the Alliance was put together in the same group, with the UK doing most of the drafting, and approved at the Rome Summit in November 1991. The Ace Rapid Reaction Corps – a multinational force of the kind that I and many others had for some time been advocating (page 133 above) – was established in May 1991 under British command. And so forth.

Merely to recapitulate these activities, completed with so much effort little more than a decade ago, is to draw attention to the changes that have occurred in the world in the interim. The recital has a curiously archaic flavour. It is not only the past. It is a past that seems to have lit-
tle relevance to a new millennium where Russia is a status quo power as well as, in effect, an ally while the enemy is a coalition of fanatics, terrorists and criminals who reject the rule of law, at least of any generally acceptable law, in the global village. But there is a relevance and it must not be lost to sight. It relates to the importance of established international structures in dealing with security issues in the modern world. The Cold War was managed successfully, in part, because both sides recognized that in a confrontation of such magnitude most states had no option but to subsume their sovereignty in a greater enterprise. Shifting coalitions, ‘posse diplomacy’, could never have delivered the discipline and predictability that prevented fighting breaking out in Europe and eventually made a peaceful, largely stable, transition possible. I am confident that, mutatis mutandis, the same will be found to apply to the world as a whole. The global crisis that we now confront will require from the rich, liberal democracies a long-term engagement that can only be delivered through institutions built on inescapable international commitments. The war cannot simply be a war on the manifestations of terrorism. It must also be a war on the causes of terrorism. The vast transfer of resources to the developing societies that this will eventually be seen to involve will mean sacrifices by the developed that could never be contemplated, let alone delivered, by individual democracies acting on their own. It remains to be seen whether the Americans will be prepared to except the same kind of limitations on their freedom of action on the world stage as they have been willing to accept, essentially from the Europeans themselves, on the European stage.

Apart from my continuous involvement in NATO’s efforts to adapt itself to the new environment, I was able to experience that environment for myself in 1991 in trips to Prague (April), Moscow (May) and Bucharest (July). These were certainly the first visit of their kind ever made by any British NATO Permanent Representative en poste. In Prague, I participated in a conference on European Security jointly hosted by Manfred Worner and Jiri Dienstbier, the Czecho-Slovak Foreign Minister. I chaired one of the three conference sessions – a session that was addressed, extraordinarily enough, by the Italian Foreign Minister, the Polish deputy Defence Minister, and by the Czechoslovak Chief of Staff as well as by well-known German and French intellectuals. Those were remarkable times! (As a bizarre footnote, when I wasn’t chairing the meeting, I found...
myself sitting next to Shirley Temple, the then US Ambassador in Prague.) So much so that most of my remarks from the chair were addressed to the need to avoid the dangers of over excitement. I counselled against ignoring problems and reminded earlier speakers that they should be careful about welcoming a return to ‘European normalcy’ since for many that normalcy had been war. Juri Kvitsinski, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, having accused Western Europe of ‘complacent inertia’, I told him that the real problem we faced was ‘systemic overload’. ‘In some ways too much innovation and improvisation is taking place … The risk in tackling too much at the same time is that the real issues may not be properly addressed and the solutions produced may not be the right ones … With that in mind, talk of the dissolution of NATO [raised earlier by the influential Russian, Georgi Arbatov] really has to be discounted. Nor is it advantageous to label institutions such as the Alliance as ‘not permanent’ [Juri Kvitsinski]. No institutions are immortal but to give them interim status is likely to render them less effective… [There is] one very clear precondition for any form of progress, namely the maintenance of stability throughout the continent, including the Soviet Union, while the process of comprehensive, pragmatic and evolutionary transformation takes shape.’

In making these remarks, I was no doubt mindful of the heartfelt tribute to the Alliance paid at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council some four weeks previously by the Czechoslovak President, Vaclav Havel and briefly repeated when he opened the Conference just described. He summed up more eloquently than I would have dared to do, as well as more accurately and from a more relevant perspective, the contribution made by NATO down the years to the successful management of the Cold War. The following extracts, from a long statement, may convey some of its flavour:

From the time when I was young, I used to hear in my country, from all the official authorities as well as from all the media, one thing only about the North Atlantic Alliance: that it was a bulwark of imperialism, a devil incarnate that posed a threat to peace and wanted to destroy us.

I am happy to have this opportunity to tell from this rostrum today the truth: the North Atlantic Alliance has been, and remains … a thoroughly democratic defensive community which has made a substantial contribution to the fact that this continent has not experienced any war suffering for nearly half a century and that a great part thereof has been
saved from totalitarianism. If Western Europe can now enjoy such a
measure of democracy and economic prosperity … it is undoubtedly due,
among other things, to its having established, together with United States
of America and Canada, this security alliance as a tool of protection of its
freedom and of the values of Western civilisation. I am happy to be in a
position to apologise to you today, on behalf of the Czech and the Slovak
peoples, for all the lies which my predecessors, on behalf of the same peo-
bles, were for years telling about you …

[Having explained that his original vision had been for the absorb-
ing of NATO into a pan-European security union, Havel acknowledg-
ed that more cautious counsels had prevailed because] …it has become evi-
dent that the building of democratic systems and transition to market
economies in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are affected by
more impediments than was originally expected and that the unholy lega-
cy those countries have to deal with goes deeper and has wider ramifica-
tions than anyone could imagine … The long suppressed desire of the
peoples of Central and Eastern Europe for self-determination has sudden-
ly made itself felt in all its unthought-of urgency, a number of times turn-
ing into nationalism, xenophobia and intolerance towards other national-
ities …[In the Soviet Union] the conservative forces are obviously mobil-
is ing in an effort to reverse the course of history and restore – against the
will of citizens and peoples – a centralist authoritarian system. Tension
and instability in the country are growing and can have an adverse effect
on the international situation as a whole … As result of all these factors,
our countries are dangerously sliding into a certain political, economic
and security vacuum. The old, imposed, political economic and security
ties have collapsed, yet new ones are developing slowly and with difficul-
ty, if at all …

We have highly appreciated the Declaration from the NATO
Summit of last July as well as the Communiqué from the December
meeting of the Council. These documents add strength to our feeling
that NATO is well aware of the historically new situation in Europe and
is beginning, in the light of this new situation, to change itself to some
extent and to open itself to co-operation with the new European democ-
racies … We realise that, for a number of different reasons, our country
cannot become a regular member of NATO for the time being. At the
same time, however, we believe that an Alliance of countries united by
the ideals of freedom and democracy should not forever closed to neigh-
bouring countries sharing the same goals …

The North Atlantic Alliance has been able to serve as a solid guar-
antee of stability, freedom and prosperity for so along primarily because
it has been placing emphasis on the fundamental rights and freedoms of
every individual. The protection of democracy and human liberty to
which it has been committed has given encouragement and inspiration to
the citizens of our countries, too.
I was very conscious of these words, and of what I had heard in Prague, as I travelled to Moscow at the beginning of May to address the Soviet General Staff Academy and to meet with senior Soviet personalities in the security field. It was, of course, another extraordinary moment – this time in Soviet history. The right-wing coup attempt lay just three months in the future. One of those with whom I met, at some length, was Marshal Akhromeyev, then the Soviet Union’s best-known soldier. He shot himself in August in the immediate aftermath of the coup’s failure. Akhromeyev had retired but in May was, at least formally speaking, still Gorbachev’s senior military adviser. We met in the Kremlin. He told me that not only did the Russians not want a confrontation with NATO, they could no longer sustain one. He had nothing against NATO: indeed he believed it could contribute to stability in Europe. But NATO’s determination to maintain its military structure and its references to the threat from instability in the Soviet Union were not helpful to Gorbachev. Instability was an inevitable consequence of economic and political change. It was a problem the Soviets would have to deal with themselves. In any case, there was no threat of instability from the Army. It was mature and loyal and would never act against the President or Parliament. I told Akhromeyev in reply that NATO was a defence organization. It needed and would continue to need a military structure to balance the military power of the Soviet Union and to cope with possible instability. I gave him no undertaking about NATO enlargement but said that we were being very careful in dealing with the approaches we receiving from Central and East European governments. We had no wish to upset the Russians.

I had met Akhromeyev the previous year in Brussels and found him, as I did on this occasion, an impressive and rather sympathetic personality – although physically slight and unhealthy looking. In many ways he embodied the tragedy that the, as it turned out imminent, collapse of the Soviet Union represented for the many gifted individuals who had had to spend their lives in Soviet service. Notwithstanding the strictures elsewhere in this book about the dishonesty that undoubtedly lay at the heart of the Soviet experiment, it would be foolish to deny that there was also much idealism. As a boy, Akhromeyev had been involved in the defence of Leningrad. At the time of our meeting in Moscow, he was obviously deeply troubled by the immediate prospects and by the thought that all
that sacrifice might have been in vain. However inappropriate his subse-
quent actions, his suicide showed he was no time-server. I was, I confess,
surprised by the undisguised hostility towards Akhromeyev displayed the
following day by Georgi Arbatov – whom I had just encountered in
Prague. He told me that people like the Marshal were prepared for a mil-
itary coup, though they would hope to execute it in the name of the
President. They believed that the Army was the ultimate guarantor of
order – an attitude that was entirely impermissible in a democratic state.
According to Arbatov, Akhromeyev wanted to revert to ‘Fortress Soviet
Union’. Arbatov followed Akhromeyev only in claiming the Soviet Union
was incapable of sustaining a military confrontation but that inappropriate
policies and statements from NATO encouraged the reactionaries in the
Soviet Union. He reverted to the claim he had made in Prague that
NATO did not have a long-term future. I again disabused him of this
notion.

I delivered the same message, somewhat unnecessarily, to Anatol
Chernyaev, Gorbachev’s Diplomatic Adviser. It was in the Soviet Union’s
interest that NATO remained – so that we could collaborate on arms con-
trol, the problems of Central and Eastern Europe, and instability to the
south [ten years too soon]. Chernyaev, extraordinarily open-minded even
by the turbulent standards of the day, said that Gorbachev had no desire
to see NATO wound up. Especially since the collapse of the Warsaw
Pact, NATO had become a force for stability both in Europe and in the
world where new threats were emerging from people like Saddam
Hussein. The Soviet government appreciated the discreet way in which
NATO was responding to overtures from the East Europeans – who were
no longer under any threat from the East. Indeed there would be no
return to the threat from the past, whoever came to power in Moscow.
But there could be a threat e.g. from the dispersal of nuclear weapons, if
the Union fell apart. The prospect of disintegration was being exploited
internally for domestic political reasons and externally because people
abroad were genuinely worried. In fact the drafts for the new Union
treaty would soon be tabled. Most republics would remain in the Union
– even the Armenians and Georgians once they had thought carefully
about the alternatives [vain hope].

My final and most dispiriting meeting was with the Chief of the
General Staff, General Mikhail Moisesev. He displayed all the old neuroses.
Following their victory in the Gulf, the Americans were suffering from a victory syndrome. NATO force levels might be being cut on the Central Front but they were being built up on the flanks e.g., in Turkey and Israel[!]. The CFE negotiation had gone completely wrong: the Soviet Union should be allocated the equipment quotas that had gone to its former allies. By 1994 the Germans would be asking their Allies to leave their territory and would be casting their eyes once more on the lands they had lost in the East etc etc. My efforts to rebut this paranoid nonsense e.g. by pointing out that it would be absurd for NATO to denude its vulnerable centre in order to reinforce its flanks and that massive force cuts were being forced on all the Allies by public opinion, were to no avail. So, for that matter, were my efforts to reassure the serried ranks of bemelled staff officers whom I addressed at the Staff Academy. I made an orthodox presentation of the case for NATO along lines that will be familiar to any reader who has persisted this far. The first ‘question’ came from a brigadier, as broad as he was tall, who expressed the hope that I had not come to the Academy to ‘teach the Russians how to behave’. He was rapidly followed by another who wondered why assertions of NATO’s good intentions should be accepted in Moscow given that NATO had many years previously [in the Stalin era] rejected an offer by the then Soviet Govt to join the Alliance. It was altogether a rather intimidating experience. I understood better than ever why in the old days conventional arms control talks had made so little progress.

The previous paragraph risks leaving a misleading impression of the atmosphere, though not of the substance, of my contacts with the Soviet military. The meetings were characterized by the greatest good humour—particularly a session with the Commandant of the Staff Academy (and later, briefly, Defence Minister) General Rodionov. I was unaware until shortly after our encounter that he was also known as ‘the butcher of Tbilisi’, following an incident in that town when troops under his command were reputed to have violently quelled a riot using weapons that included trenching tools! Unsurprisingly, I returned to Brussels distinctly uncertain as to what the immediate future held for the Soviet Union but persuaded that it was still absolutely right to be worried about the possibility of serious instability marking the final throes of the Cold War. Violence was clearly expected by many of my interlocutors. The editor of the magazine Ogonyok said bluntly that a military coup was inevitable. I
recall reporting to London at the time that Akhromeyev had seemed to me to protest a little too much about the loyalty of the military. There was something like a consensus that, by whatever route the Union was about to become much looser. In short, no-one really attempted to deny that the country was living through a revolution and that literally anything might happen – including events running completely out of control.

On NATO enlargement, I was increasingly persuaded that it was bound to happen but that it would have to be handled with great care. So far as I can recall, nothing I said in Moscow could have been interpreted by the Soviets as an assurance that there would never be enlargement. What I did say, more than once, was that the East Europeans were looking to NATO to solve their problems and that we had to respond to them while also responding to Soviet concerns. Our policy would have to be a balanced one even if I could not then see just how the circle would be squared. It may well be that some of my interlocutors took the associated statements that NATO was not seeking expansion as an assurance that there would be none. In any case, their sensitivity was so obvious that I did my best to play down the issue – at least until the time of my departure from Evere. (I made it clear in my farewell statement to the Council in January 1992 and in my first public talk thereafter, that I regarded enlargement as inevitable.) Other, more senior, personalities may have given the Russians more categorical assurances. Certainly many Russians still claim that they were seriously misled about enlargement at this time.

This was my last bilateral encounter with the Russians in a context that could, with any justification at all, be described as ‘managing the Cold War’. The talks with Chernayev and Arbatov had demonstrated how far this was already a concept out of the past. (So fast did things move thereafter that within a couple of years I was back in Moscow engaged in founding a private investment bank! After various vicissitudes, the resulting enterprise went under in the crash the August 1998.) When I visited Bucharest a few weeks later, in July, the Cold War was an irrelevance – although the Romanians’ nervousness about future Russian intentions was anything but irrelevant. I was sufficiently impressed by the potential of one or two of the Romanians I met to return there also, in 1993, to set up a banking operation. The disappointingly slow progress since in the reform of this basically very rich country shows yet again just
The autumn of 1991 was spent by the Alliance in what were essentially post-Cold War activities. These included the endorsement at the Rome summit of the Alliance’s New Strategic Concept (the genesis of which has already been described) and the establishment of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC). The NACC offered a means of bringing together (initially) nine East European countries, including the Soviet Union, with the full Council members and was a means of defusing, at least in the time being, the enlargement issue. (Enlargement itself was plainly not on the cards, or even desirable, at that time.) The idea initiated with the US but had strong backing from the UK (or at least from me. There was some initial concern in London about the proposal, reflecting understandable worries about the emasculation of NATO and the downgrading of the CSCE.) It was later to lead on to the Partnership for Peace and in my view has, on balance, fully justified itself. Be that as it may, for me personally the NACC was to provide a final, memorable postscript to an involvement with the Cold War that had begun 35 years earlier on the shores of the Baltic. On 20 December, in Brussels, the NACC held its inaugural meeting at Foreign Minister level. It was also my last appearance as UK Permanent Representative at any NATO ministerial meeting. Manfred Worner emphasised at the outset how moved he was to have the opportunity to preside over a meeting of the twenty-five governments. ‘When I took office as Secretary General of the North Atlantic Alliance, I could not receive the Ambassador of any of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in our headquarters. Our states were adversaries. Three and a half years later here we are, sitting around the same title, celebrating the inaugural meeting of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council.’

The Soviet Union was represented at the meeting by Nikolai Afanassievsky, their Ambassador to Belgium – who had been, incidentally, a junior member of the Soviet CSCE delegation in Geneva sixteen years earlier. At the beginning of the day, Afanassievsky had handed in a letter from Boris Yeltsin suggesting that at some point in the future the Russian Republic should be considered for membership of NATO now, in 2002, a much more actual topic. This would have been sensation enough. But about midday a further message was brought in to Afanassievsky.
Having read it, he took the Soviet Union nameplate off the conference table and put it under his chair, announced that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, and asked that all references to the Soviet Union be removed from the (already agreed) communiqué. As a result, the first NACC communiqué has a footnote. According to the official record of the meeting the Estonian Foreign Minister, Lennart Meri (previously film producer, subsequently President, a gift from whom sits on my desk as I write) intervened a little later to draw attention to the historic character of the moment and to ask the Secretary General to ensure that history should not subsequently be rewritten. He is immediately followed by the Secretary-General, who was in the middle of his closing remarks, giving Meri the reassurance he sought and going on to pay an agreeably exaggerated tribute to my contribution to ‘the process’. I thanked Worner and said: ‘It is rather odd to be farewelled on an inaugural occasion of such drama and moment. I feel like a bit player who, having spent some time learning his lines, suddenly discovers that he is bidden to leave the stage just as the curtain goes up … The only consolation is that I shall be able to watch the next act in the drama from a safe seat in the upper circle.’ Worner thanked me again and closed the meeting so that the Ministers could go off for their group photograph. Afanassievky declined to participate on the grounds that he no longer had a flag in front of which to stand!

I have from time to time regretted my decision to leave the Diplomatic Service five years early. That regret is tempered by an awareness that when I took the decision, years previously, I could not have begun to imagine the precise circumstances of my actual departure. It is hard even now to think of any diplomatic follow-on that would not have been something of an anticlimax.

But before leaving the Service, I had to take my leave of SHAPE, of my colleagues on the Council and of the rest of NATO. The farewell remarks that I had to make on various occasions repeated arguments that I had by then been advancing for some months. They tried to look forward rather than back. They were more welcome to some (the Americans) than to others (the French and the Germans). Although dealing with the post Cold War scene, they were very much rooted in the pragmatic approach that has, I hope, been evident throughout this book. I repeated the basic messages in a talk that I gave to RUSI within a couple
of days of my final departure from Brussels on 22 January 1992, and some extracts may be worth reproducing here as a tailpiece.

**Extracts from talk to RUSI, London, January 1992**

*Out of Area.*

The [in area/out of area] dispute continues but has, to my mind, been completely overtaken by events … NATO is plainly free to act, should it so choose, wherever the security interests of the Allies are at risk … Of course the Allies’ response to crises can be provided by groups of Allies or can be subcontracted. The only proviso is that in Chapter V situations decisions are taken by the NAC and that arrangements for operational control are unambiguous. The decisive criterion must be: – how should the Allies best deploy their assets to preserve their security. In a real crisis I am fairly confident that this would in fact be the criterion, which makes theological disputes in advance of the event the more absurd – particularly since if prolonged they will damage our practical ability to respond.

*Enlargement.*

The level of co-operation which it [the North Atlantic Co-operation Council] currently offers will not satisfy indefinitely countries which hanker after full NATO membership … This fact … means that we can no longer exclude the prospect of enlarging the Alliance. Indeed we need it in order to give ourselves leverage in Eastern Europe and to keep the disillusion there at bay. The prospect may be distant and the criteria severe but the option must be there.

*US/Europe*

The challenge to governments on both sides of the Atlantic is to manage this process [reducing the US force levels in Europe] in such a way that draw down does not become disengagement. Washington has to accept that a smaller US role is still worthwhile; Europe has to accept that a substantial US role is still eminently desirable and that nothing should be done to make the continuance more difficult …

Whether, for how long and in what strength the North Americans stay in Europe is something that they themselves will decide. But the conduct of the debate on the development of a European security and defence identity is certain to have a considerable impact on that decision….
There will be such a European identity. I can perhaps say, since I have been arguing for it for many years, that it is long overdue. But we still have the choice of pursuing it in the context of a ‘European Europe’ or of a Europeanised Alliance … Many Europeans who should know better appear to favour a ‘European sovereignty’ defined precisely in terms of its distinctness from the United States. They find something demeaning in our present security relationship with the United States … This kind of reasoning may be understandable in the context of Europe’s commercial and agricultural dealings with United States. In a security context it seems to me both dangerous and old-fashioned: if national sovereignty is to be eschewed, what is the particular virtue of European sovereignty? The United States may exclude itself from Europe: we may drift, willy-nilly, towards a binary relationship between Europe and North America. But these options are fraught with risk and disadvantage … By insisting on a purely European approach, Europe risks undermining the existing arrangements without putting anything in their place … ‘Completing Europe’ is, in the decade of enlargement, an ever more theological concept where security is concerned. Anti-Americanism is a tangible and common enough motive. It is hardly a respectable one. Standing on one’s own feet is fine – but what matters is that we stand as steadily as possible, not that we stand alone.

Given the kind of risks which the Western security community is likely to face over the next decade or two … to try to insist on a European Europe seems to me verge on the eccentric. I can see no aspect of the problems ahead which will be more effectively tackled on a purely European basis than on a transatlantic basis. Moreover it is obvious that no European government or group of governments has any serious intention of replacing the vast investment which US administrations have made and continued to make in e.g. logistics, communications and anti-missile technology.

The right course to pursue must be that which will neither ostracise nor isolate the US but which will leave us with viable structures and a viable relationship in place as the US rundown goes forward. It involves Europeanising the Alliance and creating European defence policies and structures that are compatible with it … The argument between the Europeans and the Atlanticists will produce neither new forces nor added efficiency. Symbols, however evocative, will add nothing to our security.
What our governments, collectively, need for the effective management of crises in an unpredictable future is the maximum number of options and the minimum number of demarcation disputes.

The argument on out of area engagements was, at least in principle, resolved by events relatively quickly. It is now accepted that there are no actual limits to the area in which the Alliance could choose to defend its interests. How far it will in the event choose to stretch is, obviously, an altogether different question. The argument over enlargement raged for several years, in some respects it still continues, but was effectively resolved by about 1996. But on making a reality of a European defence and security identity within the Alliance, things have gone much more slowly than I would have hoped or than was needed. We are now beginning to see the price of that tardiness in terms of European military inadequacy and growing US unilateralism, founded in impatience with European weakness and declining familiarity at working level with the European allies. More and more influential Americans are referring, privately, to NATO as yesterday’s organization. There would be no great harm in this if there were any interest in a replacement institution as the vehicle to preserve the habit of security co-operation. There isn’t. The attitude now is that ‘the mission determines the coalition’. An ally is, in effect, as good as its performance last week.

I am not sure that we have yet fully appreciated the complications likely to flow from having as the world’s only super-power a democracy whose electorate is conscious that for the next generation at least their country’s power will be unchallenged by that of any other state. Voters in the United States are unlikely to be very attracted by the tolerant, generous and long-term policies that the global situation demands. Since most voters, most of the time understandably accord priority to the welfare of those immediately around them, they are a good deal more likely to favour short term, hard line, punitive approaches and to vote accordingly. Administrations and politicians that plead the exigencies of the international situation, of their allies and so forth as a reason for restraint or involvement are likely to receive short shrift at the polls. Given that the threat from global terrorism demands a common response from the liberal democracies in just the same way as did state socialism, the present
and foreseeable myopia in the United States is worrying and depressing. I myself, more out of discouragement than for any other reason, have been forced to think in terms of giving priority to increasing European defence and security integration, wherever this is feasible and on whatever terms are available. Although the auguries here are also discouraging, the alternative risks being the rather rapid erosion of any credible European capability to use force in defence of its interests. How this is going to be resolved will be the story of the next decade and beyond! I hope those responsible will learn something from history. As far as Nato is concerned, they could do worse than repeat it.
Chapter 12
Conclusion

Increasingly, the Cold War looks like a prolonged and dangerous parenthesis in world history, rather than as part of the evolutionary story of mankind. What gave it its peculiar intensity, as with the confrontation with Nazi Germany, was the ideological dimension. The conflict was less between communities fighting for a place in the sun (although it was that also) than between mutually incompatible systems. Co-existence might be possible in the short and even medium-term but was finally impossible because the mere presence and example of the one social structure represented an intolerable threat to the self-image and self-belief, and eventually therefore to the existence, of the other. (We must try to ensure that this never becomes true of the current confrontation with Islamic fundamentalism. But it is not going to be easy, if only because the fundamentalists themselves seem determined to push things in this direction.)

Given that compromise was not on the cards, and absent mutual disaster, the victory was always likely to go to the most stable, robust and economically successful society or group of societies. Future generations seem likely to take the view that (as with the defeat of Hitler and of National Socialism) the downfall of state socialism was sooner or later inevitable provided that the capitalist democracies kept their collective nerve. 1917 was a crucial year but not because of the Bolshevik revolution. It was then that American political and economic strength were fully deployed for the first time on the international stage, transforming a European conflict into a world war destined to be decided, like the two succeeding world wars, by the application of global power.

This was not, of course, how it felt to the participants. No one involved knew how long the Cold War would last. Few on the Western side had the confidence of hindsight in the ineluctability of the outcome. Indeed there were lengthy periods, even at a relatively late stage, when
pessimism was a good deal more obvious than optimism. On the Eastern side, assertions of certainty about the outcome were, almost literally, endless and confidence universally professed. But real confidence was a rarer commodity. Indeed the extent to which the citizens of the Soviet Union and, even more, of Eastern Europe knew that they were living a lie, that the constant assertions of success were false, was one of the most dangerous and corrosive aspects of the entire situation.

Against this background, was the Cold War ‘managed’ effectively? One answer, given that terminal violence was avoided and a result achieved, is that it must have been. But that does not, perhaps, take us much further. Could the enormous expenditure of resources and the huge concomitant risks have been avoided and a conclusion reached sooner or less painfully? Ignoring the fundamental futility of such speculation, I am inclined to think that over the years the West in fact played the hand rather well. If it is right that the Cold War was a zero sum conflict, then a massive military build-up may well have been unavoidable. Neither side was going to allow itself to be out built or to concede an avoidable advantage to the other. The East-West arms race was highly dangerous, absurdly exaggerated and, in terms of the diversion of resources away from more obviously useful objectives, enormously wasteful. But it was far from unique or irrational. Military investment (and the closely linked investment in space) was one area where for a long time Soviet Governments were conscious of enjoying an edge. They were in a position to direct (‘command’) resources more ruthlessly and thus to commit a higher proportion of GDP to the military budget than were their Western rivals. It was more or less inevitable that the Soviet Union would try to exploit the opportunity. It was less inevitable but ultimately unsurprising that the West should exploit its greater economic muscle to match and eventually, as its growing technological advantage came into play in the 1980s, to eclipse the potential of the Soviet military-industrial establishment. Gorbachev was reluctantly forced to acknowledge both that an unsustainable amount of money was going to the military and that however much the Soviet Union spent it could not compete. (The general, perhaps excessively rapid, de-escalation of defence expenditure that followed the ending of the Cold War gives the lie to the argument that the whole thing was a manifestation of the limitless ambition of the military industrial complexes on either side. Certainly their role was often
unhelpful. But it is easier to identify the problem than to suggest how to ameliorate it in a situation of existential conflict.)

A complicating factor was the tendency of the intelligence communities on both sides persistently, and sometimes grossly, to overrate the performance of and therefore, directly or indirectly, the threat from the opposition. This applied to both the economies in general and to weapons systems in particular. It applied to both intentions and to capabilities. It was here, perhaps, that the mechanisms built into the Cold War scenario for repetitive self-justification and for self-fulfilling prophecy are most apparent. It was almost always safer in career terms (and very possibly better in national terms) to err in the direction of exaggerating any given threat than of underestimating it. But cumulatively damaging though this process was, it was never, in my judgement a decisive consideration. Intelligence coups, and intelligence assessments, can be of great importance in tactical decisions. But where strategic policy formulation is concerned, political philosophy, prejudice, necessity and ignorance tend to be far more important. Intelligence will tend to be welcomed insofar as it confirms pre-existing concepts and rejected where it contradicts them. (Practitioners and politicians alike will deny this, for obvious reasons, but so it seems to me to have been.) Sadly, intelligence communities are in any case a good deal more sensitive than they like to admit to the political environment in which they find themselves. It is rather obvious that the gyrations of Western policy, at least as expressed in the speeches of many of its leaders, in the 1970s and 1980s owed a good deal more to subjective political factors than to any objective intelligence product. The failure of Soviet political strategists to react sensibly to the floods of intelligence available to them about Western intentions and capabilities in the same period suggests a similar moral. The propensity of both sides to attribute superior cunning, capabilities and, indeed, malevolence to the other is but another example of the extent to which what I have described earlier in this book as ‘mirror’ thinking dominates human affairs. For too many Cold War politicians and publicists it was their nightmares that set the standards.

As regards the influence of the academic and more measured journalistic communities, the larger part of their work had in my experience little or no direct impact on the day to day conduct of the struggle. Of course it mattered when, as happened regularly in the United States, aca-
demics occupied relevant positions in government. Of course it could have considerable indirect influence on the political climate and attitudes, at least on the Western side – just as academic studies have, over time, influenced the strategy and equipment of armed forces in general. American intellectuals clearly had a very direct and substantial influence, benign or otherwise, on the philosophy of deterrence, the balance of terror and so forth. But in my personal experience, whether in Geneva, at No. 10, in Vienna or in Brussels, I and those around me, as we considered day by day what to do next, paid only very limited attention to the inputs of the commentators in universities, think-tanks and the media. The contingencies of the moment, the demands of co-ordination, the need to react to the latest initiative from the opposition or to pre-empt the next, dominated one’s thinking. In the nature of things, few commentators could in any case hope to be sufficiently close to the action to make a timely or relevant contribution. At the higher levels of government, the strategic framework was provided directly by the political leadership. Lower down and in the international arena, this influence could be a good deal more tenuous. That is when, and why, the ideological consensus and the institutional binding on both sides, certainly on the Western side, became so important for the stable management of the Cold War.

It was in this rather different sense that the Cold War seems to me to have been ‘managed’ relatively sensibly. There was a consensus on both sides – conscious in some cases, unconscious in many – to allow the confrontation to play itself out rather than to bring it to a head. Beyond the territory of the two pacts and China, no holds (other than WMD) were barred. Inside that vital area, subversion and agitprop of every kind notwithstanding, restraint was to be exercised. Political leaders could and did indulge in sustained and vituperative criticism. But those responsible for day-to-day affairs proceeded on the assumption that there would be no doomsday. They continued to hack away in the undergrowth in the belief that at some point they, or their successors, would emerge from the jungle. The flesh creeping scenarios played out by both sides in their command post exercises, which occasionally still find their way into the press accompanied by much wringing of hands, do not contradict this thesis in any way. It was important to look into the abyss from time to time. It

1 Weapons of Mass Destruction.
made it that much less likely that we would stumble into disaster – by accident or design. In my own experience, the military, men like Michael Carver\(^2\) and Andrew Goodpaster,\(^3\) were more conscious than most of us of the potentially horrendous consequences of miscalculation. The idea that only the peace campaigners really understood the hideousness of nuclear war was, and is, rather offensive. To put the issue at its simplest, deterrence worked precisely because the decision makers on both sides placed an extremely high value on what they knew (better than anyone) would have been lost had deterrence broken down. The contrast with the attitudes evinced by the terrorist opposition now faced at a global level by the developed regions could hardly be more striking.

On the Western side, most of these professional intermediaries were sceptical as to the usefulness either of threats or of unilateral concessions. It is striking that the Western democracies hardly ever wavered in their commitment to a collective, consensual approach to policy formulation and implementation; and that the consequent procedures almost invariably resulted in the emergence of policies that were a mixture of support for more or less plausible military strength with appeals to more or less convincing reason. Among other things, this is a tribute to the continuity and common sense of many governmental administrations in many countries. There were certainly times when substantial elements of Western public opinion, and not necessarily the least informed sections of it, appeared ready to throw in their hand. There were, equally, times when the hot heads and ideologues appeared to be in the ascendant. But, public sound and fury notwithstanding, at the coal-face neither tendency ever appeared to have much chance of prevailing. The policy of negotiating patiently, seriously and collectively from a foundation of credible military strength, in the expectation that the economic and political robustness of the capitalist democracies would eventually be decisive, was never really challenged in all the years that I dealt with the issues.

There were, it is true, recurrent differences of style among Western governments, notably as between the Americans and the Europeans. On our side the Americans were inevitably the dominant players, in the

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\(^2\) Field Marshal Sir Michael (later Lord) Carver was Chief of the Defence Staff, 1973-76.

\(^3\) General Andrew Goodpaster was Supreme Allied Commander Europe, 1969-74.
nuclear missile sector effectively the only player – British and French aspirations notwithstanding – as the various missile negotiations demonstrated. But the confrontation was never exclusively between the superpowers and, although often tempted, the Americans could rarely afford to take the West Europeans altogether for granted. They were, by inclination, more confrontational, more unilateralist, less inclined to compromise than their Canadian neighbours or anyone else in the Alliance (except, mutatis mutandis, the French). But this arrogance, however irritating on occasion, was a natural reflection of the position of the US as very much a first among equals. It was in any case usually accompanied, at least at working level, by impressive dedication and expertise. The wonder was that there were not more episodes like the Reykjavik summit in 1986. The Europeans were often disorganized, usually less robust and, in the eyes of some, less serious than their American allies. On occasion (in the case of the French more regularly) they allowed resentment of US dominance to become apparent. But in general the differences in approach never prevented eventual agreement among them. Every serious European participant knew perfectly well how extraordinarily fortunate they were to have the US as an ally and that efforts to develop transatlantic positions were, in effect, doomed to succeed.

The peaceful resolution of the Cold War, along with the reunification of Germany and of Europe without major violence, was arguably the most important, most welcome and least costly (in an ultimate sense) of the positive politico-military achievements of the twentieth century. I would place it ahead of the creation of the European Union (including for these purposes WEU) because the Union was the child of the Cold War and would almost certainly have gone to the wall if the East-West confrontation had ended in violence. The United Nations may carry the hopes of mankind, but its record in the politico-military field is far from dazzling and its greatest challenges lie in the future not in the past. In the final crucial years of the Cold War a non-violent outcome was only possible because both sides played their roles imaginatively and responsibly. But over the two generations that the War lasted altogether, NATO was the vehicle for a collective, coherent and continuing policy that deserves a considerable part of the ultimate credit. One may wonder whether any single democratic government, or group of governments not bound by Treaty, would have been capable of such steadfastness. Of course the path
was anything but smooth. There were considerable mistakes and mishaps along the way. But the importance of multi-national organizations is that, not least because they embody considerable inertia, they are more difficult to divert or derail than smaller entities, even the United States itself. Given that the Nobel Peace Prize has subsequently been awarded to the United Nations, it may be recognized in years to come that objectively speaking there would have been a strong case for awarding the Prize to the Alliance, as an institution, alongside Gorbachev – bizarre and provocative though most people would undoubtedly have found such a suggestion at the time and, perhaps, still today.

The problems facing Soviet professionals must in many ways have been more wearisome. It is true that, whatever the underlying discord in the Warsaw Pact, they presumably faced fewer problems in developing common positions at the governmental/party level. But defending those positions in negotiation must often have been distinctly disagreeable. For a good deal of the post-war period, they must have known that time was not on their side, that their room for manoeuvre was severely limited and that a great deal of what they were saying in debate was simply untrue. I have often thought that the role of a KGB operative actively and consciously engaged in trying to subvert Western governments would have been less arduous than that of a negotiator constantly having to defend the indefensible. But what ultimately mattered was that virtually throughout the Cold War the Soviet establishment acted as though it were a status quo power. While they were less inhibited, both tactically and strategically, than the liberal democracies, they accepted that there were very definite limits to their freedom of action; that they were committed to the survival of an international process in which formally accepted obligations really did matter; and that a rational negotiation was infinitely preferable to the alternative. It was the existence of this common ground, and of a large number of dedicated individuals to administer it, that made it possible to manage the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion. We can but hope that the same turns out to be true for future, similarly existential, confrontations in the high street of the global village.
APPENDIX I

Basket III of the CSCE

Paragraphs from the Final Act of the CSCE, signed at Helsinki on 1 August 1975, covering Human Contacts and Information in the section relating to co-operation in humanitarian and other fields

1. Human Contacts

The participating States,

Considering the development of contacts to be an important element in the strengthening of friendly relations and trust among peoples,

Affirming, in relation to their present effort to improve conditions in this area, the importance they attach to humanitarian considerations,

Desiring in this spirit to develop, with the continuance of detonate, further efforts to achieve continuing progress in this field

And conscious that the questions relevant hereto must be settled by the States concerned under mutually acceptable conditions,

Make it their aim to facilitate freer movement and contacts, individually and collectively, whether privately or officially, among persons, institutions and organizations of the participating States, and to contribute to the solution of the humanitarian problems that arise in that connexion,

Declare their readiness to these ends to take measures which they consider appropriate and to conclude agreements or arrangements among themselves, as may be needed. and

1 See Cmnd 6932, pp. 225-82 for the full text of the Helsinki Final Act.
Express their intention now to proceed to the implementation of the following:

(a) Contacts and Regular Meetings on the Basis of Family Ties

In order to promote further development of contacts on the basis of family ties the participating States will favourably consider applications for travel with the purpose of allowing persons to enter or leave their territory temporarily, and on a regular basis if desired, in order to visit members of their families.

Applications for temporary visits to meet members of their families will be dealt with without distinction as to the country of origin or destination: existing requirements for travel documents and visas will be applied in this spirit. The preparation and issue of such documents and visas will be effected within reasonable time limits; cases of urgent necessity – such as serious illness or death – will be given priority treatment. They will take such steps which may be necessary to ensure that the fees for official travel documents and visas are acceptable.

They confirm that the presentation of an application concerning contacts on the basis of family ties will not modify the rights and obligations of the applicant or of members of his family.

(b) Reunification of Families

The participating States will deal in a positive and humanitarian spirit with the applications of persons who wish to be reunited with members of their family, with special attention being given to requests of an urgent character – such as requests submitted by persons who are ill or old.

They will deal with applications in this field as expeditiously as possible.

They will lower where necessary the fees charged in connexion with these applications to ensure that they are at a moderate level.

Applications for the purpose of family reunification which are not granted may be renewed at the appropriate level and will be reconsidered at reasonably short intervals by the authorities of the country of residence or destination, whichever is concerned; under
such circumstances fees will be charged only when applications are
granted.

Persons whose applications for family reunification are grant-
ed may bring with them or ship their household and personal
effects; to this end the participating States will use all possibilities
provided by existing regulations.

Until members of the same family are reunited meetings and
contacts between them may take place in accordance with the
modalities for contacts on the basis of family ties.

The participating States will support the efforts of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies concerned with the problems of family
reunification.

They confirm that the presentation of an application concern-
ing family reunification will not modify the rights and obligations
of the applicant or of members of his family.

The receiving participating State will take appropriate care
with regard to employment for persons from other participating
States who take up permanent residence in that State in connexion
with family reunification with its citizens and see that they are
afforded opportunities equal to those enjoyed by its own citizens
for education, medical assistance and social security.

(c) Marriage between Citizens of Different States
The participating States will examine favourably and on the basis of
humanitarian considerations requests for exit or entry permits
from persons who have decided to marry a citizen from another
participating State.

The processing and issuing of the documents required for the
above purposes and for the marriage will be in accordance with the
provisions accepted for family reunification.

In dealing with requests from couples from different participating
States, once married, to enable them and the minor children of
their marriage to transfer their permanent residence to a State in
which either one is normally a resident, the participating States will
also apply the provisions accepted for family reunification.
(d) Travel for Personal or Professional Reasons

The participating States intend to facilitate wider travel by their citizens for personal or professional reasons and to this end they intend in particular:

gradually to simplify and to administer flexibly the procedures for exit and entry;

to ease regulations concerning movement of citizens from the other participating States in their territory, with due regard to security requirements.

They will endeavour gradually to lower, where necessary, the fees for visas and official travel documents.

They intend to consider, as necessary, means – including, insofar as appropriate, the conclusion of multilateral or bilateral consular conventions or other relevant agreements or understandings – for the improvement of arrangements to provide consular services, including legal and consular assistance.

* * *

They confirm that religious faiths, institutions and organizations, practising within the constitutional framework of the participating States, and their representatives can, in the field of their activities, have contacts and meetings among themselves and exchange information.

(e) Improvement of Conditions for Tourism on an Individual or Collective Basis

The participating States consider that tourism contributes to a fuller knowledge of the life, culture and history of other countries, to the growth of understanding among peoples, to the improvement of contacts and to the broader use of leisure. They intend to promote the development of tourism, on an individual or collective basis, and, in particular they intend:

to promote visits to their respective countries by encouraging the
provision of appropriate facilities and the simplification and expediting of necessary formalities relating to such visits;

to increase, on the basis of appropriate agreements or arrangements where necessary, co-operation in the development of tourism, in particular by considering bilaterally possible ways to increase information relating to travel to other countries and to the reception and service of tourists and other related questions of mutual interest.

(f) Meetings among Young People

The participating States intend to further the development of contacts and exchanges among young people by encouraging:

increased exchanges and contacts on a short or long term basis among young people working, training or undergoing education through bilateral or multilateral agreements or regular programmes in all cases where it is possible;

study by their youth organizations of the question of possible agreements relating to frameworks of multilateral youth co-operation; agreements or regular programmes relating to the organization of exchanges of students, of international youth seminars, of courses of professional training and foreign language study;

the further development of youth tourism and the provision to this end of appropriate facilities;

the development, where possible, of exchanges, contacts and co-operation on a bilateral or multilateral basis between their organizations which represent wide circles of young people working, training or undergoing education;

awareness among youth of the importance of developing mutual understanding and of strengthening friendly relations and confidence among peoples.
(g) **Sport**
In order to expand existing links and co-operation in the field of sport the participating States will encourage contacts and exchanges of this kind, including sports meetings and competitions of all sorts, on the basis of the established international rules, regulations and practice.

(h) **Expansion of Contacts**
By way of further developing contacts among governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations and associations, including women’s organizations, the participating States will facilitate the convening of meetings as well as travel by delegations, groups and individuals.

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### 2. Information

**The participating States,**

*Conscious of the need for an ever wider knowledge and understanding of the various aspects of life in other participating States,*

*Acknowledging the contribution of this process to the growth of confidence between peoples,*

*Desiring, with the development of mutual understanding between the participating States and with the further improvement of their relations, to continue further efforts towards progress in this field,*

*Recognising the importance of the dissemination of information from the other participating States and of a better acquaintance with such information,*

*Emphasising therefore the essential and influential role of the press, radio, television, cinema and news agencies and of the journalists working in these fields,*

*Make it their aim to facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of infor-
mation of all kinds, to encourage co-operation in the field of information and the exchange of information with other countries, and to improve the conditions under which journalists from one participating State exercise their profession in another participating State, and

Express their intention in particular:

(a) Improvement of the Circulation of, Access to, and Exchange of Information

   (i) Oral Information
       To facilitate the dissemination of oral information through the encouragement of lectures and lecture tours by personalities and specialists from the other participating States, as well as exchanges of opinions at round table meetings, seminars, symposia, summer schools, congresses and other bilateral and multilateral meetings.

   (ii) Printed Information
       To facilitate the improvement of the dissemination, on their territory, of newspapers and printed publications, periodical and non-periodical, from the other participating States. For this purpose:

       they will encourage their competent firms and organizations to conclude agreements and contracts designed gradually to increase the quantities and the number of titles of newspapers and publications imported from the other participating States. These agreements and contracts should in particular mention the speediest conditions of delivery and the use of the normal channels existing in each country for the distribution of its own publications and newspapers, as well as forms and means of payment agreed between the parties making it possible to achieve the objectives aimed at by these agreements and contracts;

       where necessary, they will take appropriate measures to achieve the above objectives and to implement the provisions
contained in the agreements and contracts.

To contribute to the improvement of access by the public to periodical and non-periodical printed publications imported on the bases indicated above. In particular:

they will encourage an increase in the number of places where these publications are on sale;

they will facilitate the availability of these periodical publications during congresses, conferences, official visits and other international events and to tourists during the season;

they will develop the possibilities for taking out subscriptions according to the modalities particular to each country;

they will improve the opportunities for reading and borrowing these publications in large public libraries and their reading rooms as well as in university libraries.

They intend to improve the possibilities for acquaintance with bulletins of official information issued by diplomatic missions and distributed by those missions on the basis of arrangements acceptable to the interested parties.

(iii) Filmed and Broadcast Information

To promote the improvement of the dissemination of filmed and broadcast information. To this end:

they will encourage the wider showing and broadcasting of a greater variety of recorded and filmed information from the other participating States, illustrating the various aspects of life in their countries and received on the basis of such agreements or arrangements as may be necessary between the organizations and firms directly concerned;

they will facilitate the import by competent organizations
and firms of recorded audio-visual material from the other participating States.

The participating States note the expansion in the dissemination of information broadcast by radio, and express the hope for the continuation of this process, so as to meet the interest of mutual understanding among peoples and the aims set forth by this Conference.

(b) Co-operation in the Field of Information

To encourage co-operation in the field of information on the basis of short or long term agreements or arrangements. In particular:

they will favour increased co-operation among mass media organizations, including press agencies, as well as among publishing houses and organizations;

they will favour co-operation among public or private, national or international radio and television organizations, in particular through the exchange of both live and recorded radio and television programmes, and through the joint production and the broadcasting and distribution of such programmes;

they will encourage meetings and contacts both between journalists’ organizations and between journalists from the participating States;

they will view favourably the possibilities of arrangements between periodical publications as well as between newspapers from the participating States, for the purpose of exchanging and publishing articles;

they will encourage the exchange of technical information as well as the organization of joint research and meetings devoted to the exchange of experience and views between experts in the field of the press, radio and television.
Appendix I – Basket III of the CSCE

(c) Improvement of Working Conditions for Journalists

The participating States, desiring to improve the conditions under which journalists from one participating State exercise their profession in another participating State, intend in particular to:

examine in a favourable spirit and within a suitable and reasonable time scale requests from journalists for visas;

grant to permanently accredited journalists of the participating States, on the basis of arrangements, multiple entry and exit visas for specified periods;

facilitate the issue to accredited journalists of the participating States of permits for stay in their country of temporary residence and, if and when these are necessary, of other official papers which it is appropriate for them to have;

ease, on a basis of reciprocity, procedures for arranging travel by journalists of the participating States in the country where they are exercising their profession, and to provide progressively greater opportunities for such travel, subject to the observance of regulations relating to the existence of areas closed for security reasons;

ensure that requests by such journalists for such travel receive, in so far as possible, an expeditious response, taking into account the time scale of the request;

increase the opportunities for journalists of the participating States to communicate personally with their sources, including organizations and official institutions;

grant to journalists of the participating States the right to import, subject only to its being taken out again, the technical equipment (photographic, cinematographic, tape recorder, radio and television) necessary for the exercise of their profession;*

enable journalists of the other participating States, whether perma-
nently or temporarily accredited, to transmit completely, normally and rapidly by means recognized by the participating States to the information organs which they represent, the results of their professional activity, including tape recordings and undeveloped film, for the purpose of publication or of broadcasting on the radio or television.

The participating States reaffirm that the legitimate pursuit of their professional activity will neither render journalists liable to expulsion nor otherwise penalise them. If an accredited journalist is expelled, he will be informed of the reasons for this act and may submit an application for re-examination of his case.

* While recognizing that appropriate local personnel are employed by foreign journalists in many instances, the participating States note that the above provisions would be applied subject to the observance of the appropriate rules, to persons from the other participating States, who are regularly and professionally engaged as technicians, photographers or cameramen of the press, radio, television or cinema.
Appendix II

The Rime of the Ancient Diplomat (or CSCE Stage III)*

It is an ancient Diplomat
And he stoppeth one like me
‘By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp’st thou me?

The doors of peace are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May’st hear the merry din.’

He holds me with his skinny hand,
‘There was a group,’ quoth he.
‘Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!’
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds me with his glittering eye.
I, Common Man, stood still,
And listen like a three years’ child.
The Diplomat, he hath his will.

I, Common Man, sat on a stone:
And taketh off my hat,
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Diplomat.

* Sir Michael Alexander, who included this poem in his typescript, thought that it might have been the work of a Canadian diplomat. However, despite enquiries in Ottawa, it has not proved possible to determine authorship.
II
‘The plane was cheered, the airport cleared,
Merrily did we rise
Above the kirk, above the hill,
And soared off in the skies.

The sun came up: to right and left
Where ‘ere the eye did see,
And it shone bright, nor in the night
Went down into the sea.

Shone on and on through every day,
Through midnight until noon-‘.
The Common Man here beat his breast.
He’d heard the loud bassoon.

The Common Man he beat his breast,
And rose, but then he sat.
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Diplomat:

‘And then the keen words came, and they
Were vigorous and strong:
They sounded and our thoughts gave wings.
And chased us south along.

With beating hearts, though furrowed brow,
As we pursued – we knew not how-
Our task to make it clear that now:
Détente was here and in its tread
Came hope and peace: joy sans surcease
And southward aye we fled.
III
And then there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And texts, chest-high, came floating by,
As cool as emerald.

So often vexed, the careful texts
Took on a dismal sheen;
Nor shapes of sense, no matter whence,
The words were all between.

The words were here, the words were there,
The words were all around;
They threatened and growled, and roared and howled.
Like noises in a swound.

Day after day. day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion,
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Détente, détente was every where
And all the texts did shrink;
Détente! We knew ‘twas in the air,
Had we but time to think.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Though thirty five were we,
And never a saint took pity on
Our souls in agony.
IV
But then came dawn – we took our pens,
And clustered fit and able,
Sweet sounds rose slowly from our mouths
And rested on the table.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Swiftly, swiftly flew our words
With care and caution too:
We caught one here, we caught one there,
And soon we had a few.

V
Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The midnight sun I see?
The Pope, Herr Schmidt, and Leonid
On streets of Helsinki?

A marching-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light.

This marching-band, each waved his hand
And voice did they impart -
Their voice; and oh! the silence shrank
’Twas music on my heart.
VI
Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till that ghostly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
‘Tis follow-up each place I see,
I know all men that must hear me;
To them my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door?
The VIP’s are there,
While in this garden-bower I hide
From music spoken there:
And hark the little conf’rence bell,
Which biddeth all to prayer.

O Common Man! this soul hath been
Alone, with nought but me,
So lonely ‘twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to
sweeter than the conference
‘Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the hall
With a goodly company!
To walk together to the hall,
And all together reach,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, young dips, and loving friends
Blick and Mendeleevitch

Farewell, farewell: but this I tell
To thee, thou Common-Man!
He liveth well, who loveth well
From Man to Common-Man’.
Appendix III

PARITY LOST*

Francis Richards¹

Arms and Manpower I sing, and lest the Theme
Too Lofty for my Modest Talents seem,
Come, lovely NATO, lead the Everian troop
Of martial spirits to my Drafting Group;
With timely guidance, Nymph, my thoughts inspire
And teach the hand that tunes the untutored lyre!

Thy broad wings, steel-girt Goddess, swiftly bear
Thee over towns and forests through the air,
O’er snow-clad Taunus, and the rushing Rhine
Beyond the Elbe and Oder-Neisse line,
From where the Stolid Dutchman guards his Dyke
To Lodz, and where the morning Sunbeams strike
The crests of Tatra; and from Pripet’s fen
To Friesland’s meadows, and then back again,
Tell all, fair Harbinger; do not conceal
What thy all-seeing National Means reveal -

* In the opinion of Sir Clive Rose, who kindly supplied the explanatory footnotes, this epic verse ‘was one of the best things to come out of the first three years of the talks’. Sir Clive was UK Head of Delegation to the MBFR talks, 1973-76, and UK Permanent Representative to Nato, 1979-82.

¹ In 2003 Sir Francis Richards was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Gibraltar.
How stands the Balance between East and West?
Are the scales level? Or is one depressed?
Could our defences stand the brutal shock
Of Eastern wolves descending on our Flock?
But stay! Why do thy tattered garments gape,
Inadequate to hide thy Beauteous Shape?
Rubescent cheek and downcast eye proclaim
Thee as the victim of some deed of shame.
Speak, fair Everia; for my spirit longs
To dress thy wounds, and vindicate thy wrongs!

Then speaks the Goddess, fighting back her tears,
'In deference to your somewhat Tender Years
And lack of Clearance, I shall exercise
Some Self'-Restraint, and subtly Bowdlerize
My Tale; some circumstances you would find
Repugnant to the Chaste and Modest Mind.
Now hearken: first I bent my hapless course
To make inspection of the Western force.
All through the day the Luneberg Heath beat
With clash of armour and with marching feet;
The proud parade those fearsome Teutons led,
Rank on brave rank, with Leber\(^2\) at their head;
Then Rumsfeld\(^3\) marched his Grizzled Legions on,
With Lance and Pershing, and with Honest John;
The Rhenish Army, with its Ancient Gear,
And dwindling British Cohorts next appear;
Thousands more, to sounds of fife and drum,
From Benelux and Canada there come –
A bold array! What danger could impend
When such as these our Liberties defend?

\(^2\) Federal German Defence Minister.
\(^3\) Donald Rumsfeld, US Permanent Representative to the North Atlantic Council, 1973-76. In 2001 he was appointed US Secretary of Defense.
\(^4\) NATO codenames for Soviet military aircraft and missiles.
Alas! Too soon I laid my fears to rest,
For as I turned my back upon the West,
And Eastward sped across a low'ring sky
A darker scene presented to my eye;
Black clouds rose up to bar my passage, chased
By chill winds from Siberia's icy waste.
The birds fell silent, and fast took their flight,
Yielding their place to creatures of the night,
Foul shapes of Evil, reeking of Fresh Blood;
Foxbat and Flogger, Fitter, Frog and Scud,
Fishbed and Faggot, Ganef, Grail and Bear⁴
Gibbered and shrieked in the putrescent air.
Beneath - beyond the bristling hedge of steel,
Cleaving the Continent from head to heel,
That rings the Workers' Paradise about
To keep the Workers in, and others out -
I saw Pavlovsky's Slavic Vanguard dread,
The Muscovitish myriads, outspread,
A Horde unnumbered as the grains of sand
In Gobi, or on Blackpool's Tropic Strand -
A motley million, drawn from near and far;
Buryat and Bulgar, Prole and Commissar,
The smooth Armenian and the brown Uzbek,
The rancid Kirghiz and the humbled Czech,
Kazakhs and Tadzhiks, Latvians and Huns,
Tundra and taiga yield their choicest sons,
Tartary's jetsam, gathered by the tide
And cast up on the continent's far side;
Forces which to our own as well compare
As hawk to plover, or as hound to hare.
Most prominent among their serried ranks
Mine eyes descry the dread Main Battle Tanks
Metallic Pachyderms, whose Toughened Hide
Can turn oncoming Weaponry aside,
Whose Mighty Gun and Caterpillar Track
Make them a fearsome weapon of Attack,
Monsters descended lineally from those
Which braved with Hannibal the Alpine snows
And fought the Macedonian, when of yore
He strove with Porus by the Indus shore.

Now part the ranks, as once the Red Sea’s wave
Passage to Israel’s fleeing children gave;
What champion can it be that takes the field?
The trumpets sound, and Brezhnev stands revealed:
That fabled chieftain and commander staunch,
Hardened of Sinew and Immense of Paunch,
He comes, with Foul Intent and Visage Fell,
Like Cerberus before the gates of Hell.
Too late I knew the peril of my plight,
Too late I turned to save myself by flight;
Through wood and plough, Collective Farm and mire
Splashed by mud and rent by thorn and briar,
By plain and puszta, over stile and hedge,
At first I kept a Qualitative Edge.
Some time the unequal steeplechase I led,
Though close behind I heard the heavy tread
Of lusty Brezhnev and his Ribald Crew
As foot by foot they ever nearer drew.
I slipped: they seized me: and what then befell
No power on earth can move my lips to tell;
Mine not to draw aside the Kindly Veil
That night cast o’er the ending of my tale.

Long did thy Nymph endure their Bestial Rule;
But when at length the fires of Lust grew cool
They rose, like Glutted Vultures from a Bone
And left me, bruised, dishonoured and alone.
Full long I wept, and cursed the fatal slip
That gave me to that Forced Relationship
With Brezhnev’s myrmidons; a Nameless Whore,
They Maiden Goddess maiden is no more.
What tears, what prayers can e’er restore to me
My virgin treasure, spotless PARITY?
Oh Parity! Sole pledge of Lasting Peace,
Whose name is potent to make Discord cease!
By SALT experts acclaimed the brightest gem
That gleams in Détente’s dazzling diadem!
Which nips th’ incipient Conflict in the bud,
That Mars may howl in vain for human blood,
And Zeus’s nuclear Bolt rest in his hand
While rosy Pax prevails throughout the land,
And SACEUR lays aside his idle blade
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade.
My Parity once lost, how can there be
A real enhancement of stability?’

She paused, and cries of grief distressed the air
As NATO gave full rein to her despair;
Sobbing, she laid her lovely head to rest
On Dr. Luns’s\(^5\) sympathetic breast.
Then blazed the lightning from his wrathful eye
As to the Goddess Luns returned reply:
‘Hush, Wronged Enchantress! Wipe away thy tears!
Vain is thy grief; unfounded are thy fears.
Still in thy service beat some Valiant Hearts,
Practised in War and Diplomatic Arts;
To their assistance let us have recourse,
To win by guile what has been lost to force.
For thou shalt have thy Parity again
When Terence Wood\(^6\) shall come to Dunsinane!’

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\(^5\) Dr Joseph Luns, Netherlands Foreign Minister, 1952-71, and Secretary General of Nato, 1971-84.

\(^6\) Assistant Head of the FCO’s Western Organisations Department, 1973-77. British Ambassador to Austria, 1992-96.
At Luns’s word, the call goes far and wide
To summon NATO’s champions to her side.
First honest Resor,⁷ learned in the law,
As Cincinnatus in those days of yore
Sped at the Senate’s call to succour Rome,
Forsakes the plough, and leaves his prairie home;
With his Achitophel, the wily Dean’,⁸
He treads the road to once-imperial Wien.
Next Behrends⁹ leaves the margin of the Rhine,
With Hofman¹⁰ and his store of Nahe wine;
And Cagiati,¹¹ Nimrod of the Alps,
Turns from the chase to hunt for Russian scalps.
And Adriaenssen¹² his resolve attests
To spice the Group’s discourse with Gallic Jests;
Winter¹³ and Vos¹⁴ this Band of Heroes swell
With Spyridakis,¹⁵ Grande¹⁶ and Türel.¹⁷

But stay! What gallant troop from Albion’s shore
Sets sail, in dazzling panoply of war,
And braves the buffets of the Northern sea?
’Tis ROSE,¹⁸ the flower of Whitehall’s Chivalry,

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⁷ Stanley Resor, US Head of Delegation to the talks.
⁸ Jonathan Dean, US Deputy Head of Delegation.
⁹ Wolfgang Behrends, Federal German Head of Delegation, and later Federal German Ambassador to Canada.
¹⁰ Wilfred Hofman, Federal German Deputy Head of Delegation.
¹¹ Italian Ambassador to Austria and nominally Head of Delegation to the talks. In practice Italian interests in the talks were represented by the Counsellor in Italy’s Vienna Embassy.
¹² Belgian Head of Delegation.
¹³ Luxembourg Head of Delegation.
¹⁴ Netherlands Head of Delegation.
¹⁵ Greek Head of Delegation, and subsequently Greek Ambassador to Cyprus.
¹⁶ George Grande, Canadian Head of Delegation. Later Canadian Ambassador to South Africa.
¹⁷ Turkish Head of Delegation.
¹⁸ Sir Clive Rose.
Destined to shine in Vienna's far-famed fight,
And, having had his Day, to be a Knight.
Others there are in Rose's train, whose names
Are ever on the lips of Russian dames,
Who use them to intimidate each child
That shows an inclination to be wild:
In case it be, as we have been assured,
True that the Pen be mightier than the Sword,
With devious Gillmore,19 skilled in Soviet Lore,
And sapient Mehew,20 our success is sure:
While if the Sword be mightier than the Pen,
Why, Pratt21 is with us, and we win again!
Oh Concourse of Great Minds! Excess of Brain!
When shall Europa see thy like again!
Let Brezhnev tremble! Let Podgorny quail!
The cause of Right must surely now prevail!
My task is done: mine not to sing the scene
Of what transpires behind locked doors in Wien.
Seek not with hands profane to draw aside
The Veil of Secrecy ordained to hide
The Hofburg's Mysteries. Its weekly Rites
Are only for the eyes of Acolytes;
Remember Pentheus, and the fate of him
Whom raving Maenads once tore limb from limb
Because with impious gaze he dared to spy
On what was not intended for his eye.
(But he who yearns for Knowledge nonetheless
Has but to scan the columns of the Press.)
And now my patient Muse I may release
To sing of Love, and other toys of peace,
Of Nymphs and Shepherds, Daffodils and Larks,
The Joys of Spring in green suburban parks,
And wait the day when she shall be retained
To sing the Lay of PARITY REGAINED.22

19 David (later Sir David) Gillmore, Head of Chancery and UK Deputy Head of Delegation, 1975-78. Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the FCO, 1991-93.
20 Peter Mehew, Counsellor (MoD) and member of UK Delegation, 1975-77.
21 Brigadier Oliver Pratt, Defence Adviser, UK Delegation, 1973-76.
22 Sadly, at least as far as I know, she never was summoned back! Michael Alexander.
Managing the Cold War

Acclaim for Michael Alexander

The Lord Kerr of Kinlochard, Head of the UK Diplomatic Service, 1997-2002

Here we see again the dazzling sheen we so much miss, the agility in argument, the elegance in exposition. And here too we see how firmly held – though constantly re-tested – were the convictions from which he spoke. Clarity rooted in, and refined from, complexity.

Sir Rodric Braithwaite, UK Ambassador to the Soviet Union/Russian Federation, 1988-1992

He had what few officials have: a genuinely creative mind, combined with a determination – within the limits of propriety – to see his ideas on policy adopted by ministers. He was a man of penetrating intelligence, lucid and forceful to an extent that could sometimes seem overbearing to his interlocutors. He took no prisoners in argument, and was never less than formidably effective in action.

Professor Christopher Coker, London School of Economics

These are the reflections of a man who for much of his working life found himself at the center of the diplomatic containment of the Soviet Union. His conclusion is that the West played its hand rather well. And he should know for he was one of the principal players. To use his own naval metaphor, he helped steer the alliance on a sensible course to a by no means inevitable conclusion.

Bridget Kendall, Diplomatic Correspondent, BBC

Even for those of us who remember that period, his detailed and frank account of what it was like backstage, battling to overcome bureaucratic and ideological obstacles at some of the key negotiations of that era, is a revelation.

The central issues of Michael Alexander’s career were the central issues of his time: the confrontation with the Soviet Union, and the instruments of defence and diplomacy by which this could best be managed. These issues are the subject of the book which he left behind him and which is here presented to the reader. The book blends rigorous analysis, personal reminiscence, detailed accounts of negotiations and policy discussions, and original documents, including a series of penetrating private letters on the Soviet Union and the future of the Cold War that he wrote in the 1980s to the then Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher.
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