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The Warsaw Pact, the German Question
and the Birth of the CSCE Process,
1961-1970

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Small Steps towards Big Changes

The 1960s gave rise to many radical worldwide changes, not least the spectacular transformation of East-West relations. The overture to this era, however, was determined by one of the gravest international crises of the Cold War period. The history of the Berlin crisis resulting in the construction of the Berlin Wall became a well-studied symbol of the Cold War. What is much less known, however, is the fact that the Eastern bloc misinterpreted many of the implications the conflict entailed. While the members of the Warsaw Pact were not worried about a direct military conflict with the West, they believed that the Berlin crisis would lead to the development of enduring tension in international politics and, moreover, to an East-West 'economic war' which would encumber the development of the Soviet bloc's key Western economic relations. It was also expected that the greatest loss would be suffered in trade with the FRG and that it would be especially difficult to find substitutes. This was a gloomy prospect especially for Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania – those Warsaw Pact countries that had no serious unsettled issues with the FRG. By this time the Soviet bloc was clearly divided into two sub-blocs as far as the German question was concerned: the first one included those states for whom security

was the priority (the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Poland), while in the second one were the countries mentioned above who had a serious interest in economic co-operation, increasing trade and acquiring the latest technologies. Therefore, the latter were the primary victims of the lack of diplomatic relations with West Germany, and they found it increasingly difficult to support the line taken by the 'security-concerned' sub-bloc. In these countries it was more and more difficult to explain to the public why their governments could not establish diplomatic relations with their most important Western economic partner.¹ This dilemma was addressed by János Kádár at the HSWP CC session on 1 August 1961, where he stated that approximately 30 per cent of the country's foreign trade was conducted with Western countries, and one quarter of that percentage represented trade with the FRG.² Indeed, Kádár had already remarked on the importance of this trade relation two months earlier: 'This is what the German issue means to us.'³

As is well known, no such 'economic war', not even a general Western embargo followed the construction of the Berlin Wall. On the contrary, the economic relations of the WP members with the FRG even gained significance in the following years. This was mainly due to a slowly changing attitude in West Germany's leadership. The first step on the road to a new *Ostpolitik* was the exchange of commercial missions with Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria in the fall of 1963, resulting in a noticeable improvement in economic relations in the following years.⁴

The Beginning of the CSCE Process, 1964–1966

The German question remained a crucial element during the process that led to the summoning of a conference on European security. Thus, the idea to campaign for an all-European security conference re-emerged just a decade after the aborted initiative of Khrushchev and Molotov in 1954. This time it began as a project of the Polish leadership, who had addressed the issue at the end of 1964. On 14 December 1964, Poland's foreign minister Adam Rapacki asked the UN General Assembly to convene a European security conference that included the United States.

The proposal was officially put forward at the Warsaw session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact in January 1965 without any special preparation or previous consultation with the member states. Although the issue was not originally on the meeting's agenda, the participants supported the improvised proposal unanimously. However, this call for a conference⁵ – although it may be considered as the starting point of the process eventually leading up to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act – was under-represented in the document. This was due to the chaotic nature of the PCC session held just a few months after the fall of Khrushchev – incidentally the

first PCC meeting in the history of the alliance where real debates took place among the representatives of the member states. At the meeting, numerous issues, considered important at the time, were discussed, most notably the Eastern bloc's reaction to Western plans for a multilateral nuclear force.⁶ Consequently, the declaration – besides stating that in this case the Warsaw Pact 'would be forced to carry out the necessary defense measures'⁷ – put forward a series of confidence-building proposals, such as the establishment of a nuclear free zone in Central Europe, signing a non-aggression pact with the NATO countries, a proposal to keep the two Germanys nuclear free, etc.⁸

Later in 1965, Soviet diplomacy claimed the prerogative over an eventual ESC, and from thereon the issue – in close correlation with Moscow's endeavours to settle the German question – became the central problem of the period lasting until the mid-1970s. Consequently, the next session of the Warsaw Pact PCC, held in Bucharest in July 1966, was fully devoted to the issue of the security conference. The session was prepared by an unusually intense process of multilateral co-ordination, including the longest foreign ministers' session in the history of the alliance, which lasted for two weeks.⁹ The Soviets had an ambitious plan for the PCC meeting: on the one hand they wanted to carry out the organisational transformation of the alliance that had been proposed by several member states like Poland and Hungary for a long time, and at the same time they wanted to issue a powerful declaration on the security conference itself. Moscow's priority was the latter, however, and this was clearly shown by a last-minute deal with Romania. Because Bucharest opposed any reforms, its support for an ESC had to be bought by taking political and military reforms off the agenda.¹⁰ The unanimous declaration called upon the continental leaders to start preparatory talks for a conference on European security.

At the same time, the demands of the Eastern bloc were also spelt out: the West should accept the existence of the two German states, and the FRG should not only give up its claim that it solely represented the German people but also accept its Eastern borders. In addition, the document – due to political pressure from Romania – demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of the European states, the elimination of foreign military bases and called for the simultaneous dissolution of the two military-political alliances. This resolution of the Bucharest session of the WP PCC constituted the Eastern bloc's first serious initiative concerning the institutional settlement of East-West relations, and, at the same time, it also represented the first important step on the road to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

Western reactions to the declaration were not entirely unfavourable. However, the conditions for convening the conference could not yet be accepted by most of the states concerned. Nevertheless, these demands were basically of a *defensive* nature, and they were far from irrational. This was clearly illustrated by the fact that just a few years later, between 1970 and 1973, during the final

settlement of the German question, the FRG and the West generally accepted the conditions established in Bucharest. At the same time, the Bucharest declaration had very harsh anti-American and anti-West German overtones, and the text quite overtly called upon Western European countries to stem US influence.¹¹ However, in reality, acquiring the co-operation of these two states constituted the key factor for a successful realisation of a European security conference. The Bucharest declaration proved to be somewhat premature as it did not lead to the immediate preparation of the conference. After considering the positive or at least neutral responses from Western countries, the Soviets came to the conclusion that a grand and comprehensive political campaign would have to be launched to convince Western European societies and governments of the merits of the undertaking.

In influencing the Western public, Moscow primarily relied on the assistance of communist parties in Western Europe. However, following de-Stalinisation, the rise of Maoism and the rise of Euro-communist tendencies, unity in the old sense was already a thing of the past as far as the Western European communist parties were concerned. Eventually, all participants attending the conference of the European Communist and Workers' Parties held in April 1967 in Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia accepted the Soviet proposal, and the declaration issued after the conference unanimously endorsed the call for a pan-European security conference. From this moment until March 1969, the Bucharest appeal and the Karlovy Vary declaration formed the basis of Eastern endeavours to popularise the necessity for the security conference.

In order to influence political and governmental circles in Western Europe, the Soviets resorted to a decentralised policy. After the Bucharest appeal, Moscow started to urge other members of the alliance to engage in bilateral negotiations with Western European countries to communicate the significance of the new initiative for the future of East-West relations. The main goal of the campaign launched by the Soviet bloc was to promote the Soviet's most important strategic goal: that is, to convene the European security conference, thereby ratifying the European status quo that had been established after the Second World War. An important by-product of this strategy was that the Eastern and Central European states had a chance to strengthen their Western relations 'legally'. While these states were widely perceived as 'Soviet satellites' up to the early 1960s, by the end of the decade – with the exception of the GDR – they were able to present themselves as equal partners in international politics. This was not simply a result of the unfolding détente process but a qualitatively new status acquired by these countries in their own right that was made possible by a series of bilateral negotiations with Western states with the aim of paving the way for the European security conference.

Earlier contacts with Western states had been bilateral contacts in the classical sense, focusing primarily on economic relations, while the representation

of the Eastern bloc had remained the prerogative of the Soviet Union. But from now on, as the Soviet leadership tried to advance the role of their allies in world politics, Moscow itself had come to regard them as partners, albeit only in a limited sense. This development resulted in unprecedented international activities of some of the East-Central European countries – especially Poland, Hungary and Romania – which in turn promoted their emancipation both within their own alliance and in East-West relations in general.

These ESC-related negotiations contributed to easing international tension, gradually augmented the mutual trust between the representatives of the two sides, and promoted the development of a common European conscience in the long run. They prepared these countries for the role they would later play in the process initiated by the WP PCC's Budapest declaration of March 1969. As a result, the European allies of the Soviet Union participated in the preparatory negotiations of the Helsinki conference not simply as mere proxies of Soviet policy but in several cases – and in many areas – they acted as independent entities, often playing an important role in shaping the overall process.

The Soviet Bloc, European Security and the German Question, 1966–1969

The first spectacular step of the slowly but permanently changing West German *Ostpolitik* was the issuance of a so-called peace memorandum in March 1966 in which the government declared its intent to renounce the use of force in international relations and expressed its constructive attitude concerning the development of East-West relations. At the summit meeting of the leaders of WP's member parties held in Moscow from 16–22 October 1966, Gomulka proposed a meeting among the WP's foreign ministers in order to negotiate about a common standpoint on the West German initiative.¹²

Romania, however, did not support the idea of such talks, while the Soviet leadership had no intention of convening the meeting without the Romanians in order to maintain the appearance of unity at any cost. However, within a few months WP member states – unprepared as they were – had to deal with a new and far more serious *Ostpolitik* from Bonn.

The new West German Grand Coalition formed in 1966 – in which the SPD acquired a governing position for the first time – initiated secret preliminary talks with four countries, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, in the fall of 1966 in order to establish diplomatic relations with these states. This step indicated a radical turning point in the foreign policy of the FRG since it would clearly have meant giving up the Hallstein doctrine. In return for this significant concession, Bonn asked these governments to consider the 'Moscow model' as the basis for opening official relations without any preconditions.¹³ In this way,

Eastern European partner states were expected to tacitly accept Bonn's long-time claims concerning the German question. A consultative meeting was urgently required, but Romanian opposition prevented it. Thus, the countries concerned – after consultations with Moscow – made their decisions independently. Hungary informed all other WP member states – not only Moscow – about its negotiations with Bonn, receiving ambiguous responses, if any at all. No objections were raised and available evidence also indicates that the Soviet leadership itself was prepared to consent to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the FRG and the four WP member states concerned.

The Hungarian leadership considered this as an act of approval and therefore the HSWP PC session on 10 January 1967 accepted a resolution to commence official negotiations with the FRG. Rolf Lahr, the Under-Secretary of the Auswärtiges Amt visited Budapest from 23–26 January 1967 as a result of which the Hungarian leadership was ready to establish diplomatic relations. However, without any prior consultations with other WP members, it was suddenly announced on 31 January that Romania and the FRG were to open diplomatic relations.

At this time, an extraordinary meeting of WP foreign ministers was summoned to negotiate the developing crisis. The Hungarian foreign minister took part in the conference with the mandate that an agreement had to be reached on how other member states might open diplomatic relations later on. Instead, under pressure from the GDR and Poland, assisted by the Soviets, without any prior information, and presented with an ultimatum, the participants had to accept a secret protocol. The protocol stated that the conditions were not ripe yet for establishing relations with the FRG. In addition, East Germany and Poland insisted that the FRG should be forced to recognise the German Democratic Republic as soon as possible, to renounce the claim that it solely represented the German people and to recognise the European borders settled after the Second World War.¹⁴ The Hungarian leadership was shocked that it had been compelled to walk into this trap. During the HSWP PC session of 13 February 1967, a vehement debate developed about what could be done about this humiliating situation.¹⁵ It is no exaggeration to state that this represented the most serious falling-out between the Hungarian leadership and the alliance since 1956.

Eventually the HSWP PC decided that in order to maintain the unity of the WP, the parties concerned should be informed about the special Hungarian position: while the HSWP did not agree with the main thesis of the protocol and while they maintained that further consultations on the issue were required, they would loyally carry out the joint resolution accepted in Warsaw. As a result of this, Hungary became the last country of the Eastern bloc to establish official relations with the FRG in 1973 – following the general settlement of the German question in the previous years.

In a paradoxical way, however, we can conclude that in this case the rigid and persistent standpoint of the GDR and Poland was eventually justified by the course of history as the results they had been hoping for were achieved in what turned out to be a relatively short period of time. If the FRG had opened relations with these three countries along the lines described, it is more than likely that such a development would have significantly affected the budding process of the general settlement of the German question. Even the very outcome of the West German elections in September 1969 – that is the victory of the SPD – could have been called into question; indeed, it could have rightly been argued that if it had been possible to achieve such an important diplomatic victory in the field of *Ostpolitik* by applying a flexible policy but without making basic concessions, this could have been a model for a successful FRG strategy in the future as well. This in turn might well have influenced the entire process of détente.

Conflict and Unity: The Victory of the Unconditional Doctrine at the WP PCC Meeting in Budapest, March 1969

Regarding the considerations which made the Soviet leadership issue a call for a European security conference at the Budapest meeting, accessible evidence remains inconclusive. Several important developments had taken place since the beginning of 1969 – especially prior to the meeting of the PCC – each of which might have contributed to the decision. Richard Nixon, the newly elected president of the United States, took office in January 1969. During the election campaign, Nixon had already indicated that he wanted to improve Soviet-American relations,¹⁶ and in February a 'confidential channel' was established between the two governments during yet another crisis over Berlin.¹⁷ Since the Americans were willing to add European affairs to the agenda of bilateral negotiations, chances for a conference on European security seemed to improve.

Only two weeks before the Budapest meeting, on 2 March 1969, an armed incident at the Ussuri River posed the danger of open military conflict between the Soviet Union and China. With its Eastern borders severely threatened, it was only logical that Moscow wished to secure its Western frontiers by codifying the status quo reached after the Second World War. The main stumbling block to this endeavour had up to that time been the West German government. However, on 5 March 1969 the Social-Democrat Gustav Heinemann was elected president of the FRG. Although his post was not comparable to that of the American or the French president, the fact that he was elected half a year before the general elections in September 1969 created a good opportunity for Willy Brandt to form a government in anticipation of an SPD-FDP majority in the elections. As foreign minister of the Grand Coalition government that

took office in 1966, Brandt had already given ample evidence of his will to improve relations with the East-Central European states. Thus, in March 1969, the Soviets were faced with immediate pressure in the East and opportunity in the West. These factors may have strengthened the belief of the Soviet leaders that the upcoming conference of the WP PCC in Budapest provided a good opportunity to test the ground for a European security conference. Of course this approach also required the approval of the other allies, who could be persuaded by representing this idea in terms of their own national interests. The Romanians were to be flattered by a repetition of the Bucharest declaration, this time calling for a security conference without any conditions, which was also welcomed by the Hungarian hosts. Thus, the Poles and the East Germans supported the project (and concessions to the Romanians) in order to maintain unity within the Warsaw Pact, because for them a unified Soviet bloc remained the best prospect for successfully forcing the FRG to accept their position as the solution of the German question.

After all this preparation, the merely two-hour long meeting of the Political Consultative Committee ran according to plan. The session was chaired by Alexander Dubček, and only two comments were made on the speech delivered by Marshall Ivan Jakubovskii, one by János Kádár and one by Leonid Brezhnev. Then the five military documents were signed. The short communiqué and the text dealing with the call for a European Security Conference were unanimously accepted by all the parties without comment as had been agreed previously. The co-operative and civilised tone of the call was primarily due to the efforts of the Romanian leaders who had made several motions for editorial amendments. Indeed, it was none other than Nicolae Ceauşescu who had persuaded Władysław Gomułka to accept a more conciliatory evaluation of the FRG.¹⁸ Thus, the visible and rather spectacular outcome of the meeting – executing the first reform in the military structure of the Warsaw Pact and issuing a promising call for convening a conference on European security – was effectively a Soviet-Hungarian-Romanian accomplishment.¹⁹

The main achievement of the meeting was the acceptance by all parties of the Soviet-Hungarian proposal that there should be no preconditions for the convening of an ESC. The inclusion of this in the Budapest appeal would prove to be a crucial factor in bringing about the CSCE process.

The Budapest appeal also included the obligatory paragraph (an amended version from the Bucharest declaration) on the German question and the issue of frontiers. It claimed that a basic prerequisite of European security was the inviolability of existing borders – including the Oder-Neisse line and the border between the FRG and the GDR – the recognition of two German states, the cessation of FRG attempts to monopolise the representation of the German people, the renunciation of nuclear weapons and the recognition that West Berlin held a special status and did not belong to the FRG. While in reality this

package remained the main strategic goal of the Soviet bloc, these demands were no longer presented as preconditions for the staging of a European security conference but as political goals for it to reach eventually.

Towards Creating a Co-ordinated WP Agenda for the CSCE

Following the WP PCC meeting in Budapest in late March 1969, Moscow initiated an extensive campaign to exploit the favourable situation for a security conference. In this campaign the Hungarians became the closest collaborators of Soviet diplomacy as their interests basically coincided with Soviet ones in fostering a radical rapprochement in East-West relations. The Hungarian leaders had no preconditions for a European settlement – unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR – and could only gain from a successful process. By now, they had developed good contacts with Western Europe and a certain prestige as promoters of détente. On the other hand they were much more loyal, flexible and obedient partners for Moscow in this exercise than the less manageable and considerably more rigid East Germans and Poles, not to mention the Romanians.

At the end of September 1969, the Soviets indicated to their allies that they were to hold a conference of the WP foreign ministers in October, to reach a co-ordinated position for an eventual ESC. To prepare for this meeting, several Soviet deputy foreign ministers paid simultaneous visits to the member states, and on 26 September Leonid Ilichev had talks with Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter in Budapest. Moscow suggested that the two main items on the agenda were to be the renunciation of force and a declaration urging the development of economic, trade and scientific co-operation between the European states.²⁰

However, in the course of this Soviet 'testing campaign' it became obvious that achieving unity at the upcoming meeting of foreign ministers would be a very difficult task indeed. Therefore, on 17 October, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Semenov urgently asked for personal consultations with the Hungarians, and on the following day Deputy Foreign Minister Károly Erdélyi flew to Moscow.²¹ During their talks the Soviet representatives voiced serious concern that excessive Polish, Romanian and East German demands might prevent reaching a consensus within the bloc, thus resulting in the Warsaw Pact losing control over its own initiative in spite of otherwise favourable international circumstances.

Therefore, the Soviets asked the Hungarian leadership to act as moderators to mitigate the Polish, East German and Romanian proposals at the meeting of the WP foreign ministers in Prague on 30–31 October 1969,²² a meeting that had originally been convened to reconsider the Warsaw Pact's policy in light of the recent SPD-victory in West Germany. At this moment, the Polish proposals were aiming at the final recognition of European borders; the Romanians

wanted to see the inclusion of an appeal for the dissolution of the military blocs, the withdrawal of foreign troops, the elimination of foreign military bases and the renunciation of the threat of using force in the final document; while the East Germans desired the international recognition of the GDR through the ESC.

To fulfil this role, the Soviets asked the Hungarians not to present any ideas of their own at the meeting. Instead, they should resubmit their proposals at a later point in the preparatory process. These included the establishment of an European Security Council, concluding agreements on regional co-operation, summoning a meeting of the mayors of European capitals in Budapest, and establishing a system of European economic co-operation over electricity, gas and oil, post and telecommunication, the linking of transportation networks, the promotion of industrial co-operation, the harmonisation of industrial standards, the abolition of trade barriers, and the encouragement of tourism.²³

These Hungarian proposals represented ambitious, long-term plans for European co-operation, some of which would only be realised after the political transition of 1989–90, while others will only be fully implemented after Hungary's accession to the European Union. Another noteworthy point is that while the Polish, Romanian and East German proposals all aimed at strengthening European security, the Hungarian proposals focused on co-operation. Thus, Hungarian diplomacy – while in formal accord with Soviet intentions – essentially echoed Western ideas about intensified co-operation.

Following this 'friendly request', the Hungarian delegation played a constructive role during the foreign ministers' meeting in Prague. As a reward, some important Hungarian proposals were accepted which were to form crucial elements in the Warsaw Pact's strategy towards the CSCE. Thus, the Prague meeting accepted the idea that there should be a series of security conferences²⁴ and that a permanent organ should be set up to co-ordinate the required preparatory work. It was also agreed that a group of experts dealing with European economic co-operation should be established within the WP, and this group's work should be co-ordinated by the Hungarian foreign ministry.

Two documents were ratified at the Prague conference: a public declaration and a memorandum that was handed over to Western European governments. The latter also contained a draft for the final document of the planned security conference, displaying great optimism – and in retrospect a good deal of naivety. This draft contained only two pages – as compared to the one hundred pages of the Helsinki Final Act signed on 1 August 1975. Eastern leaders displayed a similar dose of excessive optimism regarding the eventual date of the conference, which they – as in following conferences – deemed to be possible within six months or a year at most.

The main result of the foreign ministers' meeting was the declaration that the WP states planned to discuss two important topics at the security conference: European security and the renunciation of force between states as well

as the strengthening of trade, economic and technological relations based on equality and contributing to political co-operation among European states. Another important result of the Prague meeting was that a new series of bilateral negotiations was initiated between East and West with the active participation of the East-Central European states.

By the end of 1969, most WP member states realised that the changes in the FRG were opening the door to the realisation of the security conference. The radical transformation of the West German position and the announcement of a new *Ostpolitik* by the Brandt government heralded new possibilities for the solution of the German question, which was so central for European security. On 8 December 1969, negotiations on the conclusion of a Soviet-West German treaty began and similar talks with Poland were initiated promising the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border.²⁵

Thus, a summit meeting was held in Moscow on 3–4 December at the initiative of a rather confused GDR leadership to co-ordinate the Warsaw Pact's policy vis-à-vis the FRG. The East German leaders were rather sceptical about the FRG's intentions, and they were strongly against the idea of direct Polish-FRG talks. However, at the meeting a Polish-Hungarian-Romanian 'axis' – supported by the Soviets – emerged, arguing for a real turn in the FRG's policy that created a historical chance to settle the German question according to the interests of the Eastern bloc. The most surprising aspect in this was the radical change in the Polish position, obviously triggered by the prospect of Bonn's recognition of the Oder-Neisse border.²⁶ The result of the meeting was a compromise: the WP member states were encouraged to enter into negotiations with West Germany but they could establish diplomatic relations with the FRG only after Bonn had recognised the GDR. This was an important break with the principles adopted at the Warsaw meeting in early 1967 as only one of the numerous preconditions for establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG remained. Thus, the way to direct negotiations with the FRG was reopened by the Moscow conference of December 1969.

From the end of 1969 further favourable events indicated that the chances for the convening of a conference on European security had improved substantially. The declaration of the NATO Council meeting held in Brussels on 4–5 December, almost exactly at the time of the Soviet bloc summit in Moscow, ended with a chapter titled 'Perspectives for Negotiations'. In this, NATO cautiously envisaged that bilateral and multilateral talks with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries might eventually lead to the staging of a conference on European security.²⁷ In his speech to the US Congress on 18 February 1970, President Nixon declared that the United States recognised the Soviet Union's legitimate security interests in Eastern Europe, and he emphasised the American government's readiness for talks in order to reduce international tension and to promote détente.

The Rome session of the NATO Council on 26–27 May 1970 was the first meeting of the alliance that was dominated by the question of how to respond to the ESC-initiative of the Soviet bloc.²⁸ The communiqué of the meeting contained several new and positive elements, such as stating that the aim of permanent East-West contacts was to 'explore *when* [emphasis added] it will be possible to convene a conference or a series of conferences on European security and co-operation'. It was also stated that under certain conditions, the NATO countries considered it possible to start multilateral talks on this topic, and that the convening of the conference was not linked to negotiations on troop reductions in Europe.

The Breakthrough: The Cradle of Basket III

With this, the ball was back in the court of the Warsaw Pact countries. What was needed now was a stock-taking exercise, summarising the results of the bilateral talks and preparing for a flexible response to Western overtures. This was to be the task of the conference of WP foreign ministers held in Budapest in July 1970²⁹ that proved to be a turning point in CSCE history.

Both the preliminary meeting of deputy foreign ministers and the conference itself were characterised by intensive debates between the representatives. In pursuit of a compromise, the Hungarian hosts once again played a crucial role. The success of the conference came about through close co-operation between Soviet and Hungarian diplomats, often supported by the Romanians. In this way it was possible to reject initiatives by the GDR and Polish leaders aimed at making the settlement of the German question a precondition for the security conference. Thus, the Budapest principle was maintained by declaring once more that there should be no preconditions for the convening of the conference.³⁰

At the meeting of the foreign ministers, two elements were accepted with the intention of facilitating Western participation: in return for Western acceptance of the participation of the GDR, it was declared that the United States and Canada could also take part in the meeting. Another important Western precondition was also agreed on: besides the issues of political and economic co-operation, cultural co-operation could also be added to the agenda of the conference.

The Soviets and the WP member states had known from the beginning that the conference could not be held without the participation of the United States and Canada, but for tactical reasons this possibility was deliberately floated so that in return they could ensure the participation of the GDR. The field of cultural relations was accepted at the behest of the Hungarian delegation. Later this proved to be a reason for disintegration in the Eastern bloc, and was to be labelled 'Basket III' in the multilateral preparatory phase of the conference. However, at this point this concession opened up the way to accept the Western idea

of talking about the 'freer movement of people, ideas and information between the countries of East and West'.³¹ The Third Basket eventually provided the basis for developing the human rights campaign in the period after Helsinki, and especially during the successor conferences that eventually played a significant role in the disintegration of the communist system of East-Central Europe at the end of the 1980s. Therefore, the importance of the acceptance of the cultural field as part of the agenda by the Soviet bloc can hardly be overestimated.

The WP foreign ministers also decided on the establishment of a permanent organ dealing with the issues of European security and co-operation. By this time Moscow, to facilitate the issue of the security conference, agreed to the Western demand that prior to, or at least coinciding with preliminary talks on European security, negotiations on the reduction of armed forces in Europe should be initiated and that this body was to create a framework for such negotiations.

It was also officially accepted that the venue of the conference should be Helsinki, and the Finnish proposal to start multilateral talks via the ambassadors in Helsinki was also agreed on at this meeting. After the conference a draft document on economic, technological and cultural co-operation was forwarded to Western European governments.

There was a long road from Budapest to Helsinki, where, in November 1972, official multilateral preparatory talks started on the European security conference, but the foundations were laid down at the WP foreign ministers' meeting in Budapest. Thus, the way was open to conducting concrete negotiations on crucial issues such as the Soviet-West German and Polish-West German treaties, the Four Power agreement on Berlin and the treaty between the FRG and the GDR – all important elements of the settlement of the German question that was in fact the main precondition for a successful European security conference.

Notes

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1. It seems likely that this intra-bloc conflict led to the failure of a Soviet initiative urging other communist states to establish official relations with the FRG based on the example of Moscow in 1955. The HWP Politburo did indeed take a decision to that effect in July 1955.
2. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 4/42. ő. e., account of János Kádár at the HSWP CC session on 10 August 1961.

3. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 4/41. ő. e., account of János Kádár at the HSWP CC session on 10 June 1961.
4. On the talks between the FRG and Hungary in 1962–1963, see M. Ruff, 'A magyar-NSZK kapcsolatok, 1960–1963: Útkeresés a doktrínák útvesztőjében' [Hungarian-FRG Relations, 1960–1963: Search for the Way Out of the Labyrinth of Doctrines], *Múltunk*, 44/3 (1999): 3–40.
5. J. P. Jain (ed.), *Documentary Study of the Warsaw Pact* (New York, 1973), 409.
6. On the meeting, see V. Mastny, editorial note on the seventh meeting of the PCC, 19–20 January 1965, Warsaw (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>). See also C. Békés, 'Titkos válságkezeléstől a politikai koordinációig: Politikai egyeztetési mechanizmus a Varsói Szerződésben, 1954–1967' [From Secret Crisis Management to Political Co-ordination: Political Co-ordinating Mechanisms in the Warsaw Pact, 1954–1967], in János M. Rainer (ed.), *Múlt századi hétköznapiak: Tanulmányok a Kádár rendszer kialakulásának időszakáról* [Everyday Life in the Past Century: Essays on the Period of the Emerging of the Kádár Regime] (Budapest: 1956), 9–54, here 37–38.
7. Jain, *Documentary Study*, 408.
8. C. Békés, *Hungary and the Warsaw Pact, 1954–1989: Documents on the Impact of a Small State within the Eastern Bloc*, Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact, 2003 (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>).
9. For the records of the conference, see Records of the Committee of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, 2002 (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>). See also the introduction to the document collection by A. Locher, *Shaping the Policies of the Alliance: The Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Pact, 1976–1990* (Zurich, 2002).
10. On the meeting, see V. Mastny, editorial note to the eighth meeting of the PCC, 4–6 July 1966, Bucharest (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>). See also Békés, 'Titkos válságkezeléstől', 42–43.
11. V. Mastny, eighth meeting of the PCC, 4–6 July 1966, Bucharest (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>).
12. The resolution made at the HSWP PC session on 27 October 1966 agreed to this proposal. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 5/408. ő. e.
13. In late 1966, the Kremlin also asked Warsaw Pact member states to base their resumption of diplomatic relations with Bonn on the 'Moscow model' – which caused considerable fury in East Berlin and Warsaw, at least. A complete file on this 'error' can be found in the Ulbricht files from January 1967. SAPMO, Büro Ulbricht, DY30/3520 and -/3519, conversation Ulbricht-Semenov, 17 January 1967; and memorandum on the 'Moscow model' on Ulbricht's order, 19/20 January 1967. AAN, KC PZPR, XIA/83, conversation Gomulka-Andropov and Ponomarew, 28 December 1966 in Moscow. Both cited in O. Bange, *Ostpolitik und Détente: Die Anfänge 1966–1969*, Habil. MS (Mannheim, 2004) (publication forthcoming), 73–78, 136, 257.
14. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 5/417. ő. e., minutes of the HSWP PC session on 13 February 1967.
15. *Ibid.*
16. For the unsuccessful attempts to organise a Soviet-American summit in late 1968, see C. Békés, *Európából Európába: Magyarország konfliktusok keresztüztüében, 1945–1990* [From Europe to Europe: Hungary in the Crossfire of Conflicts, 1945–1990] (Budapest, 2004), 236; and A. Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995), 189–195.
17. As shown by G. Niedhart and O. Bange, 'Die "Relikte der Nachkriegszeit" beseitigen: Ostpolitik in der zweiten außenpolitischen Formationsphase der Bundesrepublik Deutschland im Übergang von den Sechziger- zu den Siebzigerjahren', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 44 (2004): 415–448, here 434–438 (<http://www.detente.de>); and O. Bange, 'Kiesingers Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik von 1966–1969, in G. Buchstab, P. Gassert and P. T. Lang (eds.), *Kurt Georg Kiesinger 1904–1988: Von Ebingen ins Kanzleramt* (Freiburg, 2005), 455–500, here 476–479.
18. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 5/486. ő. e., memorandum by Deputy foreign Minister Károly Erdélyi for János Kádár on the WP PCC meeting in Budapest on 17 March 1969 (19 March 1969).
19. Stenographic transcript of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the CC of the Romanian Communist Party, 18 March 1969. V. Mastny, C. Nuenlist and A. Locher eds., Records of the Political Consultative Committee, Tenth Meeting of the PCC, Budapest, 17 March 1969 (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php>). For a detailed presentation of the fierce internal debates preceding the official session of the WP PCC, see Csaba Békés, 'The Warsaw Pact and the Helsinki Process, 1965–1970', in Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou (eds.), *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–75* (London and New York, 2008), 201–220, here 207–210.
20. MOL-XIX-J-1-j-Szu-1-00358-20/1969, 85. d., notes on the discussion with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister L. F. Iljichev, 27 September 1969.
21. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 5/501. ő. e., notes by Károly Erdélyi for the HSWP PC, 18 October 1969. The document is published in Békés, *Hungary and the Warsaw Pact*.
22. MOL-M-KS 288. F. 5/501 ő. e., memorandum of conversation between Erdélyi and Semenov on 17 October 1969 in Moscow (18 October 1969).
23. Foreign Ministry memorandum for the HSWP Political Committee on the European security conference. MOL-M-KS-288. F. 5/ 501. ő. e.
24. The proposal was originally made by the Soviets, brought up by Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov to Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter at a meeting in Budapest on 24 September 1969. It became a 'Hungarian' initiative as a result of the Soviet-Hungarian game played at the conference of foreign ministers in Prague.
25. The Soviet-West German treaty was signed on 12 August 1970, and the Polish-West German treaty on 7 December 1970. The result was a de facto recognition of the Oder-Neisse border by Bonn – not precluding eventual claims of a reunified German state. The issue was only finally settled by the 'Two-plus-Four' negotiations in Paris on 17 July 1990 and the German-Polish Border Treaty of 14 November 1990.
26. On Polish policy concerning the German question, see D. Selvage, 'The Treaty of Warsaw: The Warsaw Pact Context', in D. C. Geyer (ed.), *American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969–1972* (Washington, D.C., 2004), 67–79; Wanda Jarzabek, 'Władze PRL wobec normalizacji stosunków z FRN latach 1970–1975' [The PPR Authorities' Attitude towards the Normalisation of Relations with the FRG 1970–1975], in *Rocznik Polsko-Niemiecki* 12/2004 (Warsaw, 2005); idem, 'Ulbricht-Doktrin' oder "Gomulka Doctrine"? Das Bemühen der Volksrepublik Polen um eine geschlossene Politik des kommunistischen Blocks gegenüber der westdeutschen Ostpolitik 1966/1967', *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung*,

55/1 (2006): 79–114; O. Bange and T. Geiger, 'Die kirchlichen Initiativen und die Reaktionen der deutschen Volksparteien', in F. Boll, W. Wysocki and K. Zimmer (eds.), *Kirchliche Versöhnungsinitiativen und deutsch-polnische Verständigung* (Bonn, 2008) (forthcoming).

27. *NATO final communiqués 1949–1974*, NATO Information Service, Brussels, 231–232.
28. In the communiqué, fourteen out of twenty-one paragraphs dealt with East-West relations in general and three specifically with the issue of a conference on European security. *NATO final communiqués 1949–1974*, 233–237.
29. MOL-XIX-J-1-j-Szu-00949-1/1970, report on the visit of Foreign Minister János Péter to Moscow on 22–29 December 1969 (6 January 1970). The conference was convened at Hungarian initiative.
30. MOL-XIX-J-1-j-EU-208-00482/20/1970, 93. d., report to the government on the meeting of the Warsaw Pact's foreign ministers in Budapest on 21–22 June 1970 (29 June 1970).
31. 4–5 December 1969, Brussels. *NATO final communiqués 1949–1974*, 231.