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B A C K G R O U N D   B R I E F I N G

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH U.S. OFFICIALS

AT 3:10 P.M. EDT

JULY 23, 1975

MR. NESSEN: The briefing is for use on a background basis. You should refer to these gentlemen in your copies as U.S. officials.

QUESTION: Is there going to be a transcript?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure.

THERE SHOULD BE NO DIRECT QUOTATION, but only paraphrase what the gentlemen say. After the briefing, if there is some particular quote you would like to use, you can check with them or with Bob Funseth at the State Department.

There is no embargo on this. You can use tape recorders, but only for the purposes of your own notes and not for broadcast.

The thought was that this would be limited to the CSCE. You can see how this goes, and if at the end perhaps there are other questions, there might be time for that.

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I think I have covered it all about the ground rules. With that I will turn you over to the U.S. officials.

QUESTION: Can I ask a question about the ground rules? On the ticker we have, we have in our office, this morning the names of these gentlemen appeared on the UPI ticker, and it is not going to be any great mystery to anybody who is conducting this briefing.

MR. NESSEN: That was a notice to correspondents. I am talking about the use of attribution to U.S. officials in your written stories. Hopefully, this briefing will be more for your own background and understanding of the trip than for printing stories, but if you do write stories, you should attribute it to U.S. officials.

One other item. We gave out this morning a briefing paper on the CSCE. We are getting additional printed material on this trip. I would hope that by the end of the day tomorrow we would have the actual document to be signed.

Don't hold me to that. It may be early Friday morning as opposed to late tomorrow afternoon, and we will be having other printed materials so you can brief yourselves up on the trip.

U.S. OFFICIAL: I would like to keep this as brief as possible because I know you have questions, and we would like to give you as much opportunity as possible to raise those.

I will make some general introductory comments, and my colleague will review the contents of the document that is to be signed in Helsinki.

I am sorry you don't have the full text yet, but the final, corrected version with commas in place is just coming on an airplane from Geneva today, I think, and we will get it to you as quickly as possible.

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You do have a fact sheet, I believe.

As many of you know, the idea of a European conference, European Security Conference, an all-European security system, whatever it was called, goes back to the period 1953 to 1954 when the Soviet Union advanced proposals on the general subject in the context of the entry into NATO of the German Federal Republic.

At that time, the stated Soviet purpose was to prevent that entry of the Federal Republic into NATO, and indeed to dissolve NATO and substitute in its place a so-called all-European security system or security pact.

It got nowhere at the time, obviously. It was one-sided and of no interest to any Western country.

That general proposal for all-European security arrangements continued to be reiterated from time to time over the next several years, with no particular echo in the Western countries.

At that time, there also was no particular place in the proposal for neutrals or nonaligned countries in Europe. There was a revival of it in a somewhat different form in the mid-sixties, and at that time, the chief objective seemed to be, on the part of the Soviets and some of the other East Europeans, to find a substitute for the peace treaty ending World War II.

That approach also had no appeal in the West, although in some West European countries there began to develop a bit more interest in having some sort of an all-European meeting. Nevertheless, nothing came of those proposals.

Then later still, in 1969, the proposals were revived by the Eastern side and were considered by NATO, which at that time -- I am talking about 1969-1970 -- concluded that there were many concrete issues in Europe between East and West, which would be much better dealt with in normal bilateral negotiations and that any conference that might be called between East and West, as well as for Europe generally, should be very carefully prepared with the issues carefully delineated and moved on to as concrete a plan as possible.

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The Soviets, and the Eastern countries, in making their proposals, at that time seemed to be principally interested still in such matters as recognition of frontiers and issues that would have normally been associated with a peace treaty. As you know, what happened after that was that the negotiations on Berlin went forward and eventually were completed in 1971.

The Federal Republic of Germany proceeded to negotiations with the Soviet Union and Poland in that period, also -- and later on with the German Democratic Republic -- and settled various outstanding issues between itself and those countries. It was only after those matters had been resolved that the Western countries agreed to proceed to an exploration of what a Security Conference might do.

It was always clear on the Western side that there would be no interest in merely having certain declarations concerning borders and things of that kind, but that any conference dealing with the improvement of East-West relations in Europe, with a stabilization of East-West relations in Europe, had to take into account the human aspects of the problem, the division of Europe, and all sorts of more specific potential areas of cooperation.

It was a Western view from the beginning, shared widely also among neutrals in Europe, as well as among some of the smaller countries in Eastern Europe, that there was no purpose in having a conference at all if it was simply to produce some general principles duplicating what was already essentially embodied in the UN charter or in bilateral agreements that had been previously reached between various West European countries and East European countries.

Also, as this process of preparations got underway, the Western countries stipulated that it had to be brought into some kind of parallelism with negotiations on forced reductions in central Europe. As you may recall, the actual agreement on the date in 1973 to proceed with the first stage of the European Security Conference, was tied to an agreement to begin the talks on troop reductions in Europe -- the so-called MBFR negotiations.

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So, the original concepts or purposes that seemed to underlie the Soviet proposals for this conference were substantially modified as a result of events, as well as as a result of Western insistence.

I may say here, from our standpoint, one of the gratifying aspects of this whole operation from 1969, when we discussed it in detail here at a NATO meeting, you may recall, in April of 1969, through the present, has been the very substantial measure of agreement that has existed between the NATO allies in how to handle this conference.

This is of some importance because various allies did not necessarily approach this project from the same standpoint and with the same interests. For us, this particular venture in multilateral diplomacy has never had the significance that it has had for some of our allies, particularly the smaller countries, or for that matter for some of the countries in Eastern Europe.

We have had our own contacts with the Soviets and with some of the other East Europeans. We have had major negotiations that we have had over the years on arms control and other issues. So this has never been, for us, as crucial a vehicle for doing business with the East as it has for some of the other countries that don't have the channels or the issues to talk about that the United States has.

Nevertheless, despite these somewhat different vantage points, it has proved possible for the NATO members to stay very close to each other on all the issues and on tactics, as well as on strategy, in dealing with this conference. The mechanism that we devised for carrying on this coordination both in Brussels and in Geneva, and before that in Helsinki, at the site of the Conference, in some respects are pioneering in their efforts to harmonize Western positions in this rather unique exercise in multilateral diplomacy.

I think that is something that ought not to be overlooked, particularly when questions are raised about this or that unilateral American action with respect to this conference. Everything that we have done in this conference and about this conference has been in consultation and in harmony with our allies and the President is going to Helsinki as a result of consultation and very close coordination with every one of our allies.

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This is really quite an important achievement.

Just a couple of words and then we will go on with some more details. The results of this conference are embodied in a document that you will be getting, called the final act. It is very long. It is a negotiated document. When you get 35 countries as varied in size and history and with as divergent or at least different interests as these, it is obviously going to be negotiated and there are going to be compromises and there are going to be formulations that are not ideal from this or that country's standpoint. That is the nature of a diplomatic effort.

So that is one thing to bear in mind in looking at this and in finding this or that imperfection that you may find as you look at the text.

Secondly, it was always understood that this was not going to be a treaty or a jurisdictional instrument but rather an outcome essentially of political significance. That is to say an effort to set certain political guidelines for East-West relations in the period ahead, to set certain political standards for this period against which conduct can be measured; to provide political incentives for restrained, and wherever possible cooperative conduct in the further evolution of East-West relations.

Since this is essentially a document of political significance, it cannot -- and as explicitly stated does not -- affect anyone's legal position or legal views of the situation with respect to Europe. As you know, there are different views concerning certain aspects, legal aspects of frontiers and so on in Europe, but none of these things are affected or changed by this document; nor, equally important, are, for example, such things as our Western rights with respect to Berlin, with respect to Germany as a whole, affected by this particular document and by the outcome of this conference.

The proof of the pudding in this is going to be in the eating, if I can coin a phrase. (Laughter) In other words, in some sense this is a pioneering effort of setting forth a comprehensive set of political objectives, political standards, political rules of the road among these 35 participants and they are going to have to be implemented in practice and at least, however, there will be some standards against which to measure that implementation.

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I think that will be of some importance in judging people's performance over the future. It also imposes certain obligations on this. It is not as though all the obligations in Basket 3 -- the ones that deal with human contacts and freedom of information, and so on -- as if all of those are going to have to be implemented by one side.

Those aspects of this document that can be readily translated into concrete action -- which is mostly the material in Basket 2 and Basket 3 -- will have to be implemented over a period of time by all the participants.

In many instances, countries will find it highly desirable to follow these general guidelines with specific negotiated agreements that will, in fact, carry legal commitments. This one does not but you can take this as a basis and begin to negotiate additional bilateral agreements in which you translate the political terms of this document into more binding reciprocal terms and arrangements in this or that field, and that applies very largely to the economic and technological and so on provisions in Basket 2, and these other ones on movement of people and freedom of information and human rights in Basket 3.

So it would be, I think, inaccurate to see this document as drawing a line under a period, as terminating a period, but it should be seen rather as a takeoff point in which behavior can be more explicitly measured, performance can be more explicitly measured against the understandings reached here.

So if you can think about this operation in those terms, I think perhaps you might avoid some of the pitfalls of interpretation that I have encountered in my reading in recent weeks on this, and to assist you further in that direction I will turn this over now to another U.S. official to go through the Baskets.

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U.S. OFFICIAL: I will do this very briefly because I think it is easier to answer your questions and see where the difficulties lie on the basis of specifics.

You have a fact sheet which describes the four parts of the document. The first part is the statement of principles and it is really that statement of principles that is the part that has been of greatest interest to the East, to the Soviet Union, in the early consideration of this kind of conference.

However, what has happened in the statement of principles is that rather than focusing on the kind of principles that could be directly related to something approaching a peace treaty which would fix borders and fix political status for all time, in achieving balance and in achieving what the West wanted to put into this document, the Soviets accepted other principles which give some balance to the document.

For example, there has been much talk about the principle on the inviolability of frontiers and that one, I may say, is one of the examples of less fortunate language. It comes out in English that people are going to refrain from assaulting frontiers or borders. But against the inviolability of frontiers you have principles that deal with sovereign equality and in the principle on sovereign equality there is a provision for peaceful change of frontiers.

You have a principle on self-determination which again relates to the question of frontiers indirectly, and aspects of these principles that might relate to a peace treaty.

I can list through the principles -- sovereign equality, nonuse of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes. This is something that is of interest to some of the smaller states.

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The Swiss, for example, have come up with a charter which would provide for the special handling of disputes. Some of the Eastern European countries, for example, have been very interested in the nonuse of force. The Romanians have pushed the nonuse of force opinion very strongly.

In addition to the principles in the first part of this agreement, of this text, are certain modest confidence-building measures in the security field. Any serious measures in this area would probably come in the MBFR talks, but it was clear the neutrals in some of the smaller countries, particularly, were anxious to have something in these texts that would give some step toward dealing with the security problem that they would participate in.

Well, the modest step was a notification on a voluntary basis of maneuvers. Now the maneuvers are set with rather large numbers -- 25,000 men, 250 kilometers. Actually, what that means is it covers all of Europe and it is 250 kilometers into the Soviet Union, and 21 days notification period.

Now it is also provided that smaller maneuvers can be notified. The fact it is voluntary does not have that much significance. All of these things have really kind of moral obligation and it even looks to us as though the Soviets are getting ahead of this because about the time we were agreeing on this particular provision they announced for the first time a major maneuver in Western Russia.

There is also a provision for reciprocal exchange of observers on maneuvers and a spoken desire that other measures should be considered in the future, but I think mainly this is a symbolic thing that they want to try, and the smaller countries are very anxious to have on the record.

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The second major area is the one that relates to economic relationships, science and technology and environment. These statements are essentially statements of desire to increase relations on the economic and commercial side. Provisions are made for taking steps to prevent exchanges from becoming a burden on relations; that is, for cheap goods to be going too much into one area. The safeguards concept, in other words, was mentioned in there.

The fact that there are different trading systems and that different ways of trading have to be formulated is alluded to, and ways of studying the problem to see how, for example, equality in trade can be worked out between state trading systems and free market economies.

There is also a provision for arbitration of disputes, facilitating business contacts, and so forth. Science and technology, again, mainly increased cooperation. Certain fields are identified where they would like to see further work and progress.

There is a natural body for some of this work to be done in the UN Commission, the ECE in Geneva, where all the parties are members and much of this work can proceed in that body.

There is then, not within any particular part of this text but put in because it did not really fit in any other place, a special reference to the Mediterranean area. This was pressed by some of the Mediterranean littoral states who wanted to have an acknowledgement by the other states in Europe of the close security and economic relationships of those states to the mainland of Europe, and favoring greater economic ties. This was pushed by the Maltese Prime Minister and some of the others -- the Italians -- and it refers also to the desirability of limiting arms in that area.

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The third large area is the humanitarian category, and there it is divided mainly into the human contacts and exchanges and information. And on the human contacts the effort here is to try and get standards that are more concrete so that when we go in or other Governments go in and say, "We have this list of people who in our country are anxious to have family reunification, are anxious to have relatives immigrate," that you can point to something which says that these applications are to be looked at by the Governments. They are to be in principle favorably received.

There are to be no measures put in the way of this kind of family reunification or immigration. The standards are not specific down to what you can take with you or how long you have to sell your property, but it refers to these matters and it certainly makes it possible for countries to then go on and have more detailed bilateral agreements on these matters, and this just sets out the overall standard. Also for increasing travel and contact and tourism, and that kind of thing.

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On the information side, again, hortatory language, but with specifics in terms of the desirability of increasing the flow of publications, newspapers, periodicals, of cooperation in these exchanges; with specific respect to journalists, we hope you are all duly appreciative that there is something in there about multiple entry visas that we used to have a lot of complaints about that people could not be sure they could get back in; eased travel conditions within the country where the correspondent is accredited and a statement about the no expulsions for legitimate activities.

These are statements of policy, and there is no court you are going to be able to take anybody into to get these statements of policy enforced, but they do give us this standard and they will enable us, when occurrences happen -- and occurrences will be inevitable -- to come in and say to the Government, "Now, look, you signed on to this document, you accepted these obligations. Now, why aren't you living up to them?"

The cultural exchanges are again specifically referring to artists, musicians, works of art. The French were very anxious to get some reference to their language, desirability of studying languages, and spreading national cultures, educational exchanges and so on.

The last area is the follow-up, and here the only agreement reached -- because there were differing views -- was that there would be a meeting in 1977 to examine the implementation of these policy statements and to see whether further meetings should be held.

Originally, the Eastern countries wanted some kind of institutionalized process, and the Western countries, by and large, did not want to see that. They wanted to see whether in practice these declarations were going to lead to progress.

So, the compromise was that there would be this meeting that would examine the situation without establishing an institution that would specifically follow the implementation of the agreement.

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I think we will take questions.

QUESTION: Can you tell us if this changes the American position that they do not formally recognize Soviet occupation of the Baltic?

ANSWER: No, it does not change the American position. There is nothing in this text -- first, the text is not a legal text. Secondly, there is nothing in the text that deals with recognition of borders or States. The inviolability principle talks about respect for frontiers, but it is also coupled with the idea of peaceful change and it is directed at the use of force to upset frontiers.

The American position on the nonrecognition of the incorporation of the Baltic States has not been changed by this document.

QUESTION: Is there anything in this agreement that you believe or that the Administration believes would actually restrain the use of the present doctrine in Eastern Europe?

ANSWER: Let me try and answer that. There is nothing in there that in any sense, even in a political sense, endorses it. Secondly, there are many formulations, principles and statements in this document which, if objectively read and interpreted, are contrary to anything that has been in the past associated with the Brezhnev doctrine.

Thirdly, the issue of the Brezhnev doctrine itself was one -- as some of you may know who were in Geneva -- that was not far beneath the surface in the deliberations of the conference.

While it obviously is not mentioned explicitly, it is quite clear from the legislative history of the outcome that, not only was there no thought of endorsing it, but the whole thrust of what was being done was to deny the validity of any such thing as has been called the Brezhnev doctrine.

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Whether it restrains the behavior of States when they perceive interests to be at stake, I can't tell you that for certain. But certainly the political thrust, the moral thrust, the psychological thrust of everything associated with this runs counter to the kinds of behavior associated with what has been called the Brezhnev doctrine.

QUESTION: Specifically, if I could follow up, the principle on nonintervention in internal affairs, do you regard that as counter to the Brezhnev doctrine specifically?

ANSWER: Yes, the principle of nonintervention in internal affairs of States. It goes even beyond that because it has a formula that says you can't use any present text to intervene. I think Bob Froelich -- isn't that right -- there is a phrase like that.

So. I think the language is pretty clear. Plus, I am reminded, of course, there is strong affirmation of the principle of self-determination.

QUESTION: The last part of these negotiations reminded some of us of the last days and the last hours of the Illinois State Legislature. Could you explain the unseemly haste?

ANSWER: If you had been in Geneva, I don't think you would have had the sense of unseemly haste. I think you would have thought you were on a slow boat to China.

QUESTION: I am talking about the last days of it, not the 22 months.

ANSWER: I think the last days of it had to do with a very technical matter. The document was virtually agreed. The problem was whether the last two phrases, none of which were of major significance to the West or the East, could be settled in time so that people could go on vacation in August.

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In other words, the choice was between getting a conference in at the end of July or waiting until some time in October. But the issues involved were not issues of any consequence to us or, for that matter, to the Soviets.

It had to do with a phrase the Maltese wanted to put into the text, and three or four other things of that kind. That was what the impatience was about, not that there was unseemly haste in dealing with the gut issues of this negotiation.

Wouldn't you say that?

ANSWER: Yes.

ANSWER: And we got propelled into that when the Secretary was in Geneva. So, I don't think that is a fair description as far as the major thrust of this whole operation is concerned.

QUESTION: Have you very much lost sight of the MBFR in connection with this?

ANSWER: Have we lost sight of this? In what way?

QUESTION: The parallelism. When you first began talking about it, there was a definite link, and now that has been lost.

ANSWER: No, the parallelism was always between the opening of these meetings. It was always known that the MBFR issues were going to be extremely complicated and technical, in some respects more so than in the case of SALT, and that there was going to be a very difficult negotiation, so the matter of having the outcomes in terms of time simultaneously, I don't think that was ever contemplated.

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The MBFR negotiations are going forward. They just recessed now for a few weeks, as they periodically do. There is an active consultation going on in NATO on them, so I don't think that the organic link between political negotiations about the state of relations in Europe and negotiations on the military aspect -- that organic link has been maintained and exists even though this particular exercise is now going to come to its completion.

But I certainly would not say that the MBFR negotiations have been lost sight of.

QUESTION: To follow that up, if I may, how then would you assess the future of MBFR now that we have finished this?

ANSWER: It is speculative. Some people feel it will move faster. But there are complex technical issues and we will continue to make a very intense effort to get those talks moving constructively, and we will have to see. But certainly it is not going to be dropped, and it won't be dropped by the allies.

QUESTION: According to you, do you gentlemen feel that this will really hasten the progress on MBFR, reaching this agreement?

ANSWER: I can't predict it, but if you look at the amount of attention that has been given to CSCE by foreign offices and Governments over the last several months, the last year or two, for that matter, and NATO, and every other place, that particular preoccupation will be set aside and this will be the single major multi-lateral negotiation about the center of Europe that is going to be on the agenda right now, and I think that fact alone may speed up that process, but I don't want to underestimate the complexity of the problem.

QUESTION: Why do you think the Soviet Union attaches so much importance to this document and the signing of it?

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ANSWER: Joe, I think it is speculative, obviously, and I think their own view of that -- the exercise has changed over the years, as I was trying to say in my introductory comments. I think they have attached most recently a certain symbolic significance to it.

I think it also figures in the general timetable of events and activities that the Soviets would like to see accomplished before the next party Congress, which is the 25th, and that has some special significance for them.

I think that the Soviets, as has been pointed out, have always been more interested in the kinds of things that were in Basket 1 than in the others. In fact, one might even say their interests with respect to the others has not been overwhelming.

So, I think that they have been interested in the symbolic and the political significance of it. But, obviously, everybody is going to have an interest of some kind and the fact that one side has an interest does not vitiate the fact that others might also have an interest.

That is how you get a balance of interests and ultimately an outcome.

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QUESTION: I think you were being a little defensive before about the Western concessions. You said it is not a legal document and therefore it did not accomplish everything. Both of you were, actually, but you used the phrase "takeoff point".

Is there any real prospect for bilateral negotiations with the Communists on these supposed concessions they made that you know and we all know are not binding?

ANSWER: In some respects, we are ahead of other countries because we have a number of bilateral agreements, not so much dealing with Basket 3 issues but with Basket 2, although with some Basket 3 issues as well. I think you are going to have to see what happens.

The Canadians, I think -- I don't want to speak for them -- but the Canadians have a great interest in family unification because of the large Ukranian population in Canada. I think they regard this -- insofar as anything in writing can be -- as a helpful step forward that will make it possible for them to deal with an issue that is of considerable human emotional and political significance in Canada.

So I think that it varies, really, from country to country, how and in what form these things may be translated into further actions and further agreements. But I think a presumption has been created, and I don't think any country is going to feel itself free of some of the pressures generated and presumptions generated by this to push ahead into performance.

QUESTION: Is the Soviet involvement Portugal now consistent with letter and spirit of this final act?

QUESTION: What was the question?

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ANSWER: Whether Soviet involvement in Portugal is consistent with the letter and spirit of this document.

Let me say first, I think the press and some others have been somewhat more certain and specific in their knowledge of what the Soviets are doing in Portugal than we have been able to be, which is not to deny that there is some Soviet involvement. I think that non-intervention is clear, and we would certainly deplore Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of Portugal.

I think that in the end every government is going to have to search its own conscience and practices insofar as its fidelity to these principles is concerned. We will all have to observe behavior and we will all have to adjust behavior to conform ourselves to the political principles and precepts set forth here. But there is no question that we would deplore and object to Soviet intervention and interference in the internal evolution in Portugal.

QUESTION: I don't read anything in there as answering the question. Respectfully, does their intervention in Portugal, to whatever extent it exists, violate the letter and spirit of this agreement?

ANSWER: I just said that I have a little of a problem with the question because you would have to define "intervention," but I am perfectly plain, I hope, in saying that if there is Soviet intervention and interference in the domestic processes of Portugal, then this would have to be regarded as not compatible with the principles contained in this document.

QUESTION: How much intervention is there now?

ANSWER: I don't want to discuss now the precise forms of Soviet involvement or intervention -- because I don't want to start splitting hairs -- we may regret a pravda article about Portugal and think it is unhelpful, or unwise. I think there will be some question whether that can be legitimately defined as intervention.

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There are other forms of intervention which have been referred to by Senators and in the press, and on that question, if it turns out that that is in fact correct I would say that that would not be compatible with the principle of non-intervention.

QUESTION: Are there several million dollars going into --

ANSWER: I can't answer that question because I personally cannot be that precise. I just can't.

QUESTION: I have a follow-up on that. I just came from a luncheon addressed by Mr. Vernon Walters, the Deputy Director of the CIA. He confirms Senator Bentsen's charges saying that the figure of \$10 million being pumped into Portugal by the Soviets is probably in the ballpark, that it is hard to count because it is in cash. So the Soviet involvement in Portugal is certainly beyond one Pravda article.

My question is: Have we raised this with the Soviets, and if we have not raised it with them, how can this be a document being solemnly signed having considerable moral and political force?

ANSWER: It has not been signed yet, first of all. The question of what we raise and what we don't raise with the Soviets gets into the question of diplomatic exchanges that I am not prepared to discuss today.

QUESTION: Can I ask, on the other side of this, if the West Germans and the Swedes through their social democratic party funnel money to the socialists in Portugal, is that intervention?

ANSWER: I am not going to parse this, Bob. First, we are not going to be the ones that sit in judgment and make unilateral judgments, necessarily, on this.

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I think countries are going to have to, as I said before, search and examine their own practices and consciences, if necessary, and we will be consulting with our allies as this unfolds, and as we look at the implementation and as we look at how people conduct themselves once this thing has become part of the body of international political standards -- and we will have to address those problems as they arise.

The problem of non-intervention, definition of aggression, have been problems that have been labored over in the League of Nations in the United Nations for years, for generations, with problems that many of us are familiar with.

And so I am not going to stand up here this afternoon and give you a simple, flat answer on that kind of a contingency or any other, for that matter. I think that the principle of one government -- and, under whatever guise -- attempting to influence political evolution in another country, to determine the outcome of political struggles and conflict in another country, to establish paramount interest of its own or whatever you may want to say, I think could not be construed as compatible with the kinds of principles enunciated here. There are many gray areas and I just cannot go into that in detail.

QUESTION: Did the United States acquiesce or agree or go along with what is being done or will be done in Helsinki in order to further along aspects of its detente with the Soviet Union, in regards to, for instance, SALT? In other words, what part did the detente, the U.S. bilateral relations with the Soviet Union play in the U.S. agreement to go along with this in Helsinki?

ANSWER: First, the agreement should not be construed as one as between us and the Russians to go to Helsinki. The agreement was a collective one that we shared with our allies.

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QUESTION: But why a unilateral decision?

ANSWER: I think the whole CSCE exercise, and now its consummation, is part of the process commonly known as detente. That has many facets to it -- some of bilateral negotiations, some of maintaining your own defense strength. That is all part of the detente process so this is one facet of it. And we would hope it gives additional impetus to the more constructive elements in East-West relations that have appeared.

Now whether it helps SALT or hinders SALT or has no particular impact on SALT, it is very difficult to say. SALT has many of its own complexities. On the whole, I think if we take this Helsinki step now with maturity and sobriety, and approach the future -- as regards the implementation of this -- with no illusion but with some reasonable hope, then I think it ought to help the other hopeful aspects of the detente process.

QUESTION: Can you give us any guidance on President Ford's pace or the schedule when he is in Helsinki? Do you anticipate he will have a number of bilateral meetings or are they reserving great chunks of time for meetings with Brezhnev?

ANSWER: Most of the time will be spent in the conference session by the President, because I assume all the leaders will want to show each other the courtesy of listening to their remarks. There will be some additional bilaterals, and I assume the White House will be announcing those.

QUESTION: Will all 35 heads of state or governments speak?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Does the U.S. Administration feel that this agreement is ready to make any noticeable change, not in the principles but in the practice now being applied in the Soviet Union and other East European countries regarding exchange of ideas, freedom of movement, entry of newspapers and so on? I am speaking now of practice and not of principle.

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ANSWER: I think we have measured hopes it will contribute to that, but we will have to see in practice.

QUESTION: There was some criticism, particularly recently, that the United States yielded on the voluntary part of the advance notification on troop maneuvers, that we did it because we were in a hurry to get the conference over with.

Was there at any time the thought here that that could have been strengthened so there would have been some requirement on the other side to give notification of troop maneuvers?

ANSWER: I can answer that. As far as we were concerned from the beginning -- because this is a non-binding document, because this is not in any way a treaty or agreement -- we had never thought that these provisions with respect to the security and confidence-building measures would be other than voluntary.

There may have been some states at the conference who thought it should be more binding, particularly some of the neutrals. But we have been proceeding on the basis of agreed positions among the NATO countries, and it was an agreed position that we all took with respect to the voluntary nature of these notifications.

QUESTION: To avoid the pitfalls of what you call interpretation, what do you say to the criticism that the language of these documents is so ambiguous, fuzzy, elastic, that any signatories can read into them whatever it so chooses?

ANSWER: I think that is an excessively harsh description of the language of these materials, these documents. I think some of it is compromise and may come close to meeting that description. Some of it, I think when you read it, is surprisingly crisp and straightforward and not just the parts that you might think are the ones desired by the other side.

MORE

So I think that is not a fair description of this in its totality. Now, of course, you do run into the problem of interpretations. But I think if we handle this thing well, then it ought to be possible to avoid the most excessive interpretations of some of the more ambiguous formulations that inevitably come into a compromise document.

That is to say it ought to be possible to marshal the force of opinion for a rational and reasonable interpretation. I don't think we should take a defeatist attitude about that.

QUESTION: Do you think this will help deter the Soviet Union from another adventure such as the Czechoslovakian engagement, and do you think this document will also help liberalize Soviet Union immigration policies?

ANSWER: I think, on the first question, it may contribute to the general political climate in which such events will not recur. I would hesitate to say what nations will do when they see their interests ultimately engaged, but I think that if it is implemented, if it is followed by further actions in the bilateral realm and in other areas, it should contribute, as I say, to a general political climate in which that regrettable and unfortunate and tragic kind of action will not occur.

On the second question, I would hope that in some of the areas specified in the documents, some of which have been mentioned: family unification, others like that -- I would hope that it will make a contribution in that area.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

MR. HUSHEN: Gentlemen, for those who came in late, let me state a couple of things.

Secretary Kissinger's briefing at 11:00 on Friday is available for live coverage, and Ron Nessen's briefing will be delayed until after Secretary Kissinger's briefing is over with.

END (AT 4:05 P.M. EDT)