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by

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NATO's interest in improving its ability to execute conventional defense has been increasing for some time. The NATO Conventional Defense Improvements (CDI) effort incorporates programs ranging from enhancements in such basic categories as ammunition stocks and infrastructure to exploration of updated operational concepts such as greater use of reservists, barriers, and targeting on enemy rear echelons. Perpetual political and fiscal obstacles to an improved NATO conventional defense capability persist, but a consensus appears to be growing that NATO must take flexible response more seriously, especially in the context of US-Soviet strategic parity and Soviet conventional and chemical advantages in Europe. Although NATO's effort to move toward a "no early first use" posture remains uncertain insofar as determining how much is enough, and then procuring "enough," at least the task of identifying how little is too little is going forward, as witnessed by the May 1985 Defense Planning Committee *Report on Conventional Defense Improvements*[2] and ministerial approval in December 1985 of a conceptual military framework to provide nations with broad, long-term guidance on NATO military requirements.

Few deny that an improved NATO conventional defense capability would promote overall deterrence, but achieving a more credible conventional posture addresses only one aspect of the Warsaw Pact threat. Soviet surprise and deception constitute another. As Christopher Donnelly, Director of the Soviet Studies Research Center at the British Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, explains:

> If the war is to be won [by the Warsaw Pact], some considerable degree of surprise is absolutely essential . . . . Preparations for war, of course, are bound to give indications to NATO analysts and so these "warning indicators" . . . must be made ambiguous. Partial mobilization and reinforcement can become commonplace as repeated exercises . . . . Troop redeployment can be explained as being necessitated by internal economic or security concerns . . . . A counter-mobilization by NATO could be labeled as "provocative" and rendered ludicrous by sudden, though temporary, demobilization on the part of the Warsaw Pact. All in all, NATO's *warning time* may not equate to the *preparation time* NATO's commanders will get. This latter *must*, if the USSR is going to start the war, be by definition very limited, so that NATO's defences are unlikely to be heavily fortified or well dug in depth, and there will be no strong NATO operational reserves established.[3]

More generally, Richard Betts has argued that "a Soviet attack could succeed . . . even if the West redresses the conventional imbalance, if the attack were to use unanticipated techniques and catch NATO unready. Strengthening the order of battle offers only additive advantages to NATO; achieving surprise offers multiplicative advantages to Moscow."[4]

Although avoiding surprise is first and foremost a unilateral responsibility, real opportunities may exist for negotiated measures that would help complicate attempts at undetected preparations for aggression, increase the predictability of military activities, clarify intentions, and facilitate the political decision to react to warning—thus narrowing the gap between warning and preparation time. Such measures, known in the European context as "confidence- and security-building measures," or CSBMs, in themselves would not obviate an effective assessment process. According to NORAD CINC General Robert T. Herres, however, they "could serve as an important data point in determining the significance of a series of ambiguous situations."[5]

Hence, complementing the CDI is a less well-known acronym, CDE, standing for the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe. Convened in Stockholm on 17 January 1984 and concluded on 22 September 1986, the CDE produced an agreement on a regime of CSBMs to "reduce the risks of confrontation in Europe." By enhancing military openness and predictability through cooperative measures such as notification, observation, and inspection of conventional military activities, these CSBMs should in theory reduce the risks of surprise attack, avoid a crisis or confrontation sparked by miscalculation or misunderstanding, and inhibit the show of force for political intimidation. These measures apply to the whole of Europe extending as far east as the Ural mountains, and are politically binding upon the 35 participating states—all the European countries except Albania, the United States, and Canada. Though not technically an arms control agreement, the Stockholm accords include the first *militarily significant* confidence- and security-building measures to grow out of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

The purpose here is to review the key provisions of the Stockholm agreement, assess its military significance, and speculate as to the future of the CDE.

THE STOCKHOLM AGREEMENT

The agreement was distilled from five separate proposals advanced in 1984 by NATO, Romania, the neutral and nonaligned countries, the Soviet Union, and Malta,[6] totaling over fifty proposed CSBMs. The purpose was to build upon the limited Helsinki Final Act "confidence-building measures," which called for voluntary notification 21 days in advance of ground troop maneuvers involving 25,000 or more troops, pre-notification of smaller-scale maneuvers and troop movements, exchange of observers at notifiable maneuvers, and exchange of military delegations. However, not only were these measures voluntary and lacking in agreed verification provisions, they applied only to a narrow, 250-kilometer belt of European Russia. Subsequent experience with these measures indicated considerable discrepancies in compliance. Thus, the CDE mandate, adopted on 9 September 1983, required CSBMs to prove militarily significant, politically binding, adequately verifiable, and applicable to the whole of Europe.

The Stockholm agreement,[7] dated 19 September 1986 (although actually finalized on 21 September), contains the following CSBMs:

1. *Prior Notification of Certain Military Activities*. Notification will be given 42 days in advance of four types of military activities: (a) *land force exercises* involving at least 13,000 troops or 300 battle tanks organized into a divisional structure or two brigades/regiments; (b) *amphibious landings* involving at least 3000 troops; (c) *parachute drops* involving at least 3000 troops; and (d) *transfers* of forces from outside the zone to arrival points in the zone, and from inside the zone to points of "concentration" in the zone, to participate in the notifiable activity or to be "concentrated," if the transfer involves at least 13,000 troops or 300 battle tanks. *Alerts* exceeding these thresholds are to be notified upon commencement.

The information required to accompany notification is quite detailed, including the numbers and types of participating divisions and weaponry. NATO originally had sought an independent information measure (not linked to notifications) whereby states would annually exchange information on their command organizations in the zone and composition of ground forces and land-based air forces. The Soviets, however, refused to provide this data.

NATO had also sought a lower threshold—6000 troops or the major elements of a division, whereas the Soviets initially proposed 20,000 troops. The 13,000 figure, nevertheless, will result in ten to twenty Soviet notifications a year—a considerable achievement in light of the fact that the total number of Soviet notifications under the Final Act from 1976-83 reached only 22 notices. Increasing the number of Eastern notifications to reinforce understanding of Warsaw Pact military activities was a major NATO objective, so the agreed threshold represents a signal accomplishment.

2. *Observation of Certain Military Activities.* Observers from all participating states will be invited to monitor exercises and transfers when they meet or exceed 17,000 troops, and amphibious and parachute activities at 5000 troops. Alerts exceeding 72 hours are also observable.

In contrast to the Final Act, an elaborate "code of conduct" is provided for the treatment and rights of observers, including provision of maps, briefings, and use of personal binoculars. Observers will be allowed to observe major combat units and, "whenever possible," communicate with commanders and troops in the field. This represents a far cry from the Final Act experience; Western observers were infrequently invited to Warsaw Pact exercises, and US observers had not been invited to observe an Eastern exercise since 1979 (although invitations were issued for a September 1986 exercise apparently as a goodwill gesture). It also represents a considerable success for NATO and the neutral and nonaligned countries in that initially the Soviets sought to limit the number of states invited to activities and the number of activities that would be observed, and even refused to allow observers to carry binoculars.

3. *Annual Calendars.* This section requires that a list of planned military activities for the forthcoming year be transmitted no later than 15 November. Changes in the annual calendar will be disclosed in the 42-day advance notification.

4. *Constraining Provisions.* States will notify each other of planned military activities involving over 40,000 troops to be carried out in the second subsequent calendar year. Activities with over 75,000 troops not so notified cannot be carried out. Activities with over 40,000 troops are prohibited if they were not notified in the annual calendar. Activities not notified in the annual calendar "should be as few as possible."

These "time constraints" represent a NATO concession. All of the CSBM proposals save for NATO's had called for constraints on either the size, duration, or location of military activities. NATO resisted such measures, arguing that NATO required large exercises to test readiness and that such measures could prove counterproductive in a crisis by inhibiting defense response. The agreed measure requires notification only well in advance and does not affect alerts, but it is, nevertheless, a constraint.

5. *Compliance and Verification.* Each state may request a 48-hour inspection when compliance with CSBMs is in doubt. A state need not accept more than three inspections

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per year, nor more than one inspection by the same state. States belonging to the same alliance cannot inspect each other's activities, so NATO and the Warsaw Pact are assured inspection of each other's suspect activities. Inspection may be conducted by ground or aerial teams or both, and will be granted within 36 hours of the request. Inspectors will be permitted to use their own land vehicles, but aircraft will be chosen by mutual agreement. Inspectors will use their own maps, photo cameras, binoculars, dictaphones, and aeronautical charts, and may inspect an area no larger than that required for an army-level military activity. Restricted areas will be kept to a minimum, and areas where notifiable activity can take place will not be declared restricted areas—meaning that field training areas cannot be treated in the same way as restricted military installations such as airfields and garrisons.

This measure represents a truly historic breakthrough in arms control: for the first time the Soviets have agreed to mandatory, on-site inspection—which they resisted until 19 August 1986. It is of significance not only for the CSBM régime, but, because of its precedent-setting value, for the Geneva negotiations on nuclear and chemical arms control. The measure becomes effective on 1 January 1987.

MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE

The Stockholm agreement has crucial political importance as a watershed in East-West relations. But the CDE mandate required that the agreement prove "militarily significant"—the test for which would be based on various criteria. Is openness promoted about the size, structure, and activities of military forces? Are agreed standards of routine military activity established? Is the show or use of force for political intimidation inhibited? Is it more difficult for states to simultaneously comply with CSBMs and mount an attack? And is the possibility for reacting to warning facilitated?[8]

Although the true test will involve how the agreed CSBMs are implemented, in principle the Stockholm agreement tangibly contributes to these objectives.

A fundamentally important accomplishment is agreement on notification by annual calendar, so that planned military activities—including those beyond just maneuvers—would be forecast in detail one to two years in advance to all other CDE states. The overall effect of the CSBM notification regime should be to create a better basis of understanding about normal military activities. Any significant deviation from the calendar forecast would be highlighted, thus inhibiting the threat or use of force for political intimidation (e.g. Soviet exercises intended to coerce an Eastern European nation) and making it difficult to mask intentions in a crisis. The primary effect is predictability: states would know what was supposed to happen in some detail. This information would complement unilaterally acquired intelligence and, moreover, could help focus intelligence assets as an exercise got underway. Compliance with this measure would complicate preparations for sudden attack—unless, of course, the state in question risked declaring war well in advance. In a nutshell, no state can mass forces without being subject to prompt inspection and public accountability.

One possible problem concerns the alert exception, for which no advance notification is required but which requires notification upon commencement. The alert exception is arguably necessary since advance notification defeats the training purpose of the alert itself (although the fact that orders are not given in advance to the troops themselves does not preclude providing advance notification to other states through normal diplomatic channels). Of course, if the alert is not a routine readiness exercise but the beginning of, say, a short-warning attack (within four days of receiving campaign orders), obviously CSBMs of the notification variety will not prove effective. This points to the usefulness of considering other types of CSBMs that could actually lengthen warning time rather than confirm warning. These will be discussed later. However, the most likely scenario is one wherein the Pact would require weeks of preparations for an offensive. Over this time, violations of a notification regime or irregularities brought to light by CSBMs, coupled with other data, should provide sufficient indications of hostile intent. Even if CSBMs reduce the likely ambiguity of warning indicators by some small percentage point, this in itself can be considered significant.

The observation and inspection measures also play a significant role. Such measures would allow all participating states to discern whether a notified or suspicious activity was routine or threatening, and help verify the central contents of a notification—again complementing other intelligence means. The presence of observers or inspectors would make it more difficult to employ military activities as covers for attack preparations or for intimidation. If the activity was threatening, warning would be issued, as would be the case if an observation or inspection was denied. It should also be noted that evidence gleaned from these CSBMs could be used to publicly challenge a potential violator—e.g. "you have violated your political commitment." This could be useful not only because unilateral intelligence sources and methods would not be compromised, but because such violations could facilitate the all-important political decision to react to warning.

In addition to contributing to threat assessment by gathering information, CSBMs may have another direct military application. According to James R. Blaker, vice president of the Hudson Institute, the use of inspections, should it cause the East to shut down attack preparations in the inspection area for the duration of the inspection (to deceive the inspecting team), conceivably could degrade Eastern attack preparations by as much as five percent in first echelon firepower by D-day, and cause up to a 28-hour delay in the arrival of second echelon armies at the general defense position. Hence, according to Blaker: "If the inspection was carefully targeted and timed . . . it could bring the kind of space and time gaps in the momentum of the East's attack which could be achieved by pre-emptive Western interdiction strikes" contemplated in AirLand Battle.[9] Again, if the inspections were denied, these measures would force the country in question to effectively sound an alarm against itself.

Granted, some would argue that these declared CSBM benefits are illusory because it is simply inconceivable that a Warsaw Pact planner would not use CSBMs as instruments of deception. For example, according to retired Colonel Jim E. Hinds, Principal Director for Negotiations Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy:

> A good planner will be delighted by the opportunity to manipulate standardized procedures. He might cover some preparation steps by providing notice of out-of-garrison or alert activities. He could attempt to calm the opposing Alliance by inviting observers in accordance with the agreement, if necessary permitting observation of specially staged exercises designed to give a normal peacetime appearance. Reinforcements might be moved surreptitiously under the cover of such maneuvers.[10]

However, it is likely that attempts at deception will accompany any attack preparations, with or without CSBMs. Although a Pact planner may no doubt attempt to employ CSBMs as instruments of deception, a carefully designed set of measures could also work in the West's favor by targeting those critical indices of aggressive preparations, thereby forcing the Pact to reveal its hand and overcoming the possible effects of deception. Deception must be expected, but the CSBM regime affords the West a new weapon to foil attempts at *maskirovka*.

In sum, the net effect of the agreement may be described as follows:

> An agreement would reduce the risk of military confrontation arising from ambiguity about the nature of military activities and the intentions behind them. It would do this by requiring a routine exchange of

information concerning military forces and their normal exercise practices which would, over time, develop a pattern of normal military activity in Europe. Establishing the data base which defined this pattern may take a few years, but once established, it could become the norm against which all military activity on the continent was judged. Conformity with such a norm could contribute to increased stability as well as greater predictability in the overall military situation. On the other hand, extraordinary military activity, determined by reference to the established norm, would become readily identifiable with the result that appropriate political and, if required, military countermeasures could be taken. Conformity with a pattern would serve the confidence-building aspect of a [CSBM] regime, while identifying deviations from the norm would be useful for the security-building aspect.[11]

BEYOND STOCKHOLM

The third review meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—the CDE parent forum—convened on 4 November 1986 in Vienna to review the results of the Stockholm Conference and possibly make a decision as to its future, including supplementing the mandate to accommodate new directions. The CDE mandate states that the purpose of the CDE is to "undertake, in stages, new, effective, and concrete actions designed to make progress in strengthening confidence and security, and in achieving disarmament," and it may be that arms reductions will be taken up in a post-Vienna CDE meeting. In May 1986, the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting in Halifax called for "bold new steps . . . in the field of conventional arms control" with the objective of "the strengthening of stability and security in the whole of Europe, through increased openness and the establishment of a verifiable, comprehensive, and stable balance of conventional forces at lower levels." The announcement was in response to Gorbachev's Berlin speech in April 1986 proposing conventional and tactical nuclear reductions "from the Atlantic to the Urals." Although NATO may decide to preserve the existing NATO-Warsaw Pact Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations, which focus on Central Europe, rather than begin an open-ended 35-state disarmament forum, the effectiveness of CSBMs will obviously be limited so long as the forces themselves are not reduced to balanced and more stable levels. Presumably, a follow-on CDE meeting would also tackle unresolved matters from the Stockholm conference in addition to new CSBMs. In general, it is anticipated that more ambitious measures will be sought. For instance, speaking in January 1984 on the desirability of early adoption of the NATO CSBMs, then US Head of Delegation James E. Goodby stated that the CDE "could then proceed to an examination of more complex and difficult measures."[12]

Among the logical candidates are operational constraints, or those measures which restrict the size, location, duration, or type of military activities. The idea is to *prevent*, rather than only notify, observe, and inspect, potentially threatening activities. Such measures could prove especially important in a crisis by providing tangible proof of mutually nonaggressive intent and thereby dampening the effect of military factors in forcing the pace of crisis. Or, if war is deliberately sought, such operational constraints could reduce the ambiguity of warning and possibly increase warning time. The agreed time constraints provide a foundation for such discussions, but in themselves are insufficient from the perspective of inhibiting surprise attack because they do not include "alerts"—an obvious loophole.

In this context, the proposal of the neutral and nonaligned states to limit maneuvers by duration, annual number, and troop level, with an annual exception to take into account large-scale exercises such as Autumn Forge, may provide a suitable basis for discussion. A proposal that NATO considered in the late 1970s for limiting the number of divisions out of garrison at any one time might also be reviewed. Other likely proposals will include geographic restraints on various types of activities (e.g. restricting simultaneous reconnaissance flights and large-scale exercises near borders, cross-border movements, and the distance troops may deploy away from garrisons). Special restrictions should accompany activities not notified in the annual calendar, including "alerts." Constraints requiring some form of force realignment may also eventually be considered. For instance, retired Colonel John G. Keliher of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has proposed a restricted offensive weaponry deployment zone along the inner-German border. This constraint would render it necessary "to resort to highly visible troop movements and/or restructuring in order for a potential aggressor to mount a large-scale surprise attack, thereby increasing the warning time to the other side."[13] These and other types of constraints could be complemented by new types of inspection measures, such as permanent observer posts at major troop exit and entry points and at the peripheries of major installations.[14] Identifying constraints that complicate the ability to launch a sudden offensive without also impeding full defensive readiness will inevitably prove complex, but they seem essential for future CDE negotiation.

Additional areas likely to be taken up in a post-Vienna CDE conference will include attempting to negotiate information measures apart from notification (which will be required to establish an agreed data base if arms reductions are pursued), building on verification, discussing air and naval CSBMs, and addressing the question of consultative arrangements—which could assume the form of either compliance review boards or more ambitious "security council" or "crisis control" centers. For example, as suggested by Lieutenant Colonel David T. Twining, one goal of such a center could be to maintain "crisis action SOPs" which would become operational in given contingencies, thereby enabling national leaders to defuse a crisis if it were their intent to do so.[15] The application of emerging technologies associated with Follow-On Forces Attack for purposes of verification and warning should also be investigated.

Despite a plethora of conceivable CSBMs that could be discussed in a post-Vienna CDE meeting, however, it should not be assumed—nor is it suggested here—that there exists some logical set of measures awaiting adoption. Many issues that were debated and rejected in Stockholm will invariably come to the fore again. For example, it was only with great reluctance that the Soviets eventually withdrew by late 1985 a number of proposals not considered CSBMs in the West—e.g. a declaration on the no-first-use of nuclear weapons, chemical- and nuclear-free zones, and reduction in military spending. Controversial ideas can also be expected from the neutral and nonaligned states, such as Malta's continuing fascination with a nuclear-free Mediterranean. The Soviets may also re-open the CDE "zone" question by attempting to secure coverage of vast expanses of the Atlantic and perhaps even North American territory. The US Navy is likely to remain just as opposed to constraints on maritime activities as the Soviet General Staff is to Western notions of "transparency," or greater openness.

In addition, a fundamental political issue is raised by the CDE process insofar as it remains an "integral" part of the broader Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, that is, linked to non-security questions such as human rights. According to Ambassador Barry, the Soviets "would like to turn the CDE into a separate, co-equal military-security forum which could grow to overwhelm its parent CSCE process,"[16] although without accomplishing much of what the West would consider "militarily significant." It is certainly not obvious that the West can successfully define an agenda for concrete CSBMs designed, almost entirely, to mitigate the effects of deliberate Warsaw Pact policy, and yet maintain some semblance of East-West balance among the various Helsinki Final Act provisions as the CDE progresses.

Nevertheless, although it poses risks and opportunities, the CDE process is likely to endure. Over time, it may evolve into the principal forum for East-West conventional arms control. This is more likely to be so as envisaged reductions in nuclear weapons go forward, if ever. As then French foreign affairs minister Roland Dumas stated before the CDE early last year, "The limitation of nuclear armaments cannot be put forward as sufficient in itself . . . . [T]he problem of conventional armaments cannot receive only secondary priority as compared with nuclear negotiations."[17] By its focus on the whole of Europe, and its 35-nation constituency, the CDE offers a potentially promising instrument to execute this ambitious tasking. In this context, the Stockholm concluding document should prove militarily significant by increasing the predictability of military activities, while setting the stage for the negotiation of more difficult security issues in the years ahead.

NOTES

1. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, 28 January 1986, plenary address before the CDE (courtesy of US Embassy Stockholm).

2. For a recent overview, see "Information Sheet" distributed by the NATO Secretary General's Press Spokesman at the Defense Planning Committee Ministerial Meeting, 22 May 1986 (Brussels: NATO Press Service, 1986). See also Subcommittee on Conventional Defense in Europe, Karsten Voight, Rapporteur, *Conventional Defense in Europe: A Comprehensive Evaluation* (Brussels: North Atlantic Assembly, December 1985).

3. "Soviet Operational Concepts in the 1980s," *Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe: Proposals for the 1980s*, Report of the European Security Study (ESECS I) (New York: St. Martin's, 1983), p. 113.

4. Richard Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington: Brookings, 1982), p. 16.

5. John Borawski, ed., *Avoiding War In the Nuclear Age: Confidence-Building Measures for Crisis Stability* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986), p. xiii.

6. For a general background, see my "The Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures," *Arms Control* (London), 6 (September 1985), 115-49; and, with Stan Weeks, "From Stockholm To Vienna: Confidence-Building Measures and European Security," *Orbis*, forthcoming. A full history of the talks will be published in 1987 as *From the Atlantic to the Urals*, coauthored with Lynn M. Hansen and Suzanne Parry.

7. For the text of the concluding document, see *The New York Times*, 22 September 1986, p. A12. For an account of the US bureaucratic battle that required a presidential decision to resolve, see Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Will Explore a Soviet Proposal to Cut War Risk," *The New York Times*, 17 September 1986, p. A1. This leak damaged the NATO inspection position, which called for using neutral and nonaligned state aircraft as opposed to the Soviet preference for using the aircraft of the inspected state. The Soviet view prevailed.

8. Of course, the test for "military significance" is subjective. For example, surprise attack considerations and the goal of military "transparency" do not necessarily dictate the same measures. If, say, complete openness was the objective, then all troop maneuvers and movements should be notified. However, each year in West Germany alone there occur approximately three or four corps exercises involving 40,000 troops and above, ten division-sized exercises of 10,000 troops, 80 exercises of more than 2000 troops, and 5000 three- or four-day exercises of more than 2000 troops; 580,000 military flights are also conducted annually (*White Paper 1985: The Situation and the Development of the Federal Armed Forces* [Bonn: Federal Minister of Defense, 1985], p. 116). Not all exercises, of course, are "militarily significant"—let alone capable of providing the basis for actual operations. The 13,000 troop threshold seeks to strike an appropriate balance, and the 300-tank criterion corresponds to the inventory of a Soviet armored division.

9. James R. Blaker, "On-Site Inspections: The Military Significance of an Arms Control Proposal," *Survival*, 26 (May-June 1983), 104.

10. Jim E. Hinds, "The Limits of Confidence," in *Avoiding War In the Nuclear Age*, p. 192.

11. Remarks by Ambassador Robert L. Barry, Chatham House, London, 4 February 1986. Statement provided courtesy US Embassy Stockholm.

12. CDE plenary statement 24 January 1984.

13. John G. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions* (New York: Pergamon, 1980), p. 158.

14. See Jonathan Alford, "Confidence-Building Measures in Europe: The Military Aspects," in *The Future of Arms Control: Part III, Confidence-Building Measures*, ed. Jonathan Alford, Adelphi Paper No. 149 (London: IISS, 1979), p. 10.

15. David T. Twining, "An East-West Center for Military Cooperation," in *Avoiding War In the Nuclear Age*, p. 180.

16. Statement at the Hearing, "The Stockholm Conference and the CSCE Process," US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 25 March 1986, p. 4.

17. CDE plenary statement, 28 January 1986.

The author is indebted to the US CDE delegation for making possible on-site inspection of the final round in August 1986.