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## The Decades of Détente

### **Cold War resilience: coexistence and Helsinki as twin ideas**

The notion of détente appears as a constant topic of discussion in contemporary history writing on the Cold War. There are several theories on its periodization, and even more definitions of the phenomenon. The Helsinki Final Act is one of those significant examples that can prove quite clearly that most of the spectacular Cold War turning points are embedded deeply in the course of a long preceding process of a particular Cold War resilience. By this, I mean that both sides, East and West, wanted to adjust themselves to the *permanent* feature of a prolonged Cold War. That is, they began to fit themselves into a long-term rivalry emerging between the two great political-civilizational galaxies from the mid-1950s onward. Beginning in that period, the ideological emphasis by each side lay much more on the non-hot features of this East-West rivalry rather than on the “war” itself, which—as we now know—never became hot in the direct spheres of influence of these superpower blocs. Thus, we can say that the Helsinki Final Act has no unique status in the Cold War constellation; it was not the result of the dynamization of East-West relations in the early 1970s, but rather it was, in reality, a necessary consequence of a long-term process that began in the mid-1950s. During the intervening decades of East-West interaction, intentions and even institutions on one side frequently strengthened and motivated the other’s, slowly developing into a new type of interdependency. In these

flows, however, there were particularly decisive factors in these constellations. First, there was the nuclear balance of power and the consequent partial-peace coordinate system, called the Cold War. As part of this shifting context, different practices and strategies of resilience by the two blocs can be counted. Second, one ought to point out the ongoing scientific and technical revolution (STR) of the time as an ultimate motivation for intensive cooperation, but also for internal reforms.

On the Soviet side, the main ideological framework for a more flexible strategy was the announcement of the doctrine of peaceful coexistence, which became a twin idea of the future Helsinki process. In 1953, the main ideological question was formulated by the Soviet leadership in the following way: What shall we do with our strategies without war? From then on, the Khrushchev leadership presented itself on the international ideological stage as the *ambassador of peace*. The Soviets took into consideration that the public everywhere wished for disarmament and a ban on nuclear testing, therefore it presented the Soviet bloc as the main advocate of world peace. To support this idea, they tried to use modern mass communications effectively, giving a new meaning to pre-medial propaganda. This aimed to influence the masses, and mainly the public opinion, of the opposite camp. Like Lenin, Khrushchev should be seen as an ideological forerunner of the age of media: they both experimented with means of attaining mass influence far beyond the borders of empire.

After launching their policy of peaceful competition and the doctrine of coexistence. Moscow put less emphasis on encouraging class struggle, conflict between nations, and direct revolt against the West. It no longer wanted to use unavoidable violence to urge the decisive global world-revolution. It tolerated various paths leading to peaceful expansion and began to see transformations (all around the world) from rather an evolutionary than revolutionary perspective.<sup>1</sup> With

<sup>1</sup> On the offensive nature of coexistence, see Adam Ulam, *Expansion and coexistence: Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1973* (New York: Praeger, 1974); In his *Failed Empire*, Vladislav Zubok argues that Khrushchev did not particularly

this ideological and strategic turn, Soviet policy undoubtedly modified key elements of Leninist propaganda and generally the discourse of the Cold War, too.

No doubt, with the ideological support for peace, Moscow first wanted to gain time to enter a new accumulation phase that would lead to at least a military balance, if not a relative advantage,<sup>2</sup> and this strategy seemed to bring results quickly. In the second half of the 1950s, the Soviet Union had moved closer to its desired balance of power, and this success encouraged it to act as an initiator. Accordingly, the Soviet leadership was reactive and proactive—or even offensive—at the same time. Its ideological line propagated the belief that science and technology had fundamentally changed the nature of war, because the threat of nuclear conflict discouraged the two world-systems from launching military actions in areas of their direct influence. It officially accepted that the two opposing systems had been forced to coexist alongside one another peacefully, because the struggle between them would be prolonged and de-intensified, which also meant that the notion of “war” shifted from direct violence and military solutions to the spheres of diplomacy, economy, ideology, culture, and propaganda.<sup>3</sup>

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prefer the policy of coexistence either, but later embraced the recommendations of his colleagues in the leadership. Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire. The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 94–99.

<sup>2</sup> István Kende, *Forró béke, hidegháború: A diplomáciai kapcsolatok története 1945–1956* [Hot Peace, Cold War: The History of Diplomatic Relations, 1945–1956] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1970), 61. There are some analysts who believe that the Soviet leadership, and particularly Brezhnev, were honestly committed to détente, and did not primarily work toward the accumulation of power to increase influence. See Vladislav M. Zubok, *op. cit.*, 223.

<sup>3</sup> Csaba Békés stresses that both sides realized, not only later, but already between 1953 and 1956, that in the interest of avoiding a third World War that would result in total annihilation, the two world systems were forced to coexist. This triggered decisive changes in the relationship between East and West, and opened a new era in the history of the Cold War. Csaba Békés, “The Long Détente and the Soviet Bloc, 1953–1983,” in *The Long Détente. Changing concepts of security and cooperation in Europe, 1950s–1980s*, edited by Oliver Bange and Poul Villaume (Budapest–New York, Central European University Press, 2017), 31–34.

In the Khrushchev period, party congresses (the twentieth in 1956, the twenty-first in 1959, and the twenty-second in 1961) taken together formed a coherent strategy confirming theoretically that the most significant parameters of the age would be the special co-relations of the arms race, the scientific-technical revolution with a wide range of its impacts and the transformation of the world economic system. The official recognition of these factors inevitably projected a more complex and differentiated worldview on the horizon of Soviet ideology. Moscow emphasized that there was a close relationship between coexistence and economic and technological competition-adaptation, because a lower level of international tension would provide more opportunity for “peaceful construction” and a favourable situation could prove to be an advantage—without giving up on offensive plans for Europe and the so called Third World.

### **Toward a security system in Europe**

Coexistence seemed to be a flexible political doctrine, most appropriate for these peaceful competition goals. For this reason, from 1953 onward it remained a definitive thread in Soviet foreign policy. It became the central element of Moscow’s interpretation that the new, friendlier political environment would successfully prepare the ground for the idea of European cooperation too. At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956, Khrushchev declared that, in parallel to the peaceful coexistence doctrine, there was an urgent need for a security system in Europe, which lay among the top priorities of Soviet strategic goals.<sup>4</sup> Then, in 1957, the parties of the Soviet bloc released a joint statement of peace,<sup>5</sup> which was accompanied

<sup>4</sup> N. S. Khrushchev, *Report of the Central Committee, Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 4, 1956* (London: Soviet News Booklet no. 4, February 1956), 21–24.

<sup>5</sup> Declaration of Communist and Workers’ Parties of the Socialist Countries, Meeting in Moscow, USSR, November 17–16, 1957. See Sino-Soviet Split Document Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/>

by offensive diplomatic and ideological campaigns, followed by similar ideological messages. At the same time, the number of diplomatic contacts and personal meetings multiplied. The Soviet Union strived to settle its relations in every region with every possible diplomatic partner, and tourism also improved to a limited degree, first mainly among the countries of the bloc.<sup>6</sup>

The Khrushchev leadership also encouraged theoretical examinations of questions related to European security. Under the cover of scientific work, a Permanent Committee was established with representatives of Soviet, East German, Polish, and Czechoslovak scientific institutes, which organized scientific conferences first in Prague in 1961, and then in East Berlin in 1964 and 1965. Hungarians could only join this initiative later due to diplomatic isolation following 1956. Using all means possible, they sought contacts with Western social-democratic parties in the interest of influencing the development of European interstate relations through them,<sup>7</sup> and they also

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comintern/sino-soviet-split/other/1957declaration.htm (retrieved on May 10, 2019); Stalin also had experimented with “peace policy,” which to him was equivalent to conquest. See the slogan: “Lasting Peace! For People’s Democracy!” See also Michel Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 504; 630–631.

<sup>6</sup> On Soviet foreign policy, see, among others, Vladislav M. Zubok, op. cit.; Csaba Békés, “The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics,” CWIHP Working Paper no. 16, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., September 1996, 2–4; Ferenc Fischer, *A kétpólusú világ 1945–1989* [The Bipolar World, 1945–1989] (Budapest–Pécs: Dialóg Campus, 2005); Geoffrey Roberts, “A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953–1955,” CWIHP Working Paper no. 57, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2008. On the rise of tourism, see Vilmos Gál and Attila Szilárd Tar, *Dokumentumok a XX. század történetéhez* [Documents on the History of the Twentieth Century] (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2001), 344–345.

<sup>7</sup> For a brief review of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’s (MSzMP) initial party relations, see The Central Committee (Henceforward: MSzMP CC) Foreign Affairs Department report on our relations with socialist and social-democratic parties. Recommendations for further tasks, May 1974. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/637. ó. e. On the entire period, see István Simon, *Bal-kisértés, a kádári külpolitika és a nyugati szociáldemokrácia* [Kadarist Foreign Policy and Western Social Democracy] (Budapest: Digitalbooks, 2012).

called for convening a congress of the peoples of Europe or a convention of the leaders of its states.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the direct political factors, coexistence, and later the European security manoeuvre, had different motivations (among them economic) as well. Moscow's immediate goal was an expansion of economic relations and the lifting of restrictions by Western states. The decision to abandon the Asian type autarkic model resulted in the need for European Soviet-type systems to adjust themselves continually with respect to their opponents' parameters of economic competition. So, the principles of coexistence were soon translated into practice: relations between the two blocs moved from individualism to interdependence and the outlines of an emerging cooperation were based on mutual interests. In spite of prevailing restrictive regulations, this switched to the path of East-West economic cooperation. The period of isolation began to be replaced with a loose collaboration, which was not yet a true interdependence. Still, it had strong, mutual, and irreversible effects. Industrial relations, all in all, covered not only short-term contracts and the exchange of finished products, but also more stable cooperation and commitments over the long term. Western Europe, with some extra input and capital investments, gained newer capacities, while Eastern Europe received modern technology.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the bloc mainly expected that the gradual connection of the two parts of Europe would mean not only a new phase of economic relations, but also that they would be able to eventually neutralize the Western half of the continent. At the same time, the call for a security system in Europe contained the most practical political goal of all: to confirm the western

<sup>8</sup> Recommendation of the MSzMP CC Foreign Affairs Committee to the MSzMP Political Committee (henceforward PC), September 17, 1975. MSzMP PC, October 12, 1965. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/377. ó. e.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent synthesis on the Soviet bloc's role in shaping East-West relations, see Csaba Békés, *Enyhülés és emancipáció. Magyarország, a szovjet blokk és a nemzetközi politika, 1944–1991* [Détente and Emancipation. Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, and International Politics, 1944–1991] (Budapest: Osiris-MTA TK, 2019).

borders of the Soviet empire, and additionally to accomplish the ambitious Eurasia concept along with it. In this sense, détente was, in Moscow's eyes, in fact a new type of challenge, a new approach in the struggle.

Recognizing the importance of the Soviet intention to reorganize the Cold War security structure, Western leaders soon felt that the Soviets had not only gained a head start in rocket technology, but by promoting coexistence, in propaganda too. It was obvious that it had gained an advantage in the development of ideology as well, since it was difficult to question the rationality of the doctrine of peace, thus it really had the potential to confuse the public in the developed world. It was a new phase of argumentation-competition. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, among others, was rather anxious about this Europe-neutralizing policy. He realized that Western propaganda was having difficulty responding to new Soviet approaches because these Soviet methods differed to a significant degree from those of Stalin: they were more flexible and more difficult to defeat, even by newer means. Eden emphasized that all this would test European and American policy.<sup>10</sup>

From these considerations, it is understandable that in the beginning many Western politicians were reluctant to join the coexistence paradigm, and this was the case with the European security project, too. The West suspected that a more overarching political vision and strategy lay behind the new Soviet ideological initiative, and for a while they were rather mistrustful of the Soviet proposals.

And indeed, coexistence was not merely a quickly absorbed tactical element for Moscow, but part of a more general, carefully thought-out multi-factor concept, and the Helsinki project was the necessary result of that. It also means that there was an apparent continuity between the Khrushchev and the Brezhnev periods' interpretation of security goals. The former's initiative for Europe was improved by the latter from the mid-1960s onward. In both political eras, the strategy of coexistence and

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Eden, *The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: Cassel, 1960), 362–363.

the permanent effort for a European security system had multi-layered, diversified security goals:

1. the strengthening of Soviet and continental security;
2. diverting the German threat; in close connection to the first two,
3. securing the western borders of the Soviet empire through special treaties;
4. the pacification of Europe (especially in the shadow of Chinese-Soviet tensions); and
5. the reduction of American influence while expanding Soviet presence in the world.

Concrete negotiation proposals were first articulated at the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee (WP PCC) session in Bucharest in July 1966, then at the Karlovy Vary meeting of European Communist and Workers' Parties in 1967, and at the WP PCC's Budapest meeting in March 1969. The key points included: the German question, disarmament, peaceful conflict resolution, neutrality, lifting embargoes, production and scientific cooperation between the two halves of Europe, dismantling the blocs, a European security conference and a meeting of all European parliamentary representatives.<sup>11</sup> Then, the 1969 conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow was in many regards an outstanding event in the

<sup>11</sup> The consultations of CC Secretaries of Fraternal Parties in Moscow in December 1973. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ó. e. On other exchange values, see Record of the Main Content of Gromyko's Conversation with the US President J. Carter, September 23, 1977. National Security Archive, Washington DC, Carter-Brezhnev Project; see also For European Peace and Security. Statement by the Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties, Karlovy Vary, April 26, 1967, [https://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement\\_by\\_the\\_european\\_communist\\_and\\_workers\\_parties\\_on\\_security\\_in\\_europe\\_karlovy\\_vary\\_26\\_april\\_1967-en-e8fe5ae4-27cc-4e0f-a48a-c8c82cb548e6.html](https://www.cvce.eu/obj/statement_by_the_european_communist_and_workers_parties_on_security_in_europe_karlovy_vary_26_april_1967-en-e8fe5ae4-27cc-4e0f-a48a-c8c82cb548e6.html) (retrieved on June 10, 2019). Later, these same principles were supplemented and re-formulated. See Documents Adopted by the International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, Moscow, June 5–17, 1969, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110706145416/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/> (retrieved on June 10, 2019).

history of the Soviet system. It projected the key foreign and domestic policy trends for the coming decades, and outlined the accompanying ideology in detail. Its goals were strongly supported by the fact that by the end of the 1960s the earlier asymmetric military power balance between the two superpowers had developed into a “symmetric bipolarity.”<sup>12</sup> (Later that year, the beginning of the SALT I negotiations essentially codified the shift in the balance of power, signalling Soviet advantage. Moscow insisted that the USA accept that the Soviet leadership would not give up on developing its fleet, including nuclear submarines, claiming that this was the only way it could counter-balance the USA’s advantageous strategic position.)

The conference of the international Communist parties made clear that Moscow’s key ideological and diplomatic goal was to have both halves of the continent accept the historic necessity of the Soviet Union’s European policy and a new type of Eastern integration as well. The key goal of the more open Eastern ideological teambuilding was to confirm that the Euro-Atlantic region’s realistic political partner was a Ural-Europe, and that closer relations between these two equally ranked integrations were inevitable. Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet

<sup>12</sup> See Ferenc Fischer, *op. cit.*, 241–247. Also see The Agitation and Propaganda Committee’s (APC) material for debate about international agitation and tasks for further development, May 5, 1970. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/138. ó. e.; János Kádár’s oral report on the meeting of Fraternal Parties’ First Secretaries in the Crimea, MSzMP PC, August 2, 1972. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/587. ó. e. On the maneuvers in the Helsinki process, see Csaba Békés, “Hungary, the Soviet Bloc, the German question and the CSCE Process, 1965–1975,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 3 (2016): 95–138. On institutionalization, see Pál Dunay and Ferenc Gazdag, eds., *A Helsinki folyamat: az első húsz év. Tanulmányok és dokumentumok*, [The Helsinki Process: The First Twenty Years. Studies and Documents] (Budapest: Stratégiai és Védelmi Kutató Intézet–Magyar Külügyi Intézet–Zrínyi Kiadó, 1995); On the most recent international research, see Oliver Niedhart and Gottfried Bange, eds., *The CSCE 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008); Wilfried Loth and Georges-Henri Soutou, eds., *The Making of Détente. Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965–75* (London–New York: Routledge, 2008); Andreas Wenger, Wojtech Mastny, and Christian Nuenlist, eds., *Origins of the European Security System. The Helsinki Process Revisited, 1965–1975* (London: Routledge, 2008).

leadership considered the political-ideological constellation favourable. A new phase of ideological struggle was started by the Helsinki process.

Moscow held that it was in the position to take initiatives, that the ball was in its court, and that the prospects for a wide supportive social alliance based on effective peace propaganda were good. The Vietnam War in which the US committed military aggression while the Soviets avoided direct intervention, and then the American defeat, as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict, appeared to create a context suitable for developing an intensive propaganda program in Europe. Given the temporary ideological disadvantage of the USA, Western public opinion could be receptive to an Eastern peace campaign.<sup>13</sup> Therefore Brezhnev announced an “offensive peace policy” (as a more intense variant of coexistence), exploiting fears of war and growing dissatisfaction with American influence. His ideology (even if he was not serious about it) from the mid-1960s proposed that since the NATO treaty would expire in 1969, it would be a good opportunity to envisage a Europe without military blocs (instead of renewing the treaty), and to create a collective security system in which Europe would not be threatened by any potential German military force and, correspondingly, the role of the USA on the continent would decrease. Moscow refused the accusation that the convergence of the two halves of the continent served Soviet interests, and claimed that the West had just as great a need for the advantages of an international division of labour and for the other half of European markets.

Khrushchev’s coexistence principle became offensive during the Brezhnev era in different ways, and it was increasingly a practice directed toward European space. Words of peace, European security, and a converging continental identity together promised to be an effective tool in winning over public opinion in the West. The initiative to reallocate military funds for peaceful goals, including social, health, and public education development, as well as offering aid to developing

<sup>13</sup> Brezhnev’s remarks at the July 31, 1972, meeting of Fraternal Parties in the Crimea. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/587. ó. e.

countries, sounded particularly appealing. Peace and security arising from disarmament, social profit, and environmentalism were topics that offered attractive solutions for many.

Nonetheless, during the long preparatory period leading up to the European security conference, the West, and especially the United States, was—understandably—reluctant to accept a new manoeuvre meant to neutralize Europe. At the same time, it took into consideration the opportunities of an opening to the East in economic, scientific, and cultural relations, and eventually tuned itself to a unique European détente policy. As a counterbalance, Western states pushed for freedom of information, the flow of ideas and information, and the free movement of people, which was translated into the concrete goal of the liberalization of visa practices. As part of their human rights agenda, it urged a quick solution to the issue of reuniting families, the authorization of the emigration of Jewish populations,<sup>14</sup> lifting restrictions on the work and movement of foreign journalists, an improvement in work conditions for businesspersons, an increased inward flow of press products, and guarantees for at least a few civic rights. Regarding the western parties' political preferences, there were, however, some differences. The Americans considered the free movement of diplomats and technical experts as particularly important, while the Federal Republic of Germany prioritized the development of industrial relations, joint ventures, and information centres. The British and the French were interested in improving primarily cultural relations and saw opportunities in the distribution of press products. During the intensive bargaining process, they attempted to take stock of the Soviet side's weaknesses, and,

<sup>14</sup> The Soviet Andrei Sakharov initiated the establishment of a committee on the protection of human rights, and encouraged allowing a portion of Soviet Jewry to settle in Israel. Certain experts hold that due to Western pressure, 40% of post-graduates with Jewish heritage left the Soviet Union in this period. Ben Fowkes, "The National Question in the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev Policy and Response," in *Brezhnev Reconsidered*, edited by Edwin Bacon and Sandle Mark (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2002), 68–90; 72; see also, Record of the Main Content of Gromyko's Conversation with the US President J. Carter, September 23, 1977, National Security Archive, Washington DC, Carter-Brezhnev Project.

thus, they sought contacts with opposition groups within the Eastern bloc. For example, when, in January 1972, American Congresspersons visited the Soviet Union, they organized a meeting with liberal intellectuals, which was later condemned by *Izvestia* in a statement. The Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested at the US Embassy in Moscow and a member of the American delegation was expelled from the country.<sup>15</sup>

### **Ideologies around security: the clash of future visions**

On the road to the security conference, it became clear that both East and West were preparing thorough, refashioned indoctrination campaigns: the exchange values of security negotiations entered into ideological warfare on the main issues: European status quo versus human liberties and rights. Reconstructed goals, themes and organizations emerged in the battle, and the emergence of new, up-to-date tools brought a visible change to the ideological struggle. In the first half of the decade, opponents strengthened their propagandist potential, increased their budgets, revised their earlier principles, and reorganized their institutions.

The heightened ideological manoeuvres demonstrated that both camps perceived the constellation to be favourable and appropriate for argumentative propaganda. They strove to make use of the cracks that appeared thanks to the *relatively* free flow of ideas and people in order to use all possible forums to propagate the advantages of their systems in a seemingly apolitical and ideology-free manner. The propagandist role of diplomatic institutions abroad was supplemented by press offices, trade companies, offices, and chambers, and by mass information tools, scientific research centres, cultural organizations, and outstanding public figures. Increasingly

<sup>15</sup> Current Sovietology and convergence theory. Constructed by Tibor Görög, research fellow. HSA Archive F-76/1973; Supplement to the summary titled "Imperialist propaganda aimed against the Hungarian People's Republic," January 15, 1972. IV. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ó. e.

large and professional apparatuses worked on winning over the other party's heartland and public opinion, and additionally, the Third World and their populations.

Soviet bloc members regularly discussed Western preparations during ideological coordination meetings. Brezhnev highlighted that the West was creating "an entire system of ideological myths" with massive propaganda machinery and modern tools, and it is particularly efficient in exploiting the appeal of Western mass culture. He claimed that the ideologues, on the payroll of the imperialists, create a unique pseudo-culture, which aims to dumb down the masses and dampen their social consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

Western propaganda organs had also anticipated a "peaceful conquest" policy, and this was not a defensive tactic on their part. The starting points of Western ideology were summarized at the conference on Sovietology held in Hamilton in October 1971, and at the spring 1973 ideological-strategic coordination meeting in Salzburg. Propagandists agreed to avoid open confrontation with Eastern states and parties, i.e., they would refrain from using violent, harsh language vis-à-vis the enemy. They did not threaten armed intervention, but at the same time they offensively worked to pluralize the Eastern bloc, to instigate national communisms and to liberalize domestic politics. They also agreed to continuously remind the residents of the Soviet camp of the positive, latently market oriented features of necessary economic reforms, stressing the liberal characteristics of a modest scale of "democratization," hoping to radicalize political-economic-social movements.<sup>17</sup> They agreed

<sup>16</sup> "Speech by Leonid Brezhnev at the 1969 Moscow meeting," [https://web.archive.org/web/20120608044725/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/2S.15.2-Leonid.Brezhnev,Some movement-problems](https://web.archive.org/web/20120608044725/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/2S.15.2-Leonid.Brezhnev,Some%20movement-problems) (retrieved on June 10, 2019). The Soviet bloc's intelligence claimed to know that in July 1973, the American Congress approved additional funding of \$50 million for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. See Bulgarian comments at the December 1973 Moscow meeting of Central Committee Foreign Affairs Secretaries. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ó. e.

<sup>17</sup> Soviet comments at the 1973 Moscow ideological meeting. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ó. e.

that, in order to erode the Soviet system, they would utilize financial credit, cultural exchange, and diplomatic manoeuvres.

### **The pre-Helsinki propaganda: global and welfare ideas**

An important change in the discourse of both parties was that an increasing number of global issues entered the points of debate which were relevant to their rivalry. The Soviets, however, were especially active in gaining the support of the Western public for the *de jure* recognition of the European *de facto* status quo. Beyond questions of disarmament, they initiated solutions on important global issues like rational raw materials and fuel extraction, transportation, eradicating the most dangerous and widespread diseases, conquering space, utilizing the natural resources of the world's oceans, and environmental protection. It was a unique aspect of the ideological struggle that principles and theories could not remain exclusively the elements of a global discourse. They had consequences for consciousness and, even if slowly, they reformed practice. For example, in 1971–72, in the framework of a complex Comecon plan, several multilateral environmental protection agreements were signed in the region. Environmental protection research was launched, earlier laws and decrees were unified, and political leaders indicated on several occasions that the economic point of view needs to be supplemented by environmental considerations. (A proposal was passed in Hungary in 1974 on establishing, next to the government, a National Environmental Protection Council, which would prepare laws on environmental protection and then coordinate its execution.) At the same time, the Soviet bloc had to take into account that the two halves of Europe were not synchronous in this regard. The West already focused on protection from noise and vibration pollution, while the East still concentrated primarily on hygienic correlations, the secure management of industrial and household waste, and the protection of landscapes, but above all catching up with Western growth levels, which often compromised environmental

protection. Damaging accompanying elements—partly as an effect of Western movements—were criticized by local environmentalists.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond those listed above, the debated issues also included the exploitation of the world's oceanic resources, demographic explosion, mass famine, and the problem of dangerous diseases. Propaganda could not ignore these real problems, as they were direct sources of political tension: they strengthened opposition in the East, non-conformist civic movements in the West, and destabilizing riots in the South.<sup>19</sup>

With its modified “agenda,” Moscow for its part strove to open a new era in the age of ideologies and labelled it as the peaceful offensive of socialist countries, being inspired by the European cooperation and security conference.<sup>20</sup> There was less focus on class struggle and world revolution, and it instead advocated for a more realistic—and for many, more acceptable—idea of European security. The ideologues of the Soviet bloc viewed as potentially independent social factors all those in the West who were sensitive and receptive to both social equality and the ideals of peace. Propaganda, therefore, spoke to all potential Western audiences: socialists, social democrats, the believers, intellectuals, urban and village middle classes, non-conformist youth organizations active in student and civil rights movements, and women. The latter were counted on for their feminist affiliations, although at other times they were perceived as depreciators of modern revolutionary ideas.

The tone of Soviet-led propaganda became more peaceful, and it acknowledged the significant progress made by Western countries in science and technology, its economic growth, and

<sup>18</sup> The situation of environmental protection and guiding principles for further tasks. Proposal. March 12, 1974. MSzMP PC. March 26, 1974. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/633.

<sup>19</sup> At the July 31, 1972, Crimea meeting, this was all brought up openly by Nicolae Ceausescu. The July 31, 1972 meeting of First Secretaries of Fraternal Parties in the Crimea. MSzMP PC. August 2, 1972. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/587. ó. e.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem. L. I. Brezhnev's comments; The December 1973 Moscow meeting of the Parties' Central Committee Secretaries dealing with ideological and foreign affairs issues. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ó. e.

the high standard of living, and thus, it modified its theses on the general crisis and decline of capitalism. After the exhibitions of kitchens in the 1950s, the struggle over lifestyle gained new momentum on both sides: fresh *topoi* and styles, but mostly more efficient technology emerged. Following the lead, the Soviet camp also adjusted its propaganda to be more indirect. It took into consideration that the trend of “sociological propaganda” has been introduced everywhere, which meant that instead of direct advertising of theories, propaganda would focus on the export of lifestyle. It would fill information with commercial and mainly technical advances, culture, fashion, accommodation, leisure, tourism, and hobby topics. Surveys showed that the targeted youth, intellectual, and petite-bourgeois (middle class) groups were most receptive to such lifestyle propaganda, along with keeping alive ideas of nationalism.<sup>21</sup> As a response, the Soviet bloc developed its own refashioned ideology. Its main claim was that it did not want to catch up with capitalism in all areas—in their view, consumer society would not bring an end to inequalities precisely because it prioritized the pursuit of profit to the satisfaction of needs, and it transformed individuals into mere market consumers. Artificial supply and demand, parasitic consumption, too much focus on luxury items, and pseudo-culture could by no means be among the competitive goals that the Soviet bloc would have liked to reach.

Though it may be surprising to those familiar with everyday life in the Soviet sphere, the Eastern bloc had its own welfare image in contrast to the Western one, and a target audience. Its propaganda discourse was adjusted mostly to the worldview of those Western middle- and working-class strata that sympathized with leftist movements and opposed state-monopoly capitalism, to the wishes of immigrants,<sup>22</sup> and also counted on the spread of national liberation movements. It

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Bulgarian comments.

<sup>22</sup> Report to the APC on Hungarian Radio’s foreign transmissions. September 19, 1967. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/83. ó. e. For a brief analysis of the spatial distribution of transmissions aimed abroad and presumed audience attitudes, see: Report to the APC about foreign transmissions, recommendation for further tasks. October 20, 1979. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/334. ó. e.

interpreted national and racial conflicts in a uniquely socialist manner, with a special focus on masses of foreign workers migrating to Western Europe. Emphasis was put on communal spirit, social security (e.g., the basic right to health care service, public education, the right to employment), equal opportunities, and mass access to quality culture. There were also references to the insecure social situation of the other side's workers, to racial and religious discrimination, and the intervention of security services in the private lives of citizens. The mutual accusations were not especially shy.

One part of Soviet expansion strategy was, for the sake of attracting more sympathy, to propagate a virtual people's front policy, which had worked out in early Sovietization periods. It still subscribed to the idea that evolutionary, influence-building Sovietization processes could be induced in the West. From an Eastern point of view, Western civic and leftist movements were an especially promising sign of crisis, as were demonstrations against racial discrimination and assassinations in the USA. American and European strikes were sources of great hope, as were struggles for civic equality and national liberation struggles.<sup>23</sup> The Soviet leadership felt that religions were also in crisis. It thought it possible that the state monopolistic tendencies inherent in STR might move the intellectual, peasant, urban middle class and workers strata toward socialistic ideas. It identified positive convergence signs in socialist and social-democratic movements, and even in some Christian circles.<sup>24</sup>

Parallel to its almost unbroken optimism, Moscow was aware that in exchange for security in the West and potential gains in influence, it needed to open its doors wider to outside influence. It still accepted the inclusion of statements on human rights

<sup>23</sup> At the June 1969 meeting, Brezhnev noted with satisfaction the strikes mobilizing tens of millions of people in the USA, France, and Italy, and spring demonstrations in Japan. Comments at the 1969 Moscow meeting. Speech by Leonid Brezhnev at the 1969 Moscow meeting, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120605084004/http://leninist.biz/en/1969/IMCWP679/2S.15.1-LEONID.BREZHNEV-Present.Situation>, (retrieved on June 10, 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Documents adopted by the International Conference, 27–28. (retrieved on May 10, 2019).

and the improvement of cultural relations during negotiations leading to Helsinki. This more flexible policy, however, further allowed the system-integrity to loosen, although it had already begun to soften in the Khrushchev era. Openness in this period was especially dangerous because the propaganda capacity of the West—in direct proportion to its economy—was significantly greater than that of the East. This, combined with its pluralist democracy and human rights message, made it easier for Western countries to take over the ideological initiative. The Soviet apparatus, therefore, intensely sought those active responses and effective tools which would make possible the “flow in two directions.”<sup>25</sup> Its foreign policy and diplomacy—despite actual constraints and Western manoeuvres—tried to make the most of economic, engineering, technical, and scientific cooperations.

Close to the negotiations, the Soviets had two direct goals: the spread of economic contacts and the loosening of constraints dictated by its opponent. In response, the West expected an easing of visa processes, a quick solution to family unification issues, and as a part of the human rights demands, the immediate easing of the Jewish population’s general emigration, later the guaranteeing of civil liberties and rights in a broader sense.<sup>26</sup> It also claimed the expansion of the space for work and movement for foreign journalists, an improvement in the work conditions of businesspersons, and a large-scale influx of press products.

The Helsinki Final Act was signed on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European states as well as the United States and Canada. In the Soviet Bloc, it was celebrated as a great political success as was regarded as a guarantee for the legalization of the European status quo, including the borders. In fact, the document was the result of a compromise: Basket III contained

<sup>25</sup> Report to the APC on the execution of the MSzMP PC’s May 22, 1973, resolution: On the experiences and strengthening of the struggle against imperialist propaganda, recommendation for further tasks. October 18, 1976. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/314. ó. e.

<sup>26</sup> Record of the main content of Gromyko’s conversation with the US President J. Carter. September 23, 1977. National Security Archive, Washington DC, Carter-Brezhnev Project; Heller and Nekrich, op. cit., 681–685.

a promise that freer movements of people, information, and ideas would be ensured by Soviet bloc states as well. This seemed a reasonable price for the Soviet bloc countries to pay, especially as they believed that their regimes would successfully thwart any possible Western attempts at using this obligation to destabilize their systems.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the Decalogue of the Final Act also contained the principle of non-interference with regard to the internal affairs of other states, which could be used for refusing any unwanted intervention.

### Geopolitical ways of thinking

After Helsinki, the two competing worlds were connected by many threads in economics, culture, tourism, emigration, and church relations. Consequently, people had easier access to Western press products, broadcast times for Hungarian-language radio programs expanded, many watched Austrian and Yugoslav television, and the use of direct program-broadcasting satellites was on the agenda.

After the agreement, both sides tried to make maximal use of the more flexible manoeuvring space for agitation, hoping to convince the world of the advantages of its own system. In the post-Helsinki constellation, the development of propaganda capacities did not decrease; on the contrary, the pace of the competition accelerated: an intense race started for information sources and the division of the global media space. Propaganda discourses on both sides strove to keep up with the changes, favourite topics included futurology, the prognostication of global history, and the articulation of grand, comprehensive perspectives, a renaissance of geopolitical ways of thinking.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> On the Soviet bloc's policy concerning the CSCE process, see Svetlana Savranskaya, "The logic of 1989: The Soviet peaceful withdrawal from Eastern Europe," in *Masterpieces of History. The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, edited by Svetlana Savranskaya, Tom Blanton and Vladislav Zubok (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Report to the PC on the execution of the resolution concerning the experiences of the fight against imperialist propaganda and its strengthening;

It was generally thought that it was more effective to inform the informed, i.e., leaders in politics, mass communications, economic life, science, and culture, along with the intelligentsia, university students, and pupils. The period was characterized by an international struggle for influence over the masses: both sides sought to acquire all the up-to-date, effective communications equipment, tools, and institutions through which it could carve out an advantage over its adversary. The world was characterized by a drastic increase in media potential, and the strengthening of the defensive mechanism of the Third World and new civic movements, e.g., women and environmentalists.

The target audience was at this time expanded and somewhat differentiated: the classic youth, intelligentsia, and artist target groups were now accompanied by religious groups, ethnic groups, peace activists, and environmentalists as well as by, rather significantly, women's groups. The latter were targeted because of the appearance of radio and television in the home; in the private sphere, the practice of politics had outgrown the limitations of men's clubs, and from this point on, in the struggle between worlds, the rivals viewed women as a new ideological target group. Women were discovered as a potential voter basis and as opinion formers within the family. There was fierce competition in particular in the Third World, where both sides tried to show ever more positive images about the lives and perspectives of women. Both sides celebrated the International Year of Women, connecting it to the topic of children at the same time. The UN announced the Decade of Women,<sup>29</sup> to which the Soviet bloc responded by republishing August Bebel's

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recommendations on further tasks. October 18, 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/314. ó. e.; The report of the Foreign Affairs Department to the MSzMP PC on the closed meetings of the Central Committee Secretaries of the Fraternal Parties of eight socialist countries. March 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/739. ó. e.; On the re-emergence of geopolitical thought, see Ferenc Fischer, *op. cit.*, 30–51; 92–98.

<sup>29</sup> In 1979–80, UNESCO issued a statement on eliminating discrimination against women: *Against discrimination: UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*.

*Woman and Socialism* (on the hundredth anniversary of its first publication), and put together some propaganda material for the Third World discussing the position and rights of women in the Soviet system.

Certain countries in the region had no choice but to move forward. The MSzMP therefore expanded the list of those who could receive confidential publications and thus these materials appeared in the offices of the directors and Party secretaries of book publishing companies, theatres, museums, film studios, and research institutes. They could reach urban and county public administration leaders, Party and state managers of universities and colleges, the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines, as well as radio and television departments.<sup>30</sup> News editing saw the increasing participation of foreign correspondents, who not only put together political and economic bulletins but compiled education policy, agricultural, urban development, legal and other publications that were deemed confidential from the international press. Their primary role was gathering economic information and informing Hungarian economic leaders. From the early 1980s, they had access to reports prepared for party organizations at Hungarian diplomatic missions after they had complained that they were not informed of regime-critical Polish and Soviet press articles through inaccessible confidential materials.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The Agitation and Propaganda Department's (APD) recommendation on modifying the system of distributing and publishing MTI's confidential publications. February 2, 1982. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/381. ő. e.; Recommendation of the secretariat: modifying the system of distributing and publishing MTI's confidential publications. March 8, 1982. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 7/646. ő. e.

<sup>31</sup> Report on the meeting of foreign correspondents. July 7, 1980. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/349. ő. e.; The APD's recommendation on modifying the system of distributing and publishing MTI's confidential publications. February 2, 1982. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/381. ő. e.; The APD's recommendation on the MTI's confidential distribution system. January 20, 1987. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/481. ő. e.

## Following negotiation paths

After the Helsinki agreement, the Soviet leadership continued to feel it had an interest in convergence on the continent, thus it did not remove rapprochement with Europe from the agenda. The Eastern bloc continued to do everything it could to evoke feelings of community and to call for newer rounds of coordination meetings. It put pressure on its Western partners with recurring proposals and urged another Pan-European conference to resume discussions on those questions that remained unsolved and to initiate a new round of negotiations on European military détente and disarmament. It encouraged further meetings, most notably the CSCE follow up meetings in Belgrade (1977–78) and Madrid (1980–83). However, in the last phase—partly because of the presidential election planned for November 1980—the USA was reluctant to accept the proposal.

Western Europe, on the other hand, was less repudiating and more inclined toward peaceful continental coexistence, disarmament, and the enlivening of relations; its vigilance vis-à-vis the Soviet threat seemed to have waned. It did not reject the Eastern bloc's recommendations out of hand, and was not opposed to building interstate relations: in fact, it encouraged such construction. In this moment of conciliation, Moscow hoped to achieve the establishment of forums, disguised as being depoliticized, to negotiate unresolved issues. It considered cultural cooperation to be particularly promising, since its diversionary ideologies masked real political efforts and potentiating forces: depoliticized topics made confrontational points of view avoidable or meaningless.

As a result of these efforts, the Madrid statement of 1983, formulated by the states that had signed the Helsinki Final Act, accepted the plan for a separate cultural forum, which also signalled that the significance of indoctrination packaged in culture had once again gained in value in this period.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The proposal of the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Education Minister to the APC on the further work on the recommendations submitted to the Cultural Forum. April 21, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/466. ó. e.

In 1985, the six-week-long European Cultural Forum in Budapest was the first pan-European meeting to be held in a Warsaw Pact member state. Preparations for the in-camp forum took place at the meeting of cultural ministers of socialist countries in 1984 in Balatonőszöd, then at the 1985 Moscow consultation. The main goal of the meeting was to move forward interstate and personal relations, with two-thirds of the participants being artists and experts working in the cultural field. In plenary sessions and panels, they discussed three key topics: cultural creativity activity, opportunities for distribution, and for cooperation. They aimed to attain a positive joint agreement for the Helsinki follow-up conference to be held in Vienna in 1986. The meeting drew diplomats, writers, artists, and cultural experts.

The West, and foremost the USA, wanted to bring in so-called monitoring groups, especially right-wing émigrés and minority rights activists. Based on the practice used in Madrid, they requested travel documents, rental office space, free contacts with delegates, exhibit and publishing opportunities, press conferences, seminars, and authorization for protests. The United States made the renewal of “the most favoured nation” principle contingent on the granting of the above requests, while the Soviet bloc resolutely campaigned against them.

In this (dual) vice the Hungarian party leadership tried to find a solution based on its usual tactical principles: referring to earlier rules, it allowed in everyone who was not banned from receiving tourist visas, representatives of non-governmental organizations were accepted if they could provide proof of a Hungarian host institution, and in some exceptional cases those who had been sponsored by their states.<sup>33</sup> They refrained, however, from allowing non-conformist writers, Czechoslovak or Yugoslav émigrés, or members of the Hungarian opposition

<sup>33</sup> Preparations for the Cultural Forum. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. April 16, 1984. 288. f. 41/425. ó. e.; August 6, 1985. 288. f. 41/450. ó. e.; The joint report of the Scientific, Public Education and Cultural Department and Foreign Affairs Department to the PC on issues concerning preparations and execution of the upcoming European Cultural Forum. September 18, 1985. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/949. ó. e.

from attending the forum. These people were left with the option of a counter forum and an alternative memorandum.<sup>34</sup>

## Cultural Forum and a common European identity

The Forum, however, did anticipate integration across all Europe. Aside from discussing continental security, the participants at the meetings dealt with European heritage, cultural roots, and common European identity. Recommendations were made on harmonized East-West programs and organizations, and—perhaps not by coincidence—Günter Grass<sup>35</sup> recommended a joint cultural foundation to be headquartered in Budapest with subsidiary offices in Vienna and Amsterdam. Plans were discussed for a European cultural studies society, the translation and publication of works in less common languages, an international folklore centre to be named after Béla Bartók to collect and publish folk art heritage, a symposium on cultural heritage, artists' meetings, art education, catalogue exchanges, enhanced cooperation in theatre, film, and design, as well as a common youth symphony workshop and orchestra. None of this was a surprise for the Soviet bloc: from the early 1970s, it had been consciously preparing for integration initiated by the East. At that time, Austrian recommendations for forming a joint Pannonia Research Institute or the Monarchy Historical Research Society were perceived as attempts to loosen structures. By the 1980s, it systematically looked for

<sup>34</sup> The Hungarian democratic opposition's statement to the European Cultural Forum. October 14, 1985. In: Sándor Szilágyi et al, eds., *Beszélő Összkiadás II*. [The Complete Edition of Beszélő] (Budapest: AB-Beszélő Kiadó, 1992), 335–338; On the alternative forum, see Ervin Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988)* [The Hungarian Democratic Opposition, 1968–1988] (Budapest: T-Twins Kiadó, 1995), 324–325.

<sup>35</sup> It is proved that Günter Grass was in contact with the East German secret police, therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that he encouraged European harmonization on the direct or more likely indirect urging of the Soviets. He later was an avid supporter of Finlandization ideas too. See Ágnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér, *From Yalta to Glasnost: The Dismantling the Stalin Empire* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 192.

comprehensive European topics in the framework of coordinated projects.<sup>36</sup>

During the Forum, the host Hungarian government had two aims. Adjusting to Soviet trends, it attempted to appear as an initiator of promoting common cultural values. For example, it supported a European Contemporary Arts exhibit, but was firmly against having the embassies of Western countries organize similar monumental exhibits of their own. At the same time, it strove to use the event to present Hungarian culture; organizers adjusted the program of the Budapest Arts Week accordingly, including film, opera, and ballet shows, and concerts featuring foreign soloists.

The organization of communication was a unique, new, structure-forming task, as according to the Helsinki rules all delegations had the right to hold a press conference at any time. It was at this time that the idea of a permanent press centre—operating partly on entrepreneurial principles—was first articulated.<sup>37</sup>

### **Binding and separating factors**

With the Cultural Forum, East-West ideological coordination entered a new phase: true cooperation between foreign affairs and cultural experts began in the complex European integration process. The consensual search for a common historical identity at the same time did not cover up debated points, especially in areas like human rights, pluralism, and dilemmas pertaining to national and nationality issues. In the end one of the fundamental questions

<sup>36</sup> The proposal of the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Education Minister to the APC on the further work on the recommendations submitted to the Cultural Forum. April 21, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/466. ó. e.; The 4<sup>th</sup> quarterly report of the APD: imperialist propaganda aimed against the People's Republic of Hungary. January 15, 1973. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ó. e.

<sup>37</sup> Recommendation to the APC [on the establishment of a high-capacity, continuously operating press center]. July 1, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/470. ó. e.

of the discussions was whether common or separating factors dominated. Western participants insisted that the Soviet system by default could not guarantee human rights, therefore, for the sake of cooperation, they had to accept the Western interpretation of principles on the free flow of ideas, creative work, expression of opinion, and the free movement of writers and artists. In contrast, the Soviets pointed out a double standard, claiming that the Westerners saw right-wing dictatorships as less problematic than left-wing versions. (They were disapproving, for instance, of the fact that Western delegations did not condemn the South African regime.<sup>38</sup>) Referring to this, they argued that (in theory) equality-based social, cultural, and ideological perceptions were superior to liberal-pluralist human rights, as their system did not base itself solely on consumerist culture, but took political values into consideration as well. They also stressed the essential role of the *state* in distribution, planning, and the defence of national interests and values. This argument at the time was not seen by everyone as provocative or dismissible, as the Soviet system had begun distancing itself from strict autarchic centralization and was approaching a more differentiated corporatism, which made such statements somewhat more acceptable. Further, state intervention was not alien to neoconservative ideology and among Western intellectuals, although theirs was not a Soviet-based approach. The French, for example, spoke publicly about their own state culture policy, while others were concerned about the spread of unlimited free-competition consumption models.

The consensus points forming among the participants did not cover up divergences at the levels of development or culture, and could not solve issues of regional, federal, or national integration, or tensions among national and ethnic groups. The majority of participants at the Forum, for example, did not support nationality aspirations reaching beyond the framework of the state, did not respond to the memorandum written by Hungarian émigrés on nationality and ethnic conflicts, and

<sup>38</sup> Report on the experiences of the Cultural Forum for use in the international ideological struggle. January 13, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/466. ó. e.

similarly neglected Turkish, Bulgarian, and Greek debates or the memorandum of the Hungarian opposition. On the other hand, they supported the theory strengthening the status quo—on the bridging role of ethnic minorities—which put an emphasis on maintaining national cultures, in a sense blocking autonomy movements and other similar political tensions. The Polish, Soviet, Hungarian, and East German delegations drafted in this spirit a recommendation on these issues, out of different motivations and sometimes as a last resort. They were joined by Ireland, Great Britain, the USA, Spain, West Germany, and Canada. Czechoslovakia, however, adamantly opposed even the mention of the bridging principle in the final act.

The final act draft prepared by neutral countries was accepted by the Soviets. The USA and Luxembourg, however, remained particularly offensive, and contested issues blocked agreement in the end. Consensus was not reached in the following areas: disruption of radio broadcasts, the free flow of information, censorship, liberties, freedom of expression and association, the rights of national and religious minorities, and recommendations on the roles of non-governmental organizations. Despite this, the majority agreed with the Hungarian statement that deemed the Forum to be an opening of a new chapter in the history of cultural relations among the thirty-five countries.<sup>39</sup>

### **European security: The Eurasia concept as a risky project**

The Soviets did consider the Helsinki Accords to have similar significance as that of the Vienna Congress in 1815 (which solidified the European status quo) on the continent, viewing themselves as successors of the Czars.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The Scientific, Public Education and Cultural Department and Foreign Affairs Committee report to the PC on the work of the Cultural Forum. November 28, 1985. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/957. ő. e.; National consciousness in Hungary, the national-nationality issue in our days. January 21, 1986. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/459. ő. e.

<sup>40</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok, *op. cit.*, 237.

Nonetheless, it had two imminent consequences. It did not eliminate the arms race or tensions between the two superpowers; and it even strengthened stubborn American offensive policy. Meanwhile it pushed the Soviet-type system toward unavoidable disintegration.

In the second half of the 1970s, an intensive armaments race, in which each side aimed to gain an advantage, was coupled with disarmament negotiations. At the same time, the neutralizing Soviet offensive continued, which triggered a strong American political and ideological response. The post-Helsinki period's most serious—and possibly unexpected—challenge for the Soviets was the intense American reaction to the situation. Its rival superpower, and especially its post-Nixon administration, clearly considered both the Helsinki process's efforts to neutralize Europe and the double integration of the two halves of the European continent under Soviet pressure as leading to a Soviet expansion of influence in the region. Consequently, Washington did not hesitate to remind its enemy of its trans-Eurasian interests and external sphere of interests by deploying missiles in Europe.

The USA similarly wanted to obstruct the possibility of an Asia-neutralization manoeuvre, i.e., the spread of Soviet “coexistence” in the East. China itself felt that the Soviet plan for spreading collective security to Asia was clearly aimed at isolating the country. The Moscow leadership denied this, and it did not give up on its plan, even urging a world conference on disarmament. It also emphasized that it did not want Asia to be ruled by three countries, by Chinese raw material and Japanese potential under US supervision.<sup>41</sup> After Helsinki, the increasing tension between the two Communist great powers

<sup>41</sup> The problems of harmonizing ideological work and foreign policy propaganda. Thesis for the 1973 Moscow ideological meeting, as well as Soviet comments. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/628. ó. e.; Discussion between János Kádár and L. I. Brezhnev at the July 1977 Crimean meeting. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/723. ó. e.

was felt worldwide, even the Hungarian Party feared a Soviet-Sino war.<sup>42</sup>

Worries were heightened by a visibly revived West-East ideological offensive. Apart from maintaining diplomatic relations, the USA settled for exerting more concentrated pressure than ever in armament, economy, and ideology. Among its tools, the armament race was the most conspicuous, but the ideological offensive was also visible; its inflexibility forced its enemy into a defensive position up until its collapse in 1989. The Soviet leadership was struggling with the effects of changes in the world economy, and, on the one hand, it was pushed into excessive expenditures by fast-paced American military development. At the same time, its ideological potentiality had relatively weakened too. Washington had in ten years twice strengthened its propaganda apparatus, and its discourse had been given new momentum. The United States characterized itself as the melting pot of peoples, while everywhere else in the world it saw itself as having an interest in the strengthening of ethnic, national, minority, and religious identities and organizations, and naturally supporting opposition to the Soviet system. As a response, the Eastern bloc's counter-balancing ideology emphasized that Western states were feeding the wave of Eurocommunism, a rival leftist approach,<sup>43</sup> and that they were also responsible for religious and ethnic potentiality processes when dormant ideologies were awoken, fundamentalism was

<sup>42</sup> Report on Budapest experiences of agitation and propaganda work related to the international situation; recommendation on further content and methods tasks. June 1979. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/306. ő. e.

<sup>43</sup> The Soviets viewed Eurocommunism theories as de-Leninization, and urged Western Communist parties to refrain from supporting these orientations. See The February 27, 1978, Budapest meeting of ideological and foreign affairs secretaries. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/301. ő. e.; The Foreign Affairs Department's report to the PC on the closed meeting of central committee secretaries of eight Fraternal Parties. March 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/739. ő. e.; Report to the PC on the Berlin meeting of ideological and foreign affairs secretaries of central committees of Communist and workers' parties of socialist countries for the July 24, 1979, PC meeting. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 5/777. ő. e.; Report on the execution of the agreements of the July 1979 Berlin ideological and foreign affairs meeting. July 24, 1979. 41/329. ő. e.

encouraged, and churches were urged to (re)form themselves and emerge as independent political forces.<sup>44</sup> Given the above, the European agreements were a double-edged victory for Moscow: the American political reaction to the (potential) Soviet expansion of influence eventually accelerated and catalysed the USSR's collapse, and as such the Helsinki results were one step forward and two steps back.

The same can be said concerning the identity of the Soviet-type system. The idea and the praxis of coexistence, together with the project on European security, had some obvious risks. An opening that proceeded too quickly could threaten the integrity of the Soviet and Western variant structures that were designed primarily for defence. Also, accountability in the field of human rights could bring destabilization that would be difficult to defend against.<sup>45</sup>

To sum up, the growing contacts between the two camps made the iron curtain more and more permeable. The Soviet desire to unite Europe (at least virtually, in a way), carried with it the danger that the Soviet system would be gradually entering the Western gravitational sphere. But the Soviet East had no choice, because its adaptation policy originated directly in its Eurasia vision, which meant a peaceful expansion by advancing Soviet influence into the western part of the continent almost all the way. Accordingly, Soviet policy concentrated on expanding relations with Europe, but this strategy contained both opportunities and dangers. Coexistence and STR implied from the outset that their impacts would not leave untouched the integrity of the Soviet sphere. The empire, which earlier tried to isolate itself almost hermetically, now cooperated more flexibly, and opened narrow gates between the opposing camps. The new external impulses loosened the isolation of the European

<sup>44</sup> Oral supplement on the execution of the PC's April 26, 1966, resolution. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ó. e; Addition to the summary titled "Imperialist propaganda aimed against the Hungarian People's Republic, 1972, IV. January 15, 1972. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 22/1972/35. ó. e.

<sup>45</sup> The Budapest meeting of ideological and foreign affairs secretaries of February 27, 1978. MNL-OL M-KS-288. f. 41/301. ó. e. On human rights issues in American diplomacy, see Vladislav M. Zubok, op. cit., 254–257.

Soviet zone. It brought unanticipated effects into its economic, cultural, and finally its political system. The more efficiency the Soviet bloc states built into their own mechanisms, the more they became dependent on other external actors. At the same time, these countries' economic autonomy decreased, and they became more vulnerable. Even cautious and partial cooperation made them more unprotected, especially in some export-dependent states of the camp like Hungary.

With the systematic development of East-West relations (and the applied practice of *détente*), the Soviet leadership partially dismantled its own autarchy for the sake of advancement. But by doing so, it also risked having the permanent and fast integration of foreign elements into its own system, which would eventually loosen the precious identity-integrity balance of it, and finally weaken the iron curtain.