

DOCUMENTING DIPLOMACY, EVALUATING DOCUMENTS: THE CASE OF THE CSCE¹

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Louis Decazes, duc de Glücksberg, is not a name with which either students or practitioners of contemporary diplomacy might be expected to be familiar. Even in his day, when foreign minister of France in the mid-1870s, he was overshadowed by his more able and colourful contemporaries—figures such as the Prince Gorchakov and the Prince von Bismarck. Nevertheless, Decazes is worth recalling because of his early recognition of the importance of knowledge management for the making and conduct of an effective foreign policy. In February 1874, just three years after France's catastrophic defeat in its war with Prussia, Decazes, probably under the influence of his private secretary, the historian Albert Sorel, instituted a commission to oversee the administration of France's diplomatic archives. The *Commission des Archives Diplomatiques*, a body composed of academics, archivists and former and serving diplomats, was required to ensure that the information contained in France's diplomatic records was put to the proper service of the French state in its hour of need. To this end Decazes insisted that they seek out documents for publication. His concern, he stressed, was neither with satisfying the curiosity of historians, nor with meeting the propaganda requirements of politicians, but with providing publications which would encompass a "real diplomatic education". He concluded:

In thus furnishing the servants of France with the means to fathom the details and processes of that policy which has created and consolidated our greatness, we shall give them, not only models to follow, but also the possibility of taking up again a task which has for too long been abandoned, or, at least, a tradition for too long interrupted.²

What Decazes wanted was volumes of documents—despatches, letters and memoranda—which would in effect serve in the first instance as manuals for the education of diplomats, and secondly as works for the

enlightenment of the French public in the ways of diplomacy. France would regain its former position in Europe by learning from its past.

France was not, of course, the first country to begin the publication of selections of its diplomatic correspondence. Nor was Decazes the first Frenchman to believe that the examination and interpretation of documents should be fundamental to an education in diplomacy. Alexandre d'Hauterive, an early nineteenth-century French diplomat, who, as keeper of the foreign ministry archives, helped organise a diplomatic school within the archives, argued that new entrants to the service should learn their craft by attempting to construct from documentary sources brief histories of developments in France's foreign relations.³ Elsewhere in Europe, where no provision was made for the formal schooling of diplomats, it was generally assumed that junior attachés would acquire the art of drafting and imbibe the wisdom of their elders through their long engagement in the drudgery of copying, cyphering, decyphering, docketing and registering of despatches and telegrams. The reading of such correspondence was expected to introduce them to the practice and principles of diplomacy, and enable them to grasp the economic and political interests of the states they served.⁴ Practice may not have made perfect diplomats. But it may have made for better diplomatic practice.

Whether the documents which the Quai d'Orsay began publishing in the 1880s, French diplomatic correspondence of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had any significant influence on the foreign policy of the Third Republic is not easy to assess. The political geography of Europe had changed, but the methods employed by de Lionne, de la Motte Goulas and Choiseul, may not have been wholly irrelevant to the problems faced by their Gambettist successors. It is also worth remembering that Gabriel Hanotaux, who was foreign minister in the mid-1890s, was biographer of Richelieu, and both he and Raymond Poincaré, who presided over France's entry into the First World War, were active members of the *Commission des Archives Diplomatiques*. Yet, few editors of modern series of diplomatic documents, whatever their association with their respective foreign ministries, seem to see their work as primarily aimed at assisting the formation and instruction of aspiring ambassadors. Quite apart from any personal satisfaction that my colleagues and I may derive from editing *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (DBPO), we are not

nearly so concerned with the education of diplomats as with contributing to the promotion of an informed public debate on British foreign policy. That is not to say that our publications could not serve as useful introductions to modern diplomatic methods and practices. Our two latest volumes, one documenting Anglo-Soviet relations in the period 1968-72, and the other covering the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe from 1972 until 1975, could well prove especially useful in this respect.⁵ The subject matter of the volumes still retains a certain relevance for contemporary international relations, and many of the documents afford valuable insights into diplomatic practices and procedures and offer models for the formulation of arguments. Certainly the CSCE volume provides much information on how the technique of multilateral diplomacy can be adapted to serve national ends. And, on a more general note, the teaching of international politics or relations can become a barren activity when totally divorced from material evidence in the form of documents.

Published collections of diplomatic documents have, however, to be approached with caution. They are by their nature selections. Not only do their compilers, the editors, exercise choice in deciding which individual documents should make up the collection; they may also decide on the issues to be so documented, and the periods and geographical areas to be covered. Editors may have complete freedom of access to archival sources. They may also, as I do, have considerable freedom in deciding which documents to publish.⁶ Yet, while they may be free from official influences and wedded to objectivity, they are unlikely to be able to put aside their own peculiar academic interests, their presumptions and even sometimes their prejudices. Their selection is almost certainly bound to reflect their current perspectives. The first major published series of British diplomatic documents were produced very largely in response to the post-1919 debate on the origins of the First World War, and since that war was perceived in Britain mainly as an Anglo-German conflict whose immediate origins were primarily European, the editors, G.P. Gooch and H.V. Temperley, tended to focus in their selection very much upon those developments affecting the deterioration of relations between Britain and Germany in the pre-war era. Yet in so doing they may well stand accused of having failed to give sufficient weight in their documentation to the extra-European rivalries that continued to beset Britain's relations with

France and Russia and which might, had war not broken out in 1914, have led to increased tensions between Britain and Russia in Asia and possibly an Anglo-Russian war. In this and other respects, the editors were guided in their choice of documents more by what had happened than by what might have happened, and in so doing they assisted in defining the period and setting the agenda for historians of British foreign policy.

Our two latest volumes of British documents and another to be published this year, covering the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks in Vienna and other aspects of détente in the mid-1970s, owe their existence neither to any perceived need to defend British policy, nor to any public demand for documents relating to a particular crisis or international conflict. The decision was taken in 1994 to recommence publishing Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) records from the closed period, i.e. those documents which would, under our thirty-year rule, otherwise be unavailable to the public. It had, in fact, always been within the remit of the editors of DBPO to publish documents less than thirty years old. That had been expected of the original editorial team. But the series had fallen behind in its publishing program, and since the end of the Cold War seemed to make more recent issues less sensitive than they might once have been, the opportunity presented itself to carry the series into the 1970s and possibly the 1980s. The government was committed to more “open government”, and we felt that if we were going to carry the series into the next century it would make sense to jump into the deep-end of the archival pool and make a splash. Yet, in choosing what subjects to cover we were also influenced by a desire to look at a period of political change, and in the case of the CSCE volume at an aspect of multilateral diplomacy which would permit the further exploration of Britain’s relations with its allies and partners in Europe and North America and its attitudes towards the Soviet Union in an era of détente. The CSCE seemed to represent a watershed in the Cold War in Europe. Indeed, in 1975 the Helsinki Final Act was regarded by many as symbolising the end of the Cold War. Some doubted this: one British diplomat described the negotiations as “Cold War by other means”. And although détente now looks more like a stage of cold war, rather than a break between two separate cold wars, it did, particularly in the form of CSCE, afford opportunities for transcending long-established divisions in Europe.

There are other parallel volumes in preparation. In addition to MBFR, we are working on a volume covering British policy in the Mediterranean and southern Europe during the mid-1970s, an era when conflict and radical political change seemed to expose NATO's vulnerable southern flank, and we are preparing other new volumes on the Far East, southern Africa, and Berlin. But quite apart from the decisions editors may take with regard to the choice of themes, readers have also to reckon with those relating to the selection of particular documents for inclusion in volumes. The CSCE volume contains some 143 documents printed in full, with footnote references to five or six hundred more. This, however, is only a fraction of the files consulted. The volume covers three and a half years of multilateral diplomacy which dealt with issues ranging from divided families to divided nations, and the FCO records of the negotiations are vast. As editor, I sought after documents which would best tell the story, and documents which were particularly significant, either because they accurately reflected official thinking on the negotiations, or because the advice and analysis they offered affected the decision-making process. Yet, I was also bound to ask myself whose story I was telling. Any selection of documents is, after all, bound to be in some respects an interpretation. Then too, there is the question of whether or not to include a document because it offers contrary advice, or an opinion not generally shared by other ministers or officials. To omit is in one sense to suppress, but to include such a paper in a volume may involve giving excessive weight to views which were of little consequence.

These, of course, are all essentially editorial problems, of interest to historians, but probably only of marginal concern to diplomatic readers of the published record. But the diplomat, no less than the historian, must be mindful of the various interpretations that can be placed on individual documents. The papers published in our CSCE volume consist of correspondence between the FCO and missions abroad (i.e. despatches, letters and telegrams) and internal Office briefing papers, memoranda, minutes and submissions. They contain instructions to diplomats, reports on conversations and particular developments, and analysis and advice on policy matters. Yet, however accurate the reporting, however clear the analysis, and however sound the arguments a document deploys, the reader has to ask several pertinent questions about it before he can appreciate its value. What, for instance, were the document's origins? Who

drafted it? Who sent it? Who received it? Who read it? And what action did it inspire? In the case of the documents contained in our CSCE volume, we have usually been able to identify those responsible for drafting internal FCO papers and outgoing despatches and telegrams. It has been less easy to do this in the case of correspondence sent from posts abroad since telegrams and despatches are usually signed off by ambassadors or other heads of mission. But, in any event, it is always necessary to bear in mind not just what has been reported, but what may not have been reported, and the extent to which a paper may have been drafted with the express purpose of influencing particular recipients. A diplomat might, for example, offer radical advice more with a view to stimulating debate than provoking action. Arguments deployed in conference and recorded in despatches may be only a partial reflection of policy. They may, after all, have been deliberately designed with a view to learning more about the negotiating strategy and tactics of the other side.

Context has also to be taken into account. No diplomatic document can be fully understood or evaluated without consideration being given to the economic, political and social circumstances prevailing at the time of drafting. The British historian, G.M. Young, once dismissed diplomatic history as, the story of “what one clerk said to another clerk”.⁷ There was an element of truth in this. The sheer quantity of diplomatic documentation available can make for dull history—history which simply reproduces or summarises exchanges amongst ministers and officials. Such works once gave diplomatic history a bad name. But, in truth, few diplomatic historians have failed to recognise that a proper appreciation of the past conduct of international relations is impossible without an awareness of those developments in domestic politics, which may be only briefly touched upon in foreign ministry records. The problem from the historian’s point of view is that diplomats very often omit from their correspondence that which is obvious to the recipients of their communications. They may report in detail on the conditions in the countries in which they are resident. There is, however, rarely need for them to comment upon domestic developments in the country they represent. Thus only occasionally do the documents in our CSCE volume even hint at that sense of relative economic and political decline that was so prevalent in Britain throughout much of the 1970s. Indeed, the two British general elections of 1974 and the transition from the Conservative government of Edward

Heath to the Labour government of Harold Wilson seemed to require no more than an explanatory footnote. There are hardly any references in these documents to the industrial and inflationary problems that beset the British economy in this period, and only rarely do they make any mention of the energy crisis of 1973/4 which ended more than a quarter of a century of steady economic growth in Western Europe and North America. Only in one document is there a hint of the doubts evidently felt by some British diplomats about their country's future international role. In a round-up despatch dealing with the multilateral preparatory talks at Helsinki, which preceded the opening of Stage I of the CSCE negotiations, Anthony Elliott, the UK Head of Delegation, observed almost in Achesonian terms: "If Britain is not to be a major European Power in the context of the CSCE, she can hardly hope to be a Power anywhere."⁸

Elliott's words were particularly pertinent since, despite initial fears on the part of British diplomats that the conference could all too easily help consolidate the Soviet hold upon East/Central Europe, impede the further economic and political integration of Western Europe, and weaken the Atlantic alliance, they soon found in the CSCE a vehicle by which to achieve a closer working relationship with their new found partners in the European Community in the framing of a common foreign policy. They also discovered in the mechanisms of the conference a means of broadening the agenda of East/West détente beyond the notion of easing tension between rival blocs, and of compelling the Russians to discuss such hitherto taboo issues as human contacts and the freer dissemination of information. And in this context there are perhaps three aspects of this volume which should be of especial interest to any newcomer to diplomacy. All three relate to multilateral diplomacy and might most conveniently be designated: procedures, method and form.

Diplomats have long known that before any international conference can assemble four things have first to be settled: (1) who are to be the participants; (2) where it is to meet; (3) when it is to meet; and (4) what is to be discussed. But, as has become increasingly apparent during the twentieth century, successful multilateral diplomacy also depends on prior agreement on how what is to be discussed is to be discussed, i.e. there has to be an understanding on the conference agenda and procedures. For all 35 participants in the CSCE procedure was important. That is why it took

more than six months to settle on the agenda and the committee structure of what became Stage II, the negotiating stage, of the CSCE. Indeed, the multilateral preparatory talks, which began in November 1972 and ended in June 1973, became a conference in their own right—one reason for devoting an entire chapter of the CSCE volume to the subject. As these documents reveal, the British, along with their allies and partners, feared that unless there was a prior understanding on a detailed agenda, and on how that agenda was to be tackled, the CSCE could easily become a talking shop. It might then provide the Soviet Union with what it desired—an international endorsement of the political and territorial *status quo* in Europe—but leave the West with no more than a few general declarations on pan-European cooperation. Western public opinion might then be encouraged to believe that since the Cold War was over defence budgets could be slashed and alliances dismantled. And if Western governments were to gain anything from the conference then it must be in the form of provisions which would allow for greater contact between individuals on both sides of the European divide and for the freer exchange of ideas and information. Détente would have to be about relations between peoples as well as between states. The West therefore looked towards the preparation of an agenda which would allow their delegates the opportunity to raise points of detail relating to such matters as rights of Western journalists to travel and report in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the rights of individuals to travel abroad, and their right of access to foreign books and newspapers. This meant having not just an agenda, but detailed mandates for each of the committees and sub-committees into which the conference would be divided for working purposes.⁹

In seeking terms of reference for the committees and sub-committees Western delegates met with considerable resistance from their Warsaw Pact counterparts. And the story told in the documents contained in Chapter I of our CSCE volume is that of how essentially procedural decisions were taken to overcome Soviet opposition to the kind of negotiating program the West desired. The crucial breakthrough came in January 1973, when two neutral delegations, those of Austria and Switzerland, took the initiative. The Austrians recommended the grouping of agenda items in four baskets, and, with Western encouragement, the Swiss prepared a catalogue of proposed elements of negotiation and grouped

these in separate, but unnamed baskets. One of these, Basket III, included all those items relating to human contacts, culture and information which Western governments wished to see subject to negotiation.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the Russians, apparently with a view to increasing the momentum of the talks, signalled their readiness to discuss draft assignments for Stage II committees (or commissions), and then proceeded to table these for committees on each of the four baskets. They nonetheless continued to oppose the drafting of terms of reference for individual sub-committees, although they did indicate that they might eventually acquiesce in the subdivision of assignments according to subject matter.¹¹

This, in effect led to another procedural innovation—what might best be termed “bottom-up diplomacy”. It had long been recognised that the West, once faced with even a provisionally agreed agenda and brief descriptions of committees’ tasks, would be in a weak bargaining position to seek agreement on terms of reference and the establishment of sub-committees for an effective Stage II. Elliott therefore recommended that they start the drafting process “from the bottom up”, considering individual subjects in each basket, seeking agreed formulations for each of them, and building up a number of smaller subject areas corresponding to sub-committees and finally complete agenda items.¹² In time this was accepted by all the delegations at Helsinki, and following the establishment of working and mini-groups the talks acquired a flexible organisational structure which Western representatives, very often supported by neutral and non-aligned delegations, were able to turn to their advantage in the preparation of the Final Recommendations which would serve as the basis for Stage II negotiations.¹³

The negotiating tactics, or diplomatic method, adopted by Western delegations at Helsinki also played a large part in helping them to secure their objectives. The close cooperation which developed between the delegations representing the nine EC countries, and the newly-established mechanisms of European Political Cooperation, were particularly important in this respect. The maintenance of both allied unity and the sympathy and support of neutral and non-aligned delegations was vital in resisting Soviet pressure for the drafting of more restrictive texts covering future negotiations on Basket III issues. The Soviet delegation only began to show signs of movement when it became apparent that, if they were to have a conference at all, they would first have to agree to

negotiate on the human contacts issues the West wanted to debate. And for Western delegates to Stage II of the CSCE, which began in Geneva in the autumn of 1973 and continued until the summer of 1975, it was equally important to ensure that nothing was conceded in Committee I, the committee charged with examining principles guiding relations amongst participants, before progress had been made on Basket III issues in Committee III. It was initially assumed in the West that it would be far easier to draft a set of principles—principles which would include a declaration on the inviolability of frontiers, a notion much favoured by the East—than it would be to prepare texts on such complex human rights issues as family reunification. Hence Western diplomats were very much aware of the fact that they might have to slow-up progress in Committee I in order to ensure that they were in a stronger bargaining position to secure what they wanted in Committee III.¹⁴

What emerged, and what we have tried to document in this volume, was a method of diplomacy that might best be described as competing procrastination. And one of the chief characteristics of the CSCE negotiating marathon was long periods of deadlock when little or no progress was made—and, from an editor's point of view, documenting deadlock can be a very deadly business. Sir John Killick, Britain's ambassador in Moscow until the autumn of 1973, nicely summarised British and Western negotiating strategy when he wrote: "we must play it as long and as hard in the Commissions as necessary, and I only hope the Americans...will not join the Russians in pressing for speed. It is we who must exploit Brezhnev's sense of urgency and desire for a concluding 'summit' in order to drive hard bargains."¹⁵ Killick's reference to the Americans was far from irrelevant. In the early 1970s British diplomats were more than a little apprehensive about super-power "bilateralism" in the search for East/West détente and what some regarded as the emergence of a Washington/Moscow axis. Along with the representatives of other Western European governments they feared that President Nixon and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, might well be prepared to sacrifice European interests for the sake of a broader understanding with the Russians. They had some reason to be concerned, especially when, during a visit by President Nixon to Moscow in July 1974, he and Brezhnev announced that they favoured the early conclusion of the CSCE, and a Stage III of the conference at summit level.¹⁶ This ran completely counter

to Western strategy, which had so far aimed at delaying Stage III until the West had achieved what they wanted, and at making Brezhnev pay for a summit with concessions in Basket III.

Kissinger, in fact, never seems to have taken CSCE particularly seriously, at least until he got down to writing his monograph on diplomacy and the last volume of his memoirs.¹⁷ But as these works demonstrate, perspective can have a devastating impact upon even the most academic of diplomatic memories. It seemed to British diplomats that Kissinger believed that more liberal practices in the eastern bloc countries could not be induced by direct pressure, but would come about as a natural concomitant of détente in inter-governmental relations. He appeared in their eyes not to understand the genuinely idealistic element in the Western European approach to CSCE, and that like “his hero Metternich, [he wanted] stability and detente . . . for their own sake”.¹⁸ In the end, however, the Western Europeans withstood American pressure for the early tabulation of a list of their minimum objectives in Basket III, and taking advantage both of waning public interest in the West in détente in general and the CSCE in particular, and Brezhnev’s evident desire to wind-up the conference with a summit meeting in the spring/summer of 1975, they were able to go some way towards achieving their objectives in Basket III without making too many sacrifices elsewhere. Their gains were limited, but they had at least achieved a *locus standi* for future involvement in the internal affairs of Eastern Europe.

But the Western Europeans were not alone in adopting methods appropriate to the multilateral marathon that the CSCE proved to be. The British documents also demonstrate that some of the smaller powers were able to use (or misuse) the consensus rule that applied in the CSCE to their advantage. On one memorable occasion during the preparatory talks the delegates of Liechtenstein were instrumental in compelling the Soviet Union and its allies to provide a detailed defence of their policy towards human and cultural contacts.¹⁹ And Malta, a small country which figures large in some pages of this volume, was capable of bringing all progress towards the conclusion of the conference to a standstill when in the summer of 1975 its prime minister, Dom Mintoff, made a successful bid to secure reference in a CSCE Mediterranean Declaration to a lessening of tensions in the area and a reduction of armed forces in the region. Indeed on the evening of 10 July 1975, when Stage II was drawing

to its close, all the delegates at the conference were left to sit round in rage and humiliation before learning that Mintoff was “in bed with a slight fever, and could not discuss the question until he had held further consultations”.²⁰ The disruptive capacity of small states in multilateral diplomacy can never be ignored.

Alex Sceberras Trigona remarked in his paper published in the proceedings of last year’s conference on Knowledge and Diplomacy that the traditional method of assessment of diplomatic documents as, for example, *procès-verbaux*, protocols and treaties did not really contribute much to knowledge. “It is”, he observed, “superficial as it only treats diplomatic documents at face value. Students emerge all the poorer for it, obsessed with form for form’s sake.”²¹ Yes, of course, but! In one important sense Dr Sceberras Trigona is right. The contents of a document, its substance, is usually far more important than the form it takes. And where a document is an internal communication—a record of a meeting, a message from one official to another or to a minister—it would hardly seem to matter whether it is called a memorandum, a minute, a note or a submission. Yet where international agreements are concerned it would hardly do to equate an exchange of notes with a memorandum of understanding, or a declaration with a treaty. Form matters in these cases because form frequently establishes, or at any rate reflects, the nature of the obligation entered into and the degree of commitment involved, whether the engagement be moral, political or ultimately legal.

Throughout the CSCE the form of the documents the participants would finally adhere to was a key issue. The British were from the start determined that the documents comprised in what became the Helsinki Final Act should not have a legal status (i.e. that they should not constitute a treaty). The reasoning behind this was fairly straightforward: (1) they did not want to set up what could amount to a regional system of international law peculiarly applicable to Europe; (2) the matters dealt with in the CSCE went beyond the competence of individual Western governments and would in some cases have required secondary legislation if the document signed were a treaty; and (3) if the Final Act were to have legal status it would probably have required many more years negotiation. It was also important to Western governments that the documents covered by the Final Act should have an internal balance, and that they should be regarded as having equal value. The Soviet leadership appeared

to want to give the Declaration of Principles pride of place. For their part, the Western countries and the neutrals and non-aligned insisted that the contents of documents dealing with confidence building measures, economic cooperation and humanitarian, information, cultural and education matters had equal significance.²²

It was also important for Western delegations that the Declaration of Principles should not be seen as consecrating the political and territorial *status quo* in Europe. They were especially concerned about Soviet pressure for the inclusion in the Declaration of Principles of a provision recognising the “inviolability of frontiers” which might be interpreted as meaning the “immutability of frontiers”. This was, of course, a matter of particular concern to the West Germans, who were anxious that the declaration should also allow for the peaceful change of frontiers. Differences between East and West over this issue resulted in a long and acrimonious debate, conducted very largely in Committee I, and the eventual inclusion in the principle dealing with the sovereign rights of states of a phrase to the effect that frontiers could be changed “in accordance with international law, by peaceful means, and by agreement”.²³ The British played a prominent, though far from decisive, role in this debate. This may seem surprising. But the British were reluctant to accept any provision which might seem to imply that frontiers were set in concrete. They were also opposed to any phraseology which might seem to inhibit closer union and the eventual abolition of frontiers within the European Community. But tactics were probably more important. Western delegates had initially sought to maintain a close link between the notion of the inviolability of frontiers and provision for their peaceful change, and Soviet opposition to the close juxtaposition of these two concepts soon brought the work of Committee I to a standstill. The British recognised that this was the one real “bargaining counter” that the West possessed in their dealings with the East, and the decision of their allies in March 1974 to accept the possible textual separation of the two concepts—a decision taken in the misplaced hope that it would encourage Soviet concessions on Basket III—was regarded by the British as a negotiating error of the first order.²⁴

Even then, however, the exact position and formulation of the phrases relating to the inviolability of frontiers and their peaceful change continued to divide East and West. When in February 1975 the British prime

minister, Harold Wilson, paid an official visit to Moscow the issue came up in discussions with the Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko. Wilson told Gromyko that so far as he knew "there was no difference between us on the form of words, only on where the phrase [on peaceful change] should go in the Declaration". He then went on to ask "why we could not include the phrase both in the place where the Soviet Union wanted it and where others wanted it also"? Poor Gromyko then thought it necessary to reply at great length and in detail, explaining the Soviet position that had been repeated on numerous occasions before. Ah, replied Wilson, "he was an amateur on these matters, and ... the discussions had been very educational for him".²⁵ One wonders who was fooling whom? But the message was clear: form mattered.

It was of no less significance in the drafting of Basket III provisions. From the beginning the idea of freer movement of people, ideas and information between East and West was of first importance to the West's approach to the CSCE. So far as Western (and neutral) governments were concerned, it was the point on which the success or failure of the conference could turn. Yet from the opening of the Geneva talks in the autumn of 1973 the Russians and their allies seemed determined to avoid both detail and commitment on the points of most interest to the West.²⁶ The Russians resisted negotiation on a subject by subject basis, taking the line that the results of Committee III should be governed by a preamble, in which they evidently wanted to include wording designed to provide them with an excuse for maintaining restrictive practices and with a pretext for insisting that Western governments should control the activities of their broadcasting authorities, publishers and the like.²⁷ In the Soviet view the more detailed the substantive provisions on human contacts and information, the more explicit must be the restrictive references in the preamble. The latter must therefore contain references to "non-interference" and to "respect for the sovereignty laws and customs" of participating states.²⁸

Western and neutral delegations successfully resisted Soviet demands that the preamble should be drafted first. But they had to accept that there should be a preamble covering the results in Committee III, and that drafting work on the preamble, and on the substantive provisions should proceed in parallel.²⁹ By the summer of 1974 it was also apparent that this would probably mean the West's accepting a neutral "package

deal” involving reference in the Basket III preamble to respect for the Declaration of Principles which would in turn be so formulated as to reassure the Eastern countries that the West would respect their internal order.³⁰ Ultimately, the preamble to Basket III recognised that the broad aims of cooperation, contacts and the broader dissemination of information were important elements in the process of strengthening security and developing cooperation, and should be put into effect in full respect for the principles set out in the Declaration of Principles. In effect, this meant that while cooperation in these fields should not damage the sovereign rights of individual states or constitute intervention in the internal affairs of other states, it must take place in full respect for the principles of self-determination, human rights and fundamental freedoms. References to human rights, together with the more detailed provisions of Basket III, meant that these issues, however qualified by preambular references, were now accepted as legitimate matters for international concern. In these instances then, as in the case of the drafting of the Declaration of Principles and the negotiation of the various accords that made up Basket III, form (i.e. the structure and balance of the Final Act) was hardly less important than substance.

If, indeed, this CSCE volume has any lessons to offer about the nature of contemporary diplomacy they are ones which relate to structure and process—to the structure of the conference committee system and the documents it produced, and the processes and mechanisms through which both sides sought to achieve their ends. But the documents have also to be understood in their context. Although the neutrals and the non-aligned had a very significant role to play in the CSCE negotiations, the conference was in many respects about relations between two major power blocs, separated by an ideological divide. Bloc to bloc negotiations are still a significant feature of economic diplomacy, but the ideological divisions of 1972-75 are now very much part of history. As with the archives which d’Hauterive wanted his diplomatic apprentices to study and the documents which Decazes hoped would assist in restoring France to its proper place in Europe, the British records on the CSCE require critical analysis and evaluation if their message is to be properly understood. Diplomatic archives remain the raw material of international history. They are a source of knowledge whose effective management no foreign ministry can

afford to neglect, and in so far as they offer the aspiring diplomat enlightenment on past and sometimes current conduct they may provide guidance on the methods most appropriate to achieving specific ends. Yet studied in isolation, they are, in a rapidly changing world, rarely likely to provide a full or real education in diplomacy.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The opinions expressed in this paper are the author's own and should not be taken as an expression of official Government policy.
- 2 Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Paris), Archives des Archives, Procès-verbaux de la Commission des Archives Diplomatiques, vol. i, 4 April 1874.
- 3 Alain Meininger, "D'Hauterive et la formation des diplomates," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* (January - June, 1975), 25-67.
- 4 Sir Francis Bertie who, after a career of forty years in the British Foreign Office, was appointed British ambassador to Rome in 1903, held views typical of his generation on the proper education of young diplomats. He was convinced that it "ought to be the duty of every Secretary & Attaché to read all the [Foreign Office] print so far as more pressing duties permitted", and he was highly critical of his junior staff for wasting their time driving about "to pay visits & attend tea fights to the detriment of their imbibing knowledge of diplomatic correspondence". Keith Hamilton, *Bertie of Thame: Edwardian Ambassador* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1990), 54.
- 5 *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (hereafter cited as *DBPO*), Series III, Vol. I, *Britain and the Soviet Union, 1968-1972*, and Vol. II, *The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972-1975*, eds. G.Bennett and K.A. Hamilton (London: TSO, 1997).
- 6 Cf. R. Bullen and M. Pelly, "Documents on British Policy Overseas: Editorial Principles and Practice" in *Fonti diplomatiche in età moderna*

- e contemporanea* (Rome: Ministero per beni culturali e ambientali, 1995), 128-45.
- 7 Cited in Z. Steiner (ed.), *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (London: Times Books, 1982), 10.
- 8 *DBPO*, Series III, Vol II, No. 37.
- 9 *Ibid.*, Nos. 16 and 17. British policy towards the CSCE is considered in more detail in Keith Hamilton, *The Last Cold Warriors: Britain, Détente and the CSCE, 1972-1975* (Oxford: St Antony's College, EIRU, 1999).
- 10 *DBPO*, Series III, Vol. II, No. 20.
- 11 *Ibid.*, No. 21.
- 12 *Ibid.*, No. 22.
- 13 *Ibid.*, Nos. 23 and 26.
- 14 *Ibid.*, No. 43.
- 15 *Ibid.*, No. 38.
- 16 *Ibid.*, No. 89.
- 17 Cf. H. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (London: Simon and Shuster, 1994), 758-59; *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1999), 635-63.
- 18 *DBPO*, Series III, Vol. II, No. 94.
- 19 *Ibid.*, No. 37.
- 20 *Ibid.*, Nos. 75, 81, 90, 129, 130 and 132.

- 21 Alex Sceberas Trigona, "Knowledge and Diplomacy," in *Knowledge and Diplomacy*, ed. Jovan Kurbalija (Malta: DiploProjects, 1999), 95-101.
- 22 *DBPO*, Series III, Vol. II, No. 137.
- 23 *Selected Documents Relating to Problems of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1954-77*, Cmnd 6932 (London: HMSO), 225-82.
- 24 *DBPO*, Series III, Vol. II, Nos. 70, 71, 72 and 76.
- 25 *Ibid.*, No. 112.
- 26 *Ibid.*, Nos. 61 and 63.
- 27 *Ibid.*, No. 68.
- 28 *Ibid.*, Nos. 93 and 94.
- 29 *Ibid.*, Nos. 63 and 65.
- 30 *Ibid.*, Nos. 93 and 94.