

Spain and the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe process

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The current Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe grew out of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). Its first meeting was the Helsinki Conference, which was held between 1973 and 1975. The meeting marked a turning point in the period of *détente* prevailing at that point in the Cold War. Its two principal foundations were the consolidation of the status quo that had emerged in 1945, demanded by the Communist States, and respect for Human Rights, proposed by the West.

Spain was also in attendance in Helsinki, punching above its weight, especially in view of the difficulties it was facing both domestically and abroad at the time. General Franco's dictatorship had been presented with a unique opportunity: it was the first time that Spain had been invited to participate in a major international forum since the end of the Civil War in 1939. Madrid was the first Ministry of Foreign Affairs to accept the offer made in 1969 by the Socialist bloc to convene a conference on security in Europe, despite the deep-seated ideological antagonism between Francoism and Communism.

Spain made significant contributions to the 'Helsinki Consultations', which began on 22 November 1972 and ended on 8 June 1973, with the adoption of the Final Recommendations. The recommendations, also known as the 'Blue Book', identified both the agenda and the procedures to be followed at the future Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, where Spanish was to be an official working language thanks to the steps taken by the Spanish delegation under the direction of the Ambassador to Helsinki, Nuño Aguirre de Cárcer, who played an active role in the preparatory phase. It should also be pointed out that Aguirre de Cárcer and the other Spanish diplomats present at the consultations (and at the rest of the Conference) acted completely independently of any guidance from Government as there was much more concern in Spain at the time over domestic issues than there was for foreign policy matters. Subsequently the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Laureano López Rodó, attended the first stage of the CSCE, which ran from 3 to 7 July 1973 in the Finnish capital, which was also to be the place where the Final Recommendations were approved.

The second stage of the Conference, which took the form of work by experts, was held in Geneva between 18 September 1973 and 21 July 1975 and its aim was to negotiate the final text of the meeting. Spain, whose delegation was headed by the Ambassador Miguel Solano, participated actively when it became a mediator between the two Cold War blocs. However, the Spanish stance regarding the various Committees or 'baskets' was closer during this stage to that of the Warsaw Pact on matters such as defending the status quo which had emerged in 1945, non-intervention in the internal affairs of each country and the right of each people to establish their own political system. Spain also came out in favour of the peaceful change of frontiers and the territorial integrity and inviolability of States. By contrast, like the West, Madrid defended multilateral international relations.

The role of Spain was, however, most apparent in the four following areas: tourism, emigration, Gibraltar and the Mediterranean. Spain at that time was already a major international power in tourism and Madrid had also recently become the seat of the World Tourism Organization; Spain therefore wanted to share its experience in tourism with the world, and for that reason the Spanish delegation was among those which made the most proposals in this field. With regard to emigration, there were millions of Spanish citizens living outside Spain at the time; accordingly the Spanish delegation argued at the Conference for improvements in emigrants' living conditions. It should be pointed out that Spain supported the opening up of East-West relations for the purpose of cooperation on these two matters, among others, but not for the free movement of thought and ideas.

Madrid made it clear in Geneva that acceptance by Spain of the European status quo did not imply the automatic abandonment of its rights to sovereignty over Gibraltar, rights which were recognised by the United Nations in the context of decolonisation. The Spanish government endorsed the principle of the peaceful alteration of borders as set out subsequently in the Final Act.

On security in the Mediterranean, at the Conference Spain reiterated the importance of ensuring peace in each region as it feared that the ‘thaw’ in Central Europe could lead to an escalation of tension in the Mediterranean. Spain argued in Geneva that there should be greater participation by countries on the southern shore in the Committee established specifically to discuss all matters related to the *Mare Nostrum*.

Another significant issue involving Spain at Geneva was the debate about the term ‘national minorities’, proposed by Yugoslavia but rejected by Madrid because of regional issues within the Spanish State. Ultimately, the concept of ‘regional cultures’ owed its inclusion in the Helsinki Final Act to the diplomatic steps taken by the Spanish delegation.

Finally the Spanish Prime Minister, Carlos Arias Navarro, travelled to Helsinki to participate in the third stage of the Conference, which took place between 30 July and 1 August 1975 and brought together the Heads of State and of Government of the participating countries with a view to signing the Final Act negotiated by experts in Geneva. In the speech he made to the full session of world leaders, Arias Navarro reaffirmed the commitment of Spain to the continuity of the process which had begun in Helsinki and he again set out the key approaches taken by his country during the various stages of this, the first meeting of the CSCE. The Spanish Prime Minister, who was chair of his country’s delegation, used his trip to Helsinki to open a significant number of bilateral dialogues with the most important international leaders of the time. Similarly, while there he tried to resolve some of the more significant current issues in Spanish foreign policy, such as the conflict in the Sahara, the complex negotiations for the signature of a new Concordat with the Holy See, and the renewal of the defence agreements with the United States. Finally, Arias Navarro’s trip to the third stage of the Conference was also an attempt to strengthen his image at home, as it was the first appearance by a head of the Spanish Government before a renowned international forum since the advent of Franco’s dictatorship in 1939.

The Helsinki Conference therefore marked an initial step towards Spain’s return to the international community. However, the good impression left by the country at the CSCE was shattered by the escalation in repression by the Francoist regime shortly after the signature of the Helsinki Final Act. That escalation was evidenced by the execution of five ETA and FRAP terrorists (two hard-left armed groups) on 27 September 1975 during the last days of the Franco regime. In the eyes of world public opinion Spain was, therefore, the first country expressly to fail to comply with the spirit and letter of the text signed in the Finnish capital.

The Helsinki Final Act invited all countries involved in the CSCE to a subsequent meeting, the Follow-up Conference in Belgrade, which opened on 4 October 1977 and aimed to analyse the degree of implementation of the text signed in 1975. However, Belgrade was a complete failure at a time when *détente* was already on the point of collapse. The lack of agreement in the Yugoslav capital at the end of the Conference on 9 March 1978 therefore came as no surprise to anyone. In the meantime Spain, whose delegation was led by the Ambassador Juan Luis Pan de Soraluce, succeeded in garnering international backing for the process of transition to democracy that was occurring in Spain at the time, and this support was confirmed when Spanish diplomats managed to secure Madrid as the seat of the next major CSCE meeting.

In line with the provisions of the final text which emerged in the Yugoslav capital, a series of specialised forums was organised under the framework of the CSCE prior to the Madrid Conference, in which Spain was among the participants: the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes in Montreux (Switzerland) which took place between October and December 1978; the forum for Mediterranean cooperation in Valletta (Malta) in February and March 1979, where Spain was one of the few countries other than the host to table proposals; and the Scientific Forum in Hamburg (Germany) in February and March 1980, which Spain regarded as a ‘dress rehearsal’ for the forthcoming Madrid Conference.

September 1980 saw the start of the preparatory sessions for the second CSCE follow-up meeting amidst a complex international context in which confrontation between the two sides in the Cold War had re-emerged. The Spanish Government had to demonstrate its diplomatic skills at the consultations in September and October 1980. The USSR and its allies were not willing to pursue the process initiated in

Helsinki without guarantees that the tensions that had emerged in Belgrade would not resurface in Madrid, and wanted to deal solely with issues related to disarmament; the West rejected that proposal, as there were other international forums where that very matter was under discussion, and instead proposed a deeper exploration of Human Rights. As a result the Madrid Consultations looked as if they would fail in their initial stages. Ultimately, however, the preparatory sessions succeeded and the 'Purple Book' was adopted; the Conference meetings opened on 11 November 1980 and, in an attempt to prevent a fiasco like the one that had occurred in Belgrade, had no pre-determined time limit.

As far as the role of the host country was concerned, it should be noted that the diplomatic measures taken by Spain succeeded in putting the preparatory meetings for the Madrid Conference back on their feet by making it possible both to review the Helsinki Final Act and to raise new matters concerning the 1975 text. The Spanish delegation to the CSCE in Madrid was led by the young diplomat Javier Rupérez, who was also a Member of the Spanish Parliament for the Union of the Democratic Centre (UCD) party; from November 1982 the delegation was headed by Ambassador Pan de Soraluce who, as stated above, had previously performed that role in Belgrade. It is also important to note that in October 1982, in other words during the Conference, there was a change of Government in Spain which brought Felipe González' Socialist Party into power. The previous UCD government had used the first sessions of the CSCE meeting in Madrid to sound out the possibility of Spain's joining NATO. However, although the role of the Spanish delegation as mediator under the UCD Government was weakened when, much to Soviet displeasure, Spain ultimately sided formally with the Western bloc, Spain had succeeded in bringing closure to the less controversial issues in the Madrid Concluding Document. The reservations of the new, Socialist Spanish Government towards the Atlantic Alliance meant that Spain resumed a role as key mediator between the blocs. The proposal put forward by the Prime Minister, Felipe González, to the Conference in June 1983 set out a series of initiatives which would be embodied in the Final Mandate of the meeting. This was evidence of the essential role played by Spain at the Madrid Conference as host and mediator, rescuing the meeting from failure on many occasions and making the continued existence of the CSCE possible despite the delicate international situation.

Following three years of meetings, the Final Mandate of the Madrid Conference, signed on 9 September 1983, incorporated significant headway made on the text of the Helsinki Final Act. Instances of this were: the first international condemnation of terrorism, proposed by Spain; support for trade-union freedoms and freedom of association, against the background of the struggle between the Communist dictatorship in Poland and the independent union Solidarity; and protection of religious freedom. Another important new aspect was the convening of a conference on confidence- and security-building measures and disarmament, in Stockholm in 1984 within the framework of the CSCE, which in part was an accommodation of Soviet requests in that regard. The participating States decided to continue with the meetings of experts on the Mediterranean question. Similarly, with regard to human contacts some progress was made in culture and education. Finally, where the continuity of the process which emerged in Helsinki was concerned, the Madrid Concluding Document encouraged several specialist forums and convened all CSCE States to the third Follow-up Conference which would begin in Vienna in 1986. The novel aspects contained within the Mandate approved in Madrid and the progress made on the substance of the Helsinki Final Act are evident, proving that it was indeed possible to amend and update the 1975 text.

The process which had begun in Helsinki therefore continued. In accordance with the provisions of the Madrid Mandate, the CSCE held a number of specialist meetings before Vienna. The first of these, which was also the longest and most important, was the Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) and Disarmament in Europe, which took place in Stockholm. The work of the Conference took place from January 1984 to September 1986, when the participating States reached a final agreement. The adopted text developed military confidence-building measures and the signatory States undertook, in contrast to the military chapter of the Helsinki Final Act, to make the text binding politically, although not legally. Spain, which had an interest in ensuring a successful outcome to the Stockholm meeting in that it was the result of an initiative from the Madrid Conference, had an active role once again. During the meeting, the Spanish delegation was led by the Ambassadors in Sweden, Máximo Cajal and José Manuel Allendesalazar. In addition the Spanish Prime Minister, Felipe González, was the only Head of Government apart from the host, Olof Palme, to attend some of the sessions of the Stockholm meeting.

Spanish diplomacy was also evident in the other meetings of experts which preceded the Vienna Conference, such as the meeting in Athens on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes (March-April 1984) or the meeting on Mediterranean cooperation, held in October 1984 in Venice. Spain also attended the three meetings on matters before the CSCE which were of greater interest to the West, which were held in an attempt to compensate for the focus on matters which had been of more interest to the Communists in Stockholm; namely: Human Rights, in Ottawa (May–June 1985); Culture, in Budapest (October–November 1985); and Human Contacts, in Berne (April–May 1986) — not all of which enjoyed the same degree of success.

The assumption of power in the USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev revitalised the CSCE. The Vienna Conference took place in a more relaxed international atmosphere than its predecessor in Madrid; the Vienna Conference opened on 4 November 1986 and its closing stages coincided with the beginning of the end of the Cold War, closing on 19 January 1989, a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Javier Villaceros was the Ambassador at the head of the Spanish delegation to the meeting. The Vienna Concluding Document incorporated significant agreements on human rights in the obligations it contained in the form of respect for human rights and the right of observation of governments' conduct in human rights matters; furthermore, the document provided for the imminent opening of negotiations to reduce conventional arms in Europe. Meanwhile, thanks to the initiative of Spain, a third CSCE meeting of experts on the Mediterranean was held in Palma, Mallorca, in September 1990 and focused on economic issues rather than security matters.

Finally, the fall of Communist totalitarianism in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War led to a number of historic changes within the CSCE in which Spain was involved as just another State. Meeting in the capital of France, the Heads of State and of Government of 34 CSCE countries (including the recently unified Germany) signed the Charter of Paris for a New Europe on 19 November 1990, which hailed the ending of the division of Europe and established the first standing bodies of the Conference: a Secretariat in Prague, a Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna and an Office for Free Elections in Warsaw. The Budapest Follow-up Conference, which was held from October to December 1994, signalled the culmination of the institution-building process with the decision to transform the CSCE into today's Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Since then Spain has played an active role in the OSCE by contributing funding and staff in different fields, including observers for international missions and election-monitoring. Additionally, Spain held the rotating Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2007, a point which marked the culmination of the country's contribution to the organisation that embodied the legacy of the process initiated in Helsinki in 1975.