INTERVIEW WITH

JOHN J. MARESCA

CONDUCTED BY IDA MANTON

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Living Memory Project - Charter of Paris for a New Europe

Closing World War II in Europe

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Ida Manton (IM): Let us start by looking at the beginnings of the CSCE in Helsinki. In such a polarized world, somehow the circumstances developed to negotiate the Final Act. When you see it from this perspective, do you consider it to be a well-crafted and successfully negotiated document or more of a miracle?

John J. Maresca: I do think it was something of a miracle. My own take on this is that the people who were there in the beginning were each thinking differently, but the desire to produce something was common to everybody. And that was what eventually pushed us along. I had this impression of mine confirmed years later when I received the memoirs of Anatoly Kovalev, the leader of the Soviet delegation and a real hardliner. I received them by fax at my Radio Liberty office in Prague, just one long reel of paper in Cyrillic, which kept coming off the machine. The people in my office were astonished by this. We selected and translated some interesting parts, which I later published in our monthly publication Transition Magazine [Open Media Research Institute, June 1995]. That's when I learned that the Russians had felt the same frustrations that we had, that we were both desperately trying to find some little bits and pieces that we could put together in order to have some form of success after all that work.

We went into the negotiations with very formal language, which, of course, the Soviets at that time just rejected. This was especially true for the principles [Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States]. It took a long time for them to accept that we would go deeper than just the naming those principles. That's what the Soviets wanted, just a list of names like “non-intervention in internal affairs”. Instead, what they got is four paragraphs on what that means. But to have those sentences added – it took two years.

Many things were not settled until the last days. Two or three days before we actually concluded the negotiations, we had maybe ten problems that remained on which there was no agreement, even on those principles. I called up Yuri Dubinin of the Soviet delegation and I said: “We’ve got to solve these problems”. He said: “Yes, I agree with you. How are we going to do that?” And I said: “Meet me in

front of the fireplace". There was a delegate's lounge; it was cozy kind of place with comfortable chairs. I went up there with an interpreter and a couple of experts, and I had pieces of paper marking every place where we had a problem. I was there for three hours with Dubinin, and he was the worst person you ever wanted to deal with. He wouldn't let anything pass without making it into a nasty confrontation. But we had to get through it. The date had already been fixed for the signature. We spent several hours there and we solved each of the problems, one by one. The distance between our positions was huge, and it was only because at that point he also felt pressure to finish, and they were going to Helsinki just like we were going, that he accepted some of the things.

When you read the language in the Helsinki Final Act, some of these commitments, it is pretty impressive, and we owe a lot of that to the neutral and non-aligned countries (N+N). They were certainly a great advantage in terms of making any progress. There were situations where we would argue over a single word for weeks and then the neutrals would come in with alternative wording, often even a whole list of words to choose from. Eventually we would find some kind of wording that both sides could accept.

So, to come back to what I was saying earlier, I think that all of us there, by the time we got down to business, were desperately interested in finding something that we could produce out of these diametrically opposed positions. I think that came through in the document and that is why some parts look a little strange, but it does contain some bits and pieces which were for that period very interesting and a big step forward.

IM: While Helsinki was maybe a problem-solving exercise in which many constructive, creative diplomats, as you said, wanted to get something done, the 1990 negotiations that resulted in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe had a different energy.

In the early days in Helsinki relations were very distant, especially between the two opposing blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Each had very different, rigid views, subject to group agreements. When we were preparing for the CSCE summit in Paris, the situation was quite different. The leader of the Soviet Union was Mikhail Gorbachev, who was a very rational person and I think was genuinely looking for ways to create a more positive relationship with the West. He found a like-minded person in the French president Francois Mitterrand. Mitterrand was a socialist who was actively looking for ways to build closer relations with the Soviet Union.

At that time, I was the senior expert on France in the State Department as the director of relations with Western Europe. Many Americans – business leaders and other prominent persons – came to see me to ask for my analysis of how Europe was evolving. They were concerned that France under Mitterrand, who had included French communists in his government, was getting too close to the Russians. But I knew France pretty well, and I knew Mitterrand personally, and I understood his game. He was playing French politics, to ensure the support of French communist voters, while avoiding any real concessions to the communist party.

Getting Gorbachev to Paris was a double win, politically, for Mitterrand, and gave him a leadership role among the whole European group. But it doomed Gorbachev. Moscow hardliners viewed him as too "Westernizing," and soon we saw Boris Yeltsin withdraw Russia from the Soviet Union in order to eliminate Gorbachev, who was left without any meaningful position. And at the same time Yeltsin introduced Putin as his successor. Russia's future course was fixed: Putin, with his crucial ties to the

KGB, was mandated to re-assemble Russia's dominance over the whole of what had been the Soviet Union – his life-long mission. And that is what has been playing out, before our eyes, all these years: the attempted, KGB-assisted, re-establishment of Moscow's full control over the whole of what was the Soviet Union. With just one hold-out, but an important one: Ukraine.

IM: Toxic polarization is defining many political processes nowadays. Can we still find countries that will have the respect of both sides and could mediate without taking a side? How can we recreate what you are saying was the core ingredient in the CSCE negotiations - the engine for problem-solving? Is this the main ingredient that we are missing today?

Diplomats have a special problem-solving mentality. I think that even now if you put diplomats together and said: "you have to find something that you all agree on in this subject area" and just made them stay there until they came up with something, they would indeed come up with something. It might be more difficult, might be different from what it was then, but they would produce some result, and the neutrals once again would step in and try to help.

That was a methodology which just grew out of nothing because we were forced to do. In Dipoli nobody really knew what to do next and gradually some themes developed that were just organizational. The idea of baskets, for example, was a big step forward. It sounds ridiculous now, but until the idea emerged of having baskets, we didn't know how to organize the different views. So, these different subject areas, like information, human rights or military matters, became baskets containing related various views of the different factions were just put into that basket. They weren't at all the same, and gradually we were able to break them down further within the basket. Whatever the subject was, you could put them together, and gradually you could compare one sentence with another and realize that the positions were quite different. But we had to try to marry them up, and that is where the neutrals became indispensable. Because they would then offer alternative suggestions for how to combine an idea from Moscow and an idea from Washington into a sentence that would seemingly take care of both.

Also, everybody was under pressure. That's another crucial factor. The Russians were under tremendous pressure because it was believed that the initiative came from Russia. People dispute that, and historically it is a question mark of where the initiative came from for this kind of negotiation. I got into this earlier when I was working in NATO for an Italian Secretary General. We already had packages of proposals that we wanted to put forward, because NATO was thinking of something, not exactly like this, but some kind of exchange with Moscow. NATO took the first step towards some kind of a negotiation by making a public statement that they were appointing an explorer - a representative who would explore options for areas where we might have some kind of common ideas in order to get something started. That was the NATO proposal for getting something started. They even selected the explorer, an outgoing Secretary General who I worked for, Manlio Brosio.

To answer your question about "the neutrals now," my reply would start with the situation of Russia under Putin. He has deliberately chosen the role of the world's unscrupulous villain, and by doing that he has made it very difficult for any country to be neutral! How can one be neutral in the face of Putin's style of government, his loud threats, his deliberate bullying, his mindless killing of people — even children -- targeting of schools and civilian shelters, his destruction of towns and cities -- and,

worst of all, his senseless invasion of Ukraine? He has created such a toxic situation around him that two of the long-time, traditionally-neutral countries of Europe — his nearby neighbors, Finland and Sweden — have decided that they cannot be neutral in such a situation and have sought to defend themselves against what they clearly consider a very threatening environment. So, they have decided they must be prepared to defend themselves, and join NATO. And Putin's threats have now become reality, with his savage attack on Ukraine, confirming Europe's worst fears.

Can we still find countries which can mediate this situation? Yes, of course! There would be plenty of qualified mediators if Putin showed any willingness at all to join in peaceful discussions — peace negotiations could easily be held in, for example, Switzerland, or under UN auspices — if Russia showed any willingness at all for such a step. But without some indication by Putin that he is ready to stop the destruction and join such discussions in good faith, it is impossible to move in that direction. Unfortunately, I do not think the "neutrals" are in a position to play some sort of "in-between" role in the current world situation. Ironically, they are clearly so uneasy/afraid of what Putin is up to that they are running as fast as they can to join NATO, or any other group which might help their situation. They are all afraid of Putin's aim to bring every possible nearby country under Moscow's control! The only real "neutral" left in Europe is Switzerland, and it has a long history of maintaining that role.

Looking back again at the Helsinki negotiations, some European diplomats in their memoirs or interviews argue that American diplomacy was not very active. They say they were expecting the Americans to help out, but that the support was not there. How do you see the American involvement, because for the most part you were the chief negotiator in that period?

Well, it's true that there was a hardline contingent in Washington who were very skeptical. They were suspicious that any kind of contact with the Russians would create openings which they would profit from. At the same time, within the US government, and particularly within the State Department, specifically in the section focused on Europe and European security, there was a strong feeling that we had to use the opportunities of any negotiating forum to seek to expand the freedoms that were available to people in Eastern Europe.

We were engaged with the NATO allies in a long reflection process, which produced a study called the Harmel Report (named for the Belgian Foreign Minister who led that project). It became the basis for NATO's approach to negotiations with the Soviet Union. Our negotiations were to seek (among other security-related objectives) "freer movement of people and ideas" in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It was a common strategy, which was to be followed by all the members of NATO. NATO is the place where the United States leads, and all of the negotiations with the Soviet Union were products of close co-ordination within NATO. Anyone who thinks the United States was not active is simply ignorant of what goes on in NATO, and how this relationship works.

To reinforce the cohesion of the West on the basis of the NATO group, the NATO allies decided to have a single negotiator who would represent them all. That negotiator was to be the outgoing Secretary General of the Alliance, Manlio Brosio, a well-respected Italian diplomat. NATO decided to send Brosio to Moscow as its "explorer", to see whether there might be a serious basis for some sort of negotiating process to lower the level of military confrontation in Europe. And I was designated to be his single associate on that mission, since I was already his chef de cabinet at NATO headquarters in Brussels. This was actually how I got my personal start in all these negotiations. But the trip to

Moscow never happened. In a hugely long communique from Moscow the Soviets included a brief sentence which said that the Soviet Union "would not negotiate with a representative of a military alliance". Brosio was super-smart, and he spotted this sentence immediately. "That is their response," he said, and began packing his bags to return to Torino, his home city. He knew that phrase meant the Soviets would not deal with him as the negotiator, for ending the Cold War. So, our mission ended before it began, after more than a year of preparations at NATO! Brosio retired, and instead negotiations were started on the basis of the Soviet initiative – they asked Finland to invite all the countries of Europe and North America to meet in Helsinki, at the assembly hall called Dipoli.

I had been the central person in the NATO international staff tracking the Western preparations for the negotiations – quite an intense, complicated effort – so when the Dipoli talks evolved into a true negotiation I was recruited to be the deputy head of the United States team. This was in spite of the fact that I was of a significantly lower rank than the other members of our delegation – a unique structure, but one which worked. I led from behind throughout that phase of the negotiations, which is the reason why the US delegation sometimes seemed to be low-key. But we were definitely *not* low-key. We met regularly with the Soviet delegation to underscore Washington's engagement on the key negotiating issues – like the possibility for changes in international frontiers, which had to be kept open to permit (and *not* prohibit) the eventual reunification of Germany. This issue was eventually fixed with the language negotiated, personally and secretly, by Henry Kissinger with Andrei Gromyko – the famous clause on possible changes in international borders: "Frontiers can be changed, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement." On the basis of this agreed clause, which simply validated the US-Soviet Union agreement, Germany was subsequently reunited with no objections from any side. It had been agreed at Helsinki! Since this was the heart of the Helsinki Accords, it would be pretty hard to argue – as you mention – that "there was no American support"! Anyone who argues that simply does not know the history!

I worked quietly and behind the scenes. I worked out many, many problems through my regular (but unknown) contacts with my Soviet opposite number, Vladimir Petrovsky who later became a senior Soviet diplomat whose career concluded with his appointment to the very influential international position as head of all United Nations institutions in Geneva. I often saw him there, and we remained friends until he passed away. I have recounted all this in my book *Helsinki Revisited* — together he and I worked out many negotiating problems, but I have never boasted about that.

The fact that the CSCE resulted in a major historical win for the West was in large part due to the very discreet role which the US delegation, led in large part by myself, played. We were never out front, which obliged the Europeans to step up and kept the whole negotiation from becoming a US-Russian shouting match. I think the result of this strategy speaks for itself: the Cold War ended with the whole of Eastern Europe free, Germany reunited, and a peaceful relationship between East and West in Europe celebrated at the CSCE summit in Paris. In fact, I think that in the light of Putin's efforts to unravel this peaceful situation, it would not be a bad thing to reconvene the CSCE now, to put all of Europe's pressure on Russia to push them out of Ukraine and back into their peaceful behavior of these last decades.

Just to put this into context, can we briefly discuss the tensions and the realities on the ground? In the period when Helsinki was negotiated, many people did not have basic human rights, despite the United Nations Charter already being adopted. Then Helsinki was negotiated and something miraculous happened. The dissident movements in Czechoslovakia and Poland grew and with them

the expectation that the people will enjoy the freedoms agreed in Helsinki. They expected reforms in their countries and in the national legislation. Charter 77 says that the "citizens have the right, and our state the duty, to abide by them [the rights and freedoms confirmed in Helsinki]". Why was Helsinki so powerful?

After Helsinki was signed, the Soviets knew that they would have to show something, and they chose to do some symbolic things, for example they released some Jewish immigrants – I met a taxi driver in New York who was one of those. It was enough to convince people that there were possibilities there. And that inspired the dissidents throughout the eastern part of Europe to think that by pushing they could get more. It was like the story of the tiny hole in the dike, with just a tiny flow of water, which simply grew and grew as people learned that there were new commitments on freer travel, and families decided to take advantage of them. Of course, there was also a broadly-based fear that the opportunity to travel more freely might not last very long, so many people decided to leave quickly, to leave immediately, and simply drove to the nearest border and walked across (sounds familiar). I have told the story often of the huge wave of East Germans who started crossing the border from Hungary into Austria when they learned that the Hungarian government had eased their restrictions on that border. Whole families of East Germans simply abandoned their tiny East German "Trabant" cars along the side of the road, and hitchhiked across the border into Austria, where they went as fast as they could to the West German embassy in Vienna. I used to pass that embassy on my way to my office in central Vienna, where we were still negotiating, and there was a line of refugees along the street and around the corner, waiting their turn. They all knew that under West German law any German had the right to a West German passport. So, these refugees from East Germany entered the embassy as East Germans and came out as West Germans! They were transformed. And this was at least partly because of the impact of our negotiations. It was truly a transformative moment in Europe. I watched it happen. I was there. Those crowds of ordinary people, in Prague, and in Poland, and in East Germany – all over the East – were inspired by our work on the so-called "Helsinki Accords". I used to travel across that frontier, between East and West, from time to time, and I knew it pretty well. It was a chilling experience because the landscape was increasingly barren as one approached the border crossing. There were no cars at all, because people could not travel. I was an exception because — as an American diplomat — it was easy for me to get visas and to travel anywhere. In fact, I went to Prague with my family several times. The streets in Prague were empty — even the lively narrow streets near the river — there were no crowds of tourists then, as there are now. I recall one day when I was there with my family — just as tourists — we looked for a place to have lunch, and literally could not find one in the center of Prague. There were no restaurants, everything was bleak and ominous. Later I lived in Prague, after the Cold War was over — up on the hill on that narrow street which goes down to the Castle. I was the President of the private organization which took over the functions of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, and their associated publications. My office was in the one "sky-scraper" which existed in Prague at that time. Each morning, I would walk down the long narrow streets from the hill to take the underground metro to my office. And it was always filled with people, filled with life — music and shops and cafes! And I would reflect on those extraordinary changes. Prague was transformed into such a colorful, interesting place — a place one never wanted to leave! That is the key thing about freedom: it inspires people, brings out the best and most creative elements in them. Those who have never experienced it do not always understand this phenomenon. Free people become creative people, thinking people – and it changes everything.

That was what you call “Helsinki’s power” — the power of this idea of freedom, which had been so repressed in Eastern Europe! And now Moscow, and Putin, are trying to take that away from Russia's nearest neighbor, Ukraine — in total violation of the Helsinki Accords — and every international norm. He is trying to reverse history, and to take that freedom away in a spectacular violation of — not only Helsinki, but of all the norms of international relations! It is a colossal, mind-boggling violation, so spectacular that it took some time for many people in the West to realize what was going on! We worked long and hard to bring the norms of freedom to Eastern Europe and the USSR, and we cannot now permit them to be swept away by Putin!

The first Follow-up Meeting. It was in 1977 in Belgrade and for the first time, governments were reporting on human rights violations in other countries. That is remembered in the history of the CSCE/OSCE as a turning point, a harsh moment that was not well accepted by the Soviets.

The Soviets were thinking they would sign this document [the Helsinki Final Act] and gradually people would forget about it. But that is not how it was seen in the West, especially by people who were engaged on these issues. It is true that if you took one of these ideas, like for instance family reunification, it could be very small, or it could be very big. It depended on how you interpreted the language, and how many people applied, and a lot of things that were not really controllable. The Soviets somehow thought you make a tiny commitment and that means a tiny result, a tiny concession, and a tiny effect. But no, a tiny commitment can sometimes have a huge effect. We in the West knew that any one of these ideas would be like ammunition for lobbying groups, and they would push on these things – in the United States, but throughout Europe as well – because we were used to that. That was the difference.

For many years, before and after the Helsinki negotiations, there was an ongoing debate in Washington about whether it was more advantageous to try to handle delicate matters with the Soviet Union privately or publicly. When Jimmy Carter was elected President, those favoring public diplomacy on human rights issues came into the Administration and so this became an official Washington strategy, replacing the secrecy and back-channeled private diplomacy used by Kissinger under Presidents Nixon and Ford. The changes in the US strategy for the CSCE review meeting in Belgrade reflected a broader change from private to public handling of CSCE issues, resulting from the change in the White House. President’s Jimmy Carter’s appointment of former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg to head the US Delegation in Belgrade reflected Carter’s intention to use the CSCE as a highly provocative public lever for his active human rights advocacy concerning the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. This was a very sharp change of general policy from the Kissinger years. Ambassador Bud Sherer was retained as Goldberg’s deputy, but Goldberg completely overshadowed him, and made human rights in the communist countries into a banner public policy of the US Administration. With Goldberg as the leader of the US Delegation the famous US low profile in the CSCE was a thing of the past, and the Belgrade meeting became very contentious as he raised specific names and cases, and did not hesitate to address issues publicly.

You mentioned that Soviet negotiators couldn't envisage the aftermath of the Final Act. Could you? Was this something that the Western diplomats were hoping for or did it come as a surprise to you as well?

No one could foresee what would happen after the Helsinki Final Act was signed. But we knew what our objectives were, which became new international obligations for the signatory countries when

the Final Act was signed. I went back to Washington as the head of the State Department office that was responsible for the implementation of what had been agreed in the Final Act. And that instantly became a huge bureaucratic challenge. All the lobbying groups in Washington were inspired by the new commitments which were contained in the Final Act. These activists saw them as being much more significant than the way we were interpreting them as bureaucrats, and began pushing for immediate implementation of those commitments by the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries.

We started receiving mountains of information about individual human rights cases, all over Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. People were sending in letters – someone had a cousin in Prague, or a friend in Moscow, or there was a news report from somewhere. Some people managed to get out of the Soviet Union, but left their children behind and wrote to us asking for help for their family to get back together on the basis of the "family reunification" provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. Many of these appeals required approaches to the government in Moscow, so that we had to find the best way to raise the issue with the Russians. And every individual story was different, requiring research, verification, and judgement before the US government could become involved.

And not only that. This was picked up in Congress, and every Congressman wanted to use these new international commitments for the benefit of their constituents. These inevitably included, for example, families that had emigrated but who had left behind their sisters or their cousins, and wanted to ensure that they, too, could leave the Soviet Union.

There were so many individual cases, just tracking them became almost impossible. Each of them had to be recorded, summarized, and tabulated by country and type of incident, because this was to become the record of the implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. My small office was overwhelmed, and I immediately had to add new staff. Then somebody told me I'd better get a computer. "What's that?" I said. Computers simply didn't exist at that time. So, I looked into this, and discovered that we could buy this thing called a computer, which would track information on a machine. So, I ordered one – it was the very first computer in the US State Department! It looked like a big, old-fashioned steamer trunk with four legs, and I had it installed against the wall. The first thing we had to do was to figure out how to use it, which we did, and it quickly became indispensable.

To make matters more complicated, a few Congressmen started complaining that we were not handling these cases fast enough, or as actively as we should. A bill was passed creating what came to be called "The Helsinki Commission," a new joint Congressional-Administration committee focusing exclusively on the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act. At a certain point, the newly-inaugurated president, Jimmy Carter, who had no previous experience in Washington, sent a handwritten note to Cyrus Vance, his Secretary of State. The note read, literally, as follows: "Who is this guy Maresca, who is screwing up our relations with Congress?" Just handwritten on a small piece of paper, which was then hand-carried by courier from the White House to the State Department to be delivered to the Secretary of State. I was really on the edge of disaster when that happened. Fortunately, the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, was a very rational person. Not only that, he was also an alumnus and the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the school that I had also gone to, Kent School, so he knew my name. I was one of the very few people from that school who was in the foreign service, working in the State Department. So, when he read Carter's note, and saw my name, of course he made the connection and knew exactly who I was.

The reason Carter had written was that some Congressman had gone to him and complained that Congress was not getting full co-operation on getting people out of the Soviet Union and that the one responsible for this hold-up was some guy named Maresca. Vance surely didn't even know that we were tabulating all of this stuff on our big computer in the building there below him – he could not know everything that was going on in the department he had just taken charge of. But he was the Secretary of State, so right away I was put in jeopardy by that complaint. It is pretty unusual for a junior official in the State Department to be the subject of a personal complaint to the President! My friends said: "it's better for you to move to some other position." I *did not* move to another position – I was always pretty determined to do my job – but that's what life was like in those days. We were all running to keep up with the requirements of following up on all of these very specific family cases, on the basis of the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act.

There were many people who expected results immediately, and while the effects of the Helsinki agreements were, over time, tangible and positive, it obviously did not, and could not possibly happen overnight. I was invited to speak to a group of professors at the Harvard Faculty Club at one point, and everyone complained that they "had not been kept informed" of developments during the negotiations. I responded that it was not our responsibility as diplomats to keep professors informed. And there was skepticism about the possible results, to which I responded by recounting one case – just one of many cases – where children had been reunited with their parents on the basis of the Helsinki commitments. I said that if just one child was reunited with his or her parents, then our work was worth the effort.

The Helsinki Final Act was a historic achievement, but it presented an enormous "follow-up" challenge. It was undertaken, carefully and slowly, by all the West European countries which had individual cases of concern to them, thousands of cases, typically Russian émigré families with relatives who were still in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. This became a huge new diplomatic effort, all across Europe and North America, and it went on for years. In fact, there are still many individual human rights cases being discussed on the basis of the Helsinki commitments. And it was these commitments which finally undermined the whole structure of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and stimulated the break-up of the Soviet hold over those countries, and eventually of the Soviet Union itself.

The road that began in Helsinki eventually led to the signing of the Paris Charter for a New Europe in 1990.

Europeans wanted to take account of the changes that were happening, to prepare a new summit-level gathering, to reflect the significance of the historical moment we were seeing taking form and to lay the basis for peaceful relations in Europe. Phrases like "a common European home" and "creation of a peaceful order in Europe", were used to describe the objectives of such a meeting. The Soviet President, Gorbachev, proposed such a meeting to President Mitterrand in Kyiv in December 1989 and Mitterrand immediately supported this idea. There was recognition that events were moving swiftly, that the entire European balance was changing, there was the possibility of German reunification, so it became clear that measures were needed to ensure that the coming evolution would happen peacefully. So, the CSCE was re-convened using the format of delegations accredited to the CSBM (Confidence and Security Building Measures) negotiations, to prepare for a new CSCE Summit, to take place in Paris. This elevated the importance of our negotiations, in terms of the world stage, in a way that had never happened before.

It was also a shift in who "owned" the CSCE. Up until that time the CSCE was owned by the Soviet Union – it was their initiative. The Russians had secretly gotten the Finns to offer an invitation. That

was kept secret for years, but gradually people came to know. The Finns were very sensitive about this, because they do not like to be portrayed as being manipulatable, especially by the Soviets. But that was the way it happened.

I think the summit in Paris upgraded the image of the CSCE as an institution in ways that are hard to qualify, because Paris is such a centre – for the press, for public attention. Everybody knows that things that happen in Paris are by definition important. So, it changed the whole order of magnitude. The optics were also very important. I think that was a great gesture by Mitterrand and he benefited from it, just like any other politician would.

What was your role and what was the composition of the US delegation that conducted the Charter of Paris negotiations? How did that happen?

There were two negotiations going on in parallel in Vienna at that time. One, considered the more important one in Washington, was the negotiation on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Europe, which was seeking concrete agreed force reductions on the basis of balance between the two sides. This was very difficult because it meant essentially that the Eastern side would have to make bigger reductions than the Western side. The MBFR negotiations included only the delegations from the member countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The US Delegation for those negotiations was headed by a political appointee, Jim Woolsey. The other negotiation in Vienna was the one in which I was the head of the US delegation. This was about military confidence - and security-building measures (CSBMs), a subject which had been included in the Helsinki Final Act. It was the established military component of the CSCE agenda, having produced more than one agreement since Helsinki. This negotiation included delegations from all the participating States of the CSCE, even the neutral countries and the mini-states.

Then, Gorbachev and Mitterrand had their summit meeting in Crimea, and agreed that the full CSCE should be re-convened to move toward greater East-West co-operation. The French moved very quickly, and before anyone could develop opposition to the concept, the CSBM negotiation was upgraded to be the preparatory negotiation for the newly arranged forthcoming summit-level CSCE meeting and signing ceremony in Paris. I was, of course, already the US ambassador to that very negotiation, and so I just expanded my responsibilities, as well as the number of people in my delegation.

What were the core goals to which your delegation aspired?

The goals shifted in major ways when Mitterrand and Gorbachev agreed to co-sponsor a new summit-level meeting of the CSCE in Paris. That decision meant that we had to produce a broad and significant document, which would be appropriate for signature by the Heads of State of Europe and North America. It would have to merit a summit-level signature. And it was clear that the only subject which could fit that role, at that moment of history, would be the official closing of the Cold War. So, we negotiators immediately turned our focus to developing that sort of document.

In Vienna there was, as I mentioned, already a negotiation going on which was aimed at producing an agreement on the reduction of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces in Europe. And in the CSCE context we began negotiating a broad document intended to encourage a general opening of friendly East-

West relations in Europe, which eventually was given the ambitious title “Charter of Paris for a New Europe”. But we realized immediately that we would need another document for that summit to make sense: we needed a document that would formally close World War II in Europe.

At that time the situation in Europe had been rapidly evolving, and with Gorbachev as the leader of the Soviet Union, it was possible to think in these terms, and to negotiate positively with the Soviet representatives. So, we immediately took on the challenge of producing a true war-concluding document for World War II in Europe. This started in private, even secretive, meetings of "ambassadors only," in obscure conference rooms in the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. It resulted in a new document, which was given the deliberately modest title “Joint Declaration of Twenty-two States”.

You recently published a book about this document, *The Unknown Peace Agreement*. There you argue that it is the closest document we will ever have to a true peace treaty concluding World War II in Europe. How do the Paris Charter and the Joint Declaration complement each other and why do we all refer to the Paris Charter as the “peace agreement” of World War II?

Well, actually the Joint Declaration of Twenty-two States and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe are not really connected. They were simply signed in Paris at about the same time. Strangely, the Joint Declaration has remained in the background, so I decided to write a book, to explain its meaning and how it originated.

The Joint Declaration, although it was *not* anticipated before we started the negotiations to prepare for the summit in Paris, became one of the principal achievements of those negotiations. It is the sole, and genuine, peace agreement which officially concluded World War II in Europe, and, as far as we can tell, there will never be another such document, in view of the fact that one of the key participants in that war, the Soviet Union, was dissolved and ceased to exist shortly after the “Joint Declaration” was signed.

As I have explained in my book, we could only have a legitimate peace agreement closing World War II in Europe during a period of about six months, because not all of the states which were participants in that war existed before that period, and not all of them existed after that period. For a legitimate agreement to end a war you need it to be signed by the same states that actually fought the war – it must be the actual combatant countries. In this case it had to be the countries which fought World War II in Europe, and those countries only existed at the same time for a very short period. Germany was divided after the war, and until it was reunified it was not the same country that fought the war. The Soviet Union was also one of the countries which fought the war. And once the Soviet Union broke up, you didn't have a legitimate country on the other side which could sign a genuine peace agreement. So, the period during which you could conceivably have a genuine, legitimate, peace agreement for the war in Europe was very short.

Even with that book now published, the way World War II was officially concluded remains relatively obscure, which is unfortunate. I think it is high time for scholars and so-called experts to recognize this key historical document with the overly-modest title of the “Joint Declaration of Twenty-two States.” Historians have a responsibility to confirm this key element of recent European history!

The Charter of Paris was, of course, important in its own right. It made possible a broad opening of East-West relations in Europe, the effects of which were truly historic. That coming together in Paris marked the official – and also the practical – end of an era: the era of the Cold War. And as a part of that change of historical eras, it also made possible the official closing of World War II in Europe,

through the signature of the Joint Declaration. That summit-level meeting in Paris deserves to be recognized as the symbolic turning point which it was in the history of Europe and the world. I have always thought the Paris summit meeting has been undervalued historically. It was a true – and positive – historical turning point.

Was Paris a way to formalize the dialogue that was informally happening in the CSCE before, from Dipoli through Geneva and the Follow-up Meetings in Belgrade, Madrid and Vienna?

I think the CSCE's peak was probably that meeting in Paris, and unfortunately for the CSCE, there are a lot of other things that now have taken place. The dialogue of the CSCE had its day and was important at the time, but is not relevant now. If someone tomorrow proposes a new summit-level session of the OSCE to resolve the problem of Ukraine, then, maybe, it will suddenly take centre stage again. But nobody is doing that. It is kind of hard to imagine – where would it be, to begin with? It would have to be somewhere in the middle to symbolically fit that role, and who would do it? Would the Turks offer to do it in Istanbul, for example? Without some new lift-off like that the OSCE is irrelevant today.

The CSCE institutions have never been able to acquire the strength, nor the influence, which we optimistically thought they might acquire, and when the break-up of the Soviet Union left Gorbachev without any official position, Russia began its long return to the harsh, dictatorial government which was the tradition there. That made it impossible for the CSCE institutions to have any impact, and they did not really survive in any meaningful way. Maybe the time will come when they can be revived, but sadly I do not see that happening in the current circumstances.

In the early days of the CSCE one of the factors, which was always a consideration when we started thinking about how things would go in such a body, was how close we were at any given moment to actual combat, to having a war. I think history has shown that you can only get to the kind of discussions that we have had in the CSCE over time if you are relatively far away from having an actual war. Whereas right now, we're not only close to having a war, we are having a war. So, the idea of having some kind of dialogue in the midst of killing people is very remote. But maybe that time will come.

The Charter of Paris is known as the most enthusiastic document in international law, a consequence of the enthusiasm built by the rapprochement, the reunification of Germany and by the fall of the Iron Curtain. Was this spirit captured? Were there, though, early warnings that were sidelined by the "good news"?

There were certainly many signs that warned of what was to come — that the warm and friendly atmosphere of the summit meeting in Paris was "too good to last." In many ways that warmth was a genuine reflection of the fact that the likelihood of a major world war seemed to have been greatly diminished by Gorbachev, by the liberalization he had encouraged in Russia, and by the positive atmosphere of our negotiations in the CSCE. But, as we now know, that positive atmosphere did not last very long, and soon there were indications of serious difficulties to come.

Perhaps the most concrete signal during that period that everything was not in perfect order was Gorbachev's personal reaction when he learned that the leaders of the three Baltic States were attending the Paris summit meeting of the CSCE. I happened to be standing near Gorbachev, who

was talking to President Bush in the lobby of the conference during a coffee break, when he saw the Baltic State representatives across the entrance lobby of the building. They had been admitted as observers — only to the outer corridors — under a special arrangement I had personally worked out with my counterpart, the Russian ambassador to our negotiations, and the informal group of countries which supported the independence of the Baltic States. We had reached a compromise with the Soviet delegation under which the representatives of the Baltic States, with their own entry badges, could circulate in the outer corridors of the huge meeting hall we were using in Paris. They were very well-known figures in Russia because they were actively holding demonstrations and agitating for their independence.

So, there was a brief diplomatic incident when Gorbachev saw the Baltic States representatives in the corridor outside the grand meeting hall where the speeches were going on, and recognized them. He immediately protested to Mitterrand, who called his security chief over and whispered something to him, actually covering his mouth with his hand. And the French security agents immediately, but very politely, escorted the Baltic State representatives from the building. I rushed across the great entrance hall to inform President Bush and Secretary of State Baker of what was happening, which was all I could do – the CSCE operated on the basis of consensus, so a single objection to the presence of the Baltic State representatives meant they could not attend. I had personally checked with my Soviet counterpart, the ambassador who was the head of the Soviet delegation, to ensure that the Soviets would not object to the presence of the Baltic State representatives in the outer corridors of the Summit meeting in Paris, and he had just shrugged and had not raised an objection. But obviously Gorbachev had not been informed. And for an instant, Gorbachev was visibly very angry. But Mitterrand then helped, and engaged him in a positive discussion, and very soon the two of them were smiling and nodding their heads. And then Mitterrand, whom I knew quite well from my days as the US Minister in Paris, gave me a nod to say "everything is okay." That incident was certainly a setback at that moment for those of us who were pressing for the independence of The Baltic States. As you may know, the US continued to have embassies representing the three independent Baltic states in Washington throughout their "forced incorporation" into the Soviet Union, and during the CSCE negotiations I personally developed an informal "Friends of The Baltic States" group within the CSCE, to do what we could to involve the Baltic State representatives, to keep them informed, and to support their lobbying efforts for their independence. And later, within a few months after the Paris Summit, Moscow actually accepted the independence of the three Baltic States! I have studied the way the Baltic peoples pressed for their independence during that period, when they began asserting their right to independence increasingly loudly — in newspapers and on the radio -- and I believe this small incident in Paris was a true milestone for them: within a few months after the Paris meeting, Moscow actually recognized their independence. After all, our small group of "Friends of The Baltic States," meeting on the fringes of the negotiation had some effect, and very shortly after the Paris summit they were free!

What was the perception of the signing of the Charter of Paris in the US? How did the politicians react and what was the public reaction to it? How did it compare to the reaction to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act?

When the Helsinki Final Act was signed, the reaction in the US was mainly negative. The US Administration had failed to explain the meaning of the Helsinki Final Act, and what we were trying to achieve by lowering the level of confrontation with Moscow. Later, when the Helsinki negotiations actually accelerated the reunification of Germany and the opening of more positive East-West relations, I think they earned their recognition as a positive factor. The Charter of Paris was generally

seen positively, partly because Gorbachev personally was seen that way. I was proud to have led that negotiation.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, you were asked by Secretary of State Baker to carry out a special assignment, to officially open direct US diplomatic relations with each of the states that were newly independent from the former Soviet Union. What were the highlights, new realizations or some stories you would like to share from this historic assignment?

This particular episode of my diplomatic career has become a focus of the new book I am working on, titled "Ukraine: Putin's War for the Near Abroad". The thinking about this long mission of mine began just when the Soviet Union was dissolved. We realized that there were new states that we had not really treated as independent states. We would have to establish embassies in each of the new capital cities, and that would take some time. And gradually the idea emerged in Washington that we should ceremonially do something to recognize that we would have direct diplomatic relations with each of them.

That is when I was named as a special envoy to open direct US diplomatic relations with each of the newly independent states. My mission was to pay a formal call on the head of state, or the local equivalent (sometimes the titles are different in these countries), the prime minister, and the ministers of defense and of foreign affairs in each of these new capitals. And in a ceremonial way I would open direct bilateral relations with each of these new states. So that's what I did.

I used the US embassy in Moscow as my base, also to send reporting telegrams to Washington, because we couldn't send any classified messages otherwise. Some of the US diplomats there were a bit unhappy to see another American ambassador arrive on the scene. As far as they were concerned, the ambassador in Moscow was also the ambassador to all of these places. So, the embassy was not really going out of its way to be helpful to me. They weren't going to block my mission, obviously, because it had been ordered by Washington, but they also weren't going to make it really easy. They didn't want it to be important. So, I was up against that.

Anyway, I assembled a small delegation, and actually one member of my delegation has now become a famous person - Marie Yovanovitch, the distinguished US ambassador who was harassed by Donald Trump when she was the ambassador to Ukraine. At that time, she was a junior officer on her first assignment, and she was designated as my special assistant from the embassy in Moscow. She spoke absolutely perfect, native Russian and was indispensable on this trip.

I made arrangements in advance, and went one by one to all of the capital cities of the countries which had made up the Soviet Union. I had the use of an air force plane and I had a military entourage, including a senior officer, so that I would always have a senior US military officer in uniform right behind me. Military attachés are very important in such a situation because they're very visible. They wear their uniforms, and that's a visible indication that you're a senior American official. Otherwise, nobody knows who you are. I carried out that highly symbolic mission over the period of one year, because it was slow and somewhat complicated to line up each of these visits. The governments were new and were not used to visits by American ambassadors, and often they did not know how to receive me, what to say, and what the real meaning of such a visit might be. The first capital I went to was Kyiv, because of the history – Kyiv is the ancient birthplace of the very notion of Russia, the original "Kyivan Rus" from which all Russian history flows.

Was that the first occasion on which a US ambassador was sent directly to open diplomatic relations with Ukraine?

Yes, it was. Of course, other US ambassadors had visited Ukraine many times while it was a part of the Soviet Union, but none had gone there on an official visit to the independent state of Ukraine.

Kyiv is a big, well-developed, very sophisticated city, which gets a lot of visitors. It was not at all like the remote capital cities of Central Asia. Lots of people who visited Moscow would also go to Kyiv, so the people there were pretty blasé about foreign visitors. So, in comes an American (me) who says he is celebrating this and that. But I was just another American for them. They were very polite, but they weren't excited, whereas in some places I visited the local people were really very excited about seeing me when they realized who I was and the symbolism of my visit. Many of these people had never seen an American ambassador before, and surely some had never seen any sort of American! So, that was an interesting experience for me. Later, after I retired, I went back to one of these places – Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan, and lived there as a visiting professor at a local university for two years. Baku is really a wonderful place – beautiful, spotless, lively, historic, and open to the world, with great cuisine and excellent local wines!

During your last years of involvement with the OSCE you were dealing with the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh.

I focused on some lesser-known issues during the last period of my role in the CSCE, including the one over Nagorno Karabakh. At a certain point I became a kind-of “engine" for trying to find a solution to that issue – which I ultimately concluded was totally impossible at the time. And that was when I decided to leave the diplomatic profession. I broke my sword, so to speak, on that very issue. It is still is unresolved, and won't be resolved in our lifetimes, if ever. There are many situations like that one around the former Soviet Union, and we don't even know of some of these. The Russians, of course, do, and I have to give them some credit here, because these are situations that they have been dealing with for a couple of hundred years or more, awful, bloody conflicts, which no other world power wants to get involved in.

The issue of such ethnic conflicts came up in the negotiations of the documents that were produced in Paris, and as I recall the overall conclusion was that it was just too difficult for outsiders to deal with issues like that. Nobody really came out and said that, but the general reaction was that these conflicts are so difficult that we will have to kick the ball down the road a bit before really confronting the problem. And so, this issue, and others like it, were left aside; they were considered too difficult. Nagorno Karabakh is not the only place like that. Former Yugoslavia was also like that. Filled with places that had a mix of the many nationalities that composed what was Yugoslavia, and many of these places were filled with hatred and old rivalries, where it is very difficult to find peace.

How can we manage diversity in society differently? Or do we have to resign to polarization that then becomes a violent conflict, and then leads to dissolution? Was it maybe possible to prevent the escalations already in Paris?

The simple answer is “no”. I've been wrestling with this challenge of hatreds between national groupings ever since I got into CSCE subjects. And even before that, because growing up in the United States I ran into this myself all the time. That may sound strange nowadays because Italian names are now accepted more widely. But having an Italian name when I was growing up was very much

like having some more exotic kind of name now. My mother was American, and my sister and I were both Italian and American. We lived a very privileged life, on the shore of Lago Maggiore, near the Swiss border. My mother only left Italy to take her two small children to safety in America when war broke out in Europe, but my father was not allowed to leave — Italian males could not leave because of the war. And we were not immigrants to the USA; my mother was from St. Louis, and her two children were born Americans. But the US has always received huge numbers of immigrants, including many Italians, and as a diplomat I became interested in this general subject, which has now become a central world problem, a challenge for every country.

Having the Charter of Paris and its beautifully written pledges for us to live in peace and prosperity should have prevented Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. What would be your recommendation for building more resilience into the machinery?

The CSCE summit in Paris produced some very important agreements – at least they would have been important, historically, if they had been respected and maintained. But they were not. They were deliberately and spectacularly broken by Vladimir Putin with his invasion of Ukraine. That event was the culmination of a long series of events in Russia aimed at reversing the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The population of Ukraine under the popularly-elected leadership of Volodimir Zelensky resisted being brought again under Moscow's control. And Russia then invaded Ukraine to enforce Putin's vision of a reunited Soviet Union. The relations established by the Charter of Paris and the structures set up at that time are totally meaningless as long as there is an aggressive leadership in the Kremlin which is trying to subjugate a neighboring state through a vicious war!

So, we are now far beyond the commitments of the Charter of Paris, and I think the utility of that agreement may well have been completely destroyed. Certainly, as long as Russia continues to be run by Putin, or someone like him, as a dictatorial regime with the clear objective of re-establishing Moscow's control over the whole of what was the Soviet Union, there will be no possibility of peaceful relations with Europe and North America.

This makes the work of any international forum very difficult, for the OSCE and for the United Nations system as well. Will it be possible to reconcile the diverging narratives after Russia has invaded Ukraine and waged a very destructive war or will this require rethinking the whole international order?

The United Nations structure is antique. If there were any sensible approach to these things – which there isn't, because it's all politicized – one would update the whole structure and the way it operates, so that everything could be upgraded and modernized. But that won't happen because some countries will resist changes that might reduce their independence.

In addition, we face a whole new international context following Putin's open aggression on Ukraine. That has signaled a willingness to carry out extraordinary, completely uncalled-for violence in pursuit of the conquest of a neighboring sovereign state, which the world has not seen since Hitler's time. This raises the "Putin problem" to one of world-wide consequence and urgency. The United Nations simply cannot deal with such a problem, because the country which has created this problem has a veto power in the UN!

So, unfortunately the world – especially the NATO allies and our friends in other parts of the world – will have to go back to the basics of international relations and start a process of isolating Russia and Putin, perhaps for a very long time, in a kind of new cold war. The objectives of this isolation should be to encourage Russia to change course, to end its use of violence to enforce its will on its neighbors, and to seek acceptance by the world community. Countries which support the Russian position in this situation will have to be subjected to the same isolation as is imposed on Russia. This type of approach is not very effective, but it is the best way of responding to unacceptable behavior without actually starting a war.

Over the longer term I think we need to consider ways to encourage more normal international behavior by Russia, and to impose really meaningful sanctions when a country discards so completely the norms of peaceful international relations. As difficult as it may be, we need to construct an international system which can enforce the rules of peaceful international behavior. Experience over time has shown how difficult it is to obtain meaningful international commitments which cannot simply be ignored when a country decides to do that.

For some the Paris Charter was the end of the Cold War, for others it was not. Have these diverging narratives been sufficiently addressed? How much have narratives like Trump's "America first" contributed to Russia and China wanting to be "first", too?

What was lost through Trump's Presidency is America as an ideal. Ronald Reagan talked about the "shining city on the hill". That was America, and we lost that. Largely because of Trump, and people like Trump. The United States, even though it had bad practices, and had minorities that didn't agree, still held out as an ideal of the best kind of society. But with Trump, all of the worst traits in American society have come to the surface, and now you can no longer claim that kind of image for the United States.

So, the world has lost something that it had, which was this image of the shining city on the hill. We've lost it. Because the United States has lost it. Partly because of Trump. Unfortunately, Trump epitomizes all the negatives in our society in a way that pulls them all together, which creates an image that you can see, and you can see where it's going. You can see its effect and that it has a huge following. It has become concrete, scary, in ways that it wasn't before. With Trump the negative side of our society has become much worse than it was before, and that is a tragedy for our country, for America.

What kind of diplomacy will we need in the period after the war in Ukraine?

The alternatives to the United States are unfortunately few and far between, because there is no other country in the world which brings together the stature, the size, the variety of national origins, and the worldwide influence that the United States has. Unfortunately, that image now has been completely decimated by Trump, and could be even worse if Trump were to have some sort of comeback. It will linger for a long time, because he made it into a national kind of thing and even made it respectable for a lot of people who came out of hiding and now are public about these things.

We need to rebuild, following the Trump era, which still hovers over us. We need, once again, to find that "shining city" – or some other image that meets the needs, the dreams, of the world. What

other country can do that? We will have to find a leader who thinks in those terms, who can bring the country together again, so that it can, once again, inspire people everywhere.

What is more difficult is to look beyond the specific issues and problems of today, and to find, in all the disappointing history which we know, some redeeming quality, some ray of hope for the future, which can restore our faith in the human race. That is very difficult when one has seen the cruelty of dictatorial regimes up close and personal. We have not yet found the basis, nor the means, to rid our governing systems of bullies, thieves, and tyrants, and I do not think we will find those answers any time soon.

Maybe the hope then should not be in leading countries or leading politicians, but in investments in the future through the students that we have in our classrooms, in efforts to mobilize young people to be politically more active and to care about what is happening in their political systems? Maybe we will not see another superpower being a leader and maybe small-scale initiatives, like Fridays for Future will guide social justice and responsible governance. Can youth and civil society help overcome the divisive narratives in times when consensus has become impossible even on holding a Human Dimension Implementation Meeting?

That is a possibility. What you are saying is that it is possible for things to evolve gradually, and I think that is generally true. It would be nice to be able to say: "Look, this is the United States; we will always come back to our basic values." But I don't think it is possible to say that now with full confidence. Our experience in recent years has not been very reassuring. Certainly, there is a lot of wisdom in being patient, in the belief that solutions often come in smaller units, and if we can succeed, for example, in establishing systems that are fair and forward-looking, even in just one country, that's a huge victory. Maybe it's better to start that way, to try to change things patiently and gradually. But it will take a lot of determination, and patience.

OSCE has had a very limited outreach programme and usually only in the countries where there are field operations. What can we teach the young and politically curious minds and how?

The OSCE has done very little to explain to the public how, and why, it came to exist, what are its objectives, and what benefits it has brought to international relations in Europe, including North America. This failure has had the effect of negating many of its benefits and potential benefits. Certainly, the primary objective of such an organization must be better mutual understanding among the people of the countries which are its members, and certainly such mutual understanding is badly needed in Europe, including the adjacent areas of the Mediterranean and Central Asia. One can argue that we have now come full circle and are back at the very East-West hostilities which the CSCE/OSCE was intended to ease and even overcome. Our stated objectives in those negotiations were to develop friendlier, more open relations between East and West in Europe, in many domains, and while that appeared to be working at the time, it quickly was lost, and now East-West relations, at least with Russia, are once again at rock bottom. And the CSCE/OSCE is nowhere to be seen.

Just a word about the Prague office of the OSCE. This was my personal idea — one of quite a number which I contributed over the years! I got to know the small library, which was there, which I used for

quick research on a number of issues, and thought it would be useful for the OSCE to have a centre where diplomats could do the research which is always essential in international relations. At the time we were looking for ways in which the CSCE could be useful to the participating States, and I thought a place for concrete research on issues would be useful in that sense. So many issues arose during our negotiations which required some research that such a facility was clearly needed – especially for foreign diplomats who may be here on assignment and suddenly need to understand the background of some international issue. The idea was popular among the CSCE delegations, and it was immediately adopted. I hope it has fulfilled its mission over the years!

I have always believed that diplomacy requires a full understanding of the issues. Not just a superficial knowledge of events, but much more than that, an understanding of the sensitivities, the complexities, the implications and the risks of international activities of all kinds. And that sort of understanding demands a deeper feeling for the way things work, of the effects of actions taken, of the way such actions may affect the lives of ordinary people.

How can research and diplomacy help find a better way out of the new polarization we are facing, so we can have a new Paris sooner rather than wait for 45 years (which is the period between the end of the WWII to Paris)?

In a way we reached a high point, at least in the diplomatic dimension, with the summit in Paris and the Charter of Paris which was signed there. Those negotiations, and the summit-level commitments they produced, gave us an agreed context within the framework of the CSCE: agreed principles which must be respected, the basic requirement for respect for human rights, and agreement on the need to avoid conflicts which, after all, was not nothing! And all of Europe was committed to these agreements. The CSCE was thus a central, a pivotal element for the world, which included the commitments of all of Europe and its offshoots, including the United States and Canada, and we were discussing the very basic values we believe in. We were negotiating, discussing how to express them as something we could all agree on, and would commit to. That's what the principles are all about — respect for the universal values and principles which all of our nations share. And if one looks back on that, in comparison with where we are now, it's just phenomenal. The text of the Helsinki Final Act starts with these universally-recognized principles, and these principles are very much a statement of the values which we in the West believe in, subscribed to by all the countries of Europe and North America. And it is simply incredible that we all agreed to them, committed our countries to respecting them, including the Soviet Union and all the nations of Europe, both East and West!

We are at a really low point in our relations with Moscow right now, and it is hard to see how we can climb back to some level of mutual understanding. There isn't really a lot of evidence out there that will point toward moving in a more positive direction, certainly not in my lifetime. I certainly won't see anything like the “Helsinki” agreements again. The contrast with the period of those agreements is very dramatic, very striking. Imagine what we were able to agree on with the Russians at that time, and where we are now.

The OSCE symbolizes what is the very best in Europe, and which is somehow totally ignored. Europe is the essence of a broad variety of nationalities, of nations which have many things in common, and also many things which are individual and national, and belong very much to their nations. The continent is filled with such things: music, literature, traditional clothing, ancient sayings, and endless traditional stories. It is what makes Europe so interesting, so fascinating. This complicated region

with its multiple languages and cultures and national identities has been attractive with these fascinating central features, the reason why everyone, from all parts of the world, wanted to come to Europe, to see it, hear it, experience it. And this has also been its weakness, because it meant rivalry and, at times, war.

As this is an oral history project, and has the element of inter-generational dialogue, I would like to share an important lesson for young scholars and activists, and that is: wars are destructive and cruel, and no one benefits from them; they must find ways for Europe to avoid wars. That was our principal objective in creating the OSCE, and we must pursue it in every possible way. That, as I said in one of my books, is the lesson of Helsinki. There are many things which young people can learn from the history of Europe, and hopefully those lessons can help us to avoid more wars in – and over – Europe.

I was born in Europe, at a time when the continent was headed toward war. My father was Italian, but my mother was American. When she was convinced that war was inevitable, she risked her life to take her two children to America. Our ship arrived in New York just as the war was beginning, as Hitler invaded Poland. I grew up as an American, and I never saw my father again; he passed away before my family could be reunited. My story is one of many, many stories which tell us that wars must be avoided, that we must do everything possible to avoid them. I spent my career as an American diplomat, negotiating for this objective, and I would gladly do it all over again.

You have a personal connection with legacy of war you were trying to put behind us in the CSCE negotiations. How did the two-year old Italian boy who had to escape Europe on the last ship from Genoa to New York become the chief US negotiator working for decades on closing that same war?

My family and I are among those who were devastated by World War II in Europe. In the Helsinki negotiations we were trying to close that war — to find normal relations among the countries concerned. I was not just an "outside expert" brought in to carry out these negotiations, I was one of those who had suffered. I lost my family, my home, my nationality, my identity because of that war. And the supreme irony was that, many years later, I became the central person, representing one of the main powers, the US, in the negotiations which formally concluded that war, and which ultimately made it possible for Europe to return to a normal situation.

I was born in Stresa, in the north of Italy, in a villa surrounded by the gardens of an historic luxury resort, the Grand Hotel Des Iles Borromées. The Hotel is an iconic landmark on the shores of Lago Maggiore and it figures in Ernest Hemingway's novel *Farewell to Arms*. My father, Franco Maresca, was a long-time director of the hotel. All male Italians were subject to possible national service as war loomed in Europe, and he was not permitted to leave Italy. He took us to Genoa where we took the ship to New York and that was the last time we saw my father. As the SS Conte di Savoia was pulling away from the pier, out into the Hudson River, empty and without passengers, to return to Italy and the war, my mother, with her two small children, passed through the US customs and immigration services. The official looked closely at my mother's American passport, in which the American consul general in Milano had inscribed her two small children aged two and four, with our photos. We were entered into her American passport, which meant that we were also Americans, as prescribed by the consul. All the other passengers had left, and the ship was slowly backing away from the pier, which was empty. And we were still standing in front of the US immigration officer. My mother was very nervous and concerned, so she said to the officer, very softly, "Please, can you

tell me, what is the nationality of my two children?" He did not reply immediately, as he looked through her American passport, where he saw our two photos, stamped with the official seal of the US consulate in Milano. After a pause, he said: "Lady," - and he stamped her passport - "As of now, they're American citizens." My mother, with her two infants, and dragging our luggage, walked to the nearest hotel. It was evening by then, and they had a vacant room. My mother and sister slept in the bed, and I, as the smallest, slept in two chairs, pulled together, with my mother's mink coat as my blanket. We were in America, and we were Americans, but we had nothing but the clothes on our backs. It was the beginning of a whole new life - of struggle and poverty, and never seeing my father again.

My story is the classic story of America, its promise to everyone who has ever arrived here. They have all arrived with nothing, typically not even speaking English. We did this quite literally, even though my mother was American (she had been living in Italy for ten years). Years later, that little Italian boy, fleeing the war and speaking not a single word of English, became the American ambassador who negotiated the formal conclusion of that very war!

My first assignment was the usual rotating assignment which every incoming junior diplomat in the US system goes through – six months in each specialized type of work at an overseas post. I was, first, the vice consul at the US consulate in Amsterdam, then, second, a commercial officer in the economic section of the US Embassy in The Hague, then an economic officer and finally a political officer. And then I was transferred back to Washington to be the junior French desk officer (tracking US relations with France). My French was just short of perfect, which impressed everyone, so one day I was urgently sent out to the airport to keep Charles De Gaulle, then the President of France, company while he awaited his plane, which was late. I spent an hour with him – just the two of us plus the French ambassador in Washington, and this gave me a *very* big reputation! Shortly after my meeting with De Gaulle, I was called in my office in Washington and asked if I was available for an interview with the Secretary General of NATO. "When?" I asked. "In about 30 minutes," was the reply. So, I was interviewed by the Secretary General of NATO, an Italian, called Manlio Brosio. The interview lasted about ten minutes, and I was the only candidate the US presented for the job as his "chef de cabinet". I spoke fluent French and Italian, both of which were requirements for the job. He approved my assignment immediately and I left one week later for the NATO headquarters in Brussels. That is where I learned my life-long trade specialty, negotiating with the Soviets.

What is the way forward for the OSCE?

The CSCE/OSCE took shape during a period when relations between the West and Moscow seemed to be improving. The CSCE relationship depended heavily on the assumption that Russia was acting in good faith, that it would respect its commitments, and that it had as much interest in improving relations, and in a full and stable peace, as we did.

I think that has now been shown to be untrue, which means we must return to the sort of suspicion and mistrust which dominated our relations with Moscow in the past. That is clearly the case as long as Putin remains in power, and will probably continue when Putin is replaced by a successor, unless and until Russia proves convincingly that it can be trusted to respect its commitments. And I would argue that even then we should maintain our ability to defend ourselves.

People will debate for a very long time over whether this return to confrontation was predictable or not, whether it was naive to seek more positive relations with Moscow, or we should have continued to maintain the distance and mistrust of the Cold War period. I was a leading negotiator during the detente era, following my years as a military officer and a key official in the NATO structure. And then I participated in our efforts to improve relations and to seek rational commitments, to find and maintain a stable peace between East and West in Europe. I don't think we were naive in that effort, and I am still in favor of seeking every possible opening to build a rational and lasting peace, while maintaining our ability to defend our interests if and when that may be necessary.

It is never easy, politically, to carry out both of these objectives at the same time, but I think we must do exactly that. The objective of finding a rational and solid basis for peace is simply too important to just brush it aside because we are disappointed, or because we do not trust the other side. On the contrary, we must pursue peace in spite of, and fully recognizing, those difficulties, taking them into account and protecting ourselves in case our efforts for peace should fail. We need to find the basis for a stable peace precisely because we are faced with an ongoing threat of possible war. That is the reason for our efforts, which must continue.

This interview is part of the oral history project "Living Memory - 30th Anniversary of the Charter of Paris for the New Europe", an extra-budgetary project conducted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s Documentation Centre in Prague headed by Ambassador Irena Krasnicka. The project envisages intergenerational dialogue based on memories of diplomats who attended the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)'s Paris Summit in November 1990. The interview was conducted in 2022/23 by Ida Manton, International Negotiation scholar and researcher, who is the Co-ordinator of the Living Memories project and has been working for and with the OSCE since 2002 in various capacities and in many field operations.

Read more by John Maresca:

To Helsinki, Duke University Press, 1987.

Helsinki Revisited, Ibidem Press, 2016.

The Unknown Peace Agreement, Ibidem Press, 2022.

See also: "Looking back on the Helsinki Final Act", excerpt from the memoirs of Anatoly Kovalev, published in Transition Magazine by the Open Media Research Institute, Prague, 30 June 1995. ©John J.Maresca.

Upcoming: "Ukraine: Putin's war for Russia's 'Near Abroad'" can be preordered here, Ibidem Press, 2024. The book contains a significantly longer version of this interview, which affords more detail than the online version.