

# Goodbye to Detente?

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Though an extremely perilous revival of the cold war, international tension and the arms race has been unleashed by US imperialism, its Thatcher and Chinese accomplices, it is premature for John Cox and Dan Smith to write their obituaries 'Goodbye to Detente?' in the September 1980 and February 1981 issues of *Marxism Today*.

In commenting on some of their views I shall not be able to furnish the extensive quotes and footnote references which always seem so formidable and impressive. Rather shall I have to rely on my own working class instinct and experience over a period nearing 60 years.

John Cox's extensive article did usefully pose some of the problems and views held in the various organisations of the peace movement and answered some of the anti Soviet arguments. He also took some passing swipes at those who support the Soviet Union's position as 'sadly misplaced', 'merely pathetic' etc.

Dan Smith carries this criticism much further with his references to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Afghanistan, Africa and claims that 'Soviet military strength has been the basis of the USSR's hold on Eastern Europe for 30 years'. In this his position



coincides with that of some rabid anti Soviet campaigners.

What stands out from both articles is that they do not evaluate from a working class or Marxist position but chiefly from a rather non-aligned liberal-pacifist estimate.

Any evaluation from a Marxist standpoint of the complex military and other contradictions besetting the world today should proceed from recognition of the role of imperialist forces led by the US which want to halt and reverse social change and the socialist forces, with the Soviet Union playing

the major role, which want to promote social change. This is the age old contradiction between capital and labour expressing itself in a highly dangerous and acute form as the world revolutionary process increasingly weakens declining imperialism which is beset by growing economic and other difficulties. Marxists cannot be neutral or impartial in this struggle.

## The position of the Soviet Union

The struggle between the forces representing capital and labour entered a new qualitative stage with the advent of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia. If the capitalists were prepared to react so brutally against early trade unionists who at that stage constituted no real threat to their power then their million times more brutal and bloody response when one sixth of the world was torn from their grasp can be understood moreover as the revolutionary process spread to Germany, Hungary and other areas.

It can truthfully be said that the capitalists the world over are far more conscious of their class interests than the workers are and that they have never baulked at spilling oceans of blood, murder, dungeon or any vile crime in defence of their interests.

During the whole of the period following the socialist revolution the imperialists and their allies used every weapon in their vast armoury against the Soviet state. In the thirties when Litvinov at the League of Nations in Geneva advocated disarmament Britain was in the forefront in rejecting it. When the Soviet Union urged collective security against Hitler's expansion and fascism it was rejected. Support was given to the Rome/Tokyo/Berlin axis as a *'cordon sanitaire'* against Bolshevism. The 50 millions dead and incalculable destruction of World War Two was the price mankind paid for the anti Soviet class policies of the imperialists.

Even during the war anti Soviet strategies were pursued as shown by the delay in opening the Second Front in Europe in the hope that the USSR would be so exhausted that its postwar power would be irrelevant, but the calculations came unstuck as the revolutionary process advanced and the national liberation movement added a new dimension to it.

Whereas socialism was contained behind Soviet frontiers prewar and the domination of imperialism continued in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, a tempestuous process of change was maturing in the world. In 1949 there were less than 50 countries in the UN. Today there are over 150 and imperialism has received a setback of cataclysmic proportions despite all its endeavours. The leaders of US imperialism have baulked at nothing — military pressure and intervention, coups, financial bribery, engineered assassinations, intrigue, destabilisation etc, in their class motivated total struggle against socialism and its ally national liberation. While recognising divisions, not of principles but of practice, within the imperialist camp and the often contradictory interests between powerful sections of the capitalist class, it must be said that on the whole they have succeeded in concealing their class interests and have influenced hundreds of millions into accepting that their vast armouries are designed for defence and for deterring the Soviet aim of overrunning the 'free world' and imposing upon it a totalitarian dictatorship.

### Conditioning to nuclear war

The so called deterrent strategy of US imperialism has taken some severe knocks and exposure during recent years. Authoritative organisations such as SIPRI, and many experts, have conclusively shown that the nuclear and other armoury of imperialism far surpasses that of the Warsaw Pact powers. The US leaders brought the world 'eyeball to eyeball' during the Cuba crisis of 1962 to compel removal of Soviet rockets from the

Western Hemisphere yet the US, self appointed world gendarme, has surrounded the Soviet Union with some 2,500 bases stretching from the Baltic, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia to Japan.

The concept of deterrence too has steadily given way to conditioning people to acceptance of nuclear war and even of winning a nuclear war. In 1978 US Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld could say with little protest: 'The present planning objective of the Defence Department is clear. We believe that a substantial number of military forces and critical industries in the Soviet Union should be directly targeted and that an important objective of the assured retaliation mission should be to retard significantly the ability of the USSR to recover from a nuclear exchange and regain the status of a 20th century military and industrial power more rapidly than the US.'

The advent of the 3 component transistor set in motion developments in micro-electronics, micro-miniaturisation and other areas of technology that have outpaced the imagination of sci-fi writers. These developments have been incorporated into weapons systems. Boasts are made of how Cruise and the coming Tornado war planes will be able to escape radar detection and deliver their nuclear payloads with pinpoint accuracy on Soviet ICBM silos.

All of this increases the temptation for anti Soviet nuclear maniacs to 'get it over with' and launch nuclear war against the Soviet Union. In fact the whole US forward strategy and 'theatre war' preparations in Europe is based upon acceptance of the destruction of Europe and vast areas of the Soviet Union which would then be compelled to sue for peace and accept US world domination.

Throughout the entire postwar period the Soviet Union because of its fundamental humanism and its planned economy geared to providing for social needs, not profits, has taken numerous initiatives and made continuous proposals aimed at easing world tension, ending the arms race, winning general and complete disarmament and securing the adoption of the principle of peaceful coexistence as the only means of survival in a world of two diametrically opposed social systems.

### Very different

That the Soviet Union has an arms and defence industry is without question. But to liken it, as Dan Smith does, to the US military industrial complex which promotes cold war policies, is integrated with the Pentagon and makes the most fabulous profits, is ridiculous and exposes his lack of a class and socialist outlook.

Just as Dan Smith seems to see little difference between the military-industrial complexes of imperialism and the Soviet defence industry, so too, does he seem to equate imperialists' efforts to sustain reactionary regimes with Soviet attempts to 'undermine' them. Perhaps, from an abstract, moral, standpoint the positions seem to be similar but from a class standpoint they are worlds apart.

Imperialism wants to maintain its dominating, exploiting and profit making role and to prevent social change. Socialism wants to end colonialism and assist national independence as the prerequisite for advance to a higher stage of social transformation.

Of course there can be no advance guarantees that aid will lead to progress in the socialist direction. That's a risk that has to be taken. Nasser was succeeded by Sadat after the Aswan Dam and other Soviet aid. Sadat has become a US tool in the Middle East. Pinochet has been installed by US imperialism after the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile. Africa, Asia and Latin America have become complex arenas of conflict between the forces of progress and imperialism in the world. The socialist countries cannot act like Pontius Pilate and wash their hands of the struggle and retreat behind their frontiers leaving Angola at the mercy of the South African apartheid internationalists, the peoples of El Salvador and other areas, defenceless against bloody military juntas and White House overlords.

It's been said that the United Nations should intervene to resolve conflicts and problems as for instance Afghanistan. Imperialism still holds the dominant influence in the UN which has so far shown its inability to halt the arms race and reverse the drive to war. It has been frustrated by the US and others in efforts to solve the Israeli/Arab crisis in the Middle East, to stop the Vietnam war by the US, to intervene against the ruthless Pinochet regime and the genocide of Pol Pot in Kampuchea.

To expect the UN with the present composition to intervene and protect a government struggling against feudal reaction and hostile external class forces seems naive at best. Any replacement of the present government of Afghanistan would, most likely, be one of internal reaction backed by Pakistan, China and the US as a base and dagger pointing to the Soviet Union.

### Dissidents

For long dissidents in the socialist countries have been elevated into a major human rights issue. For the people and for democracy human rights are indeed a fundamental issue.

But the ruling circles of capitalist society are in a poor position to emerge as its champions. Every right of the people whether it be of a trade union, education, health, vote, meeting, facilities to express **views**, womens' equality or what have you, has had to be wrung from them through unceasing **struggle**. Today they deny millions the right to a job of work and threaten the most fundamental right of all, the right to live, with the preparations for a nuclear holocaust in which not only the people but all the creations of their toil for thousands of years would be reduced to ashes.

Dissidents should be judged not only by the criticisms they express or the aims they profess but also the consequences of their actions on the world struggle between imperialism and socialism. While they take their wares to imperialism to be used against socialism then they can only be regarded as imperialist **tools**.

In the peace movement whether it is CND

or any other body Communists have a duty to express views about the nature of the struggle in the world today, the class interests and aims of the protagonists in order to develop wide understanding. This does not mean imposing views. Neither does it mean conciliation or retreat. Certainly the reviving CND has a vital role to play for peace today and an urgent need is to extend support from the labour and trade union movement which has stood on the sidelines for so long. Success for the aims of CND including Britain to be cleared of nuclear weapons and brought out of NATO could have enormous repercussions not only in Britain but throughout Europe in winning a Soviet response and isolating the main threat to the peace of the world, American imperialism.

In conclusion, may I say a word to some of our anti Soviet critics. You are fully entitled to your views but temper them occasionally with a little self **criticism**.

Many of the difficulties and problems

experienced by the Soviet Union did not arise exclusively from its internal development. For almost 30 years it was a besieged land. On it, by a quirk of history, fell the responsibility to break the world front of class dominated society and to open the road to a classless system and a new civilisation. No one had previously pioneered that awesome **road**.

If we had been more successful in curbing the onslaughts of our own ruling class and taking the pressure off the Soviet Union their path would have been so much easier and their enormous achievements so much greater **still**. Today again Britain is a US base and dagger pointing to their hearts, forcing them into huge arms spending, slowing down social progress and the advance to communism. Have we no responsibility for this situation and no fear that the class hatred of imperialists and their nuclear madmen might unleash a nuclear catastrophe with appalling consequences for the lands wrested by our class from their **oppressors**?