

Hungary, H-Bomb, Germany

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The discussion on Isaac Deutscher's article, Russia in Transition is held over the third issue.

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FOR the past ten years the West has been entrapped in the web of the policy of "negotiation from strength". The service chiefs have argued *ad nauseam* that the voice of persuasion would be of little weight without a massive stockpile of armaments behind it. But it had been forgotten that a policy of peace by threats was necessarily incomplete. It laid down with great firmness the conditions of war, but the conditions of a peace settlement were left disastrously equivocal. The putative aggressor was therefore never sure that the armies would not be unleashed whatever he did, and had no recourse but to stockpile in turn. The vicious circle was joined.

As the defence psychosis articulated itself in NATO and crept insidiously towards German rearmament, the Disarmament Conferences sank from one monotonous stalemate to another. The resulting deadlock was the defeat of the very aims which Western policy was supposed to achieve: stable peace was further away than ever, the freedom of the satellites was yet more curtailed; their economies put under still greater strain by the Soviet rearmament drive. Likewise the economies of the West were drained and distorted by the high level of armaments expenditure.

It is difficult to negotiate successfully from a position of relative military weakness, but there are ways of building up strength which make negotiation impossible. This is what happens when the armament machine depends on the assumption that if not victorious war, at least the surrender of the other side must be the outcome.

Diplomacy no longer seeks a *modus vivendi*—it serves as concealment and apologia for military preparation. This was the final impasse, the "brink" towards which Western policy was heading as the cold war closed in.

Then came Hungary. What should have been an unexpected success beyond the wildest dreams of the Pentagon strategists—unexpected because in spite of their own propaganda they were quite convinced that Hungarian youth was being easily formed to the Rakosi pattern—was proof of the failure of this policy. Soviet tanks could crush the Hungarian people's rising, while the nuclear and conventional forces of the West stood by, powerless. This massed retaliatory force was of no use to the Hungarian people: its use would have left nothing in Hungary—and in many other parts of the world—to free. The uselessness of all this accumulated material might have afforded a certain macabre amusement if it were not for two important facts. First, that the presence of these forces in Europe was itself one of the potent causes of the Hungarian tragedy and, second, that if no foreign policy reorientation were to follow, the Hungarian tragedy might repeat itself in East Germany or Poland, with nuclear war as the last act. Hungary highlighted the terrible dangers of the Korea which the embattled power blocs have created in the heart of Europe. Hungary proved that it is only through international *detente* that the Red Army—guarantor of Rakosi, Kadar and Ulbricht—can be got out of Eastern Europe.

Since Hungary, the costs of the armed deadlock have begun to appear a little exorbitant to both sides. The countries of Eastern Europe are now clearly economic and military liabilities to the Soviet Union, rather than a buffer against a recurrence of 1919 and 1941. The beginnings of wisdom, visible in Soviet policy, are matched by a corresponding mobility in Washington, where the counsels of Mr. Stassen seem to have prevailed, at least for the moment, against those of the Service Chiefs. In any case, in the last agonising days of the Hungarian Revolution, the American admin-

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istration was driven to a tardy repudiation of the "roll back" policy which had helped to cause such havoc in that unhappy country.

The powers are coming round to the fundamental problems that have to be solved: the control of nuclear weapons, disarmament, the reunification of Germany and mutual withdrawal from the Elbe, culminating, perhaps, in the concurrent abolition of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Hungary may have made possible a leap of the diplomatic imagination away from the present military confrontation. Purposive and fruitful negotiations on these critical international problems may have at last become possible.

Central to any European settlement is, of course, Germany. The situation in East Germany is a constant menace to world peace—what would have happened if the Hungarian uprising had been followed by a revolution, there led by people like Professor Harich? German unification involves guarantees of German neutrality, if it is to be acceptable to the Russians. It involves too an end to the uncertainties over Germany's eastern frontiers: the western powers must join the Soviet Union in recognising the Oder-Neisse line. German settlement in these directions, linked with agreements to stop nuclear tests and cut conventional arms, could provide an excellent basis for the "long haul" of disarmament, the phased withdrawal of Soviet and Ameri-

can troops from Europe and a progressively expanding scheme of control and supervision. Only through such a general European settlement could the East European peoples secure freedom and the danger of another Hungary be averted.

If either side continues to think in cold war terms and to assess all policies in the light of an impending showdown, we cannot even begin with the first condition of peace—a German settlement. If high armaments levels continue, for example, the Soviet Union will hold to the East German industrial potential and the West will hardly forgo the proven talents of Krupp. It is therefore essential to maintain the present orientation towards achieving a whole complex of agreements: on German unity, nuclear tests, "open skies" policy, phased withdrawal of Soviet and American troops.

It is at this time, when there is a genuine basis for agreement on phased disarmament and the disengagement of the powers in central Europe, that the precarious post-Eden government has chosen to bolster deflated British prestige. When the first serious discussions on atomic disarmament were being initiated in London, Commander Noble was delegated to obstruct the proceedings, so that Britain could show the world what the Establishment press calls "our big bomb". While America and Russia are groping their way out of cold war politics in Europe, the slogan of "peace through

strength" is refurbished by the bankrupt heirs of Suez. While the rest of the world is painfully disengaging itself from cold war policies, and cold war ethos, the British government takes its place with Dr. Adenauer and Admiral Radford in the forefront of those who seek to reactivate the armed deadlock of the past decade. The island which has become a primary target in a global war seeks specious protection to make a major contribution to the general holocaust. Meanwhile, behind the smoke screen thrown out by Macmillan's crypto scientists, the radiation hazards accrue. And now, finally, Macmillan's mannered refusal to test the Soviet proposals on the H. Bomb and German neutralisation.

An energetic protest against this irresponsibility is necessary. The Parliamentary Labour Party has called for a postponement of the tests. That is good, but it is not enough. Britain must stop the manufacture and testing of the H-Bomb—before a general international agreement and as an aid to international agreement. It is necessary, as Mr. Bevan has said, to take this issue from parliament to the country, explaining to everyone the terrible dangers involved in the present policy of the Conservative government. The Disarmament Conference is still meeting in London. The British government must work not to keep alive paleolithic cold war attitudes, but to transform a tentative trend into a permanent settlement.