

THE CONSTRUCTIVE PATH TO DISARMAMENT

by

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The object of the organisers of the Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention which is scheduled to meet in New Delhi in the third week of this month under the impressive auspices of the Gandhi Peace Foundation is laudable. It is well known that, established in 1959, the Foundation has been seeking to promote "the acceptance by all peoples of the principles of truth and non-violence in the conduct of social, national and international affairs." Besides, the Foundation also enjoys the distinction of consciously eschewing partisanship in national and international affairs. The organisers of the Convention claim to "express the hope of mankind that the nuclear arms race should stop forthwith so that the new discoveries of science are utilised for bettering the lot of the vast numbers of human beings who are today still in the grip of ignorance, poverty and disease."

Yet, while sympathising with the broad objective of the Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention, one wonders whether it will serve any useful purpose in relation to the consolidation of the forces of peace and freedom in the world. On the other hand, in the context of the cold war and the world alignment of forces, the Convention may only help in weakening the will of the democratic countries to resist the forces of totalitarian communism which are seeking to overwhelm the world. Further, held as it is, at a time when the United States of America is in the process of testing its new nuclear weapons, it will project the U.S. as the main culprit and thus serve the ends of Soviet propaganda against the U.S., in spite of the fact that it was primarily the Soviet Union which violated the three-year moratorium on nuclear weapons and the present U.S. nuclear tests are only the reaction to the Soviet violation. Therefore, while being theoretically non-partisan, in practice the Convention will give a boost to the Soviet side, especially in the uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa. For while the Soviets will definitely ignore its appeal in their armament build-up, the Convention is likely to be taken seriously by the common people of the free world. As it is, the Convention seeks to deal with the symptoms rather than with the disease by ignoring the basic fact that the armaments race is not the cause but the consequence of the degradation of the human spirit brought about by a belief in the inevitability of force as the midwife of history. Further, it is rather intriguing that Mr. Kuo Majo, Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Peoples' Congress should be invited to this Convention. Being a prominent Chinese Communist, Mr. Majo has no faith in a world without wars.

Effective Control

It should be noted that the Democracies have consistently expressed their willingness to put a stop to nuclear tests as well as to the production of nuclear arms and to substantially reduce their armaments provided the Soviet Union gave positive proofs of a similar willingness on its part. Consistent with this policy, the Democracies have proposed a series of disarmament plans, but the Soviet Union, on one pretext or the other, has done nothing else but frustrate them. The Democracies have rightly argued that, without an effective system of control and inspection, any plan of disarmament will remain utopian. The validity of this argument will be obvious from the fact that an underground nuclear test may remain undetected without proper inspection and may give a country, if it chooses to be unscrupulous, a chance to arm itself secretly with nuclear weapons. Acceptance of disarmament without effective control and inspection will primarily affect the democratic countries because in a democracy, every item of expenditure has to be publicly accounted for, which is not the case in communist countries. Therefore, while the Democracies will suffer from this handicap, the Soviet Union will be free to build up the strength of its arms, both conventional and nuclear, without being detected. Hence, the wisdom of an insistence on effective control and inspection.

The Soviet Government has consistently opposed inspection on the ground that it would provide a cover for espionage on the Soviet territory. The untenability of this attitude is obvious. The plans for inspection offered by the West did not mean that only Soviet territory would be subject to inspection; it means that all nuclear powers, including the U.S. and Britain, would offer themselves for effective inspection. If the argument of espionage on the Soviet territory is correct, Britain and other countries too would run the risk of espionage on their own territories.

The truth of the matter is that the Soviet Union has no faith in disarmament in relation to its own military strength, although it is anxious to create a false sense of security in the Western nations and lull them into a disarmament programme. It must be realised that the foundation of Soviet dictatorship, is the demonstration of force, both within and without. Remove force, and the Soviet dictatorship would collapse.

Can USSR Afford To Disarm ?

It would be, therefore, logical to presume that the Soviet dictatorship cannot afford to disarm, and that for various reasons : political and economic. As Mr. Lorenz Stucki of Zurich, one of the most widely respected political commentators of Europe, points out, the Soviet Union is far more anxious about the

possible results of general and complete disarmament than the United States. Apart from its effect on the Soviet economy, the Russian leaders are more afraid of the political consequences of disarmament, especially the effect disarmament might have on the world-wide communist movement and on the peoples of Eastern Europe. A casual reading of the newspaper reports from Moscow since the launching of the first Sputnik in 1957 would show that at least since then Soviet foreign policy has been largely a matter of making large demonstrations or threats of force and then sitting back to watch the results. As Stucki observes : "Let us imagine a disarmed world where neither the Soviet Union nor the United States any longer disposed of nuclear bombs, long distant rockets or inter-continental bombers and where even conventional troop quotas were reduced so much that they were no longer capable of a war of aggression. In this case, America, which owes her prestige throughout the world, to her riches, her generosity, her economic resources, her high standard of living, her liberty and the dynamism of her spirit of enterprise far more than to her military might would suffer hardly at all from general disarmament. The prestige of Western Europe, whose military power in any case only inspires a very limited degree of confidence, would hardly be affected at all.

"But what would happen in Berlin, in Eastern Germany, in Hungary, in Poland ? If political weight and power were henceforward to depend on economic factors, who would continue to tremble before a state to which on one hand the United States and on the other, community of Europe were both economically and infinitely, superior ? Why should the neutral pay their respects to Mr. Khrushchev when Mr. Hallstein (head of the European Common Market Executive in Brussels) represented far greater economic achievements ? "

The Kremlin policy makers are conscious of the possible consequence of disarmament on their part. They are, therefore, more interested in paying propaganda lip serve to the general and complete disarmament than actual dismantlement of their immense military installations. Behind this state of mind lies a deadly insecurity and doubt : that the victory of Marxism is not inevitable as was thought in the 19th and early 20th centuries. As the noted left-wing British socialist historian Mr. A.J.P. Taylor, has himself put it "the legal Marxist doubted the central dogma of Marx's economics that capitalism was leading to increasing misery. This 'law' foretold the inevitable doom of the capitalist system. Experience did not seem to confirm this dogma; and from this more terrifying doubts followed — that perhaps the entire economic analysis was based on false formula. In this case, capitalism might be growing stronger, not weaker. "

Faced with the frightening prospects of political, economic and spiritual insecurity, the Soviet Union is struggling to build up its armament strength, even at the cost of general welfare of the Soviet people. Therefore, a drastic increase in defence expenditure and considerably increased investment in armament industries have been decided upon in Russia and in all the satellite states of Eastern Europe, as a matter of "urgent necessity." The increased expenditure on armaments was, in fact, hinted in the last Soviet budget and in the budgets of respective satellite countries, but because of the ease with which the truth can be concealed or even twisted or omitted in a communist budget, the extent of the increase has not been generally realised in the democratic countries. Before the end of this year, expenditure on armed forces of the Communist bloc in Europe (excluding Albania) will increase by 37.7 per cent compared with the rate of spending last year. Speaking of Russia, by the end of the year, she will have increased her military spending by 44.9 per cent which is the highest rate of spending on military build-up compared to that of any country in the world. In other words, Russia, this year, will spend 13,409 million roubles on her armed forces — an increase of 4,154 million roubles over the figure for last year.

Double Talk

The double-talk policy of the Soviet Government towards disarmament does not represent a new twist in communist strategy. It is, in fact, in conformity with Leninist norms. Lenin had stressed that, until the socialist revolution triumphed throughout the world, the idea of disarmament was utopian (Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, 1st ed. Vol. 48, p.158); yet, he had advocated some unacceptable proposals for the propaganda purpose of "unmasking the bourgeois pacifists" like those who are sponsoring the Delhi meeting, in the eyes of the masses. As the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia states "proposals by the socialist state on disarmament did not contradict the Marxist-Leninist principle that disarmament is impossible while capitalism exists. On the contrary, they were propaganda for this principle, designed for the toiling masses of the world." Lenin himself had declared: "Only after the proletariat has disarmed the bourgeoisie can it, without betraying its universal and historic task, scrap armaments altogether and the proletariat undoubtedly do this, but only then and under no circumstances before....." (Lenin, Collected Works, 4th ed. Vol. 1, 1946, p. 845) This has remained the Soviet line all over these years.

In view of the feverish military preparedness of the Soviet Union and other satellite countries and also in view of the dual policy the Soviet Union has deliberately followed since Lenin's days, would it not be suicidal if genuine democrats and sincere believers in freedom and the dignity of man such as the organisers of the Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention in Delhi begin to preach

disarmament and call for the banning of nuclear weapons without simultaneously demanding effective inspection and control. ?

It should be realised that the Soviet Government is now using every "peace" propaganda device to delay United States' needful testing. If, it succeeded, the result would be to give it a substantial period of absolute superiority in armament race. What the Soviet Government needs is a few obstructionists in the right place to cause substantial delays in the programme of Western arms build-up.

In these circumstances, the only sensible course open to genuine democrats is not to undermine the preparedness of the Democracies to resist communist design for world domination. It should be noted that whenever faced with some resistance as in Korea, Azerbaijan and during the Berlin air lift -- the Soviets have shown resilience. It would be fatal to forget that, without substantial nuclear deterrent, the Democracies would be helpless and this fact would endanger the freedom and security also of all democratic and free countries of Asia and Africa. The West as well as the free Asia and Africa will face overwhelming Sino-Russian conventional forces, against which all democratic countries both of West and East, are lamentably unprepared and weak. That is the present situation between Communist China and democratic India.

Lessons of History

The real problem is not one of disarmament but of arms control. History teaches that men only lay down their arms when a stronger authority emerges to guarantee their security. Thus, the village republics, city states, and barons had disarmed only when the King and the Nation State came forward to undertake the role of guaranteeing security. Similarly, the sovereign States of today can only be expected to lay down arms when assured of protection by a World authority and a World police force. The bringing of such an authority into existence is the immediate task. In the absence of such safeguards, to talk of complete disarmament and the banning of nuclear bombs would be peacemongering and not the real Service of Peace.

Mr. Hugh Gaitskell, the British Labour leader, recently drove this point home when he said : "We all want to stop the nuclear tests which poison the atmosphere. But they will not be stopped except by agreement -- agreement which can be relied upon and, therefore must be subject to international verification. What a pity it is that people do not concentrate their protest against those who refuse to make such agreement."

Some men have sought to confuse the moral issue by stating that they

would prefer to be red than dead. On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhij, the greatest contemporary prophet of peace, often said that he would prefer a man to fight with violence rather than see him behave like a coward. It is not life as such and under any conditions that is of value but what the Greek philosopher Aristotle had described as "the good life." Life is worthwhile when it is meaningful.

One hopes that the Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention will bear this great truth in mind while dealing with the contemporary problems of war and peace.