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SOVIET MILITARISM AND THE PEACE MOVEMENT



SOLIDARITY

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About ourselves

Are you dissatisfied with your present existence? Certainly important decisions about your life are out of your control and in the hands of managers and officials of one kind or another. It's likely that you don't know your workmates or neighbours very well, and often feel lonely or anxious for no obvious reason. The pressure to consume and to obtain the necessary cash means that daily life remains a soul-destroying struggle.

Of course, socialists and social reformers were offering answers to these problems before Marx was a twinkle in his father's eye, but despite bloody revolutions, struggles for trade union rights and the election of reformers to government, there has been no fundamental change. The 'Communist' world is not communist, and the 'Free' world is not free. Genuine freedom means the end of wage labour and economic inequality, the liberation of personal and social relations among human beings - a transformation of society which would be totally revolutionary in scope.

But when we come to examine most radical or revolutionary movements we find that in practice they have little to do with freedom. Hierarchical organisation and veneration of gurus go hand in hand with

a willingness to manipulate and sacrifice campaigns and issues in order to "build the revolutionary party". The real movement for freedom is not to be found in formal organisations, but rather in the responses of ordinary people who feel down-trodden and cheated. SOLIDARITY is not the 'leadership' of this movement but merely a small part within it. In our pamphlets and magazine we attempt to broaden and deepen the growing criticism of modern society in theory and practice.

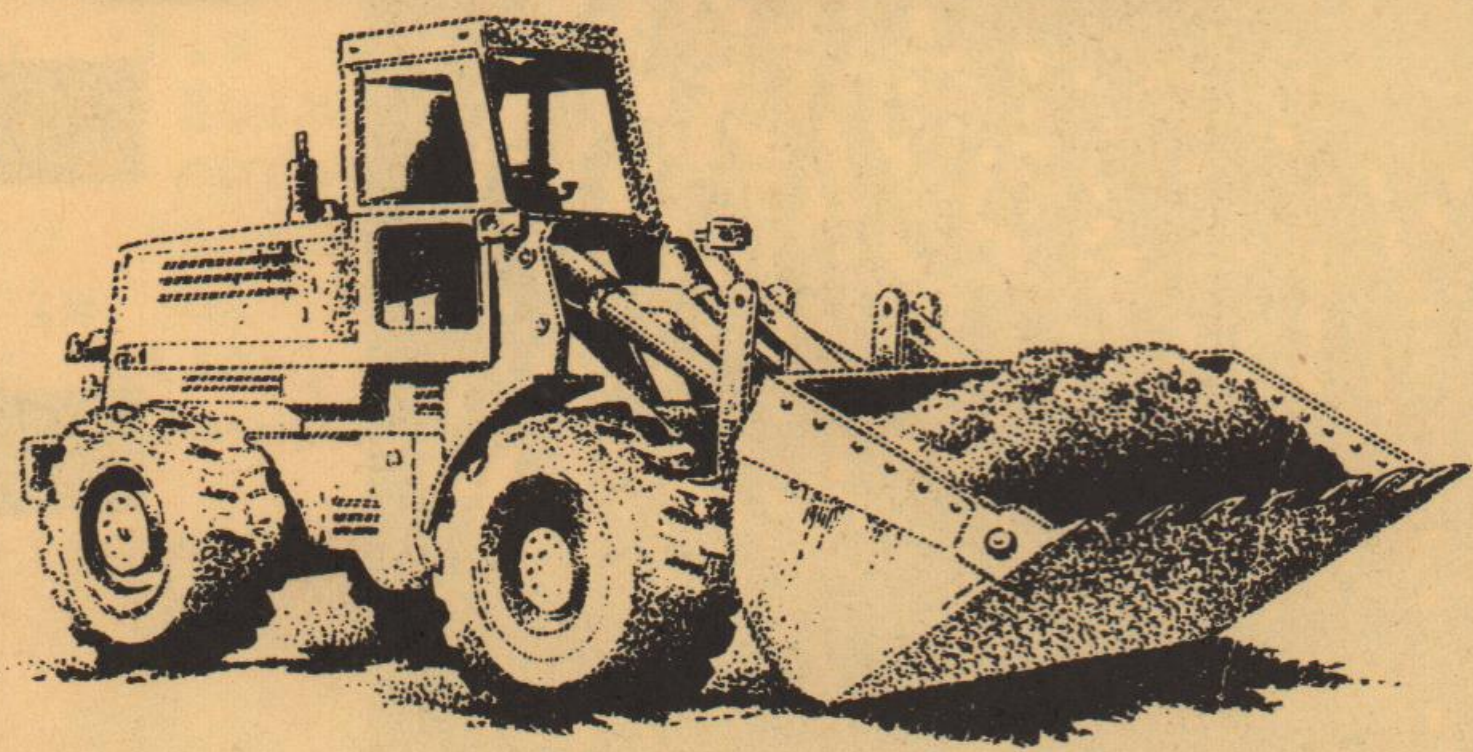
We try to learn from the history of ordinary people which lies hidden beneath the history of the leaders and generals. For us, as revolutionaries, meaningful action is whatever increases the confidence, autonomy, initiative, participation, solidarity, egalitarian tendencies and self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, cynicism, differentiation through hierarchy, alienation, reliance on others to do things for them, and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others, even those allegedly acting on their behalf.

Solidarity magazine is produced approximately three-monthly, and is generally reflective of both the shared ideas of the group as a whole and the discussions within it; we are not embarrassed to air our differences in public. We invite your comments and criticisms, and would especially welcome letters and articles. Anything not published will be returned with an explanation. We reserve the right to cut material submitted to us unless you specifically object.

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daily tit

**HEDGEHOG
SUICIDE ON
M-WAY**



EDITORIAL

"One, two, three, four, we don't want a nuclear war!", chant the CND marchers, expressing a sentiment shared by every sane human being. "Two, three, four, five, we just want to stay alive!"

There is no doubt that being alive is generally better than being dead. But there are limits to the desirability of just 'staying alive'. It isn't necessary to be an admirer of heroic martyrdom to believe that death fighting imprisonment might have been preferable to the barbarity of the Nazi concentration camps or Pol Pot's Cambodia; but if there is a choice between merely 'staying alive', and something more, to opt for the former shows a depressing lack of audacity.

Yet 'just staying alive' is the desire of a large part of the CND marchers. For them there is nothing better on the horizon; the horror of nuclear war looms so large in their imaginations that all concern for the content of future life has been eclipsed by fear for the very existence of a future life. Political though has been replaced by an almost animal lust for self-preservation.

It is of course dangerous to interpret a movement through only one of its slogans. All the same, the blinding effects of fear are all too noticeable in the resurgent peace movement - nowhere more so than in the attitude of much of that movement to the Soviet Union. Here the problem is not so much that of outright pro-Sovietism; the overt Stalinist and Trotskyist defenders of the 'workers' bomb' are a dying breed exercising little direct influence. Many of their excuses for Soviet militarism have, however, survived their decline. The peace movement is riddled with people who claim, more or less sincerely, that the USSR is the innocent, encircled victim of Yankee imperialism, that Russia is justified in arming because of the vast number of Soviet deaths in the Second World War, or that the Russians are just keeping pace in the arms race.

Such claims are naive and dangerous. They ignore the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the crushing of the free workers' movement and dissident opinion inside the USSR, and the tentacles of Soviet military aid in the Third World. They overlook the massive build-up of Soviet conventional arms in the last decade. The suffering of the Russian people in the last war is no more of an excuse for these activities of their rulers than the Holocaust is an excuse for systematic racial discrimination and



military expansionism by the state of Israel.

Yet much of the peace movement remains soft on the Soviet Union. Last year a quarter of a million people turned out on the spring CND demonstration in Hyde Park; a week later a demonstration called to mark six months of martial law in Poland drew only 2,000 to Trafalgar Square, most of them Polish emigres. Not that demonstrating is any paradigm of political activity; but the point should be clear.

There are some in the peace movement who are not completely blind to the nature of the USSR. Edward Thompson and others

around European Nuclear Disarmament have made a point of emphasising the responsibility of both sides in the arms race, calling for the formation of independent peace movements both sides of the Iron Curtain. But END too have been the victims of wishful thinking - hoping that the political system of the Eastern bloc could allow an independent, reformist, pressure-group type peace movement to exist in competition with the state-run official 'movements'. They have not grasped that any admission of pluralism by the Eastern-bloc states undermines the institutional and ideological foundations of those states' power - that, in short, the Eastern-bloc states cannot be politically liberalised.

It is in this context that we publish 'Facing War' in this issue of Solidarity. Under the name of Paul Cardan, C. Castoriadis wrote many of the theoretical

texts which were the original inspiration of SOLIDARITY. 'Facing War' presents an identification of the real rulers of the USSR as a 'military-industrial complex' which has replaced the Party bureaucracy as the dominant force in Soviet society. As can be seen from other contributions to this issue the article has caused much discussion inside the group, and its conclusions are by no means accepted. Nevertheless, the editors feel that many of the points made are worthy of further consideration by a wider audience, not least the emphasis which Castoriadis places on the responsibility of the Soviet Union's leaders for the arms race. The article first appeared in English in the American journal Telos, but the present translation incorporates revisions which were made by the author when the text was reprinted in a French collected edition of his works.



FACING WAR

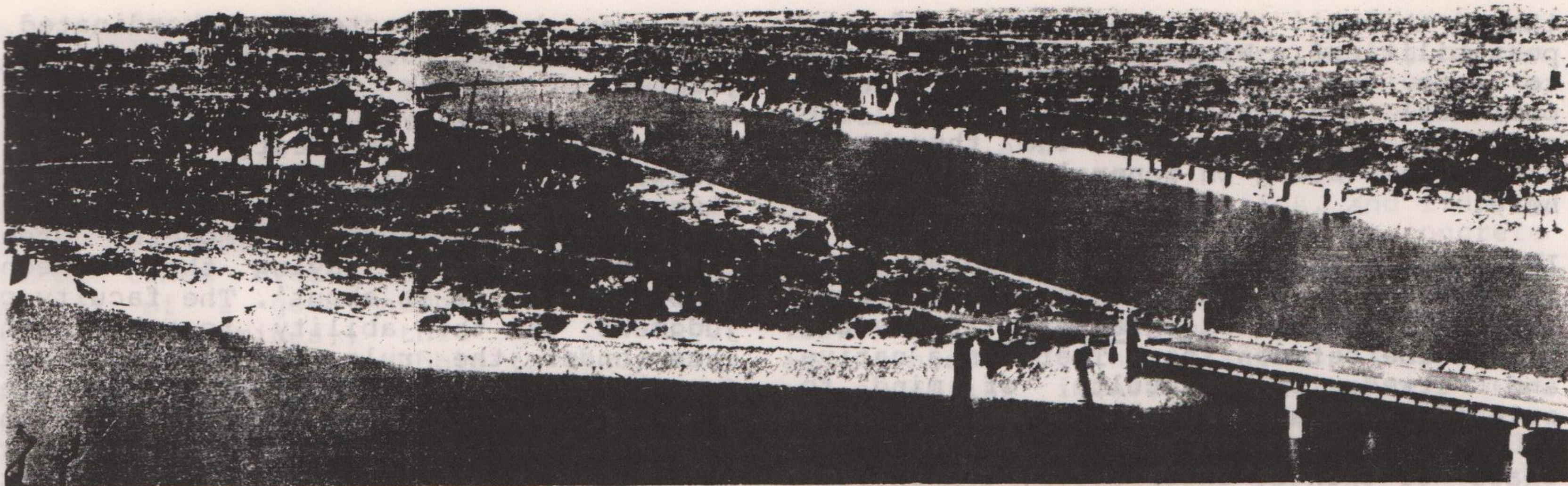
by Cornelius Castoriadis

Author's introduction

The following reflections have their origin in a conjunction of several events: the Russian invasion and occupation of Afghanistan; the popular uprising and the toppling of the Iranian regime followed by a combination of chaos and crude theocracy; the Vietnamese conquest of Cambodia which followed the extermination of half the Cambodian population by 'their own' rulers; the installation of governments supported and maintained by the Russians in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Southern Yemen; the 'energy crisis'; accelerated inflation; the foundering of what had until now appeared to be the tranquil course of modern capitalism.

With the possible exception of the resurgence of religion as a social and

political factor in Iran, none of these events by themselves present significant novelty. Nonetheless, the historical terrain has been rudely modified (or at least our image of this terrain, although at the boundary they amount to the same thing). The coming together, or rather the mutual inter-relationship, of these events and their effects, demonstrates a renewed and aggravated crisis of the world system of domination, following a phase of relative stability between 1953 and 1973. The effect that these events will have on the socio-economic base of the era is inestimable: growing wear of the social fabric and the decomposition of the mechanisms of social direction in the Western countries of modern capitalism; internal impasse of Russian bureaucratic society and the acceleration



of its imperialist expansion; inability of capitalism to transform and truly assimilate the immense regions of the Third World - Islamic countries, India, Africa - and the crises which result.

Once again, the instability and internal problems of the world system of domination is such that we find ourselves in the shadow of a world war. It is not a question of making 'predictions' on the proximity, remoteness or the further indefinite postponement of such a war. The reader who sees the following as a 'prediction' gives it a completely opposite meaning. It is a matter of orientating oneself in a situation in which the prospect of war has once again become a decisive ingredient which includes the real possibility and probability of an open confrontation of the two superpowers - the two super gangs. This possibility in turn becomes an active factor in actual developments. For the present, and no doubt in the coming years, the world situation cannot be thought about without taking into account, first and foremost, the prospect of war.

We can do nothing about the evolution of the present situation, which only makes sense in reference to war, be it proximate or deferred. Nor can we do anything about the attitude of the great numbers of people, here and there - on the other side of the iron curtain - who alone could stop this process. What we can do, in the face of this threatening cataclysm, is to contribute to the survival of the most vigorous and numerous seeds of a critical spirit, of lucidity, of liberty and of responsibility. To do this, in the face of the concert of mystifications which has already risen in pitch - but is nothing in the face of what awaits us in coming years - is above all a question of seeing clearly.

I did not write this as a university thesis, and I did not wish to enlarge the text excessively or multiply the references or secondary discussions in relation to the main text. I could have produced dozens, if not hundreds of citations. I felt it would be superfluous for me to do so, since I refer to obvious facts that one is forced to assume are known to all those who follow the daily

press with even minimal attention. If, for example, in regard to the discussion on the installation of new tactical nuclear arms in Europe, someone asks, "what are the Pershing missiles, the SS-22s, and the Backfires?", since discussion of these apparatuses and their respective capabilities have filled the columns of the papers for months, I do not consider it incumbent upon myself to supply this kind of information lack. More subtle is the case of the philosopher who has vaguely heard mention of an object named the MiG 25, but does not know if this airplane outclasses the corresponding American plane, and is unable to understand that its existence and its production in series and in quantity implies a society absolutely different from what we have analysed for 35 years as the 'civilian' Russian society. This lack of technological information or sociological imagination is not something I can supply. But I do not believe that there is a line of partition here between 'informed people' or specialists, and others. The effects of the will not to see are prodigious. One can be a 'political' journalist (I have met some) and not take into account - or not want to take into account - the total inability of the NATO forces in Europe to stop a Russian offensive of classic means. Now the fact that the NATO forces stationed in Europe have always been, and after 30 years remain, incapable of accomplishing the 'classic' mission assigned to them in theory: delaying a Russian offensive long enough to allow an American mobilisation and the transport of U.S. units to Europe (a task that would actually take several months) - this fact is recognised and proclaimed officially and regularly by those responsible year after year. This by itself suffices to support the argument of the major portion of this text.

It is obvious that this text is an 'article of opinion', and I do not see how it could be otherwise for a text approaching these issues. Now we could bury our heads in the sand; the temptation to do so is certainly very strong, for the idea of possible war is disturbing to the highest degree. One takes a risk in forming an opinion before the events to the best of one's information and judgment and expressing it. But political life is necessarily based on opinion. There is no science of

the things to come and 'future possibilities'. Without a view of things to come there is no possible position or political activity. Philosophy, the ontology of history or the thought of historical being in general is not my aim here.

In short - the most difficult point - all opinions are certainly not equal, and there is no existing a priori procedure to decide between them. There is a native and irreducible faculty of mind to orientate oneself in history (as already in life). The ability to discern in the chaos of things, information, tendencies, possibilities, arguments, reasoning, objection and counter-objection, what matters and what does not, what is very probable and what is only slightly so, the fact that has acquired or could acquire decisive importance and the one

that can be neglected or subordinated - this is an aptitude that all possess to a greater or lesser degree of importance, which is certainly considerably developed with experience, interest, contact with things, the possibility of free discussion, but which is not reducible to 'rational' procedures. Modern Greek expresses it in saying that someone 'knows what it is about'. The faculty of judgment is the ability to subsume the case under the rule; but someone who in front of a patient mentally enumerates all the diseases he studied is not and never will be a doctor. Whoever in regard to the problems discussed in this text objects that I have not spoken of China or Japan is someone who 'does not know what it is about'.

C. CASTORIADIS
February 1980

Russian politics and society

It takes two to make a war. But it does not follow that the character and 'responsibility' of the two parties to a conflict is necessarily the same. Nor does the designation of an aggressor, the assigning of the initiative and immediate responsibility in the launching of the war, decide the question of the respective rights and wrongs, or of the political position to adopt in the face of the conflict.

It is necessary to emphasise from the start that, confronted with these questions, the habitual modes of thought are of no help; they rather form a screen. In particular, traditional 'left' ideology, with its empty, shabby, worn-out, sempiternal schemas, clearly operates here to mask reality. The Russian invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 (which would have resulted in wars were it not for the overwhelming material disproportion between the aggressor and the victim), the territorial conquest and the de facto annexation (because that is what it is) of Cambodia by Vietnam, is condemned or 'explained' for good or for bad following the particular catechism that one professes. We hear the same pseudo-theory of 'the motors of war', the same appeal to the 'economic' pseudo-analysis, the same conclusion: war is inevitable when it is made by the (private) capitalists and it is an accident when it is made by the Russians.

Now the first fact in need of consideration and explanation is: of the two superpowers that confront each other, only Russia is pursuing, and actually is able to carry out an offensive politics. It was not finance capital that sent the Cubans to Ethiopia, the falling rate of profit that led the Vietnamese to Cambodia, the devalorisation of capital that obliged the Russians to invade

Afghanistan. And it certainly was not the necessity to defend Russia - it being 'defended' as well as it necessarily and possibly could be from the time of its acquisition of the H-bomb and its corresponding delivery systems, that is, for over 25 years - which ceaselessly pushed the Kremlin to augment and accumulate terrestrial weapons of war (the domain in which it possessed overwhelming superiority from the start, and which continues to grow), to construct a navy which rivals the Americans', and began to gain a superiority in nuclear armaments. This policy was followed, and this giant accumulation of armaments was made with considerable efficiency in a country which is still not even close to success in satisfying what have come to be called



the 'elementary' needs of the population, where the totality of the civilian economy is in a lamentable state, where agriculture - previously exported for millenia - does not succeed in feeding the population. The alternative, wheat or the H-bomb, was completely and categorically decided upon by the Kremlin some time ago.

A parenthesis is necessary here. The 'mounting' Russian armament expenditures are not, and evidently cannot be, known (contrary to the armament expenditures of the so-called 'Western' countries). There are several reasons for this, of which it will suffice to mention the first: the official Russian budget is meaningless in all respects, and in the absence of any margin of public control no one can know what part of the military expenses are concealed in the budgets of different administrations, ministries, etc. That is just one of the many secondary benefits for a truly democratic regime that is based on the authentic expression of popular will in a single party which receives 99.99% of the votes at all the elections. The exercise of estimating these expenditures to which Western experts permanently devote themselves (the conclusions, moreover, frequently being changed) is futile. Not only are their bases completely uncertain, the effort is conceptually impossible. For example, even comparing the GNP of France and the U.S. in 'real' terms - or the France of 1979 to the France of 1975 - poses problems which in principle are strictly insoluble. Without entering into technical details, the method most frequently followed by the Western experts in making their comparisons - estimating how much it would cost the U.S. to produce the same quantity of armaments, to maintain the same number of men under arms, etc. - runs into the same problems. Two systematic differences appear here (recognised and theoretically taken into account): the maintenance of a Russian soldier costs far less than the maintenance of an American soldier; the production of all technological products, even the most simple, must cost much more in Russia than in the U.S. But how much more? The discussion is futile if it aims at comparing the military potentials, because in any case, its point of departure must be presenting these military potentials (in terms of 'objects', or real entities) as known. If one knows that the Russians have 2000 ICBMs of approximately so much power, and the Americans have 1000 of which such a proportion are 'mirved' (with multiple warheads), that is a pertinent fact, not their respective costs in rubles or dollars. It is the same for global comparisons: what one party or the other spends in 'dollars' contributes nothing to knowing whether two supplementary American aircraft carriers balance four Russian armoured divisions.

The only things which count here are the use values: quantities and qualities. The 'summation' of these use values (the

transformation of these vectors into scalars) will not be made before the hour of truth. What is actually well known, that is from the quantitative point of view, is the overwhelming superiority of the Russians in the domain of 'conventional' war, and their equal or superior nuclear power to that of the Americans. As for quality, the results of the Yom Kippur War (individual anti-tank weapons, aircraft, etc.), as well as their space program, permit no thoughts of inferiority.

Let us close the parenthesis and ask ourselves the following question: how is it, in a country that - leaving aside the question of agriculture - has not succeeded in provisioning its stores with spectacle frames or blue jeans, that must have recourse to foreign (capitalist) firms to set up car factories and foundries, to obtain petroleum drilling equipment and Pepsi-Cola, that in such a country one can dispose of the technological and productive means necessary to establish an arsenal and an armament industry with a global output superior to that of the U.S.? There is only one possible answer. It is evident - and in view of the results it is a tautology - that there is not one Russia, but two. There is not one Russian economy and production, but two. There is a Russian 'civilian' life with its production and economy, and a Russian 'military' life, with its production and economy. It is to the first, and the first only - 'civilian' Russia - that the perfectly justified recognition of the distinctions between several sectors relate: the 'official' planned sector (which stocks the shops with inferior, unusable, or nonexistent merchandise), the sector reserved for the private consumption of the bureaucracy (special shops, etc.), the 'free' sector recognised or tolerated (market of certain agricultural products, for example), and the 'black market'. As for the other, it is constituted by the systematic skimming of all the best resources of all categories - evidently, in the first place, human resources - in all the areas of interest for the military apparatus. It is not difficult to understand how this is done. Suppose that in France the first 30% of the students who finish at the top of the entry examination or final tests of the 'prestige schools' were drafted and enrolled into a caste provided with all kinds of privileges, with a standard of living several times higher than they would have elsewhere. The 'material' products themselves are only a secondary question, since the army possesses its special foundries, its special electronic factories and even cloth manufacturers, or it can simply choose the products that pass its tests for quality from 'general' production, leaving aside the rest, that is to say, the junk, for the 'civilian' sector. At any rate, it is only a question of proportion: the army has no need of its own fields of wheat or cotton; and the armament factories are evidently

under its direct and total control. Inversely, this skimming aggravates the chronic debility of the civilian economy, which is essentially the result of the resistance of the producers and the profound irrationalities inherent in bureaucratic management.

This is not a matter of Kremlinology, a generally ridiculous and at best futile enterprise. I am not saying that the military clique actually has a greater influence in the Politbureau than any other, for it is not a matter of military cliques, but of the army as a social body. It is a question of sociological conclusions that almost inevitably lead to this factual statement: Russia has become the primary world military power, with all that that presupposes industrially and technologically, at the same time that it has not succeeded in collecting the crop at times of already insufficient wheat harvests. We see practically two separate worlds, except that the second furnishes raw material - coal as well as infantry - to the first. Society and economy operate as if they were perfectly divided into two parts. Everything operates as if the 'military society' formed a separate society within a 'general' Russian society (and obviously to a degree qualitatively different to that of the military establishments in 'Western' countries). Given what the army as a social body succeeds in extracting from Russian society, and what it 'costs', the question becomes, to what degree is Russian society - as we have thought for decades - still a society dominated by the bureaucracy, whose active centre, whose heart and soul, is the party-state, and to what degree is it not already, or in the process of becoming, a stratocracy (stratos = army), the army as social body assuming, through the intermediary of the upper echelons, the direction and orientation of society?

What the army extracts from society and what it costs: in this regard the discussion of 'military expenditures' in economic terms makes sense (as already stated, it does not compare the international military potentials).

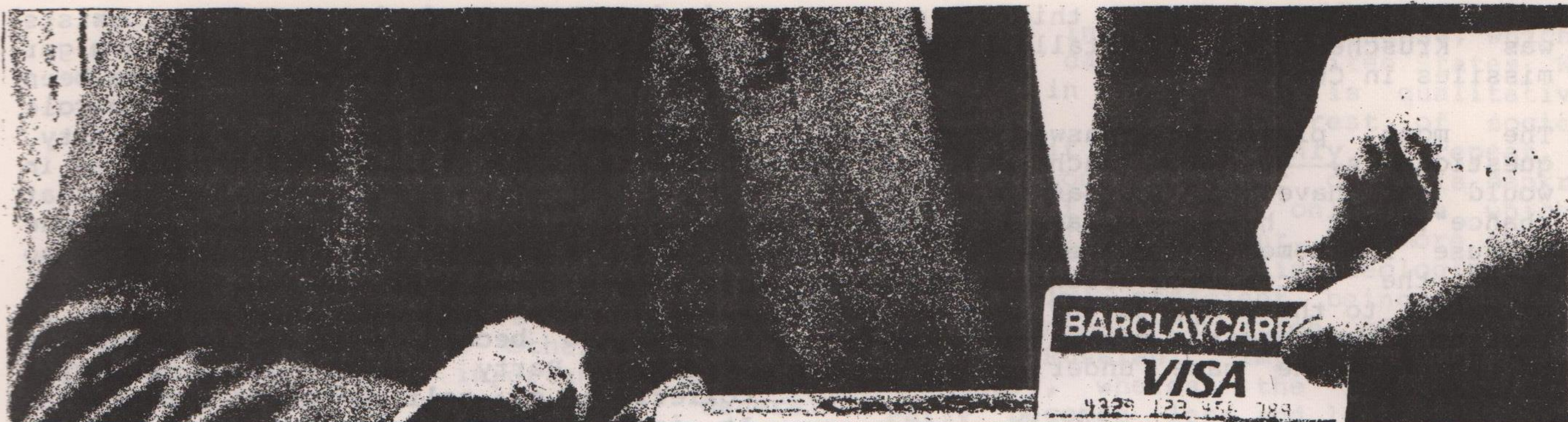
Keeping in mind the qualifications and reservations formulated above - which cannot be sufficiently emphasised - the best possible estimate, in terms of size, is that the total Russian military expenditures must represent a proportion

of the social product three times greater than that of the U.S.; something in the order of 15% of the social product in the Russian case, against something in the order of 5% in the case of the U.S. (taking the absolute difference in the production of the two countries into account, one could note that it is such proportions which assure an approximate equality of the 'value' of their expenditures). To understand what this means one must keep in mind that a modern economy in a country of strong growth (for example, Germany, France or Italy in the period 1950-1973) does not devote more than 10% of its social product to net investment, i.e. to the accumulation of its capital, to the production of means of production above and beyond the replacement of worn-out or obsolete means, which are the precise conditions of this growth (that, again, qualitatively, and in terms of size, without forgetting all the reservations raised by the measurability of the social product, the concept of net investment as soon as there is a technical change, etc.). However, the growth (certainly in the capitalist sense of the word - but it has never operated in any other way in Russia, i.e. 'catch up with and surpass America') of the Russian economy, to a great extent, has been sacrificed to the army. These quantitative considerations are reinforced if one keeps in mind the qualitative effects of the skimming of which I spoke above; it is not 15 engineers out of 100 that the army drafts; it is the 15 'best'.

I must emphasise and remind the inattentive reader that my argument is not based on the proportions of military expenditure. These may soon reach 20% of the gross national product of the U.S. without, in itself, changing the nature of American society. The economic dimension is only invoked here to show that there is a systematic option taken and followed, that this option is very expensive, and that it remains incomprehensible if it is not placed among the more general and political options internally as well as externally. These in their turn contribute significantly to forming Russian society. It is needless to state that when I speak of 'options' I am hardly thinking of a punctual and 'rational' decision as is taken in a game of chess.

My argument is based on the qualitative difference - which can only be challenged in the most blatant bad faith - of the effective functioning and production of the 'military society' and the 'civilian society' of Russia. One does not buy Mig 25s, SS-22s, Backfires and Soyuzes in the supermarkets, either in Moscow or New York. But what is bought in New York supermarkets is qualitatively closer to what is produced for the army, and more or less functions or fails to function to the same degree, while in Russia, a well-known chasm, daily attested to by official Russian periodicals, separates the two sectors. This is the reason why





the idea of Russian military overstocking - the Russian military chiefs learned from experience in the 1941-1944 war to accumulate as many weapons as possible in time of peace, knowing that their production and replacement in time of war is very difficult - without being false, does not answer the question why in one of the sectors, the military, everything seems to function with near perfection, and in the other, the civilian, everything remains chaotic and debilitated.

One cannot present a factory which manufactures Mig 25s by itself. Such a factory is only materially possible as one element of an almost complete subgroup, a 'sub-matrix' of production, which, moreover, is almost completely self-contained (except for several inputs of raw materials), constituted by dozens if not hundreds of functioning 'branches', all at a level completely different from the civilian industry. It is known how a typical Russian factory functions. One can be categorically certain - from the point of view of output - that those factories producing military goods, and everything that they demand, must not function like that. To mention only one of the innumerable implications of this fact, it also means that in those factories there is a completely different attitude on the part of workers. How this is achieved, even if it is only by means of higher wages and other privileges, is still another question to be explored.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to understand that what is in issue is not the Russians' capacity to invent (or to 're-invent' or copy or steal from the Americans) this or that product. Nowadays, it is known that the information necessary to build an atomic bomb is public, and that a physics student could build one by artisanal means if he possessed a small quantity of fissionable material. What is in issue is the industrial production of an enormous mass of products of applied high technology that actually function.

These considerations also show that invoking counter-examples, Nazi Germany for instance, is futile. Certainly Hitler raised considerably armament expenditures after 1933, but to equip the Wehrmacht he had no need to do more than simply reorientate a part of German industry to other final products without changing anything else.

Now evidently such a choice is not without cost, neither in its presumptions nor in its internal or external implications and consequences. Thirty years after the end of its 'reconstruction', Russia has still not succeeded in becoming a 'society of consumption', a transition that countries as badly managed as Spain or Greece have accomplished in a dozen years. If the 'Western' countries can maintain liberal regimes, without Gulags and without ideas, it is, although not solely, because they can furnish the population with 'commodities' in increasing quantities each year (which obviously poses the question of the stability of these regimes if a halt in this growth is prolonged). From the standpoint of the ruling stratum, a politics which continues to accent repression rather than a blossoming of consumption is evidently not the only possible, nor even in theory the most advantageous, one.

Certainly we are not in the realm of 'rational' choices, and I would be the last to underestimate the profound irrationalities, the insurmountable 'active' inertias that, in more than any other contemporary social regime, dominate the Russian bureaucratic totalitarian system from one end to the other. I have already written on several occasions (2) that a transition towards a more 'supple' bureaucratic regime in Russia, though theoretically possible, is nonetheless practically inconceivable. In the final analysis, Russia, much more than other societies, is an immense avalanche which rolls by the force of its own weight and the slope of the terrain, which no one, neither an individual nor a ruling body, can lead or direct.

This does not prevent one from discerning constants in this movement, and the question arises insistently: what is the factor which for decades has in a coherent, consistent, and uninterrupted manner allowed the army to absorb the best part of the country's resources, the part which would by now have made the difference between the actual state of civil penury and the state of a moderately prosperous modern economy? How and why has the Party been able to make systematically such an effective ex post facto choice? How is it that there has never been a fraction at the heart of the Party proposing and imposing a more 'political' politics? (Even the Krushchev

episode does not escape this schema; it was Krushchev who installed Russian missiles in Cuba).

The most plausible answer to that question is, "Because such a fraction would not have had, and has not had, any chance". It has not had the chance because for some time the effective power over the decisive orientations has belonged to the army, to the heads of the military bureaucratic apparatus. This was surely not the case under Stalin, for example.

In a totalitarian regime of the Russian type, given its present situation, what could prevent those who have the instruments and effective means of power in their hands - the army - from having the power itself? In the absence of a political life, of a demonstrable public opinion, of institutional controls, of effective legal regulation of the accession and succession to the supreme posts, what could be a counter to the real force of the army? On what could the power of the Party rest?

Surely the power of the Party has never rested on anything but the imaginary, in the fullest sense of the term. I will return to this question in all its most important aspects later. It is a question of the imaginary in its most important and general sense: as it is embodied and instrumentalised in and by Terror on one side and by Ideology on the other.

What could be more horribly 'real' than the Terror, and the Russian Terror above all; the tens of millions of cadavers, the decades passed in the Gulag? This is true enough, but what were the necessary conditions of the Terror? One of its bases, the most important, was demonstrating to millions of people that they could not, that it was not possible, to resist it. How this representation came to be and to prevail, what it was rooted in, is not our question here. But Solzhenitsyn and other dissidents have said and repeated what we have known for some time, at least since La Boetie. In sum, the Terror would not have been 'inevitable' if everyone had not, in some manner, concurred; that alone made it inevitable. On the other hand, why was it Stalin who arrested and executed Yagoda or Yezhov, and not the other way round? Why was it that the other members of the Politbureau executed Beria during its session, and not a squad of Beria's men who arrested those members before the session of the Politbureau started? As much as the most primitive of primitives believes in his fetish, so much did Yagoda believe that Stalin was untouchable. Yet Brezhnev showed in practice in 1964 that Krushchev was not untouchable (3). In short, the Party could only have wielded the Terror if everyone believed the Party wielded the Terror. Now the Terror no longer exists in that form; at any rate, it is no longer what it was.

And from now on Ideology no longer exists either. For some time the vulgar catechisms of Stalin (or Mao) have been able to play a social and historic role independent of their intrinsic quality. They still do so, but elsewhere - in Africa or Latin America. The fact is that they no longer do so in Russia; no one believes in them, the Party bureaucracy no more than the rest of the population. Russian society has become - or is tending to become - a cynical society (4). The Party is more than a simple collection of self-co-opted careerists. It is, and must always claim to be, Everything - and it is practically Nothing. In one sense, it proclaims its own death, and it does so in many ways, as the day when from Brezhnev's mouth it proclaimed "Don't wait for anything else, there is no other 'socialism' before us, the only socialism is that which exists here and now; in Russia 'socialism is really existing'". Briefly, there is no other 'historic future' than this appalling present.

The Party, always 'functionally' a parasite, proclaims itself historically parasite. It has "accomplished its historic task", led Russia to socialism, that is to say, produced this lame and miserable industrialisation. The function it retains - the direction of society - it accomplishes as poorly as possible, and does so in the full view and knowledge of the entire world. For the nth time, at the end of last year, Brezhnev was obliged to proclaim publicly that almost nothing had gone right; the economy had stagnated, productivity too, that all the measures taken, repealed, retaken, had been in vain.

The only 'Ideology' that remains, or can remain, alive in Russia is Grand Russian Chauvinism. The only imaginary which retains a historical efficacy is this nationalist, or imperialist, imaginary. This does not need the Party except as a mask and above all as an instrument of propaganda and action for international penetration. its organic vehicle is the army. The army, in opposition to the Party - which remains incapable of resolving the question of its leadership - is an essentially stable structure, which combines, since it has rid itself of the pernicious interferences of the Party, the stability and regularity of a military-bureaucratic apparatus of the traditional type, with the characteristics and practice of a modern bureaucracy dedicated to the task of its self-adaption and modification. The army in the only truly modern sector of Russian society - and the only sector which functions effectively.

Everything indicates that it is no longer possible to speak of Russia as a society dominated by that creation of Lenin perfected by Stalin, the totalitarian party-state. Everything points to the fact that it will increasingly necessary to consider Russian society as a stratocracy, where the social body of the army is the ultimate instance of real

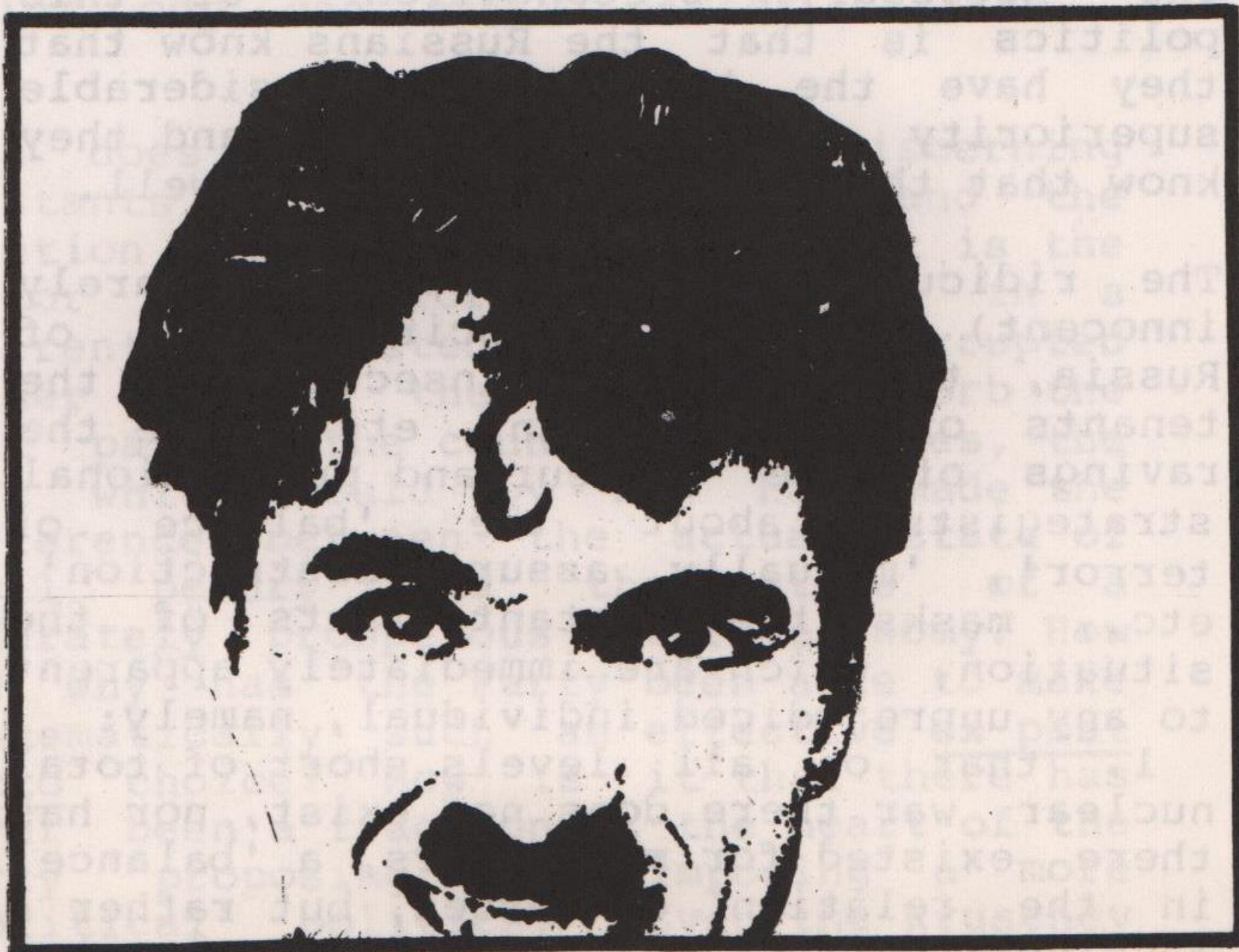
domination (and not only the ultimate, guarantee of established order, internally and externally), which for innumerable historical and immediate reasons must and will preserve the existence of the party as a mask and as an instrument, both indispensable and deplorable. Its main role increasingly becomes, on the one hand, to manage and sub-contract the 'non-military' society in the margins left by the army's demands, and on the other to be the internal and more importantly external Propagandastaffel of the General Headquarters of the Russian army. Not being able to conquer the world in the name of Christ, the Czar, or Holy Russia, it is infinitely more plausible and effective to do so - as its press-agent Marchais says - in the name of 'class struggle on the world scale'.

One can see the brows of the sociologists crease. "What is a social body? Where have you defined that concept?". This type of discussion does not interest me. In French it is called 'esprit de corps', 'corps de metier', etc. In Russia it is a matter of a new social historical reality. Those who when they hear the word 'army' think of condottieres, lancequents, or of court officers will not understand very much. In what category can the Russian army of 1980 be placed? Only in the category of 'the Russian army of 1980'. This is here the question must be approached; the reality of what a great modern army is (of which there are in fact only one and a half examples, the Russian and the American, the latter not really being deployed). This is not a matter of officers and soldiers. It is an immense techno-industrial bureaucracy, in which the techno-industrial side is more and more emphasised. To be a 'good officer' is not to watch over the impeccable state of the company kit, nor to lead the troops into combat revolver in hand. It is to participate as a specialist in a function of technical qualification in the management of an immense multi-trust which encompasses innumerable activities that must be constantly co-ordinated. In Russia there must be something in the order of 20 million active people (perhaps 15, perhaps 25, certainly not 1 and certainly not 100 million) integrated into this multi-trust (I am obviously not speaking of soldiers alone). According to Le Monde (7 March, 1980), there are 100,000 chemical warfare specialists: nothing but chemical warfare! (an industry that consumes very little labour power on the production side). It makes no difference if the figure is replaced by 50,000 or 150,000. To discuss this reality in terms of a 'professional army' is to show that the question has not been understood at all. The 18th and 19th centuries are over. The distinction between a professional army and an army of conscripts, etc., is now passed. As to the second point: this social body, this army that is a multi-trust in Russia, is not and could not be simply another sector juxtaposed to the others. It is a sub-society, a society apart, a 'military

society' in the widest sense, which is not the case in the United States. Why? Because in Russia it is qualitatively different from the rest of society. Because it is the only - I repeat, the only - modern sector of this bankrupt society. It is the only one which is functionally efficient, and more and more the only one that is ideologically (or imaginarily) efficient, being the natural and organic incarnation of ideology and Grand Russian imperial nationalist imaginary, whereas the ideology of the Party becomes less and less significant. If, and as much as, the 'image of Stalin' is actually put back into circulation, it must be understood that it functions in the succession of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, as the figure of the supposed conqueror in the 'Great Patriotic War' and founder of Russian world power, not as the author of Historical and Dialectical Materialism.

For 50 years the Party tried to organise and modernise society; it failed lamentably, and says so. In one domain it did not fail: the military domain. How and why did this miracle occur? I say that the Russian army - military society - has made itself what it is over the last 30 years; it has in reality unencumbered itself of the Party's grip, of its interferences, of its false statistics, of its appointments based solely on membership of this clan or political clique, etc. Not that such phenomena do not exist in the army - they do, as in all bureaucratic systems, but to a degree that is qualitatively different. The Party only survives by the perpetual camouflaging of reality. That is and cannot be the case with the army, as the Russian army is and functions. At this stage in Russian society, where the former mode of totalitarianism (Stalinist) has crumbled, the army appears as the only effective force which can continue to hold society together.

On their foreheads the zeks in the Gulag have tattooed the words "slaves of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union". Perhaps the time has come to decipher on the brows of all the citizens of the Soviet Union another tattoo written in invisible ink: "Serf of the Grand Army of the Russian Empire".



Power relations: the relevant imbalance

Whether one accepts this interpretation, or whether one remains limited to its more obvious implications, the CPSU is completely and profoundly engaged in sacrificing all other objectives to a politics of international military superiority, whose consequences will remain the same for the present and into the future. Russia is engaged in a constant process of directly or indirectly expanding its domination, in which the phases of 'detente' are only tactical manoeuvres or obligatory pauses.

The events of the last years show - and undoubtedly the most important in this regard are the events in Africa, not Afghanistan - that this process has entered a critical phase. The Russians invasion of Afghanistan is not important 'in itself' (I speak solely, be it understood, in terms of Realpolitik) because the Russians already reigned in Kabul. It is important as a sign, and, moreover, as a challenge. (It is ridiculous to talk of a 'miscalculation' by the Russians; not that they didn't commit one, and a grave one, but because it is perfectly well known that they discounted the strong American reaction). It shows that the Russians have decided to continue their expansion each time the occasion presents itself - and moreover, to show, if necessary by massacring ten millions Afghans, that their domination (directly or by the mediation of their local lackeys) once established is absolutely irrevocable. The constant demonstration of the irreversibility of Russo-communist domination once it is established is a life or death question for the Russian regime; it has taken the place of the assurances formerly furnished by the 'laws of history' as to the inevitability of socialism (no doubt, dialectically, the Russian tanks are only a moment and instrument of the Reason of History and its laws).

The necessary precondition of this politics is that the Russians know that they have the benefit of a considerable superiority in power-relations, and they know that the Americans know it as well.

The ridiculous discourse (which is rarely innocent) on the 'encirclement' of Russia, the agony and insecurity of the tenants of the Kremlin, etc., like the ravings of the amateur and professional strategists about the 'balance of terror', 'mutually assured destruction', etc., masks the blatant facts of the situation, which are immediately apparent to any unprejudiced individual, namely:

1. that on all levels short of total nuclear war there does not exist, nor has there existed for many years, a 'balance' in the relation of forces, but rather a massive imbalance in favour of Russia;

2. that this situation is quite naturally exploited to its full potential by the Russians when the occasion presents itself or the events lend themselves to it;

3. that this situation, which is practically impossible for the Americans to redress, pushes the nuclear extreme to the fore;

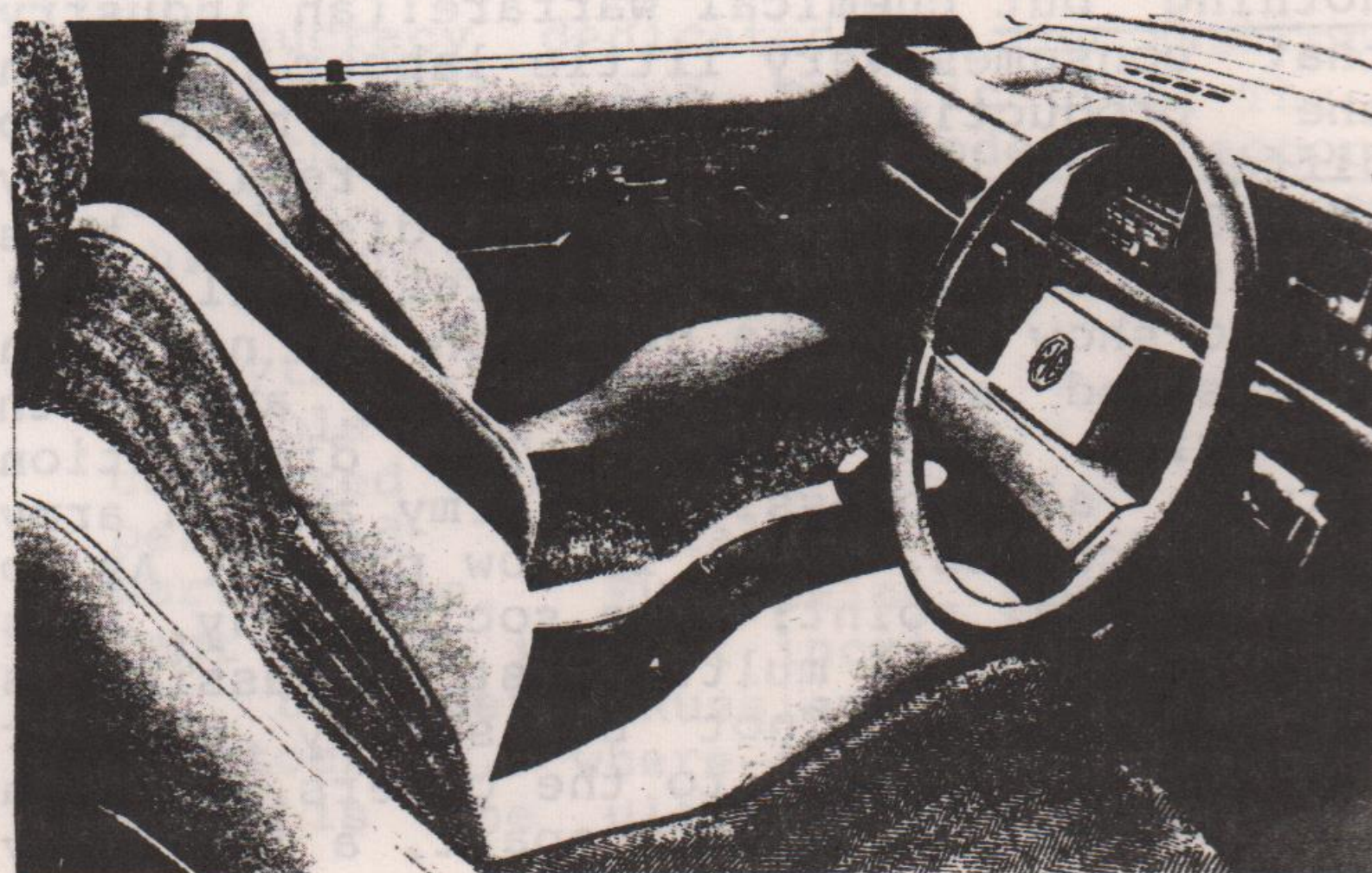
4. that at the level of nuclear confrontation, and given the present and foreseeable means and technologies on each side, the notions of 'balance' and 'imbalance' make no sense;

5. that the process leading to war and the conducting of the war itself infinitely surpasses the capacities of the ruling apparatuses, here and there, to control it 'rationally';

6. that the representation of the effects of nuclear war do not suffice to the slightest extent to suppress the real possibility of such a war.

The overwhelming superiority of the Russians on the infra-nuclear level is as much military as it is politico-military. The situation is well known on the military plane: the figures and totals are spread over all the newspapers, and it is pointless to review them again. The Russian superiority does not only rest on a massive superiority of power, but is also strategic. The 'encirclement' of Russia (that is to say, the fact that the Earth is round) has a completely inverse significance to that given it by the pro-Russian philanthropists: actually, Russia holds a central position (analogous to that which gave the Germans a powerful advantage during the last two world wars) which allows them to operate via internal lines.

Europe is a perpetual potential pawn in the hands of the Russians. In a 'conventional' war, in view of the power of the Russian army, its size, the proximity of its bases and reservoirs of material and manpower, the Russian divisions could be at Biarritz in several days. Today, as thirty years ago, the mosaic of the NATO divisions stationed in



Europe, with their veritable Babel of uncoordinated equipment and logistics, could at the best offer scattered resistance to the Russians. Even that supposes that these divisions would fight and be able to do so; is it possible to have an army in a country - as in the case of Italy or France - where perhaps 15-25% of the population prefers to fight on the other side, or at least not against them?

This situation is not modifiable either politically or militarily in the foreseeable future. The installation of new tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, which was decided on at the end of 1979, and will take several years to complete, can only partially offset the heavy advantage which the Russians possess in this area as well. It is imbecilic to hypothesise that the Russians will limit themselves to counting the Pershing missiles as they arrive, and restrain themselves for the goodwill of Giscard from maintaining the advantage that they already have.

In short, if the tactical nuclear weapons are not used, the Russian SS-22s and the Backfires give them several years' advantage. They will maintain this advantage by responding to the recent decisions of NATO by correspondingly increasing their means. Europe's only protection still rests in the ICBM silos and Polaris submarines of the US. That is why an escalation to the extremes is inscribed in the 'logic' of the situation.

This is not only the situation of Europe. The Russians can intervene in many other locations, be it directly or be it by the Cubans, Ethiopians, Yemenis, or Vietnamese, by way of their conventional military power, by their central geo-strategic position, or through their political know-how by utilising the local 'communist' parties or 'National Liberation Movements'. It is by such methods that they have installed themselves in three African countries (Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia), in South Yemen and perhaps tomorrow in North Yemen. The Americans are, and will probably remain, incapable of responding to this 'salami' tactic. The few Russian reverses up to now - Egypt or Somalia - are minor and are more failures to succeed than setbacks.

At any rate, since the Russian invasion of Afghanistan it is pointless to debate this further. But from this perspective it is important to emphasise that the invasion of Afghanistan is hardly a 'local' affair. There is an obvious truth here, which has always been obvious, and since December 1979 even the blind must be able to see it: if the Russians had invaded Iran or Pakistan in the wake of the Afghan expedition (of which there was never any question, despite the serious examination of Mr. Mitterand and the sudden discovery of 'warm waters' by various sorts of Western hack editorialists) the Americans would not

have been able to do a thing to oppose them on the ground. Their only possible response would have been total war.

The problem was discussed in a recent Pentagon report, the 'secret' Wolfowitz Report, which was recently published (International Herald Tribune, 15 February 1980) by the American journalist William Safire (ex-ghostwriter of Nixon speeches and a 'hawk' renowned for his moderately low level of intelligence). According to the Wolfowitz Report the question is: 'does the United States have the military project power in the (Persian) Gulf in the event of a Soviet push into Iran or on the Arab oil fields?'. But that is clearly not the question. The true question is, what could the United States do if the Islamic phantasmagoria collapses (the Tehran unemployed having had enough Sourates to eat) and the ensuing chaos in Iran leads to an open confrontation between the divisions of the two popes, as the late Joseph Stalin said, namely the Tudeh (Communist) party on the one hand, and the lieutenant-colonels of the Iranian army on the other.

The conclusion of the Wolfowitz Report is, it seems, that the American forces could not oppose a Soviet military occupation of Iran if Moscow 'decided to seize the historic occasion to change the world balance' (ibid.). One of the inferences of the conclusion of this report is that 'to keep the upper hand in this Iranian scenario, we would be obliged to threaten the use of tactical nuclear weapons, or actually to use them'. One is again flabbergasted by the IQs of the military experts. If the Russians wanted to provoke the Third World War on the battlefield, what need would they have to detour through Iran? And if they did not want to provoke it, why would they directly and militarily occupy Iran? What use would there then be for the Tudeh Party? What use would there then be for the Cuban volunteers (and one can soon expect Yemenis for operations in an Arab or Islamic country)? But let us suppose that the Russians try to occupy Iran or Pakistan militarily. If the Pentagon decided to respond with the use of tactical nuclear weapons, can we suppose that the Russians would limit themselves to making the sign of the hammer and sickle? In a local war conducted with tactical nuclear arms, the Russians would probably still have the advantage (just taking into consideration the distance of the bases from which the one and the other would operate). But only a madman could believe that such operations would remain limited as to their place, or to their means.

In fact what the the Wolfowitz Report shows - and, moreover, everything that is known about the American 'strategy' - is that the Pentagon is incapable, and with reason, of understanding the lessons of Vietnam, the African countries, and even (despite the admirable resistance of the Afghan people) of Afghanistan: that the Russian scenarios are not military

scenarios but socio-politico-national-military ones. They remain incapable of seeing this because for them social conflict in general (exploited by communist totalitarianism) remains a fallacious Marxist invention. But only these scenarios make sense in the case of Iran, as only they made sense years ago in the case of Portugal, may perhaps make sense tomorrow in Turkey (and do not make sense, for all one knows, in the case of Pakistan).

On the American side, the conventional military scenarios approach the grotesque. The official estimate of the Pentagon is that it will take one month to put a force of 20,000 men on a manoeuvrable footing in the Persian Gulf. (It took a week for the Russians to put 80,000 men in Afghanistan). Even if the force were doubled and the time reduced in half, the situation would remain preposterous, or 'symbolic'. The 1800 marines that Carter wanted embarked on the American fleet in the Gulf are symbolic, as is the garrison in West Berlin. Symbolic of what? Of this, and only this: that an attack would unleash the holocaust. But it is not true to say, as Safire does in the cited article, that 'The Russians know that the United States is bluffing. The US is not on the verge of starting the Third World War to 'save Iran' or to 'save Middle Eastern oil'. The Russians may very well delude themselves that they 'know' that. No one really knows what the US will do, the President and the Pentagon as little as anyone else, and the question is not knowing what they will do in this particular case; the question is to know what they will do before the Russian push, which is certainly not destined to finish with Afghanistan; to know when the accumulation of 'local' advantages by the Russians will be considered as being on the verge of passing to the 'global' level by the Americans - and what will happen then?

Given the reality of the nuclear 'balance of terror', the skindeep calculations of the experts hold little interest in the face of the massive body of known facts. From the moment when neither of the adversaries do nor can dispose of an incontestable wholesale advantage, be it quantitative or 'technological', and this is perceived as such by the other (for example, the possibility of a preventative precision attack that would 'surgically' annihilate the near-totality of the forces of retaliation of the other), the question of knowing that the Russians can atomise 12 billion people and the Americans only 11 billion is of little interest: alas, the population of the earth only adds up to 4 billion. Let us simply note in passing that the supposed 'parity', fragile and disputable aim of the SALT II accords, in fact consists of freezing the situation as it would be at the moment when the rapidly ascending curve of the Russian nuclear force intersects the very slowly ascending curve of the American nuclear

force. One can leave aside the many other questions relative to SALT II, the means of verification, and above all its insertion into a general framework, not of balance but, as we have already shown, of imbalance. The fact is that Russia has shown in practice that Afghanistan interests them much more than SALT II. Evidently, this clearly shows their justified conviction that in the present circumstances the concept of 'parity' or 'nuclear balance' makes no sense, and that its only utility is to permit the Russians to pose as champions of peace, to allow Kissinger to have himself photographed, and for Nixon or Carter to be elected or reelected. Further, the implication is that the growth of the Russian nuclear force will continue, and



as is well known (see International Herald Tribune, 1 and 2 February 1980), even supposing a massive effort on the part of the Americans, the supposed balance could not be achieved until after 1985, or rather towards 1990. This situation is primarily due to the fact that the Russians, already possessing a great superiority in numbers of missiles, are now capable of giving them multiple warheads ('MIRVing' them) and have already started to do so.

But this obscures the essential fact that at the present levels of technology and armaments the notions of nuclear parity, balance and imbalance, are beside the point. The value placed on the relations of forces on the nuclear level makes no sense outside of a situation (ended 25 years ago) of a massive and flagrant imbalance which could only consist of a quantitatively overwhelming monopoly by one party of one or a combination of critically important weapons. (In passing, this is why the 'nuclear independence of France', the gargle of the political milieu here from the Gaullists to Rocard, is a humourless joke. If the Russians wished to invade France, and the Americans did not interfere, they would know that - 'at best!' - Kharakov would be destroyed).

Two factors render the notions of 'parity' and 'balance' senseless. The first, already mentioned above, is well-known: that the two superpowers are beyond balance. They each have an overkill capacity. After having suffered enormous destruction, both sides would still be able to destroy the other several times over (if only due to the survival of a good number of missile-carrying submarines), that is to say, they'd just be adding rubble to the pile. The mass of the disproportionate available means of the two sides is so much beyond the 'needs' (!) that it would be useless to figure out their relation on paper.

But there is also a second reason: in light of the possibilities of massive destruction, it is completely absurd to make supposedly exact estimations of the capabilities of each of the adversaries. After leaving the room in which they play war games and computer simulation, one again realises that real war has nothing to do with war on paper. For henceforth no past 'experience', even from the distant past, can serve as a guide. The problems posed by the concrete circumstances of an eventual launching of war, its rhythms, the Western 'political' environment, the respective rapidity of detection, the reaction and activation, the accuracy, the mistakes and miscalculations in reasoning or of techniques, by all evidence create a fantastic margin of uncertainty on both sides. (It has just recently come to light that for several years a significant portion of American missile-carrying nuclear submarines were not operable).

When the autopsy of the Third World war is made by the historians of the 21st century - that is, if that century can have the luxury of having historians - they will undoubtedly discover a greater collection of stupidities committed, in proportion to the event, by each side than in the First or Second World Wars, where they were legion.

These remarks are a reminder that a 'calculated rational strategy' that continues to dominate all representations in this discussion is pure fantasy. This fantasy approaches pure and simple delirium when it is claimed - as it is in the general and official pronouncements of the General Staff, the politicians and the 'strategists' - that the 'Mutual Assurance of Destruction' (the aptly-named MAD) guarantees the achievement of a 'total rationality' of war, which would have the effect of thereby rendering war impossible. The idea, if one dares to say it, is that given the present technical levels, if each side possesses a sufficient quantity of missiles that will always survive the possibility of a surprise attack to inflict 'unacceptable damage' on the other, no one will start a war, because both would know that the only result would be mutual destruction.

The absurdity of this idea lies, to begin with, in a total misunderstanding of the actual manner in which decisions are formulated in the apparatuses - which are profoundly and necessarily irrational - in a misunderstanding of historical processes and real politics, and finally in a misunderstanding of the concrete situation that the two adversaries find themselves in. The supposed 'balance of terror' is accompanied by, and will be accompanied for the foreseeable future, by an essential imbalance in the relations of forces short of a nuclear confrontation. This in fact effectively transforms the world situation - already considerably transformed over the last ten years - into a situation of imbalance, and sooner or later this transformation will become intolerable for one or the other adversaries.

Things are tragic enough to permit a note of humour. Here are several utterances of General Lucien Poirier, (from X. Sallantin, Douze Dialogues sur la Defense, Les Cahiers de la Fondation pour les etudes de defense nationale, cahiers 9 and 10 (Paris, 1978) pp.27-43): "We have entered an era of obligatory politico-strategic rationality...The adversaries constantly exchange information to their capabilities of action and 'reciprocal reaction in regard to their nuclear umbrellas, which can never be used in real acts. This is a strategy of imagination in which the weapons systems only have a semiotic function (sic!). Appended, for the information of the eventual aggressors, are the depicted strategic models...of the chain reactions that will be decided upon if the aggressor menaces the sanctuary...that is because the model describes what will happen...in a convincing enough way, so that nothing will happen".

According to the brave General Poirier, having so foreseen that the Russians will not menace 'the sanctuary', the US will remain at ease. The Russians would be able to install themselves in Mexico or Canada; it suffices that they do not invade Nevada. Who knows what is next? If the Americans succeed in placing their bombs, the President, and the Pentagon, in orbit, perpetual peace will be assured.

Nothing can prevent a General Staff (the 'decision makers') from believing that the other will attack; no one can prevent them from imagining that temporary circumstances confer on them a passing but decisive advantage; nor can a preventative attack of surgical precision against the other's means necessarily create a situation of sufficient imbalance to force the attacked to give up the struggle. But above all, no one can ever make actual history into a 'semiotic' war game, or conceive of the context in which critical decisions will be taken as leaving ample room for an in any case non-existent measured rationale

of decision-making. The idea of 'unacceptable' losses, on which this whole construction is based, is meaningless. Each side can hope to destroy the other 'almost completely', itself only losing, say, a third of its population (which would still leave 150 million Americans or 180 million Russians). Those innocents who believe that just because this mode of calculation is unacceptable for them it is the same for the General Staff and Heads of State should remember that the essential element of the strategy of the great Stalin consisted of carpeting the battlefield with the bodies of Russian soldiers, several waves of attack being freely and deliberately sacrificed for the cause, so that the Nth wave could succeed. Moreover, he invented nothing, and this is not what exposes his barbarous traits the most clearly; from the battle of the Marne to the final offensive of the summer of 1918, this was the essential element of the strategy of the graduated, braided and decorated Cartesian, Baconian and Kantian butchers of the Western Front.

Postscript

This article was finished on 27 February 1980, except for the notes, and was sent to the French printer the same day. Since then, here is what I read in an interview with Andre Sakharov recorded by Kevin Leose, bureau chief of the Washington Post in Moscow (printed in the Washington Post, 9 March 1980):

Leose: "Will the Soviet government exercise or try to exercise more control over the internal life of its citizens in the new decade?"

Sakharov: "I fear it will".

"Do you think the 1980s will bring fundamental changes in the Soviet economy?"

"Our country faces serious economic difficulties. Among these are shortages of goods, especially foodstuffs, rural and urban manpower shortages, deteriorating workplace discipline, growing alcoholism, pay-scale inequalities, shortages of fuel and many other raw materials, slow growth of labour productivity and decline of capital investment funds, greater losses due to waste and bad planning, shortcomings in public service systems. All these problems encourage the continued militarisation of the economy ... Any such reforms (as to decentralisation) inevitably affecting the very bases of the totalitarian economy and social structure are very unlikely at the present time. In fact, the last few years have seen the heightening of the tendency to compensate for internal defects with external activism, the parasitic exploitation of world progress and

of the Western Front.

But what has been forgotten throughout is that - despite an abundant historical past - there are no longer any 'unacceptable losses' when the adversaries fight with their backs to the wall, when the stakes are total. Nor are there any 'objectives of war' which could limit the means. If one wants to exact a tribute from a population, it would be absurd to exterminate them; if one wants to exploit a territory and its inhabitants it makes no sense to completely devastate it. But in the present case the 'objectives' are transformed into the pure and simple chance to survive, and that bars any limitation of means. One argues before the Third World War as though it were the wars of Frederick II or Napoleon, instead of thinking, if one must have a historical analogy at any price, in terms of the destruction of Carthage, or the wars of religious or other exterminations. The war we find ourselves facing will not be a Clausewitzian war.

resources under the flag of detente abroad while strengthening the militarisation of the economy and military-industrial complex at home. The dangers of this development to the world are obvious".

"Do you think the Soviet leadership will continue to be interested in arguments on the limitation of strategic weapons with the United States, and do you think a SALT III agreement will be signed in the next decade?"

"In their imperialist designs for expansion the leadership of the Soviet Union is playing a complicated and dangerous game, but I do not think they are crazy, at least not at this stage of history".

What Sakharov calls the 'military-industrial complex' corresponds in my eyes to what I call the Russian military sub-society.

Notes

1. For example, see the article of G. Duchene, "L'officiel and le parallele dans l'economie sovietique", in Libre, 7, pp.151-188.
2. In the last place in "The Social Regime in Russia", in Telos, 38, pp.32-47.
3. I emphasised this aspect - a constant feature of tyrannical regimes, as admirably portrayed by Shakespeare, particularly in "Richard II" - in "La Chute de Khrouchtchev" in Socialisme ou Barbarie, 38, (October 1964).
4. Cf. "The Social Regime in Russia", op. cit.

RESPONSE TO 'FACING WAR'

The Castoriadis article which appears in this issue contains a certain amount of common sense, a number of assertions which appear to be true but which ought to be dealt with more carefully than the author allows himself to, and one profoundly worrying omission. All in all it adds up to a surprisingly bad article coming from someone who can usually be relied upon to clarify thinking instead of adding to the confusion.

Perhaps we should begin with the points where there is likely to be pretty general agreement amongst those on the left who still think for themselves. The single most important point to agree with in Castoriadis' article is that if we wish to understand the power struggles of the 'great powers' the worn-out schemes of the traditional left will not help. We are dealing with issues which are too important to allow ourselves to be restricted by emotional attachments to inaccurate theories such as the notion of degenerated workers' states (which somehow remain better than their capitalist rivals) or the idea of the impossibility of the long term survival of the capitalist system. We can therefore dispense at the start with any idea that people on the real left have any cause to feel in the least way sentimental towards Russia or need to feel the least regret in condemning Russian military expansion for what it is - the action of an imperialist power. It is also important to agree with a couple of other basic pieces of common sense in the article. In nuclear terms there is no point in considering too closely the balance of forces between 'East' and 'West'. Both have quite sufficient overkill capabilities to make participation in a nuclear war an inconceivable act for any rational government in either bloc. Unfortunately, as Castoriadis so rightly points out, governments are not always rational, and wars can begin for more reasons than that the two sides are intelligently pursuing their own self-interest. I remember reading a while back a very plausible book which argued that because of the internationalisation of trade and the growth of multi-national corporations it was no longer in the interests of any power bloc to fight a war. The disruption to the course of normal profitable trading and the damaging effect on companies with businesses in both countries made war an impossible choice for any rational capitalist. The book, called 'The War of Steel and Gold', was written by one Norman Brailsford in 1914, but unfortunately for the author it only sold well in the early part of that year. No doubt our own modern theorists will continue to inform us about the protection against war provided by



possessing overkill right up until the last moment before they disappear into the shelters to leave us facing the consequences. Castoriadis is not alone in rejecting such blinkered thinking and seeing the risk involved in having two powers, one of which has superiority in the deployment of conventional forces, while both sides have the capability of destroying each other by nuclear attack. Most unbiased observers recognise this risk. What is unusual is the precise manner in which Castoriadis describes this situation.

According to Castoriadis:-

- 1) the USSR is completely and profoundly engaged in sacrificing all other objectives to a politics of international military superiority;
 - 2) of the two powers that confront each other, only Russia is pursuing and actually is capable of carrying out an offensive politics;
 - 3) there is 'a massive imbalance in favour of Russia' at all levels short of total nuclear war;
 - 4) it is 'practically impossible for the Americans to redress' this imbalance;
 - 5) 'Europe is a perpetual potential pawn in the hands of the Russians';
 - 6) 'this is not only the situation of Europe. The Russians can intervene in many other locations';
 - 7) 'Russo-communist domination once established...is absolutely irreversible'
- Taken all together these statements form an unusually complex jumble of truths, half-truths and mystifications which cannot quickly be unravelled. What mainly seems to me to be in error is the

emphasis which Castoriadis puts on certain statements. For instance, in what way is it true that the Russians wish to sacrifice all other objectives in order to achieve international military superiority? Large elements of the Russian regime certainly do want to establish such a superiority, but surely we are entitled to query the care with which a person is choosing words when that person asks us to believe that there are no other objectives which the Russians would refuse to put at risk in order to achieve such domination? The survival of their regime, for instance? Internal stability? A minor quibble, perhaps, but does it help clarity to use the triumphalist language of the propagandist and assert with a wave of the hand that all other objectives are sacrificed? Furthermore, in what sense does it help the debate to try to allocate proportions of blame for the likelihood of nuclear war onto one side or the other? Castoriadis tells us that of the two super-powers only Russia is pursuing and actually is able to carry out an offensive politics. Now this to my mind is a major mystification. Russia is certainly capable of and determined to carry out an offensive politics in certain circumstances, but so are the Americans. What unbiased observer could view the activities of the Americans in Vietnam, Chile, El Salvador, Iran, etc., etc., as the actions of a well-meaning government which is pursuing a defensist strategy? Americans have proved themselves perfectly capable of pursuing an aggressive strategy (e.g. the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba); the difference between the two powers is not in intent but in the relative numbers of their successes. It is a major mystification for socialists to ignore Russian aggression, and one which is gleefully exploited by the Thatchers of this world, but it is an equally major mystification for socialists to ignore the American military's belief that they have a right to impose a government of their choice in any country where they are capable of doing so.

Since the Russians have proved more successful at extending their spheres of influence and domination than the Americans we might at first sight be inclined to agree that in conventional forces there is a massive imbalance in favour of Russia. Certainly this appears to be the case in Western Europe, but can a person of Castoriadis' obvious intelligence really be unaware of the strategic significance of Red China and the size of their conventional forces? It may or may not be true that in global terms the Russians possess a conventional military superiority (I personally doubt it) but does it help to clarify matters to have this described as 'a massive imbalance'? This is not the contribution to the survival of lucidity, of liberty and of responsibility which Castoriadis promises. It is mystification, not clarification. Moreover, we are entitled to ask whether it is impossible for the

Americans to redress the imbalance should it exist. American productive forces are still immensely superior to Russian ones, as almost anyone who has passed through both countries would attest. Even on the Russians' own distorted figures their GNP in 1980 was \$1,212,030. The USA gave a figure of \$2,582,460 for the same year (see the 1981 World Bank Atlas). The Russian figure is given at a comically distorted exchange rate which must result in at least a doubling of the real figure. In other words, the USA probably produces four times what the Russians do. With very little relative effort the Americans could close the conventional military gap on the Russians and pass them, and it is a moot point whether the Americans' 5% military budget or the Russians' 20% represents the heaviest total level of military spending (especially if we allow for the Americans' expertise in electronics, computing, etc.)

Next I want to argue with the assertion that Europe is a perpetual political pawn in the hands of the Russians. First, there is nothing perpetual about the situation. The balance of forces changes regularly in ways which are not always predictable, particularly in Eastern Europe. Second, does not the existence of an unreliable internal population affect the armies of Eastern Europe far more than those of France or Italy, and shouldn't this be included in the calculations? Nevertheless Castoriadis is on much stronger ground with his assertions here (if not with his Daily Express language). To my mind he is right in identifying any imbalance in conventional military superiority as a constant temptation to a government heavily influenced by the armed forces and as a potential trigger for a conflict which would probably become nuclear. However, for every roughly accurate statement which he makes Castoriadis seems to throw in at least one dubious assertion. He claims, for instance, that Russo-Communist domination once established is 'absolutely irreversible'. Surely there is direct contrary evidence here on a major scale. First, China: how is it possible to avoid the conclusion that it has totally broken away from Russian domination? Why didn't the Russians invade when the break was made if the maintenance and extension of Russian domination is the sole objective of the all-pervasive Russian military? How did the level of influence of Russia in China differ from that in Afghanistan? Wasn't it a life-or-death question for the regime to demonstrate the irreversibility of its influence, and massacre ten million or more Chinese? Second, we ought to consider Eastern Europe and ask a simple question: whatever we think of the regimes there, do they have more or less independence from Russian control than they did twenty years ago? All in all the whole article is shot through with impatience with the task of carefully examining the evidence

for and against any assertion Castoriadis wishes to make, and with a desire to do away with the tiresome necessity for precision.

This brings me to the most worrying question of all. Why was the article written? The one glaring omission in the whole piece is any statement of what conclusion we are expected to draw. Was the article an academic exercise of no significance written by a man who only wishes to sound off about the state of the military situation like some armchair general with a son at the front? If so, fine. If not, then what does Castoriadis want us to do about the Russian threat? Should we be forming pressure groups to press for a build-up of conventional forces in Western Europe? Should we be writing letters to the popular press demanding that more be spent on arms to protect poor Europe in its hour of need? Should I join the Territorials, or

volunteer for the SAS? Couldn't Castoriadis have found it in his heart to insert somewhere in his article a few simple statements which would have assuaged all reasonable protests? Is it too much for him to say 'a plague on both your houses' or 'there is no guarantee of peace short of the overthrow of oppressive governments wherever they may be', or 'the communist world is not communist but the then the free world is not free, our aim is to establish a world which is both genuinely free and genuinely communist'? Does his systematic overstating of the case against one side and his refusal to state at any time in the article the mildest attack on the other side imply a dangerous abandonment of principles with which he himself has been associated for a very long time? I hope not, but he must see how easy it is to misrepresent what he is trying to say, and it would be a very simple matter to clear up where he stands.

ANDY BROWN

Letters

Dear Solidarity,

As an ex-member of Solidarity who has recently been involved in 'Wildcat' and 'Intercom' I should like to comment on the editorial 'About Ourselves' in the first issue of your new series. I realise that you won't want to go over all the arguments we had in detail again, so I'll make it brief.

The three informal tendencies you refer to definitely did exist, but your summary of their views is so oversimplistic as to be a misrepresentation.

In particular the criticisms made at the time of the organisation, and especially London members, on the interrelated issues of trade unionism (in general, and not just over Solidarnosc), social-democratic politics, and CND, came not just from ex-Social Revolution group members, nor even just 'Manchester Solidarity members, and could not be dismissed simply as being close to 'marxist left communism'. Certainly some of us had always rejected Cardan's economic analysis and considered that there was a connection between Cardan's views and the confused ideas prevalent in Solidarity at that time on the three issues mentioned. But our criticism, shared by many long-serving Cardanists, was that the group had abandoned the relatively sound position represented in 'As We See It' and earlier publications of the group and instead of developing on these had degenerated into a 'wishy-washy' libertarianism, a view not altogether dissimilar from the other 'oppositional' tendency you refer to.

The resignation of both our tendencies and 'dropping-out' of other members did effectively dissolve the national group in practice and left something less than 30 active members (most of them in London).

Hopefully this new series of your journal will see some clarity emerging on the major issues facing us at this crucial time.

Fraternally, M.B.

Dear Comrades,

I was recently mildly surprised, reading a book review in a bourgeois paper, to see Cornelius Castoriadis denounced as a Cold Warrior. Only mildly, as I'd read an article of his, written just after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which pointed in that direction*. Sadly, a second article in a recent issue of Telos confirmed my fears (C. Castoriadis and P. Thibaud, 'The Toughest and Most Fragile of Regimes', Telos 51, Spring 1982, pp. 186-90. Telos is an academic journal published in the US by adherents of the Frankfurt School).

Discussing the Western peace movement. Castoriadis has some amazing things to say:

"Let us say a few words about the situation in the Western countries. It is true that one can observe a clear decline of the dominant strata and of their devices for managing society, but one can also note what is much more important

still, a decline of society, the classes being all mixed up; a decline which is probably irreversible, but here and now already reaches a critical point. In one sense, society breaks up into interest groups, into lobbies. In one sense, too, the limit of that process is being realised by the peace movements: groupings having zoological interests, better red than dead, one does not want to croak, it does not matter what else happens...."

"...[the denuclearisation of Europe is] politically weak and morally untenable. What does it matter that the Russians (sic) and Americans (sic) annihilate each other with atomic weapons so long as we Europeans survive! Everything takes place as if for people of Western societies there is nothing left worth paying for, paying with one's person, risking one's life..."

"There is a way of guaranteeing against the danger of war; it is to invite the Russians (sic) to install themselves in all countries. This way, one is sure to avoid war..."

"...the question in effect is this: how does one live in the face of nuclear war? For the first time perhaps one expresses in a massive and atrocious manner the fact that we are always living in the face of death. It is the only gift that we bring with us when we come into the world: the promise of death. It is only after one has understood this, once one has already counted oneself legally dead, that one can begin to truly live..."

It is not necessary to support the peace movement - which I do not - in order to condemn this morbid nonsense, which is worthy of Solzhenitsyn in decline. As for 'there is nothing left worth paying for', I heard an identical argument in the pub a couple of months ago - by a trainee fighter pilot, in defence of 'zapping the

Argies' and preparing for World War Three.

I don't know if there's some deep personal crisis behind Castoriadis' dreadful political collapse, but I can suggest an intellectual explanation. His life has been devoted to propagating the idea that the clue to modern society lies in the increasing power of the state ('statocracy' is the word used in the Telos article). Increasing statification looks rather implausible as a characterisation of Reagan's USA, Thatcher's Britain, and even Deng's China. This problem can be dealt with by (a) fudging the issue, which is what we've done; (b) amending and improving the analysis, which is what we should have done; or (c) retaining the original analysis, but concentrating criticism on 'the Russians' (peasants and KGB generals alike), where statocracy clearly does make sense. This last is what Castoriadis is doing. There is nothing new in this slippery slope. It leads inexorably to morbid Russophobia, and ex-socialists like James Burnham and Karl Wittfogel (the author of Oriental Despotism) slid right down it decades ago.

The last thing I want to do is to start another witch-hunt. But Castoriadis is (rightly) regarded as the theoretical inspiration of Solidarity, and his endorsement of what might be termed libertarian genocide is infinitely more important than anyone else's silly flirtation with the Labour Party. I therefore ask you to print this letter so that I can publicly disassociate myself from someone who can no longer be regarded as a socialist, nor a humanist, nor an internationalist. I invite other readers, individually or collectively, to do the same.

Yours fraternally (or whatever),

John King



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