

SOVIET EXPANSIONISM AND EXPANSIVE ANTI-SOVIETISM

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'Western capitalist societies and socialist societies simply represent different stages of development; there are differences between them, but they are not fundamental differences.' Nowadays, no one would dare to come out with such a statement in a political meeting of any kind. Anyone who did so would be laughed out of court and would look like a schoolboy trying to cause a sensation rather than a responsible adult. Yet it is in fact a fairly accurate summary of the views held by a number of distinguished economists, sociologists and political observers in the sixties and early seventies. Walt Rostow,¹ Jan Tinbergen,² and Sorokin³ all predicted that in economic and social terms the capitalist and socialist systems would converge and that the technological revolution would transcend them both and produce a synthesis of capitalism and socialism: the affluent society. Other famous figures like Galbraith⁴ and Marcuse⁵ also took a sympathetic view of this thesis, even though the latter did draw pessimistic conclusions from it, and developed it in various ways. Even Sakharov predicted a scientific and technological revolution in both systems which would, by the year 2000, lead to a world government and to the elimination of contradictions between nations.⁶ It might seem easy to sneer at the euphoria of such theories. They flourished almost exclusively in capitalist countries and were the product of an extremely favourable historical environment. The golden sixties meant not only full employment and a standard of living that would have been inconceivable only a few years earlier, but also the conquest of space. At least in its early stages, the conquest of space meant that, in scientific and economic terms, the USSR was catching up with the West. At the same time, the long, slow process of detente had produced a whole series of agreements and treaties in a wide range of areas. It was very tempting to interpret what was in fact only an ephemeral trend as an irreversible movement. It would, however, be a mistake to think that the theoreticians of convergence felt any sympathy towards the Soviet Union. In that sense, the early ideologues of the death of ideology were quite clearly products of their own system.

We now live in an age of disillusionment. The 'technostructure' simply maximizes austerity. The only growth area is in unemployment, which is quietly ushering in an era of enforced leisure. For many people, there is

no longer any possibility of improving their standard of living. Even the crisis itself is in crisis; detente is collapsing under the sudden impact of divergent conceptions of 'security'. It is one of history's ironies that the scientific revolution which gave rise to so many hopes should have been subordinated to the needs of the arms race. Technology is used primarily for the manufacture of armaments. With all due respect to the alchemists of the sixties, the eighties are likely to be an age of lead rather than an age of gold.

New prejudices for old

Times change, and discourses change with them. The dream of world government is gone for ever, shattered by the prismatic reflections of new conceptions. New clichés are turning old commonplaces inside out. Curiously enough, however, the prevailing pessimism applies to only one vector of the old convergence. As a result, the megalithic struggle between the bourgeois state and the dictatorship of the proletariat has undergone a metamorphosis. Like certain archaic clauses in the penal code, the term 'capitalism' has fallen into disuse. It belongs to the nineteenth century and is 'no longer applicable'. To replace it, the most archaic allegories of the bourgeois revolution have been pressed into service: pluralism, democracy and freedom. These are now the three spectres that haunt our whole social system.

Socialism never existed, except in the naive writings of idealists. For seventy-five years, a barbaric system deceived us by usurping the name of the socialist utopia. It can no longer hide the fact that it is an obscene society, that it is the living embodiment of the very worst form of dictatorship. It can no longer conceal the horrors of the Gulag or the fact that it is a vampire which feeds on democracy, a new form of imperialism. George Orwell, who prophesied this gigantic struggle between good and evil, is enjoying a posthumous triumph with books that are scarcely older than NATO itself, books which read like Nostradamus rewritten by La Fontaine.

Given these conditions, there can be no question of waiting peacefully for the unification of the world. Not only do we have to take sides; we have to dig in as soon as possible. The most constant part of the anti-Soviet discourse is the military theme or, to use the stock phrase, 'the evaluation of the threat'. NATO has been making the same point for the last thirty-five years. 'The military might of the Warsaw Pact is so great that it cannot reasonably be justified in terms of defence needs. . . It still gives great importance to the element of surprise and to rapid offensive operations. Warsaw Pact forces are organized, trained and equipped to take the offensive from the very outset of any conflict.'" NATO, of course, is a purely defensive organization 'designed to prevent war; its ultimate political objective is to achieve a lasting peace based upon

appropriate guarantees of security. In order to achieve that objective, it must have sufficient power to discourage attacks on any of its members'.¹¹

Involuntary peace

There is nothing new about this polemic. If we invert the terms of the equation, we find a mirror image of the same picture, but this time it is the Soviet Union that is in the right. It may well be a truism to say that no weapon has ever been used for purely defensive purposes, but it is also more pertinent than ever. The invention of the atom bomb and of the formidable combination of a missile and one or more thermonuclear warheads was the result of a technological breakthrough that gave offensive thinking an indefinite lead over defensive thinking. It also meant that any offensive would be unimaginably violent, devastating and uncontrollable. The military, and much less the politicians, have never liked anything they cannot control. Both pacts claim to have kept the peace in Europe for the last thirty-five years, but both have created and maintained tensions which have at times come close to causing a general conflagration. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that both sides are simply taking the credit for the achievements of their weapons and that they are in fact dismayed by the incredible speed, range and destructive power of their strike forces. Peace can only last until such time as one of the protagonists sees through the charade. The one thing that transcends confrontation and restricts their bellicose ambitions is the likelihood of their being annihilated in any intercontinental exchange. In that sense, deterrence is nothing more than a codified form of blackmail masquerading as a point of law. It is not a doctrine which ensures perpetual peace, but a de facto situation which temporarily prevents war.

Comparisons are odious

There is of course nothing new about the idea that only the Warsaw Pact is an aggressive military alliance. A more recent assumption has, however, darkened the picture even further. It is generally assumed that since the 1970s, the Soviet Union has developed the means to carry out its policy of worldwide expansion. Not a single meeting of the Military Committee, the Nuclear Planning and Defence Groups or the North Atlantic Council goes by without this principle being reiterated or without a review of the new weapons systems introduced by the Soviet Union. In 1982, a 'comparison of opposing forces' was for the first time published for the benefit of both the media and the general public. It has recently been updated and republished by NATO's information service. The stated aim of this publication is to underline the rapid build-up of Soviet power in every domain. The build-up is very real. But this publication is also designed to prove that it poses a threat to world nuclear parity and to demonstrate that the USSR has a crushing superiority in the European theatre. Thus,

it is claimed that 'The quantitative and qualitative improvement in the USSR's strategic forces means that it now has the potential to upset the strategic balance.'⁹ The only way NATO can reach this conclusion is to stress numbers of vectors (missiles and aircraft) and their power as opposed to number of warheads and their accuracy. Describing the balance of strategic power in these terms is rather like judging a nation's economic power in terms of the surface area of its factories rather than in terms of *real production* and *quality of production*. In terms of numbers of warheads, the USA's vast superiority (in 1975, the ratio was three to one in its favour) has not been reversed, even when calculated in purely numerical terms (9,665 warheads as opposed to 8,800).¹⁰ Given the surplus nuclear capability of both sides, this has no military significance. The USA also has the advantage in terms of accuracy and the speed with which its missiles can be launched." The Soviet Union is also at a disadvantage in other areas; US warheads, for instance, are more evenly distributed between the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force). 71 per cent of all Soviet missiles are land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles which are highly vulnerable because they are easily detected by satellites. The equivalent figure for the USA is 22 per cent. The Soviet ICBMs can only be used for a first strike or for launch on alert.

The Soviet Union's weak second strike capability completes the picture; it consists mainly of weapons which would be likely to survive a first strike, in other words submarines and strategic bombers. The Soviet Union has virtually no strategic airborne forces, which account for only 3 per cent of all nuclear tests carried out (they represent 27 per cent of all US forces and 49 per cent of all megatonnage). This is quite understandable, given that a Soviet bomber has very little chance of reaching any target in the USA. Submarines carry 32 per cent of the Soviet Union's warheads; the equivalent figure for the USA is 51 per cent. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) also notes that: 'Only 15 to 20 per cent of the Soviet Union's submarine forces are deployed on a permanent basis, largely because the Soviet Union is unable to keep more of them in service. Almost 50 per cent of the USA's strategic submarines are permanently on patrol. Whereas the twenty American submarines which are always at sea are thought to be invulnerable to Soviet anti-submarine warfare, the nine or ten submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles which are based in Soviet ports are under constant US surveillance. . . Soviet submarines are much noisier than their American equivalents and are therefore more vulnerable to anti-submarine warfare. Given this, the geographical advantages it enjoys and its technological superiority, the USA can be considered the dominant side in terms of anti-submarine warfare.'¹²

The methods used to evaluate the balance of power constantly give rise to misunderstandings and tend to give credence to over-simplifications.

Three truly discriminatory methods are used. The criteria chosen for comparisons systematically reinforce NATO views. No weight is given to the fact that in qualitative terms, the West has a definite advantage. Finally, neither French nor Spanish forces are taken into account on the grounds that neither country is a member of NATO's integrated military structure. As a result of these omissions, only Soviet missiles and land-based US missiles are taken into account in calculating the balance of power in Europe. Whereas organisations like SIPRI and the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies always use world figures, the strategy used by NATO gives credence to the argument that it has nothing in Europe to counter the Soviet Union's SS44s, SS5s and SS20s. But as is the case with ICBMs, most theatre missiles are carried by French, British or US submarines, the latter being based in Great Britain.

In terms of conventional weapons, NATO always omits to mention that the USSR has a lot of old weapons as well as more sophisticated weaponry. Thus, a great deal is made of the threat posed by the Soviet Union's 50,000 tanks. But whereas T72s and T80s may be comparable with the West's best tanks, the Soviet Union also has 35,000 T54/55s and T62s (80 per cent of the total), whose design dates back to the early sixties. Their operational weakness was confirmed when large numbers of these tanks were destroyed in the clashes between Israel and Syria in the Lebanon in 1982.¹³

An asymmetrical balance

For the last thirty years the Soviet Union has been catching up with the West, but by the 1990s we are likely to see the completion of a whole series of American research programmes and a large-scale use of advanced technologies which will allow the US to regain the ground it has lost. The reliability of automatic guidance systems and the fearful accuracy of targetting systems will make all the difference and, together with the ability of electronic counter-measures to outwit decoys and evade increasingly sophisticated warning systems will determine a projectile's ability to reach its target. Battlefield weapons will simply be so many parts of an overall technological structure and generic terms for them will have no operational meaning in terms of comparative evaluations.

No serious historian would even contemplate assessing the threat posed by a state in terms of how many battalions it has. If battalions were that important, the Roman Empire would never have fallen to the Goths, Napoleon would have lost all his battles, Nazi Germany would have had considerably more difficulty in conquering France¹⁴ and the war in Vietnam would have been no more than a training exercise for the USA. On the other hand, history is full of examples of states which have—for all sorts of political, economic and ideological reasons—deliberately started conflicts, even though they were in purely military terms weaker

than their enemies. They have been victorious because they were able to exploit the advantage of surprise or their tactical superiority.

NATO calculations inevitably take into account the heartlands of the USSR, as 60 to 80 per cent of its military capability is concentrated there. American territory is never taken into account. This reflects a real geographical imbalance, but it has nothing to do with the world balance of power. It has become fashionable to discuss conventional forces solely in terms of Europe. This implies that part of NATO and less than one third of all American forces should be equivalent to the Warsaw Pact and two thirds of all Soviet forces. If that balance were ever achieved, it would be intolerable to the Soviet Union.

NATO plays upon our strong Eurocentric sympathies and exploits this concentration on Europe in order to conceal the fact that the military choices made by the two great powers are radically different. The USA has had unchallenged military control over the American continent for decades. The only direct threat has to come from the sea or the air. The only country in the world which stretches over the greater part of two continents faces hostile powers on two fronts. The Soviet Union is not protected by any natural barriers.

Since 1945, the USA has dominated the world in terms of expeditionary and air-sea power. The USSR has achieved land and air superiority along its frontiers and in two potential theatres of operation: China and Europe. The dominance of land-based forces has for a long time been a constant feature of Soviet history and goes back to Russia's imperial traditions. This can also be explained in terms of the vast area of territory that has to be defended (22,402,200 square kilometres; 2.5 times the surface area of the USA) and in terms of the length of the border and lines of communication which are not broken by any oceans. To describe the largest country in the world as a 'regional' super power may seem provocative. But two thirds of the surface of the earth is covered by water; those who remain on land will never be the strongest.

Given that, in territorial terms, the existing status quo with both NATO and China is unlikely to change, the USSR's capacity for expansionism is usually evaluated in terms of its military presence in the Third World rather than in terms of the possibility of a war between the super powers degenerating into a worldwide nuclear conflagration. The main issue we have to look at, then, is the USSR's ability to intervene rapidly and in force far away from its own frontiers. We also have to look at the results it has obtained in that area. In these terms, the classic Western argument, which concentrates upon conventional forces (conventional and nuclear), is rather less than convincing. Any power which wants to rule the world—and this, it is claimed, is the Soviet Union's aim—has to deploy its forces throughout the world. That means that it must rely upon air and sea power and must have military bases throughout the

world. We will therefore concentrate upon this aspect of the strategic confrontation.

NATO countries are increasingly disturbed by the Soviet Union's ability to 'project' its military power to every continent in the world. 'The Soviet Union's ability to react to crises or favourable opportunities, and its ability to make its power and influence felt in zones that are far away from its own frontiers have caught the attention of the whole world. . . Recent analyses of the Soviets' tendency to increase their capabilities have brought out the current and projected development of the Soviet navy, its improved air and amphibious capabilities, the organizational flexibility of its forces, and improvements in command, control and communications (C³I) and logistic support.'¹⁵ 'In the first stage of their attempt to acquire facilities, the Soviet Union had major successes in Ethiopia, South Yemen, Angola and Vietnam and lesser successes in Syria, Tunisia and Guinea.'¹⁶ The conclusions reached by the highly competent Military Committee are very pertinent, but they can lead to assumptions which are diametrically opposed to the motives that are normally ascribed to the Kremlin leaders. NATO makes no secret of the fact that it sees the Soviet Union as having 'A fundamental philosophy according to which all resources, military and otherwise, have to be used together to establish a flexible network of influence and to open up a window on the world.'¹⁷ According to former NATO Secretary Joseph Luns, 'The Soviet Union has never restricted its ambitions to equality and the maintenance of the status quo'¹⁸ and has 'used the theoretical pretext of peaceful coexistence to begin psychological warfare and subversion.'¹⁹

The real world is both more complex and less Machiavellian than this. The constraints which have governed the spectacular development of the Soviet navy, which in 1945 was simply a coastal defence force and which is now a deep water fleet, are, for instance, very different to those governing the growth of the American fleet. The US Navy's powerful task forces are deployed in every ocean in the world and are headed by gigantic aircraft carriers with a displacement of 70 to 90,000 tonnes, each of them capable of housing some one hundred aircraft. The four Soviet fleets do not have anything like the same capabilities. In the event of a major war breaking out, they would immediately be cut off from one another and would have to make for their home ports. And as a result, the USSR would be cut off from the rest of the world. The tasks assigned to the Navy in wartime are therefore astonishingly modest. Their initial and most important task is to protect the coast and to prevent any landings from taking place. They then have to ensure that the strategic nuclear submarines have unchallenged supremacy in the inland seas controlled by the USSR (the Arctic Sea, controlled by the Northern Fleet, and the Sea of Okhotsk, controlled by the Pacific Fleet). Finally, they would do their best to overcome natural obstacles (occupying straits and keeping

open channels through the ice fields) and the blockades set up by the West to keep Soviet ships penned up inside territorial waters. Then, and only then, would they begin to disrupt enemy sea communications and to attack the task forces.

Although the Soviet Union has developed its navy to such an extent that it can interdict coastal areas to any Western invader and can carry out certain attrition missions against enemy communications, it has only 12,000 marines (6 per cent of the American total) and has little amphibious capability. It is, then, its increased *peacetime* capabilities which worry the capitalist countries. It is not the Soviet Union's ability to protect sea communications with friendly Third World countries that worries them so much as the fact that its ships now cruise the oceans of the world and have both a certain deterrent capability and a far from negligible ability to spy on the Western navies and gather intelligence on their tactics and operational capability.

In the event of crisis or even tension, this means that the West can no longer make even a limited intervention with the certainty that it would not lead to a major confrontation with Soviet warships. But although this may make the American admirals reluctant to threaten Soviet interests too openly, what NATO describes as 'an offensive force capable of making its effects felt throughout the world'¹¹ was not enough to stop them bombarding Beirut, invading Grenada, blockading Nicaragua and mining its ports, all within the space of a year.

TABLE I

Military Forces and Bases Abroad

<i>Locations of Foreign Forces</i>	<i>Countries of Origin</i>		
	<i>US and Allies*</i>	<i>USSR and Allies*</i>	<i>Other*'</i>
North America			
1 Bermuda	US	1,550	—
2 Canada	US	710	—
	UK	##	—
Latin America			
3 Antigua	US	120	—
4 Ascension Is.	UK	##	—
5 Belize	UK	1,800	—
6 Cuba	US	2,270	USSR 2,500
7 Falkland Is.	UK	7,000	—
8 Honduras	US	300	—
9 Nicaragua		—	C 2,000
10 Panama	US	9,130	—
11 Puerto Rico	US	2,980	—

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TABLE I (contd)

Military Forces and Bases Abroad

<i>Locations of Foreign Forces</i>			<i>Countries of Origin</i>		<i>Other**</i>
	<i>US and Allies*</i>		<i>USSR and Allies*</i>		
NATO Europe					
12 Belgium	US	2,390			—
13 Germany, West	US	257,980			—
	UK,F,B,N.	150,100			—
14 Greece	US	3,470			—
15 Iceland	US	3,110			—
16 Italy	US	13,920			—
17 Netherlands	US	2,120			—
18 Norway	US	210			—
	UK	n.k.			—
19 Portugal	US	1,670			—
20 Turkey	US	5,310			—
21 United Kingdom	US	28,540			—
Warsaw Pact					
22 Czechoslovakia		—	USSR	78,000	
23 Germany, East		—	USSR	406,000	—
24 Hungary		—	USSR	50,000	—
25 Poland		—	USSR	50,000	—
Other Europe					
26 Spain	US	8,410			—
27 Greenland	US	320			—
28 Gibraltar	UK	2,100			—
Middle East					
29 Bahrain	US†				—
30 Cyprus	UK	4,900			—
	G	1,300			
	Tu	24,000			
31 Egypt	US	150			—
32 Iraq		—	USSR	1,200	J 3,000
			EG	160	
33 Israel	US	110			
34 Lebanon		—			S 50,000
35 Oman	US†	—			—
	UK	660			
36 Saudi Arabia	US	480			—
37 Syria		—	USSR	2,500	Y 500
			EG	210	
38 Yemen, AR		—	USSR	500	—
39 Yemen, PDR		—	USSR	1,500	C 800
			EG	320	
South Asia					
40 Afghanistan	—	—	USSR	95,000	
41 Diego Garcia	US	1,800		—	

TABLE I (contd)

Military Forces and Bases Abroad

<i>Locations of Foreign Forces</i>		<i>Countries of Origin</i>			
		<i>US and Allies *</i>		<i>USSR and Allies *</i>	<i>Other**</i>
South Africa (contd)					
42 Mayotte	F	n.k.		—	—
43 Reunion	F	n.k.		—	—
Far East					
44 Brunei	UK	1,000		—	—
45 Cambodia		—	USSR	300	V 170,000
46 Canton Is.	US	#		—	—
47 F. Polynesia	F	n.k.		—	—
48 Gilbert Is.	US	#		—	—
49 Guam	US	8,760		—	—
50 Hong Kong	UK	7,650		—	—
51 Japan	US	50,740		—	—
52 Johnston Atoll	US	120		—	—
53 Korea, S.	US	38,630		—	—
54 Laos		—	USSR	500	V 45,000
55 Midway Is.	US	#		—	—
56 Philippines	US	14,950		—	—
57 Thailand	US	100		—	—
58 Trust Territory	US	#		—	—
59 Vietnam		—	USSR	5,000	—
60 Wake Is.	US	#		—	—
Oceania					
61 Australia	US	700			
Africa					
62 Algeria			USSR	1,000	
			EG	250	
63 Angola			USSR	200	C 18,000
			EG	450	
64 Benin		—	USSR	1,200	—
65 Cen.Afr.Rep.	F	1,500		—	—
66 Chad	F	n.k.		—	L 3,000
67 Congo		—	USSR	350	—
			EG	750	—
68 Djibouti	F	3,700		—	—
69 Eq. Guinea		—		—	M 400
70 Ethiopia		—	USSR	1,350	C 13,000
			EG	250	
71 Gabon	F	450		—	—
72 Ghana	UK	150		—	—
73 Guinea		—	USSR	380	—
			EG	120	—
74 Guinea-Bissau		—	USSR	600	—
75 Ivory Coast	F	450		—	—
76 Kenya	US†	—		—	—

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TABLE I (contd)

Military Forces and Bases Abroad

Locations of Foreign	Countries of Origin				
	US and Allies*	USSR and Allies*	Other**		
Africa (contd)					
77 Libya		USSR 1,800 EG 400			
78 Madagascar	—	EG 300	NK 400		
79 Malawi	—	—	SA 100		
80 Mali		USSR 200			
81 Mauritania	—	USSR 200			
82 Morocco	US† F 150	—			
83 Mozambique		USSR 300 EG 100	C 750		
84 Namibia			SA 67,500		
85 Sahara, W.			M 90,000		
86 Senegal	F 1,170	—			
87 Seychelles	—	—	T 250		
88 Somalia	US†	—			
89 South Africa			I 200		
90 Sudan			E 700		
91 Zaire	F 130 B 350				
92 Zimbabwe	UK 100		Ch 120 NK 200		

* NATO and Warsaw Pact

Less than 100 personnel ## Several hundred personnel

† Facilities under construction

** Key to country names, see table opposite

n.k. not known

TABLE II

*Countries with Forces Abroad**Key to table above*

B	Belgium	25,350
C	Cuba	34,550
Ch	China	120
E	Egypt	700
EG	E. Germany	3,310
F	France	58,750
G	Greece	1,300
I	Israel	15,200
	Jordan	3,000
	Libya	3,000
M	Morocco	90,400
N	Netherlands	5,500
NK	North Korea	600
S	Syria	50,000
SA	South Africa	67,600
T	Tanzania	250
Tu	Turkey	24,000
UK	United Kingdom	93,860
US	United States	461,130*
USSR	Soviet Union	700,880
V	Vietnam	215,000
Y	Yemen, PDR	500
	Total	1,855,000

* Does not include **284,000** US service personnel afloat.

Over **1,800,000** of the world's armed forces are currently on foreign territory. About one-third are abroad to fight wars or serve as occupying forces. The majority are based on foreign territory to project national power and serve as the eyes and ears of the forces at home.

Naval presence and naval supremacy

The fact that the balance of power at sea is still in favour of the US and other NATO naval powers like Britain and France has less to do with numbers of ships and tonnage than with bases in foreign countries. Even a modern squadron of nuclear propelled ships and ocean-going auxiliaries cannot undertake an engagement thousands of miles away from its home port. It needs at least one permanent forward base capable of supplying it with fuel, munitions and large quantities of food at short notice. And according to *Flottes de Combat*, (the French equivalent to *Jane's Fighting Ships*), 'Despite continuous diplomatic efforts, the Soviet Navy has not yet succeeded in finding a foreign base worthy of the name, and the few staging posts and other facilities it has acquired here and there cannot compensate for what would in wartime be a very serious handicap.' Moreover, 'Nothing new has been introduced into the auxiliary and support fleet, which, despite all the efforts of recent years, is still the surface fleet's weak point.'²² The fifteen or so ports which are usually described as fall-back bases are in fact little more than anchorages with a few supplementary facilities. Only the old American base at Cam Ranh in Vietnam appears to have been refitted to take a score of warships, about six hunter-killer submarines and long-range reconnaissance aircraft on any permanent basis.²³ On a much smaller scale, Ethiopia has also been able to provide some purely military facilities. Third World countries which receive aid from the Soviet Union are usually reluctant to grant it such facilities, precisely because of the radical nationalism and desire for independence that led them to break with their pasts. In the West, Angola, for instance, is usually described as a puppet of the Soviets and the Cubans, yet its constitution bans the construction of any foreign bases in the country. The Soviet Union pays a high military price for its anti-imperialist policies. The Americans, on the other hand, have spun a real spider's web of 360 major bases and 1,600 installations in 36 countries. In the event of war breaking out, the Mediterranean, the Pacific and the Atlantic would immediately become Western lakes. Guantanamo, which is actually on Cuban soil, houses almost as many American troops (2,270) as there are Soviet troops on the rest of the island (2,800).²⁴ Only the Indian Ocean is not under exclusive US control, not because American, French and British forces are numerically inferior, but because the Soviets appear to be able to ensure a permanent presence there thanks to Ethiopia and South Yemen.

In addition to the American forces based in Europe, it requires 142,000 men to man and maintain the euphemistically named forward based system. This dense and complex network is the result of forty years of tireless application of the 'containment doctrine' developed by Truman and Dulles. In both peacetime and wartime it plays an indispensable support role for the 284,000 naval personnel who are permanently based

at sea, the 194,000 marines and the 400,000 men of the Rapid Deployment Force. Whilst medium-size naval powers like Britain and France cannot be compared with the USA, they have retained a string of island colonies scattered across the oceans of the world. These provide staging points for their fleets, which could usefully complement one another in time of war. Britain has 26,000 troops based outside the NATO zone; France has 10,000 (see Table D).

The Socialist community's military presence outside the frontiers of the Warsaw Pact is much more varied. That presence includes the massive troop concentrations that are the classic symptoms of armies of occupation (leaving aside the issue of political justification). The Soviets have 75,000 troops in Mongolia and a further 100,000 in Afghanistan; there are 170,000 Vietnamese troops in Cambodia and 45,000 in Laos. Here, we are talking about land-based forces in countries bordering on the powers concerned. From a purely military point of view, these territories represent only a marginal extension of Soviet expeditionary capabilities. These interventions were not in fact motivated by expansionist ambitions. There are also 21,800 Soviet troops and 3,310 East Germans in a score or so of Third World countries, but their mission is very different. They are advisers, technicians and instructors and their primary task is to train local armies in the use of Soviet equipment.

The Cuban interventions in Angola and Ethiopia were on a very different scale. In both cases, one Third World country gave aid to another in order to protect a Socialist revolution which was threatened by foreign intervention. But what struck observers most was the rapidity and efficiency of the airlifts organised by the USSR and the excellent Soviet-Cuban coordination which ensured rapid and decisive victories. In the case of Angola, Cuba's decision to respond to the MPLA's call for aid on 5 November 1975 came twelve days after the South African intervention. It led to a decisive victory in late November and to the complete defeat of the FNLA and UNITA in mid-January 1976. At the end of January, the South African forces decided to pull out. In Ethiopia, the Ogaden was reconquered only a month after the start of the counter-offensive. In both cases, the Cuban forces were relatively small and totalled only 20,000 men, or barely a *division*.²⁴ The resources used by the Soviet Union were, however, impressive. The Red Army's airborne capacity was not exactly unknown; in 1968, a whole division was moved into Prague overnight and every strategic bridge in the country was occupied within six hours. During the 1973 Arab-Israeli war huge quantities of supplies were flown in in record time. All these operations took place on the periphery of Soviet territory and there was no need for refuelling. In the case of both Angola and Ethiopia the distances involved meant that refuelling halts were inevitable and authorization to fly over a number of countries had to be obtained. This was the first long-range intervention

made by the Socialist camp.

The astonishing development of Soviet air transport can largely be explained in terms of the virtual disappearance of other modes of transport (rail, road and ship). Aircraft are often the only means of ensuring communications in all weathers, especially in *Siberia*.³⁶ The operational importance of this axiom has not escaped the Kremlin; the airborne force soon became an auxiliary command and then a strategic command.

Although Soviet naval capabilities have definitely increased since 1960, it is difficult to accept NATO's claims that it has moved from coastal defence to control of the seas. Naval supremacy is still mainly an American monopoly and the Soviets have yet to show any desire to challenge that monopoly. Their fleet is still primarily an anti-ship force designed to prevent the USA controlling the seas rather than to challenge it directly.

In this context, access to port facilities has not been a determining factor in Soviet Third World policy. On three separate occasions, the Red Army has lost important bases which would otherwise have allowed the fleet to be refuelled in the Mediterranean. After the break with Yugoslavia in 1948 it lost access to Cattaro, and the break with Albania in 1966 cost it other facilities. Finally, Egypt's defection in 1971 denied it access to Alexandria. A similar reversal occurred in the Indian Ocean in 1977, when the Soviet Union lost access to the Berbera base in Somalia. The ease with which Third World countries have expelled their Soviet advisers and changed sides without a shot being fired indicates the fragility of the 'extension of Socialism'. These events ought to make those who still claim that once the Soviets set foot in a country they are there for ever think again. History teaches us that poor countries find it much easier to break off their links with the Kremlin than to repay loans from the West. In that sense, the IMF is a much more efficient and discrete policeman.

Unlike the USSR, the Americans have made their forward base system a major priority and have used the pretext of ensuring the survival of the rest of the world to set up bases on the Warsaw Pact's doorstep. They have in fact assumed the right to open fire at point blank range. This, combined with the doctrine of containment, means that, for the Soviets, strategic operations begin at the border. For Moscow, any increase in the Soviet Union's ability to make long-range interventions means increased room for manoeuvre. For Washington, it is an intolerable challenge. All the symptoms of this neurosis can be seen in a single phrase chosen at random from the prolific literature of Atlanticism: 'NATO does not have a great enough numerical *advantage* to ensure a satisfactory *balance* of naval *power*.'¹⁷

Domination or influence?

Luns is simply expressing the convictions of his Western colleagues when, in the midst of all this desolation, he finds at least a crumb of consolation in the fact that 'The Communist regimes have lost both their monolithic structure and their ideological and political appeal because they have failed on every count, except in terms of military prowess.³⁸ According to the former Secretary General, the USSR's so-called failure condemns it to being a one dimensional power. In terms of international relations, this leaves little room for the motivations of Third World countries which turn to the Soviet Union for aid; no political ideal is involved and all they can import is destabilization. This simplistic vision of the rules governing East-West relations simply confuses the issue. The model is discredited and only the threat remains.

The arms trade with the countries of the South is of course much more important to the USSR than it is to the West, but its absolute value is less important than its relative effect on the balance of trade. Between 1979 and 1983, the Third World absorbed 70 per cent of all the Soviet Union's exports of heavy armaments, 50 per cent of US exports and up to 80 or 90 per cent of French and Italian exports. NATO countries have always sold more weapons to more countries than Warsaw Pact countries, but this sector represents only 3 per cent of their total foreign trade; arms account for 10 per cent of Soviet exports.³⁹ This structural difference is becoming more marked, and half of all Soviet exports to the Third World now consist of arms. The change has been decisive, but it would be inaccurate to claim that it represents a complete militarization of trade with the Third World.

The change has more to do with admiration for Soviet weaponry than with admiration for the USSR itself. Soviet weapons are easy to use and maintain and stand up well to the harsh combat conditions found in most poor countries. They are also cheap and can therefore be bought in larger quantities than the more sophisticated and more fragile weapons produced in the West. Finally, they tend to be supplied more rapidly. Conflicts in the Middle East have consistently shown that their operational performance is poorer than that of American or European arms, but many governments are less interested in quality than in maintaining large armies at low cost and without excessive technological dependence on outside forces. Their nationalist and anti-imperialist aspirations are more important than their commitment to the Socialist ideal. The Soviet Union and the USA have a similar balance of trade with the Third World, but only twenty-six countries trade with the Soviet Union, whereas seventy-three trade with the USA.

Although the arms trade helps to improve profitability and provides the hard currency which the Soviet Union needs so badly, this highly specific form of aid cannot in itself change the basic nature of the regimes

to which it goes. Sukarno's Indonesia, Nasser's Egypt and Indira Gandhi's India all had highly developed public sectors, but they were still basically capitalist countries.

Even Third World countries which have political and military links with the Soviet Union trade more with the West than with the USSR. Ethiopia and Angola are classic examples of this paradox. In 1981, only 9.8 per cent of all Angola's imports came from the USSR; **56.6** per cent came from Western Europe and a further 11.1 per cent came from South Africa.³⁰ 27 per cent of Ethiopia's imports that year came from the USSR, whereas **54** per cent of its foreign trade was with the US and EEC countries.³¹

It is of course true that the USSR is trying to promote its interests throughout the world and that it therefore comes into conflict with the US and its allies, but it is far from true that it takes control of all the countries with which it establishes favourable relations. This is why many observers argue that the Soviet Union's sphere of effective dominance is restricted to Eastern Europe. The integration of the political and the military indicates that the international division of labour rests upon a very narrow economic base. The USSR's primary objective is the maintenance of the status quo with NATO and it tends therefore to react to any major opposition by breaking off relations or, in extreme cases, by military intervention. On the other hand, it would be difficult for an objective observer to describe those Third World countries in which the Soviet Union has exploited situations it did not create as constituting a sphere of influence. Alliances have been reversed, and the Soviet Union has been unable to influence events to any great extent. The fact that it expanded its sphere of influence in Africa and Asia substantially during the seventies does not in itself alter that fact. On the other hand, the challenges posed by Poland and Rumania may have revealed that its sphere of influence is increasingly fragile, but they have not breached it to any great extent.

Two other processes are also at work. One is gradual and goes by stages, but the other has been surprisingly rapid. Most European Communist Parties have, to varying degrees, distanced themselves from the Soviet Union and have left its 'sphere of domination' but not its 'sphere of influence'. Afghanistan, which was for a long time within the Soviet sphere of influence, has been dragged by force into its sphere of domination.

The Canadian Kremlinologist Jacques Levesque notes that, in economic terms, 'Local revolutions have extended Socialism beyond the borders of the Soviet Union, but they have not helped it to recover from its economic inferiority. On the contrary, the China of the fifties, Vietnam, Cuba, Angola and Ethiopia have all been economic burdens for the Soviet Union. In other areas of the Third World, the Soviet Union paid dearly

for the extension of its influence in the fifties and sixties. Since the fall of Khrushchev, Soviet leaders have tried to make trade with the Third World more profitable, and have been criticised by their partners for doing so, but they have not caught up with the West to any significant extent.' He concludes that, 'Until now, the extension of Socialism beyond the frontiers of the Soviet Union has resulted primarily but not exclusively in political and strategic gains. . . In that sense, the spread of communism. . . does help to consolidate and legitimize Soviet power.'³²

The fantasies of anti-communism

The anti-Soviet discourse of NATO is both logical and understandable coming from an organization of states which, in both ideological and military terms, is hostile to both the USSR and to Communism in general. The fact that NATO's one-sided arguments are being taken up by many intellectuals and by most of the Western media is a sign of the times. Some of their arguments look more like a frenzied crusade against the forces of evil rather than a careful and objective attempt to analyse the complex mechanisms that govern the workings of any society. In France, this tendency is represented by best-selling authors like Glucksmann, Morin, Ellenstein, Castoriadis, Lévy, Besançon and, to a lesser extent, Hélène d'Encausse. The amazing thing is that this crude warmongering discourse enjoys such popularity and is accepted by people of such widely differing views. More balanced and detailed analyses by Kremlinologists and observers of East-West relations like Kennan, Bialer, Hough, Lavigne, Julien and Levesque receive much less attention and are blithely ignored by the popular ideologues. There is something alarming about the mass interest whipped up by these apocalyptic prophets and their oversimplified picture of the Soviet threat, especially when more open-minded people are dismayed by the uniform greyness of the terms in which the inextricable complexity of the world is described. Novices are confused or disappointed by any analysis of world diplomacy or technology that does not read like an adventure novel or a political pamphlet. But when analyses are couched in those terms, objectivity flies out of the window.

Anti-Sovietism is rather like the Loch Ness monster. From time to time it reappears in the distance, refreshed after a few years' sleep. But it never dies because it is the USSR itself that makes its heart beat. Anti-Sovietism sounds the death knell for reasoned debate and for any rational debate and marks the beginning of an emotional campaign. Unfortunately, it takes hindsight to realize how much emotional intensity and irrationality is involved. On the other hand, these outbursts of irrepressible emotion allow the authorities to take concrete decisions, and the absurdity of their long-term implications is equalled only by the haste with which they were taken.

The incident involving the South Korean Boeing may well have revealed

the paranoia and tactlessness of the Soviet military, but it certainly cannot be interpreted as evidence of any increased operational capability or of expansionist ambitions on the part of the Soviet Union. But it had a considerable impact on the thinking of the US Congress, which had until then been reluctant to vote the exorbitant military credits demanded by the Reagan administration. Yet again, an emotional response confused the real issues.

A detailed examination of the US defence budget reveals that it has less to do with any real increase in the military capabilities of the USSR than with the short-term needs of the US itself. The Soviet budget has been rising steadily since the fifties, whereas the growth of the US budget has been characterized by the series of leaps reflecting the wars in Korea and Vietnam. This has not, of course, prevented the US from using the USSR as a pretext. In 1960, Kennedy used the terrifying prospect of a 'missile gap' to justify his huge nuclear programme. Although most commentators now accept that the 'gap' was purely imaginary, it is still part of NATO's arsenal of arguments. The same argument has successfully been used to prove that Europe is completely defenceless against the Soviet Union's SS20s. Reagan's attempt to use the 'window of vulnerability' argument to make Congress swallow the bitter pill of the Ballistic Missile Defence programme was less successful, but experts at the Laurence Livermore research centre in California are already preparing dossiers on a worrying 'beam gap' that is expected to appear in the 1990s.

Anything that comes from the East is portrayed in negative terms. Vices are turned into virtues and vice versa. The USSR is only a great economic power because it wants to improve its army and export its revolution. If its economy stagnates, it will be tempted to invade the West in order to acquire our technology. Trade with the Soviet Union is dangerous as it is tantamount to feeding an enemy. If the Soviet Union achieves self-sufficiency, it will become even more dangerous and nothing will stop its growth. The development of the Soviet threat means that we have to have arms control, but as soon as an agreement is reached it becomes a status quo which can only work to the advantage of the USSR. Its leaders are old and have established a gerontocracy which reflects the fossilization and stagnation of their system. They are ready to do anything. If—and everything suggests that this is in fact the case—a younger generation emerges and takes over from the old men, it will consist of Young Turks who will do anything to make their presence felt on the international scene, regardless of the consequences for the existing balance of power.

Propaganda techniques in fact have very little to do with the subject under discussion. The subject under discussion simply provides them with something to denounce and pretexts for polemics. Those who attack the Soviet Union most savagely are often those who know least about it.

Balanced counter-arguments have to rely upon a much higher degree of documentation. But the outcome of any debate with those who simultaneously hold state power, have the power that only money can give and control the media is a foregone conclusion. It is like the battle between David and Goliath. But this time, David has no sling.

NOTES

1. W.W. Rostow, *Les Etapes de la croissance économique; un manifeste non-communiste*, (Paris: Seuil, 1963).
2. J. Tinbergen, *Convergence of Economic Systems in East and West*, (Rotterdam, 1965).
3. P.A. Sorokin, *Russia and the United States*, (London: Stevens, 1950).
4. J.K. Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*, (London, 1967).
5. H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, (London: RKP, 1964).
6. In C. Zorbibe, 'Espoir et illusion d'un rapprochement des structures économiques et politiques', *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 1975, p. 10.
7. Service de l'information de l'OTAN, *L'OTAN et le Pacte de Varsovie; Comparaison des forces en présence*, (Brussels, 1964), p. 3.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
10. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1984*, (London, 1984), pp. 24, 27. The figures are all taken from the same source.
11. For a more detailed study see Xavier Zeebroek, *La Puissance militaire soviétique*, Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix (GRIP), *Dossier Notes et Documents*, No. 71, (Brussels, 1984), Part 1.
12. *Course aux armements, contrôle des armements*, (French translation of SIPRI 1983 *Pocket Yearbook*); GRIP, *Gyroscope*, Summer-Autumn 1983, pp. 80-81.
13. For a more detailed study see Xavier Zeebroek, 'Liban, Qui a peur des armes soviétiques?' *Gyroscope*, Winter 1982-1983.
14. France and England had 3,267 planes between them, as opposed to the Third Reich's 3,959. On paper, the Allies in fact had the advantage in terms of fighters (1,420 against 1,264), but unfortunately only 690 fighters and 1,120 other aircraft were actually in France in June 1940. In terms of numbers of tanks, Hitler was at an even greater disadvantage in June 1940 he had only 2,574 tanks, as opposed to the Allies' 4,100. No German tank weighed more than 20 tons; the Allies had 330 of that weight. For further details see J.Sapir, 'Comment apprécier la menace soviétique?' in *Eviter la Guerre* (collective), (Paris: Maspero, 1983), pp. 52-53.
15. 'Expansion de la puissance militaire soviétique', *Nouvelles Atlantiques*, No. 1372, 10 December 1981, Annexe A, p. 1. (Press release from North Atlantic Military Committee.)
16. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
18. J.M.A.H. Luns, 'Un Regard d'adieu sur l'OTAN', *Revue de l'OTAN*, (Brussels, April 1984), p. 2.
19. *Ibid.*
20. For a more detailed study see D.M. Gormley, 'The Direction and Pace of Soviet Force Projection Capabilities', *Survival*, (London: IISS, November-December 1982), pp. 266-276.
21. *L'OTAN et le Pacte de Varsovie*, p. 18.

22. J. Labayle-Couhat, *Flottes de combat 1983*, (Paris), pp. xxiv, xxv.
23. 'Bombardiers nucléaires soviétiques déployés au Viet-nam', *La Wallonie*, 2 March, 1984.
24. R. Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1983*, (Washington D.C.), pp. 8-9. Cf. Tables I and II.
25. As will be seen from Table I, there are now 34,550 Cubans based abroad, most of them in Africa.
26. Cf. S.I. Sikorsky, 'Make it Simple. . . Make it Work', *Air Force Magazine*, (Washington D.C., March 1984), pp. 92-95.
27. *L'OTAN et le Pacte de Varsovie*, p. 5.
28. Luns, 'Un Regard d'adieu', p. 5.
29. *SIPRI Yearbook 1984*, p. 177.
30. F. Gèze, A. Valladao and Y. Lacoste, (eds.), *L'Etat du monde. Annuaire économique et géopolitique mondial*, (Paris: Maspero 1982), p. 320.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
32. J. Levesque, *L'URSS et sa politique internationale de 1917 à nos jours*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980), pp. 328-329.

Translated by David Macey