

Current Notes and Comments

Freedom in Danger: The External and Internal Threats*

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The Fight for Liberal Democracy

One of the reasons why we still enjoy a great measure of freedom in the Western world is that, from the time of Edmund Burke until the middle of this century, our peoples have been prepared to fight for political freedom, not only with their hearts and minds but with their lives as well. It is a matter for some concern that nowadays, for a number of reasons, people seem less ready to recognize the dangers, and even if they recognize them, less ready to fight against them persistently and courageously.

Until the early part of this century, the acknowledged model of government, the ideal system, even in the Russia of the Tsars, was liberal democracy, in the British, the European or American style. Today, however, the free institutions and the democratic systems which we have inherited from our political forebears have lost their hold on the allegiance and the affections of the people of the world. They are no longer universally accepted—they are, in fact, fiercely and often violently challenged; and they are attacked and violated with increasing frequency inside the democracies of the West. No one any longer talks as they did at the turn of the century (and even for a while between the two great wars) of the progress of liberal democracy throughout the world. Instead we have been forced into a kind of siege mentality in which we have to talk not of the spread of liberal democracy but of its defense against the dangers to its very survival.

It is, of course, still fashionable in certain quarters to dismiss this kind of thinking as alarmist “doom-watching.” Anyone who seeks to identify the

*The text of this paper was delivered by Lord Chalfont on 3 Sept. 1976 at the XXIIND Annual Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association in Copenhagen.

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massive and growing threats to the survival of Western liberal democracy is met with cries of "cold warrior," of "fascist" or with that most mindless and meaningless of slogans "Reds under the bed." Yet I believe it to be demonstrable that our way of life *is* under a far more serious threat than it was in the days of Edmund Burke . . .

In my view, regulated individual liberty—the freedom of the human individual to make choices about his life and his future, provided that in doing so he does not impinge upon the freedom of other human beings—is incomparably the most precious possession that we have. It is, of course, possible to argue that there are places in the world to which such a judgment would be irrelevant and irresponsible. Lectures on the dignity and freedom of the individual might not be welcome in the streets of Calcutta where people die of disease and starvation every day; but in the West we have no cause to fear the worst excesses of starvation or disease.

Whatever our economic problems, our standard of living in the material sense is higher than it has ever been before, and we have both the opportunity and the right to care more for the higher qualities of life; and it is for this reason that I advance the clear proposition that the most precious single possession that we have inherited from centuries of industrial revolution and political development is our freedom, and the political system which sustains and nourishes it. I believe that freedom now to be dangerously menaced in a number of ways. It is threatened by the growing possibility of attack from outside and perhaps even more significantly by persistent assault from within as well. Let us look a little more closely at some of these dangers, beginning with that posed by Soviet foreign policy and the military threat which arises from it.

Moscow's Aggressive Foreign Policy

Those who still need to be convinced that there *is* a grave and growing military threat to the survival of Western civilization now have available for their consideration a formidable array of evidence, provided by many witnesses with impeccable credentials. A succession of NATO's admirals, generals and air-marshals—from Hackett, Haig and Kielmannsegg to Steinhoff, Carver and Zumwalt—have issued a series of solemn warnings about the weaknesses of a Western defense system which is now faced by one of the most powerful military machines in history. A few journalists, academics and independently-minded politicians have sounded the alarm bells as well. More recently, a new and impressive voice has added its own warning—no less than that of Dr. Henry Kissinger, United States Secretary of State.

As is now widely known by those with an interest in these matters, the United States Department of State earlier this year issued (with Dr. Kissinger's authority) a telegram of guidance to American diplomatic posts. It is true that the telegram was based on the record of a talk given at a meeting of American

diplomats in London by Mr. Helmut Sonnenfeldt, one of the Secretary of State's advisers. But no one, presumably, will be naive enough to believe that Mr. Sonnenfeldt's dissertation in London was inconsistent with the views of his chief; or that if it were, it would have had immortality conferred upon it in a State Department telegram. Whatever may be the finer points of qualification and exegesis, it is clear that the telegram represents the latest thinking in the State Department.

It is, therefore, a matter of some importance that the general lines of this thinking should be widely known and understood. It is, to be true, not of an especially revolutionary nature, but it has the merit of being lucid, logical and realistic. Its basic premise is that the Soviet Union is emerging as a global superpower, and that there is nothing that anyone can do to prevent it. The Soviets, according to the Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt doctrine, are the new imperialists, and their power is based almost entirely on military strength. At the same time Communism is making substantial advances in Western Europe; and Dr. Kissinger, like most other people capable of reading anything more profound than the message on a packet of cornflakes, declines to believe that French, Portuguese, British or Italian Communists are fundamentally different from their comrades in Moscow. In other words, he recognizes that if Communists begin to participate in, and eventually to dominate, the governments of certain Western European countries, that will be the beginning of the end of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the signal for a radical transformation of American foreign policy.

It is, perhaps, not entirely coincidental that this analysis is broadly consistent with the view taken of East-West relations in Peking. The Chinese theory is that the "social-imperialists" of the USSR have a global strategic plan which involves the destruction of NATO by isolating the United States from Western Europe and, through the mechanism of *détente*, undermining the will of the West to resist Soviet expansion. With the United States manoeuvred into a "Fortress America" mentality and Western Europe either neutralized or "Finlandized," the Kremlin would be able to turn Eastwards, attack China and spread the Soviet Empire over the whole of the Eurasian land mass. Allowing for the inevitable differences of emphasis and presentation, there is very little substantial difference between the American and the Chinese analysis of the world power equation.

Faced with these persuasive scenarios of possible Soviet intentions, the leaders of the West seem strangely unmoved. Those who postulate an aggressive and imperialist Soviet foreign policy are denounced as McCarthyists and reactionary cold warriors. It is claimed that the Soviet Union has nothing to gain from expansionism, and that the policy of *détente* should be taken at its face value, as the expression of a genuine desire for world peace through disarmament and international co-operation. It is, therefore, important to look beyond

mere theoretical hypotheses of Soviet political aims.

As anyone trained in the basic essentials of intelligence work will confirm, the business of assessing the likely actions of a potential enemy depends upon a correct interpretation of two closely interrelated factors—his intentions and his capabilities. If, then, the warnings about Soviet imperialism are to carry any weight, those who issue them must be prepared to demonstrate that the Soviet Union has the capacity to implement an aggressive foreign policy; and furthermore that it has shown unmistakable signs of using its military and other resources for this purpose.

High Soviet Defense Expenditure

It is notoriously difficult to calculate with any degree of confidence precisely what percentage of the Soviet gross national product is devoted to its military budget. In a detailed and highly technical analysis of Soviet defense spending given in testimony last year to the United States Joint Economic Committee, Mr. Andrew Marshall of the Defense Department suggested that analysts of the Central Intelligence Agency, usually regarded as the standard-bearers of the Cold War, have consistently *underestimated* Soviet military activity.

As Mr. Marshall points out, military as opposed to civilian research and development in the Soviet Union is given clear priority for deploying the best scientists in such disciplines as applied mathematics, computer science, systems analysis, biochemistry and biophysics. Furthermore, arbitrary Soviet accounting practices tend systematically to underprice military research, development and production. Finally there is the generally accepted phenomenon of direct or indirect subsidy of military activity from non-defense departments or from society in general. Pre-military training, for example, which is designed to prepare young Russians for military service, is paid for not out of the defense budget, but out of donations, lottery proceeds and State grants.

Mr. Marshall's evidence to the Joint Economic Committee suggests that defense activities in the Soviet Union may account for anything between 10 and 20 percent compared with approximately 6 percent in the United States and an average 3.5 percent in the rest of NATO. Even the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a studiously objective and cautious body, using a realistic dollar-rouble conversion rate, estimates Soviet military expenditure at over 10 percent of gross national product.

It is, however, not only the current level of spending which is significant. Any analysis aimed at assessing future Soviet intentions must take into account the general trend of military procurement. The consensus among Western intelligence services is that the rate of Soviet defense expenditure has doubled in the last ten years, while that of Western countries has remained virtually static. The United States Defense Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, recently told the

American Senate that the Soviet Union last year spent 42 percent more on defense than the United States.

The result of all this has been a massive accretion of Soviet military power. Exact assessments of its strength are made difficult by the Russian passion for secrecy and the closed nature of their political system. In any case, numerical strength alone is not the decisive factor in assessing a military balance, especially in the field of nuclear weapons. It is, however, worth pointing out that whereas ten years ago the Soviet Union had only 224 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles against America's 854, the corresponding figures today are 1618 Soviet ICBMs and 1054 in the United States. These figures do not include submarine-launched missiles, in which the USSR also has a slight numerical advantage.

The Soviet superiority in numbers of launch vehicles is largely cancelled out by the American lead in multiple warheads, giving them a total of 6,794 warheads against 3,442 in the USSR. This is, however, a situation which could change very rapidly if the latter should equip its more powerful launch vehicles (the SS 18 and the SS 19) with large numbers of multiple warheads. The Soviet Union produced a new generation of MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetted Re-entry Vehicles) only three months after the signature of the first agreement of Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT I), in which the United States had conceded superiority in launch vehicles on the grounds of their own lead in MIRVs. Even so, the development of the cruise missile, with extremely accurate guidance systems, is likely to keep the United States ahead of the USSR in nuclear missile technology. It is probably for this reason that the Soviet Union has suggested a deal with the Americans by which deployment of the Tupolev supersonic bomber (Backfire) would be limited in exchange for American restrictions of cruise missile development.

Growing Strength of Warsaw Pact

Turning to the conventional field, the Red Army, together with the Air Defense Forces and the paramilitary units of the KGB and the MVD, has a strength of 2.8 million. The total armed forces are said to number 3.5 million, though some American experts put this figure as high as 4.5 million. The comparable figures for the United States are 790,000 and 2.1 million, respectively. The Soviet Union has 40,000 battle tanks, the United States just over 10,000. These raw figures alone, however, do not provide a true picture of the military balance. They do not, for example, take account of the relative strengths of America's allies in NATO and those of the Soviet Union in the Warsaw Pact.

A much more significant comparison is that between the Warsaw Pact and NATO in Europe. Here, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the position in the crucial Northern and Central sectors is weighted substantially in favor of the Communist forces. There are, for example, 69

Warsaw Pact divisions (40 of them Russian) facing 27 NATO divisions; or put in another way, 895,000 Communist troops against 625,000 Allied troops in the West. There are 19,000 main battle tanks, 5,000 tactical aircraft and 5,600 artillery pieces in operational service in peacetime in the Warsaw Pact forces in North and Central Europe; in NATO there are 7,000 tanks, 2,000 aircraft and 2,700 guns.

As the IISS points out, in publishing figures of this kind a balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact cannot be struck simply by a comparison of manpower, combat units or military equipment. It is necessary to take into account, on the one hand, that some of Moscow's allies may not be entirely reliable in a crisis and that NATO's equipment is probably technically better than that of the Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, NATO forces are not deployed where they would be needed in war; the Soviets have reasonably secure internal lines of communication across Eastern Europe, while the American home base is 3,000 miles across the Atlantic; and the Soviet Union is able to impose almost complete standardization of equipment throughout the Warsaw Pact, an achievement which has so far proved too much for NATO.

Even when these and other factors are taken into account, however, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the military balance in Europe is heavily in favor of the Warsaw Pact. As a recent NATO study has pointed out, this superiority would become even more decisive if the Soviet Union decided on a surprise attack with limited objectives. Although this is one of the least likely scenarios for the immediate future it is clear that, in the worst possible case, Warsaw Pact forces could occupy large areas of the Federal Republic within a matter of days, overrunning NATO's battlefield nuclear weapons before any decision could be made to fire them.

Most Western strategic analysts still believe that, in spite of their great and growing superiority in the European theatre, a military attack there remains an unattractive option for the Soviet Union, if only because of the risk of nuclear retaliation. It is in this context that we must consider the phenomenon of Soviet naval strength.

The Soviet Union, possibly accepting a stalemate in the European area, has clearly decided to give a high priority to naval deployment, designed to add to the geopolitical pressure of land-based military power. The Soviet navy now constantly demonstrates its capacity to operate on a global scale, with units being moved flexibly among the four main fleets—the Atlantic, Baltic, Pacific and Black Sea (which includes the Mediterranean fleet) and the Indian Ocean Task Force. In addition there is a Research Fleet which is larger than the combined research fleets of the rest of the world, and is engaged in oceanography, intelligence collection, meteorology and communication. Soviet bases and naval facilities are appearing all over the world—in East Africa, West Africa, India, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Somalia and Aden.

It is, then, demonstrable that whatever may be the declared intentions of the Soviet Union in foreign policy, it is rapidly acquiring a war-winning military capability. This is underlined by the development in the USSR of an elaborate Civil Defense Organization, indicating that Soviet military planners do not rule out the option of a nuclear war, which they evidently believe they could actually win.

The British Government's Statement on the Defense Estimates, published in March of this year, devoted four pages to an extensive commentary on the growing strength of the Warsaw Pact. It pointed out that in the European Atlantic area the Soviet Northern fleet and the Warsaw Pact had a clear superiority in surface ships, submarines, naval aircraft, men, tanks, guns and tactical aircraft, outnumbering NATO by ratios ranging from 1.3 to 1 for soldiers to 2.7 to 1 for main battle tanks. There are, of course, still those who insist that this massive buildup derives from motives which need cause no alarm in the West—such as fear of China, the need to maintain Soviet dominance over Eastern Europe, or the simple desire to be the biggest and the strongest military power in the world after decades of inferiority complex in the face of American military power.

It would, however, be a totally irresponsible Western leader who rejected the possibility that it might have another, simpler and more brutal motive—the motive imputed to the Soviet Union in the Chinese analysis, namely that these powerful forces are meant sooner or later to fight an imperialist war.

International Terrorism and Eurocommunism

The threat to our freedom is not, however, simply a classical military threat based on the growing power of the forces of the Soviet Union and its allies. There are other developments in international relations as well which should give us cause for grave concern. International terrorism has reached new levels of ruthlessness and violence and it hardly needs saying that most terrorist activities are directed against the governments of liberal democracies. No one hears of terrorist attempts to blackmail the government of the Soviet Union or the People's Republic of China.

I do not suggest for one moment that the forces of international terrorism are centrally inspired or centrally controlled, but I do suggest, on the basis of clear and incontrovertible evidence, that when it suits their purpose to do so the forces of international Communism will give support to terrorist organizations anywhere in the world. There is already proof of close links between the IRA and some of the more extreme Trotskyist movements in Britain; and Soviet military equipment regularly appears in the armories of terrorist organizations all over the world.

In the international field, there is the discernible shift to the left in political attitudes. This is a complex matter which might well be the subject of a paper

on its own. I will content myself here simply with the example of Italy, which, if present trends continue, will almost certainly have sooner or later either a Communist government or a coalition in which Communists will play a dominant part. Some people insist that the Communists of Italy are different from the Communists of the Soviet Union—that they are men of democratic principles, committed to pluralistic government, to free elections and to the defense of the West through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In my view anyone who believes this is living in a dream world. The Communist Party of Italy and its leader regularly send their messages of solidarity to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and attend its meetings in Moscow; and at the 25th Congress of the CPSU in February of this year Mr. Brezhnev issued stern warnings against any retreat from “proletarian internationalism.”

Whatever the Italian Communist Party may say today about “historic compromise” or about their commitment to the principles of democracy, it seems to me that if the Italians do eventually choose Communism, whatever their understandable disenchantment with the record of their past governments, they will be embarking upon a dangerous and possibly fatal experiment. It can be argued that if a country goes to the polls in a democratic election and elects a Communist government, that is probably the last time it ever will go to the polls in a free election. In any case, whatever may be the validity of these arguments, no one would seriously dispute that the emergence of a Communist government in Italy would fundamentally shift the balance of political power in Europe and might even set off a chain reaction which will have its repercussions in Yugoslavia, in Austria, in Spain and possibly even in France.

Western Decline and Demoralization

No matter how objective one may seek to be, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the power and vigor of Western liberal democracy is in decline. The pressures on our political freedom, however, are not entirely external. It is no longer possible to disguise the fact that within our own societies we have substantial numbers of people who are prepared to use the instruments of democracy to destroy the very political system which gives them the freedom to behave as they do. Much has been spoken and written about some of the more obvious manifestations of this in Britain—for example, the disproportionate influence of the Communist Party in the leadership of major industrial trade unions, the activities of extremist and subversive organizations, the growing strength of the Left in the Labor Party and its influence on the political complexion of the government.

There are, too, signs of a more general decline and demoralization in Western society. One of the most disturbing of these is the steady rise in the level of violence. I refer here not only to the mindless and destructive violence of football vandals and hooligans, but to the more serious violence of political terrorism

and also the disturbing incidence of violence amongst criminals. I believe that manifestations of this kind are themselves a danger to our free society and that we must now ask ourselves some very serious questions about the kind of society we have fashioned. In the creation of any social and political system, the most delicate and crucial calculation of all is that which concerns the balance between freedom and order.

I have recently visited countries in which, it might be powerfully argued, there is too much order and too little freedom. In the People's Republic of China for example, whatever great economic and social advances have been made since the revolution, there is no real freedom in the sense in which we understand it—there is no freedom of movement, no real freedom of speech and no freedom of intellectual inquiry. In Mrs. Gandhi's India, once the largest democracy in the world, there is now a measure of government control so rigid that it would be perverse any longer to describe it as a free country. There are many other countries in the world, including the Soviet Union itself, where the choice of those who govern society has been for order at the expense of freedom. It is a choice which leads inevitably, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn has told us, to oppression and to misery.

Yet I wonder whether in the West, in our justifiable horror of oppression, we have not begun to drift too far in the other direction. Have we gone so far in our trendy pursuit of the permissive society that we are beginning to put at risk the basic order upon which any fair and compassionate society must rest? For one thing is certain in any attempt to resolve this classic political dilemma. It is, that there can be no real freedom without order. Without the rule of law and without a healthy respect for it throughout our society there can be no true individual freedom, no real human dignity and no lasting security for the members of our society. Without order we are at the mercy of the strongest, the most ruthless and the most vicious; and we should now be thinking seriously about the kind of legislation and the kind of public attitudes which might be necessary to reverse what seems to me to be a dangerous drift towards a lawless and ungovernable society.

Finally, I come to what I believe to be the most subtle and pernicious threat to our freedom. It is not as readily identifiable as any of the others because it is quite often posed by well-meaning people who, in the pursuit of some lofty and often vaguely defined political aim, nibble away at our basic freedoms—at our freedom of speech, our freedom of economic choice, our freedom of movement. Furthermore, in many cases, the value of our money is being debased; and it is not necessary to be a student of Marxism to know that one of the principal aims of any revolutionary is the debauchery of the currency. When a people loses faith in its money, it soon loses faith in its political system; and that way lies anarchy and chaos—the favorite breeding ground of the subversive.

I should at this stage say that I certainly do not contest the right of governments to a degree of intervention in the economy or in the organization of society. To do so would be foolish in the extreme. My proposition is, however, that in some Western countries that intervention has gone too far and that we are now approaching the very frontiers of social democracy.

East-West Economic Relations

There is one other issue which should be the cause of grave concern to us—that of trade relations between the Soviet Union and the West. The economy of the USSR is, to put the matter as dispassionately as possible, not exactly flourishing. Indeed, the tenth Soviet five-year plan (1976-1980) provides for the lowest rate of growth since the war. At the Twenty-fifth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February, Mr. Brezhnev, with impressive sangfroid, recognized that there was a problem but dismissed it as being of a temporary and not very important nature. Yet there are elements in the state of the Soviet economy which suggest otherwise.

A disastrously inefficient agricultural system has resulted in a heavy demand on the world's grain supplies, in spite of the fact that collective farming accounts for a quarter of the country's labor force and one fifth of the national income. And although the Soviet Union is generally regarded as a major industrial power, its industry also shows signs of being in many respects ineffective and structurally inadequate. As a result, the Soviet Union has become increasingly dependent upon food and advanced technology from the West; and as this flows into the Soviet economy, often financed by massive Western credits, the Kremlin's military machine, already too large to be explained away as purely defensive, continues to expand.

The inference is that we are now in a bizarre situation in which Western economic aid to the Soviet Union enables its government to escape the immediate consequences of its own industrial and economic shortcomings, and at the same time to continue to devote substantial resources to the military sector. The resulting accretion of military strength is the potential instrument of a foreign policy which is openly committed to the "international class struggle," in other words, to the eventual overthrow of capitalism. The West is therefore engaged in the curious process of rescuing from its own economic incompetence a regime whose principal aims of foreign policy include the ultimate destruction of its creditors.

This analysis of one of the unacceptable faces of Communism forms the basis of an important study by Alexander Wolynski, published recently by the British Institute for the Study of Conflict. Its point of departure is that the internal and foreign policies of the Soviet Union are based on the unalterable principle of a hostile relationship between two fundamentally opposed systems—socialism and capitalism; and that "peaceful coexistence" is no more than a tactical

instrument of Soviet foreign policy. Recognizing, however, that they would be unable to solve their fundamental economic problems without substantial assistance from the West, the Soviet leaders have embarked upon the policy of détente, designed principally to ensure large-scale Western economic cooperation. This policy is, however, not to be allowed to jeopardize the Soviet military buildup, and, according to Mr. Wolynski, Mr. Brezhnev gave a formal undertaking to this effect at a meeting of the Central Committee in April 1973.

Meanwhile the United States is obviously a key factor in the Soviet calculations and a new era in Soviet-American economic relations began in November 1971 when Mr. Maurice Stans, the United States Secretary for Commerce, led a delegation to Moscow for the first official talks on expansion of trade. At the same time the Soviet Union began to cultivate economic relations with other Western countries. The implications of this theory, although not entirely novel to the student of Soviet foreign policy, are nevertheless profoundly significant.

Aiding Soviet Expansionism

It is, of course, essential to distinguish between, on the one hand, legitimate trade with the Soviet Union in a climate of genuine cooperation, and on the other hand, Western economic aid for Soviet expansionism. The distinction can only be made in the context of the perceived aims of Soviet foreign policy. Both in theory and in everyday practice they seem, in spite of the windy rhetoric of the Helsinki Declaration, to fall some way short of total benevolence. The events in Angola suggested a continued readiness on the part of the Soviet Union to exploit political instability, even to the extent of intervening in the affairs of distant countries. And the structure of the present Five Year Plan does nothing to dispel the impression that further expansion of the military machine is a primary aim of Soviet policy.

It seems, therefore, at least arguable that the West should evolve some kind of coordinated attitude towards technological and financial assistance for the Soviet Union. There are, in fact, signs that American controls on the licensing of exports to Eastern Europe are becoming stricter—the United States government was notably incensed by the success of the Soviet Union in playing off one private interest against another in their notorious grain deals. On the other hand, West European countries seem slow to recognize the problem. Indeed, there are known cases in which an export license for computers has been turned down in Washington because of possible Soviet military application of the equipment, while similar requests have been approved by the Cocom, the Co-ordination Committee in Paris.

It would, of course, be foolish to suggest that normalization of trade with the Soviet Union and other Communist countries is intrinsically undesirable. Yet there is one sentence in Mr. Wolynski's recent study which should be engraved in some prominent place in every chancery and cabinet room in the

West: "Whenever assistance is provided from outside the Soviet economic system, its internal resources are released, and by substitution the Soviet Union is enabled to devote such resources to the regime's political objectives."

This is, of course, one of the advantages of central planning and a totalitarian political system. It is an advantage denied to the West, which is committed to a mixed economy, and to the freedom of commercial enterprise and entrepreneurial skills which go with it. Yet the present situation is clearly unsatisfactory, and there is a case for both national and international government action to ensure that trade with the Soviet Union is so conducted that it is not inconsistent with the general aims of our own foreign policy; and more specifically that it does not positively promote those of the Soviet Union in so far as they are hostile to the West.

The Need for Reciprocal Détente

It is sometimes argued that even if Soviet foreign policy poses a threat, there is very little that can be done about it. The Soviet Union, the argument runs, is emerging as a global super-power and neither China nor the West can prevent it. Furthermore, it is suggested that the West is in no position, economically or politically, to match the Soviet Union tank for tank and ship for ship, and that to attempt to do so would be dangerous as well as enormously expensive. The logical corollary is that the only intelligent policy is that of détente—attempting, in the words of the Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt doctrine, to "affect the way in which (Soviet) power is developed and used."

It has to be said, however, that the progress of détente policies so far does not furnish grounds for excessive confidence. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks have done nothing to prevent the further development of nuclear weapons; specifically, they have done nothing to prevent the Soviet Union from shifting the nuclear balance perceptibly in its own favor. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe ended in the virtually meaningless Declaration of Helsinki, a collection of pious declarations and empty platitudes, including a great deal about non-intervention in the affairs of participating States, which did not prevent the Soviet Union from intervening very actively in Portugal a few weeks later.

Finally, the major achievement of the talks of Mutual Force Reductions, since they began in October 1973, seems to have been to change the name of the negotiations, from MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions) to MUREFAAMCE (Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe)—a development of rather less than world-shaking importance. It is clear from the negotiations and especially from the initial proposals put forward by both sides that the Soviet Union is perfectly content with the present military balance, and intends to maintain a numerical superiority even in the unlikely event of an agreement to reduce force levels.

On the other hand, it is clearly in the Western interest that a dialogue with the Soviet Union should be maintained. What is dangerous about the present situation is that we are negotiating from a position which is, relatively speaking, growing weaker every day. This will lead, at best, to concessions by the West without anything very significant in the way of reciprocation by the Soviet Union; and at worst to a position in which Soviet demands might become intolerable, but, in the face of growing Russian military power, irresistible. They might one day, to borrow the vivid language of the mafioso, be in a position to make us an offer which we would be unable to refuse. It is, therefore, important and urgent that the West should decide, before it is too late, what policies to adopt in the face of this growing danger. The first essential is that governments should be prepared to recognize the potential threat and that they should have the political courage to ensure that their people are aware of it.

Urgent Atlantic Action

In democratic societies it is, of course, unpopular, in what is generally if somewhat naively regarded as peacetime, to propose programs of rearmament; and when economic pressures become heavy, the easiest target for retrenchment is the military establishment. Yet none of the housing, medical or social welfare programs will be of any use in the long term unless Western governments are prepared to provide effective and adequate security forces to defend their political systems against attack—whether from outside or from within. If Western countries continue to try to cut their defense budgets while that of the Soviet Union is increasing every year, the ultimate decline of the West cannot be long delayed.

Much could be done, however, even without much extra cost, to improve the efficiency of NATO's existing defenses. Standardization of equipment, specialization in national arms production, and harmonization of tactical and strategic doctrines might seem too obvious even to need mentioning. And yet NATO, in the 27 years of its existence, has signally failed to make more than marginal advances in any of these fields. The deployment of NATO troops is still based upon the adventitious arrangement of post-war occupation zones, and bears little relation to the demands of an effective defense. Yet no one seems willing or able to correct the situation.

Finally, the defensive strategy of the Alliance is based upon an illusion. The principle of flexible response requires that NATO forces should be able to meet aggression at any level with a suitable riposte. The fact is that the conventional defenses have been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that the ability to repel anything but a comparatively minor reconnaissance now depends on the early use of nuclear weapons. The fallacy of the "tactical" nuclear battle still blinds many military planners to the somber truth that, in the era of the second strike capability, American, French or British nuclear weapons are extremely