

It Takes Two To Détente or Can Russia Change Its Spots?

The Soviet Union, in regarding the coexistence of states with different social systems as a form of class struggle between socialism and capitalism, at the same time consistently favors the maintenance of normal, peaceful relations with capitalist countries, the decision of interstate questions in dispute by negotiations and not by means of war.

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For the Soviet Union peaceful co-existence is only a new tactical phase in weakening the bonds of the free world.

Konrad Adenauer,
at Yale University, 1956

In the Declaration of Basic Principles, on relations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., signed in Moscow on May 29, 1972, the two nations say they "will proceed from the common determination that in the nuclear age there is no alternative to conducting their mutual relations on the basis of peaceful co-existence." These are the guidelines that were set up about three years ago between the two world leaders. What can be said about the conduct of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in the context of a combustible world which will help us determine whether the representations have been lived up to? It is here contended that with specific reference to the conduct of the U.S.S.R., the deeds have not in any way been consistent with the words since they were announced so auspiciously. In the area of the Middle East, trade, attitude and conduct toward NATO, adherence to the norms and precepts of international law and their general disruptive conduct, the Russians can surely be faulted. Let us try to justify these allegations.

In an essay entitled "Détente: Reality and Illusion"¹ Hans J. Morgenthau

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¹Wall Street Journal, July 18, 1974.

points out that the balance of terror, not detente, has kept the peace between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in recent years. Effective restraints have been placed on the foreign policy of both superpowers; he reminds us of the American abstention during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviet retreat at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the Middle Eastern War of 1973. It is Morgenthau's view that the Russians have suddenly discovered the virtues and benefits of detente—as a universal abstraction. They have discovered the disproportionate burden of sustaining simultaneously a high military presence on their Eastern and Western frontiers and of competing with the United States for nuclear and general technological parity. There are other areas, in addition, where Russia finds the theory of détente to work in their best interests. They have been receptive to West Germany's recognition of the territorial status quo in Central Europe; they seek the same recognition on the part of the other European nations as well as the non-European members of NATO through the instrumentality of the European Security Conference. All of these moves have been taken by Russia in the name and spirit of detente. Morgenthau files a dissent.

These, and other, Soviet policies, deserve to be examined on their own merits, in view of their bearing upon the interests of the United States. Yet their justification or rejection in the name of detente inhibits such examination: The invocation of detente as a kind of disembodied spirit, permeating and thereby transforming the overall relations of formerly hostile nations, becomes a substitute for the detached examination of the objective factors of interests and power.

On the one hand, the Russians want the security of their Western boundary fixed by an agreement with both NATO and non-NATO countries. But what are they doing as a quid pro quo for this arrangement? The Soviets are pressing Norway for the establishment of a joint Norwegian-Soviet rule of the Spitzbergen Island group north of Norway in the Arctic Ocean.² This action would further weaken NATO's position in a strategically important area. It is contended by authoritative sources that the further extension of Soviet sea and air power into the Norwegian and Baltic Seas has already seriously weakened the alliance's position on the northern flank, regarded as the key to the strategic control of the North Atlantic and the main sea lanes between North America and Europe. All Soviet nuclear submarines, the report goes on to say, are based at Murmansk and must pass between Spitzbergen and Norway's North Cape into the Atlantic. Under present arrangements their passage can be detected by the alliance.

Eugene V. Rostow, professor at Yale Law School and President of the Atlantic Treaty Association asserts³ that the Middle Eastern war of October,

²New York Times, September 9, 1974.

³New York Times, October 21, 1974.

1973, was a fundamental Soviet thrust at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, designed to outflank allied forces in central Europe. The war had other purposes too: to separate Europe from America, bring Europe's resources under Soviet control and drive the United States out of the Mediterranean and Europe itself. Rostow goes on to charge that the Arab attack was the most basic thrust against the Atlantic alliance since 1945; it was far more serious than earlier crises over the peripheral areas like Cuba, Berlin and Korea. The war, claims Rostow, was a strategic, not a tactical move; it was a threat to the very basis of our positions. The Soviet game plan for 1973 was the same as in 1967, but on a larger and better-prepared scale. Rostow feels that the efforts to coax Israel to enter into further "military-disengagements" without peace would repeat the disastrous 1957 formula that permitted the Soviet Union to expand its influence in the area, and approach the point of bringing Europe—and perhaps Japan—under its control.

The position and activity of the Russians in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 is something that must be examined in the context of the theory and practice of détente. C. L. Sulzberger⁴ an astute observer of world affairs—contends that the world seems to be running down the road to a further Arab-Israeli war, more bitter, more bloody, and certainly more dangerous than its predecessors. Sulzberger alleges that the Soviet Union, privately furious that Secretary Kissinger had managed to euvre it out of Egypt has retaliated by arming Syria to the teeth. It has also been equipping the PLO with new weapons and tactical training. Yasir Arafat, with the aid and comfort of Russian arms, foresees war within six months. There seems to be no question that the Egyptians and Syrians would not have attacked in October, 1973, without the tacit approval (and aid) of the Russians—recalling the similar ploy of the U.S.S.R. when North Korea invaded the South. No threatening move by any of the Middle Eastern countries is made unless and until Russia gives the enterprise a nod of approval. In a scenario of the future entitled "The Oil War of 1976: How the Shah Won the World"⁵ Paul Erdman describes how the Russians and Iranians had (just prior to the outbreak of that war) executed a mutual assistance pact; that the Shah controlled (1976) the biggest and best trained army in the Middle East, the largest and most sophisticated air force and a flexible modern navy. After assurances from Russia and the loan of six atomic bombs from France, the Shah proceeds to conquer Iraq and turn the Persian Gulf into an Iranian lake.⁶ Granted that this scenario is entirely fictive and imaginative, the point of this view into the future emphasizes that the Russian boundaries are carefully

⁴New York Times, November 10, 1974.

⁵NEW YORK MAGAZINE, December 2, 1974, p. 39.

⁶There are some people who feel that if the control of the various oil rich countries around the Persian Gulf did fall under the control of the Shah, it would make for a more stable community in that region than now exists.

monitored by the Soviets and only those strategic or tactical moves that benefit it are permitted or connived at.

It would be the height of naivete to believe that any superpower would allow anything to happen on its periphery (or anywhere in the world, if it could control it) that it felt was inimical to its best interests. On the other hand, if the world is eagerly looking toward an era of compromise and cooperation, then how can the Soviet Union justify its actions in the October 1973 war? Walter Z. Laquer, Director of the Institute of Policy Studies in London writes as follows a few months after the war.⁷

If the Russians knew that there would be war in the Middle East, surely they would inform Washington. A common effort would be made to prevent war, and if that should be impossible, to limit the fighting and bring it to a speedy end.

That, of course, wasn't what happened. As a matter of fact, it was only on October 20, 1973, when the tide of battle turned in favor of the Israelis that the Russians urgently called Secretary Kissinger to Moscow. Laquer asserts that the recent Middle Eastern war has certainly contributed to a more realistic understanding of Soviet policy and the scope of détente.

One of the most important elements in the determination of what is behind the rhetoric of the parties to the detente is the question of attitude. Why should the Kremlin gloat over the woes of the West as a result of the four-fold jump in oil prices? When the Russians came to the United States to buy wheat in 1972, no American reveled in the inefficient Soviet farm system of low productivity. We did not challenge them for the low priority given to agriculture under the Communist system where most investments went into heavy industry and defense. D. Gale Johnson, agricultural economist at the University of Chicago indicates⁸ that there is "little possibility that Soviet farm output growth can keep pace with growth in demand during the present decade unless the Soviet Union is willing to embark upon a massive import program for feeding materials." It is ironic to note that the Russians are launched on their meat expansion programs at the very time when the Western industrial countries are being persuaded to reduce their meat consumption in order to enhance the grain supply available for the millions of people living in the famine-stricken areas of the world.⁹

The threat of rapid increase in Russian naval presence in the Indian Ocean is most destabilizing. Reopening the Suez Canal will bring the Black Sea Fleet some 7,000 miles closer to the Indian Ocean. Previously it had to sail 10,400 miles around the Cape of Good Hope to reach the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ The Russians

⁷*What Happened to Détente?* NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, December 17, 1973, p. 26.

⁸Association for Comparative Economic Studies, Fall, 1974.

⁹New York Times, November 18, 1974.

¹⁰New York Times, November 19, 1974.

have marshalled a squadron of approximately 20 ships of all types in the Indian Ocean. Reports are coming in from Europe that the Russians intend to deploy in the Indian Ocean the first of their Kiev-class attack air-craft carriers, now completing tests in the Black Sea.

The trouble with trying to have a friendly entente with Russia is that one never knows where one stands with them. And it is often too illusory to determine the true meaning of their words from the language used. In March, 1974, the Soviets accused¹¹ the United States oil companies of committing "financial sabotage" by selling oil in Western Europe below the current market price. Four American oil companies had offered to sell 2 million tons of cheap crude oil in Western Europe; the Russians claimed that the American cartel was trying to discourage Western European countries from dealing directly with the Arab oil-producing countries. It was suggested that Washington was abetting the alleged plot to disrupt long-term oil contracts between Western Europe and Arab countries. The Soviet press, the report went on to say, which implicitly supported the Arab oil embargo, had indicated its chagrin over the lifting of the embargo against the United States. In the context of normal, civilized conduct between men and nations, whatever hurts one friend is also inimical to the other. With regard to Russia, one must never expect the normal or the usual. The Soviet press has put the blame on the western "oil monopoly" rather than the Arab oil producers for the oil shortage and the jump in prices.

Another anomaly that one encounters in the Soviet conduct is the dichotomy between words and actions. The Russians heap extravagant credit on themselves for the fact that they helped draft The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations during 1948-49. They blandly assert that the principle of respect for basic human rights has become one of the most important principles of international law. A leading Soviet legal scholar, G. I. Tunkin, acknowledges that all states have a duty to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all persons; states have a duty not to allow discrimination by reason of sex, race, language or religion; states have a duty to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹² After having said this, there is a jarring change of view:

Securing human rights remains and will remain basically the domestic affair of states. Therefore, the principal field of struggle for human rights is the internal system of a state and especially its socioeconomic system. The international protection of human rights, effectuated principally by international legal means, is (although important) merely an auxiliary means of securing such rights.¹³

The difficulty with Professor Tunkin's argument is that by Russia's ratifying

¹¹New York Times, March 24, 1974.

¹²THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, Harvard University Press (1974), p. 81.

¹³Tunkin, *op cit*, p. 83.

two international Covenants of Human Rights in 1973,¹⁴ the matters discussed therein became matters of international concern. Therefore, the problem of free emigration is no longer solely a domestic concern of Russia. Article 13 of the Convention on Civil and Political Rights says that "everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own." How the Russians in the face of this injunction, can insist that the detention of Jews or any other minority is a domestic affair is hard to fathom. On the one hand, the Russians take pride in their adherence to the norms of civilized behavior as exemplified in the precepts of international law. On the other hand their interpretation of these universal precepts depends on a strictly ad hoc and chauvinistic interpretation in what it believes will serve its own best, selfish interests.

It is becoming apparent that the Jews are not the only ethnic group which want to exit from Russia. John Dornberg, an American who is based in Munich and has specialized in East European affairs for many years, indicates¹⁵ that Russia is a bubbling pot of unrest and protest among and by its various nationalities. Volga Germans and Meskhetians (a small Moslem group deported from the Caucasus during the war) along with the Jews are demanding to emigrate. Ukrainians and Lithuanians are being jailed for wanting more control and economic autonomy. Some members of a clandestine Armenian Nationalist Unity Party are on trial for forming a Secessionist movement. According to Dornberg, Moscow has handled these dissidents in three ways. (1) In some instances it has refused to acknowledge publicly that the problem exists. (2) It has attempted to arouse nationalism and pride in the national achievement in response to the wavering loyalties among the country's numerous nationalities. (3) The government has attempted, as a last resort, to suppress nationalist and separatist manifestations with harsh measures. It is reported that more than one-half of the political prisoners now in Soviet labor camps are serving terms for various acts and expressions of "bourgeois nationalism." The situation has become so volatile that some observers predict a "nationalist explosion in the U.S.S.R." within a decade.¹⁶

If there is one theorem concerning the US-USSR détente on which all cognoscenti agree, it is that the Russians see substantial benefits to their economy if trade with the United States is expanded, most-favored nation status granted, and credits allowed by the Export-Import Bank. George F. Kennan points out¹⁷ some of the benefits that redound to Russia among which are better international division of labor. For the satellites there is the prospect of the

¹⁴International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which are the legal embodiment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

¹⁵Boston Globe, January 19, 1975.

¹⁶Dornberg, *op cit*, n. 14.

¹⁷ON DEALING WITH THE COMMUNIST WORLD, Harper & Row (New York, 1964), p. 36.

reinclusion into the community of Europe in at least one important respect. But how can one justify the paranoia that Russia appears to be suffering from more than 50 years after the Revolution? Why should the Russians try to make under-the-table deals such as the recent \$500,000,000 purchase of corn and wheat which President Ford stopped? Reciprocation does not seem to be a word found in the Russian dictionary. To the Kremlin, détente can be only a one-way street. The United States is willing to trade for the benefits that flow from lessened tension between the two protagonists and a curtailed arms race. But the question being asked on this side of the Atlantic is: are we swapping too much for too little?

There is no question that a trade deal with the Russians could, in many specific areas, help the American economy at a point in time when demand could well be improved. Billions of dollars are involved in selling to Russia the various commodities, airplanes, technology and know-how which they so desperately need and want. The American balance of payments, now running at a substantial deficit, could be radically improved. Vladislav Kozyakov, a Russian based in Washington who is a feature writer for TASS, points out¹⁸ the valuable business being carried on by Russia with a consortium of West German banks. France has negotiated for the sale of French industrial equipment; Kozyakov states that a \$300 million contract was recently signed with Russia on purchasing equipment for the automobile industry. Originally, the Soviets wanted to place the order in the United States—at a time when thousands of auto workers are out of a job. The Russian correspondent could not understand why the United States did not recognize the value of these important trading deals and wondered why obstacles—unacceptable terms concerning domestic matters—should be imposed as a condition.

It would seem that if you are going to stand on moral issues in a controversy where your adversary does not stand on the same moral principles, you had better have a point of leverage. If the world community is bitter at the brutal implications of apartheid in Rhodesia and South Africa, the enlightened view is expressed in the halls of the United Nations and in the world press. Should not the United States take a moral stand on the treatment of Soviet citizens by its government, especially where Russia protests its adherence to the norms of international behavior? Is it appropriate that the Russians be required to stand up to their obligations, not merely make rhetorical protestations?

Marshall D. Shulman, professor of International Relations and Director of the Russian Institute at Columbia¹⁹ asserts that the winds of change are indeed blowing through Russia and that we must recognize that a frontal attack on the Soviet style of politics is not feasible or advisable at this moment. There are hard

¹⁸A SOVIET VIEW OF THE TRADE ISSUES, *Boston Globe*, January 16, 1975.

¹⁹AN APPROACH TO DÉTENTE, TRADE AND HUMAN RIGHTS, *New York Times*, March 10, 1974.

liners in Moscow and the Soviet police apparatus who will complain about lightening controls and fear the effects of prolonged low tension. Professor Shulman goes on to urge that the amelioration of the relationship between the two protagonists will have to be coordinated on a staged basis. Stage I is to reduce the danger of nuclear war by lessening the military competition and encouraging restraints in the continuing competition between the two countries. Stage II would be the furtherance of economic relations with the Soviet Union. There are some who see trade as the universal solvent of international conflicts. Shulman's program "would be a modest and controlled development of economic relations, largely in consumer goods and machinery, with the prospect of a gradual increase over a fifteen- or twenty-year period involving an increasing mix of advanced technology and investment in resource-development."

Professor Shulman would require that the administration coordinate and control the credits and the transfer of technology on the basis of a national policy. In his view the future trade would not be determined by the separate action of individual companies depending on the profitability of these transactions to them. As the trade develops, conditions favorable to a change in Russian emigration and other liberating processes will grow apace, with the sympathetic attention and support of world public opinion. It is Shulman's opinion that the restrictive trade amendment has the character of an ultimatum, which will inevitably generate forces of resistance in the Soviet political hierarchy and will be counterproductive.²⁰

The Russians pride themselves on their adherence to the norms of international law. It is their view that since the Great October Socialist Revolution they have been instrumental in the transformation of the "old" international law into a "qualitatively new one."²¹ Tunkin goes on to say:

The development of international law did not proceed along the path of liquidating state sovereignty and of expanding the possibilities for interference in the internal affairs of other states, as the imperialist powers supposed, but instead along the path of strengthening the principles of respect for sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs and other important principles of international law—the introduction into international law of new progressive principles directed against aggression and colonialism and toward the strengthening of peaceful coexistence of states.

These are the remarks of the scholar who has held the chair of International Law at Moscow State University since 1965; has been elected president of the Soviet Association of International Law since its formation in 1957. How do these views coincide with the world of reality?

²⁰Since this was written, the Soviet Government announced its cancellation of the trade agreement.

²¹Tunkin, *op cit*, n. 11, p. 256.

One could suggest that one man's rationality is another man's rationalization. How can Tunkin, a spokesman for the Russian legal apparatus, square the occupation of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 with the principle of "noninterference in internal affairs" of other states? Several hundred thousand Crimean Tartars have petitioned, demonstrated and vehemently asserted their claim to return to the Crimea. They had been deported from that area during World War II because Stalin considered them sympathetic to the Germans. In the Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Ethonia, the conflict is, according to Dornberg, that there has been an invasion of Russians and other Slavs and Moscow has attempted to impose its cultural and economic control over these countries. It is to be noted that these countries were independent from 1918 to 1940 when the Russian Army occupied their country and they were incorporated into the U.S.S.R. How can one talk about "aggression and colonialism" as being a bourgeois delict when in Lithuania the official Russian policy is the suppression of the Catholic Church, which has played a significant role in Lithuanian history and is symbiotic with Lithuanian nationhood.

Salt I, Salt II, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty of 1972, the Berlin, German, Vladivostock agreements, have all dealt with the problem of United States and Soviet arms control and limitation. Talleyrand, in an earlier, critical era, said of two other countries, they were "too frightened to fight each other, too stupid to agree." Whatever agreements have been reached seem to have been written on water. Proliferating sales of weapons to various incendiary parts of the world continue (unfortunately, on the part of the United States, also). Nations, from Indonesia to India to Cuba, have all turned to Moscow when they couldn't purchase them anywhere else,²² and Moscow strikes a political quid pro quo for each bargain. India agreed to provide the Russian Navy with Indian port facilities in order to obtain delivery of the sophisticated MIG 21. Members of the Canadian and American delegation to the Pugwash Meeting in July, 1974,²³ pointed out that we are on the verge of a quantum jump in the dangers of the situation. They insisted that there is real urgency that a comprehensive test ban be executed within two years from that date.

In conclusion: in a world full of alarums and excursions (vide, the world-wide alert called by President Nixon at the time of the Yom Kippur War), it would seem that the two great protagonists would walk with great circumspection. The arguments here advanced would indicate that the Russians have gone out of their way to pour oil (Middle-Eastern?) on the smouldering flames. In no way

²²Boston Globe, February 10, 1974.

²³Boston Globe, July 22, 1974.

does this imply condonation of some of the actions of the United States in the recent past (there seems to be a vivid feeling of déjà vue as far as our Vietnam policy in January, 1975, is concerned); but with specific reference to Russia, there seems to be a wide disparity between what they uphold as their principles and what they do in the real world. Herman Kahn wrote in 1968 concerning the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the United States and U.S.S.R.:²⁴

. . . (T)he competitive risking of inadvertent war is unavoidable so long as weapons systems and confrontations exist. In addition, whatever the risk may be in normal times, almost all believe it is increased when there is tension or crisis, and yet almost no one is invariably willing to allay tension by automatically accommodating to all of the opponent's demands in every crisis. Thus, our willingness to undergo tension or crisis inevitably involves some increased threat to the other side. When the Russians (and the United States) are willing to discuss truthfully and trustfully their weapon systems and their confrontations, only then can we argue that a viable détente is feasible.

²⁴Herman Kahn, *ON ESCALATION*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1965, p. 66.