

8 MAY 1985:
RECONCILIATION OR SOMETHING ELSE?

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It is easily forgotten what 8 May 1945 was about. It was the end of by far the worst regime the world has ever seen. It was not only authoritarian in the sense of being a dictatorship with no free press, no free trade unions, no democratic process as we know it, no rule of law, torture and persecution of the political opponents of the regime. It was not only totalitarian in the sense of everything being subordinated to a plan designed at the centre of the State, eventually enacted as "Führer-Befehl". It was a genocidal regime: out to kill, to exterminate 11 million Jews because of a sickening philosophy of history and society, and out to exterminate 100 million slaves, particularly Russians, in order to provide space for the Aryan race, particularly to Germans. The regime managed to kill 6 million Jews and 20 million Russians, fulfilment ratios of 55% and 20% respectively. Not very high for teutonic "Gründlichkeit". I am convinced that the Führer, when he finally committed suicide, 30 April 1945, died with the feeling of being one of the world's major failures, not because his country was in ruins, but because of these low percentages.

As the brunt of the nazi attack was directed eastwards, it was in the East that the suffering was highest. Of the 13.5 million German soldiers that were killed during the War, 10 million fell on Soviet soil. Up till D-day in Europe, 6 June 1944, 90 to 95% of the belligerent activity of the German army took place in the Soviet Union. This is where the German war machine received its most shattering blow, in Stalingrad, this is where there were most victims of the nazi onslaughts, and most sacrifice to bring nazism to an end.

Of course the story of Soviet involvement is ambiguous like everything else in human history. Stalin had predicted, in 1931, that the attack would come within ten years - a rather accurate prediction. The Soviet Union entered the Molotov-Ribentropp Pact, not only a Pact of non-aggression but also of some limited cooperation. And it should also be added that before that there were very many Soviet efforts to strike an alliance with the Western powers, rejected from the West, not from the Soviet Union (in spite of, interestingly enough, Churchill's support of such schemes, but then he was not really in power). The Soviet Union certainly had

their own schemes, unacceptable to the West on the basis of self-determination. And the Soviet Union had a definite interest in putting more territory between their heartland and Nazi Germany before the expected war came.

I think the final judgement of history on this matter will be exactly this: ambiguity. But what seems very clear today is that Nazi Germany's war actually was divided over time in two parts: before Stalingrad and after Stalingrad. Before Stalingrad the purpose was to establish a "Neuordnung", a new order, in Europe. Even detailed plans for colonisation of the Soviet Union had been drawn up, giving territories for such "aryans" as Norwegians and Dutch, even for the British - the latter as a measure of the amount of realism in nazi thinking. After Stalingrad, these plans were quietly shelved, and in nazi propaganda the war took on another character, the fight for "western civilization", against the "Bolchevist asiatic hordes". Up till the very last moment before the capitulation, this fight was carried on, defining Germany as an outpost for the West, the last barrier stemming the tide.

Reagan's visit to Bitburg, 4 May 1985, has to be seen in this perspective. Marketed as a visit of reconciliation, "forgive but not forget", the hidden message was of course a different one. I see two aspects to that message: the United States in general and its President, the Great Communicator, in particular, as the ultimate arbiter in the world, the one in whose power it is given, possibly because ordained by God himself to forgive, to draw the final line, to add up the balance. And then there is a more sinister message, in addition to this fit of megalomania: of course the methods of the Wehrmacht, not to mention those of the SS may have been a little rough, but essentially they were fighting the correct battle, they were on the right side. As Reagan~~himself~~ has expressed it, referring to the U.S. participants in the international brigade during the Civil War in Spain, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: heroic, but you were fighting on the wrong side! No doubt, this should also be seen in the perspective of the increased U.S. interest in nazi Germany's Blitzkrieg, bringing the war with extreme rapidity on to enemy territory by combining land forces and air attacks, in other

words, the precursors of what today is known as AirLand Battle.

This is what Reagan was celebrating in Bitburg: the fight against Bolchevism. Reagan sees the world that way, being in no doubt whatsoever as to where the centre of the evil is located. But the problem to which both he and his German associates reveal such an enormous insensitivity is that whatever he might think about the Soviet Union constitutes no basis whatsoever for condoning, even forgiving the horrendous crimes of anti-Soviet Nazi Germany. Even the most elementary knowledge of what happened in Eastern Europe, from the attack on Poland till the German army was routed, should have opened the eyes, the brains and the hearts to what an insult this constitutes to the hundreds of millions of inhabitants in that part of the world, including their descendants. The crimes committed by SS in Western Europe, such as ~~Ouradoux~~ sur-Glane, become trivial, totally insignificant in comparison. The major facts are as simple as this: Hitler's war was with the East, hoping that the West would also see it that way. It was the East that suffered not only most, but took almost all the suffering on themselves and their soil. It was the East that responded and finally brought Nazism to an end. They were certainly aided by the allies, financially, militarily, politically, with human sacrifice. But if there had been no war in the East, if the Soviet Union had remained passively on the sidelines, neither helping nor fighting Nazi Germany, would the allies have mustered the resources not only to liberate occupied territory in the West, but also to kill nazism at its very core, in the centre of Germany itself? Bombing would not have been enough. Nazism was not only the ideology of a small clique, it was by and large supported by the German people. To bring it to an end might have meant fighting from house to house, one street after the other, conquering hamlets, villages, towns, cities. In the end the allies did this, but only against a Germany totally exhausted and weakened through its losses in the East.

Reagan's visit to Bitburg and everything that happened in this connection, bears testimony to the triumph of the Hitler-Goebbels approach. The fight against Bolchevism is not necessarily what NATO was all about, NATO should probably more be seen as

a defensive organisation. But it is certainly what Reaganism is all about, with so many elements pointing in the direction of a first strike strategy to get rid of communism once and for all. Had Hitler revisited Germany forty years later, he would have had all reasons to remain content: finally, they understood! And then the Jews protesting in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp were pushed out of the camp by German police who were only acting according to orders, and those orders, in addition, came from the Americans, Hitler might have added, not without a certain admiration: 'Not bad. I am happy to say that unquestioning obedience is still a virtue among the Germans'.

So, what should have happened these days? Without in any sense condoning Bolchevik excesses or the repressive features that still remain in the Soviet Union, it is simply so brainless and heartless not to be able to utter a word of recognition of the tremendous Soviet sacrifice in the common struggle. I remember vividly an experience I had one early Sunday morning in July 1982, outside Novgorod, in the Soviet Union - I was on a camping trip with my family. There was a war memorial, dedicated to one of the turning points of the war in that area. A small detachment from the Soviet army was standing at attention, a prepared speech was delivered by the Sergeant to the Captain, by the Captain to the Colonel, and by the Colonel to the General, who then opened it and read it. After the ceremony was over and the soldiers relaxed, looking with undisguised curiosity at the Volkswagen Kombi bus and the Norwegian-Japanese couple with their children who had been the only spectators, I went up to the General and said in my poor Russian that "Whatever difficulties we have now, I just want you to know that we are very many in my country filled with gratitude for what the Soviet army did during the war". Believe it or not, the man started crying. Filled with emotion, he embraced me, and I did not quite know what to do - only said "Thank you, goodbye", and went back to the car.

Countless people have had similar experiences. The fortieth anniversary of the end to the Second World War offered a grandiose opportunity that went unutilised by people blinded

by their ideology, brainlessly and heartlessly aggravating a conflict that may annihilate us all, just in order to play their small ideological games and satisfy their own egos. Down to the smallest detail; not even the communist, socialist, social democratic resistance against nazism was worthy of some expressions of gratitude. Their resistance had to be "right" in both meanings of that word, celebrating 20 July 1944 over and over again, a resistance that also had its ambiguities, like everything else.

And yet all these events pale in significance relative to the bigger issues on the political agenda of today: the strategic defense initiative (SDI). There are at least three ways of analysing SDI, all of them leading to very negative conclusions. Some people also invoke a fourth analytical approach: that SDI is technically impossible, and for that reason not to be taken seriously. I think that is a very dangerous mistake: this is exactly the type of argument that serves more than anything else as a challenge for the SDI researchers to show that they can master the problems. Now, let us rather engage in more serious analysis.

First, let us assume that SDI is a purely defensive system, only aimed at destroying incoming missiles. In that case there are two possibilities: the system is, say, 90% effective, or it is, so far unlikely, 100% effective. The consequences are obvious: in the first case, the Soviet Union will need ten times as many missiles as before in order to have a penetration ratio that is acceptable to them according to their strategic plans. And in the second case, it would be rather stupid to attack with missiles, meaning that other ways of carrying the weapons to the points of impact would be preferred, for instance in suitcases. If millions of Mexican landworkers have been able to cross the Mexico-U.S. border during the last years, it is difficult to imagine that a couple of Soviet agents, for instance, camouflaged as Mexican landworkers, could not bring in some bombs in a suitcase or two. In fact, it is even more difficult to imagine that they have not already done so for precisely the same reasons as the U.S. probably has already planted bombs on Soviet territory (in both cases to be ignited by remote control): other methods are too costly and too

unreliable. Conclusion: ten more turns on the armaments spiral, and/or introduction of qualitatively new delivery systems.

That this is a realistic conclusion can most readily be seen by asking the opposite question: what would the U.S./West do if the Soviet Union had launched an STI in such a grandiose way as the U.S. does at present?

The second analytical approach would be located in the grey zone between defensive and offensive, but not in the sense of something in-between, but in the sense of both-and. In another connection, I have pointed out that nothing is more dangerous than a country that possesses great offensive capability and yet has been able to make itself invulnerable. If the SDI is to be considered as a defensive system, then the objective is simply invulnerability, not only for counter-force attacks, but also for countervalue attacks (cities, populations), by making U.S. airspace impenetrable. Since there is no attempt whatsoever at the same time to reduce the offensive capability, something that should have been done if the approach were entirely defensive, the net result is a combination that is ideal for a country planning a first strike attack. But even if the United States does not harbour such intentions, the Soviet Union will be even more convinced than ever that they do, and do everything possible in order to obtain the same strategic profile, a combination of offensive striking force, of annihilating capacity, and invulnerability. The naive answer would be that "this they cannot afford": the Soviet Union certainly has problems, but not that of mobilising a sacrificial spirit against devastating threats from the outside. If for no other reason than that these threats will by necessity not only affect unpopular leaders in the Soviet Union, but the population as a whole. Conclusion: something more important than an arms race, a strategic race where new and even more dangerous doctrines come into play, more explicitly and with more deadly realism than ever before.

Third, there are important arguments against the assumption that SDI really is a defensive system at all. It is so vulnerable to such a simple meteorological phenomenon as clouds at the same as it may soon become possible to have a devastating impact on ground targets, simply burning them into oblivion, using laser

rays and particle beams when the sky is not overcast. (Day or night does not matter, the location of targets are well known, in addition there are ways of coping with the darkness at night). Obviously, he who attacks with missiles will choose a cloudy period, making the missiles invulnerable right after start and close to impact; he who wants to attack with SOI (strategic offense initiative) will choose a cloud free atmosphere. Since this is well-known, it looks as if the system from its very inception is biased in favour of attack. To this it may be objected that during most of the trajectory, the missiles from an attacker will be way above any cloud protection, which is true. The counter-objection would be that the rays and beams of an attacker would not be impeded by anything except destruction of the sources of the rays and beams themselves. Conclusion: in all likelihood, there are offensive intentions behind the STI, not necessarily saying that these are the only intentions, but that the system is sufficiently ambiguous to make the hypothesis that they are also intended for attack a very likely one.

Obviously, those on both sides of the Atlantic favouring the SDI have now obtained one major objective, the 572 Euromissiles are by and large forgotten. The criminal who steals your purse is likely to be forgotten if somebody else, maybe even the same criminal, burns down your house or starts killing members of your family. The worst drives out the worse. Of course, they would be wrong in assuming that for that reason they have got rid of the Peace Movement in Europe. Just on the contrary, that Peace Movement will in all likelihood come back again, quantitatively stronger and qualitatively better than ever when the implications of the SDI become fully known. Right now we are in the period of confused European "statesmen"/"stateswomen" contemplating some minor issues, such as whether research on SDI will in fact increase the chances that SDI will be implemented (of course it will); whether the U.S. offer to have the "best brains in Europe" participate in SDI research, in fact means channelling these brains in the military direction and for U.S. purposes, against a vague promise of "civilian spin-off effects". (Of course it will, in addition, why not go directly for these

"spin-off effects", like the Japanese do?); whether SDI will not make Western Europe even more vulnerable, if it makes the U.S. less vulnerable (of course it will, the cost efficiency of Soviet missiles will be higher when used on European soil, whatever defense potential is present in SDI will be less for Western Europe because of geographic proximity and also more destructive, there being no Atlantic ocean over which the destruction could take place).

In addition to being horrifying and bizarre, this development also seems so utterly unnecessary. I have here in my hand the new defense plans for Austria, published this year. The plan is very detailed, and the basic points are simply these : to make the country as indigestible as possible by mobilising non-provocative military defense, civilian defense, economic defense, psychological defense- in times of peace, when war threatens, and in times of war. As is well-known, this is combined with Austrian neutrality, and a promise to make this neutrality credible by defending the country against the most likely war scenarios: a Soviet-led incursion from Austria's two neighbours and/or a U.S. inspired effort to establish a corridor between two major NATO countries, Western Germany and Italy, through Austria. (From the last two of Austria's neighbours, neutral Switzerland and non-aligned Yugoslavia, no realistic war scenarios are envisaged).

One may discuss details of this plan, and from a completely pacifist/anti-military perspective it is of course unsatisfactory to have even a non-provocative military defense component. My own attitude to that would be to support the Austrian Peace Movement in their struggle for non-military defense, yet at the same time see Austria as an example, in the same way as suffering from the common cold is preferable to suffering from cancer. What should be noted in this connection, is that although Austria is much smaller than Germany, her history is not that different, particularly her Second World War history. There was nazism in Austria too, many, many Austrians believed in the struggle against Bolchevism, the political profiles are about the same, the military people cannot be that different in ideological inclination and intellectual paradigms. And yet, the result is totally different,

through historical events, the nature of which we know relatively well. What is possible for Austria could have been possible for Germany, and could once again become possible for Germany, provided the right synergy between the German Peace Movement, realistic alternative security policies for the Federal Republic of Germany, and the political carriers in a parliamentary democracy, the political parties - right now meaning the Green and the Red parties - can develop further.

I will not go into details with these kinds of alternatives, having committed whatever thoughts I myself might have in that connection to the book "There are alternatives!", presently in English, German, Dutch, Spanish and Norwegian editions, with Swedish, Italian and Japanese (and a couple of others) on the way. Many others have done similar, and no doubt, better jobs. But for those of us who write alternative scenarios, plans, programmes, it is rather important not to lose sight of the obvious fact that without strong mass movements, our effort is only academic, and quite often not even that. And without political parties who can carry the initiatives, without too many compromises through the maze of the political process, forward to some kind of implementation, even a happy marriage between these movements and the peace programmes will come to naught.

So, that is our predicament. The situation is critical, but not hopeless. There is more opposition than ever, even at the governmental level, as can be witnessed from the important speech by the British Foreign Minister some time ago; even in the U.S. Congress. Sooner or later, all these forces will crystallise into a tremendous momentum in the opposite direction. Let us only hope that it is sooner, rather than later. More particularly, if it nevertheless comes later, that it will not be too late.