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AFTER NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT – WHAT?

Ten Proposals for Concrete Peace Politics for the 1980s¹

Dear friends,

You who have now concluded your march for peace through Europe, you people are the conscience of Europe. If our governments, East and West, had pursued a rational, sensible policy of peace your heroic march would not have been necessary. But our governments, East and West, are pursuing an arms race for two reasons:

- Because they have an enormous scientific, bureaucratic and industrial capacity all the time making the arms more destructive, more precise, more difficult to defend oneself against, and
- Because they get frightened when the other side does the same.

To the East the SS20s are modernizations of the SS4s and the SS5s of earlier years, and reactions, for instance, to the Polaris system of the West; to the West the Cruise and Pershing II missiles are “modernizations” of present systems and reactions to the SS20s. The West, including – unfortunately – the government of this country, are now pursuing a policy, after the historical and disastrous NATO decision of December 12, 1979, of stepping up the arms level by trying to deploy 572 of Cruise and Pershing II – the idea being that this will make the Russians reconsider their deployment of SS20s, and then the two sides will together agree to lower the levels of nuclear overkill, and destruction of nature and civilization at the same time. Of course this will not work out. The Russians will do just the opposite: they will “modernize” their weapons further for the two reasons mentioned. It is all a part of an arms race with increasing tension and fear, there are no examples at all that one party is pressed to stop and enter an agreement in such a race, there is no compelling reason why he should. Our governments are pursuing something which does not exist: what they do is metaphysics; they are the true “idealists” in the sense of being truly unrealistic.

But that does not mean unilateral disarmament is realistic: as an isolated approach it can lead to attack from the other side, and it can lead to even more armament if the mood changes again. What seems to be realistic is a process of mutual unilateralism where one party stops and makes one step down the spiral, giving the other side a chance to follow – for instance with a nuclear-free zone starting in the Nordic countries and extended to include Soviet territory. Or: a no-first-use pledge for ABC weapons. Historical examples point to this as the only realistic possibility. But the condition is that initiatives are made and that responses in a positive direction, from the other side, are taken seriously – not just brushed aside as propaganda. Moreover, disarmament alone is never enough – it has to be combined with not only a sense of balance as just indicated, but also with efforts to solve the conflicts underlying the whole situation, and efforts to develop alternatives to the nuclear arms both parties are relying on – with the potentials of a mega-Hiroshima/Nagasaki built into them.

The following are ten proposals – short-term, entirely feasible given political will – along these lines with a very brief justification of each of them.

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- (1) The best defense a country can have is to be as invulnerable economically as possible, and have only defensive means of defense.

This is the basis of the Swiss defense system: to be so self-sufficient in times of war in such basic fields as food and energy that there will be no temptation to pursue aggressive policies with intervention in neighbouring countries and rapid deployment forces for action all around the world. At the same time Switzerland has a defense system which is not based on trying to export the war and fight it on other people's territory – which is what the Soviet Union tries to do with her system of buffer states and the US tries to do with her “modernization” of the European theater – a theater where the superpowers are supposed to be spectators, pushing buttons and we the victims of their failed politics.

- (2) A non-aggressive defense is fully possible: it probably consists of a combination of conventional military, para-military and non-military defense.

Both Switzerland and Yugoslavia have come far in this direction, and they are probably both among the safest countries in Europe today because their defense systems do not threaten anybody at the same time as any possible aggressor knows the population would go on fighting long after a possible military capitulation. They are incapable of nuclear retaliation, that is true – but precisely for that reason does not make any other country so desperately afraid of them that they might try a first strike to eliminate that threat.

- (3) Military blocs can hardly be abolished all of a sudden, but more countries members of the bloc could become more independent and become protest countries rather than client countries.

Both France and Romania are good examples of countries that are not automatic followers of the superpower line. They both played historical roles in the 1960s in bringing about détente and may play such roles again. But we need more countries. They do not have to declare themselves non-members, but it is quite clear that Poland and the Netherlands de facto are protest countries rather than client countries. New models should be found for membership in the pacts, with special relations to the superpowers. Thus, the four countries mentioned are for all practical purposes nuclear-free zones even though France has the force de frappe – it is the degree to which a country is willing to play the role given to it by the superpower and to be host to superpower bombs that counts.

- (4) Neutral countries in Europe should play a much more active role in the non-aligned movement, also in development questions to bridge the gaps.

The non-aligned movement consists mainly of countries trying to get out of the pattern of underdevelopment. They are offered only two models of development: capitalist and socialist, or private capitalist and state capitalist to be more precise. The superpowers are jealously watching that a country sticks to the correct model. What is desperately needed in the world today would be countries capable of developing a third or a fourth, a fifth development model so as to be not only non-aligned in a military sense, but also in development politics in general. Only by teaching the superpowers that there are alternatives to their policies can they possibly start giving up their interference in internal affairs. But if the Western bloc helps for instance Poland in developing a new strategy of development, more democratic, possibly more socialist, then this will be seen as an effort by the other side to subvert. Hence, the neutral countries have a great role to play, and some of them are also themselves in search of development alternatives.

- (5) Organize peace-building and war-avoidance conferences without superpower or with superpowers as observers only.

To entrust the peace process to superpowers is not only totally unrealistic, it is catastrophic – like entrusting the control of the traffic in narcotics to the major narcotics dealers. To the contrary, the neutral countries in Europe, and the protest countries, should take initiatives to organizing new types of conferences not dominated by superpower objectives and superpower thinking, for instance with all this superficial rocket counting that goes on. With superpowers even as co-presidents of such conferences no new ideas will ever be permitted to emerge. The superpowers should be less in the center of the process, more on the margin.

- (6) As an example of peace-building measure: new forms of cooperation.

A number of cooperative measures emerged in the former period of détente, the late 1960s. But they were flawed in an important way: there was little or no understanding of the danger of economically unbalanced cooperation. Countries, like Poland, importing increasingly expensive and exporting less valuable goods will become dependent and increasingly in debt; this, in turn, may increase the likelihood of superpower intervention. More symmetric forms have to be found, what they are is not so easily seen. The search is important and must continue.

- (7) Example of war-avoiding measure: a UN surveillance satellite.

Crimes are being committed every day against the people of Europe and other countries as well as by superpowers and some of their allies who target their missiles on human beings anywhere, like fascists preparing genocide. These crimes should not pass unmasked. Each side knows through its system of spies and spy satellites more or less where the other side has its weapons of mass death. We, the possible victims, are entitled to share in this knowledge, to reveal it, to unmask it. The excellent French proposal in the last UN special session on disarmament went far in this direction and should be supported.

- (8) Example of war-avoiding measure: UN troops between East and West.

We all know that UN peace-keeping forces represent no guarantee. But they would, stationed in buffer zones between NATO and Warsaw Treaty Organization countries in Europe, be important symbols of a world society present and watching, and at least trying to help by being in-between.

- (9) Local, municipal councils represent a new force in the peace movement and could build up the support for nuclear-free zones and also for alternative forms of defense.

A number of them already exist in Britain – much more work could be done along these lines as it is quite clear that the old form of leaving it all to the national governments and parliaments, which then leaves it to an alliance and/or a superpower government, leads to defense policies much too far removed from the people who supposedly are to be defended and might have very different opinions from their leaders who will be protected in their underground bunkers.

- (10) Eventually, the action by people themselves is indispensable as a peace factor, and the most solid factor on which to build.

The peace movement in Europe, but so far mainly in the West and mainly in the North, is now a political factor nobody can afford to neglect. This means that people have power. In a democracy the peoples should also have the right of more than demonstrations, marches and other excellent

consciousness-raising measures. They should also have the right to demand a popular vote over military policies that imply the transformation of European countries into guaranteed targets of nuclear rockets from the other side, in a desperate effort to eliminate missiles before they are fired. They should have the right to have such votes also on a local basis so that the communities with a population in favor of such disastrous policies can bear the risks themselves, and perhaps understand better what they favor. And they should, eventually, have the right to veto, with all nonviolent means, the introduction of any nuclear capability in their local community. There are risks in this. But the risks of yet another turn on the spiral of armament are infinitely higher: they spell the end of all of us.

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So, let us liberate our politicians from their thought prisons, they are prisoners of their own much-too-simple logic. The situation is dangerous, difficult, but not yet hopeless. What has been mentioned above is completely possible – and so are many other peace policies. There are so many things that could be done; and, I think, more realistic than what we read from our politicians every day. Time to start doing them is now. If the politicians do not want or are unable to do so from the top level of the countries and the alliances, then others have to show the way. Like you people have!