

WILL THE PEACE MOVEMENT BECOME
A LIBERATION MOVEMENT?

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Will the peace movement become a liberation movement?*

The answer is simple: it has to. At the most immediate level we in the peace movement are fighting an almost desperate fight of survival, against a military caste in temporary possession of our societies in East and West, in the NATO and the WTO alliances. Ours is the struggle for survival, against the very real possibility of nuclear extermination. The system of which we are parts is politically headed by the super-powers, but it would be naive to assume that all the difficulties would disappear were the super-powers to retire from the scene. The real occupation is by the military caste mentioned, by the military-bureaucratic-corporate-intelligentsia complexes in all these countries. They even have the audacity to present their age-old aggressive, expansionist tendencies as a doctrine of security, dressing up their ever more offensive armory as means of deterrence, even in the age of nuclear arms where this, in its consequence, can only mean what they themselves announce: mutual assured destruction (MAD).

The issue here is not with the idea of defense, nor with the idea of deterring an attack. The issue is with the use of ever more offensive weapons, weapons that can be used for an attack; and with a concept of deterrence based on retaliation rather than on trying to make society indigestible in case an attack should come. The issue is with a military doctrine, itself a rationalisation of the expansionist tendencies of so many of the countries involved, which again and again has proved to be disastrous. Weapons that can be used for attack on one side provoke, they lead to fear and anxiety on the other side and to the accumulation of similar weapons. The result is an arms race. And the result of an arms race is, in the overwhelming majority of cases what we simply cannot afford to have, under any circumstance: a major war.

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I think it is correct to refer to this military caste willing to sacrifice millions, even tens, hundreds, of millions for their abstract gamble of security as fascist. So, if the question is whether the peace movement will become a liberation movement the answer has to be yes, we have to liberate ourselves not so much from these concrete persons as from their way of thinking, the structures of militarization they have been able to build, the deadly weapons.

And this is what the peace movement is about. The peace movement, by far the biggest movement in the developed countries right now, is an expression of the total lack of faith, by the population, in these governmental policies. Its an expression of the lack of faith, more particularly, in governmental experts, seeing them as the prisoners of their own basic ideas, unable to find any way out, messing around in their own thought-prisons, aemitting cascades of words and conferences, unable to set the system moving towards peace rather than towards war.

At this level of thinking the peace movement is directed against both superpowers, against offensive military doctrines in either camp. The basic idea becomes "plague on both your houses", a relatively symmetric perception of the two superpowers as responsible for the present predicament. But then there is another level of thinking where some additional questions are asked. Thus, which superpower has, by and large, been ahead in the arms race, been the "race champion"? Which superpower has made almost all the qualitative changes in the arms race, the introduction of new systems designed to be even more destructive, to penetrate defenses on the other side even more effectively, to be even more invulnerable against attack? Which superpower is involved in conflicts almost all over the world, trying to maintain impossible, repressive regimes, mainly in order to secure markets for their own products and raw materials for their own industrial processes? Which superpower develops rapid deployment forces, in order to come to the rescue of its client regime all over the world, which superpower goes far beyond any kind of historically understandable inclination to secure its own borders by trying not to have any challenge in the immediate

neighborhood? Which superpower even develops a strategy which, regardless of intentions, looks increasingly like first-strike-strategy?

The answer is clear enough, and has to do with the phenomenon that Washington seems never to be able to understand: that people in Europe, particularly Western Europe, seem to be more afraid of what the United States could start doing, and certainly more afraid of nuclear war as such, than of the much touted Soviet attack. And that leads one, of course, to a less symmetric view of the two superpowers. The distribution of responsibility is no longer 50%-50%. But does that mean that it should be 100% for the United States and 0% for the Soviet Union? Certainly not, only the ideologically very biased and the politically very naive will accept such a distribution. It is understandable that such ideas should arise in a continent like Latin America where the repressive influence of the Soviet Union is not felt to any large extent. But in Europe this is not the case. In fact, one of the difficulties we Europeans face is that in Europe it is turned around: United States appears with a friendly face in Western Europe, as it was the liberator from Nazism, whereas the Soviet Union appears with its repressive features in Eastern Europe, where it also was an occupying army in what was mainly axis countries. In Europe, hence, the world is turned around - so there are also liberation movements in Eastern Europe trying to liberate the population from the repression radiating from Moscow.

But the conclusion is nonetheless very clear. Not only will the peace movement become a liberation movement in the sense mentioned above. It is also fighting the same system as the liberation movements around the world, in Latin America, Africa, Asia and in Eastern Europe are fighting: against expansionist, exploitative, repressive systems of all kinds; be they referred to as capitalist imperialism or socialist imperialism.

But then there is still another level at which we are struggling. It has to do with certain traits, certain characteristics of occidental civilization, and by that I mean essentially the parts of the world originally covered by christianity and islam. These cultures usually

come in two versions, a mini-version and a maxi-version. There is the soft christianity of Pope John XXIII and of Saint Francis of Assisi; the Peace Laboratory here in Malta is an expression of that tendency. But there is also the very hard christianity of Pope Pius X and countless other popes; of the inquisition; of the witch hunting found among catholics and protestants alike. There are Franciscans in christianity, but there are also Dominicans - - - .

Similarly for capitalism. It comes in soft versions, in the small firm with a relatively close relation between labor-buyers and labor-sellers and a relatively limited range of operations, and it comes in the very hard version of the multinationals, giant machines for the oppression of nature, producers and consumers alike.

And correspondingly with socialism. It comes in the soft version of small collective organizations, cooperatives, with a limited range; and in the giant version of large scale state planning, according to abstract principles, again highly destructive of nature, of producers and consumers alike.

Deep down in Western civilization something is hiding which is also found in other places, but certainly not all of the non-West: something aggressive, exploitative, expansionist. The superpowers are expressions of this, so again the perspective becomes more symmetric. And this is where the alternative movements have their points of departure: they are not only alternative in the structural sense of favoring the soft organizations mentioned above over the hard ones, but also in the cultural sense of trying to come to grips with these deep and destructive inclinations in our civilization, trying to get the softer aspects up to the surface, trying to rid ourselves of the harder, expansionist aspects.

Thus, I see three levels of de-liberation, and three levels of operation. They are all relevant for all three of us, for peace movements, liberation movements and alternative movements. But there is a certain division of

labor: we specialize on one level each. They are heavily inter-related in a very strong, almost indestructible alliance. And yet it is our task to fight at all these three levels, with all the force we can muster, non-violently as far as possible, and when it is clear that there is no longer any potential for non-violence, that all methods have been tried, then with a minimum of violence necessary, without in any way glorifying it.

For us in the peace movement struggle at the first level leads to the fight not only against the destructive forces surrounding us, but also for constructive alternatives. Some of them might take the shape of defensive defense rather than offensive, of gradual decoupling from superpowers, of making the societies less economically/socially/politically vulnerable so that they can stand-up in a crisis without being supported by a superpower, and new forms of peaceful coexistence between East and West. There is more than enough work to do. Some of this will have to be political; in the West working inside the systems provided by parliamentary democracies, in the East inside the systems provided by the party organization. In the last instance this is all a question of politics, and politics has to be based on a broad mass movement (which we have), a good program for alternatives (which we also have, at least to a large extent) and political carriers in the power system. In the West I think the social democrats and the greens are the best examples of this, the red/green alliance now shaping up.

At the other level the peace movement will fight with the liberation movement but perhaps always try to point out that there could be non-violent alternatives that at least should be tried. And at the third level the peace movement will fight with the alternative movements, working for a softer occident, for a non-expansionist, non-aggressive, non-exploitative occident relative to nature, to man everywhere and more particularly to women, to other countries.

So, which of these struggles is the more important one? A stupid question in my opinion, even the wrong question. They are all important;

but their relative importance varies, of course, from time to time and from place to place. Let us fight any tendency for anybody who is operating at one of these levels to say that the other two are less important! It is exactly in that spirit that I have consistently avoided any such expression as "deeper" level - they should all be seen as different ways of relating to the world predicament.

The Republic of Malta is the host of this conference. I think it is difficult to find, in Europe, a more appropriate host, a host that has been fighting the deadening influence of the superpowers and also Western imperialism by ridding itself of the NATO bases, at considerable cost and risk to herself. She bases security on an entirely defensive concept, is non-aligned, tries to create invulnerability out of her vulnerability and has already played a very important role between East and West, between North and South - located as she is in the center of these compass directions. I am sure I speak for everybody when I express my thanks not only for organizing this very timely conference, but also for the achievements of Malta in the past and in the present, and no doubt also in the future.

So let me finish by that very good formulation I found this morning when visiting the Peace Laboratory: Let us look for the things that unite, not for those that divide. The alliance between peace movements, liberation movements and alternative movements should be a lasting one. We have an important task to do, a heavy responsibility when governments fail to do their job.