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Against the New Détente**

*by*  
*Todd Gitlin*

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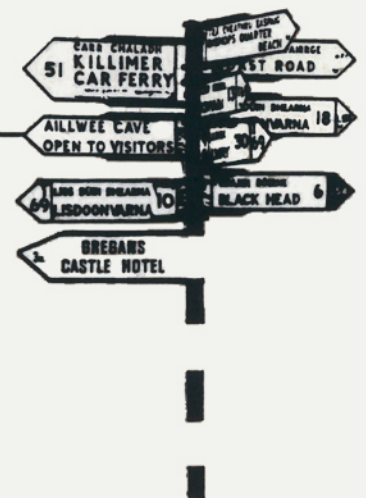
Working Paper No. 20

*Series Edited by James M. Skelly*

Second Conference on Discourse:  
Peace, Security and International Society

Ballyvaughan, Ireland

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The conference held at Ballyvaughan, Ireland, in August 1987 was the beginning of an on-going international intellectual interchange on topics related to the discourse of peace and security and international society. A second conference, building upon the insights of the first, took place at Ballyvaughan in August 1988. Sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, the two conferences were intended to foster general inquiry into these scholarly topics and to stimulate at University of California campuses research and teaching that incorporate these perspectives. The 1987 conference resulted in the publication of seventeen Working Papers (see list on order form on last page), which may still be obtained from the IGCC Publications Office. The Working Papers from the 1988 conference comprise the writings which seventeen scholars submitted to their colleague-participants in preparation for the meeting. Some have been updated somewhat before publication here. Some have been published elsewhere and reissued here with permission. The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation hopes that both of these series of Working Papers will help to interest even more scholars in pursuing these lines of thought.

James M. Skelly  
Series Editor

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## **Coming Detractions: Notes on the Right's Mobilization Against the New Détente**

### **Introduction**

What follows the Cold War? Even the fact that the question can be asked is astounding.

The central fact for East-West relations today is the amazing transformation at work in the USSR — not only *glasnost*, which is amazing enough, but the heated and public political struggle within, as well as outside, the Communist Party. Eras are expiring, it seems. In the USSR, the fear that is one of the main legacies of Stalinism. In the US, the infinite cockiness of the military establishment; the Reagan era expires with the INF treaty, the benign cooing of the two imperial chiefs, probably some private deal-making between Washington and Moscow — and if that weren't enough, revelations of military-industrial corruption, which should hardly have come as a surprise. In both the US and the USSR, the assumption of perpetual confrontation is embattled. This means that the mood on both sides is more fluid, more promising, even giddier than at any time since the Kennedy-Khrushchev détente a quarter-century ago. The dovish parties of the two superpowers want to melt the Cold War altogether, and start — something else.

The question is, What? Shall the sequel be "peaceful competition" (Gorbachev), "cold peace and peaceful competition" (*The New York Times* editorial of August 10, 1987), "stable coexistence" (the American Committee on U. S.-Soviet Relations, including Arthur Macy Cox, William Colby, and George Ball) — or, grudgingly, "steps...to reconcile vital U. S. and Soviet interests" (Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance)? There is dispute and confusion in both camps over what the new relationship is, what to call it. But whatever, exactly, it turns out to be, it is certainly not the paranoid confrontation with which we have been saddled for more than forty years. That corrosive force, reality, is eating away the essential map which most people carry in their heads. For the first time since 1945, the master map, the Cold War, is apparently dissolving before our eyes. Simplifying the world into two mutually exclusive, eternally confrontational blocs doesn't describe, let alone explain, much of what is happening in the world — economic, political, and ethnic tensions within both blocs; halting moves toward East-West cooperation in defusing the Middle East, southwest Africa, Central America, and Cambodia; growing economic interdependence as well as jitters.

The American mass media, for their part, have been orchestrating an unusual array of East-West themes and images to accompany the decline of Cold War antagonism. In recent months, we have been regaled with the pomp and circumstance of Washington and

Moscow summit coverage; the we-can-all-talk-to-each-other format of a special chatty *Nightline* featuring Senator Richard Lugar and Speaker Jim Wright along with other politicians in Washington, satellite-linked to top Soviet officials in Moscow; and even reminders of the World War II amity between the US and the USSR. (On June 17, for example, on the CBS Evening News, Charles Kuralt narrated a terribly moving report. During the War, a captured Russian army doctor was, along with his countrymen, being starved by the Nazis. Americans next door in the same gulag were permitted Red Cross food shipments. Interviewed recently by Kuralt in Russia, the doctor recalled how American prisoners, at great risk to themselves, shared their food. He had written down the names of some of these Americans. The CBS camera is there as one of them, a Texas doctor, calls the Russian and speaks to him for the first time in more than forty years.) The symbolic coding says: Proximity is real; it overcomes enmity. The superpowers rattle missiles at each other, but humans (leader to leader, official to official, ex-prisoner to ex-prisoner) are partners in dialogue if not, indeed, allies.

As the American establishment reorganizes its understanding of the world, the American right is not silent. The initiatives of American foreign and military policy often bring with them a pronounced undertow, although not always a successful one. With Yalta came "twenty years of treason"; with Kennedy's *détente*, Goldwater's counter*détente*; with the Vietnam war, the skeptical and oppositional "Vietnam syndrome"; with Nixon's *détente* and SALT I, the Committee on the Present Danger, the arms buildup, and the right-wing campaign against America's "unilateral disarmament." The more strongly a policy departs from established themes, the greater the recoil that works its way through American politics. We should expect that, as economic and political pressures continue to build toward a softening of the East-West antagonism, so will counterpressures.

It is therefore useful to monitor the right's reactions to East-West rapprochement. The problem for the American right (including George Bush, at least for campaign purposes) is to keep up the sense of alarm — and the military budget — now that The Enemy is working hard to resign his post. What is a mobilization without an enemy? With Gorbachev on his way to Washington for last December's summit, a prominent right-wing ideologue, Howard Phillips, went so far as to publicly denounce Ronald Reagan as "a useful idiot for Soviet propaganda." The clenched-teeth right has to deny that anything has "really" changed. Pundits of the right nowadays resort to a language of structural essence ("the basic Soviet system remains to be changed") more commonly associated with the hard-bitten left. Having lost on INF, they are digging in for more protracted and consequential battles to come.

In these notes, I look at the American right's responses to the East-West relaxation marked by the Washington and Moscow summits and the signing of the INF treaty. The maneuvers of the right are interesting in themselves. They also prefigure the future of the East-West debate. The right's failure to block the INF treaty should not be taken as a sign of capitulation in principle. For one thing, the INF treaty rolled back the clock solely on two small, well-defined categories of nuclear missiles. It was achieved, from the American side, by the old evil-empire-basher himself, a hard man for the right to fight. Reagan could (and did) portray the treaty as the harvest of "strength," a vindication of his 50 percent military buildup of 1981-86, and, before that, the NATO two-track decision of 1979.

But the disgruntled right is also deploying its themes and forces for more momentous choices ahead. If current trends continue, there is a fighting chance to set the structure and language of international relations on an accelerating course toward major nuclear arms reduction and a vigorous peace. (Consider, to take a small example, how in recent months the mainstream political-ideological vocabulary has widened to include "interdependence.") Opportunities can, of course, be missed; they have been missed before, as the limited test-ban treaty of 1963 hardened into an ending, not a beginning. But short of a catastrophic event like the deposing of Gorbachev by hard-liners, the mid-term prospect is for continued East-West relaxation, featuring, at the least, START talks, asymmetrical conventional cutbacks in Europe, and joint East-West pressure toward regional settlements. As Cold War verities continue to come unglued, we may expect the countermobilization to be fierce. To the extent that détente progresses, the anti-détente themes of the last half-year are likely to recoil with increasing energy. The discourse of the right in the first half of 1988 offers a preview of how it may be expected to react during more bitter battles to come.

I read every article touching on East-West relations, the USSR, the INF treaty, etc., in four right-wing periodicals (*Conservative Digest*, *Reader's Digest*, the *American Spectator*, and *Human Events*) between December 1987 (the month of the Washington summit) and June 1988 (the month of the Moscow summit), inclusive. Since the early seventies at least, these four have often set the agenda for right-wing political activists, some of whom ended up in policy-making positions themselves. President Reagan is known to have leaned heavily on the weekly *Human Events*, so much so that at one point during the development of the East-West rapprochement, top aides were at pains to keep the journal away from him — or at least joked out loud about doing so.

The neoconservative *Commentary* and (on foreign policy) *New Republic* have also been influential in Reagan's Washington, representing the Henry Jackson wing of the Democratic Party. While thinking about this paper, I have read *Commentary's* and the



*New Republic's* statements on international questions, but pause to look only at a *New Republic* editorial, the most comprehensive recent statement on arms control to appear in either journal.<sup>1</sup> The foreign policy right is an amalgam of Republican and Democratic rights, both of which can be expected to resist (although not necessarily equally) substantial nuclear arms reduction, American withdrawal from Europe, and a shift toward East-West confrontation to a spirit more pacific. While these precise channels of the right may not play so prominent a part in years to come, variations on the themes they sound are almost certain to blast forth over the decades to come.

I am listing the themes in descending order of frequency.

### **Theme I: There's Nothing New Under the Kremlin Wall**

The easiest way to deny the proposition that a changed Soviet Union makes possible a transformed East-West relationship is to deny the premise. One major theme on the right, accordingly, is that nothing has changed in the USSR. Indeed, with certain exceptions to be itemized below, the Soviet Union is a creature of essence, not accidents. When contemplating the Soviet Union, externals are misleading. Only the essence counts. Any appearance to the contrary ends up confirming that nothing has changed. "The Evil Empire is Not Run by Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm" is the headline of a *Conservative Digest* piece by publisher William R. Kennedy Jr. (2/88, pp. 127-28). The opening conveys the tone of the piece and others in this vein:

Once upon a time there was an Evil Empire called the Soviet Union whose leaders enslaved their own people, tortured prisoners of conscience in gulags, and sought to rule the world. The captive peoples suffered under one terrible tyrant after another, until the day a benevolent emperor named Mikhail Gorbachev, who was married to a beautiful princess named Raisa, began a policy he called *glasnost* or 'openness.' He said this would bring peace and happiness to everyone if only America would give up its weapons.

This is the fairy tale presented to Americans in the euphoria following the [Washington] Gorbachev-Reagan Summit. But, for those with eyes to see, the Emperor Gorbachev is as naked as previous Soviet rulers have been, their evil ambitions cloaked only by the transparencies of disinformation and propaganda. Indeed, *nothing of substance has changed in the Kremlin* since the day Josef Stalin openly proclaimed, 'Sincere diplomacy is no more possible than dry water or wooden iron.' [My emphasis — T. G.] *Glasnost* is simply the latest Soviet ploy to lull the United States into letting down its guard.

In this demonology, the Soviet Union stands forever outside history. As in originalist theories of the Constitution, the Soviet Union was inscribed in history by Lenin, and remains, once and for all, Lenin's creature. "The Soviet empire still exists," writes *Human Events* (6/4/88), "and Gorbachev, it is useful to recall, isn't the first Soviet leader

to initiate substantive internal reforms or enter into a policy of accommodation with the West." Stalin and Malenkov-Khrushchev did the same. "Yet each period of reform and accommodation was replaced by renewed repression at home and aggressive actions abroad...."

Summit meetings, another piece warns, "play...into the hands of the NRDC [National Resources Defense Council] and its allies...by tacitly confirming the premise that the defining characteristic of the Soviet Union, and hence of its relationship with the United States, is its possession of nuclear weapons. In truth, its defining characteristic is that it is a police state with insatiable international ambitions" (*American Spectator*, 2/88).

Beneath *glasnost*, then, lurks the gulag; beneath the mask of loveliness, evil; beneath the smile, naked aggression. *Glasnost*, accordingly, consists of "rotten fruits" (Kennedy, *Conservative Digest*, 2/88).

The image of the mask which conceals depths of evil appears over and over, but nowhere more ferociously and weirdly than in the *ad feminam* form of *Conservative Digest's* 3/88 piece, "Party Hack Under Her Silk Babushka." Here Alan Stang, before going on to argue that "Raisa's doctorate was in brainwashing peasants to get them to give up the 'superstition' of their religion," slams the woman at what is assumed to be her most important and therefore vulnerable point: appearance. At least, Stang writes, Raisa Gorbachev is preferable to her predecessor, the previously unknown and "disheveled woman who shuffles forth "at state funerals," that widow who "resembles a farm animal, who may be more equal than the rest of us, but has all the appeal of an ox. Her hair looks like the creation of a mediocre restaurant, her ensemble like something the Salvation Army wouldn't accept." Then falls the blow: "As known diehards, we don't like to admit that Raisa looks a lot better than this, but we do. One might even find her attractive, if one happened to be (say) a fireplug."

The pathology of this passage is breathtaking. I am not sure why exactly it is that our protecting father, good old Dad of the American state personified by the toughest Dad in town, is in danger of being lured to his death by the wiles of the Silk Babushka. Is it that her womanliness is dangerous, or that she is not really a woman at all? In any case, wise counselors must attend Dad lest he succumb. Consider the closing paragraph of Stang's invective:

In short, Raisa Gorbachev is a specialist in changing people's minds by tinkering with their environments, also known as brainwashing. She is an apparatchik, a psychopolitical operator. The mass media that treat her otherwise will not hereafter have any excuse for doing so. Unless, of course, they share her ideological commitment as a professional propagandist for Communism.

The Party Hack must be unveiled as the vile beast she is, in other words, so that father will come to his senses.

The fear and hatred of women are stupefying.<sup>2</sup>

Another version of the unchanging essence comes from Melvin J. Lasky, co-editor of the once CIA-subsidized *Encounter*, whose *Encounter* article is reprinted in *Reader's Digest* (6/88). "Is Russia Really Changing?" the headline asks, followed by "Don't bet on it, this respected commentator cautions the West." After taking a swipe at the media (see below) and providing a Cook's tour of U. S.-Soviet history, Lasky closes with Gorbachev "admitting that his country is in the grip of a mortal stagnation — and needs fundamental change!...What Gorbachev has been officially confirming is only those truths that have been obvious since 1917..." Whence he proceeds to itemize eight devastating critiques Gorbachev has leveled at Soviet norms and practices. In other words, Gorbachev's criticisms of the USSR are proofs that the USSR remains unchanged! If, on the other hand, Gorbachev had covered up for the USSR, that would be taken as proof that — the USSR remains unchanged!

Since the USSR is an unchanging and unchangeable essence, it follows that Gorbachev is provisional. He shows up as a charlatan, an engineer tinkering with the system, or a well-meaning failure/victim. The pure form of the third possibility appears in a parable by the Soviet émigré Vladimir Bukovsky published on the eve of the Washington summit entitled, with clucking irony, "A Lonely Visionary" (*American Spectator*, 12/87). The Party didn't want either *perestroika* or *glasnost*, the military wanted *perestroika* but not *glasnost*, while the people wanted *glasnost* but not *perestroika*. So Gorbachev, visiting the White House, asks for asylum, and years later is encountered in a California bar, living the good life.

Even signs of Soviet relaxation can be taken as prefigurations of doom. In a *Reader's Digest* symposium, "Can Gorbachev Last?" (5/88), with Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter voting yes, the same Bukovsky argues that Gorbachev's successes lead inexorably to failure:

Détente, with its liberalization, brings about the erosion of the Soviet system, and leaders have to reverse the policy to stop that erosion.

Within five years, the external empire will be unmanageable. The Soviets will be losing countries in the Third World. They will also be having trouble in Eastern Europe and at home. Nationalism will be an important force, as we have already seen in Armenia, the Baltic states and central Asia, with people clamoring for a better life and more rights. At that point the Soviets will have to do something to divert attention from these problems — deploy new missiles in Europe or invade another country, generating a Cold War climate.

Bukovsky is probably right about the USSR "losing countries in the Third World" and "having trouble in Eastern Europe and at home." In the same symposium, Zbigniew Brzezinski defends a similar proposition: Soviet decentralization will unleash political aspirations in the USSR, and therefore "Gorbachev's legacy is going to be a Soviet Union in protracted turmoil" (*Reader's Digest*, 5/88). Why these expectations should militate for a Western military buildup is less than clear, since nothing would be more likely to promote more hostility in the Soviet Union. The only possible answer would be: Spend the Soviet Union into military weakness. This is the answer probably waiting in the right's wings.

To sum up, the right has a powerful need to believe that the USSR remains unchanged. The more signs appear that the Soviet Union is changing, the more the true believer is pressed to explain them away. Why? Psychologically, cognitive dissonance can be disabling; the streamlined belief is, paradoxically, the most tenable, and the more tenuous it is, the more fiercely it must be held. But politically too, the theme of the unchanging USSR is not only enticingly simple, it may also be indispensable. Several forces converged to create the Reagan right of the eighties: the economic right (pro-business), the social right (anti-modernist, anti-feminist, fundamentalist and evangelical Christian), the neoconservatives (liberal in domestic policy but aggressive across the borders). Their coalition became victorious in 1980 when it was joined by the substantial number of white workers who suffered in the Carter-era stagflation. But the fault lines crisscrossing this coalition are deep. If it is to stay together, there has to be a cement. The coalition's cement was, and remains, and (I am tempted to say) *can only be*, defense against the overseas menace: hostility to the encroaching forces of Communism. In a word, paranoia.

One may wonder, then, how Richard Nixon was able to deflect the right — in particular, the China Lobby — when he opened the way to alliance with China. The answer is twofold. For one thing, like Reagan's, Nixon's anti-Communist credentials were unimpeachable. For another, he was operating according to the principle that the enemy of an enemy is a friend. The major enemy remained in place, a fixed star in the firmament, unswerving as before. The new relationship with China made sense in the context of the unyielding old relationship with the USSR.

## **Theme II: The Press is Red**

We have already seen, in Alan Stang's fashion report, the theme of the traitorous press — a staple on the right, for East-West relations as well as every other issue.

"U. S. Media Act As Conduits for Soviet 'Disinformation,'" reads a *Human Events* headline (5/7/88) over a long review of "Moscow Meets Main Street," a Media Institute

pamphlet by Ted J. Smith III, which denounces American television for giving too much time and too lofty credentials to Soviet spokespersons. The offending media conduits apparently are not universal, for the reviewer, Allan C. Brownfeld, is impressed by the pamphlet's foreword, which lauds it as "intelligent, provocative and altogether useful"; the foreword was written by John Corry, "respected television critic of *The New York Times*." According to Brownfeld, "What Dr. Smith calls the 'Sovietization' of American television is proceeding at a rapid pace. There was a dramatic 64% increase of stories using at least one Soviet source from 291 in 1981 to 477 in 1985." And this under the watchful eye of the Reagan administration! The closer to Washington power the right got, the more it expected its policies to sweep the land; if they didn't, this must be because the hinterlands were bamboozled by resistant forces — thanks to "culturally neutral" (see below) ideamongers, the media and the schools.

Another sounder of alarms against the red-lining media is Michael Ledeen, who writes a Presswatch column for the *American Spectator* but is better remembered as a player with strong U. S. intelligence connections in the thick of the Iran-contra deal. "Even the Pope is looked at more critically [by the media] than the Kremlin leaders," Ledeen writes (3/88), "and it is not merely, as some would have it, because of the public-relations skills of Comrade Gorbachev." The real reason for double standards is left tantalizingly unspecified. Ledeen goes on to defend that Dickensian tyke of small enterprise, Rupert Murdoch, against those government bullies, Senators Kennedy and Hollings, who forced Murdoch (in a "covert action," a phrase more evocative if one knows Ledeen's background) to sell his newspapers in New York and Boston on the grounds that he already had TV stations there and couldn't have both. Ledeen concludes with this bathetic appeal:

Every time I speak to a conservative group on the subject of the media, I am asked, "What can be done to make the media more representative, more objective, more thorough?" I always respond, "People with different points of view have to get involved, have to buy newspapers, magazines, and television stations, have to make movies and write and publish books. You must compete with the left, which prizes influence over the media, and resorts to all manner of stratagem to obtain and expand it."

Finally, the aforementioned Melvin J. Lasky, in his "Is Russia Really Changing?" includes this tantalizing paragraph:

Newspapers and television, enchanted by what is presented as a Gorbachev Revolution, revise old certainties and propagate new illusions. Foreign ministers, even presidents, shake hands with Soviet counterparts as if they were old allies.

"As if they were old allies"!<sup>3</sup> I'd thought we *were* old allies. Must be those treacherous newspapers I've been reading.

To sum up: The theme is America as "pitiful, helpless giant" — Nixon's phrase for the right's recurrent torment in an era when empire has bumped up against limits. The right's animosity toward the media — vividly demonstrated already at the Goldwater nomination in 1964 — is a passion, but more: it is a stratagem that obliquely addresses the right's frustrations in American politics. The disturbing thing, from a right-wing point of view, is that after organizing for two decades they saw their champion elected with what they took to be a mandate for sweeping change — and now, seven years later, they have accomplished so little of what they pine for. How shall they account for the discrepancy between promise and performance? It must be the media and the schools. (The subject of the schools is something I want to come back to on another occasion.)

The repeated jeremiad against a rigged media carries an interesting, unspoken, possibly also unthought logic. The right knows the truth about the Soviet Union; the people do not, apparently, know that same truth, or at least are not conducting themselves in accordance with it; it follows that the people are being misled. The misleaders must be the institutions of mental management, principally the media and (in the Bloom-Bennett version of the parallel argument) the schools. The premise is that America has the way ("Americanism") and the means (might) but lacks the will. It is strong but has become weak. Tough America needs to kick Commie ass, could do so if it put its mind to it, but is being sicklied over by the pale cast of thought — intellectuals and their institutions. Muscle is being held back, softened by forces of mind: the female side, again. Brawn weakened by brain — once again we encounter a parable of misogyny.<sup>4</sup>

Cultural despair about America feminized crops up everywhere among the paleoconservatives as well as neoconservatives like Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter. We shall see it come up again in a moment.

### **Theme III: The Specter of Moral Equivalence**

A third theme, integral to the first two: fear that the media, along with others among America's cultural elites, are leveling the difference between the US and the USSR.

"It is hugely important to Moscow," writes A. M. Rosenthal, recently (and unwillingly) retired editor of *The New York Times* in a December 7, 1987 *Times* column condensed in *Reader's Digest*, "that the world believe there is no great difference between us. That would mean the end of American leadership of the free world, the very concept of which would no longer exist." Rosenthal is explicit, then, about what is at stake in America's retention of the moral high ground. He cautions Western leaders that they have

fallen for Gorbachev's "brilliant strategy," which is "to attain [full moral equality with the United States] without essentially changing the system upon which the Soviet dictatorship and his own power rest." "Moral equality," Rosenthal writes, "erodes our own values and visions and compassion." Those who suffer in the Soviet Union and its captive nations, Rosenthal concludes, "will testify that there can be no moral equality between a democracy and a dictatorship, even a dictatorship with velvet on the bars."

Rosenthal is quite right to insist that, as "parties in Washington and New York delightedly discover that, like us, the Russians are, after all, just people," it is reasonable to insist that "'people' do not initiate invasions or establish political prisons; systems and those who run them do." The wartime Russophilia that ran rife in *Life*, say, was rampant unrealism, mystification that easily turned to Russophobia when the gloss wore off after 1945. On the other hand, it is not so clear that these party-going naifs need A. M. Rosenthal to remind them that the Soviet system is a system. I think the vast preponderance of Americans who cheer Gorbachev do not do so in ignorance of the fact that there is a Soviet system, but precisely in the knowledge that there is one and *therefore* in support of Gorbachev's efforts to transform it. There is a good chance that when they "discover that, like us, the Russians are, after all, just people," they discover precisely the home truth which the entire history of tribalism and nationalism conspires to deny and which must become common knowledge if a world civilization is to come into being and survive.

The view I have just expressed probably qualifies as the "cultural neutrality" fervently denounced on the right. Provenance for the phrase is claimed by Ted J. Smith III, author of the aforementioned "Moscow Meets Main Street." The *Human Events* review (5/7/88) quotes Smith thusly: when American media place "the hostile propaganda of foreign regimes...on an equal footing with the statements of American political leaders," what they are displaying is "cultural neutrality." Smith associates "cultural neutrality" with "cultural relativism," which is likewise the bugaboo of Allan Bloom and William Bennett, among others. Cultural relativism, in his view, follows from cultural determinism, the belief that "any knowledge claim inevitably reflects the values and assumptions of the culture in which it originates." Today's journalism, he argues, "combines the value neutrality of factual objectivity with the reformist zeal and commitment to deeper (albeit negative) truth envisioned by the New Journalists. It consists, in short, of cultural neutralism and nihilism...."

As if, once you acknowledge that the Other Side exists, with human faces and purposes of its own, you lose the moral edge and tumble the rest of the way down the slippery slope toward equating all political systems. The crystalline self-satisfaction of

moral superiority dissolves into chaos. Ted J. Smith III and his co-believers are haunted by the fear that to acknowledge the humanity of the Other is to lose the advantage. This is the time-dishonored appeal of nationalism, haunted by the fear that the moral edge is possibly not so self-evident after all.

The logical lapse is severe and revealing. The question is, What ought one to conclude from the fact that the Soviet Union is "a dictatorship with velvet on the bars"? Does it follow that the Soviet Union is an unbridled aggressor? That nuclear weapons are not evil? That the arms race ought to be pursued helter-skelter? That one would only be alarmed about the unique and irreversible evil of a nuclear war if one succumbed to the witchcraft of "moral equality" or "cultural neutrality"?

The right's argument slides abruptly from one thing to another: from the moral superiority of democracy over dictatorship to the embrace of the American side in an unreconstructed Cold War contest. If democracy is superior to dictatorship, this must be so partly because the citizens in a democracy are free to debate, among other things, the question of their nation's role in the world. To be a democracy does not settle the question. Rather, it launches it.

#### **Theme IV: Distrust and Are You Sure You Want to Verify**

The fourth theme that looms large in the precincts of the right is the danger that the Soviets will cheat — joined by the danger that they will not.

The immediate alarm is straightforward: The Russians have cheated on every treaty. (Ronald Reagan has said so himself.) Why should INF be different? The *Wall Street Journal* (excerpted in *Conservative Digest*, 1/88) worries aloud that the INF treaty will unleash "a mad momentum likely to sweep away the Reagan rearmament program in general and the strategic defensive initiative in particular....*The Russians, of course, will cheat....*The U. S. will lapse into a position of strategic inferiority, as a result of the trends started in the last year of the Reagan administration." (My emphasis — T. G.) William F. Buckley, Jr.'s contribution to the discussion (*Conservative Digest*, 2/88) is to ask of what value is verification when, by his account, previous verification measures have been sufficient to ascertain that the Soviets have cheated on other treaties. "What is the point, conservatives are asking, of verification when, having verified that there is cheating, we don't know what to do about it?"

A longer piece in the *American Spectator* (6/88) cautions that the consequences of cheating would increase "exponentially" if there were deep cuts under a START agreement. Conservatives, writes Carnes Lord, erred by demanding tough standards of verification and lots of inspection. The problem is threefold: (1) "Strategic weapons are becoming



increasingly difficult to monitor." (2) "On-site inspection has been grossly overrated. It has to be presumed that the Soviets will never permit a U. S. inspection team to uncover direct evidence of a violation." Americans will gather useful intelligence, but will be self-restrained; the Russians "will have a field day." (3) Buckley's point: What can be done about cheating? Lord wants to designate sea-launched cruise missiles as a category to be increased commensurate with Soviet behavior. Otherwise, Lord concludes that there is a danger of "unilateral disarmament." The same argument is made in an interview with David Sullivan, a staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee working for Jesse Helms' Republican minority (*Conservative Digest*, 2/88).

Haunting all the cheating fears is the right's suspicion that it has lost SDI; the ballistic-proof shield will not be deployed in time to spell deliverance. If the fantasy of absolute defense is dispelled, and arms reduction is prevented by the fear of cheating, there is no escape from perpetual deterrence on a perpetually upward curve of spending and "modernization." That, therefore, willy-nilly, is where the right ends up.

### **The New Realism: One Hand Clapping for Arms Control**

Finally, a word on the *New Republic's* editorial, "A Summit Primer" (5/30/88), presenting something of a new center position. Written by senior editor Robert Wright, this is the magazine's major editorial statement on arms control and the East-West situation during the first half of 1988. I take it to be representative of hard-headed opinion that will be amply represented in either a Bush or a Dukakis administration.

Contrary to the hard right's hostility to arms control as such, the *New Republic's* "Primer" takes the view that START is "not an irremediably bad idea," though it "suffers from some of the same misconceptions that possessed the president in Iceland." The essential point:

*Less isn't necessarily better.* One implication of mainstream deterrence theory that escaped Reagan at Reykjavik is that the risk of nuclear war isn't proportional to the number of nuclear weapons. Indeed, it's when the superpowers have only a few nuclear warheads that one or the other is most tempted to wipe out the enemy's arsenal with the pre-emptive strike. *Once the number of warheads is up in the thousands, getting them down around zero is a route fraught with peril, and is best traveled carefully.* [My emphasis — T. G.] Along the way it's important to worry not just about the size of the two arsenals but also about their composition.

The editorial's second point:

*Some nuclear weapons are good. Others are evil.* No, we're not just talking about American vs. Soviet weapons. We're talking about weapons that make nuclear war less likely vs. those that make it more likely.

Accordingly, the *New Republic* wants a "cheap" route to a mobile second-strike deterrent: either movable Minuteman IIIs or submarines with half the launching tubes inspectably cut out.

Finally, after wavering, the editorial looks to START as

the way station to a second, more judicious accord ten years down the road that would unequivocally make the world safer (an accord permitting, say, 3,000 warheads apiece, with a low ratio of warheads to missiles [i.e., cancellation of the MIRV breakthrough of the 1970s], and to delivery systems generally — all backed up by intrusive verification).

Why ten years away? They don't explain. On the other hand, in their view, START isn't so good it's worth rushing into.

The "Primer" is suffused by the assumption that "the strategic balance...keeps both superpowers from seriously contemplating their use." This is what dopy Reagan forgot at Reykjavik, so the *New Republic* maintains. But the assumption is by no means self-evident. Indeed, by all reputable accounts, the US maintained a vast strategic superiority through at least the early 1960s. (At the time of the Berlin crisis of 1961, according to Daniel Ellsberg, then in charge of preparing the SIOP nuclear plan, the total number of Soviet strategic missiles was — four.) It could not have been "strategic balance" that restrained Washington from unleashing the nuclear attack that it did, in fact, contemplate on a number of occasions.

Some rough strategic balance is not intrinsically a bad idea — although as an ironclad *sine qua non* it commits a fundamental mystification, the same one that all the argumentation on the right omits: it fails to acknowledge the damage that a single missile-firing submarine could do. But even allowing the goal of strategic balance, this approach is cavalier about the continuing dangers of thermonuclear R&D. It neglects the use of unilateral initiatives in lowering the nuclear numbers. Snide toward START, it swings toward complacency.

## Conclusion

For years to come, the right is going to try to amass at least the veto strength to block any arms control or détente treaty. Thirty-four votes in the Senate can do the job. The right is also going to struggle to control the debate, to turn it back to the Committee on the Present Danger agenda of the 1970s. At least under Democratic presidents, they have strong chances.

This is not the place to set out detailed responses to the positions of the right. But I don't want to end these notes without making a general point. A majority coalition which

looks toward continued East-West political relaxation, disarmament, and a decline of military approaches to political tensions is going to have to outflank the right's positions. The left-liberal-center majority needs to rebut the right — but also needs to do more than rebut. I think that, finally, the right's ideological strength comes from the way it places front and center an antagonism to the USSR which apparently matches America's predilections — its pride in political democracy, rights and liberties. The route to a majority which would stand for deepening détente and against any semblance of the Cold War lies through the same recognition — which supplies, in fact, the single standard by which developments in the Soviet Union must be welcomed with cheers. We need, in short, to develop and defend an overall approach which acknowledges ideological differences between the US and the USSR yet refuses the paranoia whose technological expression is the thermonuclear bomb.

## Notes

1. For a loose thematic analysis of the *New Republic* columnists Morton Kondracke and Charles Krauthammer, see Eric Alterman, "Washington and the Curse of the Pundit Class: The Perversion of U.S. Foreign Policy Discourse," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 1988), pp. 249-60.
2. Another version of misogyny, in fact, appears in the semi-literate space-filler that follows Stang's piece: "TRUE BULL. 'Contrary to public opinion,' corrected [sic] the late Ernie Kovacs with a little known fact, 'waving a red flag at a bull does not irritate him at all. Actually cows are the ones who get irritated when a red flag is waved at them. The reason a bull gets mad when a red flag is waved at him is because he dislikes being mistaken for a cow.'"
3. Apologies to readers. Reading the right brings out the exclamation point in me.
4. On this note, I am surprised by the absence, among these four magazines, of the predictable (and probably grounded) charge that the normally hard-headed Ronald Reagan was steered into the mouth of the Russian bear by That Woman in the White House, none other than Nancy Reagan. Possibly the magazines do not want to get the president's dander up and forego whatever influence they think they might have on him.



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- \*These papers also appear in *Multilingua* (January/April 1988)

Working papers #18-34 are from the Second Conference on Discourse: Peace, Security and International Society, Ballyvaughan, Ireland, August 6-13, 1988 (\$2.50 each). Please contact the IGCC Publications office for an update on their availability.

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