

# Nuclear War and the Struggle for Disarmament

by Joe Shapiro

## 1. Introduction

One of the most significant political developments of the last few years has been the resurgence of the disarmament movement, especially in Western Europe. This movement accelerated, with mass demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of people, following the Dec. 12, 1979 NATO decision to deploy 108 Pershing-2 missiles in West Germany and 464 Cruise missiles in various European countries. Due to this resistance, the 96 Cruise missiles originally scheduled for Belgium and the Netherlands will probably not be deployed. Further, the Reagan administration has been forced to come out with its so-called "zero option," i.e., an offer not to install these new weapons if the Soviets dismantle their SS-20 missiles aimed at Europe.

In the US the main emphasis has been on the Nuclear Freeze Campaign and the many activities being organized to coincide with the Second Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly, scheduled to begin on June 7. The highlight of the latter actions will be a march and rally in New York City on June 12 which is expected to attract several hundred thousand people.

To date there has been almost no Marxist-Leninist presence in this movement, in spite of its potential for growth. In addition, there has been almost no theoretical analysis of the disarmament movement. Theoretical leadership within the movement has been assumed in Europe by British historian E. P. Thompson, who is perhaps best known to *Theoretical Review* readers for *The Making of the English Workingclass*, as well as for his 1978 diatribe against Louis Althusser.<sup>1</sup> In the US there has been no serious Marxist theoretical output on disarmament whatsoever.

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This article claims nothing beyond the crudest beginnings of an analysis. It is written in the hope of initiating discussion of an important and growing mass movement among individuals interested in developing Marxist theory. It is the author's belief that Marxists try to understand the political potential of reform movements, including disarmament, in order to make decisions on where and how they can usefully intervene.

The article is divided into four parts. First, as background, there is a brief history of the nuclear arms race, covering the most important political and technical developments and their strategic implications. The presentation argues that one of the commonly accepted positions, namely that there has been a rough parity in strategic nuclear weapons between the US and the USSR, needs to be examined in more detail and very likely is not true.

The article then turns to an examination of some of the theoretical assumptions made by the movement. The treatment employs an argument used by Hans Magnus Enzensberger in discussing the environmental movement: it proposes and analyzes a "central hypothesis" of the movement.<sup>2</sup> The central hypothesis of the disarmament movement contains two main themes: the apocalyptic nature of nuclear weapons and an assumed "symmetry" between the US and the Soviet Union.

The next part emphasizes the current status of the disarmament movement in the US and specific ways its program has expressed the above concepts. It also discusses some of the debates that have arisen within that movement. To a large degree these are over the question of whether or not there should be unilateral demands directed at the US government, especially around imperialism in El Salvador and other parts of the third world.

The final section, admittedly provisional, tries to bring some of these threads together. It argues that the "central hypothesis" of the disarmament movement as it presently exists leads nowhere as a long term solution to the question of nuclear weapons. Its logical conclusion must be a theory of US-USSR convergence or, at the very least, indefinite peaceful coexistence.

The question then becomes, how will this movement

advance? Here two main points are made. First, the connections between nuclear weapons and US imperialism must be clarified, and from a tactical point of view, anti-imperialist forces within the disarmament movement must be supported. However, this by itself is insufficient. The assumptions made within the movement must be challenged, both through theoretical analysis and by putting forth appropriate strategic positions and tactical demands. A few suggestions in this direction close the article.

## The Literature on Disarmament

A few comments on the literature are in order. By far the most noteworthy book is the collection of essays *Protest and Survive*, edited by E. P. Thompson and Dan Smith.<sup>3</sup> This work has an interesting history. The British government had printed, in secret, a booklet *Protect and Survive* on civil defense measures which could, it was claimed, improve individuals' chances of survival in the event of a nuclear attack. This was to be distributed to the public if such a calamity appeared imminent. A leaked copy fell into Thompson's hands. He changed the 'C' in the title to an 'S' and published a pamphlet which pointed out, among other things, how utterly ludicrous the concept of civil defense was under such circumstances.<sup>4</sup> This pamphlet became the lead essay in a collection, also titled *Protest and Survive*, published in England but not distributed in the US.<sup>5</sup> An Americanized version of Thompson's pamphlet appeared in *The Nation* under the title 'A Letter to America.'<sup>6</sup> This last version is the lead article in the Monthly Review edition of *Protest and Survive*. Three or four other articles also are different from the British edition, although most of the material is the same. Especially noteworthy is Daniel Ellsberg's introduction to the US edition, titled "Call to Mutiny."<sup>7</sup> Ellsberg documents several examples, since the end of WW II, when the threat alone of using nuclear weapons was sufficient to force compliance with US demands, especially in the third world.

Also interesting is an article, included in both editions, by Henry T. Nash, a former intelligence analyst for the Air Targets Division of the US Air Force.<sup>8</sup> Nash discusses various devices used to keep workers from understanding, in human terms, the consequences of their work. These include extreme division of labor, award-giving, and the use of sanitized acronyms and words such as "Little Boy" for the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Nash's article gives nice examples of how the Department of Defense (DOD) pacifies its workers.

Overall, *Protest and Survive*, especially the US edition, gives excellent coverage of the main currents and ideas within the disarmament movement, together with considerable information on the weapons systems themselves and on the military strategy involved. It is must reading for anyone interested in the question of disarmament.

Though *Protest and Survive* does contain reasonably scholarly studies of the defense sector in both the US and the USSR,<sup>9</sup> it does not contain anything resembling a theoretical statement of the movement. Thompson attempts to develop such a statement in his article in *New*

*Left Review* (NLR) No. 121.<sup>10</sup> Here he introduces the idea that the development of nuclear weapons has produced a new social condition that he calls exterminism.

This idea is challenged by Raymond Williams in *NLR* No. 124, in what is by far the most serious attempt to date to develop a Marxist analysis of the disarmament movement.<sup>11</sup> In this article, Williams also tries to define the current meanings of such terms as "deterrence," "multilateralism," and "unilateralism," as well as commenting on possible specifically socialist contributions to the movement.

In an excellent recent article in *NLR* No. 130, Soviet dissidents Roy and Zhores Medvedev challenge the concept of "symmetry" by pointing out specific differences in nuclear development and strategy between the USSR and the US.<sup>12</sup>

There is also a vast literature on the technical aspects of nuclear weapons, their medical effects, and their effects on military strategy. This includes the publications of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), who publish an annual yearbook on world armaments, the US government, and the Washington-based Center for Defense Information. There also are articles in magazines such as *Scientific American*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, and *Aviation Week and Space Technology*. A few publications that proved useful in preparing this article follow.

A long-time standard is *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, by Glasstone and Dolan.<sup>13</sup> The US Office of Technology Assessment has published *The Effects of Nuclear War*, which discusses the effects of several attack scenarios.<sup>14</sup> The UN has published an excellent report, *Comprehensive Study on Nuclear Weapons*.<sup>15</sup> Finally, extremely valuable has been *The Counterforce Syndrome*, by Robert C. Aldridge, a former missile engineer at Lockheed.<sup>16</sup> In this short book (86 pages), Aldridge examines the capabilities of various US weapons systems and builds a fairly convincing case that the US will come close to having a first-strike capability by the mid-1980s.

## 2. Technical Aspects of the Nuclear Arms Race

The bomb that destroyed Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945 had an explosive yield of 12 to 15 kilotons, i.e., the equivalent of 12,000 to 15,000 tons of TNT. Three days later, a 22 kiloton bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. According to a 1976 report prepared by the mayors of these two cities, these two weapons had produced a total of 190,000 to 230,000 deaths by Dec. 1945 and about 300,000 deaths by 1950.<sup>17</sup>

The 1981 UN report estimated that the US arsenal contained from 25,000 to 33,000 warheads with a total yield of 4,000 to 8,000 megatons (*millions* of tons of TNT) and that of the USSR 10,000 to 15,000 warheads with a total yield of 7,000 to 11,000 megatons.<sup>18</sup> The combined megatonnage is the equivalent of about 1,000,000 Hiroshima bombs. The fact that either side can destroy the other several times over, together with the approximate equality in numbers (the US has more warheads, the Soviet union more total explosive yield) is generally used to argue that a rough parity exists. However, when the quality of the

respective weapons systems (reliability, accuracy, vulnerability, detection systems) is examined, a quite different picture emerges, namely that the US has always had a substantial advantage. Furthermore, the proposed new US systems (Cruise, Pershing-2, MX, and Trident-2 missiles) will substantially increase that advantage, possibly to the extent of having a first strike capability.

As pointed out by the Medvedevs, the Soviet Union did not develop long-range strategic bombers until well after WW II.<sup>19</sup> Thus the US came out of the war with a monopoly in delivery systems as well as in nuclear bombs. Even after the Soviets exploded their first fission bomb in 1949 and their first fusion bomb in 1953 this lack of delivery systems left them far behind. The launching of Sputnik and the testing of the first Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in 1957 did not change the balance, because of the unreliability of those early devices. Indeed, the US rapidly achieved leadership in these fields as well.

In 1960, the US launched the first Polaris submarine, carrying 16 missiles. In spite of this, John Kennedy came to power claiming that the Russians were creating a "missile gap." The reality was precisely the reverse. According to Daniel Ellsberg, in mid-1961, the Soviet Union had only four ICBMs.<sup>20</sup> It was precisely this overwhelming US superiority in nuclear weapons that enabled Kennedy to take a hard line during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

### The US Becomes a Target

Nonetheless, towards the end of the 1960s, Soviet ICBMs had improved enough, both in quality and numbers, to represent a real threat to the continental United States. This had several consequences.

1. Until the mid-1960s, the only serious Soviet threat was to Western Europe, i.e., Europe was "the only real hostage to an atomic war."<sup>21</sup> This had led to a strong movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, in England, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. With the development of ICBMs, the US became the primary Soviet target.

2. During the period of near-monopoly on nuclear weapons, stated US policy on deterrence was straightforward: anyone who attacks us will be destroyed. With the advent of Soviet ICBMs a new concept arose: mutually assured destruction (with the delightful acronym MAD). This argued that a nation will be deterred from a nuclear attack (first strike) provided its opponent has sufficient force to inflict unacceptable damage in its response (second strike). This situation has existed from the late 1960s on, because of the diversity and numbers of weapons involved and, at least in the earlier part of the period, the poor reliability and accuracy of the missiles.

3. Proposals were put forth in the US to construct anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, partly in response to a crude system (GALOSH) that went into service around Moscow in 1967. Substantial opposition to ABM development developed in two quarters: among scientists because they thought it wouldn't work, and among residents in those towns where it was planned to install the missiles.<sup>22</sup> These protests, combined with growing resistance to the Vietnam war and the reality of Soviet ICBMs, forced the US for the first time, to negotiate seriously over limitations on missiles. This led to the signing of the

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT-1) agreement in 1972.

SALT-1 had three main provisions. First, each side was limited to two ABM sites (reduced to one in 1974). Second, the number of ICBM launchers was limited to 1054 for the US and 1550 for the Soviet Union. The larger number of Soviet missiles made up for short range US missiles which could reach the Soviet Union from bases in Europe and on surface ships. Finally, the number of missile-launching submarines was limited to 41 for the US and 42 for the USSR.

### The High-Technology Gap: Parity?

Nuclear weapons and their delivery systems have always used the latest available technology. SALT-1, with its limits on *numbers* of systems, rather than their capabilities, emphasized high technology even more. It is precisely here that the US has the greatest edge. The Soviets are behind in practically every area of high technology of importance in the weapons race. For example, the majority of Soviet missiles are still liquid-fueled. All US systems introduced since 1962 use solid-fueled rockets, which are more reliable and more quickly launched.

Probably the most important recent development in missile technology was the multiple, independently-targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV), which allows several warheads with different targets to be carried by a single missile. This gives, while staying within the limitations of SALT-1, a tremendous multiplication in the allowed number of warheads, and hence of targets that can be struck. MIRV technology, developed in the US in the late 1960s, was not reproduced in the USSR until a decade later.

Aldridge documents other areas of US superiority. These include miniaturization of warheads, missile guidance, control and detection systems, antisubmarine warfare, and space technology applicable to weapons (here the Space Shuttle will give the US, an even greater lead, by dramatically reducing the cost of putting weapons systems into orbit). Even where there is approximate equality, e.g., high energy lasers, the US can, if desired, take the lead in very short order because of its superior overall technological base and stronger economy. The history of space exploration following Sputnik is a good example of this.

Convincing proof that the US is ahead in the important area of microelectronics is contained in the glossy four-color propaganda piece *Soviet Military Power*, released by the DOD in Sept. 1981 for the express purpose of getting Congress, Western European governments, and the public to believe in the Soviet military threat. After grossly exaggerating Soviet weapons capabilities for 70 pages this book comes to the topic of "Electronics and Computers." It states:

In 1965, Soviet development and production of microelectronics was about 10-to-12 years behind US capability. Today, the average relative position or "gap" is three-to-five years . . . Important Soviet decisions to acquire US and Western technology and copy, or "reverse engineer," microelectronics and computers by any means available have played a fundamentally

important role in their success. . . . The Soviets have also copied many different types of US integrated circuits, including computer logic and memory chips. . . . Without the transfusion of US technology and equipment, the Soviet Union's capabilities would almost certainly have remained at the 10-to-12 year gap of the 1965 era.<sup>23</sup>

Incidentally, the emphasis on Soviet copying of US technology is part of a concerted effort by the Carter and Reagan administrations to slow down the rate of technology transfer to the USSR by reducing scientific exchanges, granting fewer export licenses for high technology goods, and pressuring scientists to clear publication in "sensitive" areas with the DOD.

Having missiles with high accuracy is not terribly important if you are aiming at a large target, such as a city. It is crucial, however, if you are trying to destroy a military target such as a missile in a silo that has been heavily reinforced (hardened). The probability of knocking out a hardened target depends upon the accuracy, explosive yield, and reliability (chance of working properly) of the missile, and upon the hardness of the target. For a target that can withstand a pressure of 2,000 pounds per square inch (about 135 times the pressure of the atmosphere) and using 1979 data, Aldridge estimates that the best Soviet ICBM warheads (SS-18 or SS-19) had about a 27% probability of success whereas the corresponding US warheads (Minuteman-3) had about a 55% probability.<sup>24</sup> These figures are large enough so that attacks on each other's missile forces become real possibilities, especially for the US. The gradual improvement in missile accuracy has led to a change in stated targeting strategy from a countervalue attack (against population and industrial centers) to a counterforce attack (against military installations). However, accuracies are not yet high enough for either side to be close to having a first strike capability, i.e., being able to knock out a sufficient number of enemy missiles so that damage from their retaliatory attack becomes acceptable. This is especially true because of the wide range of other types of carriers available, especially missile-launching submarines, which are extremely difficult to track and destroy. However, here again the US has a big advantage. The Soviets have put little effort into developing missile submarines, perhaps because they have only two ocean ports, making their submarines relatively easy to track. Many of their submarines must surface to fire and most have outmoded liquid-fueled missiles.

### Recent Developments in Missile Systems

Although it is clear that the US is ahead, Soviet missile engineers have not been idle. In the years 1977-78, they conducted a series of test firings of improved versions of their SS-18 and SS-19 ICBMs. These tests were monitored by US satellites and by devices in Iran and the Aleutian Islands. US intelligence analysts claimed that these tests showed substantial improvement in Soviet missile accuracy. The CIA argued that US ground-based missiles could become vulnerable to attack by 1982.<sup>25</sup> This led to the idea of a "window of vulnerability" lasting for several years until new US weapons systems were deployed to "catch up."



## THE FUTURE IN OUR HANDS

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## FREEZE THE ARMS RACE

Since both missile accuracy and the data "justifying" the new claims are highly classified secrets, it is difficult for an outsider to evaluate the relative accuracies of US and Soviet missiles. However a few comments seem relevant.

1. Evaluating the intelligence data from the test firings is extremely difficult, especially since the location of the target was not known in all cases and useful information was not always collected. Indeed, some experts did not agree with the conclusions.

2. It is generally accepted that, before the new improvements, Soviet ICBMs had substantially poorer accuracy than their US counterparts. A reasonable estimate is that the new improvements will make the SS-18s and SS-19s comparable in accuracy to the US Minuteman-3, first deployed in 1970. Casper Weinberger's recent claim that Soviet ICBMs had become more accurate than those of the US is dubious as a statement of fact.<sup>26</sup> Most likely it was designed to pressure Congress to fund the MX missile.

3. The argument for a "window of vulnerability" completely ignores all US forces except the land-based ICBMs.

The US has not introduced any new high-accuracy long-range missile systems for over a decade, largely because of opposition to new weapons following the Vietnam War. This may have allowed the Soviets to close the gap in one area, missile accuracy. However, even here, proposed new weapons systems will allow the US to regain its lead.

The MX missile and the submarine launched Trident-2 will be more accurate than any systems currently deployed, including the modified Soviet SS-18s and SS-19s. Furthermore, they can be equipped with maneuverable reentry vehicles (MARVs) which allow mid-course corrections to be made based on information obtained from satellites, either to avoid defensive measures or to increase accuracy. Aldridge estimates they will have an 80% probability of knocking out a hard target, with the 20% failure rate due to misfirings, not lack of accuracy.

The Cruise missile is an air-breathing, unmanned airplane similar to the German V-1 "buzz-bomb" of WW II. However, it is equipped with a sensor system called TERCOM (terrain contour mapping) which reads its

position relative to ground contours and compares this with information preprogrammed into its guidance system. This enables it to fly so low as to be undetectable by radar and to home in to within a few feet of its target. Its main drawback is that, because it flies at a subsonic speed, it takes several hours to reach its target.

The same cannot be said of the Pershing-2. This highly accurate intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM) will reach any Soviet target west of the Urals in 5 or 6 minutes from its proposed sites in West Germany, far less than the 20 to 30 minutes warning time for an ICBM.

Though these missiles, by themselves, will not give the US a first strike capability, they will substantially increase US superiority. Because other developments, e.g., improvements in antisubmarine warfare, might make a first strike conceivable, the Soviets would be forced to treat this possibility seriously. Since, in the near term it is probably beyond Soviet capabilities to build MARVs or Cruise missiles, their most likely response would be to go to a launch-on-warning system in which their missiles would be fired automatically, without human intervention, if a US attack was detected. This, of course, introduces the possibility of an accidental nuclear war occurring due to a computer malfunction. Given the sorry state of Soviet electronics, this possibility must be taken seriously.

### The High-Technology Gap: Discussion

This brief outline of the technical aspects of the arms race raises several points which require additional discussion.

1. An important question facing Marxists is understanding why the Soviet Union is far behind in nearly all areas of high technology, in spite of the enormous number of scientists and engineers that they train, and the very substantial resources that go into such research. This problem recently was posed succinctly by Roy Medvedev in discussing the historical limitations of Lenin's work:

Lenin also foresaw the rapid development of science and technology, but he said it would occur in the socialist countries. He also failed to predict that the pioneer work in the new technological revolution would be carried out in the very countries where capitalism was 'in decay'; that these countries would not only still be in existence as such sixty or seventy years after the October revolution but would still be ahead of the socialist countries in economic and technical achievement.<sup>27</sup>

This shortcoming clearly is related to the way intellectual work in general is carried out in the Soviet Union. However, it would be useful to have a better answer to questions such as: What is the effect of the educational system on intellectual achievement? How is initiative stifled? What is the relationship of scientific work to other intellectual activities? How is intellectual work affected by economism? What is the effect of censorship?

2. Why does the Soviet Union also argue that approximate parity exists? This doubtless is propaganda for internal consumption. The Soviet party is, after all, caught in the economist trap of promoting the idea that the road to communism is through the development of productive forces.<sup>28</sup> Thus a wide-scale knowledge of the degree of Soviet inferiority in most areas of high

technology could threaten the legitimacy of the regime. Promoting the idea that Soviet military technology is competitive is relatively easy within the USSR because security and secrecy around weapons is even tighter than here.

After years of successful high-altitude overflights of the Soviet Union by U-2 spy planes, US pilot Francis Gary Power was shot down in 1960. The Medvedevs quote Khrushchev's autobiography as an example of Soviet sensitivity to their technological inferiority: "We were sick and tired of these indignities. They were making these flights to show up our impotence. Well, we weren't impotent any longer."<sup>29</sup>

3. One outgrowth of the counterforce strategy has been the increased promotion in US government propaganda of the possibility of a limited nuclear war, i.e., one that involves limited strikes by both sides on selected military targets and does not escalate into all-out attacks against population centers. It is argued that such a war might be winnable. Paul Joseph has labelled those in the defense complex who believe in counterforce strategy and limited nuclear wars as nuclear-use theorists, or NUTs. In a recent article entitled "From MAD to NUTS," Joseph argues there is an ongoing debate between the advocates of MAD and the NUTs.<sup>30</sup> Further, to Joseph, the strategy of the NUTs is so destabilizing that one should form alliances with the MADs to beat the NUTs, because the fact that either side could destroy the other in a counterstrike had led to a "balance of terror" which so far has prevented nuclear war. Putting aside the political bankruptcy of an alliance with such a totally pro-imperialist sector of the military-scientific complex, I would argue that the idea of the MAD strategy again gaining dominance is ahistorical. As emphasized by the Medvedevs, successive administrations have seen maintaining a clear advantage in strategic weapons as a way of forcing the Soviets to ratify, through negotiations, the existing US superiority in military and political power.<sup>31</sup> Both this strategy and US technological superiority appear to be permanent features of the arms race. Their logical outcome is a US counterforce strategy, with the possibility of sufficient Soviet inferiority that they would not dare to respond to a limited nuclear thrust, or even the threat of such a thrust. The fact that the US never launched such a strike during the period of nuclear monopoly is irrelevant. That period coincided with a cycle of capitalist expansion, quite different from today. Furthermore, as emphasized by Ellsberg, the US has, time and time again, used the *threat* of nuclear annihilation to gain political objectives.

4. Why does the vast majority of the US disarmament movement not accept the easily proven assertion that the US has overwhelming superiority in weapons systems? Here one cannot overlook the massive propaganda campaign waged by the Pentagon, the government, and the bourgeois media. This campaign has played on the pervasive anti-communism in US society, unfortunately aided, in the past few years, by events in Afghanistan and Poland. In addition, the details of missile technology, being somewhat abstract, are easily mystified, so that people tend to look only at the overall numbers of missiles or megatonnage. These figures by themselves do indicate an approximate parity. Also, people accept the concepts of bourgeois democracy, e.g., they see the government as

acting in their interests and believe that our democratic systems would only use these weapons to defend itself in the events of attack. Finally, people have a genuine fear of the possibility of nuclear war and a horror of its consequences. This leads to another absolutely honest reaction: namely that nuclear weapons are horrible and we must make sure they are never used again. Let's not worry about all those academic arguments about strategy and about who is ahead. Let's just get rid of them.

5. There are, of course, many in the movement who agree that the US is ahead, but don't accept the conclusions drawn here from that position. It is sometimes argued that weapons systems are so diverse and their number so great that it is inconceivable that either side could ever get a first strike capability. Here three comments are relevant. First, the definition of first strike depends upon what one considers to be acceptable damage from the retaliatory response. One can be reasonably sure, if US superiority grows, that more and more Pentagon spokespeople will argue that nuclear war is survivable and that more and more emphasis will be placed on civil defense. This is already beginning to happen. Second, an actual first strike capability is not essential to make substantial political gains. Mere overwhelming superiority is sufficient for nuclear blackmail. Third, one's opponent may perceive you to have the possibility of a first strike, even when that possibility doesn't exist. They must then react accordingly. This could even include their own surprise attack to gain whatever advantage is possible.

Others disagree with my conclusions by arguing that the Soviets can respond to any new weapons system by a sufficiently massive effort. Whether this can always be done is problematical.

Another position is that most of our new high technology systems are so complex that they are completely unreliable.<sup>32</sup> This reasoning strikes me as basically incorrect. Although it is true that new technologies normally are less reliable than those that are more seasoned, break-in problems eventually become routine. One need only recall the difficulty in getting the first Vanguard satellite into orbit, and compare this with the beautiful photographs transmitted by Voyager-2 as it flew by Saturn after a flight of hundreds of millions of miles. Certainly, many weapons systems are overdesigned for their functions, and hence not as reliable as they could be. None the less, technology does not stand still, and eventually sophisticated systems are introduced that do work.

### 3. Theoretical Positions within the Movement

In an extremely interesting article on the environmental movement Enzensberger argued that the central hypothesis of that movement, i.e., the main position being put forth, could be stated as: "The industrial societies of this earth are producing ecological contradictions, which must in the foreseeable future lead to their collapse."<sup>33</sup>

I would argue that a paraphrasing of this statement gives what might be considered the central hypothesis of the disarmament movement: "The development of new weapons by the superpowers is producing contradictions which must in the foreseeable future lead to nuclear war."

Examining this hypothesis in detail leads to some of the specific views expressed in the movement.

#### Next, the Apocalypse?

The phrase "must in the foreseeable future lead to nuclear war" expresses an *apocalyptic outlook*. This view sees the consequences of nuclear weapons as so horrible and the possibility of their use so likely that all other political issues fade into insignificance. Everyone must work on this single issue to the exclusion of everything else. Thus, connections with other issues, e.g., imperialism, racism, unemployment, and sexism, tend to be ignored. It matters not that these connections may be blatantly obvious, for example, that the US has threatened time and time again to use nuclear weapons to ensure imperialist gains.

The apocalyptic viewpoint is present also in Enzensberger's original statement, in the phrase "must in the foreseeable future lead to their collapse." Here he is dealing with such crises as overpopulation, exhaustion of natural resources or food supplies, the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, etc. In these cases, as Enzensberger points out, there is room for scientific debate on at least three questions: what is the time scale involved, which of the various variables involved in these crises is crucial, and, finally, it is not clear just what would qualify as an environmental disaster.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, when one examines the motivations and class outlook of those proposing environmental collapse, e.g., The Club of Rome, there is room for a healthy scepticism.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of nuclear war, the above doubts pale into insignificance. There is no doubt of its being a disaster: a full-scale countervalue attack would result in over a hundred million deaths within a few hours and probably an even greater number of long-term deaths.<sup>36</sup>

This is clearly different from environmental disasters. There is no room for scepticism. It is ludicrous to argue that nuclear war differs only in degree from conventional warfare, even though over 35,000 people died in a firestorm produced by conventional bombs in Dresden and over 20,000,000 Soviet citizens died from conventional weapons in WW II. Indeed, it is important, as a means of motivating people to get involved, to educate people to the horrors of a nuclear attack, as is being done so effectively by the group Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The problem is, of course, that if this education only leads to an apocalyptic vision, it is politically neutral. The DOD can publish *The Effects of Nuclear War*. Reagan and Haig will agree that massive nuclear war is a catastrophe. They will simply argue that their strategies are the best way to avoid it. Our political task around this question is to develop convincing arguments and to educate people that this is not so, i.e., that in the short run the Reagan policies increase the danger of war, and in the long run that the threat of nuclear war will remain as long as capitalism is the dominant world system.

## Hiding the Differences—"Symmetry"

Returning to the proposed central hypothesis of the movement, we note that it contains the phrase "development of new weapons by the superpowers." This expresses the concept that in the weapons race there is an essential "symmetry" between the US and the Soviet Union, e.g., that military spending is the leading sector in both economies and both have a "military-industrial complex" which plays a dominant role. Thus the two countries are equally to blame (note the moralism) for the arms race, and demands of the movement should be bilateral or multilateral.

In his article in *NLR* No. 121, Thompson introduces the concept of "isomorphism" instead of "symmetry." He quotes two definitions from the disarmament literature:

But the more apposite concept . . . is that of isomorphism: 'the property of crystallizing in the same or closely related forms', or 'identity of form and of operations as between two or more groups'. Viewed in this way, the USA and the USSR do not *have* military-industrial complexes: they *are* such complexes.<sup>37</sup>

The first definition is close to the meaning of "isomorphism" in mineralogy, the second to its usage in mathematics. Since the two definitions differ, and the conclusion follows from neither, it is clear that he is not using the term in any precise sense. The concept seems to be a theoretical muddle, so only the less abstract idea of symmetry will be discussed here.

As argued above, the concept of "symmetry" is in complete disagreement with history. Since the Soviet Union has always been far behind in the arms race, their weapons strategy has always been defensive, rather than offensive.

The Medvedevs point out additional asymmetries. They argue that, because the government and party apparatus is so strong, the military-industrial complex is under more control in the Soviet Union. In addition, interservice rivalry, which causes duplication and overproduction of weapons systems in the US, doesn't exist. Also that Soviet defense workers and scientists have more to gain than their US counterparts from a shift to civilian production. They have no fear of unemployment. The work of Soviet defense scientists is so tightly classified that their achievements go unrecognized. They cite the case of Sergei Korolev, the most important figure in Soviet rocket development, who was unknown until his death in 1966.<sup>38</sup>

The Medvedevs note asymmetries *vis-a-vis* perceptions of the Cold War. They argue that there no longer are any disputes between the Soviet Union and Western Europe that are serious enough to lead to war. Furthermore, although the "Peoples Democracies" are viewed as satellites, Europeans generally believe in peaceful coexistence and accept the USSR as a legitimate state.<sup>39</sup>

This is certainly not true of the US attitude, which views the Soviet Union as the center for world-wide "subversion." The Medvedevs see this position in an historical context: the US was isolated from nineteenth century European politics, had little to do with Russia until after the October revolution, and has never had an influential national left political party.

Though one may disagree with some of the Medvedevs' arguments, one point is clear. The concept of "symmetry" is a barrier to clarity, since it eliminates significant differences between the two societies, knowledge of which is essential to an understanding of the arms race.

## Symmetry + Apocalypse = Exterminism

Examining the movement's central hypothesis as a whole leads directly to Thompson's position in *NLR* No. 121. Using a well-known quote from Marx, he states:

If 'the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord, the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist', what are we given by those Satanic mills which are now at work, grinding out the means of human extermination?<sup>40</sup>

His form of the central hypothesis is a new category which he calls "exterminism."

I am offering, in full seriousness, the category of 'exterminism' . . . . Exterminism designates those characteristics of a society—expressed, in differing degrees, within its economy, its policy and its ideology—which thrust it in a direction whose outcome must be the extermination of multitudes. The outcome will be extermination, but this will not happen accidentally (even if the final trigger is 'accidental') but as the direct consequence of prior acts of policy, of the accumulation and perfection of the means of extermination, and of the structuring of whole societies so that these are directed towards that end.<sup>41</sup>

Thompson sees exterminism as having originated in the Cold War:

But that Cold War passed, long ago, into a self-generating condition of Cold War-ism (exterminism), but within a general inertial condition: which condition . . . is becoming irreversible as a direction.<sup>42</sup>

The most striking thing about these statements is the technological determinism involved, i.e., "the idea that social development is almost entirely determined by the type of technology which a society invents, develops, or is introduced to."<sup>43</sup>

The technological determinism in Thompson's ideas has been challenged by Raymond Williams in *NLR* No. 124. He notes that:

In the case of nuclear weapons, nothing is more evident than that they were consciously sought and developed, and have continued to be consciously sought and developed. It is true that, as so often in modern technological innovations, much of the basic research has been done for quite other reasons, without foreseeing this particular result. But again as in many other comparable cases, the crucial moment of passage from scientific knowledge to technical invention, and then from technical invention to a systematic technology, depended on conscious selection and investment by an existing social order, for known and foreseen purposes. Thus the atomic bomb was developed within a situation of total war, under the familiar threat that the enemy might be developing it, by states that were *already* practising the saturation-bombing and fire-bombing of cities and civilian populations.<sup>44</sup>

Technological determinism is a major component of bourgeois ideology, permeating our thinking and our textbooks. For example, anthropologists talk of the Stone Age and the Bronze Age, and the industrial revolution is argued to be a direct result of the development of the steam engine and the use of coal.

Technological determinism is, of course, also a major part of the ideology of the Soviets and of all their uncritical supporters, especially in the form of the "theory of the primacy of productive forces," i.e., the belief that the development of productive forces is the primary cause of social development.<sup>45</sup>

There are also specific reasons why technological determinism has been emphasized in dealing with disarmament. One has to do with the makeup of the movement itself. Traditionally composed mainly of pacifists with little or no class analysis, it has generated arguments that are largely moralistic. To them, class struggle is *not* the motive force of history. Ergo, technology becomes a good candidate.

In addition, nuclear weapons and their associated systems for delivery, control, and detection do involve the most sophisticated technology available today. A technological breakthrough, e.g., a good method of detecting and tracking submarines, would have a major effect on the arms race. A holocaust *could* occur because of an equipment failure. Technology is important in this area, probably more than anywhere else.

Yet we cannot let ourselves be deceived by all this gadgetry. As pointed out by Williams:

Technological determinism . . . is, when taken seriously, a form of intellectual closure of the complexities of social process. In its exclusion of human actions, interests and intentions, in favour of a selected and reified image of their causes and results, it systematically post-dates history and excludes all other versions of cause. This is serious everywhere, but in the case of nuclear weapons it is especially disabling.<sup>46</sup>

By minimizing the importance of human intervention, technological determinism makes class struggle irrelevant. By making technical breakthroughs determinant, it deemphasizes social relations. Technological determinism, like its cousin economism, gives a mechanical and incorrect description of the forces producing historical change.

#### 4. The Disarmament Movement in the US

Before discussing the US movement, a few comments are in order about the movement in Europe. First, why has it grown so rapidly in the last few years, especially following the decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing-2 missiles, done under the guise of modernising NATO? There appear to be three main reasons.

1. The decision to deploy these intermediate range missiles, together with talk of limited nuclear war, could again make Europe a prime target. Any use of these missiles would draw a retaliatory attack. The possibility then exists of a war in which Western Europe and the Soviet bloc west of the Urals are destroyed, with the US and the Asiatic part of the Soviet Union relatively unscathed. Talk of using neutron bombs as battlefield weapons has strengthened this view.

2. There is a nationalist aspect. The new weapons, though deployed in European countries, will be owned and controlled by the US. Thus for the first time the decision to fire would be made without consultation with the European government involved.

3. European governments signed the NATO agreements without any open parliamentary or public debate. Thompson documents this for the case of Britain.<sup>47</sup>

The second question is why have many of the demands of the European movement been unilateral, rather than bilateral or multilateral, as in the US? The answer partly is the same as for the first question. The proposed deployments are viewed as threats. Thus there are demands for no Pershing-2s in Germany, no Cruise missiles in various countries, for a nuclear-free zone in Scandinavia, and to ban the neutron bomb. However, there are other reasons. Europeans, because of their history of relationships with the Soviet Union and a higher level of political understanding, tend to view the US as the main threat and to see their own governments as pawns of the Americans. In addition, in several countries, e.g., Holland and England, there are strong labor parties with ties to the disarmament movement.

#### The Nuclear Freeze Campaign

In the US, there are two main activities, organizing actions to coincide with the second special session in disarmament of the UN General Assembly, and the Nuclear Freeze Campaign. The latter is a nationwide campaign built around a position paper, "A Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race," drawn up by Randall Forsberg of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament in 1980. During the past year and a half, the campaign has been building support for the statement (with slight regional and temporal variations):

To improve national and international security, the United States and the Soviet Union should stop the nuclear arms race. Specifically, they should adopt a mutual freeze on the testing, production and development of nuclear weapons and of missiles and new aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons. This is an essential, verifiable first step toward lessening the risk of nuclear war and reducing the nuclear arsenals.

The campaign has had impressive results. Over a million people have signed petitions in support of this statement, it has been endorsed by six state legislatures (Massachusetts, Oregon, Minnesota, Connecticut, Maine, and Vermont) and will be on the ballot in several more next November. It has been passed by several city councils, including St. Louis, Baltimore, and Cleveland, and by hundreds of New England town meetings. On March 10, bipartisan resolutions in favor of the freeze were introduced into Congress by 17 Senators and 115 Members of Congress.<sup>48</sup>

Why this impressive response? First, the campaign has been extremely well thought out and organized. The language of the petition is mild enough to offend almost no one. It appeals to, not demands from, the US and Soviet governments. Note the use of the word "should." The actions required of people are minimal: voting or signing a petition. It appeals to people's fears of nuclear apocalypse in a way that makes it easy for them to respond.



The freeze campaign has a good chance of at least partial success because the massive response, both inside and outside congress, will force initiatives from the Reagan administration. Admittedly, some of these initiatives will be pure propaganda, such as Reagan's March 31 statement that we could not agree to a freeze because the Soviets are so far ahead!<sup>49</sup> Yet real concessions may eventually be made. Having some success is important in two ways. First, it will slow down deployment of missiles at the precise time the US is striving for overwhelming superiority in order to regain the level of world-wide hegemony that existed before the Vietnam war. Second, even a partial success shows people that their organized efforts can be successful, and hence is a step in increasing political consciousness.

Of course, the freeze campaign also has limitations. The fact that its methods are those of electoral politics and it is entirely an appeal to the state helps to legitimate these institutions, especially if the campaign has successes. It also makes the campaign particularly susceptible to co-optation by the administration and bourgeois politicians. An additional weakness is that it involves minimal personal involvement, except for the actual organizers and petition-collectors.

**We Demand:**

## Unconditional U.S. Disarmament

■ Redirect resources from the military to meet human needs, especially to minimize the impact of the cuts hit by the cutbacks

■ No U.S. Intervention in Asia, Latin America, Caribbean

**June 12 – U.N. Special Session on Disarmament**  
**U.N. Plaza – Central Park (New York)**



Third World and Progressive Peoples Coalition for the U.N. S.S.D. II

There also is a technical weakness in the freeze statement. It does not ask for an end to research and development (R&D) of new weapons, presumably because this would be almost impossible to verify. Yet it is here that the US has its greatest edge. Design of all the new US weapons systems discussed above started at least a decade ago. R&D continued throughout the 1970s, even though there was a sharp reduction in the "testing, production and deployment" of weapons, i.e., there was a partial freeze on US weapons because of public resistance following the Vietnam war. Thus, when the political climate changed, much of the R&D had already been done, shortening the time interval to actual deployment.

Finally, by far the greatest weakness of the freeze statement is its complete acceptance of the concept of "symmetry." This acts as a bar to discussion of the real differences between the US and the Soviet Union in the field of disarmament. This, in turn, prevents people from making connections between disarmament and other issues: connections that are essential for political development.

### The Second UN Special Session in Disarmament

For the first time in its history, the UN held a special session on disarmament from May 23 to July 1, 1978. A 129-paragraph Final Document was adopted by consensus on June 30, 1978. Paragraph 119 stated that a second special session on disarmament should be held on a date to be decided later.<sup>50</sup> This second session will be held from June 7 to July 9, 1982.

During the summer of 1981, Mobilization for Survival (MfS), an anti-nuclear, pro-disarmament coalition, started the organization of actions to coincide with this second session. By the end of 1981, many organizations had joined in and planning was in full swing. Proposed activities included religious convocations, cultural events, educational forums, and civil disobedience. A large contingent of international peace marchers was expected. The highlight of the activities was to be a massive march on Saturday, June 12 past the UN, followed by a rally in Central Park. There was agreement on two slogans for the campaign, although the precise wording wasn't set. They were:

1. Set the Dates for a Nuclear Free World: Stop Producing, Start Reducing Nuclear Arsenals.
2. Redirect Resources from the Military to Meet Human Needs.

Two additional slogans were proposed. One, around the issue of nuclear power, never had major support and died a natural death. The other, involving the question of imperialism, was much more explosive. There seems to have been considerable confusion about the precise content of this demand: did it take the "symmetric" form of no intervention anywhere by anyone, did it refer only to the third world or did it also include Soviet intervention in Poland, did it include US intervention in Europe (some argued that deploying the new missiles was a form of intervention because it led to increased dependency in the area of defense), or did it take the unilateral form of no US intervention in the third world (an increasingly popular position because of events unfolding in El Salvador)?

There is a core of groups opposing any non-intervention plank. This core includes some organizations heavily involved in the Nuclear Freeze Campaign. Although most of these groups played a progressive role during the Vietnam war, it is clear that they have shifted sufficiently to the right in the intervening years that they now will participate only in activities that are in the "main-stream" of US politics. Some are opposed to civil disobedience occurring during the second UN session.

The struggle over imperialism came out into the open at the monthly meeting of the National Coordinating Committee which was held in New York, January 29-30. This committee was intended to be the main decision-making body for the UN campaign. Each participating national organization (about 90 were present) had one vote, as did each local campaign (those organizing in particular cities).<sup>51</sup> After being exposed to an evening and morning of manipulation by the "core" groups, an anti-imperialist, anti-racist caucus formed during lunchtime, attracting about one third of the people at the meeting. Leadership in this caucus was assumed by the National Black United Front. The caucus presented two motions to the entire Coordinating Committee. Both were passed. The first stated that the caucus would agree to sticking to the two main slogans of the campaign, provided that, in any literature, they were followed by statements connecting them with US imperialism in the third world and with racism. The second proposal stated that all major committees would contain at least one third minority representation (this part of the proposal was already on the agenda for the meeting), and that this membership would be self-determined (the new addition). An organizational proposal for the campaign was also passed, which in part, established a steering committee responsible to the coordinating committee. The author left this meeting feeling that, after considerable struggle, a reasonable and progressive compromise had been reached and the campaign could now go full steam ahead.

Was I wrong! By a series of manipulations the steering committee in effect abolished the coordinating committee which had set it up and to which it was responsible! Furthermore, it dissociated itself from the civil disobedience actions by renaming itself as The "June 12 Rally Committee" and saying it was responsible only for the mass rally. In order to legitimate these manipulations, a small group of organizations is threatening to incorporate for the purpose of running the rally!<sup>52</sup>

However, there are other forces involved in the campaign. An Afro-American Coordinating Committee was formed at a Feb. 10 meeting which had been called by third world organizations to select their representatives to the steering committee (now defunct). Though apparently the site of considerable struggle, this committee has been meeting weekly, at least to the time of this writing (mid-April).

The anti-imperialist, anti-racist caucus from the Jan. 29-30 meeting reconvened on March 13, when it became clear that the agreements of the earlier meeting were not being kept. It has since been formalized as the "Third World and Progressive Peoples Coalition" and views itself as the legitimate inheritor of Jan. 29-30.

Although they are small numerically, the Afro-American Coordinating Committee and the Third World and

Progressive Peoples Coalition eventually could become important forces in building an anti-imperialist, anti-racist disarmament movement in the US. They have several things in their favor. Many people in the disarmament movement are appalled by the machinations of the "core" groups, and agree that one should go back to the Jan. 29-30 decisions. There is substantial support for an anti-imperialist position. Finally, the presence of progressive blacks in these organizations is an important strength within this almost all-white movement.

Caught in the middle of this split are the more progressive traditional peace organizations: MfS, The War Resistor's League, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the CPUSA-dominated US Peace Council. Foundations are holding up grants, staff are not being paid, and the campaign is heavily in debt. The importance of the occasion will doubtless force compromises so that the June events will still be successful, especially since various task forces have been continuing their work and many of the organizers, particularly those outside New York City, are not aware of the infighting. Yet the struggles are bound to leave long-term scars on the US disarmament movement.

Why such a severe response to the relatively mild and conciliatory proposals put forth at the Jan. 29-30 meeting? This partly reflected ongoing struggles. Some groups had, as already mentioned, a major commitment to the freeze campaign, and so had contradictory interests. However, much more important is the racial and class composition of the peace movement, which has traditionally been white and petty-bourgeois. The positions put forth, e.g., the "central hypothesis," are alien to minorities and workers, and especially to minority workers. Apocalyptic positions reflect a bourgeois class outlook that sees one's privileges as eternal, and must respond dramatically when they are threatened. "Symmetry" is meaningless to people who have been bombarded with anti-communism all their lives, and who in addition are struggling to survive. The vague demand to "redirect resources to meet human needs" is old hat to third world people who have had direct experience of how it is carried out. The class outlook of some of these groups also shows in their draft-counselling activities, where they emphasize building up a dossier to support conscientious objector status. This technique is relevant only to middle-class whites, and is impossible for most third world youths or white members of the working class. The same is true of civil disobedience as a tactic. Getting arrested in a symbolic gesture for peace is a luxury these groups can't afford. Furthermore, many third world people perceive the armed forces as the road to a career and often as the only legal alternative to unemployment.

Additionally, many people come to the peace movement out of religious convictions. They are sensitive to inequities, to oppression. They are aware of the monolithic race and class composition of the movement. The question of involving minorities and workers arises at nearly every meeting. However, this is always done in organizational, rather than political terms. It is always "How do we set up an outreach committee?", not "Why aren't our political positions attractive to minorities and workers?". It is always a question of bringing people into a campaign whose main activities, goals, and political positions have already been decided rather than listening to, learning

from, and working in conjunction with minorities and workers. The accepted positions of the movement, e.g., our "central hypothesis," are too strongly entrenched for things to be otherwise. Viewed from this perspective it is not surprising that there was strong resistance when a group containing a substantial number of activist blacks put forth "alien" positions and demanded a role in leadership.

## 5. Beginnings Toward an Analysis

In order to situate ourselves, consider the question: "Under what conditions would the world be safe from war with nuclear missiles or other agents of mass destruction, e.g., chemical or biological weapons, that exist or may be developed?"

Since the question of the overthrow of capitalism is ignored, the only logical conclusion that follows from the assumptions of the movement is either indefinite peaceful coexistence or some form of convergence theory. I assume that, to most readers, the historical evidence regarding efforts of capitalist powers to overthrow or destabilize existing socialist states throws out the possibility of indefinite peaceful coexistence. Further, the history of inter-capitalist wars shows that capitalist restoration is no guarantee of peace. One can not get out of the dilemma by assuming "third forms" of states since capitalist expansionary tendencies would still exist. Thus we are left with the old adage "Socialism is the answer," i.e., there can be no long term guarantee of peace without the replacement of capitalism as the dominant world system.

But here we face a new problem, of recent origin: namely, the existence of wars between socialist states. The causes of such wars are, of course, extremely complex. There are specific historical factors in each dispute. The difficulties faced by emerging socialist states in a capitalist world system doubtless contribute. Yet an important consideration must be the Stalinian distortions in existing socialist societies. Here the critique of modern revisionism and economism as expressed by many modern Marxist theorists, including the editors of the *Theoretical Review*, can be useful.

The arms race and the threat of nuclear war enter into this analysis in at least two ways. First, they have strengthened those distortions of existing socialist societies that act in the direction of increased surveillance and control, and hence to a reduction in democracy. It does *not* necessarily follow that disarmament, by itself, will produce significantly greater democracy in those societies. That would involve class struggle against the entrenched bureaucracies and their Stalinian lines, such as has occurred in Poland. Nevertheless, significant disarmament would, in all likelihood, improve the objective conditions under which that class struggle could be carried out.

Second, the threat of nuclear annihilation has not entered into Marxist discussions of strategy and tactics in a serious way. For example, there are certain goals that most readers would agree to, such as weakening US imperialism and increasing democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Certain historical events advance one of these goals, but at the same time make nuclear war more probable. For example, what would have been our position at the time of the Cuban missile crisis? If installed, the

missiles would certainly have put some restrictions on US imperialist adventure in Latin America (admittedly at the expense of increased Cuban dependence on the Soviet Union), yet the attempt to install them almost led to a nuclear war.

Now, of course, many other factors entered into these 1962 events. I am merely suggesting that the threat of nuclear annihilation, which will be with us for a long time, must become a factor in our analysis. I am not proposing that we adopt an apocalyptic position that ignores everything else. Rather that we recognize, in trying to achieve our strategic goals, that it is also important to keep tensions between the nuclear powers at a low enough level that war is improbable and that we try to develop the theory required to understand how to do this.

I would argue that participation in the disarmament movement by Marxist-Leninists is extremely important. But, in intervening in this movement, far more theoretical clarity is required. One cannot, for example, reject the Nuclear Freeze Campaign out of hand because it embraces the incorrect concept of "symmetry." One must ask questions such as: will it reduce the possibility of nuclear war while other struggles continue? Will it increase political consciousness of participants, especially if Marxists are active in a critical way? Concrete analyses must be made of specific campaigns. Because of its important role in this particular movement, we must gain a much better understanding of the history, strengths, and weaknesses of pacifism and the moral positions behind it.

It is important to support the large Western European movement and, under many conditions, the movements just beginning in Eastern Europe, such as those in East Germany.<sup>53</sup> This is not just for reasons of international solidarity. A strong disarmament movement in Western Europe can reduce US hegemony, weaken NATO, and hence strike a blow against imperialism. Any disarmament movement at all in Eastern Europe, if not organized by the state, is by its very existence part of the struggle for increased democracy and against Soviet domination. Yet support cannot be automatic. For example, the multi-class nature of disarmament movements implies that any analogies with Solidarity can be misleading. Each particular situation must be analysed in detail.

In my view, the most direct way of advancing the US movement at the present time is by connecting the issue of nuclear arms to imperialism. This has also been argued by Ben Bedell in *The Guardian*.<sup>54</sup> Many organizations active in disarmament work have also participated in anti-imperialist actions. The connections between the two are clear, and resistance to interventions in Central America is growing. Yet, in the long run, this is insufficient. More important is to formulate strategic demands and arguments that will expose the incorrect ideas contained in what I have called the "central hypothesis" of the movement. One must show that "apocalyptic thinking," even though it may have a basis in reality, is ineffective in fighting against the nuclear arms race. One must point out the asymmetries between the US and the Soviet Union in the area of weapons. In particular, we must develop convincing arguments, based on the history of the arms race, current weapons systems, and Soviet political strategy, e.g., the Brezhnev doctrine, to show that the Soviet threat to the US is a myth. This will help combat anticommunism in general

and the specific propaganda campaign being conducted by the Reagan administration. All the above must be done in a spirit of support and comradely criticism, in full recognition of the mammoth strides the peace movement has made in the past few years.

One specific argument that can enlarge people's perspective is to note that completely eliminating all nuclear weapons will not eliminate the threat of nuclear war. The reason is that the technology of making nuclear weapons is well-known and not especially complicated. Thus, if a major war using conventional weapons broke out between the US and the USSR, either side could (and quite likely would, if it were losing) produce nuclear weapons in a few months. This would be especially true if the country in question had maintained a nuclear power industry, because the existence of a reactor and a reprocessing plant would guarantee a ready source of Plutonium for the warheads. The problem thus becomes enlarged from the elimination of nuclear war to the elimination of all wars. This raises the level of discussion from particular weapons systems to the causes of war, i.e., the contradictions between competing states and competing political systems.

It is perhaps worth noting that people almost never get involved in the disarmament movement (or the anti-nuclear or other environmental movements) for economic reasons. These cross-class struggles are almost exclusively superstructural phenomena. One consequence is that an economist problematic simply cannot deal with these *movements*, though it might handle, for example, weapons systems themselves. Taking into account the historical dominance of this economist problematic, one can understand why Marxist participation in and analysis of these movements has been so minimal. Here again the line taken by the *Theoretical Review* has obvious advantages. By giving the superstructure a degree of relative autonomy it creates a space within which one can start to analyse the disarmament movement.

To be consistent with the arguments developed here, demands and slogans should be unilateral. But, given American attitudes towards communism in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, a demand for total, or near-total, unilateral US nuclear disarmament will have little support. We must make very specific partial demands that can gain wide support and, at the same time, clarify the political issues involved.

One possibility is to raise demands that directly support the movement in Western Europe, e.g., to oppose the development of Cruise and Pershing-2 missiles and the neutron bomb. These issues could be used to clarify, for the American public, why Europeans oppose these weapons. Local issues also exist, such as the struggles against the Pantext plant (which does the final assembly of every US nuclear warhead and bomb) in Amarillo, Texas, and against the University of California operating the laboratories at Livermore, Ca. and Los Alamos, New Mexico, where all nuclear warheads are designed.

One demand that I find particularly appealing at the present time is that the US renounce the first use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances. No administration has ever done this. Since most Americans view the function of our weapons to be for defense rather than offense, this position could gain wide support. Furthermore, such a renunciation would aid anti-imperialist struggles by

preventing incidents of the type described by Ellsberg, i.e., the threat of using nuclear weapons to further imperialist goals.

The importance of the demand to renounce first use was illustrated dramatically in recent days when it was supported, both in an article in *Foreign Affairs* and in a public statement made on April 7, by four old warmongers: McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kenan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard C. Smith. This act was viewed as such a threat by the Reagan administration that Alexander Haig reiterated the right to first use of nuclear weapons *the day before* the statement was actually made!<sup>55</sup>

Finally, we cannot let the size and rapid growth of the disarmament movement blind us to the realities of the political situation today. At the present time the left is weak and the working class is quiescent. The overall level of political development in the disarmament movement is low. Our tasks therein are many: in addition to helping to build the movement, we have the specific responsibilities of theoretical clarification and identifying and winning over more politically aware individuals. These are long-term propositions, and must be viewed as such.



<sup>1</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Vintage Books, New York, 1966); and E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, (Monthly Review Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "A Critique of Political Ecology," *New Left Review* 84, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Thompson and Dan Smith, eds., *Protest and Survive* (Monthly Review Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> E. P. Thompson, *Protest and Survive*, pamphlet prepared for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1980. Available from NLR editions.

<sup>5</sup> E. P. Thompson and Dan Smith, eds., *Protest and Survive*, Penguin, 1980). Not distributed in the U.S.

<sup>6</sup> E. P. Thompson, "A Letter to America," *The Nation*, Jan. 24, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Ellsberg, "Call to Mutiny," in *Protest and Survive*, (Monthly Review, 1981). Also published in *Monthly Review*, Sept. 1981.

<sup>8</sup> Henry T. Nash, "The Bureaucratization of Homicide," in *Protest and Survive* (Monthly Review Press, 1981, p. 149). Reprinted from *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April, 1980.

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<sup>9</sup> David Holloway, "War, Militarism and the Soviet State," in *Protest and Survive* (Monthly Review Press, 1981, p. 70). Reprinted from *Alternatives: A Journal of World Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 1; Emma Rothschild, "The American Arms Boom," in *Protest and Survive* (Monthly Review Press, 1981, p. 108), reprinted from *The New York Review of Books*, where it was titled "Boom or Bust."

<sup>10</sup>E.P. Thompson, "Notes on Exterminism, The Last Stage of Civilization," *NLR* 121.

<sup>11</sup>Raymond Williams, "The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament," *NLR* 124.

<sup>12</sup>Roy and Zhores Medvedev, "The USSR and the Arms Race," *NLR* 130, pp. 5-22. This article also appeared in *The Nation*, Jan. 16, 1982, under the title "A Nuclear Samizat on America's Arms Race."

<sup>13</sup>Samuel Glasstone and Philip J. Dolan, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, 3rd. ed., prepared by the DOD and the Energy Research and Development Administration (GPO, 1977).

<sup>14</sup>*The Effects of Nuclear War*, Office of Technology Assessment (GPO, 1979).

<sup>15</sup>*Comprehensive Study on Nuclear Weapons*, UN Document A/35/150, Sept. 12, 1980. Also available as UN sales no. E.81.I.11. Also published as *Report of the Secretary-General* (Autumn Press, Brookline, Mass., 1981).

<sup>16</sup>Robert C. Aldridge, *The Counterforce Syndrome* (Institute for Policy Studies, 1978). For an autobiographical account of why Aldridge left the defense industry, see Bob Aldridge. "The Forging of an Engineer's Conscience," *SPARK*, Fall, 1973. *SPARK* was published by the Committee for Social Responsibility in Engineering, an organization of progressive engineers that formed during the Vietnam war. Copies of this article are available from J.S.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in *Comprehensive Study on Nuclear Weapons*, p. 54.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Medvedevs, *NLR* 130, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup>Ellsberg, p. viii.

<sup>21</sup>Medvedevs, *NLR* 130, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup>The author participated in these activities as a member of the progressive organization "Science for the People," then "Scientists for Social and Political Action" (SSPA). Resistance to the ABM, was the first action of SSPA. For an account of these early activities, see Joe Shapiro, "The Greening of the APS," *SPARK*, Spring 1973. Copies are available from the author.

<sup>23</sup>Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power* (GPO, 19810, pp. 74-5. This document is discussed in William M. Arkin, "Soviet Military Power", or a Case Not Made" in Michael T. Klare, "The Feeble Giant," both in *The Nation*, Oct. 24, 1981.

<sup>24</sup>Aldridge, pp. 24-5.

<sup>25</sup>R. Jeffrey Smith, "An Upheaval in US Strategic Thought," *Science*, April 2, 1982, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup>*NY Times*, April 15, 1982.

<sup>27</sup>Roy Medvedev, *Leninism and Western Socialism* (Verso, 1981), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>See Paul Costello, *TR* 15.

<sup>29</sup>*Kruschev Remembers—The Last Testament* (New York, 1974), pp. 443-53. Quoted by the Medvedevs, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup>Paul Joseph, "From MAD to NUTS: The Growing Danger of Nuclear War," *Socialist Review* 61 Jan.-Feb. 1982.

<sup>31</sup>Medvedevs, *NLR* 130, pp. 13.

<sup>32</sup>Mary Kaldor, "Disarmament: The Armament Process in Reverse," in *Protest and Survive* (Monthly Review Press), p. 173.

<sup>33</sup>Enzensberger, *NLR* 84, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>35</sup>The Club of Rome is an international organization of businessmen and academics in areas such as management and economics. It funds "research" promoting the idea that technological growth will lead to various forms of catastrophe. Its best-known publication is Meadows, Donella, et. al., *Limits to Growth*, A Report to the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind (Universe, New York 1972). For a review of this book and discussion of its underlying ideology, see D. Jhirad, M. Lowe, and P. Strigini, "The Limits to Capitalist Growth," *Science for the People*, May, 1975.

<sup>36</sup>*Comprehensive Study on Nuclear Weapons*, p. 77.

<sup>37</sup>E. P. Thompson, *NLR* 121, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup>Medvedevs, *NLR* 130, pp. 6-7.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup>E. P. Thompson, *NLR* 121, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup>David Dickson, *The Politics of Alternative Technology* (Universe Books, 1975), p. 44.

<sup>44</sup>Williams, *NLR* 124, p. 28.

<sup>45</sup>Paul Costello, *TR* 15.

<sup>46</sup>Williams, *NLR* 124, p. 28.

<sup>47</sup>E. P. Thompson, "Protest and Survive," in *Protest and Survive* (Penguin, 1980).

<sup>48</sup>John Trinkl, "Nuclear Freeze Campaign Takes Off," *The Guardian*, March 24, 1982.

<sup>49</sup>*NY Times*, April 1, 1982.

<sup>50</sup>*Final Document. Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament 1978*, UN Department of Public Information, Feb. 1981.

<sup>51</sup>The author was present as one of the four representatives from the New York City local campaign, and hence had one quarter of a vote.

<sup>52</sup>For details of these manipulations, see Dave Lindorff, "War and Peace," *The Village Voice*, April 20, 1982.

<sup>53</sup>Kevin J. Kelley, "East Germany: Peace Movement Grows," *The Guardian*, Feb. 24, 1982.

<sup>54</sup>Ben Bedell, *The Guardian*, Dec. 16, 1981.

<sup>55</sup>*NY Times*, April 7, 1982; April 8, 1982.

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