

19. K.P. Misra, p. 386.

20. This point has been discussed by the author in: "Protest and Violence: the Police Response", *Conflict Studies*, no.75 (1976).

21. Superintendent Shri S.K. Ghosh, Orissa Police, *Lawbreakers and Keepers of the Peace*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta, 1969), p. 16.

AVERTING ARMAGEDDON¹

by

David Levy

Some important names in the Canadian political establishment have recently spoken out in favour of a special government Peace Tax Fund. In letters to newspapers,² Senator Eugene Forsey and MPs Pauline Jewett, Stanley Knowles, Vic Althouse, Jim Manley, Bob Ogle and Svend Robinson have condemned defence spending as immoral and proposed that like-minded citizens be permitted to elect that an appropriate proportion of their taxes be diverted from arms to "a special government Peace Tax Fund, to be used for peace research, peace education, peacekeeping, peacemaking, development and other constructive uses."³

No one can quarrel with the principle. What I find disturbing is the assumption that seems to underlie the proposal — that the entire blame for the present dire threat of global nuclear destruction rests in the West. For me, the idea of a Peace Tax Fund will become a serious and constructive effort to avert nuclear armageddon only if the Kremlin's iniquities are brought into the same sharp focus as those of the Pentagon. Without such a balance, the public outcry against the nuclear arms build-up seems to me just so much hot air and therefore a thorough waste of precious time.

This spring, a Vancouver newspaper⁴ did signal service in the cause of peace research by publishing "a glimpse of Armageddon" by Vancouver physician Michael Scott, from a West Coast medical symposium on the effects of nuclear war. The shattering realities presented by Dr. Scott pointed to the *probability*, now upon us, that our planet will "flame out like a cosmic flash bulb" at the present rate of nuclear arms growth.

What struck me most about the Scott article, however, was the realization that no such frank discussion of nuclear realities could appear in Soviet newspapers. The pressure for nuclear disarmament is lop-sided, having effect in the West but not in the Soviet Union. This is the substance of my article.

What is needed to halt the dangerous nuclear build-up is some real dialogue with the Russians — not the dialogue that merely offers them a platform for their dreary, self-righteous propaganda; not mindless monologue but meaningful dialogue. And by meaningful I mean *public* dialogue. Not for nothing does Andrei Sakharov, "the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb" now totally at odds

with the regime, call precisely for public dialogue in all departments of Soviet life to replace the deadening synthetic monolithism of all its public utterance.⁵

We are now deep into the “explosion of nuclear technology” that in 1974 we knew would occur if the Salt I treaty’s interim extension at that time was not replaced by a Salt II treaty to run from 1977 to 1985. At that time, a number of U.S. programs such as the Trident and the cruise missile were to be deployed by 1978-79 and the Soviet Union had just started to deploy its MIRV’s.⁶ At a press briefing on July 3, 1974, in Moscow’s Intourist Hotel, Henry Kissinger called strategic arms limitation “one of the central issues of our time because if it (the arms race) runs unchecked, the number of warheads will reach proportions astronomical compared to the time when Armageddon seemed near, when there were something less than 1,000 warheads on both sides.⁷

Well, Armageddon seems near again. And Salt II has only recently been eyed by NATO chiefs, up there on the shelf, as meriting another look. Yet waiting for the Russians to conduct themselves as responsible members of the world community as a condition for President Reagan’s agreement to put Salt II on the table for negotiation has proved fruitless. The general furor while waiting for the Russians to behave has in any case always seemed to me to be a lot of barking up the wrong tree. The Russians will never behave militarily the way we would prefer them to; and one could certainly question why they should. The only real way of making them do so is through the brinkmanship of military confrontation. And because that is so perilous, the intelligent course is to seek some other way. Like Dr. Michael Scott, I too have a very young daughter who I would like to think had a future despite the present heavy negative odds.

Without ever directly referring to those odds in either its internal or external propaganda, the Kremlin lays all the blame for the nuclear build-up on the Pentagon. I emphasize: the *entire* blame. And every “peacenik” on our side echoes it all right on schedule. This is why I identify the lack of public dialogue in the USSR as the true underlying problem. Because no dialogue at all goes on between various sectors of the Soviet public, our liberal organizers of such phenomena as the Peace Tax Fund see no evidence of Kremlin guilt to match the oceans of abuse of the Pentagon that flood our news media.

Soviet control of all public media is so devilishly effective that our liberals seem to assume that because no criticism of Soviet nuclear policy goes on in public in the Soviet Union, none must exist. Liberals appear to think that if only Washington would disarm, so would Moscow. Totally ignored are the implications of the Kremlin’s dedication to “defending the gains of socialism by carrying out our international duty to offer fraternal aid in that defence.”⁸ Moscow’s propaganda (i.e., its unchallenged monologue in a country where no public debate is permitted) leads our liberal disarmers by the nose every day into the thick of Washington’s iniquities on the nuclear disarmament front. These iniquities are public knowledge anyway; but Moscow’s propagandists are past masters at simplifying it all for the common man. They obtain all their information straight out of the open Western press, where the nuclear debate rages as if the Soviet Union were no more involved than in racing to keep up with U.S. levels of nuclear armaments — a gross oversimplification which Moscow understandably does everything to promote.

What goes on behind the walls of the Soviet Defence Ministry is not just secret; it enjoys total immunity from public probing, which cannot be said for the Pentagon. And since the Soviet press is quite openly an arm of the Soviet Communist Party and government, no criticism of Soviet policy on nuclear arms if ever permitted in print or on the air. And because it is not permitted, our liberals assume it does not exist, that "people and Party are one!", that the blameless and peaceloving Soviet leaders would stop building up their nuclear arsenal if only U.S. leaders would make the first move. It has been a sad and consistent observation of mine that because Western minds cannot really imagine how total totalitarian press control can be, they cannot believe it is real.

Perhaps Moscow would disarm if Washington moved first. The nuclear arms race really is impoverishing the Soviet economy just as it has created permanent inflation in the U.S. economy. But just because Washington cannot take the chance of making the first move does not mean Washington merits the full burden of blame that is heaped on it by "representatives of peaceloving forces of the world".

With total immunity from effective criticism at home, the Kremlin treats the desire for peace as if it were a Soviet invention. Yet it has not even been believed by thinking Soviet citizens themselves for at least two decades; not since Nikita Khrushchev proclaimed "peaceful coexistence between states of differing social and economic systems" the cornerstone of post-Stalin foreign policy,⁹ and "the struggle for peace" became the cornerstone of the Soviet global propaganda offensive. A well-known Soviet joke dating from the Khrushchev era says it all:

"Will there be war? asks a worried listener to the mythical Radio Armenia, the fountainhead of Soviet word-of-mouth political satire.

"No, Comrade," replies the omniscient anchorman, "but there'll be such a struggle for peace that not one stone will be left standing on another"

This is what passes for domestic public criticism in the Soviet Union — sad jokes that are as deeply cynical as the Kremlin's pose is exaltedly hypocritical and that are endemic to Soviet society. But somehow this latent criticism inside the Soviet Union must be given its head if the clouds of nuclear doom are to be dispelled. And this can only happen if we first grasp that the Soviet people have no voice in the vital debate so far, that Soviet press control exists precisely in order to suppress all genuine dialogue. It suppresses all genuine dialogue on ways to peace and nuclear disarmament, dialogue that we could pick over for material to throw back in the faces of Soviet leaders the way their press minions and itinerant propagandists in our midst throw in our faces those parts of our public dialogue that suit their argument.

The Soviet press merely echoes the Kremlin's long-established nuclear blamelessness and peaceloving righteousness. It rhapsodizes endlessly in harmony with the Kremlin's anti-Pentagon orchestrations composed in committee from the huge and cacophonous diversity of the open Western media. Soviet commentators on radio and TV spend virtually all their air time emphatically agreeing with each other.

What sort of dialogue with the Kremlin do we have today with the ideas of Andrei Sakharov on nuclear disarmament allowed to play no part? By depriving Sakharov of any public say at home, he has been deprived of legitimacy in *our* Western view too, deemed to count for nothing simply because he is not heard in Soviet public media. We cannot imagine anyone of importance being barred from public expression, so we conclude that he must be of no importance, nothing more than an irresponsible crank the way Soviet commentators describe him if they mention him at all. But before I would agree to have my tax dollars diverted to a Peace Tax Fund, I would at least seek Sakharov's prior counsel. Unfortunately, he is rather hard to reach in the town to which he has been banished for talking out of turn to Western reporters. The KGB's repressive measures really work very well; so well, in fact, that they may ultimately destroy the whole world.

Where do we look for a cure? I would begin by refusing all access to our media to official Soviet spokesmen (they are all official, even when they protest on cue that they are just expressing their personal opinion, which they are now instructed to do) without prior agreement that they will refrain from parroting the Kremlin line exclusively, that they will really enter into dialogue with a human face, dialogue in which Soviet mistakes and faulty policies are admitted.

Early last April, a prominent Soviet propagandist told CBC's Patrick Martin along with about a million CBC listeners that the reasons for the shambles that *détente* currently finds itself in are now "easier to decide than before". Georgii Arbatov, director of the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada — ostensibly a Soviet think-tank but in practice the body set up to give a semblance of intellectual validity to Kremlin policy¹⁰ — referred to proposals made by Brezhnev at the 26th Party Congress to broaden the dialogue on all levels, including the summit. Leaving aside the fact that the constant retailing of whatever Brezhnev's latest speech contained is itself a standard, weary device of Soviet public utterance, if Patrick Martin had suggested that perhaps this broadness could be achieved if Dr. Michael Scott, or even the likes of me could be interviewed on Soviet national media, whatever Arbatov might have replied it would have meant *nyet*. That would not be the kind of dialogue Brezhnev's speech writers had intended.

No foreigner, except a Communist or fellow-traveller, gets into any Soviet media, except on the rarest and most controlled occasions. In all my 10 years of working residence in Moscow my voice was only once heard on Soviet TV. During the U.S.-Soviet joint Soyuz-Apollo space spectacular in August 1975, a roving Soviet TV reporter asked me what I thought of the link-up and I said "*Zdorovo!* — Great!" plus some other genuinely-felt noises of approval. It was not, of course, a live telecast. Sufficient unto that day was the unprecedented live telecast from Baikonur of the Soyuz spaceship launch, a milestone the Russians were forced to pass as the cost of U.S. cooperation.

Last November, a group of Soviet *bahrtsy za meer*, "peacefighters", toured Canada as no countervailing Western group could possibly do in the Soviet Union, unless, of course, it consisted of established Moscow-liners. At a press conference organized by the tour's sponsors, the B.C. Peace Council, I ruined the proceedings by pointing out that it would be impossible for me, and

Canadians like me, to get public platforms of any kind in the Soviet Union to do what they were freely doing in Canada. Much less could I be interviewed live on Soviet TV as one of their number, Professor Vadim Trofimenko, was due to be that evening on CKVU's "Vancouver Show".

To the enormous consternation of the B.C. Peace Council's Rosaleen Ross and Irene Foulkes, CKVU invited me to join that interview. The best that Trofimenko could do in such trying circumstances was to keep his elbow in my face as he turned toward the interviewer, his clenched fist hidden discreetly in his ample hip. No dialogue was possible; Trofimenko merely parroted what was in *Pravda*.

Trofimenko went on, however, to much greater things, being later interviewed by Patrick Watson on nationwide CBC-TV. I would like to see Watson get the same opportunity on Soviet TV, but it would be quite out of the question. And what prospects for nuclear disarmament as a product of people power does such one-sidedness as this hold out?

A brief moment came in October 1973 when it seemed as if the Kremlin was succumbing to pressure of real dialogue on peace when it hosted the World Congress of Peace Forces. In the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, 3,000 delegates from 146 countries came together for a grandiose symposium on peace and the problems of achieving it. Though entirely Communist sponsored, a respectable minority of invited non-Communists, including Western clergymen, attended and was able to make itself heard and even hearkened. Many embarrassingly unorthodox views were aired. Belgium's Cecile Rolin insisted on the indivisibility of peace and the plight of "the silent minority in camps, prisons and psychiatric asylums" of Communist countries and particularly of the Soviet Union. An Englishwoman, Margaret Gardiner, read an appeal by 10 Czechoslovakian political prisoners that had been scribbled on a stocking and smuggled out of jail. And Rev. Paul Mayer of East Orange, New Jersey, blasted the Soviet Union's repression of dissenting opinion in no uncertain terms. Would that this could happen today! Though none of it got directly into the media even then, some flavour did get into the final communique of the Congress.¹¹

The propagandistic cud-chewing that inevitably followed such a staged Kremlin media event was this time accompanied by what seemed to be some genuine rumination. The clash of views between Kremlin orthodoxy and free-wheeling liberals from the outside, though not all spelled out, was timidly being officially recognized as "interesting". Instead of being completely ignored, the mention of a conflict of views made it seem as if the Soviet Union might have been taking its first faltering steps toward an open society in response to the clamour and pressure of Western liberals. The Kremlin actually seemed to be wetting its big toe in the sea of human diversity, and trying to convince itself that the sea might not after all be too treacherous. A rambling TV monologue by prominent writer Konstantin Simonov made the diversity of opinion that the Congress had witnessed seem respectable.

True, Simonov was referring to diversity among foreigners only. True, he left intact the assumption that Soviet thinking was ultimately correct thinking and that the Western visitors were as mixed up as ever. But it seemed a real

landmark to me all the same at the time.

Alas, it proved a momentary flash in the pan. The curtain came down soon afterward and has remained down ever since, keeping Soviet manipulators of Western opinion hidden from view along with the private thoughts of the whole Soviet population. It is, in fact, that Iron Curtain which seems all but forgotten as a symbol by which to grasp what the Soviet Union is all about.

Only if the Peace Tax Fund that is due to be promoted at the Canadian parliamentary level gives top priority to a campaign for reaching out to the latent diversity of Soviet popular views on nuclear disarmament will it get my support. Only by applying heavy pressure on the Kremlin to permit the kind of dialogue that the most illustrious Soviet citizen, Andrei Sakharov, calls for can I see any real hope that my young daughter will live out her life into old age.

Footnotes

1. A much abbreviated version of this article appeared in the *Vancouver Sun*, 3 June 1981.
2. One such letter appeared in *Sunday News* (North Vancouver), 19 April 1981, p. A8.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Vancouver Sun*, 23 March 1981.
5. See "Sakharov's Letter from Exile" in *Conflict Quarterly*, vol. 1, no 2 (1980).
6. MIRV stands for multiple independently targeted reentry vehicle. The technology of MIRV-ing enables one missile to direct a number of warheads at separate targets.
7. The text of Dr. Kissinger's speech, and his response to questions from the press, may be found in: Roger P. Labrie, ed., *SALT Handbook: Key Documents and Issues 1972-1979* (Washington, 1979), pp. 254-65.
8. See William E. Griffith, ed., *The Soviet Empire: Expansion and Détente* (Lexington, Mass., 1976), p. 347n.
9. For an official Soviet definition of "peaceful coexistence", see *Soviet Foreign Policy — A Brief Review 1955-1965*, trans. V. Schneierson (Moscow, 1967), pp. 36-40.
10. The institute is described in considerable detail by former staff member and defector Galina Orionova, in Nora Beloff, "Escape from Boredom: A Defector's Story", *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 246, no 5 (1980), pp. 42-50.
11. *World Marxist Review Information Bulletin*, vol. 11, no 21 (1973), pp. 5-6.