

II by the Senate. However, should the opposite happen and East-West *détente* be consolidated, small but nevertheless tangible opportunities to assist the human-rights movement would continue to exist.

The Western program is, at best, very modest. It assumes that the improvement of the human-rights situation in the U.S.S.R. is going to be a slow and tedious process. It does not even promise that any improvement will necessarily occur. As such, the program is hardly satisfactory, either from the dissidents' point of view or from our own. Yet, under the existing circumstances, this is the best course that the Western democracies could follow. It is more realistic, and, indeed, more moral, than any alternatives that are being currently proposed.

Harsh criticism

The program of using *détente* to improve the human-rights situation in the U.S.S.R. has been subjected to harsh criticism by Western writers, as well as by the Soviet dissidents. Strange as it may seem, it has been denounced at the same time (and occasionally even by the same people) for not being realistic enough and also for not adhering sufficiently to moral principles. These two lines of argument are not always compatible, but they serve to justify the same end. In both cases, their ultimate aim is to make the progress of *détente* conditional on prior observance of human rights.

The "realistic" line of argument is that governments that do not respect the rights of their own citizens also do not respect the rights of other nations, and, as such, cannot be reliable parties to any international agreement. A policy of *détente* with the repressive Soviet Government, then, is not good *Realpolitik*. As Andrei Amalrik argued in *The New York Times* (February 3, 1977), "the West could never feel safe while compromising with violence, instead of fighting against it".

This is not sound political realism. The essence of *Realpolitik* is that international agreements rest not on goodwill but on the balance of power. Such a balance exists today in East-West relations, and *détente* operates strictly within its limits. This is precisely what restricts the possibilities of using *détente* to improve the human-rights situation in the East. In order to surmount this barrier, expanding *détente* beyond the limits of *Realpolitik* would be necessary. By proposing to move in the opposite direction, Amalrik defeats his own purpose.

Détente is also criticized on moral grounds. It is argued that the Western democracies should not enter into agreements with repressive states. By doing so

the democratic governments become a party to condoning immorality, and, in this way, the very principles on which democracy rests are eroded. In a dramatic warning against signing the Helsinki Declaration, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn claimed that, as a result of repeated compromise with the Soviet Union, the decline of the West was already under way. Since the Second World War, he declared, there had been "nothing but a descent, a plummeting down, nothing but enfeeblement and decadence". (*New York Times*, June 22, 1975.)

This line of argument is not very fruitful either. Negotiations between the Western powers and the Soviet Union have followed a time-honoured pattern of international diplomacy, in which agreements are entered in a purely pragmatic fashion by states with different political systems. Some of the East-West accords have been good and some bad, but Solzhenitsyn's dire picture of a declining West is grossly exaggerated. Indeed, his vision would be more likely to come true had the Western powers, in response to the Communist threat, abandoned their pragmatic stance and launched an ideological counter-crusade of their own. Then our system would have become more like the Soviet one, and the foundations of democracy could have been undermined.

Moralistic streak

There does exist in the Anglo-American political tradition a strong moralistic streak. During the last Presidential elections in the United States, it surfaced anew in the platforms adopted by Governor Ronald Reagan and Senator Henry Jackson, both of whom denounced a *détente* rooted in the balance of power as immoral. Yet they were so adamant that the issue of human rights should be made an integral part of East-West *détente* that it was clear that not the former but the latter was their major concern. It seems that, rather than using *détente* to promote human rights, they were trying to exploit the human-rights issue to wreck East-West *détente*.

As to the criticisms of *détente* by the Soviet dissidents, these, paradoxically, often fit more into the Russian than the Western political tradition. The dissidents' great readiness to make sacrifices resembles that displayed by the revolutionaries against the Tsarist despotism. Their moral strictures on the West echo the disillusionment with Western "commercialism and pointless diversity" voiced by the nineteenth-century Slavophiles. Their insistence on "everything or nothing" reflects the traditional Russian proclivity towards political extremism. This dissident counsel of despair we cannot accept - for our own sake as well as theirs.

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