

LIMITED PEACE

Hans Speier

August 1968

P-3920



## LIMITED PEACE

Hans Speier\*

The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, California

### I

The fact that two states live in peace does not permit any specific inferences regarding the nature of the political relationship that exists between them. There is peace between Austria and Tanzania, but this means above all that these countries have very little contact. The United States and Canada have a long common frontier; this border is open, and the two states will probably never wage war one against the other. West Germany and East Germany, however, live in peace and enmity; at their common border, which is open for commercial traffic, shooting occurs. The big Soviet Union and little Czechoslovakia are allied, but peace and the sovereignty of the Dubcek government were victimized in the alliance. The United States and the Soviet Union, the only big powers technically capable of breaking the peace on any continent and embroiling the whole world in war, have preserved peace despite seemingly irreconcilable clashes of interest, ideological controversy, and many political conflicts. They have reached certain agreements. Some of them, for example, the consular agreements, merely regulate bilateral relations in a restricted area. Other agreements, for example, the Non-Proliferation

---

\* Any views expressed in this paper are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of The Rand Corporation or the official opinion or policy of any of its governmental or private research sponsors. Papers are reproduced by The Rand Corporation as a courtesy to members of its staff.

This paper was presented at the Fourth Salzburger Humanismus Gespräch, Schloss Klesheim bei Salzburg, September 10-13, 1968.

Treaty, were concluded in order to assert common interests of the two antagonistic powers vis-a-vis other states. With some exaggeration Dean Rusk once even spoke of the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union had lived in a state of peaceful coexistence since the October Revolution.

All the relationships that have been mentioned are peaceful ones, but the nations concerned are by no means content with existing conditions. They demand that certain territorial borders be recognized or changed, and they believe in the value of certain economic and social systems as in a doctrine of salvation. Old, big, and powerful states are concerned about their power, try to extend their influence, and protect their security through armaments and alliances. New and poor states envy the rich ones, curse them for a system of rule that belongs to the past and insist that the cursed ones are morally obligated to render selfless help. All in all, one can only conclude that the world is in a permanent state of injustice and of antagonistic, unfulfilled demands for justice. Even in cases in which peace between two states is based on a protectorate of one power over the other vis-a-vis third powers, sooner or later, secretly or openly, the protected will deny that the peace is just.

When wishing that peace be preserved we do not necessarily consider the existing borders, systems of government or political aims of the states that live in peace to be good and right. In international affairs, peace means an international order in which strife is settled without violence. Correspondingly, war is a state of disorder in which a new peaceful order -- again without full realization of justice -- is to be established by violent means. A similar observation can be made

in respect to peacefulness in domestic affairs: absence of revolt and civil war does not necessarily mean that the existing social conditions are just. Social peace and social order frequently rest only upon the acceptance of rule by those who are ruled or upon the non-violent settlement of political discord.

War and peace are forms of international relations between states. Some observers are inclined to regard peace as a normal condition and war as an abnormal relationship. But this is a question of how normality is defined. In any event, propositions about the abnormality of war are more or less true depending on historical chance and geographical circumstance. It is a matter of the time in which one lives and of the community to which one belongs. I have spent only about eleven years of my life in countries whose soldiers were involved in war. Not counting the whole duration of the so-called "cold war", only five or six additional years were times of acute crisis, when some statesmen said that world peace was imperiled by other statesmen. These are 16 and 17 years altogether, so that in my lifetime and given my changing geographic location -- statistically speaking -- peace was normal and war abnormal. Nevertheless, I have lived through two world wars. The Second World War has not yet led everywhere to a final peace settlement, and today nobody can conclusively prove that a third world war will not break out in my lifetime.

From 1918 to 1939, Europe lived in mortal fear of aerial attacks on cities and of the use of poison gas in the next big war. In the 23 years that have passed since the end of the Second World War, civilized mankind has dreaded the catastrophe of a war waged with nuclear

weapons. And we not only dread such a war, but also live in fear of political opponents, in particular, communists or imperialists. It is true, the possession of nuclear weapons, which increases the anticipated horror of war, reduces the expectation of it, but it does not restrict distrust, nor is it a sufficient safeguard of peace.

If one disregards Greece from 1946-1949, Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Cyprus, and Czechoslovakia this year, the long years that have passed since the end of the Second World War have been more peaceful for Europe than for other continents. The so-called hereditary enmity between France and Germany in Western Europe has disappeared for the short or medium run, in part perhaps because Germany is divided, West Germany has been put under military supervision, and France, but not the Federal Republic, has nuclear weapons of her own. In East and Southeast Europe there is the semblance of peace, purchased for freedom, and punctuated by foreign intervention. This part of Europe is not yet so menaced by new nationalisms that the remainder of that continent or the whole world could be drawn into a new war. The European colonial powers have almost completely withdrawn from their former possessions overseas, and in the process only France has suffered relatively very high losses of life.

By contrast, the many new states of Africa and Asia have gained independence but not peace. The number of wars, secessions, and mutinies in the underdeveloped countries is mounting.<sup>1</sup> Some observers,

---

<sup>1</sup>According to a study by David Wood (Conflict in the Twentieth Century, Adelphi Papers No. 48, The Institute for Strategic Studies, London, June 1968), there have been 40 violent conflicts in Asia in the seventy years from 1898 to 1967. Twenty-two of these 40 conflicts occurred in the last twenty years. For Africa, the corresponding figures are 23 out of 33, for the Middle East, 15 out of 22. Counting by type of conflict regardless of locale, there have been 50 insurgency-type conflicts in the whole 70 year period, 33 of which occurred in the last twenty years. In the class "civil wars," the corresponding figures are 9 out of 17, and finally, all 9 coups d'etat in Mr. Wood's statistic occurred in the last twenty years.

for example, Mr. McNamara, attribute this increase in violence to poverty. But these countries were formerly not more prosperous. The bloody strife, which has led to the up-rooting of millions of refugees and to terrible famine, is in part a consequence of decolonization and the lack of tradition in the exercise of national political power. Within a few years more than a hundred new states have emerged with a total population of more than a billion people. Many of the new entities are struggling for political survival, have no natural frontiers, and are economically not viable.

The old democracies, in particular the oldest one -- the United States -- are able to absorb a large measure of internal violence, including assassinations and disorders, without a collapse of the political system. The same holds true for totalitarian governments, although they derive political stability in part from terror. For example, according to the figures, which Andrei V. Sakharov has recently published, 1.2 million people were arrested in the Soviet Union in the limited period 1936-1939. Only 50,000 regained their freedom, "the others were tortured during interrogations or shot." According to Sakharov, the number of those executed amounted to 600,000.<sup>1</sup> Also the Nazi Reich was politically stable. A world war was necessary in order to destroy it. These orders were more stable than the new states of Africa and Asia and the older states in South America. With the exception of Mexico, illegal and irregular change of the head of state is a frequent occurrence in Latin America. From 1930 to 1965 such a change occurred in 19 states 106 times.

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrei D. Sakharov, "Thoughts on Progress, Peaceful Co-existence and Intellectual Freedom," The New York Times, July 22, 1968.

II

Unlimited, eternal peace is an old dream of mankind. But we live in a world in which peace is limited by wars, revolts, and injustice. It should be the aim of policy to extend the limits of peace instead of chasing the will-o'-the-whisp of eternal peace. For otherwise, men drift all too easily into waging a last war against war, or a holy war, or a just war with the aim to exterminate those who break the peace. "Last" wars, holy wars, crusades for a religious or political belief, are usually total wars or easily degenerate into them. The extension of the limits of peace consist in alleviating injustice without violence and in regulating war. An American scholar has expressed this view somewhat unpopularly, but quite correctly, as follows: "... so long as an international order exists -- or so long as we might desire one to exist -- wars must come short of the last degree of irreconciliability and retain some of the characteristics of a conflict between potential allies, some trace of the fact that they are quarrels between friends."<sup>1</sup>

In a limited war, the technically available means of violence are not fully exploited. They are used inefficiently. In total war not only the annihilation of life and the destruction and devastation of land and property are unrestricted, but also cruelty is boundless.

War may be restricted in place and time so that even in a local war certain regions under enemy control may be spared, and no blood may be shed during the war in certain seasons, on certain days

---

<sup>1</sup>Herbert Butterfield, Christianity, Diplomacy, and War, 1953, p. 97.



of the week, on holidays, or in certain hours of the day. Also the technically available means of war may be used with self-restraint. Not in all wars are the wells to be filled with sand, as was recommended in the Prussian patriotic literature for the War of Liberation from Napoleon. Not in all wars will poison gas be used, as the Italians did in fighting the Abyssinians or the Egyptians in Yemen. In regulated, limited war, certain places, goods and persons, are exempt from violence: sanctuaries or whole cities may remain intact; nor need the earth be burned either by the victor or the vanquished; heralds, prisoners, the wounded will not be murdered; women not be raped, the defeated government not be overturned, the surviving civil population not be slain, driven out, or enslaved. In limited war the aims of war are not limitless, and when peace is concluded the victor refrains from humiliating the vanquished.

Limited wars contain so to speak an admixture of peaceful order. They are civilized wars. It is true, for the survivors in a limited war it is no consolation that their dead did not fall in a total war. But limited war as a whole causes less suffering than a war in which violence and cruelty rage without restraint.

The preservation of some traces of peace in limited war is the result of human decisions to restrict the war geographically, to wage it with more consideration than is technologically possible, and to put one's own soldiers under a law that declares certain actions to be punishable crimes: unauthorized violence, the wreaking of revenge, cruelty, the rage of destruction, sexual exploitation, personal enrichment at the expense of the enemy, etc.

Such decisions are made and observed more easily when war is not waged for sacred or semi-sacred, ideological aims; when the government personnel of different states is related by blood or belief, and when the governed people do not participate much in the war. Mass armies and civilian enthusiasm for war have uninhibiting effects on warfare. The enemy is satanized or monsterized in religious wars, colonial wars, guerrilla fights, wars of liberation, and in class or race wars. Often the enemy is equated with wild beasts. Fighting to the last becomes a self-righteous mission to exterminate evil-doers, strangers, barbarians, beasts; it may become at the same time a rage out of panicky fear.

The weapons used in limited or unlimited wars reflect the level of technological development which state and society have reached in peacetime. Underdeveloped countries can wage only technically underdeveloped wars. The industrial revolution of the last centuries has transformed European society in times of peace and has industrialized wars as well. Since we no longer hunt with bow and arrow, we use fire-arms also in battle, possibly even in civil battle. Without a steel industry there would be no dreadnoughts, guns, and tanks. Airplanes transport bombs and tourists.

The terrible boundlessness of violence in total war is not only a result of technological progress. Unlimited war is possible on any technological level, not only in the atomic age, but also at the time of Ghengis Khan. The loss of life in the Thirty Years War in Germany was relatively more severe than that suffered in the Second World War, and the restoration of the destroyed buildings and the devastated countryside proceeded much more slowly after the total war of the 17th century

than after 1945. From 1864 to 1870 Paraguay waged war against Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. All male inhabitants in Paraguay, including children at the age of 12 and grandfathers, had to fight. Resistance against the draft resulted in imprisonment, torture, and slow death. In Berlin no students demonstrated for deserters. According to cautious estimates, the population of Paraguay was reduced by the war from 525,000 to 221,000. About 9 tenths of the survivors were women. Although this war was waged with weapons, which according to the European standards of the time were backward, the relative loss of the population of Paraguay -- more than 50% -- corresponded approximately to the loss which the Pentagon predicts today for the United States in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union -- about 120,000,000.

Technical progress, of course, has made possible the expansion of war. The scientific and technological improvement of weaponry has drawn ever larger groups of the population into the region of violent death: soldiers not only at the front, but also in the rear; not only combatants, but also non-combatants; not only workers, but also non-working civilians -- the aged, women, children; not only people in factories, but also in their homes, in churches, and hospitals. Now there are not only point-targets, but carpets of destruction can be laid over cities. In the nuclear age, a whole region can be devastated and contaminated. A few bombs would suffice to turn West Germany into a graveyard, as Khrushchev once put it. Neutral and even allied countries can be drawn into the turmoil of war, as though they were enemy territory, and finally, not only the living can be killed or maimed, but also unborn children can be genetically damaged. Thus, technological

progress has almost completely removed the limits of war -- geographically, socially, and biologically. This progress has made possible cruelty from a distance, which is distinguished from the cruelty of the secret policeman or the criminal in that the perpetrator does not look his victim in the eye. Adam Smith already spoke of "invisible death" in war as of a consequence of technical progress.

Horrified as we are by this development, we must not overlook, however, that the nuclear age has not only martial aspects. The efficiency of weapons has not grown more astonishingly than have the possibilities of making life in peacetime more painless and more comfortable and of fighting disease, death and hunger. All nuclear physicists agree in this regard, whether you read Glenn T. Seaborg, Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker, or Andrei D. Sakharov.

The efficiency of nuclear weapons has deepened the fear of war, although this is true mainly of nuclear war and in some parts of the world more than in others. Since antiquity, many political philosophers have held the view that the worst of all wars is civil war, since it opens the door to savagery and leads to the decay of political order. This evaluation of civil war has changed as nuclear weapons have been invented and improved as their production costs have decreased. Today, no civil war, no matter how fiercely waged, appears so terrible and so dangerous as nuclear war. Civil wars are at least localized. The same holds true for colonial wars and wars of liberation, that is, for wars which in turn favor resort to boundless violence, because racial hatred and fear and self-righteousness seem to justify all means.

Thus we live at a time in which a nuclear catastrophe is possible but has hitherto been avoided. We enjoy a controlled nuclear peace. But this peace rests to a large extent on fear and deterrents, not on a common belief in that which makes life worth living, nor on undivided power, as in the short period of the American atomic monopoly. Limited nuclear peace is erected on the precarious balance of the big nuclear powers and on allegedly complementary interests that these powers share in preventing other states from getting possession of nuclear arms. Within this order of limited peace, conventional wars continue to be a "normal" occurrence. Some observers entertain the view that the small and medium powers have gained freedom of maneuver for their own power politics and for local wars because the big atomic powers are preoccupied with mutual deterrence. Some exception must be taken to such opinions in view of the quick termination of the war against Nasser in 1956 or in view of joint Russo-American support of India against China. Localized conflicts in which the big powers are involved with part of their military capability -- Korea, Hungary, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia -- deepen the fear of nuclear war, and the number of conventional wars has increased rather than decreased in the nuclear age.

### III

The modern age has given us not only scientifically improved weapons but also utopias of peace that are based both on science and pseudo-science. These utopias differ from mythical beliefs in a distant peaceful life and from the classical utopias by the assumption that the utopian state of affairs will eventually be realized on this earth.

According to the theories of progress, the midwives of modern sociology, war is, briefly speaking, simply barbaric and a consequence of the irresponsible use of power. Allegedly, the progress of mankind from a state of ignorance, superstition, and error to the enlightened age, goes hand-in-hand with the progress from conditions of compulsion and subordination to forms of free, intelligent, socialization. In the course of this progress the false martial virtues and the arbitrariness of rulers are replaced by education so that people will behave reasonably, by free economic activity, and by parliamentarism.

The utopia of a classless, peaceful society was originally a pedagogical notion, until Marx put it on an economic base. The Marxian classless realm of freedom is an unpolitical society, without state and without war, although according to communist doctrine this state of affairs can be attained only with the help of force.

In this connection it is not unimportant to recall that Marx and Engels applauded not only unlimited popular war and guerrilla struggles, but also the collapse of limited warfare through the ruthless counter-measures taken by professional soldiers against people's armies and guerrillas. Marx had a weakness for Gneisenau, who in his recommendations for the establishment of the Landstrum drew certain lessons from the methods of fighting adopted by the Spanish guerrillas; to the distress of his king Gneisenau ruined the old Prussian ethos of war. After the defeat of the French at Sedan in 1870 Engels and Marx (in his letters to Kugelmann) derided the British, because the latter were indignant at the way

the Prussians fought the French franc-tireurs: requisitions occurred, hostages were taken, franc-tireurs were executed, villages burned down. Engels considered it a typical prejudice of the Hohenzollern to believe that a nation was committing a crime if it continued to resist after the destruction of its standing army.

Marx and Engels were right in regarding limited war as a form of war in which the ruling classes observed certain social conventions even in enmity and struggle. The fathers of communism welcomed the barbarization of war, because it meant to them a recoil from upper class ethics. They were adherents of total war, even when it was waged for an unjust cause, and from their point of view the Prussian war aims in fighting the French after Sedan were, of course, not just.

It was not Marx, however, but Stalinists, who held the view that after a worldwide victory of socialism the socialists would continue to wage war against one another.<sup>1</sup> Marx and Engels, "the general" of the communists, and Lenin, believed in the "just" war and did not discuss future wars of the just against the just. Today it is still communist doctrine that insurrection in underdeveloped countries is just, the support of such insurrection by foreign communist states legitimate and moral, whereas the support of political order by other states is illegitimate and immoral. To this day, the pseudo-scientific utopia of a just order of peace contributes its share to contracting rather than widening the boundaries of peace.

---

<sup>1</sup>Milovan Djilas, Conversations with Stalin, New York, 1966, p. 50.

In addition to the theories of progress there are other, pseudo-scientific notions of utopian peace. In the 18th century, before the democratic participation of large masses in politics led to a form of total war, which Clausewitz designated as "buergerlicher Krieg" and de Jomini as "ideological war," quite a few observers believed that the outcome of war could be calculated scientifically. With topography and geometry as bases of their analyses, serious people considered it possible to abolish war by studying and teaching the principles of military science, preferably at an international war academy. In 1780, the Prince of Ligne proposed the opening of such an academy. He believed that given equal knowledge and equally good training and exercise of command on both sides, neither side could gain an advantage in war, so that war would become useless.<sup>1</sup>

This notion of the calculability of war has survived to this day. In fact, it has gained prominence only in our age. It is an implication of today's war games, in which civilians study the results of nuclear wars. In these games the fictitious enemy is compelled, as it were, to take part in the game and observe the rules of economic rationality. The intellectual disposition, reflected in such games recurs in the supposition that the nuclear powers can reach silent agreement on cooperative strategies so as to wage nuclear war in a reasonable fashion; such silent agreement appears possible because it is assumed that either side is capable of exact calculations of gain and loss in various forms of nuclear war. Fortuna, the goddess of chance, appears in such games only when the computers break down; a malfunctioning of

---

<sup>1</sup>Hans Speier, Social Order and the Risks of War, New York, 1952, p. 240.



technology which technicians can easily overcome. Mr. McNamara has illuminated the role assigned to reason in such considerations. He said, "Mutual (sic) interest -- mutual trust -- mutual (sic) effort: these are the goals. Can we achieve these goals with the Soviet Union, and with Communist China?....The answer to these questions lies in the answer to an even more fundamental question.

"Who is man?

"Is he a rational animal?

"If he is, then the goals can ultimately be achieved.

"If he is not, then there is little point in making the effort.

"All the evidence of history suggests that man is indeed a rational animal -- but with a near infinite capacity for folly."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. McNamara should really have concluded from this remarkable observation that the unlimited power of folly and its roots should be investigated scientifically, but it is indeed unlikely that the modern sciences are equal to this task, for as producers of utopias they are themselves children of folly.

A policy of limited peace must not be oriented on eschatological notions of an eternal peace. It must also guard against the pseudo-scientific illusion that it is possible to solve foreign policy problems like mathematical problems, that is, more or less elegantly but in any case once and for all. Neither the abolition of war nor the establishment of a world government and least of all the abolition of war while maintaining sovereign states is humanly possible. As long as there are states, there will be conflicts of interest, which may lead to war.

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert S. McNamara's address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, in Montreal, May 18, 1966; text in The New York Times, May 19, 1966.

But it would be an immense gain for the cause of peace if men succeeded in avoiding wars of political faith and race wars, in which the will to destroy is unbridled.

Today it is the most important task of a policy of limited peace to prevent nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The nuclear war would be a catastrophe of such dimensions that it must be avoided even if this were possible only by sacrificing important interests. Sovereign states, it is true, demand such sacrifices of other, third, states, more readily than of themselves or of one another. Nor is it possible to state with scientific exactness the circumstances in which such a sacrifice must be made. For example, one can hold very different views on how to counter the Russian advances in the Mediterranean. Should certain interests of Western Europe, Israel, or the United States be given up for the sake of peace so that the Russians would have more freedom of political expansion? As soon as any specific conflict in international relations is described more precisely, the difficulties of a concrete policy toward peace become as evident as does the political weakness of general desires for peace and disarmament.

As I have pointed out, the communist doctrine of the just war obstructs reconciliation which could contribute to an extension of the area of peace. It is therefore desirable that the communist leaders of Russia revise this doctrine, as they gave up, a few years ago, the doctrine of the inevitability of war between communist and capitalist states. At the present time, foreign policy is being passionately debated in the United States. This debate is a consequence of the limited war in Vietnam. The outcome of this public discussion could be influenced by the Soviet Union in favor of peace if she abandoned

her doctrine of the just war. But until now there are no signs pointing to such a deideologicalization of war in communist official doctrine; there is not even a public discussion of this subject.

Many observers of world politics are of the opinion that in the long run world peace is threatened by the so-called North-South conflict, i.e., by the contrast between the rich, industrialized states of Europe and America, the Soviet Union, Japan, and Australia on the one side, and the underdeveloped countries on the other. For the time being, there is no reason to fear the outbreak of such racial war. It is more probable that the new states will wage further war against one another and will continue to be beset by domestic revolts. By and large, these battles will be fought with primitive weapons or with the obsolete weapons of the technologically dominant powers. The advanced states could extend the area of peace by trying to settle such violent conflicts or to reduce their number instead of instigating them or attempting to derive benefits from them. In the long run, only nuclear China could provide a reason or pretext to the white nuclear powers to use nuclear weapons in a racial war. The combination of the unleashed atom with the consequences of decolonization, racial hatred, and eschatological notions of justice, would produce a catastrophe whose horror could be exceeded only by a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

#### IV

Modern science and technology have almost immeasurably increased the efficacy of the means of production and destruction, but this has happened only in a limited part of the earth. Modern science is of

little help to justice and peace. It can alleviate misery and poverty in peacetime, desalt the water of the oceans; nuclear physics serves medical and industrial progress; modern science and technology can produce new raw materials and new foodstuffs from the ocean, etc. Modern science can make contributions to birth control and to arms control. It can accelerate the communication between governments so that it becomes possible for facts and intentions to be divulged or distorted over a "hot wire." But science and technology have no power over human strife and the settlement of conflict between states, ideologies, races, and classes. Since science aspires to power over nature it lacks moral standards. Only as a political being can man wage war and limit war. Only as a political being can he become fully aware of the limits of peace and the consequences of war. Only as a political being can he constrain himself and serve peace.