

## *Book Reviews*

### **The Dynamics of Detente**

*by Arthur Macy Cox*

(New York: Norton, 1976, \$8.95)

The concept of "detente," whose popularity in this country rose and fell with the fortunes of Henry Kissinger until it was officially dropped by the Ford Administration near the end of the Secretary's tenure, appears to be experiencing something of a revival. There are a number of reasons for this, not the least being the absence of a major conflict between the two superpowers, and the advent of a new, Democratic administration committed to move rapidly towards negotiated arms reduction.

The term detente, never precisely defined, highlighted the feelings of cooperation and restraint surrounding the arms and trade accords of the 1972 Moscow conference, in the way that the spirits of "Camp David" and "Glassboro" heralded previous efforts at summitry. Unfortunately, the expectations that succeed meetings of chiefs of state often exceed real limitations.

The Soviet role in encouraging and supplying the Arabs during the Yom Kippur War, followed by the oil embargo, with all its repercussions for the worldwide recession and the stability of the Western alliance, soon chilled American enthusiasms. The sales of grain and of high-quality technology together with the furor that arose over continued Soviet repression of dissidents and restrictions on emigration, further weakened the consensus for detente and provoked charges that US policy was heading down a "one-way street."

Arthur Macy Cox, a Columbia professor and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, who has also touched base at various levels of government, struggles to assess *The Dynamics of Detente* according to the narrower meaning it has always held for the Russians: a relaxation of tensions aimed at preventing nuclear holocaust. This means primarily arms control, and the polemics of the book focus largely on the need for

large-scale cut-backs in the US defense budget, unilaterally and by way of SALT and MBFR agreements. Included is a sweeping indictment of the US role in the post-war history of East-West confrontation.

The author's arguments rest upon several premises. The first is that "the US has clear strategic superiority over the Soviets and will have for some time to come." The second, which is related, concerns Soviet intentions, which are viewed under the present leadership as essentially moderate, defensive, and reactive.

Professor Cox believes that both the US and USSR have a secure second-strike force, making mutually assured destruction (MAD) the only sound basis of strategic policy. Yet he is anxious to play the numbers game in order to show that the Jackson/Schlesinger party, while paying lip-service to the doctrine of "essential equivalence," really seeks to continue US predominance.

The author refers often to the US lead in technology and warheads. He terms throw-weight indices a "ploy," and counterforce contingencies a "mystique." Soviet missiles are larger, he says, because the Soviets lack the capabilities to match the smaller, more accurate American models. The Soviets are consigned to "catch-up" attempts, which are thwarted by the "military-industrial complex."

Most analysts tend to conclude, after balancing all factors, that US-Soviet strategic forces are at rough parity. The new generation of Soviet ICBM's, SS-16—SS-20, has been equipped with multiple warheads, and is more accurate than the weapons in the Soviet arsenal at the time of SALT I. With fixed limits on delivery vehicles, time will only increase Soviet technical capacity, while adding to the importance of their sizable throw-weight advantage. Curiously overlooked in Mr. Cox's assessment is the growing importance of the Soviet's \$1 billion a year civil defense program. This oversight is somewhat disturbing considering the swipe at Herman Kahn's call for a shelter program in the States, which was never implemented.

The author's credibility is further strained in his attempt to explain away the conventional force mismatch in Europe. The Warsaw Pact preponderance in men and armor, especially tanks, is ascribed solely to the demands of internal security and the fear of resurgent militarism in West Germany. The East European divisions (even the 15 Polish and 6 East German divisions) are written off the balance-sheet as unreliable, while NATO stability problems — the Greece/Turkey dispute, Italian Communism and French independence — receive hardly a mention. It is typical of the author's lack of balance that he castigates US policy planners both for not yielding parity in strategic forces (in SALT), and for insisting on true equality in forces in Europe (in the MBFR negotiations).

The need for the major powers to move from confrontation to negotiation is real and pressing, as Cox argues. However, the author does a disservice to his cause by failing to look closely to see that there exists a real basis for the unilateral concessions he proposes. The Washington Conference and Paris Pact after World War I showed the impotence of paper agreements without real consensus. And, later, the Berlin blockade and the Korean War after World War II arose in part through misperceptions of US commitments. There is, indeed, no alternative to detente but annihilation, but agreements to prevent the next war must be made on realistic assessment of the strategic balance.

Jon Koslow