

Speech at the Stockholm Workers' Commune

January 12th, 1980.

Comrades,

We are gathered here for a conference on the state of the nation in a time of unrest and conflicts, when folly seems to prevail over sense, when the small states' right to independence is threatened and trampled. Every day I receive evidence of people's anxiety over a development that they no longer can comprehend. Their anxiety is justified. The eighties started out in an ominous way, not just here at home but also in the outside world. The continued fighting in Kampuchea and the frightening arms race in the world and in Europe, and now the recent development in Afghanistan - all this naturally creates uncertainty about our future. We have strongly reacted against the intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan by the following reasons:

Firstly: this is a brutal aggression, a flagrant violation of every nation's right to self-determination, a violation of international law. A military intervention in another nation's domestic affairs can never be justified. A people's liberation must be its own work.

Secondly: it contributes to the escalation of tension in the world, between east and west, but also between north and south. This makes the intervention a blow against the efforts to fight the arms race, starvation and colonialism in already unsettled regions. They are being exposed to further pressures, not only in Central Asia but also in South East Asia and the Indian sub-continent, which are already ravaged by war.

Thirdly: this gives the super-powers reason to increase their armament, and their military presence in areas where the United States did not have military bases before.

Fourthly: it constitutes a hard blow against the non-aligned world, of which Afghanistan was a member, and whose inner unity is now greatly threatened. This non-aligned movement has had an important rôle to play in world politics in the striving for peace, disarmament and a more just global distribution of resources.

For all these reasons the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan must be strongly condemned.

It is particularly important that the smaller states make their opinion known

with the utmost force. For we have now been offered yet another example of how little the rights of the small states mean, when their strivings are in conflict with the guarding of power spheres by the super powers and of what they judge to be their vital interests. Regrettably, this is not the first time that we witness open military aggression by a super-power against a small country. In Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, too, we saw Russian tanks rolling in. And in the Dominican Republic and in Indochina we saw American marines intervening as intruders. It is indeed terrifying how little tolerance the super-powers show the people within their own power sphere. The Soviet Union could not tolerate the liberalization in Hungary by Imre Nagy, could not tolerate the attempts to create socialism with a more human face in Czechoslovakia. Now it obviously could not tolerate muslim nationalism in its southern neighbouring country.

The invasion of Afghanistan has led to violent reactions all over the world. The hardest reaction, not surprisingly, has come from the western super-power, from the United States. The United States has taken a number of reprisals, and threatens to take further actions. In the face of this, some might remember that the United States not long ago was guilty of similar acts of aggression. Others might direct their attention to the strange fact that the rebel movement supported in Afghanistan basically represents the same muslim nationalists as the religious groups in Iran, with which the United States is now in strong conflict. But these circumstances do not diminish the fact that the criticism against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan is justified. In the global power struggle, one must also take into account strong reactions from the side of the super powers to events that could upset the balance of power between them.

But we must try to avoid a biased view of these kind of events from the warped perspective which is being created by the global power struggle. We have seen so many examples of attempts to discredit liberation movements, e.g. in Africa, because their fight was supported by the Soviet Union. We have always supported the liberation struggle for its own sake. The liberation struggle of the Afghan people is not lessened by the fact that it is directed against the Soviet Union and thereby gets the support of the United States. We shall support the Afghan people for its own sake, because it is a small nation that wants to guard its national independence against the military violence of a super power. This demands solidarity on our part. And I think that the Soviet Union once again will have to learn the bitter lesson of the limitations of military violence in the face of a people's longing for freedom.

I said, just now, that the reaction of the other super power is understandable. Surprising, however, is its choice of actions, particularly to break agreements about grain deliveries. Surprising, too, are the thoughts of cooperation with China and the willingness to substantially increase the military support to Pakistan, a country to which the United States only a few weeks ago had tense relations. This underlines the power political dimension of the reprisals and it may have far-reaching consequences.

The violence of the counter reactions must be viewed in a wider perspective. For quite a long time there has been a gradual obvious deterioration in the relations between the leading great powers. We can see evidence of this deterioration in the discussions about Africa, about the Soviet troops in Cuba, about SALT and about a number of other questions. The American president has been trying to pursue a policy of detente. But in the United States there are strong forces that are suspicious of the policy of detente, that never accepted the idea of equilibrium in military balance of power, but want to preserve American military superiority at all costs, no matter how illusory this may be in the time of collective suicide, that oppose the SALT-2 proposal, that strongly urge the demand of increased armament in the United States and an increase of the nuclear arsenal in Europe. This attitude contains a lot of feelings of revenge after the humiliation in Vietnam and other places, and the Soviet Union has not hesitated to supply these forces with quite a number of arguments. They are now viewing the invasion of Afghanistan as a confirmation that the Soviet Union is a basically aggressive country, which by all conceivable means wants to enlarge its power sphere. This Soviet expansion can only be met, they say, by an increase of the military forces, by further building out of the nuclear arsenal, by taking hard political and economical counter actions.

It is not my intention to determine the burden of guilt. But it is my intention to stress, with all force, that the world is in an extremely dangerous situation.

It can lead to the termination of the process of detente, the detente that did make dialogues and peaceful coexistence possible, that gave such relief to individual people, and whose aim is the limitation of the nuclear arms race and, ultimately, the reduction and abolition of these doomsday weapons.

It can lead to a relapse into the cold war with its rigid division of the world, where the dialogues are replaced by insults and propaganda. This is an evil way. In a situation when reprisals and counter reprisals follow each other, when different pact members are being forced to reprisals of

their own, the situation could rapidly get out of control. When the hot line, which has been regarded as the safeguard of continued dialogue leads to accusations of mendacity instead, the contacts could easily clog. It is almost ghostlike to state how quickly the tone of voice of the cold war has returned. How willingly its flagwavers once again step forward.

This can lead to renewed escalation of the arms race. This unrestrained arms race with increasingly terrifying means of destruction will almost inevitably lead to a new world war, a war whose devastating consequences perhaps nobody will be in a position to describe.

And it is a matter of utter waste of resources in a time where poverty and hunger continue to torment a growing majority of the world population.

Here I have to add still another extremely serious fact: this new threat to detente coincides with a new economic crisis in many countries. In periods of hardship and economic depression there is a risk of a recourse to more protectionism in order to protect one's own country. But protectionism can also lead to a political climate where nationalism thrives. Thereby the prospects for detente can become even more hazardous and the threat of a cold war and military confrontation approaches.

Thus we can be brought towards disaster step by step. It is difficult to maintain the border line between a cold and a hot war. But it is absolutely necessary to avoid coming too close to that line in a world with a stock of nuclear weapons large enough to annihilate humanity several times over.

This is why we live in the days of madness.

The super-powers must realize that a durable peace can never be built upon balance of terror, nor can it rely upon the continued state of underdevelopment, humiliation and exploitation for greater part of humanity. The world needs fewer generals and crusaders and more statesmen and peace workers. People must have the right to demand^{of} those in power that they keep their heads in a situation like this, that they recognize what is essential.

Right now it is particularly important to stand up for detente. SALT-talks, MBFR-negotiations, ESC-conferences etc. are all part of a vital dialogue for disarmament and survival. Detente is no favour to either party, no sacrifice or advantage to either party. It is to the benefit and well-being of all people and must be protected, continued and intensified. At the moment it is particularly essential to work for disarmament.

The peoples of Europe have a special cause to pursue detente and counteract the arms race. The Warsaw Pact has started to spread the new Ss-20 missiles.

Last December NATO decided to produce a new generation of ultra modern nuclear middle distance missiles to be placed in Europe. The aim should be a Europe free from nuclear weapons.

The Afghanistan crisis must not be the reason for giving up the efforts to stop this madness. The two super powers must be persuaded to enter into serious negotiations in the field of disarmament.

The primary goal must be that the Soviet Union considerably reduces her Ss-20 missiles and that NATO does not place its new missiles and that NATO and the Warsaw Pact both reduce their forces in Europe.

Experience shows that what is now needed is a popular mobilization against the folly of armament, that the people's concern and yearning for peace is shaped to a powerful and concrete demand for restraint, disarmament, peace and solidarity.

Social democracy has a long tradition of active struggle for peace and international solidarity. The international work is continued within the Socialist International. We have a special working group for disarmament under the leadership of Kalevi Sorsa. This work is carried on in the same spirit as that which is reflected in the basic document from 1889 of the Socialist International: "Peace is the foremost and indispensable condition for the liberation of the working classes."

In Sweden this tradition has been pursued ever since the efforts of Hjalmar Branting, Östen Undén and Torsten Nilsson until the general international policy for solidarity which Social Democracy today has founded.

A policy for peace can obviously not be restricted to Europe. The injustice and inequality between and within the countries of the world, between and within the rich and the poor countries create fertile soil for local and regional conflicts which the big powers can be drawn into.

Therefore the search for peaceful disarmament is closely related to a sincere and far-seeing policy of solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

We are used to talking about the conflict between East and West. But now we talk more and more of the conflict between North and South, between the comparatively rich industrial countries and the starving, extremely poor masses in countries which hold a majority of the world's population. The gaps between them is growing. Pessimism is spreading in many parts of the world. The tension which this pessimism breeds obviously constitutes a threat to world peace.

But this is no irrevocable development. It can be reversed. If the political will exists, it is quite possible to annihilate mass starvation before the turn of the century and turn around the development in the poor zones of the world. There is enough cooperation to make it possible to form a fully realistic policy of survival.

I have been a member of a commission under the leadership of Willy Brandt. This commission has produced a report on this subject. We will account for this report in a month's time. I believe that our suggestions show a possible road in the interest of peace and solidarity.

Swedish Social Democracy is right now in opposition. ^{Whether/} we do have a government or not, I sometimes doubt. But the important thing is: Social Democracy must not become silent, nor let itself be silenced. We shall indignantly continue to condemn the violation of small nations, condemn the oppression of human rights and the stifling of dreams about the future, condemn the exploitation of the poor.

Above all we shall untiringly continue to work for peace, for the peaceful dialogue and the peaceful cooperation between nations, for detente and against the madness of armament and militarism.

Social Democracy is and shall remain a movement for peace and solidarity between the peoples.