

COMMON DANGERS EVOLVING INTO COMMON PROBLEMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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It goes without saying that, all through known history, peoples and nations cooperated in the face of common dangers. It is still common knowledge that a great proportion of cooperation in this regard had ceased to function once the imminent danger is over. Who, but a few historians, can remember the quiet disappearance of a multitude of alliances of the 19th and early 20th centuries into complete oblivion, following sometimes subtle but more often drastic changes in the international system. Who could foresee back in nineteenfifties that the Balkan Alliance among Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, would turn into a "dead" document a few days after its formation, due to the differing perceptions of the signatories of the Soviet challenge and to the discord between Turkey and Greece on a completely new ground. But once common dangers become common problems, then cooperation among partners prove to be more lasting and common efforts toward their solution foster an ever-increasing understanding.

In the Mediterranean region, *dangers* confronting the peoples of the Sea have turned, in the present day, into continuous and lethal *problems* desperately in need of solutions. These problems may well be put under two broad and highly interdependent headings: (1) Great power interference in the region, that is the politico-military problem, and (2) economic and ecological problem (the interdependence between the two is self-evident. Fleets of the Mediterranean countries and especially of the Great Powers add to the pollution of the sea, If a local or global war erupts -it does not really matter whether its in or outside the region- natural resources of the Mediterranean will be exploited to the full and such an episode will prove to be detrimental to the wealth of the Mediterranean peoples). Leaving the ecology and

future cooperation in this respect to natural scientist, I now intend to dwell on the politico-military problem.

What I mean by this problem does not include political conflicts or disputes among the Mediterranean countries themselves, but the possible reflections of the present state of East-West relations on the region. I think, we are badly in need of an overall, objective and up-to-the-point evaluation. It is hardly necessary to say that this small article is very far from being one. Nevertheless, I believe that truth evolves from the criticism of disputable or mistaken viewpoints.

The present day American foreign policy has two highly interrelated aspects: (1) the strengthening of the NATO defence, and (2) to attain flexibility in the world arena after the Vietnam straight-jacket and Watergate scandal and to eradicate the "ugly American" appearance. The Ford-Kissinger administration had placed a great deal of emphasis on the process of *detente* both in Europe and with the Soviet Union. This fundamental attitude may succinctly be expressed in the maxim "*detente* or nuclear war". With such an understanding, it was not considered worthwhile to use such universal moral codes as the human rights against the Soviet bloc, simply because this action would force us back into the Cold War with all its undesirable consequences, in the course of which human rights would lose its attraction anyhow. Thus, an accepted or legitimate stability, simply *detente*, became the cornerstone of the American foreign policy.

Carter administrations foreign policy, on the other hand, seem to carry certain dangers in this respect with important consequences for the Mediterranean. According to the present administration *detente* has turned into an end in itself rather than a means, and thus had a limiting effect on the overall operation of the American foreign policy. The maxim "*detente* or nuclear war" is not correct, so they say, due to the fact that a strengthened NATO defence line would deter aggression irrespective of *detente*, which is now considered by the American administration as something not static and which should be used to elicit certain changes in the overall Soviet conduct.

These views are based on two presidential declarations, *PRM10* (Presidential Review Memorandum of 1977) and *PD-18*

(Presidential Declaration of 1978), and other official declarations. According to the former, the Soviet Union has attained global strategic equilibrium and even superiority in the European theatre. The U.S. still maintains, however, superiority in the fields of economy, technology, political stability and political influence. The Carter administration seems determined to utilize its superiority in these fields through certain moves as witnessed in the ban of exports to the Soviet Union, missile improvement and precision, the use of human rights as a political weapon and the efforts of the U.S. to improve relations with certain Middle East and Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, according to the *PD-18*, the U.S. has important responsibilities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Basra. In order to live up with these responsibilities, the following courses must be taken:

- The mobility of the forces in the region has to be increased.
- Traditional forces confronting the Soviet Union have to be strengthened.
- *Rapprochement* with certain Mediterranean and Middle East countries in the face of diminishing Soviet prestige in the area following the invasion of Afghanistan has to be realized.

Viewed from the Soviet side, the most important problem is the conflict with the P.R. of China. In order to deal effectively with the Chinese from a point of strength, the Soviet Union should not be in a defensive and weak position in Europe. Superiority in Europe would also strengthen the Soviet Union in dealing with future developments in the Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean and the Gulf of Basra. In order to attain such a state of affairs, it would be to the Soviet advantage to augment her military position as witnessed in the invasion of Afghanistan. Such are the broadlines of the conflict between the global strategies of the two great powers. There is no need here to dwell on the justifications of the policy of a certain power, but I like to stress the historical fact, put forward by Mr. Kissinger, that every great power is bound to use military superiority in its foreign policy.

Viewed from this context, there seems to be, between the two great powers, three areas of contention which also include the Mediterranean region. 1. The NATO area covering the northern Mediterranean. 2. The Southern and Eastern Mediterranean area. 3. The Horn of Africa, southern entrance of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Basra. This particularly sensitive area would have tremendous impact on the Mediterranean region in time of an acute crisis.

Thus, it becomes self-evident that the Mediterranean is the most important and strategic region in the world, and the intercepting point in the previously stated areas of contention between the two powers. This danger along with the strategic importance of the region does seem to be a prolonged one, unless some undesirable catastrophe such as a global war occurs which would radically alter the overall international system. Thus, the *danger* of foreign intervention in the Mediterranean has to be considered as being transformed into a common and long-term *problem* which should be solved on a common platform by realistic, indigenous, patient and mutually accepted endeavours starting from the most fundamental issues.

The aim of the Mediterranean countries must be to try to liberate as much as possible the European *detente* and regional politics from the fluctuations in the relations between the Great Powers. I am well aware that this is easier said than done. But, if a step-by-step approach is adopted and answers to the following interrelated questions, are sought, certain aspects of the problem would be clarified to a certain extent: What is to be done? Why is it to be done? How is it to be done? With what measures is it to be done? If these questions are not answered realistically, then Mediterranean peace, security and cooperation would only be a fabric of sentiment and a vague aspiration with a few threads of academic satisfaction woven in.

What Is To Be Done?

1. The long-term goal of the Mediterranean countries seems to be to safeguard their regional interests *vis-à-vis* the global interests of the Great Powers.
2. It is imperative for the Mediterranean countries to cooperate starting from the most fundamental and imminent com-

mon problems such as ecology and enlarge their fields of cooperation so as to cover the highest political aspirations.

3. The European *detente* should be augmented and extended for the purpose of making it as immune as possible from the nature of relations between the Great Powers.

Why Is It To Be Done?

Firstly because European countries will be unable to maintain their present political stability and economic wealth in the *milieu* of contention and instability in other parts of the globe. Thus, the future of *detente* is closely linked to its extension. And secondly, the Soviet Union and the United States, global powers as they are, cannot be expected to cooperate constructively in Europe while contending in the Middle East, south Asia and Africa. Thus, if becomes evident that *detente's* extension to the Mediterranean would both liberate it from the monopoly of the Great Powers and strengthen it in its origin, that is in Europe.

How Is It To Be Done?

This is an open and gigantic question with no quick and easy answers. Differing viewpoints and a multitude of answers should be taken into consideration in the Mediterranean conferences. All I want to pinpoint here are the prevalent differences in the Mediterranean region.

Detente is institutionalized in Europe. There are eight Helsinki-participating and eight non-participating countries in the Mediterranean. Thus, half of the Mediterranean countries are outside the process and institution of *detente* in Europe.

The second major division is the fact that most of the countries within the process of *detente* are industrialized while most non-participating are not, with all the contradictions between the two sets of countries.

The third major division is that *detente* in Europe originated from and still rests on bloc politics. Thus, most of the participating countries are bloc countries, whereas the southern littoral countries are mostly non-aligned. Thus, we have to accept the fact that there are many racial, cultural, political and

economic divisions in the Mediterranean. I think this variety is only natural and it is even better to accept them as they are. Because richness in every field of life stems from variety and cooperation, by definition, includes diversity.

Taking these observations into consideration, the proposed *Mediterranean Detente* has to have a different content than that of the European one with certain parallels in principles. Furthermore, the *Mediterranean Detente* has to accommodate itself to non-alignment on the one hand and to the New International Economic Order on the other. In this respect, economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the Mediterranean peoples should be the common aim.

With What Measures Is It To Be Done?

Three possible courses of action comes to mind: (1) Starting the process of a *Mediterranean detente*; (2) to organize more frequent meetings embracing all Mediterranean countries on the Valetta line, and (3) to insist on the present course of action: Observation of the *detente* process by the non-participating countries.

On the background of present observation, the best course of action is the first one. This is to open the door to a future *Mediterranean Detente* parallel to but independent of the European one.

It is desirable that the Mediterranean countries start from the most fundamental and easily identified fields of cooperation. The common and imminent problem, ecology seems to be a good starting - point. But, ecology is generally understood as pollution and considered as exclusive concern of the developed countries, whereas it has three important aspects which highly deserve our diligent attention: (1) excessive consumption, (2) pollution of the environment due to uncontrolled industrialization, and (3) population growth. To start cooperating in the field of ecology with such an understanding could also be a good starting in the field of ecology with such an understanding could also be a good starting-point in alleviating sharp contradictions between the industrialized and developing countries of the Mediterranean and thus between the exploitation and protection of nature. With its rich natural resources and beautiful nature,

Mediterranean should be the first region for this unprecedented and constructive and progressive experiment.

Another fundamental field of cooperation is to cultivate further understanding among the Mediterranean peoples. The best course of action is to try to create a common consciousness about common problems confronting the region. Establishment of a *Mediterranean University* will be a most appropriate action towards this goal. As an initial step, the creation of a Mediterranean Summer Centre for senior students of international relations, international law, public administration and economy would serve as a meeting ground for the Mediterranean youth. Such a centre which will eventually develop into a university, may be financed by the littoral countries and the meeting place may revolve annually among them. Together with education, furthering of understanding among the Mediterranean peoples would be precipitated by a Mediterranean News Agency.

In short, with a definite consciousness of the common political, economic and ecological problems confronting the Mediterranean countries, step - by - step approach starting with cooperation in the ecological and economic fields, the establishment of a Mediterranean University, would help create a *Mediterranean Detente* parallel to but independent of the European one, is the best course of action.

In the second half of the 20 th century humanity as a whole face serious and long -term problems and our region is no exception. Our high level of knowledge brought about by available scientific data and the value systems of our modern world force us to cooperate in the solution of these problems. Because it is much easier to find solutions in a smaller scale, Mediterranean cooperation must be our first aim. And, I risk repetition in stressing the point that national, religious, lingual and cultural differences among the peoples of the Mediterranean who are presently organized within various political entities, should in no way hinder the common search for solutions to the problems which we are imminently facing.