

## **What do we actually want when we want peace? [1983]**

Spinoza, a remarkable though in many ways deviating philosopher, in spite of all the peculiarities of his thought, has retained up to this day a considerable relevance, especially as a political thinker. It is symptomatic, that a man who still carried in his vivid subconscious the suffering of his family, ancestors and countrymen which was the outcome of political and religious repression and had forced his family just as it had forced many others into emigration, can express in such a significant way the ambiguity of the reality of „peace“ and the ambiguity of the human relationship to this reality. According to Spinoza, there is not anything more miserable than the „peace“ which is nothing more than enslavement and barbarity, and the apathy of those who have been subjected. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between miserable peace and real and genuine peace. When today's participants of peace manifestations and appeals emphasize that we are living in a new situation where maintaining peace has become a condition necessary to the survival of the human race (which, of course, in this generality is certainly true), they begin to deviate in their statements that every peace (and that includes Spinoza's „miserable peace“) is better than war. The logical error (of those who are unaware of it) and the outright sophism (of those who exploit it as a propaganda trick) consists in the fact that here the future is silenced, indeed ignored. Peace is spoken of—but no one says toward what such a peace is leading. That is to say, there exists a circumstance here which has essential importance for us all, for all mankind: „miserable peace,“ false peace, illusory peace leads to war. We could rephrase the old slogan: if it is war you want, then prepare false, miserable peace.

As a Jew, Spinoza is deeply grounded in old Jewish traditions, and it was from them as well that he draws the emphasis on the ambiguity of peace. The sceptic writer of Ecclesiastes knows of the importance of the temporal and historical context: „For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.“ (Ecc. 3:1). And in this sense, there is a time for loving and a time for hating, a time for fighting and a time for peace. (Ecc. 3:8). The prophet Jeremiah turns upon the leaders of his people with the scathing criticism: „From the prophet to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there is no peace.“ (Jer. 6:13-14). There are Christians who do not refrain from ceaseless declensions of the word peace in all its cases and who go forth with this aim to conferences and congresses, but who forget (or else do not want to see that Jesus himself understood very well how problematical all talk about peace can be: „Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.“ (Luke 12:52). Likewise Matthew 10:34-35: „Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword, for I have come to set a man against...“ We even find such a harsh formulation that it startles us: „I came to cast fire upon the earth, and would that it were already kindled.“ (Luke 12:49). From all this it is obvious, that in spite of all the high estimations of peace, there is constantly sharpened awareness that peace is not the most important thing, that there are higher criteria and more significant values, and that every peace cannot be unequivocally justified, especially not that peace which comes at any price. Parallel with this goes the awareness that not even the preservation of life is nor can be the ultimate thing for anybody. „Whoever seeks to save his life shall lose it.“ (Luke 17:33).

What then is real and genuine peace? Out of what does it proceed? How can it be attained? Here once again the old Israelite tradition has clear answer: above all is justice and righteousness. „Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness quietness and trust forever.“ (Is. 32:16-17). There is only one way to real and genuine peace; that is, to the peace which leads to peace (and therefore means peace and security forever) and not to some kind of false, miserable peace which leads to war (in all its forms) and which is therefore only something ephemeral and essentially an illusion of peace. According to my judgement, this attitude is precisely represented by every person who insists on the upholding of the law and the equality of all citizens before the law, who insists on the respecting of the human and civil rights of every person and citizen—and that means everyone

who confirmed his agreement with the fundamental declarations of Charter 77 by adding to it his signature. We are not nor can we be for just any kind of peace, but only for that peace which is based on justice. The question of peace is above all the question of justice, for where there is no justice, there is no peace, but only preparation for war. The person is mistaken who thinks that he can evade war by achieving miserable peace. And when he demonstrates for such a peace at mass rallies and when he speaks in order to convince the greatest number of people that such a miserable, false peace must be won because it is certainly better than no thing, better than no peace at all, then he becomes the seducer of the people. Because that kind of peace is not better than war, for it in fact equals war, since it is headed toward it more rapidly than any war plan, since people are able to protest against concrete plans for war, but who would dare to protest against peace, even though it be false? Peace has become a magic formula: people believe that if they cry out for peace, they will ward off war. Who can find enough courage to tell them that this blindness is playing into the hands of preparations for war? Who could stand up to the accusation of being a war-monger? And who can find a sufficiently critical objectivity in order to see in a true light that the peace everyone is talking about and on which everyone is basing their hope, is false, miserable peace—one that leads to war?

Obviously, this is not intended to cast doubt on true and authentic peace, but only to emphatically remind us that we are living in world where it is extremely difficult to differentiate true values from pseudo-values and anti-values which merely outwardly resemble and live off of their good reputations, gaining ground and position by pretending to be something they are not. And it is a question not only very much to the point which stands at the forefront of our consideration, but also a question of utmost necessity if we are to orient ourselves in a political affair so significant and more and more in jeopardy like the matter of peace on our planet. To put it more precisely: what is involved is the dual direction of a critical interpretation which strives to clarify the character of peace activities. On the one hand, it is important to analyse the real subjective intentions of those who are appealing for peace. Regardless of the fact of whether or not we should have resisted the Nazi challenge with armed force, it is altogether clear that the challenge of a Czech politician would have had an entirely different character prior to Munich calling for a peaceful solution of disputes and tensions between the Czech nation and the local German minority and even with Hitler's Germany, from the appeal of some famous German political writer for an end to political provocations in the Czech border lands and an end to war preparations and military threats addressed at Czechoslovakia. In those days, both would have been labelled by the majority of their fellow citizens traitors. The motives for peace in both cases were necessarily different.

However, the difference in such a case would not be limited just to subjective motives, but would involve intensely disparate social and political situations in both countries, especially the greatly diverse conception, evaluation as well as actual relationship to so called „objective“ historical moments and „real“ deployment of force both within the countries standing before confrontation, as well as in Europe and the world. Beside the criticism of real but subjective motives for striving for peace, it is necessary to take into account the actual political situation, in relationship to which even the sincerest peace activity can show itself up as uninformed, wrongly-oriented and naive. In contrast to that a sober, realistic, even cynical view of things can appear in the proper analysis and later from a historical distance as right, or at least relatively the most right. I often recall the case of a Czech newspaperman. who absolutely conformed to the German occupation regime. After the war he was condemned and sentenced to death. I had an opportunity to acquaint myself a bit (through family members with his motivations and his view of the situation, which later took him all the way to the gallows. He figured that Germany would win the war and that it was necessary to do everything possible so that the nation could survive this catastrophe. Of course, historians refuse all attempts to say „if only...“ but it is generally known that it would have taken only a little more and still during the course of the war Nazi Germany could have been the first to drop the atom bomb and thus have decided the result otherwise. The Czech journalist-collaborator in that case would not only not have been executed, but eventually would have been judged differently. The moral element of his

motivation would have undoubtedly remained the same in many regards, but his motives of a political character would have been to a broad extent justified.

The provocativeness of the previous example was intentional. If, in fact, what faces us is a fatal threat to all mankind or at least to entire nations, then we must rid ourselves of all prejudices and clichés and habitual schemata and look critically behind every mask. There where real peace is involved no agitation can help, but only sober, accurate and all-round responsible thinking, which doesn't simplify reality and doesn't want to see it or present it as black-and-white. And so let us at least indicate by some examples—conscious-of their incompleteness—some of the aspects of the peace question, as it is posed today in concrete historical conditions and in the context of global politics, but also in connection with the diversity of the internal sides of life of individual societies and nations.

The present efforts for peace are particularly concentrated with all intensity on the problem of nuclear disarmament. Certainly this is understandable, since it is indeed nuclear weapons which threaten masses of millions, and not just in the moment of their employment, but long after as well, in the decades to follow, with the results of radio-active contamination of the entire environment of extensive portions of the earth's surface. But in spite of all this, this emphasis is still profoundly problematical: does it mean that the world should return to the ancient methods of war which were not so inhuman? Are we only after, or at least primarily after, resistance to certain forms of war but not to all war as such? Is it possible to take seriously efforts for peace which are not concerned with revealing and disposing of the actual causes of the origins of wars but with some kind of moderation of their form and course?

Although exact information is top-secret, and although because of this one is limited to rough estimations, it is possible to assume that more than 90% of humanity on our planet are threatened by nuclear weapons already produced and prepared for use in both of the most militarily powerful states of the world, namely in the USA and the USSR. Despite the fact that several other countries belong to the so-called nuclear club and that others today are attempting to gain entrance to it, their importance remains at the present time peripheral to negligible. As a result of this, both the superpowers have had to take upon themselves responsibility for the development of the global political situation. In practice this means that within certain limits they have divided their spheres of interest. They are attempting to carry these divided spheres of interest to ever more remote consequences and in essence to apply them to the whole world. The positive side of this reality is the fact that for practically four decades no regional belligerent conflict has had a chance to expand into a large if not outright global conflagration, even though more than once it has been hot-spots in the most neuralgic parts of the world which have been involved. The negative aspect is the superpowerful, hegemonistic usurpation of the right to control the affairs within their own spheres of interest without regard to the desires and political will of the populations. Consequently, it occasionally entails the flagrant infringement of the sovereignty of other states, military intervention, and the most varied of other kinds of threats of similar interventions. It goes so far that the superpowers treat their allies as vassals, like incompetent politically immature wards. It is necessary to take seriously and with all openness to admit that the efforts at securing peace which would want to separate the problem of peace from the problems of the arrangement of the global situation means no more than an intentional or undesirable distraction of the attention of people from the essential thing (from what is essential for peace). To desire today to secure global peace means more than 90% to want to secure peaceful co-existence of the two superpowers (and most probably in the future there will be more than two). But how should this peaceful co-existence look in order that it be real and genuine peace for the rest of the world as well? Is global peace supposed to mean the division of the world into two parts, where into one will be installed peace in the form of pax americana and into the other pax sovietica? Don't we know what forms these two „peaces“ can take: on the one hand South Korea, The Philippines, El Salvador and on the other Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Poland (and many more on both sides).

In the past few years the idea of nuclear or even universal disarmament has taken hold in Europe—some sort of broadening and radicalizing of the once-discussed Rapacký plan, which was dropped during the course of events. What, in the current situation of the hegemony of the two superpowers, does a disarmed Europe mean? For one thing, the strengthening of the hegemony of the superpowers, and for another, increased pressure of the superpowers on other parts of the world, since it would lead to the decreasing of military means from Europe and their transfer elsewhere. (In this sense, not only the Chinese, but the Japanese as well appear increasingly nervous.) Disarming Europe would mean putting Europe in jeopardy, that it surrender its integrity in relation to the USA and the USSR and that at the same time it would be putting the danger on the shoulders of other geopolitically important regions. It would be a solution not just for Europe privately (that is, in relation to the global situation irresponsible) but also for Europe itself catastrophic. Sooner or later it would lead either to a permanent division of Europe or to the domination of one of the superpowers, hurling all of Europe into the power-sphere of one of them 7geopolitically most probably the Soviet). But can we count on this being the most dependable way toward peace? Either we can trust both of the superpowers to avert global conflagrations in the future, and hence mass demonstrations for peace are unnecessary. Or else, we cannot trust them and the question remains why should we think that the disarmament of Europe would mean a step toward peace instead of a step toward war?

Besides the global political aspects of the problem of peace, there are as well „internal“ aspects, that is inner-societal. Peace is not today nor ever has been only an affair between states, but always between the rulers and the citizenry (population) as well. Internal social antagonisms and tensions present themselves as significant roots of belligerent conflicts. On the one hand, war is often a popular „venting“ of inner-societal troubles. (The economic crisis after WWI and the economic decline of defeated Germany and the societal difficulties connected with it were among the most significant causes of the orientation of Hitler's Third Reich toward war.) On the other hand, inner-societal tension can become a signal for an attack from outside for it indicates the serious weakening of the defensibility of the country. (The Nazis took utmost advantage of the weakening of Czechoslovakia by internal nationalistic disputes, which they intensively helped to expand from without.) Former experience can teach anyone who is willing to be taught that preserving peace depends much less on the number and type of weapons produced and ready for use than on the internal situation in the countries which have those weapons at their disposal. Wars are seldom started by states internally united. As previously stated, peace is the fruit of justice. Every state where internal „order“ is based on the infringements of rights and justice, poses a threat to peace. The greater or more powerful the state, the greater the danger. Therefore inner-societal unity of both superpowers plays an eminent role in consideration of chances for peace. Nothing could offer a more convincing testimony to the orientation of the current American president toward war or at least to the threat of war than his extensive suspension of the most varied of social programs initiated by former presidents (primarily those of Johnson who was the most active in this regard). On the other hand, over and over new waves of repressions arise in the Soviet Union which afflict by no means just a small group of „dissidents“ but entire social or national or religious groups of the population. Such interventions as in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, the prolonged intervention in Afghanistan or lately the „internal intervention“ in Poland testify to the existence of the hazardous disunity with serious explosive moments within both the Soviet society itself and the entire socialist block. These affairs must become and forever remain an integral part of the thematic of peace, that must be pursued by every society, movement and congress which truly takes the question of peace seriously, which does not want by agitation and propaganda to conceal the heart of the matter. The purpose of the selected examples has been nothing more than an attempt to point out that the question of peace cannot be reduced simply to the problem of disarmament (and surely not just in only one area of the world) nor to the problem of temporary transfer of the beginnings of a heated conflict (no matter how loudly „eternal peace“ is spoken of). Genuine peace poses a complex task for humanity, and all of its components must be called by their real names. At the same time it is obvious that it is all too easy for Soviet politics to be criticized by the United States or for

the countries of the Soviet block to criticize the politics of America. The real weight of peace can be manifested only there where criticism is proportionately balanced on both sides; that is, where the object is just as much one's own government as the government of the other side in this divided world. And there where peace movements will not remain at simplistic formulations and slogans, but where their attitudes and purposes will rest on thorough and all-round analysis of both international relations and trends in global politics as well as of the internal social, political, cultural, spiritual, and moral situation in individual countries. This is true especially in those countries which with their military, economic and ideological power pose the greatest potential threat to genuine—that is not only external but also internal—peace in whatever society and wherever the country may be on this our planet. Humanity will not live in genuine peace until the character of the last, unjust, repressive regime comprehensively changes. This is true because peace in one part of the world is never safe as long as it is broken somewhere else. We live in an age when peace is possible only when it is peace which is common to all people throughout the world, shared by all humanity. Every injustice and oppression, every infringement on the right and freedoms of individuals and groups is a serious danger to the peace and security of nations and social groups, though they live at different ends of the earth. Our world is becoming more and more one world, no matter how much the superpowers want to divide it between them. Peace obtained at the cost of a country or nation or social group or stratum or at the cost of some area of the world is only an apparent peace, one of illusion, over which only the blind or cynical can rejoice. If you want to know what kind of peace this or that movement is striving for, then ask them who is going to have to pay for that peace and with what.

The reality that peace movements are growing and strengthening can only be welcomed. But the most varied of movements come and go in waves. It is not campaigns which bring lasting results but only well thought-out programs which cannot be forced on anyone and which have their own attraction, independent of ephemeral mass suggestion and auto-suggestion. The peace activist must learn to think wisely politically, like a statesman. It is a necessity all the more urgent when fewer outright professional politicians and statesmen on a high level with qualifications can make themselves heard in current regimes in both the East and West, the North and South. (And this analogically can also be applied to the so-called „Greens.“) Eventually we will see what is decisive is not the number of marchers and demonstrators with their will for peace, but wise and rational ideas how to solve the difficulties and disputes of this world. It is relatively easy to participate in unofficial peace movements in the West. In the countries of the Soviet block it involves a certain personal risk, but aside from a little courage, a lot of other prerequisites are not necessary. However, there is a permanent lack of new ideas, projects worked up with such tremendous imagination that they can present a sufficiently realistic solution to difficult problems. At best demonstrations can prevent bad politicians from realizing some unreasonable or crazy steps. But the actual heart of the entire peace problematic is the increasing assertion of greater social, political, nationalistic, cultural, etc. justice---which means above all the securing of the rights and freedoms of the weak. We cannot reasonably expect the powers and superpowers to enforce greater justice especially in regard to the weak. Just as the purpose of the law is to protect the weak against violence. on the part of the strong, it must also be the purpose of peace efforts to prevent the powers and superpowers from dictating their wills on the less powerful or totally powerless and in this way to rule the world. Be it as numerous as it can be, the peace movement cannot restrain governments from this by force. However, neither do governments rule solely with the aid of force, but they must always rely on some, no matter how small, consent of the majority of its population. Should they take bad or unjust steps against portions of their own society or against other nations or countries, they are usually forced to interpret this in a way acceptable (that means falsely) to those at home and abroad. And just here is an extraordinarily effective weapon of truthful enlightening, thrown upon the situation ... never to put one ideology up against another, but truth against camouflage and lies. The question of peace is closely related to the question of truth. Those who struggle for peace must depend first of all on seeing things truthfully, and only then in the second or third place on their numbers. or their massiveness. So what do we

actually want when we want peace? Nothing so obvious that it would not be necessary to discuss and think about it. On the contrary, our first task is to clarify the answer to this question. It would be a fundamental error were we to opportunely want to warm up our own political soup on the flames of mass protests against nuclear armaments in Europe, whether in the East or West. In principle, thorough analysis and rational arguments based on an approach from our side can be a more substantial and effective contribution to securing peace in the future than the mere resonance and adaptability to moods, which are certainly humanely understandable and in many regards justified, but which are too closely connected to emotions and too little with thinking about basic problems. We will not attain what is necessary without open discussions which aim at the heart of the matter. And this, above all, among ourselves as well as with friends among the peace activists in other countries. If we clarify the principles ourselves, according to which we will be guided, in so doing we will help not only the future unofficial peace movement in our country, but to a certain extent our friends abroad as well.

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(These texts are meant as a basis for discussion prior to the Berlin and Prague peace assemblies.)