

The final Helsinki document approved a set of principles as the basis for international relations: solving international disputes by peaceful means rather than by force or threats; respect for all states' sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign states; respect for human rights; equal rights and the peoples' right to self-determination; the duty of the peoples to cooperate; observing international law.

The US goes back on detente

As mentioned earlier, the US only reluctantly adopted detente. This, however, did not last long. Soon after signing the Helsinki accords, Washington and its media launched a fierce campaign against detente. The US came up with its own special interpretations of the accords. The US daily *Washington Post* described detente as a vague concept, more obscure than any other. To this newspaper, the only reality which merited concern was a policy of forceful positions and the Pentagon's huge budgets. All else was illusions. Some US theorists put forth distorted concepts of detente. It was presented to the developing countries and national liberation movements as synonymous with international harmony, striking deals and mutual concessions between the two blocks. Imperialist propaganda tried to give the impression that the Soviet Union had been lured to the bargaining table; that the conflict between capitalism and socialism had abated; that the hands of the Soviet Union were bound and it could not help the liberation movements under detente.

Some US ideologists view detente as a Soviet-invented strategem, and claim that only the Soviets benefited. Others condemned the West's ill-timed termination of the cold war. They criticized the Helsinki accords as devoid of realism. Later, Reagan, using the same line of argument, described detente as a one-way street from which only the Soviet Union benefited. He called for a crusade against communism and spoke openly of «retaliation», «intimidation», «deterrence» and first-strike nuclear capacity.

After 1977, during the Carter Administration, the US veered towards restoration of the cold war. At the same time, it took one of the Helsinki principles, human rights, as a pretext for meddling in the internal affairs of the socialist countries. This was designed to blackmail these countries into changing

their policies, and as such, meant US disavowal of the Helsinki accords. When Reagan took office in 1981, this trend was escalated; US foreign policy was overtly oriented to fanning international tension. The US escalated its aggression and interference in other countries' internal affairs; it launched military interventions and encouraged civil and regional wars.

Reagan raised the banner of confronting the Soviet «danger», the necessity of gaining strategic superiority, protecting «democracy» and fighting «state terror». These slogans were raised to justify a more blatantly aggressive, militaristic US strategy. In practice, this meant a denial of detente and a return to the cold war, the escalation of armament, new nuclear missiles, etc., to upset the international military balance.



The Rapid Deployment Force, created under Carter, was institutionalized as the US Central Command with a scope of operations covering nineteen countries and a vast area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf. The US declared its readiness to send troops to any spot of the globe to protect US vital interests if these faced imminent danger. To further the strategy of swift, direct military intervention, the US has acquired new bases and facilities, established strategic cooperation with pro-imperialist regimes, and initiated new military cooperation treaties. This policy led to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and the invasion of Grenada. These aggressive acts combined to poison the international atmosphere, bringing the world to the verge of a nuclear holocaust.

Blackmail as a means of foreign policy

The orientation of the Helsinki accords showed that economic cooperation should be the basis of detente. Following the conference, a number of agreements were signed between the socialist European countries and the capitalist ones, for long-term technical, scientific and economic cooperation. The Soviet Union signed agreements with virtually all European countries. As a consequence, its trade doubled over the last ten years. It is worth mentioning that the socialist community's orders for goods produced in capitalist countries, provide jobs for more than two million workers in the countries that were party to the Helsinki accords.

When the US reasserted its confrontation policy, it resorted to the use of economic blackmail in order to wrest concessions from the socialist community; otherwise the US would not lend credibility to the socialist countries' peaceful policies or observe detente. When the US failed to wrest concessions from the socialist community, it resorted to imposing economic sanctions and trade embargos against the Eastern European countries, and even on occasion against the western ones. This is a blatant violation of the Helsinki accords which forbids the use of trade as a means of achieving political ends. The US did this even though these measures had adverse effects on US economic interests. For instance, the US grain embargo against the Soviet Union cost US businessmen 22 million dollars. The US imposed sanctions on the Soviet Union and the western European countries that had joined it in a project to transport gas from Siberia to western Europe. Five months later, these were lifted after failing to make the cooperating countries halt the project.

Along the same lines, the US Congress failed to ratify the SALT II agreement, and trade agreements were suspended with the Soviet Union. When all these measures proved futile as a means of pressure, the US abandoned detente and the spirit of the Helsinki accords altogether and escalated its hostile campaign against the socialist countries. At the same time, the US continued its military build-up, culminating in the declaration of the Strategic Defense Initiative for the militarization of space.