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Arms Trade Schizophrenia

The United States Control and Disarmament Agency recently published a report entitled "World Military Expenditures and Arms Trade 1963-1973". It covered 136 countries and put the global spending on armaments in 1972 at about \$ 197 bn. For 1973 it gave an estimate of \$ 241 bn (all figures in constant-value dollars of 1972). Over \$ 2.5 trillion has been raised for military "security" since 1963; and yet, despite these maddening sums, it appears from the report that the real growth of international armaments expenditure has slowed down. In 1969-72 it rose at a *lower* rate than in 1963-66 or 1966-69.

Oddly enough the developing countries, taken together, form an exception. Not only does the ratio of arms spending to GNP in these countries draw closer to that in the developed countries, but they have a higher growth rate in this field. This is due to the conflicts in East Asia and the Middle East — in Latin America, Southern Asia and Africa the outlay for armaments was "relatively modest", says the report. For the Latin American states for example it is estimated at 2 p.c. of GNP or even less in the period mentioned. The number of soldiers increased in the developing countries nevertheless, from 10.7 mn in 1963 to 15.6 mn in 1973, whereas it declined in the developed countries from 10.1 to 9.8 mn.

The report reveals other interesting figures. The exports of arms rose world-wide from \$ 4.4 bn in 1963 to \$ 8.7 bn in 1973. Nearly \$ 58 bn worth of arma-

ments were traded internationally in 1964-73. The industrial nations imported nearly \$ 20 bn of arms and the developing countries \$ 38 bn. The biggest armaments supplier in 1973 was the USA with \$ 4.7 bn, followed by the USSR with \$ 2.4 bn, France (\$ 450 mn), Great Britain (\$ 315 mn) and China (\$ 182.8 mn).

With so much hunger and misery in the world the observer of the contemporary scene may well regard these figures as a symptom of schizophrenia, especially in the poor and poorest developing countries. One need only think of the arms which are sent to Pakistan as well as to India, speeding the arms race in the sub-continent and rendering Indo-Pakistani relations even more explosive.

The arms suppliers can of course draw up a good case in support of their actions. The USA for instance made repeated attempts after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 to obtain Soviet agreement to the limitation of arms deliveries to Israel and its Arab neighbours. Moscow turned them all down, and the Soviet armaments supplies to Iraq were one of the reasons for the vast US deliveries for the rearmament of Iran and the arms race in the Middle East. Had the USA refused to supply arms, the armaments race on the Persian Gulf would perhaps not have been halted. The only result might well have been to cause Iran and Saudi Arabia to turn to France, England and perhaps the Soviet Union. That would have lessened the US influence in the area since the states concerned

would no longer be dependent upon spares and replacements from the USA. There is also the point that large arms exports allow progressively more modern weapons to be developed and lower the unit costs for the supplier's own army. This argument holds good for France and England as well. They want export orders for their armament industries not only as a means of paying their oil bills but in order to make sure that these industries survive.

Years ago the huge US arms exports already aroused the ire of Congress which, leaving the "arms grants" of \$ 1.5 bn to Israel during and after the 1973 war aside, made sharp cuts in the supplies of "gift arms". The Congress has so far no influence on arms deliveries for cash which any country with ready funds can obtain, while the "gift arms" are sent mainly to allied countries and designedly promote the security and foreign policy interests of the USA. The American press is now astir and coming out in support of Senator Edward Kennedy who proposed a six-months moratorium on all arms deliveries to Gulf states not expressly approved by Congress. One can only wish for the success of these efforts for all historic experience suggests that the possession of arms is a standing invitation to military adventures — and for such there is surely no need in this our time when there are so much more useful outlets available for money in a world in which hunger and misery still have to be overcome.

Hubert Höping