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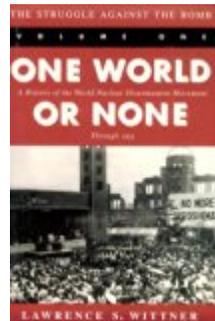
in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Lawrence S. Wittner. *The Struggle against the Bomb, vol. 2: Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. vii + 641 pp.

Lawrence S. Wittner. *The Struggle against the Bomb, vol. 3: Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. vii + 657 pp.

Lawrence S. Wittner. *The Struggle against the Bomb, vol. 1: One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993. vii + 456 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8047-2528-6.



Lawrence S. Wittner. *The Struggle against the Bomb, vol. 2: Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. vii + 641 pp. \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8047-3169-0.

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Challenge to “Realpolitik”

Lawrence Wittner has created a lasting monument to the world antinuclear movement. His amazing trilogy covers a half-century of history and almost all areas of the world. The scope of the author’s research is extremely broad and impressive. His sources include memoirs of policymakers, documents from the government archives and the archives of various non-government organizations that formed the antinuclear movement, and hundreds of oral history interviews. Besides, Wittner has made good use of the newest scholarly literature on the history of the Cold War and the nuclear race in various countries and regions of the world. I was particularly impressed with the author’s ability to weave together the still sketchy evidence and analysis on the developments in the Soviet Union and the countries of the former So-

viet bloc. Wittner’s trilogy demonstrates how much a hard-working and honest intellectual can do in one select area of contemporary history. In effect, it also demonstrates the power that tens of thousands of intellectuals can wield, once they form an international movement.

The central thesis of the books, stated clearly at the end of *Towards Nuclear Abolition* (vol. 3), is that without the global antinuclear movement led by the educated middle class, primarily liberal intelligentsia, there would have been no nuclear arms control and disarmament talks and agreements among the nuclear powers from 1958 to 1991. Wittner, whose views stem from the ideas of world federalism, is convinced that modern nation-states form a “pathological system” which, if left

to its own logic and devices, automatically generates an arms race. Hence the crucial role of the global anti-war and antinuclear movement: at the times when it rose to world prominence, it changed the policies of nation-states and generated an international pull for arms reductions. Conversely, at the times the movement declined, the unchecked great powers automatically reverted to their traditional policies of seeking national security through military might. Most great powers' governments, at most times, have been dominated by nationalists, devotees of "realpolitik," and callous pragmatists, Wittner asserts. The hawks in these governments reinforced each other through the logic of negative incentives. By contrast, the antinuclear movement gradually emerged as a unique nonaligned international network that promoted gradual reduction of tension through unilateral peace initiatives. The intellectual membership of this movement allowed it to become a unique bridge between governments divided by mistrust, security fears, and ideologies.

The author writes, somewhat defensively, that his focus on the non-government agents and his conclusions are "unorthodox." This raised my eyebrows, I must admit, since the trend in serious scholarship (at least in the Russian studies of which I am aware) is exactly towards more attention to the non-government actors, movements, the oppressed minorities, and their "subaltern strategies," etc. Even the realm of diplomatic history and Cold War historiography has mutated in this direction, to the effect that Wittner's trilogy does not stand in isolation. On the contrary, it can be easily situated within the growing number of works transcending the focus on nation-states and governments. Wittner's last volume, for instance, benefits, conceptually and factually, from the works of Matthew Evangelista and Robert English.[1] Also, simultaneously with Wittner's last volume, Jeremy Suri published a study on the contribution of dissent movements during the 1960s to the rise of détente.[2]

Evangelista and English analyze political and ideological processes as the interplay of domestic structures (states, national elites) and international dynamics and influences. Evangelista (whose book overlaps with Wittner's description of the 1980s) focuses on the rise of informal "trans-Atlantic alliances" among scientists, scholars, and political advisers who became an influential lobbying force inside both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. English devotes his book to the reappearance and surprising rise of "Westernizers" in Soviet policy and intellectual elites. Both authors emphasize the role of ideological influences. English, for instance, attributes "new

thinking" among Soviet officials to the unique confluence of international influences and domestic factors, among them the disintegration of communist ideology. It would have been only fair if Wittner had found a place somewhere in *Towards Nuclear Abolition* to acknowledge the contribution of these excellent books.

Neither Evangelista nor English, however, challenges directly the traditional conceptual hierarchy in international relations: international structures and leadership of nation-states determine policies, international movements only influence it. Suri, by contrast, boldly challenges this hierarchy. In his opinion the distinction between foreign and domestic politics is artificial;[3] numerous participants in the protest movements in the United States and Western Europe, advocates of the "Prague spring" in Czechoslovakia, dissidents in the Soviet Union, and the supporters of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, all shaped history by throwing national policymakers out of balance. Suri asserts that Richard Nixon, Mao Zedong, Leonid Brezhnev, Willy Brandt, and others constructed international détente above all as a response to domestic disorder.

Conceptually, Suri's study should be positioned close to Wittner's analysis, as both works attack the state-centered view of international relations and international security. In another way, Suri and Wittner are on the same page. Both present the détente of the 1970s as a plot by a few world leaders who devised it either to advance their agendas or in response to their perceived danger of nuclear war. During that time the antinuclear movement, writes Wittner, was "in doldrums," the arms race continued apace, and the hawks revived their influence. Suri writes, "Cooperation among the leaders of the largest states discouraged creative policymaking and risk-taking"; it "excluded most advocates of change." [4]

Wittner gives the movement much credit (perhaps too much) for making a pivotal impact on the policies of governments. For instance, he writes, "under enormous pressure from the antinuclear movement, the public policy dam finally burst in the years from 1985 to 1988" (vol. 3, p. 369). It is noteworthy that Wittner's analysis of the dynamics between international movements and national leaderships is more nuanced, persuasive, and well-documented than Suri's. In crucial instances (e.g., the impact of the cultural revolution on Mao's perception of foreign policy and especially the impact of the Prague Spring/domestic dissent on Brezhnev's leadership), Suri does not provide sufficient evidence to support his conclusions. Wittner is more careful to qualify his asser-

tions, and his conclusions are bolstered by numerous sources. Praiseworthy is the author's use of a plethora of documents—both translated and original language—from the Soviet bloc. He also took advantage of the oral history conferences on the end of the Cold War organized by Brown University, as well as the valuable collection of Soviet documents assembled by the National Security Archive at George Washington University.

In Wittner's view, the most important impact of the antinuclear movement was not direct (pressure, demonstrations, political campaigning, lobbying), but indirect. The most notable case was the synergy that existed between the movement and the Soviet leadership, a development largely produced by the *conversion* of the Secretary General himself to the antinuclear cause. I would praise, in particular, Wittner's analysis of the interaction between Mikhail Gorbachev and Soviet reformers, on one hand, and the activists of the antinuclear movement from 1985 to 1988 on the other. He painstakingly describes how Gorbachev and his reformist entourage adopted the conclusions and the intellectual baggage of the nonaligned antinuclear movement. Especially fascinating is his evidence on the crucial role of the antinuclear intellectuals in persuading Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze to remove unilaterally the barriers to the INF and START I treaties (vol. 3, pp. 371-374). Jeremy Stone, Andrei Sakharov, and Frank von Hippel influenced Gorbachev's decision to unlink INF and SDI. Two weeks after talking with them at the February 1987 Forum for a Nuclear Free World, Gorbachev made his dramatic announcement to de-link the INF and START I treaties. But the role of Gorbachev should be better clarified. Wittner contrasts Gorbachev's genuine conversion to the antinuclear cause to Reagan's later contrived conversion (vol. 3, p. 369). But he does not cite the evidence that indicates Gorbachev's anti-militarist and antinuclear slant, and his contacts with the representatives of the movement (or that of his advisers, some of whom had participated in Pugwash meetings), preceded his secretaryship (vol. 3, pp. 223-224). Gorbachev's conversion to the antinuclear cause should be analyzed in the context of Soviet domestic history and Gorbachev's biography.[5]

I found one aspect of the trilogy particularly fascinating. Wittner describes the growing disentanglement of the antinuclear movement from the influence of various state-controlled structures. A good deal of the trilogy is devoted to the struggle of the Soviets to control the antinuclear movement. Wittner's account provides for a wonderful historical irony. Under Stalin, the Soviets invested huge resources into organizing the antinuclear move-

ment. Stalin's successors, especially Nikita Khrushchev, manipulated, at times seduced and at times undermined, the movement, as it fit their interests and tactical needs. During Brezhnev's *détente* they let it languish. But the movement finally acquired "agents of influence" inside the Soviet leadership, including Gorbachev himself. The movement, a target of Soviet infiltration, instead infiltrated the Kremlin itself. How did this happen?

The key component that Wittner ignores is the decline of the international communist movement and ideology after the collapse of Stalin's cult and the Sino-Soviet split. This development enabled the ideas of the antinuclear movement to gradually infiltrate into the communist ranks. Traditionally, communists treated "pacifism" with disdain and posited themselves as ideologically superior to "naïve pacifists." From 1955 to 1962, the Soviets infiltrated and manipulated pacifist ranks without fear of catching this "disease" themselves. By 1980-83 the situation dramatically changed. Soviet agents inside the movement became a burden to the Soviet officials who controlled them. By 1987, Gorbachev ignored the communist voices within the antinuclear movement, who had become an embarrassment. The invasion of Afghanistan and the crisis over Euro-missiles was the turning point, as I recall myself. As a junior scholar at the Institute of the U.S. and Canada Studies of the Soviet Academy of Science, I met with numerous groups of young antinuclear activists in Moscow and was struck by the similarity of our views: we detested communist (Stalinist) orthodoxy and were against the war in Afghanistan. At that time, quite a few reform-minded officials realized that the Soviet military-industrial complex had triggered the crisis through deployment of SS-20 missiles during the 1970s.

I would also like to mention another aspect of *Toward Nuclear Abolition* that contributes to the ongoing debate about the impact of the Soviet Union on the international situation. Wittner's account of the quick waning of the antinuclear movement makes it clear that the bipolar tension of the Cold War was the cause, but also the necessary precondition for the huge scope and ultimate success of the antinuclear project. Since the nuclear threat was the focus of both superpowers' security agenda, it generated enormous fears and energy. Even as the Soviet Union was collapsing, the United States, the sole remaining superpower, unilaterally stopped production of nuclear missile materials and nuclear tests (vol. 3, pp. 437, 441). Yet it quickly became clear that the end of the Cold War doomed the movement to ban nuclear weapons. New challenges and security threats became

non-nuclear. Recent confrontations between India and Pakistan, the agitation over Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction,” and the threat of al-Qaeda’s acquisition of nuclear weapons helped to mobilize conservative and pro-war forces, rather than the dormant antinuclear movement.

Inevitably in such a grand study, there are a few factual errors. Gorbachev wrote *Perestroika* in 1987, not 1985 (vol. 3, p. 371); Stalin died in March, not January, 1953 (vol. 2, p. 23); and Russian elections brought nationalists to power in 1993, not 1995 (vol. 3, p. 453). This all can be corrected in the next edition. I disagree with Wittner’s interpretation that the August 1991 coup in Moscow was provoked by the signing of START I, since more serious events, e.g., the Soviet “loss” of Eastern Europe, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, were taking place by that time. Another criticism concerns the lack of the voices of Soviet hardliners, whose views in opposition to antinuclear movement are presented only through the eyes of reformers.

Overall, however, the trilogy is a very persuasive, balanced, and at times captivating read. Lawrence Wittner

deserves the accolades of historians for filling a major gap in our knowledge about the international relations in the second half of the twentieth century.

Notes

[1]. Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals, and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[2]. Jeremy Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[3]. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[4]. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

[5]. Vladislav Zubok, “Gorbachev’s Nuclear Learning,” *Boston Book Review* (April-May 2000): pp. [6-14]; and Vladislav Zubok, “Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War: Perspectives on History and Personality,” *Cold War History*, 2 (January 2002): pp. 61-100.

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