

Editorial

This has become an age of continual Summit meetings, and therefore, it seems, an age of continual riots.

A large part of the problem is the ascendancy of the doctrine of neo-liberalism, which not only seeks to drive back the influence of States, but which all-too-often imbues statesmen with a very real terror of actually doing anything at all. This is in the highest degree inconvenient when public relations are the elixir of political life.

It has been long understood that Summit meetings were more to do with media presentation than with the cutting of real deals which might change something. So it is of more than symbolic interest that the threat of collapse of the Kyoto process, which might have agreed upon tangible restraints on the causes of global warming, has been the subject of a separate conference in Bonn. In this way, any failure to agree will not undermine the great ones who have assembled in Genoa. On the other hand, any success by the majority can be ring-fenced to protect the obdurate minority. But the penalty exacted by this kind of public relations summitry is that it fosters cynicism in direct proportion to its encouragement of inaction.

The latest Summit, in Genoa, has seen hitherto unparalleled mayhem in the streets, but has generated almost invisible results. Much of public opinion thinks it knew all of this before anything happened: are not all Summits mainly to do with big dinners and extravagant photo opportunities?

Emphasis on cuddly public relations brings scant comfort to the poor, the sufferers from crucifying indebtedness, or many of the victims of pandemics. But cuddliness in the military relations between the United States and Russia will, at first sight, be seen as reassuring. In their remarkable press conference on July 22, both Presidents, Bush and Putin, seemed anxious to allay the rising apprehension, throughout the world, that National Missile Defence in the United States will entail the destruction of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, and indeed, the whole framework of control of nuclear weapons.

Outside the Summit, Mr Putin had speculated about equipping Russia's present missiles with multiple warheads, in order to be capable of blanketing out the technologies of missile defence. But in the Summit, the two Presidents agreed, perhaps, 'to look at the issue of offensive and defensive systems together as a set'.

Outside the Summit, President Putin had, not altogether in jest, proposed that Russia might join Nato. The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had responded by saying that it was 'premature to even suggest' that Russia could be invited to join the Alliance.

Just before Genoa, Putin told the *Corriere della Sera* that continuous Nato expansion to the East was simply prolonging the Cold War division of Europe. Nato joint exercises have just been concluded in Georgia and the Russians have

recently deferred the withdrawal of their garrisons from Abkhazia. Troubles boil and bubble everywhere, and it was never realistic to expect them to yield to out-front diplomacy in Genoa. But inside and outside the Summit, Bush has repeatedly insisted that 'the Cold War is over', notwithstanding any contrary indications. At the same time, the Russians have been telling the Americans that they want respect for their sphere of influence throughout all the territories of the former Soviet Union, while the Americans have been showing the Russians that they are by no means ready to meet this desideratum, as their Partnership for Peace stomps all over it.

Meantime, missile defence questions are not in the least restricted to relations between Russia and America, or even to relations between these countries and China. Missile defence is the militarisation of space, and it represents not only the chewing up of Treaties, but the actualisation of Full Spectrum Dominance, which doctrine threatens everyone, whether opponents or allies of the present American establishment. All those lasers in the high sky will prove far easier to set in orbit than it will then be to sustain peace on earth, when every dissident voice can be zapped at the full spectrum whim of the Lords of dominance.

The secular failure of summitry in Genoa is very much a reflection of the power imbalance, which ranges the greater superpower against all the others, and aborts the prospects of inclusive international agreement on even such straightforward matters as the restriction of carbon and other harmful emissions. If the lesser powers cannot, up to now, join their forces to insist on what we all need, then it becomes all the more imperative that public opinion should assert itself.

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No sooner had the summiteers left Genoa, than the spin concerning missile defence went into abrupt and decisive reverse.

'We have made no principled breakthrough' said Mr. Putin to a meeting of his Ministers in Moscow. 'Nevertheless, there has been considerable progress'. He reasserted Moscow's commitment to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

But over in Washington, on July 24, John Bolton, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States 'will not seek amendments to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in talks with Moscow, because the Treaty is "fundamentally in conflict" with the new US approach to missile defence.'

Mr Bolton insisted 'What we don't want to do is become bogged down in negotiations that could extend indefinitely'.

Meantime, the Pentagon has publicised a series of missile defence testing initiatives which officials have claimed 'could come into conflict' with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty as soon as February 2002. The following April, work will go ahead on the test site in Alaska, which will establish silos for five interceptor missiles by 2004.

For these and other activities, including the development of radars on the

Aegis warships (for tracking target missiles in future missile defence tests, or for completing data from Anti-Ballistic Missile radars in order to track short range missiles), the Pentagon needs 8.3 billion dollars for immediate research and development, all of which implies imminent contravention of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Earlier, on July 21 in Genoa, President Putin had stated that he wanted President Bush to spell out why the United States wished to abandon the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. One answer to his question came from John Bolton three days later. Another, simpler answer is that the Treaty is not consonant with Full Spectrum Dominance.

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