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by
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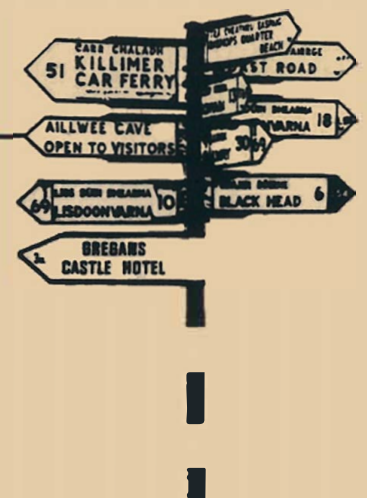
Working Paper No. 14

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First Annual Conference on
Discourse, Peace, Security and
International Society

Ballyvaughn, Ireland

August 9-16, 1987



**The Mikhail and Maggie Show:
The British Popular Press and the
Anglo-Soviet Summit**

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The conference held at Ballyvaughn, Ireland, in August 1987 was the beginning of an on-going international intellectual interchange on topics related to the discourse of peace and security and international society. It will include annual meetings, the second to be held in summer 1988, again in Ballyvaughn. Sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, the conferences are intended to foster general inquiry into these scholarly topics and to stimulate research and teaching that incorporates these perspectives at University of California campuses. This year's series of working papers comprises the writings which seventeen authors submitted to their colleague-participants in preparation for the 1987 conference. Some have been updated somewhat before publication here. Some have been published elsewhere and are reissued here by permission. The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation hopes that these working papers will help to interest even more scholars in pursuing these lines of thought.

James M. Skelly
Series Editor

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The Mikhail and Maggie Show: The British Popular Press and the Anglo-Soviet Summit

In this article I will be discussing how the British popular press covered the recent visit of the British Prime Minister to Moscow for talks with the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, about arms control and other matters of mutual interest. The popular papers under consideration are those also known as the tabloids because of their format. The titles of the national daily tabloids are *The Sun*, *The Star*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror* and *Today*. Reference may also be made to the national Sunday papers, particularly the *Sunday Mirror* and the *News of the World*, and to regional dailies — the *London Daily News* and Liverpool's *Daily Post*, for instance. Most of these papers can be relied upon to support the Conservative party politically, with the exception of *Mirror Group* newspapers which are traditionally pro-Labour. *Today* is sometimes more equivocal than the others about a pro-Thatcher line. In accordance with the topic of the conference I shall concentrate upon the geopolitical significance of the visit and the coverage — their relevance to the prospects for nuclear arms reductions on both sides of the Iron Curtain — rather than comment upon what the visit meant in the context of the British General Election campaign. The article is further restricted to an evaluation of press language in respect of content answerable (often very tenuously) to criteria of truth and rationality, notwithstanding the importance of themes and elements determined by the imperatives of entertainment values, ranging from stylistic features such as punning headlines: — *Mighty Maggie is russian to polls* — *The Sun* 2.4.87, through to an interest in Margaret Thatcher's appearance and sexuality. For instance:

Today, 2.4.87. Chris Buckland

**FINAL TRIUMPH AS ANOTHER RUSSIAN FRONT FALLS
MAGGIE SEALS IT WITH A KISS**

Mrs. Thatcher ended her Russian spring offensive in triumph last night. She is convinced her five barnstorming days in the Soviet Union will give a boost to her election chances.

Wordplay is evident in the writer's predilection for metaphors of warfare — relevant both to Anglo-Soviet relations, to the British general election campaign, and to memory of the second world war and Russia's part in it. Entertainment value comes mainly from this wordplay, especially as it is juxtaposed with, and thus played off against, the photograph of "The Kiss" which almost all of the newspapers carried on April 2nd. Margaret Thatcher is greeted by a young Georgian who is to entertain her in Tbilisi, Georgia, as a part of a folk dance troupe. In most versions of this photograph, Thatcher and her dancer appear on the point of kissing one another on the mouth. The pleasure of this is in the incongruous connection of Margaret Thatcher, statesperson and Iron

Lady, with tenderness, even with sexuality. War imagery underlines that incongruity. The metaphor of war-fighting is not sustained through the rest of the article. It has served its purpose in allowing for an attention-getting intro, overcoming the weakness of the news angle. The angle — that Margaret Thatcher has achieved "a triumph" in Moscow — is weak because it is old news on April 2nd, the last day of the trip, as is the subsidiary theme that the Conservatives' election chances are improved as a result of the visit.

These characteristics in news reporting reflect its nature as a discourse genre. And they may in many cases over-ride the constraints of rationality and truth. Yet these constraints are not irrelevant for all that. Even popular newspapers will at least want to avoid producing overtly contradictory statements in the same text. Their efforts to avoid inconsistency are under review here, particularly (a) the tension arising from the task of celebrating Thatcher's Moscow visit without undermining its readers' prior distrust of the Soviet Union, and (b) the achievement of a rhetoric which rejects denuclearization but officially supports efforts towards nuclear arms reductions.

Broadly speaking, to be rational is to be logically consistent. Obviously not all texts are answerable to considerations of rationality; nor are all aspects of rational texts. Even a serious news item in a serious newspaper can be playful with its headlines. An item in the newest serious daily paper, *The Independent*, is entitled *From Russia with trust*, alluding to the title of the famous James Bond film and Ian Fleming novel, implying that the result of this Russian visit is less than love, and thus that the *Independent's* interpretation is realistic — but perhaps also evoking the possibility of "love" in the same mischievous way as the popular papers. But, to the extent that rationality *is* a consideration, what are its requirements? One might minimally require, for the sake of rationality, the absence of overt contradiction in a text. We would not expect to find an editorial declaring in one sentence *Margaret Thatcher has achieved nothing in Moscow* and in another *It is a great achievement for Margaret Thatcher that she has achieved such a good relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev*. From a theoretical point of view it is possible to ensure the absence of overt contradiction by constructing a string of topically unrelated statements, but thereby sacrificing "texthood" itself, which would be irrational in a different way in any normal context. In any case overt contradiction is fairly easy to spot and therefore to avoid, even in a text which does depend upon intersentential relations and topical continuity. More interesting than straightforward contradiction is intratextual inconsistency, which we may define for the sake of a clear distinction as the case where although there are no contradictions at the explicit level, implications can be derived from a statement or set of statements which conflict with other explicit statements or with implications derivable from them. Thus when the *Daily Express* opens:

DAILY EXPRESS, 2.4.87. Opinion

THE REAL MESSAGE FROM MOSCOW

Measured in terms of agreements made or attitudes changed, Mrs. Thatcher's visit to Moscow might seem to have produced little but it would be simplistic to judge it in those terms.

We infer that, for the *Express*, the visit has produced something of value. It goes on to confirm this inference explicitly:

DAILY EXPRESS, 2.4.87. Opinion

THE REAL MESSAGE FROM MOSCOW

She went to impress upon the Soviet leader both the depth of European misgivings about the Russian predominance in short-range nuclear weapons and the importance that we attach to progress on human rights within the USSR. She has succeeded dramatically.

This emphasis on success is what the introductory paragraph leads us to expect. It would be inconsistent for the *Express* to spell out Thatcher's aims, as above, and then declare *Clearly, she has failed*. It would be quite difficult even to be equivocal about her success in the light of the earlier paragraph.

Attempts to maintain rational order across potential inconsistency may result in texts which exhibit internal tension. Of course, the concepts of contradiction and inconsistency can also be used in referring to relations that can arise between texts (intertextually) as well as within them (intratextually): we say that texts, or people, contradict one another. But intertextual consistency does not fall under the constraint of authorial responsibility for rational discourse, whereby each author or principle is expected to maintain a consistent position.

Mention was made above to the concept of "implication." I am using this in a broad and fairly non-technical sense to refer to propositions, connotations, "meanings" generally that can, in a principled way, be derived from texts either deductively or inductively or by some combination of inductive and deductive reasoning. This view is compatible with the kind of pragmatic approach to language and communication developed in Sperber and Wilson (1986). I take the view that the implications derivable from any statement are indeterminate because they are a function of nonlinguistic knowledge brought to the text by readers heterogeneous in their criteria of relevance and in their access to interpretative frameworks — frameworks with inherent value-positions informing different structures of knowledge and belief —, and because the limits on the number of implications that can be worked out by deduction or induction are limited only practically and not in principle.

Cynicism and Celebration

One group of commentators who had some difficulty achieving internal textual consistency were the cynics, like Julia Langdon writing in the *Sunday Mirror*. The cynics recognised the dominance of a "celebratory" account of the visit, promulgated by the majority of commentators. Woodrow Wyatt's contribution in the *News of the World* has some of the features of the latter:

NEWS OF THE WORLD, 5.4.87. Woodrow Wyatt

MAGGIE'S CHARMS BRING IN A BONUS

I confess to a thrill of British pride watching Mrs. Thatcher striding elegantly around Russia. She has made us count in the world again.

The cynics prefer to see the event as an occasion when someone has been able to "bring it off" so as to generate all the right kinds of excitement and interest:

SUNDAY MIRROR, 5.4.87. Julia Langdon

A STRANGE MARRIAGE OF MINDS IN MOSCOW

It was, for example, one of the most efficient pieces of stage management that has yet been pulled off by those who so skilfully organise the public presentations of our Prime Minister.

These are competing accounts of the visit. Langdon attributes its success to unnamed political stage managers, Wyatt gives the Prime Minister the accolades. But the cynical version is parasitic upon the celebratory one. For it is because, after the visit, Wyatt *can* credibly rejoice in Thatcher's triumph, that Langdon can talk about the success of those who arranged the trip. Success is getting what you want, and the managers of the visit got what they wanted when the *News of the World et al.* published their non-cynical demonstrations of the Prime Minister's Moscow "triumph." The papers were able to say, and with some conviction, that Thatcher looked wonderful, behaved appropriately, and was received royally, in the Soviet Union. It was exactly this, and not praise on their own account, that the British organizers had sought primarily.

Cynics have to acknowledge the viability of Wyatt-type enthusiasm. Langdon again:

SUNDAY MIRROR, 5.4.87. Julia Langdon

A STRANGE MARRIAGE OF MINDS IN MOSCOW

The informal visits were even better, the television pictures were irresistible, the images unforgettable.

This is obviously written by someone who can appreciate what fed the excitement. However, the extent to which she gives others -- Gorbachev, Russian people, the PR people -- the relevant semantically active roles implies a denial of Margaret Thatcher's own contribution to the

successful result. This is how the author effectively "manages" the tension between her appreciation of the visit's success and her explanation for that success.

There are many particular instances of this. Every opportunity to represent Thatcher as doing something, semantically speaking, is phrased to give some other person or entity the role of actor in the sentence or clause, or is contextualised as under someone else's control. Langdon writes of *Gorbachev giving her a total of 13 hours of talks* and refers to *the provision for her to go walkabout*. Another telling example of this is when Langdon mentions, as many papers did in their feature and leader article material as well as in news items, a Soviet television broadcast featuring Margaret Thatcher. Something that made this broadcast eminently "mentionable" was the fact that millions of Russian viewers go to hear the undiluted views of an authoritative spokesperson from the West — including her knowledge of Soviet weapons systems. Now it would be very easy to represent this linguistically along the lines of *Mrs. Thatcher tells the Russians about their own defence capabilities*, as of course it was represented in very many of the popular newspapers. But not in the *Sunday Mirror* — at least, not on this occasion. Langdon's version reads:

SUNDAY MIRROR, 2.4.87. Julia Langdon

A STRANGE MARRIAGE OF MINDS IN MOSCOW

There was Mrs. Thatcher's uncensored 50 minute television interview telling the 180 million Soviet viewers facts about their own defence capabilities.

The process, "telling Soviet viewers facts..." is present, but the semantic actor, linguistically speaking, is not a person but an event, "the interview." And although it is rendered as "Mrs. Thatcher's interview," thereby giving the Prime Minister a prominent role in relation to it, nonetheless the syntax conveys a weaker sense of her part in informing the Russian people about the defences insofar as readers are aware that as an interview it will have featured more people than just her — and she did not arrange it. This kind of shift is typical of the Langdon piece. Thatcher comes across as a kind of cipher who can be relied upon to do her part according to what others have decided, in her best interests, the occasion requires.

Some linguistically-informed studies of press language have focussed specifically upon the semantic roles of participants. Two articles by Trew (Trew 1979a, Trew 1979b) in particular are worthy of note in this connection. Halliday (1985) provides a theoretical framework for this kind of analysis.

The Soviet Threat

There are two particular areas of concern that I want to explore in the rest of this article, bearing in mind the foregoing remarks on the achievement of internal textual consistency. Each relates to popular beliefs which are not greatly at issue in public debate, viz., the fearfulness of the Soviet

regime and the British government's commitment to the goal of reducing nuclear weapons. In both cases there are features of the Moscow visit which call these assumptions into question, so that reporters and commentators have to do some textual work to ensure they stay in place, or risk constructing representations that are less than fully coherent. In the former case it is a bit of a problem that Gorbachev is not a formidable character, in public, and that he does so much to welcome one of his "enemies." In the latter case I think it is hard to handle the fact that denuclearization is so firmly rejected by Margaret Thatcher even as a long-term objective.

This section concerns the first of these two points. In relation to the risk of inconsistency, in talking about Gorbachev and the Soviet regime, consider the following:

DAILY POST, 2.4.87. Editorial

HOME IN TRIUMPH

Mrs. Thatcher's visit to Moscow has been an outstanding success. No other Western leader in history has had nine hours of intimate talk with a Soviet supremo. No other leader has demonstratively brought Christian worship into the open in Soviet Russia or managed, and dared to use the Soviet media to tell the Soviet people a few home truths, about the stupendous scale of Soviet nuclear armaments, for instance.

I find it interesting in this case that the success interpretation of the visit is constructed firstly in terms of achieving a large allocation of the Soviet leader's time — a representation which implies a kind of client-benefactor relation and reinforces the idea of the latter's power in this relationship. Time, a property in Gorbachev's gift, is given, and in consequence Margaret Thatcher's light is brighter. But in the next paragraph her achievements are all but in the face of Soviet state power.

Another telling paragraph in the same column:

DAILY POST, 2.5.87. Editorial

HOME IN TRIUMPH

What has become obvious is that in terms of world wide image building no-one can at present match Mrs. Thatcher's importance and also that she has established a unique relationship, for what it is worth, with Mr. Gorbachev.

What the Post gives with one hand, it takes away, or tries to take away, with the other. It gives us, as an item to feed our nationalistic pride, Mrs. Thatcher's unique relationship with Mr. Gorbachev. But we are scarcely allowed to bask in the glory of that, before the sting in the tail, "for what it is worth," underminmes it, implyn that the value of such a relations ship is not axiomatically high.

All of the popular papers, to be sure, enforce the idea of a special relationship between the two leaders: in the *Daily Mail* it is in the political editor's column where we read of *the chemistry that forged a new future* (2.8.87); in the *Daily Express* the editorial of 2.4.87 ends with an allusion to

the remarkable relationship developed between Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Gorbachev; Woodrow Wyatt in the *News of the World* reports the friendship she built with Mr. Gorbachev made the world safer. Today's political editor (Chris Buckland) is more distanced: *And she aims to tell voters that she has such a good relationship with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that it would be folly to throw it away.* The *Star's* cartoon on 31.3.87 depicts the relationship as a romance whilst on the same day it "resolves" the incipient inconsistency of the idea of a special relationship across profound ideological differences by foregrounding it as a pleasurable paradox in the headline *Best of enemies* which celebrates the extent of their disagreements as part of the special relationship.

If the *Daily Post* is an example of a newspaper failing to come to terms with a changing world view, *The Sun* of 31.3.87 may stand as an example of a newspaper engaging in deliberate remedial work across the gap which begins to open up under its feet:

THE SUN, 31.3.87. The Sun Says

MAGGIE SOCKS IT TO THEM

Under Gorbachev, the face of communism may sometimes put on a smile.

But behind that, the purpose remains the same: in Lenin's cynical phrase, to make "useful fools" of those opponents who trust the Communists and give concessions without demanding genuine concessions in return.

This shows that the gap can be closed by articulating the acknowledged "positive" side of Gorbachev and his regime as mere appearance — the reality behind the appearance remains the same. However, it is no good expecting *The Sun* to be self-consistent over the longer term, that is, from one day to the next, as the editorial column two days later shows:

THE SUN, 2.4.87. The Sun Says

ON HER WAY

Across the vast ideological gulf, she and Mikhail Gorbachev understood, respected and liked one another.

A start has been made on the long road to friendship and peace.

The inconsistency is marked when the two editorials are set side by side. Where is the advantage to Britain, and the moral credit for Margaret Thatcher, in achieving this kind of relationship with a man whose stance towards the West is essentially hypocritical? Surely *The Sun* does not want us to re-cast Margaret Thatcher as a fool or a knave? The difficulty, for *The Sun*, is that Margaret Thatcher herself had not been speaking and behaving in a way that would easily allow it to sustain or elaborate the position it took on the Tuesday. She expressed herself well satisfied with Mr. Gorbachev. To sustain its internal consistency *The Sun* would have to go against the grain of events and the wishes of the conservative publicity managers. *The Sun* finds

it more appropriate to sacrifice consistency and stay in step with the official and dominant line of interpretation.

Like *The Sun* on 31.3.87, *The Daily Express* does not take Gorbachev at his word and at face value in all respects. Over the 4-day period, *The Daily Express* seems generally nervous about the significance of unfolding events, judging from its willingness to address views contrary to the Thatcherite line it adopts as its own. To begin with, it is at pains to tell its readers not to expect too much from the visit — arms negotiations being the province of the superpowers. On 2.4.87 it acknowledges the emotional appeal of the idea of a denuclearized Europe: *Considered in the abstract, it seems a splendid idea, like a denuclearized world.* Then, its line on the human rights/arms control connection is so overt that it draws attention to that connection as a kind of novelty in the international debates, when it says on 1.4.87 *Mrs. Thatcher is right to attempt to link progress in human rights, and on 2.4.87 Unless it does (improve human rights), as Mrs. Thatcher pointed out, we should, out of mere prudence, doubt its willingness to stick to agreements on the crucial issue of disarmament.* These features evoke a speaker trying to argue against someone else's position even if that may occasionally mean acknowledging merit in the opponent's stance.

The strangest moment of this kind, to my mind, comes in the editorial column of 30.3.87:

THE DAILY EXPRESS, 30.3.87. Editorial

ENTER MAGGIE, BANNER-BEARER FOR THE WEST

As she steps into the Kremlin this morning Mrs. Thatcher will surely draw the obvious lesson from the fiasco of Mr. Kinnock in Washington.

It is that there is no point in trying to win over her host to her own ideas. For no amount of lecturing or exhortation will change either the ambitions of Mr. Gorbachev or the nature of the regime over which he presides.

Whilst the main point of these opening lines is of course to rub home a Kinnock/Thatcher contrast that resounds to Mrs. Thatcher's credit, it is nonetheless odd to contemplate the *Express's* opponent in argument here, a person apparently capable of supposing that the purpose of Margaret Thatcher's Moscow visit might be to reform Soviet society by influencing the leader of that society. This figure is evoked again on 2.4.87, when *The Express* tells us that *Nor did she go (to Moscow) expecting to turn Mr. Gorbachev into a card carrying democrat.* Perhaps a more complex analysis of the rhetorical strategy is called for in the 30th March case. For whilst on the one hand it can convey a sense of Gorbachev's intransigence, on the other this is done in a way that evokes the negative features of Margaret Thatcher's public image — her schoolmistressy bossiness. These connotations around the personalities of the two leaders are, therefore, distractions from what is arguably the main point of the thesis, to demonstrate the *Express's* realistic common sense on the possibilities for change.

Nuclear Disarmament

The Conservative government standardly opposes arguments for unilateral nuclear disarmament with claims to be actively in pursuit of multilateral disarmament. Partisans and others take this to be a sincere commitment to the disarmament principle. Critics see it as a rhetorical strategy designed to cover its essential satisfaction with a status quo only to be modified on our side in return for very substantial Soviet concessions. The ultimately cynical view assumes that the arms control/disarmament offers the Conservative Government does endorse are actually calculated to exceed what the Soviet Union is likely to negotiate upon; and of course such calculations have become problematic for the West in recent months as the Soviet Union's bottom line appears unstable.

The Moscow visit gave Thatcher the opportunity to say that she did not agree with Gorbachev on the desirability of denuclearization — with especial reference to the denuclearization of Europe. This rejection has to be squared with her commitment to multilateral nuclear disarmament — a task for the government and for the pro-Tory press, both popular and serious.

If the Prime Minister had supposed that there was mass popular feeling for the idea of denuclearization, then she could, presumably, have embraced it subject to the usual caveats — it should not be seen as a near prospect; it should not be pursued at the expense of national security, et cetera. Such an official position would strain credibility to the limit, because of discrepancies between reality and ideal; the status quo and the ultimate objective. But it would be interesting to see what kinds of language and argument rhetoricians developed in trying to render those discrepancies harmless to the Government's credibility.

No doubt when Thatcher declares she is opposed to denuclearization, she is sincere; and that one of the reasons for making an unequivocal declaration on this point is a desire to be truthful in a context that permits honesty without risk to national security or face. But there are other considerations too. In the first place an "insincere" commitment to the ideal of removing all nuclear weapons from Europe might in the emerging international context develop its own momentum and become an unwanted self-fulfilling prophecy. In the second place there are the strains that such a commitment would place upon the Conservative Government's public discourse of defence, as mentioned above. And in the third place there is the risk of alienating and alarming pro-nuclear opinion in the country, undermining its confidence in the Government.

In resisting denuclearization Thatcher rhetorically sustains her reputation as a strong leader; taking, on behalf of the British people, the position which our national security requires. What is difficult here however is to effect a self-evident alignment of *strength* and *morality*. There is a danger that Gorbachev may seem to have the more virtuous ambitions, thus requiring the British government and its apologists to engage in discursive strategies designed to minimize that

danger. Margaret Thatcher herself responds to the idea of denuclearization by saying that a world without nuclear weapons is a dream — meaning that it is a fantastic idea, utterly beyond belief. It is not like Martin Luther King's dream, a great ambition for our age. It is not a positive though remote aspiration for all nations to work towards. As quoted in the press, what she actually said was:

A world without nuclear weapons may be a dream. But you cannot base a sure defence on dreams.

Without a far greater trust and confidence between East and West than exists at present, a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us.

The source of this quotation is Margaret Thatcher's set-piece speech at the official Kremlin banquet on 30.3.87. Notice that the more specific and perhaps negotiable idea of a denuclearized Europe which had been aired around this time is subsumed into the more general and more abstract one of a world without nuclear weapons; this subsumption contributes something in itself to the "unreality" value that the author is trying to achieve for the proposition underlying this formulation. Only lip-service, and only of the least conciliatory kind, is hereby paid to the sentiment that opposes nuclear weapons as such. It is no doubt the Soviet adoption of an official anti-nuclear ambition which obliges Thatcher to say something on this point; the consequences of paying even this much lip-service remain to be explored.

Notice also that this opposition to denuclearization is specifically linked with another of Thatcher's favourite themes — that of trust. The quotation itself is intrinsically even-handed — East must trust West and West must trust East — but it is not the case that the speech as a whole was even-handed, if we are to believe the press reports. We only hear of what the Soviet Union must do to obtain the trust of the West. It must change not only its ambitions for world domination, but also its internal affairs, particularly in respect of human rights. The word "trust" becomes a keyword that effects a link between the Soviet human rights record and progress on arms control. This is a good argument for the Right as it keeps attention focussed upon the fearfulness of the Soviet Union as manifest in its internal affairs. The leader columns of the *Mail* and the *Express* record their own support for this argument:

DAILY MAIL, 30.3.87. Opinion

A CONTRAST IN WELCOMES

For the real barrier to successful peace negotiations with the West is not the Soviet regime's build-up of armaments but its refusal of elementary freedoms of speech, worship, association and not being imprisoned without a fair trial, to its own citizens.

As long as Russia's leaders sustain such tyranny over the people within their own borders it must be assumed that they would not flinch from inflicting it on others.

Of course Thatcher has other arguments to deploy for retaining nuclear weapons, including the familiar one that they have helped to keep the peace in Europe for over 40 years. But there is some evidence of discomfort with the public face of the Anglo-Soviet nuclear dialogue, perhaps insofar as she can only be, and seem, emphatically pro-nuclear in that context. On her Soviet TV broadcast (extracts from which were seen on British national television on the night of 31.3.87) she quite openly changes the subject:

Please tell me, are you interested in anything else in Soviet, Soviet-British relations, because you have spent such a long time on this. I am interested in increasing trust and friendship. I think that Mr. Gorbachev's new proposals are the most exciting I have heard for a very long time. A more open society, uh, new incentives, restructuring. Look, this is a challenge I think which is fantastic.

Because she takes the pro-nuclear line in the dialogue of her opponents, from Georgy Arbatov to Neil Kinnock can represent Margaret Thatcher as resisting morally desirable changes of policy in international relations. To establish alignment between the claims of strength and the claims of morality upon policy an attempt is made to set a moral objective higher than that of abolishing nuclear weapons. That moral objective is named as "peace." The following quotation is again from the Prime Minister's broadcast on Soviet television:

Nuclear weapons are a deterrent. They are not for use. They have been the most successful deterrent against world war we have ever known. And they have kept this half of the century free from the world wars which disfigured us for the first half of the century. That really is worthwhile. It is peace which I'm after. I don't understand why you concentrate only on abolition of nuclear weapons. It is peace I'm after.

The Popular Press

The popular press have various options, so far as these arguments are concerned: to include or exclude them; to foreground or background them in relation to other themes of coverage; to play around with the balance between strength and virtue, and to indicate support or opposition to some degree of moderation or excess. The choices made from amongst these options, in news items and in columns of political comment, reflect the interpretations that the journalists and editors wish their readers to take of events in Moscow. Interpretations in news coverage are conveyed primarily by headlines and introductory paragraphs, as well as spatial prominence. The significance of the interpretations can be assessed by comparing alternative accounts. Thus, in respect of the speeches made by Thatcher and Gorbachev at the Kremlin banquet, all newspapers on 31.3.87 make Thatcher's speech more prominent than Gorbachev's although in most cases both are reported. The views of the British Prime Minister are more salient to the readers of the British popular press than those of the Soviet leader.

The press can also, in news coverage, amplify particular contents of speeches in reporting them to their readers. The statements of news sources can be amplified by quotation or report, particularly in highly prominent textual positions such as a headline, introductory paragraph or photograph caption. Points reported without benefit of such foregrounding should impinge less on the reader's attention than points given more extensive amplification.

All the papers I have looked at used headlines to convey Thatcher's "toughness" on this occasion — *MAGGIE LAYS IT ON LINE* — *The Star*, *BUT THEY TALK TOUGH AT THE KREMLIN* — *The Daily Mail*, *I DON'T TRUST REDS, BLASTS MAGGIE* — *The Sun*. Even the non-Tory *Daily Mirror* has *THATCHER'S TOUGH TALK AT KREMLIN*. None of these headlines amplify contents of the speech, except the one in *The Sun*, which eliminates in its formulation any niceties or indeterminacies in the original text arising from Thatcher's wish to encourage the reformist policies of her host.

When contents *are* amplified, within the texts, the general argument for nuclear weapons and a nuclear deterrence strategy is not the first choice — except insofar as it is linked with the "trust" theme and the text can be used to foreground that rather than the question of abolishing nuclear weapons. This is what happens in *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*:

THE SUN, 31.3.87. Trevor Kavanagh

I DON'T TRUST REDS, BLASTS MAGGIE

"A world without nuclear weapons may be a dream. But you cannot base a sure defence on dreams.

Without far greater trust and confidence between East and West than exists at present, a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous for all of us."

It was a naked challenge to Mr. Gorbachev to prove that "glasnost" was more than just a slogan.

THE DAILY MAIL, 31.3.87. Gordon Grieg

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU, TOVARICH!

She told her hosts they are not trusted. If they wanted nuclear disarmament, she declared, they had to match promises with performance.

It was the toughest, starkest language the Iron Lady has probably used to voice her suspicions of Soviet military ambitions.

This passage from the *Daily Mail* follows, firstly, several paragraphs on the Thatcher-Gorbachev relationship and then, its most foregrounded element from the Thatcher speech, the news to please those who are glad of the British nuclear weapons — Thatcher again confirms her commitment to it. A long lead-in occurs likewise in *The Star*, but *The Star* chooses to treat first, as

good news, the announcement by the PM that a superpower deal on Cruise was possible. The priority in the *Daily Mirror* is the same as in the *Daily Mail*. In the very first *Mirror* paragraph we are told that the British nuclear deterrent is non-negotiable — and given the anti-Tory position for the *Mirror's* political correspondent, Joe Haines, it is not *obvious* that this is meant to be the "good news" for the British reader. *The Mirror* is anti-Tory but not unilateralist like the official Labour opposition. Therefore it is not able to take full rhetorical advantage of the divergence in views between Gorbachev and Thatcher on the nuclear issue. This is the conclusion I draw from the lack of attention paid by Joe Haines, the *Mirror's* political correspondent to the leaders' divergence of views on nuclear weapons — which would otherwise be a good angle for an anti-Tory paper. It is ignored in the *Daily Mirror's* leader columns as well. However, it is not necessary to be a diehard unilateralist to feel that Polaris/Trident, the so-called "independent" nuclear forces, could be brought in to arms negotiations in the interests of greater global security, and that it's possible to be too "resolutely" opposed to such a development. This may be the reason why *Mirror* readers have their attention immediately drawn to Thatcher's insistence on this point.

The argument against nuclear weapons and deterrence was of course strongly expressed by Gorbachev in his speech of reply to Thatcher — another opportunity for the papers to signal their sense of it as an issue in the East-West debate. Only *The Sun* really takes up this challenge. It is precisely his anti-nuclear stance which is chosen as the principle content for the purposes of headlining and quotation:

THE SUN, 31.3.87. Trevor Kavanagh

BAN BOMB OR RISK WAR

GORBACHEV WARNS MAGGIE

Mr. Gorbachev pulled no punches in his reply to Mrs. Thatcher's speech last night.

The Soviet leader WARNED there could be another world war unless the West picked up his offer to cut the world's nuclear arsenal.

He accused NATO of "blackmail and threat" by insisting on maintaining nuclear forces.

There is, perhaps, some ambivalence in this as to whether nuclear weapons as such are at stake or just the specific details on the table at this time, regarding intermediate forces. But that ambivalence could also be a feature of the original text from which the journalist is working. In other papers where Gorbachev's views on this point are represented it is with less amplification. Thus the *Daily Mirror* omits it from the coverage whilst *The Star* and the *Daily Mail* include it as one point among many on an inside page several paragraphs into the relevant news item — although in both cases the representation is fuller and more revealing than *The Sun*:

THE STAR, 31.3.87. Anthony Smith

"IT'S NO USE LIGHTING CANDLES ..." — MR. GORBACHEV

Mr. Gorbachev said it was a matter of concern that some people in the West continued to assert that nuclear deterrence offered the only way of preventing war.

"It is beyond our understanding how one can heap praise on nuclear arms given the fact that there already exist four tons of explosives per human being on earth, and detonating even an insignificant portion of the accumulated nuclear arsenals would threaten our survival."

In the editorial columns of the popular papers it is not thought necessary to defend nuclear weapons or the strategy of nuclear deterrence. None of them want to explore this divergence of views between Britain and the Soviet Union. *The Sun* defends Thatcher's "tough" position — not the same thing as defending the weapons which are supposed to constitute this nation's military strength. It's a strongly anti-Communist editorial — it is also an editorial in which the rhetoric of morality disappears beneath the weight of the rhetoric of strength:

THE SUN, 31.3.87. The Sun Says

MAGGIE SOCKS IT TO THEM!

The best way of ensuring peace is to convince the Kremlin that Britain and the West are not going to be blackmailed and cowed.

... The enthusiastic welcome for Margaret Thatcher within the Kremlin walls and in the streets of Moscow demonstrated the oldest, most fundamental truth about the Russians.

They respect strength. And only strength.

It is on the following day, April 1st, that the papers have an opportunity to react to the "peace" theme which Thatcher introduces in her broadcast on Soviet television. It appears from the press coverage that this idea was introduced more than once in the interview. One of those occasions, reproduced on British television, was in the "contrastive" context that I described above, where the goal of "peace" was set alongside the goal of nuclear weapons abolition, as an alternative, and as the alternative preferred by the British Prime Minister. "Peace" must have been mentioned elsewhere, however, and those papers which find it an idea worth quoting do not refer to the contrastive point at all.

Thus *The Star's* main item concerns hopes for a superpower Cruise deal. It reports the broadcast in a separate item and the main theme of this concerns the information on Soviet defence she is said to have revealed during the show. Peace is not mentioned. *The Daily Mail* also gives the defence information high priority, whilst finding room, later, to quote "*You want peace — I want peace.*" — without comment. This is not the quotation in which peace is proposed as a more virtuous ambition than the elimination of nuclear weapons. *The Sun's* main

item is about a possible Cruise deal. It mentions the broadcast without mentioning peace. It is in the *Express* that the desire for peace is strongly amplified. Its front page story on Moscow is headlined: *Maggie tells Russians: We all want peace* — and the "peace" theme is pursued through several paragraphs of introduction. The *Express* also tells us that Thatcher got impatient with her questioners' persistence on the nuclear weapons issue. What it does not do is indicate how the Prime Minister connected these matters. It too misses the contrastive point. None of the papers editorialize around the "peace" theme.

The presentational work done by the Right wing press as explored above, whilst being uniformly enthusiastic about the visit in general, is different in significant ways from Thatcher's own rhetorical line. For example, they seem less vulnerable than her to the attack upon the strategy of nuclear deterrence. This would explain why they see no need to amplify the "peace" theme, except, as in the *Express*, as a marker of Thatcher's goodwill. They risk less in directly attacking the Soviet Union than she does, and their loyalty to the Conservative party is apparently not sufficient to make them respect the (limited) restraint she shows. The context for her discourse is, after all, an international one whilst the relevant context for *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, et al. is domestic. Even the pro-Labour *Daily Mirror* cannot take full rhetorical advantage of the explicit disagreement on nuclear deterrence between the British state and the Soviet state; it cannot bring itself to explore the possibility that Gorbachev might have the stronger case here.

However, it is not necessarily a cause of concern to the Conservative Government that the papers which support it are less measured than the Governments' own spokesmen and spokeswomen. This is not to say that the Conservative Government consciously knows and approves whenever the popular papers "hype it up;" I have no evidence whether this is the case or not. but the kind of support which such discourse *ought* to mobilize for Conservative policies is, so far as that party's interests are concerned, none the worse for being shielded from elements in the "official" discourse which might indicate its vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

The tabloids have millions of readers between them and so constitute a very significant element feeding into general knowledge and attitudes, along with the national television channels. Readers of the more serious newspapers disparage the popular press, especially *The Sun*, for their unintelligent, oversimplified, sensationalist, trivializing, stridently partisan and jingoistic populism. It is difficult to defend them against these charges. However, their political influence is an open question; readers may be less than totally vulnerable to *Sun-speak*. So it is important to be clear about the specific character of popular discourse in particular cases; important to understand what it might mean to be addressed in that way.

I have concentrated upon general themes — "peace," "denuclearization" — at some distance from the complexities of the zero-zero option — for a similar reason. These may be more salient to the newspaper reader than details. It is true that they are often formulated at a level of generality that is beyond argument and debate. When Mrs. Thatcher says *I want peace* and the papers quote her, neither intend this to be taken as a seriously debatable statement, as it stands. On the other hand, if it is the case that because of Mr. Gorbachev's access to power, changes in East-West relations and in the possibilities for arms reductions are now conceivable, we might expect to see indications of these changes even in the popular press. Without a detailed examination of press language it is impossible to tell whether the general propositions they produce and reproduce are banalities or if they signify an awareness of and a response to these political developments.

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*These papers also appear in *Multilingua* (January/April 1988).