

*Edited by Leslie Palmier*

# Détente in Asia?

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# DÉTENTE IN ASIA?

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Edited by

**Leslie Palmier**

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# Preface

When in the spring of 1989 the Asian Studies Centre at St Antony's College, Oxford was planning a series of seminars on '*Détente* in Asia?', there were considerable signs of hope for a widespread easing of tensions in several Asian hotspots, but sufficient reason for doubt to justify phrasing the title as a question. Many hopes were quickly dashed by, for example, the suppression of the democracy movement in the Peoples' Republic of China in June 1989, the refusal of the Burmese army to concede power to the democratically elected government, the failure of any genuine warming of relations between North and South Korea to materialise, and the unwillingness of the warring parties in Cambodia to come to a settlement. While the revolutions in Eastern Europe and developments in the Soviet Union were proceeding at a pace that astounded the world, Asia was proving comparatively slow in moving toward new definitions of domestic and international relationships.

As events continued during the period covered by our seminars, from October 1989 through March 1990, the question mark in our title increasingly came to stand for doubt about the abilities of various Asian governments to respond constructively to the kinds of occurrences, and ensuing opportunities, which were transforming Europe. As a result the astonishing changes in relationships between Asia and the superpowers, made possible by the developing *détente* between the Soviet Union and the United States, produced rather muted effects in Asia for the time being, though the long run may prove them momentous.

The seminars were given as these political transformations continued, or were arrested as the case may have been, and they benefited by a great sense of topicality. Now the authors have had time to digest, at least to a degree, this exciting recent history, and to revise their papers accordingly. I think that readers will agree that they retain their compelling freshness.

Our gratitude is due to the authors and to the editor, Dr Leslie Palmier, who convened the series, for their contribution to maintaining St Antony's College and the Asian Studies Centre, with its focus on the comparative study of Asia, as places where informed

opinion can be heard about issues of current and widespread concern and also for making this expert knowledge available to a wider readership.

April 1991  
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