JULY 1982

THE NUCLEAR DEBATE

I

RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN INTENTIONS

BY FRED KAPLAN

THE NATION'S DEFENSE BUDGET IS CLIMBING AT A faster rate than ever in peacetime—13 percent in real terms this year. Even though Congress will no doubt take diffident stabs at the Pentagon's extraordinary coffers, the final result will probably be only slightly less than the $1.6 trillion that Ronald Reagan wants to spend on defense—$180 billion of it on strategic nuclear arms—over the next five years.

There are many reasons for the general approval of this budget, some related to the growing sense of America's insecurity—compared with its status twenty years ago—in a dangerous world. But one reason has to do with a fear that has been spread across the land by a group of extremely hawkish specialists on the Soviet Union—the fear that the Kremlin leadership thinks it can fight and win a nuclear war.

Ronald Reagan believes this idea, and has referred in one press interview to "those monsters" who "have a different regard for human life." Vice President George Bush believes it. So, according to many of their published statements, do Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of State Alexander Haig. So does the Committee on the Present Danger, an anti-détente organization founded in 1976, which includes the President as well as many highly placed members of the Reagan Administration. One of the leading popularizers of the idea is Richard Pipes, a former Harvard professor; he wrote a highly influential article in the July, 1977, *Commentary* called "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War," and he is now the senior specialist on Soviet and Eastern European Affairs in the National Security Council.

The politicians and academics who have made this idea almost commonplace claim that proof of Soviet intentions can be found in the officers' manuals and military staff journals published in the USSR. They go on to say that the American military establishment is ill equipped to wage World War III against so determined an enemy; that Americans, unlike the Russians, tend to think of nuclear weapons as instruments for deterring a war, not for fighting one; that the idea of "winning" a nuclear war strikes most Americans as absurd. One prolific defense writer, Colin Gray, of the National Institute for Public Policy, has even suggested that there is something about the American "national style" that precludes our thinking about fighting a nuclear war.

Yet such a perspective distorts the Soviet as well as the American position. These analysts try to have it both ways. They dismiss the less aggressive Soviet literature—statements by President Leonid Brezhnev and the like—as propaganda designed to delude the West into a state of complacency, and point to the more technical military literature, where truth presumably lies. To draw contrasts between us and them, however, they quote selectively from public statements by American Presidents and secretaries of defense and even academic arms-control specialists, never delving into the more arcane military manuals whose Soviet counterparts they regard as reflecting the genuine Party line.

This sort of methodology is not merely a case of polemicists trying to have it both ways. It indicates the deeper flaw of failing to draw the fundamental distinction between doctrine and military science. Dimitri K. Simes, a Soviet emigré and scholar, spelled out this distinction very clearly in a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed article. Soviet doctrine, he wrote, "is formulated jointly by political and military leaders. It defines basic strategic goals, suggests ways and means to achieve them through the force of arms, and distinguishes between acceptable and prohibitive costs and risks. And it unambiguously states that nuclear war is unwinnable and should be avoided."

On the other hand, Dr. Simes continued, "the Kremlin simultaneously assumes that the tragic possibility of such a confrontation cannot be excluded." And so, military science "addresses the best way to organize forces to enhance

Fred Kaplan, who writes frequently about defense issues, is at work on a book about nuclear strategists.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDRZEJ DUDZINSKI

deterrence and to fight a war should deterrence fail. This science is developed exclusively by the uniformed military; it deals with practical problems of waging war—not with the question of whether to initiate a nuclear exchange."

The same distinction applies to the United States. If the scholars who have quoted so copiously from the Soviet military literature bothered to venture into the vast volumes of field manuals, officers' handbooks, official statements, and other documentation concerning their own country's military science, they would come to different conclusions about what constitutes uniquely Soviet military intentions. For perusal of the American literature shows that American officers also think and write a great deal about fighting and winning a nuclear war, that they have done so for many years, and continue to do so.

IT IS HELD BY MANY AMERICAN SOVIETOLOGISTS THAT Soviet military literature makes no distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons, and that this demonstrates incontrovertibly the dangerous nuclear tendencies of the USSR. The most frequently quoted statement in support of this thesis comes from Marshal V. D. Sokolovskiy's 1962 classic, *Military Strategy*, a third edition of which was released in 1968. Sokolovskiy says that "the essential nature of war as a continuation of politics does not change with changing technology and armaments."

However, few of the Americans who allude to Sokolovskiy seem to have glanced at the U.S. Army's 1971 field manual *Tactical Nuclear Operations*, the second chapter of which begins:

> The introduction of tactical nuclear weapons onto the battlefield neither negates the principles of war described in FM 100-5 [the basic Army field manual] nor causes the development of new ones. The intensity of a tactical nuclear conflict emphasizes the importance of these fundamental truths and demands the competent application of these principles by those who would succeed in battle.

Or, as Lt. Col. Paul C. Dillon of the Army's Command and General Staff College put it in a 1970 issue of *Military Review*, published by the Army at Ft. Leavenworth: "When placed in perspective, it is apparent that nuclear power simply provides the ability to accomplish objectives which would not otherwise be attainable."

Joseph Douglass, Jr. and Amoretta Hoeber, authors of a widely circulated booklet called *Soviet Strategy for Nuclear War*, contend that "in contrast to much of Western military literature, the Soviet literature is seriously directed to the problems of fighting and winning a nuclear war."

But is the Soviet literature really so different from ours? Those who think so should look at the U.S. Army field manual *Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Reconnaissance and Decontamination Operations*, published in February of 1980, which baldly states: "The US Army must be prepared to fight and win when nuclear weapons are used." Essentially the same sentence appears in a June, 1977, manual, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Company Team*.

Further elaboration can be found in "Extending the Battlefield," an article written by General Donn A. Starry in the March, 1981, *Military Review*—which, incidentally, Pentagon press officers eagerly pass out to reporters who ask about the Army's thinking these days on theater nuclear war-fighting. General Starry was commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command when he wrote the article; he is now commander in chief of the U.S. Readiness Command. Starry writes that "the purpose of military operations cannot be simply to avert defeat, but, rather, it must be to win." Some civilian nuclear strategists have talked of theater nuclear weapons as the middle rung in a "ladder of deterrence" stretching from conventional forces to strategic nuclear forces. Not General Starry: theater nuclear weapons, he writes, "should not be considered solely as a bridge to strategic nuclear war. They are weapons which must be considered in the context of a war-fighting capability."

After detailing precisely what sorts of weapons, sensors, and tactics would be needed for fighting a nuclear war in a theater (say, Europe), General Starry goes on to

say that "we will be able to do these things quickly and efficiently on the battlefield of the mid-to-late 1980s," and that "there is, today, considerable potential to do just what has thus far been described." He adds, "There is probably little set forth in this article which is not already being done and done well in some operational units."

Some Western scholars who examine Soviet military manuals seem especially interested in the amount of tactical thinking that Soviet officers have done on the use of nuclear weapons. They note that Soviet officials refer frequently to the need for "sober calculation" and "scientific substantiation." The Soviet manuals go into great detail on how widely troops should be dispersed on a nuclear battlefield, on how they should maneuver, on the effects that nuclear weapons are likely to have on communications gear. Some of the manuals note that the use of nuclear weapons does not mean the end of non-nuclear battle, that conventional military operations will continue if for no other purpose than to occupy territory. And the manuals note that in this regard, nuclear weapons are likely to be decisive.

In all of the discussions of these Soviet efforts, however, it is assumed—tacitly or explicitly—that the United States military manuals do not discuss any of these aspects of warfare. This assumption could not be more in error.

First, numerous U.S. Army field manuals are devoted entirely to the precise effects of nuclear weapons. A very big book, the *Staff Officers' Field Manual: Nuclear Weapons Employment Effects Data*, is crammed with tables, charts, and graphs illustrating how nuclear weapons of various explosive yields, accuracies, and heights-of-burst will affect various types of military equipment, personnel, communications facilities, and troop tactics across various distances. Other manuals devote several chapters to issues of trading off maneuverability and dispersion for force-concentration in a "nuclear environment." Still other articles explain in highly "scientific" terms the effects of nuclear weapons on command-and-control equipment, and how to protect it.

Further, the American literature, like that of the Soviets, assumes that conventional war will continue even after nuclear weapons have been used. This is the essence of the Army's new doctrine of the "integrated battlefield," the subject of General Starry's *Military Review* article. But the ideas offered in his article antedate the doctrine. For example, the U.S. Army field manual *Nuclear Weapons Employment Doctrine and Procedures*, published in March of 1977, reads: ". . . nuclear weapons cannot be used in isolation, but must be integrated with the rest of the fire and maneuver on the battlefield."

Finally, and again like the Soviet manuals, American military literature refers to the potential decisiveness of nuclear weapons. To pick just one example, from *Tactical Nuclear Operations*:

> The use of tactical nuclear weapon systems decisively influences the conduct of operations. Granting commanders authority to employ these munitions tremendously increases their combat power. . . . [A] definite advantage accrues to the combatant who can first regain the maneuverability necessary to exploit the effects of nuclear fire.

DO THE CONTENTS OF THESE OFFICIAL U.S. MILITARY documents suggest or prove that the United States is planning to fight and win a nuclear war? Not necessarily—at least, no more than the contents of frequently cited Soviet military documents suggest or prove that the Soviet Union is planning to do so. Military officers everywhere are trained and paid to fight wars and to try to win them. Almost all of what the hawkish Soviet specialists in the West cite, in an effort to prove that the Soviets are out to fight and win a nuclear war, falls under the category of military science. And so does almost all of the American material cited here—which might just as well have been extracted by an American-affairs expert in the USSR trying to prove that the Americans are out to fight and win a nuclear war. Nothing in either nation's military literature contradicts the wisdom expressed in the broad "doctrine"—as opposed to the "military science"—of both countries: that nuclear war would be catastrophic and must be avoided.

The tone of science and cool certainty pervading American and Soviet military manuals dealing with nuclear war is a façade, based not on experience in past wars nor on "war games" or exercises. No "first strike" programmed on a computer has left a victim nation so disarmed that it cannot destroy the aggressor's society—or inflict more flexibly "limited" damage, if it wishes—in retaliation. "Tactical nuclear weapons" have existed and been studied for nearly thirty years; but no one has discovered how to use them on the battlefield without destroying the societies that they are supposed to protect.

Yet none of this should be cause for complacent relief. However different the politicians' "doctrine" may be from the military's "science," if major war between the superpowers does break out, and if the losing side feels compelled to go nuclear to avoid certain defeat, these manuals—Soviet *and* American—will be the only guides available. The military officers who have read them closely will follow their instructions. At that point, it may not be so clearly recognized—either by the military or by the political leaders, desperate for easy solutions—that composing a plan to fight and win a nuclear war lies a far distance from actually going out and doing it. Planning to fight wars is what the military is paid to do; but so is executing those plans when the orders are given. In the business of fighting and winning nuclear wars, the Soviets and the Americans are equally susceptible to the dangers of self-delusion. □

II

RUSSIAN AND AMERICAN CAPABILITIES

BY JEROME B. WIESNER

OVER THE PAST THIRTY YEARS, THE NUCLEAR-ARMS race has been propelled by political tensions, by technical innovations, and by rivalries inside the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union. But at the moment, on the American side one overriding concern promotes the buildup of nuclear weapons—the fear that the United States might be denied its ability to inflict a devastating retaliatory blow if the Soviet Union struck first. This fear presumes that a nuclear war, far from being an act of mutual annihilation, might be a controllable, survivable, even "winnable" encounter, and that the Soviet Union may be better equipped than the United States to prevail in a nuclear war.

Such an anxiety, if well grounded, would compel any responsible American leader to search seriously for new nuclear-weapons projects, beginning with the MX missile and perhaps extending to antiballistic-missile systems and greater efforts for civil defense, in the hope of redressing the balance. The Reagan Administration, of course, is pushing ahead on several such fronts and says that it cannot persuade the Soviet Union to negotiate for reductions in strategic weapons unless we first show our determination to increase American strength. Even if the strategic-arms-reduction talks (START) that President Reagan has proposed eventually lead to an agreement, that welcome development would not come sooner than several years from now. In the meantime, American policy need not be driven by a fear of a Soviet first strike. Instead, it should rest on a recognition of the basic reality of the nuclear age: that the only option open to either the Soviet Union or the United States is deterrence. Given today's weapons, neither side can do anything to protect itself against the retaliatory threat the other poses; by the same logic, neither side need fear that its threat to the other will be called into question. This balance hardly justifies political or moral complacency. Because of the catastrophe that would occur if deterrence failed, our best efforts must be directed to preventing the circumstances in which nuclear weapons would ever be used. But the concept of deterrence suggests a very different direction for American action from the one indicated by anticipation of a Soviet first strike.

The current era has often been spoken of as a "window of vulnerability," in which America's nuclear force is uniquely at risk. But it can instead be a "window of opportunity" in which to negotiate an end to the arms race. The most obvious and the most sensible step for the United States at the moment is to add *nothing* to our nuclear forces, and to seize this opportunity to press for a freeze on the develop-

Jerome B. Wiesner, Institute professor and president emeritus of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, served as special assistant to President Kennedy for science and technology.

ment, testing, and deployment of all nuclear weapons and new delivery systems by each side.

As has happened before in the arms race, we have been told that technical progress has created a theoretical vulnerability for our force. The Soviet missile force has increased in size and accuracy, and supposedly poses fresh dangers to our land-based nuclear missiles. The Soviet Union's theoretical ability to destroy nearly all of these missiles in a surprise attack, it is argued, will psychologically upset the balance of deterrence, and will thereby make the United States vulnerable to Soviet blackmail. This will happen, it is further argued, even though the great majority of the American nuclear weapons are carried on bombers or by ballistic-missile submarines, rather than by the Minuteman and Titan missiles that are based in silos throughout the Midwest. An American President might be afraid to retaliate after a Soviet attack on the U.S. missiles, because the Soviet Union would then respond with a major attack on American cities. The conclusion of this line of reasoning is that the U.S. cannot contemplate any slackening of the pace until it has redressed the imbalance by building the MX missile or other systems.

I accepted this scenario myself until I made a few simple calculations concerning how vulnerable the Minuteman system actually is and what the strategic situation would be even if it were somehow totally destroyed. It emerges from any such calculation that neither side can escape the risk of devastating retaliation if it launches a pre-emptive attack. This is the only vital issue for each side—the actual capabilities for responding after attack, not guesses about what the other side's intentions might be. Intentions may change, and they are always difficult to discern. But the meaning of the capabilities is unambiguous: *under present technology, either side could devastate the other after enduring any conceivable attack.*

The U.S. has more deliverable nuclear warheads than the Soviet Union does. A 1978 study prepared for the Congressional Budget Office estimated that in the mid-1980s, when the "window of vulnerability" will allegedly stand open, the U.S. will have 13,904 warheads on its strategic delivery systems, versus 8,794 for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, for reasons we have never fully understood, has chosen to build missiles larger than ours, with larger warheads; and its force, though smaller in numbers, contains more "equivalent megatons" than ours does. (The measure "equivalent megaton" takes account of the fact that small nuclear warheads do proportionately more damage than large ones, since the area a warhead destroys does not increase linearly with the size of the warhead.) The same Congressional Budget Office study estimated that in the mid-1980s the U.S. force would represent 4,894 equivalent megatons, versus 8,792 for the Soviet Union. Paul Nitze, of the Committee on the Present Danger, which has been among the most strident of the groups warning about a window of vulnerability, has estimated that if both sides built up to the limits allowed by the SALT II treaty (whose ratification the committee opposed), the U.S. would have 12,504 nuclear warheads and the Soviet Union 11,728. It foresees roughly the same advantage for the Russians in equivalent megatons as does the Congressional Budget Office.

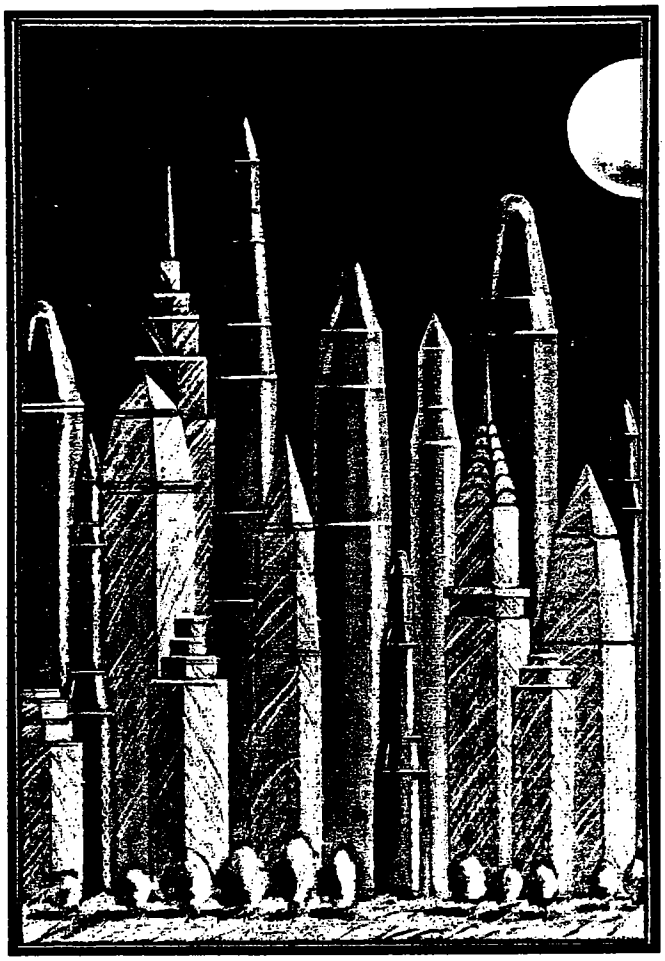
Of the 13,000 to 14,000 warheads projected for the American force, roughly 2,100 are on the Minuteman and Titan missiles. The land-based force represents some 1,507 equivalent megatons. Therefore, if every single Titan and Minuteman were destroyed in a successful surprise attack, the U.S. would be left with somewhere between 11,000 and 12,000 nuclear warheads. The submarine fleet would account for approximately 6,000 of these weapons, and the rest would be carried by bombers. All together, these remaining American warheads would represent about 3,500 equivalent megatons.

IN PLANNING AMERICAN NUCLEAR FORCES IN THE early 1960s, Robert McNamara came to the conclusion that 400 equivalent megatons would be sufficient to inflict unacceptable damage—and that the U.S. could have absolute confidence in its deterrent if it built such a retaliatory capacity three times over, once on the bomber fleet, once on land-based missiles, and once with the submarine force, for a total of 1,200 equivalent megatons. In other words, the 11,000 or 12,000 warheads, representing 3,500 equivalent megatons, that the U.S would retain even after a perfectly successful first strike against our land-based missiles would be three times larger than the force that was itself designed to be able thrice to destroy the Soviet Union. The accuracy of nuclear weapons has improved since McNamara's day, further increasing their effective power. These figures do not even count the several thousand American warheads that are left in Europe and other parts of the world, some of which could be used for retaliation.

Nearly all scenarios for a first strike assume that an attacker would have to target two warheads against each missile silo it hoped to destroy. The U.S. has 1,000 Minuteman missiles and several dozen Titans. The Soviet Union would, therefore, have to devote about 2,200 warheads to an attack. The most generous estimates put the mid-1980s Soviet force at slightly fewer than 12,000 warheads; so after launching its first strike, the Soviet Union would end up with fewer than 10,000 warheads, or several thousand *fewer* than the United States.

So far, these calculations have been based on extreme assumptions: that the Soviet Union would be able to destroy totally the force of Minuteman and Titan missiles, but that it would leave the submarine and bomber fleets intact. More realistic assumptions yield the same conclusion: that a first strike would be suicidal irrationality, which is the premise upon which deterrence is based.

Moreover, first-strike scenarios rest on the assumption



that large numbers of men and machines will perform exactly as planned. The weapons used in a first strike would have to perform reliably and very accurately, and the detonations of several thousand warheads would have to be coordinated with perfect skill, or else the whole scenario becomes immediately implausible. Yet no complex system ever works as predicted when it is first used. In carefully controlled tests, involving small numbers of weapons, it may be possible to attain the levels of accuracy required for a first strike, but I am convinced that the necessary levels of accuracy and reliability are simply not attainable in an operational force. It would require many more test flights than either nation normally conducts to get enough data to establish the actual facts about these systems. How many trial runs of a surprise attack could the U.S. or the Soviet Union carry out?

Three factors make it seem especially unlikely that a surprise attack could be successfully carried out. First, the accuracy of the attacking warheads is uncertain. Because their targets, the missile silos, are so greatly "hardened," warheads must come much closer to a silo than to "softer" targets to do damage. But it may be impossible for either side to know how accurate its warheads will be when they are fired in large fleets on a trajectory that has never before been tested.

Second, the reliability of the missiles themselves is open to deep question. Optimists assume that 80 percent of the missiles that are fired will perform satisfactorily. The likely rate may be closer to 50 or 60 percent. This would mean that even assuming maximum accuracy and accepting the formula that two warheads fired at a silo will have a 95 percent probability of destroying it, the Soviet Union might fire 2,200 warheads at our missiles and destroy only 500 to 600 of them.

Third, such an exercise would require prodigious feats of timing. It would involve very precise firings of the individual missiles, so that the two warheads attacking each Minuteman would be so perfectly spaced that the detonation of the first would not destroy the second, and warheads attacking neighboring sites would not disable each other. (These very probable accidents are known as fratricide.) A successful first strike would depend on flawless communication within the Soviet command structure. It is generally recognized that the command-and-control system is the weakest link in the nuclear forces of both sides.

In principle, the Soviet Union could improve its possibilities of success by firing more than two warheads at each missile, but then the potential for destructive interference becomes even greater, as do the complications of command and coordination. Most experts believe that two warheads per target is the practical limit.

All in all, the result is this: even after a surprise Soviet attack on the American Minuteman force, *U.S. strength would actually be slightly greater than the Soviet Union's.* If the Soviet Union could carry out the worst attack that the alarmists have been able to imagine, the United States would not only retain its relative position but would have enough nuclear weapons to destroy several Soviet Unions. And by the same logic, the Soviet Union would certainly retain the capacity to inflict unacceptable punishment on the United States, no matter how large and clever a surprise first strike the U.S. were to launch. Theorists may claim that it would not be "logical" for the side that had endured the first strike to order a retaliation, since that would lead to further devastation, but such forbearance on the part of a badly wounded but still armed nation is hard to credit.

Theorists defending the first-strike hypothesis often refer to the issues of the Cuban missile crisis. In 1962, the U.S. had many more nuclear weapons than the Soviet Union, and this superiority, many advocates of the MX now say, forced Nikita Khrushchev to back down. But in the early sixties, the Soviet Union had so few *deliverable* nuclear weapons that its leaders had legitimate reason to fear that a first strike might take away their ability to threaten destructive retaliation. The imbalance *may* have affected Soviet behavior—although American superiority in conventional naval forces seems to have weighed more heavily in the Soviets' calculations. At the comparatively low levels of nuclear weaponry of twenty years ago, a difference in size between the arsenals could have political

significance; indeed, much of the impetus in American policy has been to regain the first-strike potential the U.S. enjoyed for many years. But when each side has a superabundance of weaponry, which is the case today, small differences in size no longer matter.

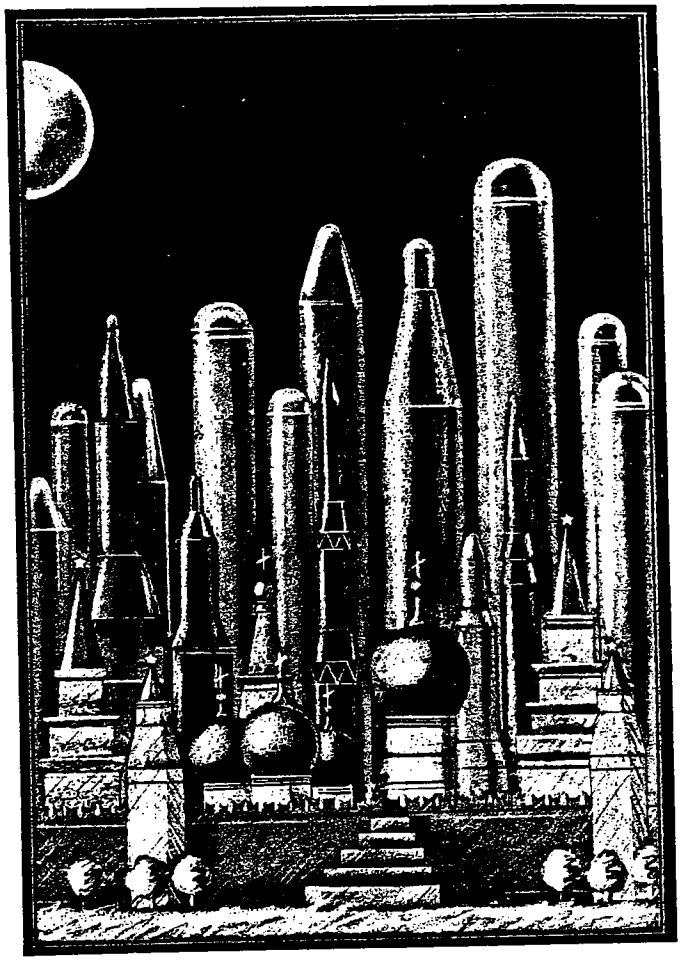
AT THE MOMENT, NEITHER THE U.S. NOR THE SOVIET Union has a meaningful strategic advantage. A window of vulnerability does not exist. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to imagine how either side could achieve a usable advantage. Both sides are thoroughly deterred from using their strategic forces, because a decision to use them would be a decision to commit national suicide. And this seems sure to remain true no matter what either side deploys in the way of new weapons.

Though the Soviets might theoretically increase the capacities of their missiles in such a way as to pose significant new threats to the Minuteman force, it would require a major breakthrough in both technology and production to do so. The same is obviously true for American forces. The MX and the cruise missiles based in Europe might be the American entry into such a competition. But at the moment, such capabilities do not exist and so cannot be deployed. Thus, now is the time for a disarmament agreement, one that would freeze all missile developments, leaving both sides with an unquestioned deterrent but without any plausible threat of a first strike. Now we have a "window of opportunity" for safer, saner alternatives to a major arms buildup. This might mean ratification of the SALT II agreement, whose limitations the Reagan Administration has so far chosen to observe, or a comprehensive freeze on the testing and development of nuclear weapons, which I favor.

An agreement to halt all testing of nuclear weapons, and of the vehicles that would deliver them, could dramatically change the political cloud that surrounds these weapons. Military technologists will strenuously resist the enactment of any such program. They will be reluctant to give up new weapons already in the pipeline. Moreover, they will maintain that if they cannot test-fire weapons, they cannot guarantee that they will work as planned. That is true, but scarcely a problem. While no one could be sure that the weapons would work as planned—which further reduces the certainty essential for a first strike—neither could anyone be certain that they won't work. They would not suffice for pre-emptive attack, but they would still represent a secure deterrent.

If this opportunity for arms control is not taken, the job will only grow more difficult in the future. The weapons of today are easy to count and monitor, but those of tomorrow won't be. The cruise missile, the stealth bomber, and far more accurate guidance systems would lead us to a nightmare world, one in which our fears would increase. That is why the opportunity must be seized now.

A limited solution to the arms race is not pleasing to many religious and ethical leaders who are emphasizing the immorality of relying on the very weapons that may threaten the extinction of the species. For contrary reasons, a nuclear-arms freeze irritates conservative political leaders, who imagine that this dimension of military force should somehow be made more "usable," and who object to a policy—deterrence—that places the civilian population of the nation at risk. Deterrence is unsatisfactory—except by contrast with the alternatives. The weapons that create the threat of annihilation cannot be uninvented. The sad fact of this era is that our populations cannot conceivably be protected except through political skill and courage applied to the task of minimizing the chances that nuclear weapons will ever be used.



Seizing this opportunity to freeze the arms race would be one demonstration of such skill and courage. It would free both sides from the fear of a first strike and would leave them with such security as a deterrent can provide. It would set the stage for further safety measures, including the reduction of nuclear forces. Meanwhile, the fear of unknown new weapons would be eliminated. And with less money devoted to strategic nuclear weapons, more would be available to repair the deficiencies in our conventional forces, to right the economy, and especially to work on the ever-growing set of civilian problems facing the world. □

(Reprinted by permission of the Foreign Editor, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London, EC1R 3ER)

THE GUARDIAN, June 27, 1982

COMMENT

Disarming from the bottom up

IF we were going to have a nuclear war the time to have had it was a fortnight ago. The celebrated "window of opportunity", about which American strategists have been warning for several years, is now open. That means that if the Russians are minded to make their pre-emptive strike against US missiles in their silos they will never have a better chance. If there is an imbalance, as President Reagan again claimed last week at the UN, it exists here and now; for if that were not the case, with both sides observing the unratified SALT II terms, there would be no need for the vast reequipment programme the US has undertaken. That is the position at intercontinental level. In Europe the SS-20s have already been installed but the Pershing II and Tomahawk cruise missiles which are NATO's response have not. Therefore, if the paper strategy is to be believed, the Russian advantage is now greater than it will ever be in the future. But it passed its maximum about June 16.

The President carries round with him the famous football, a briefcase of buttons which when unlocked give him the codes which are to signal the launch of American rocket forces in reply to a Soviet attack. But the President — and that would mean any president with a schedule as heavy as Reagan's was — hardly knew what day it was or which city he was in. He had to sleep. Notoriously he had to sleep, and he was asleep while the fiasco of America's Security Council vote on the Falklands was being enacted. If the Americans are to be believed — and why not? — Secretary Haig had trouble ringing New York. He was ten minutes too late to change Mrs Kirkpatrick's vote. But ten minutes is a half to two-thirds of the time the Americans will have to convince themselves that the blips on the radar screen are not a flock of geese over the Yukon. Allow five minutes to stir the President from his first sleep (in Rome, Versailles, Bonn, Windsor Castle) and the time is up.

Consider, too, the other western dispositions. Mrs Thatcher has a hand in these matters. She too can order Polaris submarines to fire. But how much time would she have had in the middle of the night? Her mind, like Mr John Nott's and Sir Frank Cooper's, was at that time at Fitzroy and Bluff Cove. So, within 100 miles or so, were most of her ships, though admittedly (one supposes) not the Polaris boats then on duty roster. How well equipped would Margaret, John, and Frank have been at 2 o'clock in the morning to switch from the bombing of Sir Galahad to the possible extinction of the United Kingdom? And supposing they all woke up in time to press the button, would it have worked? Or would the Russians not have taken the elementary precaution of making their first strike at our communication links so that the Polaris boats could in any case not have been told what to do?

The massive pre-emptive strike by the Russians is only one scenario for nuclear war — one ruled out, specifically at the UN last week, amid nasty cries of American disbelief — but it is one on which much ink has been spilled and money allocated. Another scenario is a "period of international tension", however that is defined, in which political conflict elides into fighting, and fighting then goes nuclear. There are two classic sources for this conflict. One is central Europe and the other is the Middle East. Well, we have just had a "period of intenational tension" such as we don't want to experience too often. While British troops were forming up for the defeat of Argentina, Israel started the fifth Middle East war. Arabs, Europeans and Americans were sending telegrams and flying hither and thither. Washington and Whitehall were jammed with signals about Mount Kent and the Beka'a valley. Only the Kremlin retained its accustomed, if malignant, calm.

Does this mean, as the Daily Express observed in 1939, that there ain't going to be no war? We would hesitate to draw that conclusion, the scale of human perversity being what it is. The most the facts illustrate is that because a window of opportunity is alleged to exist it does not follow that anyone is going to clamber through it. Had the Russians taken the gap they could have inflicted much worse damage on America and Europe than America and Europe could have given in return. But they would have had some damage — nothing on the American scale but say a couple of hundred Hiroshimas. Because even if the President and the Prime Minister were dead and communications out of action the fall-back routines would still opeate to some degree. Submarine commanders would eventually have twigged what was going on and launched a few MIRVed megatons. And that, a paper victory for the Russians notwithstanding, would have been more than the Russians were prepared to accept.

All of this suggests that, terminal though the perils of a nuclear war would be, the lesser but more commonplace evils are the ones to which the United Nations disarmament session (starring Ronald Reagan, Menachem Begin and Margaret Thatcher) should be giving its weighty, if not always efficacious, attention. The annual traffic in conventional weapons has been running at $120,000 million a year (SIPRI estimate), disregarding the cost of weapons made for the manufacturing countries' own use. More than 130 armed conflicts have taken place since 1945 of which Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East wars and the Falklands are only the most memorable. The toll of life and the length of the refugee columns have been enormous, without a single nuclear warhead being exploded.

We have lately seen what "a pimple on the ass of history" can do to two nations in arms and to the delicate network of international relations which holds the peace together. One side in this conflict had nuclear weapons, the other is in process of acquiring them (and that may be true in the Middle East as well.) But in the end they are a monstrous spook. Used, they will destroy us; unused they allow nationalisms to compete with the ever-increasing deadliness of those quite acceptable weapons, the sea-skimmer, the anti-missile missile, the radar-guided or heat-seeking rocket. It is these that are fired while the 7,000 nuclear warheads in Europe alone remain too dangerous to go near. It is these that have to be eliminated and, we think we would now argue, eliminated first.

The fire-power now in the hands of nearly every middle-ranking nation puts a premium on instant action and a discount on the time needed to resolve disputes in peace. The reason Britain and Argentina went to war, and the reason Israel invaded Lebanon, is not that weapons solve disputes where they could not otherwise be solved but simply that they had the weapons to hand. Without weapons, injustices would certainly remain unresolved, but no more unresolved than they are when the weapons have in fact been used. Only the intervening deaths make the difference and the result is the same. The Pope's most important utterance in Britain was that war, whether nuclear or not, should belong to history; it has no place on humanity's agenda for the future. In the past that would have been a piety. Today it carries a hard edge of reality.

In bald terms this means that disarmament may have to start from the bottom, not the top; from field artillery, not hydrogeon bombs; and from battalions of infantry, not fom silos in Nevada or the Urals. There has to be a lower limit. States must be able to keep internal order, even if that means prolonging disputes or injustices that in many states are evident. Disarmament is not a synonym for Utopia. It would not suddenly make conflicts of interest disappear. By freeing resources it might greatly alleviate poverty, but conflicts do not originate in poverty alone. Rich societies like ours have them equally. The argument for disarmament rests fundamentally on the premise that nations and people are no better off when the war is over than they were before it began — no better in Ethiopia, Chad, Iraq or Argentina, no better prospectively in the rubble of Moscow or Washington — and that the ritual of death followed by the replacement rituals of the travelling salesmen, ferrying among the generals who rule and the generals who buy, seems more and more absurd. One could, with the Pope, talk about human maturity. But absurdity — obscure absurdity — seems a better place to start.

Nuclear War 101: professors prompt dialogue on campus

By Sara Terry
Staff correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

July 9, 1982

Los Angeles

For John Harris, it's a matter of conscience. As an instructor at the University of Minnesota, he says that he – and the academic community at large – have a special obligation to today's college students: to teach them about the dangers of nuclear war.

Along with co-instructor Eric Markusen, Mr. Harris does just that in his upper division sociology course, "World Crisis in the Nuclear Age: Introduction to Nuclear War."

Harris isn't alone in his conviction that colleges and universities have a unique role to play in a world increasingly beset by fear of nuclear holocaust. In fact, the past year has witnessed a nationwide escalation of faculty interest in bringing arms-race and nuclear-war courses more into the mainstream of campus curriculum – into courses that cut across the academic spectrum, from physics and engineering to political science and theology.

Academicians have long been involved in efforts to educate college students and the public about arms-race issues. Many American colleges and universities have offered such courses for years. Recently, however – as the nuclear freeze and arms-race debate have come to the forefront of public attention – the movement has provoked even wider debate within the academic community.

On many campuses, the issue appears to be more a matter of faculty conscience than student activism. Unlike the late 1960s and early 1970s, when angry students demanded that university administrators institute peace studies programs, today's drive appears to be fueled by professors who see the issue as part of their responsibility as educators.

"The graduates of the university mold the future of the world," says John Ernest, a University of California at Santa Barbara mathematics professor who has written a lengthy article on the university's role in the ongoing arms-race debate. "Is the education these students are receiving adequate for the challenge they face?

"The university is concerned with culture, and we're talking about almost total destruction of that culture," he continues, "so the university has a very special responsibility here." That responsibility increasingly is being discussed across the country in academic forums and conferences as faculty and student groups are forming to draw up proposed courses.

It's unclear just how many nuclear-war-related courses now are being taught on college campuses. It is generally agreed, however, that such classes in the past have attracted a limited number of students in a narrow field at the upper division and graduate level. In contrast, the types of courses now being taught place a heavy emphasis on showing the relevance of nuclear arms race issues to a given field.

The University of California's Professor Ernest, for example, is now outlining an environmental studies course on the long-term effects of nuclear weapons. Allan Brick, an associate professor of English at Hunter College, part of the City University of New York, teaches a freshman composition course titled "Personal Life and Human Survival in the Nuclear Age." Many other classes, such as "Physics and Human Affairs" at the University of Arkansas, bring the arms-race debate into the classroom as a "module" including several lectures on nuclear war.

At Dartmouth College, where a collegewide course involving faculty members from several departments is now being planned, Elise Boulding, chairman of the Department of Sociology, says the issue has involved "a balance of concerned students and faculty."

"But it's nothing like the activism of the '60s," she continues. "That's not the temper on campus these days. Students have a more sober and cautious approach. They're asking, 'What do we need to know, and how can we use that knowledge on this problem?' "

Some professors take a clearly political stand in their courses – supporting the nuclear freeze, or criticizing the Reagan administration, for example. They assume that when students are alerted to the dangers of nuclear war, they will favor an arms freeze.

But other professors – including some that question the effectiveness of a freeze – say they simply want students to take a long hard look at how to avoid nuclear war.

"We have to suggest that the issue is more complex than the freeze campaign suggests, and more complex than the Reagan administration suggests," says John Harris, whose University of Minnesota class has grown from 15 students in fall quarter of 1980 to 55 students this spring.

"We want two things," he says, "to get students to delve more into the facts about the arms race, and to respond to the threat of nuclear war in a nonideological fashion. . . . We want students to make decisions on a reasoning basis."

ART BUCHWALD

Santa Barbara, Calif., News-Press, Wednesday, September 1, 1982 D-7

You could die laughing

People are constantly asking me, "Who is the man with the most humor in the Reagan administration?" They are surprised when my response is "Cap" Weinberger, our secretary of Defense. "Cap" says things with a straight face that make you want to roll on the floor.

Just the other day he told newspapermen he is for a "protracted nuclear war." He doesn't want one of these hair-trigger wars which last 30 or 40 minutes. "Cap" said he has ordered everyone at the Pentagon to figure not only how to keep a nuclear war going, but how to make sure the U.S. wins one when the missiles start flying.

Half the people in the Pentagon took "Cap" seriously. But those who knew what a deadpan comic "Cap" is just laughed and went back to doing the crossword puzzle.

The material for "Cap's "prolonged nuclear war" came out of a routune he did when he first took charge of the Defense Department and came up with a comic routine on "limited nuclear war."

He tried this one out in front of an armed services committee last year and had everyone in stitches. "Cap," without cracking a smile, said he thought a "limited nuclear war" with the Soviets was not only feasible, but essential so the U.S. would have time to fight a conventional war.

Cap said if we let the Russians know that we were only going to fight a "limited nuclear war" then they would agree not to use their big stuff to attack us.

The only ones who didn't laugh were our NATO allies who figured out if a "limited nuclear war was going to be waged it would be on their turf," and even after Al Haig tried to explain to the Europeans "Cap" was only joking, they still didn't find the secretary of Defense's war routine very funny.

So Cap got his writers together and said, "I think my jokes are losing something in the translation. We're going to have to come up with a new monologue, and throw the 'limited nuclear war' stuff out."

One of the writers said, "I got it! What if you just stand up at the microphone and say you're no longer for a 'limited nuclear war,' but you've opted for a 'protracted' one instead? Say we're going to build offensive weapons that will make the U.S. prevail no matter what the Russians throw at us."

"That's pretty funny," Cap said. "Let's work on it. But keep it quiet or Johnny Carson will hear about it, and use it on his 'Tonight' Show first.

The writers all went to work and came up with some memorable lines.

One was "you show me a secretary of Defense who is not preparing to win a nuclear war, and I'll show you a secretary of Defense who should be impeached."

Another one which was a real crowd pleaser: When he was asked if a nuclear war was winnable, Cap replied, again with a straight face, "I just don't have any idea; I don't know that anybody has any idea. But we're certainly going to give the armed forces everything they need to win one."

These are just a few samples of "Cap" Weinberger's humor. They may not sound as funny on paper, but when you see him standing up in front of the mike, looking like Woody Allen, delivering them, you could die laughing.