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The Bishops Blink

testimony, publications of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the reports of high-level conferences.

The letter is not *purely* a failure. It says interesting, true and urgent things about the world's need, in the interests of the world's survival, to create institutional means for resolving conflict without war. It gives evidence of a long episcopal stride toward understanding of nonviolent resistance. And, though it repeats and ably defends the church's official "just war" teaching, it scores another advance by granting orthodoxy and a place in the intramural Catholic debate to dissidents—people like Dorothy Day, Molly Rush, Cornell, Zahn and the Berrigans. (For a Catholic of my generation and my bias, it is a delight to see the name of Dorothy Day mentioned along with those of Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the sainted Francis of Assisi.)

It is not the bishops' basic stance on war that gives me trouble. I think there *can* be "just wars," and there may even have been some. The *conduct* of World War II (the firebombings of Dresden and Tokyo, the atomic bombing of Japan, the refusal of any terms but unconditional surrender) eroded its ethical rationale long before it ended. But it began as a just war and might have stayed that way had bishops, pastors and journalists evidenced less worldly prudence and more prophetic fire.

Measuring the Risk

Nor do I find the drafters of the letter innocent about what nuclear weapons are and do. After reiterating the familiar requirements of proportionality and discrimination in the conduct of war, they ask informed, pointed, almost self-answering questions:

Can nuclear weapons be directed so accurately to their targets, and be so limited in their effects, as really to cause minimal harm to nearby civilians? Would not even a "limited" use of nuclear arms against military targets result in millions or tens of millions of civilian deaths?....[W]hat about the long-term effects of radiation, or of famine, disease, social fragmentation, economic collapse, and environmental injury to be expected from any large-scale use of nuclear weapons?

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October 15, 1982

BY MEANS I DON'T wholly understand and won't inquire into, a document marked CONFIDENTIAL has appeared on my desk: the first draft of a pastoral letter on peace and war—"God's Hope in a Time of Fear"—drawn up over a period of many months by a committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

I wish I could pretend to an exclusive, but the truth is that this particular secret paper seems to be popping up on all sorts of non-episcopal desks. One suspects a purpose. The draft is subject to revision before being voted on at the November meeting of the bishops. Somebody, or maybe everybody, on the committee or elsewhere in the bishops' conference, wants some critical feedback. Here comes some.

First, the key subject addressed in the draft is the morality or immorality of US policy on nuclear weapons and nuclear war. The bishops have never addressed a more urgent question.

Second, the draft fails. That is, of course, my opinion. It means that I don't think the committee has yet arrived at a coherent, intellectually responsible position that takes account of the readily available facts and fits them into the framework of Catholic teaching.

The failure is not for want of effort. The draft is 70 pages long, and one senses blood, sweat and contention in every paragraph. Two and a quarter pages are needed to list the 37 "witnesses" who appeared before the committee, ranging from Cap Weinberger of the Defense Department to Molly Rush of the Plowshares Eight, from Paul Ramsey through Alan Geyer to Gordon Zahn, from Tom Cornell of the Catholic Peace Fellowship to Edward Rowny, chief US negotiator in the START talks.

The committee did other kinds of homework as well. Their draft quotes or cites not only the New Testament, the Psalms, Isaiah and Genesis, not only papal and conciliar statements and theological/ethical works, but also *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*, Congressional

Reflecting on nuclear deterrence, the authors acknowledge that it "may have helped avoid war over the past 37 years." But today:

Each superpower now has so many nuclear warheads and bombs aimed at the other that a failure of deterrence would be catastrophic. Can deterrence prevail under conditions of international crisis, when leaders are fearful, see great issues at stake, imagine the worst about each other's intentions, and must make life and death decisions within a matter of hours or even minutes? Is it likely that this can continue for decades or centuries?

Excellent questions. In my reading of the draft, it seems clear that its authors would answer every one of them in the negative. Assuming that is so, it will appear to many that the bishops would now go beyond saying (as they do) that Catholic morality forbids any but the most restricted use of nuclear arms. The argument seems to march inexorably toward condemnation also of the manufacture and possession of nuclear weapons for deterrent purposes.

Not so. The bishops introduce a distinction between *approval* of deterrence as a morally good thing (which they withhold) and *toleration* of it as the lesser of two evils (which they grant):

Toleration is a technical term in Catholic moral theology; in the case of deterrence toleration is based on two judgments. First...if nuclear weapons had never been made, we could not condone their creation; second, the role of the nuclear deterrent in preserving "peace of a sort" gives it a certain utility. Hence, the mixed nature of deterrence produces the moral judgment of toleration, a judgment that to deny the deterrent any moral legitimacy may bring about worse consequences than we presently live with under conditions of deterrence. The deterrence relationship which now prevails between the United States, the Soviet Union and other powers is objectively a sinful situation....Yet movement out of this objectively evil situation must be controlled lest we cause by accident what we would neither deliberately choose nor morally condone.

Some will find this an example of the tortuous reasoning that gives church leaders and ethics itself a bad name. Out of Catholic roots and Niebuhrian nurturing, I think it makes sense, as far as it goes. Unilateral abandonment of nuclear deterrence by the US would give the Soviet

Union an immense preponderance in possession of nuclear arms. When we had such a preponderance (a monopoly), we used the God-damned things. Deterrence is terribly risky; yes. Hence sinful; yes. But abandoning deterrence is still more risky, therefore still more sinful; yes.

But this is where the problem rises. Toleration of the logic of deterrence is one thing. Toleration of the actual nuclear policies of the United States and the Soviet Union is another. Neither of the superpowers, in practice, is following a policy of deterrence alone. And (as many passages in this draft letter show) *the bishops know it*. So does everybody who reads the papers. The evidence for that judgment is overwhelming, and you don't need to know a meson from a quark, a Clausewitz from a Kissinger, to understand it. Here's some of it, taken from a *New York Times* piece by Jerome B. Wiesner, president emeritus of MIT, science adviser to John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson:

Every large city of any country not only is the shelter for its people but is a nodal point for every network in the life-support systems of its area (communications, electric power, fuel supply, medicine, roads, trains, planes, food).... It is easy to count these focal points in the United States and Soviet Union. An automobile road atlas shows that there are fewer than 200 in North America. And since there is no known defense against incoming ballistic missiles, 200 large nuclear bombs...would destroy the recuperative power of either continent.... The death count—a total made up of those killed by the initial attack plus the victims of the subhuman conditions that would follow—could be as much as 200 million.

The United States possesses not mere hundreds of deliverable nuclear warheads but tens of thousands, and is manufacturing more every day. They are not needed for deterrence. Whatever the Soviet Union does, the US now possesses dozens of times enough nuclear weaponry—deployed in so many places and modes as to be invulnerable—to deter a Soviet nuclear attack. Those surplus weapons do not merely increase but *multiply* the risks we are running—the risk that nuclear war will happen, the risk that, if it happens, it will create a dead or dying planet.

The point is this. As Theodore Draper has made clear in *The New York Review of Books* for July 15, 1982 (and as Lord Solly Zuckerman has argued in *Nuclear Illusions and Realities*), a deterrence policy is shaped by the question, "How much is enough?" It will deliberately and contentedly ignore the question, "Who's ahead?" By keeping the debate centered

on the second question, policymakers on both sides have reached for other aims besides deterrence—at least political domination, at most (and worst) the power to "prevail" in nuclear war. In doing so they have put aside the ethical questions raised by the power of nuclear weapons. And the bishops, so far, have fallen into this trap.

Two other matters must be mentioned.

First, nuclear strategy: This draft of the pastoral letter formally and solemnly condemns any first use of nuclear weapons, any targeting of cities, any *threat* to use nuclear arms against population centers. Declared US policy blatantly violates all these requirements.

Second, the evolution of nuclear policy: Three years ago Cardinal John Krol, speaking for the Catholic hierarchy, told the United States Senate that the bishops could continue to condone deterrence only as long as hope remained for a reversal of the arms race and movement in the direction of disarmament. Despite a softening of Reaganite rhetoric, there has been no such movement in *policy*: The stockpiles grow, new weapons and weapons systems, some of them seriously destabilizing, are invented, produced and either deployed or prepared for deployment, and the Pentagon has drawn up a strategy for the fighting of a protracted nuclear war.

In one passage of the draft, the authors acknowledge their obligation as teachers of morality to go beyond general moral principles, to do more than issue pious pleas for peace: "We must look at the nature of existing and planned weapons systems, the doctrines and plans that would govern their use in time of war, and the consequences of use under various conditions." These acknowledged obligations are never adequately fulfilled. A Catholic (or anyone else) who accepts the classical just war doctrine, and who looks to the bishops for help in applying it to the here and now, won't get that help from this document in its present form. After arguing the case for toleration of deterrence with proper rigor, it passes by in silence, or with mild expressions of "dissatisfaction," a posture and a program that starkly violate the bishops' own criteria for a moral (or morally tolerable) nuclear policy.

What do the bishops need? World War III? One hopes for a clearing of heads and a stiffening of spines among them before November.

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GORDON C. ZAHN

Commonweal:

13 August 1982

Disaster, no; disappointment, yes

THE GOOD WORD first. The proposed draft of the November pastoral is unquestionably the strongest statement yet by the American hierarchy in opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Moreover, its overall thrust is such that it offers real promise of future statements (and, one may hope, actions as well) leading ultimately to a final and definitive condemnation of these instruments of omnicide, including their possession and production. It repeats and strengthens previous condemnations of the use and of the threat to use such weapons, specifically extending those condemnations to retaliatory use and—an important challenge to existing national policy—to first use under any circumstances. It supports the principle of unilateral initiatives as an effective step toward disarmament and gives new emphasis to the spiritual bases for rejecting nuclear war coupled with the urgent need to discover and develop a more relevant theology of peace and nonviolence. The legitimacy of conscientious objection and the need to amend Selective Service legislation to permit selective conscientious objection are reaffirmed and find strong reinforcement in the pastoral recommendations. Finally, the draft's discussion of consequences and alternatives, even considering the criticisms to be offered here, testifies to the broad range of opinion surveyed in the committee's desire to produce a statement on war and peace that would be informed, balanced, and firmly rooted in Christian spirit and doctrine. In these and many other respects, it succeeds.

If not, therefore, at all the "disaster" some critics have

claimed, the statement is nonetheless a disappointment for those like myself who hoped for more explicit moral guidance, free from ambiguities, reservations, and exceptions that have always been too much a part of episcopal statements on this most crucial moral issue of our time, perhaps of all remaining time. At fault is not only what is left unsaid and undone, but the draft pastoral (reluctantly and presumably temporarily) also accepts policies of nuclear deterrence which seem to contradict, in spirit at least, what has gone before. In doing this, the bishops admit to being skeptical of claims that the existing deterrent prevents the use of nuclear weapons, but they give these claims the benefit of the doubt. No serious consideration is given the contrary thesis, namely that reliance upon the deterrent has produced the "balance of terror" which creates and sustains the international tensions threatening the world with annihilation.

The impression is one of troubled ambivalence and a yearning for a compromise on essentially irreconcilable issues. There is, for instance, the apparent readiness to allow weapons presumably limitable to strictly military targets. This is a kind of updated version of the old "two-battleships-at-sea" scenario which has always been trundled out to forestall any judgment on nuclear weapons as intrinsically immoral. One might have hoped that the bishops would base their moral judgment on *the most likely use* as demonstrated by officially declared intent. In this case the facts are clear enough: the overwhelming majority of these weapons are designed and many are already targeted for use against cities; that is, for acts defined by Vatican II as an offense against God and man himself. Furthermore, even if the so-called tactical weapons could be (or would be!) put to such limited use, the unknowable dangers to the environment should be enough to merit condemnation in any event.

The draft pastoral's basic weakness lies in its perspective. Writing in these pages over a year ago, J. Bryan Hehir commended the Physicians for Social Responsibility for restricting their activity to areas of their own special competence and not losing themselves in what he called "the arcane details of the strategic debate." Theologians and bishops too, would do well to heed this advice. When this document speaks in terms of moral principle and the obligations it may impose, the words ring true. When it strays off into calculating possible policy alternatives to nuclear deterrence, the way to calamity lies open. Cautious disclaimers notwithstanding, there is too easy a readiness to settle for a trade-off in the form of greater reliance on conventional weapons and expanded forces, even—and this is a shocking departure from the church's consistent position since the time of Benedict XV—including peacetime conscription. Given the historical lesson that most conventional warfare has long since passed all bounds of moral justification in its means, this is simply too great a concession for the bishops to make. World War II and the "terror bombings" which destroyed most of Europe's great cities, the horrors of a "little" war like Vietnam, and now Lebanon—these were all accomplished by "conventional" military action.

This is not to criticize the obvious, and quite legitimate, concern that the relevant moral teachings be considered in the context of empirical situations and the dilemmas they present. Rather, it is to question what seems to be a reversal of priorities and roles in doing so. We have a right to look to the bishops for their moral judgment of what is actually being done and being planned, whether it be continued reliance upon MAD, the proposed shift to counterforce and its first-strike implications, or whatever. It is *not* their responsibility to fashion alternative strategies; it is the task of the diplomatic and military functionaries to devise policies and strategies that meet acceptable moral standards. The appearance of such experts before the Bernardin committee should have been the occasion for probing into the justifications offered for past and current policies—not, as was more likely the case, to solicit their advice as to what the bishops should say in fulfilling their responsibility to provide the faithful with adequate moral guidance.

Daniel Ellsberg's challenging and well-documented introduction to *Protest and Survive* (Monthly Review Press paperback, \$4.95) reveals that the United States has been "using" nuclear weapons for the past thirty-five years and that all the recent presidents (with the possible exception of Ford) approved the policies of "nuclear blackmail" we so freely attribute to Soviet intentions. Are our bishops prepared to tolerate the continuation of this increasingly hazardous game of bluff? This is what is at stake in their apparent willingness, reluctant and contingent though it may be, to go along with possession and continued production of nuclear weapons for the time being.

Despite the fact that Cardinal Krol's widely cited testimony to the Senate is now three-years-old, and that there has been nothing to indicate it had the slightest effect upon national policy, we find the same rationale incorporated in this draft document. Were it not for massive European demonstrations and our own nuclear-freeze movement (neither of which, strangely enough, is mentioned—much less endorsed as one might have hoped), the Reagan policies would still be moving in a direction diametrically opposite to that called for by the cardinal. For the proposed pastoral to content itself with repeating that reluctant acquiescence to the deterrent "paradox," with nothing more than the pious hope that progress will be made toward disarmament in the undefined interim, would be a welcome signal to our policymakers that there is no discernible danger that the bishops' patience will be wearing thin in the foreseeable future.

As one privileged to testify before the Bernardin committee, I did not expect that my pacifist position would be adopted. Thus for the reasons indicated at the beginning of this critique, I am generally well satisfied with the tone and the thrust of the draft document. At the same time I fear its failings are substantial and could prove fatal, in the literal as well as the rhetorical sense of that term. Even the slightest indication of willingness to condone the possession and production of weapons that are admittedly immoral to use or even to threaten to use can only undermine the credibility of the entire document and negate its

inspirational appeal for a new and fuller commitment to "the Gospel vision."

At some point the question must be faced: can we as Christians, can bishops as bishops, tolerate, even reluctantly, continued dependence on nuclear deterrence for any "period of grace" at all? If we apply the familiar cliché and agree that the surest way for evil to triumph is for those who know the good to tolerate the evil in silence, the answer should be obvious. For all of the welcome advances this document represents in tone and thrust, it fails to confront the evil which, as Jonathan Schell has shown, is pushing us beyond genocide, beyond omnicide, to the point where the future itself is foreclosed.

Theological technicalities aside, there are times when a prophetic word must be spoken even if there is no one willing to listen or follow. Those of us who have criticized German Christians and their bishops for failing to mount an effective witness against Auschwitz and all it meant have a responsibility to urge our own bishops to go further than this pastoral proposes, and to oppose the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of instant Auschwitzes that are already waiting to be committed in our name.

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JOAN CHITTESTER

Commonweal:

13 August 1982

Stepping tentatively between prophetism & nationalism

AS I READ this first and, I hope, truly preliminary draft of the American bishops' pastoral letter on peace and war, I found myself dealing repeatedly with two apparently disassociated but perhaps complementary images. The first is the image from Greek mythology of Penelope, the wife and presumed widow of the hero Odysseus, who attempts to delay the disaster of an arranged remarriage by agreeing to go through with the ceremony once the shroud on which she labored was completed. Then she set about weaving all day

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and tearing out stitches all night in order to buy more time for Odysseus's return and so to avoid a confrontation with those men who planned the obliteration of life as she knew and loved it. I remembered, too, a televised interview with an army officer at the rim of an incinerated village in Vietnam. The officer looked back at the scorched and gutted community and explained: "We had to destroy it in order to save it." There is in this first writing of a pastoral on peace and war a sense of hoping that something terrible will go away if we simply go on as we are; a toleration for the intolerable that is so deep in the bloodstream that we can no longer recognize our own moral inconsistencies or the nationalization of our theology.

At the same time, I sensed a deep and sincere struggle. No one comes to positions on the great questions of our time easily, nor it seems do bishops. Nevertheless, the very fact that the body of bishops is addressing the issue at all is potent sign of the relevance and authenticity of the Gospel, reason for great hope. The fact of the matter is that if the church of our country does nothing in the face of planned planetary destruction, then that sin of silence may well be the basis for the second, and more likely last, holocaust of the century. In that case the church, not the Gospel, will have failed.

The purpose of this response is to record faithfully what the present document generated in me as a reader who is just as sincerely attempting to reconcile the life of Jesus with the present state of both the world and the church. In an ecumenical, interdisciplinary study of contemporary Christianity about to be published by the Ecumenical and Cultural Research Institute of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, fifty-five percent of all the Christians polled and thirty-two percent of the Catholics in the study say that church teaching about war is unclear. My fear is that this document, as it now stands, will do little to dispel the confusion. It steps tentatively between prophetism and nationalism. It is often in tension with itself. It gives direction on the one hand, and clouds it on the other.

Here are concepts in the letter which I think need to be clarified and convictions that need to be considered.

The Sign of Jesus. The document draws a strong image of Jesus as the son of God whose mission and life was reconciliation and peace. It reminds us that Jesus did not threaten or retaliate against his enemies, that he did not permit his followers to take up arms in his behalf, that his non-violent approach to enemies was not without cost and that the ministry of Jesus is the ministry of the church. The document is so convincing that peace is a Christian mandate and Gospel risk that one expects this same document to model that. Instead, it is often a defense of war.

The Sign of the Early Church. The document reminds us that for three centuries the early church forbade Christians to be part of the Roman army on the grounds that violence was non-Christian and military service to defend the emperor, a kind of idolatry. It fails, however, to recognize that the willingness to obliterate a people or planet for the sake of national interest or political structures is itself a new idolatry and a breach of the concept of a universal church.

World Interests. The document asserts the need for world government or controls but then itself reasserts nationalism in an age in which, for all practical purposes, nationalism has been defunct for decades. No nation is any longer so isolated, so superior, or so self-sufficient that the arbitrary interests of one do not somehow spell destruction for itself as well as for the others whose interests it disregards.

Conscientious Objection. The document does a great service by reaffirming the validity of conscientious objection in the Roman Catholic tradition. It even introduces the concept of selective conscientious objection, the right of a Christian to refuse to serve in a single war or perform a single military duty on the basis that that particular war or task is unjust or immoral. On the other hand, the document lays a heavy burden on the backs of eighteen-year-old Christians and seems to expect of them what the bishops are apparently not willing to do themselves: to call nuclear war unequivocally immoral and so too the manufacture, stockpiling, and operation of nuclear weapons.

Theological Development. The document recognizes the theological validity of pacifism and the specious nature of a "deterrent" that itself escalates world tension, squanders resources that could otherwise be used to enhance the quality of life, and threatens the very existence of the planet and peoples it sets out to defend. At the same time, the document reaffirms the "just-war theory" despite the fact that the suicidal effect of nuclear confrontation is clearly out of all proportion to any political good that can be done; that discrimination between combatants and non-combatants in both the short- and long-term effects of the bomb is impossible at the outset; and that the policy of national conscription puts soldiers themselves in the category of the innocent. The document calls us "to think of war in an entirely new way" and then does not do that.

Sense of Responsibility. In its better parts, the document questions the entire deterrence argument; calls for a sense of universal social justice that will make war unnecessary; outlaw the use of nuclear weaponry in first-strike operations, in obliteration bombing, and even as a retaliatory action "which would take many wholly innocent lives"; and declares that even the threat to use nuclear weapons is wrong. The document calls for a cessation of further nuclear weapons development and the reduction of existing weapons. It reminds us that there is such a thing as national sin and that the United States itself has need to remember its own "moral outrages" and the "sinful reality of the arms race." It asks for a spiritual regime of abstinence and prayer to recall us to the danger and evil of a nuclear mindset. It requires a strong educational program in the theology of peace and reminds every Catholic of their personal responsibility, wherever they are, to turn the country away from nuclear sin and remember the created unity of all peoples. At the same time, it justifies the nuclear industry; it fails to relate the manufacture of nuclear weapons to the inevitability of nuclear war; it "tolerates" the present national nuclear policy on the grounds that there may be a worse evil than the destruction of the human race or civilized life as we know it. The document talks about "a political and moral

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dilemma" but sounds a great deal more like an American military apologia than it does a great Christian declaration on human life.

AS A RESULT, the pastoral, whose intention, I am sure, is to sound the warning and call the halt to the greatest moral danger of the ages, is itself morally schizophrenic. No matter how you read it, the double messages are clear. The document now says in separate places: We can tolerate nukes, but not for long. We can have them, but not use them. We can use them, but we can't use them first. We can't use them first, but we can't use them to retaliate either. We can use them but not on civilians though military installations abound in the midst of the great cities of the world. We can use them if we control them, but they can't be controlled. We can use them as a deterrent, but they themselves may well be the cause of war.

Most of all, the document undermines the credibility of other episcopal statements. The bishops claim that nuclear destruction and policy are repugnant to them but say it is impossible to be morally absolute in their repudiation of the manufacture or use of nuclear weapons because there is enough need for deterrence and enough doubt about their effects to command their toleration. It is troublesome to note that the bishops show no such hesitation or ambivalence about abortion. In that case from a given principle they draw universal and absolute implications with ease. Catholic hospitals may not permit abortions; Catholic doctors may not perform them; Catholic nurses may not assist at them; Catholic monies may not be used to sponsor abortion clinics. Nevertheless, the arguments for abortion are the same: the promotion of a greater good and the deterrence of evil for the parents or a handicapped child itself, for instance. What is a woman to think? That when life is in the hands of a woman, then to destroy it is always morally wrong, never to be condoned, always a grave and universal evil? But when life is in the hands of men, millions of lives at one time, all life at one time, then destruction can be

theologized and some people's needs and lives can be made more important than other people's needs and lives? It is a theological imperative that we confront this dichotomy.

My hope is that in the final draft of this much needed pastoral, the bishops will complete the prophetic work they have begun. Let them say a clear no to nuclear war and the possession and manufacture of nuclear weapons as well. Let them call Christians to their actual moral responsibility to bring the world back from the brink of its own holocaust. Let them do something effective to deter us from destroying ourselves for our own good. Let them not weave a theology of life with one hand and unravel it with the other. Let them not be like the prophets of the court in times past who said what the government wanted to hear them say but in the saying of it led whole nations to death.

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BISHOPS' DILEMMA

THE CRUEL IRONY OF DETERRENCE

SEBASTIAN MOORE

COMMONWEAL for August 13 is devoted to the bishops' statement on the nuclear menace, the first draft of which is now available. Nine authors give their views on the statement. They represent the main areas of expertise that are germane to the nuclear problematic: moral-theological, spiritual, political, military, scientific. They are all substantive and repay careful study.

There is among them a rough consensus, that the bishops have tried hard, and humbly, to do a good job, and that they have not done too badly. At least it's a beginning.

I want to reflect on what is clearly the key issue in the statement and in the nuclear debate as a whole: the issue of nuclear deterrence. I shall draw on some of the *Commonweal* contributors.

Possessing the nuclear deterrent means insuring that an enemy who launched a nuclear attack would have everything to lose. This means having the potential to cripple the enemy beyond recovery. And this means inflicting untold and unimaginable suffering on people both military and civilian, to say nothing of the ecological implications.

Now while the bishops who drafted this preliminary statement are clear that to inflict such suffering, even in a retaliatory second strike, is totally immoral, and that therefore to *be prepared* to inflict it and *threaten* to inflict it is also immoral, they are bending over backwards to find reasons for "tolerating" the "sinful situation," as they

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call it, of the maintenance of peace by immoral threat.

Why are they doing this? The reason should be clear, though it often is not to their radical critics. The bishops try to tolerate a policy of deterrence, *not* in order to keep in line with national policy, and *not* in order to leave in peace the many Catholics whose livelihood is in defense, but because they do not want to declare morally unacceptable a policy which appears to be the only way we have so far found of making a nuclear holocaust less likely. Where modern nuclear weaponry is involved, the realities are stark, and the priorities pragmatic—too much so for the fastidious moralist. The top priority is “No nuclear war!” Anyone who doesn’t see that does not know what “nuclear war” means. Therefore a policy is moral (or at least morally tolerable) to the extent that it reduces the probability of nuclear war. To reject this morally dubious but solitary prop to nuclear standoff in the interests of moral purity is, in the situation of the world today, morally callous. It comes under the sentence of Jesus against the moral experts who “strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.”

There is, however, another aspect to nuclear deterrence, that is widely ignored. If we have *enough* power to cripple an enemy, then we have *all that is needed* for nuclear deterrence. We do not have to match the enemy’s destructive power, warhead for warhead. The point here is that, with nuclear weaponry, destructiveness in war reaches a kind of ceiling, so that to build beyond that ceiling achieves nothing by a massive long-term increase of risk. The ceiling was not reached before the development of nuclear arms, so the rule *then* was “archer for archer, division for division, battleship for battleship.” The present nuclear arms race is predicated on the tragic mistake of not appreciating this difference and so of building higher and higher beyond the ceiling.

The main task, then, that faces the bishops as they proceed to firm up their statement, is to find a way of saying, trenchantly, simply, and accurately, that the very thing that makes nuclear deterrence tolerable makes the continual arms buildup in the name (falsely assumed) of deterrence absolutely intolerable morally, since it brings the future of all civilization more and more into jeopardy.

As I read around among the best people I can find, the above concept of a minimal but sufficient deterrent seems to afford the only glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. It is impressively advocated by Solly Zuckerman in his new book *Nuclear Illusion and Reality*. Lord Zuckerman, now eighty and a manifestly wise person, was chief scientific adviser to the British government from 1960-1970.

But the concept of minimal deterrence runs into a serious snag. If “crippling the enemy” means wiping out every major city in the Soviet Union, then just one submarine contains enough destructive power for this purpose. But the *content* of this threat is absolutely beyond the bounds of *any* kind of “tolerance,” however grudging and nuanced. And in point of fact, credible military ex-

perts insist that this mass-murder of citizens is no part of military policy. The latter has moved from this “counter-value” strategy to “counterforce” strategy. This means that what we threaten to do, if attacked, is not “wipe out all Soviet cities” but (and I quote from Philip Odeen, one-time Director, Program Analysis, reporting to Henry Kissinger) “to destroy much of the Soviet military machine, industrial targets critical to its military power, and the Communist party structure that started the war. Casualties would doubtless be heavy and millions of civilians would die. But the focus of our strategy and targeting is Soviet military power, not Soviet populations.” *But how much weaponry would be required to secure this less morally heinous aim?* An awful lot more

than one submarine! And the more extended becomes the enemy’s military installation, the more extensive has to be our “deterrent” capability.

Thus you get the cruel irony that a concept of minimal deterrence, which would pull us out of the arms race and massively reduce tension and the risk of nuclear annihilation, is predicated upon a species of threat that is absolutely unacceptable morally; whilst a morally much more acceptable concentration of deterrent strategy on enemy *military* strength keeps the arms race going full belt and daily increases the probability of the ultimate catastrophe. The article just quoted goes on to make this very point: “The only dissents [to the current ‘counterforce’ policy] come from a small minority on the right pushing ‘war-winning’ approaches or an equally small minority on the left (usually extreme arms control advocates) who favor an obviously immoral, minimal nuclear capability only able to threaten large Soviet population centers in a retaliatory strike.”

The piquancy of this situation could hardly be more painful. Not only is the “minimal” deterrent “obviously immoral”; its advocates find themselves to be the bedfellows of extreme warmongers on the right!

Can anyone help me—and the bishops, because they’re going to need it—with this dilemma? At least it highlights the need for the greatest possible maturity and competence on the part of those who have to make the important decisions.

SEBASTIAN MOORE

(Father Sebastian Moore, O.S.B., author of *The Crucified Jesus Is No Stranger* and *The Fire and the Rose Are One*, both published by Seabury, prepared these reflections for a new organization, *Educators for Social Responsibility*, recently founded at Marquette University. Father Moore’s *The Inner Loneliness* will be published this fall by Crossroad.)

First draft says 'yo' to nuclear weapons

By RICHARD MCSORLEY, SJ

EVEN IF ALL the United States bishops agreed with Bishop Walter Sullivan's statement: "No to nukes; no to their use; no to the threat to use; no to manufacture; no to possession" — what difference would it make? The United States would still plan to use them. Many Catholics would ignore the bishops.

Yet it would make a difference. The bishops would be speaking the truth to power. They would be giving clear pastoral direction to the faithful who are looking for it. Enough people might listen that the voice of Christ, "My peace I give you," might be heard in the White House, the Congress, the Pentagon and the Kremlin.

But the bishops who drew up the first draft statement have not spoken as clearly as Bishop Walter Sullivan. They say it is immoral to take part in a nuclear war, to threaten nuclear war, to threaten or execute first strike. If they had stopped there, anyone could understand it. But they go on to make a statement that seems to take back some of what they said. Their draft proposes that "possession" of nuclear weapons can never be approved, but can be tolerated under extremely limited conditions. Although it would always be wrong to wage a nuclear war, it is theoretically possible to imagine circumstances where a nuclear bomb could be used without using it in war and without intending to use it in war.

After hearing that, the ordinary person might ask, "What are the bishops saying?" What does it mean? Are they for or against nuclear weapons? Instead of a "yes" or "no" answer to a life and death question, they hear what sounds like "yo" — an an-

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swer to fit all questioners with contradictory opinions.

Pentagon officials will find it "quaint and curious" for bishops to allow possession but condemn use. They will ignore all the fine distinctions and say "the bishops support us."

Some politicians, hoping the church would add strong moral impetus to the wave of public opinion favoring nuclear disarmament, will find the statement weak.

Those who believe more weapons make us safe will distort the statement to make the bishops say "possession of nuclear weapons, and even use, is morally right."

Moral theologians will have a field day with fine distinctions. How to "possess without intending to use" will become a modern version of "How many angels can dance on the point of a nuclear pin?"

Possession without intention to use is nobody's position. It is a theoretic position. Nobody practices it. The U.S. deterrence position is "mutually assured destruction." We will respond massively if attacked. We may attack first. We may hit all enemy military targets.

Worried that a "no possession" statement might imbalance the terror threat, the bishops tolerate possession with extremely limited use as a lesser evil than unilateral disarmament. This fear of what might happen if all possession was ruled out is given as the argument for toleration of possession. The arguments against possession are not mentioned. Here are some of them:

1. Possession enhances the chance of nuclear war. History shows that all weapons possessed are used.

2. Possession puts the possessor in proximate occasion of sin. Just as it is wrong for an alcoholic to possess alcohol, or a drug addict to possess drugs, so it is wrong for the military to possess nuclear weapons.

3. Possession requires the expense

which is an aggression against the starving poor of the world, even before they are used.

4. Possession is open to misinterpretation by the enemy. It might incite war. Why possess weapons of mass destruction whose only moral use is a theoretical possibility?



5. Possession ignores the weakness of human nature, our tendency to sin. In a moment of anger or crisis, weapons at hand may quickly be used, as is the case with handguns.

6. Possession without intent to use except in an extremely limited manner, only on enemy forces, and only in retaliation, is a merely theoretic position. No nation ac-

cepts it as policy. U.S. military and policymakers would in no way be guided or restrained by such a policy. It could appear to be a covert approval of U.S. deterrent policy, which it is not.

Why give such importance to allowing some kind of possession? Apparently they were trying to avoid confrontation with the administration, with some of the bishops and with some U.S. Catholics. As Bishop Walter Sullivan said, "In attempting to please everyone, they end up pleasing no one."

They have gone ahead and done just what Bishop Michael Kenny of Juneau, Alaska, asked them not to do at last November's bishops' conference. He said, "If we are going to say something in the name of God, let us say it clearly and without fear. After we have said it, let's not take it back in a later paragraph."

Many Catholics will ignore the waffling "possession" statement, and rightly. The bishops clearly condemn the United States' mutually assured destruction policy and first-strike preparations.

On the issue of possession, the pastoral fails to be of any pastoral help. It is an ambiguous theoretic analysis. Moral theologians may understand the fine distinctions about possession. The public won't. The double talk about theoretical "possession without intent to use in war, but possession only for a theoretically possible use practiced by nobody" removes the discussion several steps away from public understanding.

The conflict between bishops over possession gives a nuclear meaning to the saying of St. Francis of Assisi: "All conflict begins with possession."

For that reason Francis decided that his companions would have no possessions. Let us encourage the bishops to say in the spirit of St. Francis, "No possession."

"CLINICAL MADNESS"

In a pamphlet, *The Plain Man's Guide to the Bomb* (Menard Press, London, 1982, 90 p.), addressed to the people of Britain—but of interest to everyone else—Oliver Postgate, author of books for children, describes his reaction to a televised discussion of nuclear warfare and British policy:

The discussion was an obscenity because, however well-meaning the participants were, the discussion could only take place if they concealed from themselves what the discussion was really *about*. If they had allowed themselves to see and feel the reality behind the labels they were thinking with, the very words would have stuck in their throats. . . . I can only remember the language . . . in which everything is wrapped and labelled in such a way that they were able to discuss and evaluate nuances of unimaginable horror as they were "Best Buys" in some gruesome consumer magazine.

Any nuclear exchange, this writer points out, is bound to escalate to total war, so that nuclear weapons have no military significance. They will simply destroy the world.

The hard fact is that "military superiority" no longer exists between nuclear powers. Recourse to military action from a position of strength is an option that became extinct with the arrival of nuclear deterrence, but as the coinage of international power politics is the presumption of antagonism, unless one nation is in a position to threaten the other it cannot go on. Thus the myth that nuclear superiority has a strategic value must be maintained at all costs, if necessary in the face of the present dire peril to the whole planet.

No one of the four billion people on earth wants to be burned to death in nuclear conflagration—

And yet . . . among those four thousand million people there are perhaps forty people who have that power. They seem to believe that in order to achieve some political or economic advantage, or to protect it, they may one day be obliged to carry out the threats they were forced to make in the national interest and do just that . . . even though they know there would be no economics, no politics and no human race left to enjoy that advantage if they did do that.

That is, by definition, clinical madness.

THE AUSCHWITZ OF PUGET SOUND

NAVY SECRETARY John Lehman objects to Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen calling the trident submarine base the "Auschwitz of Puget Sound." He thinks there is something "deeply immoral" in a religious leader speaking out about the preparation for nuclear war. He considers such talk to be "political."

Hitler likewise considered any bishops who opposed his military program to be intruding into politics. Hitler threatened to revoke the church's tax exemption unless that was stopped. In that way, most religious opposition was silenced. Voices that might have spoken early enough and loudly enough to stop Hitler were not heard. Had they spoken out, perhaps today we could be proud to say that the bishop in whose diocese Auschwitz was located, had publicly condemned the mass murder going on there. We could be even more proud if that bishop's warning voice had caught world attention and helped lessen the killing.

Far from wanting bishops to be silent about Hitler's killings, some complain that the Pope did not speak out loudly enough. They

argue that the Pope, as a moral leader, should have openly spoken out in condemnation of Hitler.

If we soon have a nuclear war (as many believe we will), the unlucky survivors may remember with gratitude the prophetic voice of Archbishop Hunthausen calling the trident base the "Auschwitz of Puget Sound." After the trident has gone into action and incinerated hundreds of Soviet cities and their people and after the returning Soviet weapons have turned the trident base and hundreds of American cities into radioactive ash-heaps, Archbishop Hunthausen's comparison to Auschwitz may seem like an understatement.

It is no secret that the trident is as big as two football fields put together, that it travels underwater at forty miles per hour, that it carries 192 nuclear warheads that can be shot from underwater to targets 6,000 miles distant. It is no secret that the trident's nuclear bombs are five times the size of the Hiroshima bomb. It is no secret that we already have enough bombs in our arsenal to destroy every Soviet city of over 100,000 people forty-five times

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over. It is no secret that we cannot defend ourselves against Soviet missiles. Surely the Secretary of the Navy knows all this!

At the trident base we prepare for a nuclear war that no one wins.

Vatican Council II forbids Catholics to be a part of nuclear war, and by implication, to intend one or plan one. Most American Catholics don't seem to realize this, so Secretary Lehman may have done much to get the discussion going by broadcasting the Archbishop's "Auschwitz of Puget Sound" statement.

Open discussion on the issue of nuclear war and preparations for it is badly needed. No nuclear war, nor any preparations for it, can be morally justified. No version of the just/unjust war theory will fit it or give any moral base to it. Is it too much to expect the Secretary of the Navy would be interested in convoking an important discussion about this? A public official should at least give good reasons for what he said, or apologize, or resign.

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