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November 18, 1986

Reprinted by permission of the Editor, from KATALLAGETE, Summer 1986. (Box 2307, College Sta., Berea, KY. 40404)

UNCLE SAM'S SILO

Yes, Sonny, your Uncle Sam put this silo on our farm because he's proud of it and all this land. He's holding something in reserve just in case the Russians ask for it. What's in there gives the world food for thought if not for stomachs. Believe me, my boy, because that silo stands tall, we stand tall. What's in there no weevil can infest or rat destroy. When famine comes no one will rob it, even though it's got the biggest payload you'll ever see. And you can count on it. Once delivered that payload will bring the biggest kick-back you could imagine. After that there'll be no more famine and hunger, no more sowing, sweating and harvesting. Everything will be dark and peaceful as a winter evening. No need for sun to be shining, there'll be fires around the horizon where every city is being fed from silos overseas. Then everyone will be at permanent rest, even the cattle and sheep. And if you're able, you'll look at that silo and remember how proud your Uncle Sam was of you and this land with all its plenty.

Paul Quenon
Abbey of Gethsemani 1986

Commonweal

26 September 1986

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Single copy, $1.50. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $28; Canada, $30; foreign, $33. Special two-year rate: U.S., $49; Canada, $53; foreign, $59. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038.

GRACE MOJTABAI ON BOMBS & BIBLES IN AMARILLO

Living with apocalypse

DAVID TOOLAN

"WE URGE individuals involved in the production and stockpiling of nuclear bombs to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities, and to seek employment in peaceful pursuits." On August 23, 1982, Bishop Leroy Theodore Matthiesen of Amarillo, Texas, addressed that exhortation to workers at the Pantex nuclear assembly plant outside Amarillo. Pantex is *the* final assembly plant of all nuclear weapons manufactured in the United States. Since that time, only one person, Elroy Ramos, father of seven, has responded by resigning from the company. As one ranking federal officer at Pantex put it, the overall reaction to the bishop's letter has been "a great None."

Back in Cambridge, Massachusetts that August, however, Grace Mojtabai clipped and filed a newspaper report of the bishop's statement. The author of four critically acclaimed novels — *Mundome*, *The 400 Eels of Sigmund Freud*, *A Stopping Place*, and *Autumn* — she was just starting to write a fifth. But she couldn't put the bishop's call out of her mind. She kept going back to it, increasingly curious to discover how the bishop's summons was being heard — or "how people of conscience, loving parents, thoughtful neighbors, and devoted churchgoers lived calmly with the prospect of nuclear destruction." Her curiosity became insistent. Eventually it led to the making of a remarkable book, *Blessèd Assurance: At Home with the Bomb in Amarillo, Texas* (Houghton Mifflin, $16.95. 255 pp.). The title comes from an old Protestant hymn, "Blessèd Assurance, Jesus Is Mine."

First and foremost, *Blessèd Assurance* addresses a severe communication problem. Amarillo is both host and hostage to Pantex. A 1982 study of local attitudes toward the plant revealed that "*not one* respondent pointed to a moral position as the cause for stress resulting from Pantex." Throughout every year, but particularly on August 6 and during Lent, however, the city is invaded by anti-nuclear activists who climb over Pantex's barbed wire and netted steel fences to protest, pray, and get arrested. Ms. Mojtabai's book is concerned to cross a third fence, "the barrier of incomprehension which continues to separate the demonstrators from the people working inside and from the townspeople of Amarillo."

Who are these townspeople? "AMARILLO, WE LIKE WHO WE ARE," says the Chamber of Commerce sign at the city limit. This is high prairie, windy, big sky country, virtually off the U.S. map in the western Texas Panhandle. It's also Moral Majority, Bible-belt territory, where "God Said It, Jesus Did It, I Believe It, That Ends It." Amarillo has more than two hundred churches — 191 Protestant, 10 Catholic, 1 synagogue. Ms. Mojtabai lets these people speak, lets them have faces beyond stereotypical ones — from corporate-raider Boone Pickens of Mesa Oil to Sunday school teachers and preachers Charles Jones and Royce Elms. The result, which fleshes out the pervasive influence of fundamentalist apocalypticism, is both disturbing and illuminating.

What keeps Amarilloans impervious to the nuclear arms race, Ms. Mojtabai found, is "an ever-deepening despair of human possibilities." That despair is anesthetized by two varieties of American exceptionalism, one the pseudo-religious faith in steady technological progress, the other "the conviction of blessèd assurance, the promise, for true believers, of exemption and safety from the suffering that might befall others."

But the reader, who does not live in Amarillo, is not left off the hook. "Often, these days," writes Ms. Mojtabai, "I find myself staring at the United States *through* Amarillo, indeed, the longer I look at this city, as Flannery O'Connor liked to say about absolutely anything, 'the more of the whole world I see in it.'" In some sense, "every American is host and hostage to Pantex." Amarillo's story is parable.

Two days before the centennial celebration of the Statue of Lady Liberty last July, I conducted the following interview with Grace Mojtabai in New York City. D.T.

TOOLAN: When you say early on in the introduction to *Blessèd Assurance*, "I am a Jew," and "the prospect of a holocaust consuming millions of human beings can never be

an abstraction to a Jew," I take it that this is one of the keys to the motive behind your book.

MOJTABAI: Well, it's there. I mean I felt that I should say something about my intellectual baggage, or what I came with. I haven't played it up. Some have asked whether there were associations for me between the presence of concentration camps in Europe and the presence of the final assembly plant for nuclear weapons outside Amarillo. People in the book bring it up — they don't want their city to be the Buchenwald of America. But for various reasons, partly because there are other ways of looking at the plant — it's for defensive purposes; we build them so that we don't have to use them, and so on — and partly because I don't want to demonize the people in Amarillo, and don't want to denounce them because I am part of the scene there, habituated to the plant myself, the analogy doesn't really work. I didn't play it up. But it was something that passed through my mind when I became interested in going there and seeing for myself.

TOOLAN: You mention that people in Amarillo claim not to know what the local Pantex plant does. That they feign ignorance that it's the final assembly plant for all nuclear weapons made in this country. Is that still true today?

MOJTABAI: Well, they know. There have been so many people down there questioning them. Mostly they know. They prefer not to dwell on it. I must say that there is a process of habituation to it — and a process of denial. The two are separate. I never have denied Pantex, but I have become habituated to its presence and even the strangeness of it. Not long ago I was taking a reporter out to Pantex. The cows were grazing; they were harvesting wheat right up to the bunkers — and he said, "This is eerie." And I said, "Well, no."

TOOLAN: It had been eerie to you when you first went there.

MOJTABAI: It's eerie now, when I'm in New York thinking about it. It was strange at first sight. And on second sight. But by the tenth or fifteenth or fiftieth time something does happen.

TOOLAN: I thought that one of the most interesting things about *Blessèd Assurance* was the transition that occurred in your own strategy as you sought to understand how Amarilloans could live so peacefully next to the country's sole final assembly plant for nuclear weapons. You came at the project with certain assumptions — that if you understood the geography, the history, and the economics of the place, that would explain why people take Pantex so casually. But at a certain point you seem to have suddenly realized that it was the people's theology, their religious background, that counted more than you imagined. The case in point being the fundamentalist "dispensationalist" vision of history — a tale of repeated human failure to pass God's tests. Time and time again in the past we have failed to escape disaster, and so it will always be. The assumption is that we are powerless to build a just and peaceful future, powerless to avert the nuclear destruction to come. What they rely on, then, what delivers them from despair, is the doctrine of "the Rapture," whereby true believers will be rescued from the coming holocaust.

When you first arrived in Texas, though, you seemed to be the stereotypical New Yorker going down there, thinking, well, as we all know, religion doesn't have much to do with politics. Or religion is a mere mask for other factors. Then you discovered religion was central — and your assumptions had to be radically revised.

MOJTABAI: Well, politics and economics undeniably figure in. But one of the reasons I focused on the religious and gave it, perhaps, disproportionate weight was that it came to me with such a revelation that this was vitally important. And yes, I went down there as the provincial eastern-urban intellectual. You know, on-the-loose, at-large in America, and really puzzled, really uncomprehending. Even though certainly part of my question concerned the response to Bishop Leroy Matthiesen — how do you hear him if you're an Amarilloan? Even with that, however, I discounted the religious dimension.

But I have lived in Iran, and I look at Israel and I have relatives there. And I see the fundamentalist resurgence everywhere in the world. I think one of the reasons I took fundamentalism in Amarillo seriously was that, once I heard its sound often enough there, I was already tuned in, alert to this resurgence. But it took me a long time to believe that it was happening here. Or that people with very moderate religious views — regarded in Amarillo as "sinful" — used religious assumptions to support so many of their other views. Yes, I came from a secular society and stepped off into something very unfamiliar. And that was a real turning point for me.

I don't say the religious factor is the only thing. I focused on it because I wanted to give it weight, maybe disproportionate weight. But somehow I felt it was absolutely necessary for my former self and my friends and associates to take this seriously and give it weight. I felt that Amarillo was important to each and every American — and the book tries to convey some of that conviction.

TOOLAN: What was your background? I take it you've lived in Cambridge (Massachusetts), and in New York.

MOJTABAI: In the sixties I lived in Iran and in Pakistan. I was married then and part of the time my husband was associated with the University of Teheran. Then he became a cultural attaché and we moved to Pakistan. Eventually I came back to this country and took up graduate philosophy at Columbia. For a time, I was teaching philosophy at Hunter College, and later, after going to library school, for six years I was a librarian at the City University of New York.

FATHER DAVID TOOLAN, S.J.*'s book on the consciousness movement,* Facing West from California's Shores, *will be published in the spring by Crossroad.*

26 September 1986

Then I began writing novels. From there I went to the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Studies as a fellow, and that led to a lectureship at Harvard. Then I got a Guggenheim — and at the start of that year off, in the summer, I picked up this newspaper article about Bishop Matthiesen of Amarillo inviting workers to resign from the Pantex plant. I had no notion of why, but filed it away . . . and kept picking it out of my file system and looking at it. The bishop's statement just amazed me. I thought to myself, I'll go to Amarillo and write an article about it to get it out of my system. I went there and stayed a couple of weeks. Of course I had an article and more. I had about two hundred pages of notes. Still puzzled, I came back to New York.

TOOLAN: I'm wondering about the Catholic community in Amarillo. Has there been any sequel to their initial lack of response to Bishop Matthiesen's opposition to the plant's business? Are the Catholics there talking about it? Or has it simply dropped off the face of the map? I understand only one person has resigned from the plant.

MOJTABAI: I started going out after Catholics, but I haven't followed through systematically. The bishop has been heard. And the fact that there was a bishops' pastoral letter on the subject [*The Challenge of Peace*] showed that he was not alone. I thought that would make a big difference. I don't know that it has. Catholics share many of the attitudes of their fellow citizens. They're also a minority and it's painfully visible. There's been a lot of bad blood in the past between Catholics and Protestants there. It's built into some fundamentalist "salvation history" that the Catholic church will form the core of the international order which will help bring the anti-Christ to power. I've heard more anti-Catholic diatribes there than anti-Jewish diatribes.

WHICH MEANS that Catholics are anxious not to offend, not to provoke, not to become too visible. Many of them are Hispanic and Pantex is a good employer. It was, after all, the first affirmative action employer there. I haven't gone after Catholics systematically, but I think many of them feel that Pantex is a good corporate citizen for a variety of reasons. I mean in some sense it *is* a good corporate citizen. It's economically sound, cushioned; people can count on it when other industries fail. And the company does some good things. They contribute to the United Negro College Fund. They do further the higher education of their employees. They car pool, donate blood, have that wonderful Christmas card fund where the money people would spend on cards is given to the needy.

TOOLAN: But you also imply that the company may have had not a little to do with cutting off funding for Catholic Family Services when Bishop Matthiesen established a fund to support workers who wanted to leave Pantex.

MOJTABAI: Yes. On the one hand they are the largest single corporate contributor to United Way. On the other hand, there is a strong possibility that the fact that the manager of Pantex, Charles Poole, was on the board of United Way and demanded "quick action" on the Solidarity Peace Fund [for workers who might heed Bishop Matthiesen's call for resignations] had a lot to do with cutting off funds. I can't document this — it's a hearsay report for which no one will take responsibility — but Poole also stated that there would be a cancellation of the pledges made by Pantex workers to the United Way.

TOOLAN: Is Catholic Family Service still cut off from United Way funding?

MOJTABAI: Well, after reapplying in vain, finally Catholic Family Service decided to break with United Way and go it alone.

Anyway, United Way's suspension of funding really galvanized me. Back in New York, I was on the phone continually with Amarillo, calling United Way, calling Family Service, calling the diocese. I thought it was an extremely vicious move. It was frightening. I have never seen an instance in which a powerful corporation in a town was able to exercise such influence. Incidentally, I think that, quietly, numbers of people canceled their contributions to United Way as a result.

I was very upset about it, and tried to get an Op-Ed in the *New York Times*. The reaction was typical. This is a local story, they said. Finally the *Washington Post* caught it and gave it a full page. Then the *Times* decided to give it a news story. They follow one another. Suddenly it was not a local story. Just as suddenly, the whole country and parts of the world converged on Amarillo. The *Catholic Worker* was finally the only place that would take my editorial.

I finally decided I had to go back to Amarillo. For at that point it became very clear that Pantex was behind the cut-off in funds. One of my responses was, who wants anything to do with this place? But another was, no, no, I have to go back to see this through. So I went back and spent the rest of the year there.

Then I had to go back to Harvard to fulfill a prior teaching commitment. But while I was at Harvard I began taking out maps and drawing circles around Amarillo, trying to figure out how close I could get and have an income. It was the University of Tulsa, 368 miles away, which was as close as I could come. The university fourteen miles away was actively not interested. Tulsa has worked out well.

The unblessed assurance

TOOLAN: In reading your book, I was fascinated with the First United Pentecostal Church and its local pastor, Reverend Royce Elms. Have you had any reaction from him or his congregation to your book?

MOJTABAI: I got a reaction from a cousin of Rev. Elms and it surprised me. She said she read the book at one sitting. She said it very much concerned her and that she was a "thoughtful Christian." Somehow the book disturbed her; she can't quite say how. But she wants to continue the dialogue.

TOOLAN: Isn't that gratifying?

MOJTABAI: Yes. I've had some very nice letters, but that one touched me most. It's from someone searching, struggling. She's not really sure how, but the book speaks to her in a personal way. It concerns her cousin [Rev. Elms]. . . .

TOOLAN: The Reverend Elms's critique of American society sounded at times very much like Father Daniel Berrigan's.

MOJTABAI: Yes, that's it. . . .

TOOLAN: It would take only a slight shift and Rev. Elms's message would be very political, full of hope for what we might do to dampen the arms race, for instance. Your description of the church service was wonderful. It was so earthy and physical. God, I thought, we could use some of that in Catholic churches! But the other part of Rev. Elms's message, what you call his "final solution," was really almost Gnostic. He advocates abandoning earth, leaving it to its nuclear fate. The juxtaposition of earthiness and other-worldliness was very striking.

MOJTABAI: His diagnosis of some of our ills, I think, is so sympathetic. It's his solutions that worry me. When he starts out with his harangue about our living "deliciously" in a world of want, and our never having experienced the devasta-

tion that the nations of Europe have experienced, he is right on target. He's much more astute — at least I find him so — than the Amarillo business people with their bland assurance of upwards and onwards, of steady progress and beneficent technology. When Rev. Elms says that our heads and our hands have outgrown our hearts, I really agree with him. But it's the solution proposed that is devastatingly different. And I find it very dangerous.

TOOLAN: You mean that the true believers are all going to be magically removed from the holocaust?

MOJTABAI: Yes, instantly.

TOOLAN: I take it you also find danger in the literalistic way they read the Book of Revelations — that it refers to nuclear bombs. And that there's nothing much you can do about stopping them from going off?

MOJTABAI: Exactly.

TOOLAN: Is there a possibility, though, that the people in those Baptist and Pentecostal churches would not recognize at all your emphasis on the "end time" — or the central significance you give it? That they wouldn't see the political implications, for instance, of "the Rapture" — that, as you understand it, it means doing nothing to stop the nuclear arms race? Will they, the insiders of this doctrine, recognize themselves in your portrait?

MOJTABAI: It's possible they won't. I mean this "thoughtful Christian" who writes me says, "I don't know what conclusions you've drawn." The fact that I've written the book the way I have makes it possible for her to read it. She's troubled; she senses something, conclusions that are possibly not complimentary. It may be that she's moving from recognition to recognition — as if saying to herself, yes, I know that person, I recognize that teaching.

If I don't impose a quick ideological fix, still I have an agenda. Transparent, not hidden. It's slow and progressively revealing. I've allowed people to speak for themselves wherever possible. In any event, my selection and orchestration is editorial commentary. I'm moving towards a certain realization in the reader, a sense of unease — even though I let it develop more slowly than it developed in myself.

TOOLAN: The question is the weight you give to the end-time thinking. It's very sharp for you — and ominous. Is it equally sharp in these churches? Is it the constant theme of the preaching?

MOJTABAI: It is the constant theme. I don't harp on the dangers but I do come in, do speak of them.

TOOLAN: What I wondered, though, was whether, say for the Rev. Elms's parishioners, apocalypticism actually entails escape from political responsibility or abandoning the earth to inevitable nuclear holocaust.

MOJTABAI: Well, doesn't it go back to Elms's indictment of contemporary American society? As you say, it's close to Daniel Berrigan's. To some extent I follow Elms sympathetically — that I might disarm the reader because I want a certain amount of disarming. But this might also distract from the fact that when I settle on Elms's solution, which I discuss at length and critically, the reader may miss how appalled I am by it.

But I don't think fundamentalist readers fail to recognize themselves in my account, or miss my point. Amazingly, a Sunday school teacher at First Baptist picked up the book and apparently read it. When the book comes out, I thought, that will be the end; we won't talk again. No, his response was extremely thoughtful. He said we all have to read this book and think about it. And this from the man who led me to the book on the fundamentalist doctrine of biblical inerrancy!

TOOLAN: But will the fundamentalist parishioner assent to the logic you see in his extreme end-time thinking: that it means it's futile to do anything to prevent nuclear war, that we'd best drop out of politics altogether? I am still wondering that maybe for one of these parishioners, the logic would not run that way at all.

MOJTABAI: Well, they're not dropping out of salvation history, which is all that matters. They are not dangerously passive. They are working actively in their missionary activities to bring people into this life of salvation. So they do have a sense of social responsibility. So, within their worldview, they're doing all that matters. For our part — and from their viewpoint — we're distracting ourselves from essential business and we're losing our place in salvation history. This earthly history doesn't count.

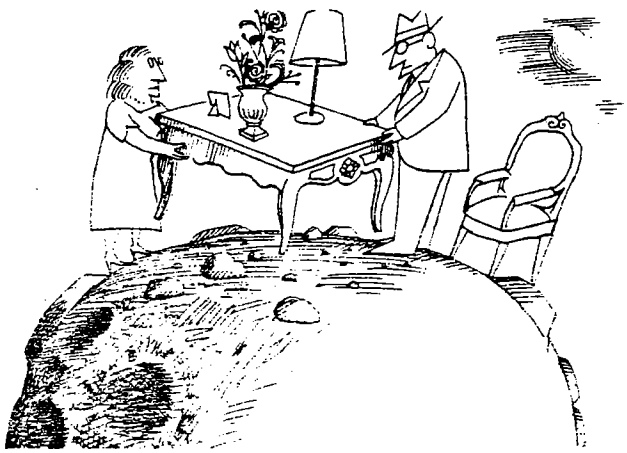
TOOLAN: The neuralgic point is the juncture between salvation history and earthly history, is it not?

MOJTABAI: Our earthly history is doomed. The script is already written [in the Book of Revelation].

TOOLAN: But one of my fellow editors at *Commonweal*, who grew up a Baptist, tells me that her experience of being a Baptist did not entail this narrow focus on saving one's own soul. When she describes all the social activities and works of mercy her church's youth ministry involved her in, it sounds much closer to the Catholic Worker.

MOJTABAI: Okay, they *are* involved in certain charitable activities, always. And there is this complete social life. They have singles ministers, prison ministers, and there is an active social dimension. For the young and the elderly it's wonderful. All of it, however, is aimed at bringing people in. That's the hope if not the expressed intention. Bringing them in, saving them. In fact, they would say they haven't abandoned the world. But the fact is that their intentions are to bring people into ideological conformity, make them like themselves. Even though credal conformity isn't expected. A Southern Baptist feels very little is asked of you: just to be born again, to confess Jesus as your personal savior, and then you're freed.

NONETHELESS, if you're an outsider — a Moslem, Jew, or Hindu — the whole idea is to bring you into the club. The way I am placed, this does not look to me like reaching out to the ends of the earth and welcoming as neighbors all the inhabitants of the earth. Indeed it looks very different to me. Yes, they are socially concerned; they're involved in all sorts of charitable work. But the intent I find narrow. Because it isn't simply helping to help, or expressing neighborliness and perhaps giving the Gospel flesh that way — or just living the Gospel that way. They couldn't just live among the Moslems, without proselytizing, as certain Catholic missionaries do. The way I am placed makes it look to me as if their cross is one-sidedly vertical, or at least with a very short horizontal arm directed almost exclusively to the proselytizing mission. Of course if I were a born-again Christian, I wouldn't see the narrowness.



A very large living room

TOOLAN: You make some hard judgments in the book. But your own position is not in the foreground; to a great extent it's recessed. So it seems to me that this allows questions to come out of the reader's own reflection.

MOJTABAI: Yes, that was part of the point. To make it possible for people in Amarillo to see themselves, and to listen to themselves. Without some smart aleck from the east coming in and overvoicing everything — summarizing it all. In fact, one of the original editorial comments from my publisher was, "too much religion" and, well, "summarize it." Say it in your own words. And I did where I felt it was absolutely necessary, but stood back wherever I could, so that it would be possible for Amarilloans to read and listen. Yes, that was very deliberately done.

TOOLAN: What would you like to see happen to Amarilloans, to the readers of your book? Or what has already happened locally that you have seen?

MOJTABAI: I hope that there will be, if not some discussion, at least some soul searching. I want to reach the people in the pews. And the people in Amarillo who aren't in the pews. So they all know what's going on in the churches on the other side of town. Those in the pews of the richer churches, you see, don't know what's going on in the poorer churches on the other side of town. Second Baptist was formed as a mission church from First Baptist. But I'm not sure that at First Baptist they are familiar with what's being taught at Second Baptist. More, I'm not sure that the pastor of First Baptist knows what his 525 Sunday school teachers are saying. These are not credal faiths, so there's a certain freedom within limits.

The people in my book live in the same town, close by each other, but they haven't met, haven't spoken to one another. The book was a chance to bring them into a very large living room — which I don't possess, you know — and to let them listen to one another.

ONE OF THE reactions that I have already heard about was something at a party. I'm told one woman went up to another woman and asked, "Have you read *Blessèd Assurance*?" There was a sudden silence in the room. Everyone was listening. The woman said no. But it's likely that people would read the book and not be willing to say anything about it — in

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public. But that's all right — if they are thinking about it.

Another reaction occurred at a bookstore. Someone called and asked the bookstore, have you got that book about Amarillo, and the salesperson said "what book?" You know, the caller said, there's a new book about Amarillo — and finally the salesperson said that's not about Amarillo, that's about Pantex. I don't know that that's typical, but it's an interesting precision.

Again, I heard recently that people were standing in line at a bookstore, waiting for something else than my book — but they were talking about Pantex. Well, that's new. Just a short while ago there wasn't much talk of Pantex in town. People would only talk when questioned by reporters, not amongst themselves.

A necessary move

TOOLAN: You spoke before of your "former self." What effect has writing this book had on you?

MOJTABAI: It's completely changed my life.

TOOLAN: For one thing, you've moved to Amarillo.

MOJTABAI: It's completely changed my life. It's too early for me to really assess or understand all that has happened or even all that propelled me to make that move, to decide to go and live there. But I lead a much more distraction-free life there.

Someone from the *Dallas Morning News* wanted to know what difference it's made physically. I live in one small room, and it's all working space — not entertaining space. Not that I ever "entertained" very much, but at least I had the furniture that allowed me to. Now I have a folding bridge table, a bridge chair, and a lamp, which I fold up and take with me to Tulsa, where I now teach half the year. With my pots and pans I look like a peddler. And of course some books. Yet I've had to decide that even books I collected were impediments. So it's been a stripping-down process. I won't say a conversion. I put all the trappings of my trade aside. I keep the essential books, the essential furniture. The bare essentials. (I really did accumulate books.) That's what's different. My worldly possessions are at a minimum.

ANOTHER RESULT of the move is that I take religion much more seriously than I did. I wouldn't say I am closer institutionally, that I am exactly more at home anywhere. But I pay more attention than I did — in my own fashion. I continue going to Masses even though I don't have to. At times I get nothing out of it. You know, sometimes the homily is indifferent. Yet even without the Liturgy of the Word, the symbolism of the Eucharist is very meaningful to me. I even continue to go back to some of the Protestant churches. . . .

TOOLAN: Perhaps because you want to hear better sermons?

MOJTABAI: Yes. And also because I miss keeping up with what people are thinking. This year Doctor Winfred Moore [of First Baptist in Amarillo] challenged the right-wing candidate for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention. He was the more moderate conservative candidate. I went back for his homecoming when he lost. He was very well received by his congregation. They all sang "Sweet, Sweet Spirit." And I joined in this time, holding hands.

TOOLAN: But what brought you to move there? What was that about?

MOJTABAI: Well, first of all I felt I couldn't understand Amarillo unless I were there on a day-to-day basis and saturated, steeped in daily life. For instance, for a long time it was a puzzle to me that the houses were built close together. It seems silly to me now, but I spent more time on this "problem." And then there are those fences, very tight; there are no chinks between the slats. They are privacy fences, I thought. I went all over Amarillo asking people, "Why do you have such fences?" They would give me answers and I wouldn't believe them. I thought there was something deeper at work here, and devious, even demonic. Because here you have all those close-knit houses — as if they wanted to be close to each other — and yet they're divided sharply by those fences. Well, the minute I moved to Amarillo and became a home-renter — not a home-owner — I realized that those fences are necessary just to keep the wind out. There was no other way I could have been convinced. I opened my door a crack and everything blew in. It was that simple.

Certain matters could only be clarified by being there. Living there, I knew what required deep probing and what was simply a fact of life. I didn't have to make up projects for myself. Moreover, wherever I was, I could start talking casually and learn something. It was a necessary move — simply from the standpoint of the book I wanted to write.

BUT THEN, why stay there after the book is written? I wanted to be there when the book came out, and not run away. I felt it was important to say, I'm here. That's why I'm staying on. I do care about the community. I like it. I love the landscape. The place has made it possible for me to live in a certain way which is congenial. I have a lot of friends there. Not the same kind of friends I used to have in New York or Cambridge — occupationally alike or like-minded.

TOOLAN: So concretely, it's more ecumenical or pluralistic for you than New York or Cambridge?

MOJTABAI: Yes, I cross boundaries more easily in Amarillo. I mean here I could theoretically, but I don't. It just doesn't happen. But there, though it's a city, it's a small town. So I know people and they know me. I can be very inward there. But when I don't want to be inward and feel I shouldn't be, I can also be out in the world — with others and for them. Not in a little pocket as one often is in New York or Cambridge. In Amarillo — though you don't have the variety of attitudes, ethnic groups, and religious groups you would have in New York — strangely enough, I mingle and make friends with people whose occupations, religious beliefs, and political beliefs are very different from mine. Somehow that friction and that mingling are very important to me. It's not restful, but I don't want to rest.

The reprint below is a follow-up on the article "The Case Against Star Wars" which appeared in the Princeton Alumni Weekly 9/25/85 and was reproduced in Laucks Foundation's Reprint Mailing No. 79 (Dec.'85). The following is a reproduction of Prof. Philip W. Anderson's part in his "Dialogue About Star Wars" with U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz (in which the Secretary defends SDI as a hedge against Soviet actions, a spur to negotiating arms reductions, and a potential means to increasing security and stability in the future). This is reprinted by permission of Professor Anderson and the Princeton Alumni Weekly from the PAW of 3/26/86.

I AM FLATTERED Secretary Shultz has chosen to discuss my article on SDI. His remarks are characteristically reasonable and moderate. I would like to address his points one by one:

Soviet "Defense" Program

We should not confuse the questions of Soviet intentions and integrity with whether the American SDI concept is physically viable or economically possible. Nor should our decisions be governed by our perception of what the Soviets are doing. There are many things the Soviets do which we need not copy; as an example, the Soviet manned space program is even more extravagant and less scientifically productive than our own and there would be little point in imitating it.

> "The scientific community has seen sound technical arguments on weapons systems fail in the face of political pressure."

Prior to March 1983, we had a program of ABM research costing $1 billion a year, a sum equivalent to the NSF budget for all of civilian science and engineering research. At that time much of the research that is now considered as particular to the SDI effort was already in place. A number of studies judged that this level of expenditure was already a more than adequate hedge against Soviet breakout.

Soviet Offensive Forces

It is of utmost importance to emphasize that two-thirds of the U.S. deterrent forces (assuming that deterrence is meant to be the role of our weaponry) are submarine- or air-launched and invulnerable to the SDI concept of boost-phase intercept as well as to any Soviet first strike. The Soviets, for understandable if complex reasons, have a more vulnerable deterrent force. Under these circumstances, while I am sure Secretary Shultz's assurance that "we do not seek . . . unilateral advantage" is sincerely meant, it is unlikely to impress the Soviets, especially as the Secretary cannot speak for future administrations.

As an aside, at this point I would like to say there is a problem in that most laymen do not really understand what is involved in SDI. Certainly just now there is an awareness of human fallibility. For our purposes here, I would like simply to explain that "boost phase" is the main difference from older ABM concepts, and it means that an umbrella of "kill vehicles" in space would cover a hostile country to guard against weapons (missiles) being launched. Even assuming such an umbrella could be made to work, it seems likely that not only the Soviets but any other member of the nuclear club—say, France—would not accept this absolute control over its strategic (or deterrent) strength.

Criteria for Evaluating Defenses

I am glad to hear the Secretary restate these. The scientific community has seen sound technical arguments on weapons systems fail in the face of political pressure.

Secretary Shultz says, of the scientific dissent regarding SDI, that "many talented scientists believe otherwise." We should look at what talented scientists are trying to tell us. It is not at all usual to be able to sign up 60 percent of the physics faculties of the nation's top universities; nor to find near-unanimity among American Nobel Prize winners, nor to hear an anti-Administration resolution on a highly controversial matter from the Council of the American Physical Society (including several past presidents). It is truly extraordinary how few scientists of real reputation are willing to support SDI publicly—I can pretty well count them on the fingers of one hand, and of those I can count not a single one is still active in research or has been for at least a decade. Even among scientists who receive SDI funding, support is extraordinarily soft; one hears privately, with some dismay, that it is justified because the concept of SDI is a useful bargaining chip, or a stick to frighten the Russians with, or that research money should be accepted from whatever source.

SDI opponent Anderson

ROBERT P. MATTHEWS

Philip W. Anderson, who is Joseph Henry Professor of Physics at Princeton, won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1977.

The ABM Treaty

There is a perceptible semantic problem when the Administration's political spokesmen speak of "defense" and the "defense" philosophy, while the actual SDI program, as described by Gerald Yonas of the SDI office or in the Office of Technology Assessment reports recently published by Princeton University Press [PAW, February 26], constitutes essentially a strengthening of our "deterrent"—a very offensive sort of defense. Many aspects of SDI (e.g., "Kill vehicles" over Soviet territory and local "hard target" defense of our ICBM's) may sound more belligerent than defensive to the Soviets.

SDI and Our Allies

Is it not too early to address the problem of what worldwide reaction to a global U.S. policing of space might be? (See "aside" above.)

Conclusion

I am heartened that Secretary Shultz "has no preconceived notions" about SDI. But in speaking of potential benefits, he neglects the many potential costs: the militarization of research, for instance, and, should the system be deployed, a great shift in our entire economy. It seems to me the greatest danger the Soviets can put us in is that of becoming more like them, and this is, in terms of military dominance and obsession with "security," the direction in which Star Wars leads us.

The secret of our extraordinary success in building and maintaining history's most powerful, permanent, and effective defensive alliance has been the perception that our civilian-dominated economy and open society are far more attractive and far less threatening to any nation which has anything to lose than is the secretive and militaristic Soviet system. In militarizing our economy we can lose that most valuable of all advantages. □

FRONTIERS

RELIGION SCIENCE EDUCATION

A Grim Analysis

EVIDENCE accumulates that the entire modern world, with some few hardly influential exceptions, is doing things wrong and that the earth itself, with the voice of its living things, is crying out in protest. How long this can go on is anybody's guess, but the prediction of ultimate breakdown will certainly come true, sooner or later. We must, it seems clear, become citizens of the world with a fully developed sense of responsibility, but how that can be accomplished remains a mystery. Already the evidence of this necessity is clear at the scientific level. An example is given in Peter Bunyard's editorial in *The Ecologist* (Vol. 16, No. 1, 1986), "Waldsterben and the Death of Europe's Trees."

Bunyard, one of the magazine's editors, begins:

> The acidification of lakes, rivers and soil profiles in parts of Scandinavia, in Scotland and other parts of Europe, equally the dying of forests over a vast area stretching from Italy to Russia are issues that can no longer be ignored. Latest reports indicate that up to 7 million hectares of Europe's forests—an area equivalent to one third of the United Kingdom —show signs of damage, with at least 250,000 hectares dying or dead, while in southern Scandinavia tens of thousands of lakes are now entirely devoid of fish. Indeed, in South Norway alone more than 30,000 square kilometres of lakes are either fishless or have reduced fish populations.
>
> As Professor Peter Schüt of Munich University makes clear, the entire woodland ecosystem in many parts of Europe is breaking down, giving the coup de grace to centuries of deforestation. And even if not the worst affected, Britain has not escaped damage to her trees, an initial survey carried out by Friends of the Earth on beech and yew showing many trees to be suffering the same symptoms as found in Europe. Britain, meanwhile, is one of the least forested countries in the world.

At the meeting at Helsinki in July, 1985, concerned with long range transboundary air pollution, twenty-one countries signed a "Protocol" on sulphur emissions, pledging themselves to reduce their emissions or transboundary fluxes of sulphur dioxide by at least 30 per cent before 1993. Fourteen countries, did not sign, among them Britain. Britain's claim is that "the causes of acid rain and acidification are not properly known and that the effect of Britain's own transboundary emissions on the Scandinavian environment remain unproved." Meanwhile, Britain's Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) refuses to install flue gas desulphurization, by reason of the added cost of electricity involved. The Board also says that there are "other, as yet unidentified sources of sulphur oxide emission and deposition." Bunyard comments:

> On scientific grounds the CEGB has a point; we are still abysmally ignorant as to the precise mechanism of either acidification or waldsterben. In both instances complex photochemical reactions are at play in the atmosphere. What is increasingly certain is that the sum of our industrial activities is at the root of the problem, basically through upsetting natural nutrient cycles. Certainly the British approach to pollution control is much to blame, particularly that of "discharge, disperse and dilute," for we have assumed that as long as the chimney stacks are tall enough, and the discharge pipes into the sea and estuaries long enough, the environment will do the rest for us, taking our pollutants away from our own shores and hopefully diluting them sufficiently by the time they reach anyone else's. . . .
>
> While few doubt that acidification is linked to acid rain and the increasing burden of acid precursors carried in the atmosphere, particularly over the industrialized north, the dying of the trees appears to be caused by different, even though linked phenomena. What *"waldsterben,"* as the Germans call forest die-back, and acidification undoubtedly have in common are man's industrial activities. And since both types of ecological crises have really manifested themselves in recent years, certainly post World War II, the conclusion must be that the changes in the environment are caused by relatively new industrial practices and ways of living. Tree death and acidification have both been observed before, but always in the vicinity of massive industrial practices—huge steel works for example. The worrying aspect of today's environmental damage is that it is taking place in relatively pristine environments away from industry and people. Indeed waldsterben was first discovered on the hilly slopes of the Black Forest and in southern Bavaria.

What then, and who, Bunyard asks, are to blame?

> One would have thought the acidification story to be clear-cut. Scandinavia, the worst affected area in Europe, imports for instance far more sulphur in the form of dioxide than it generates within its own borders. Thus each year on average some 600,000 tons of sulphur are deposited in Sweden, mostly in the south, while only 100,000 tons come from Swedish sources. Britain meanwhile produces some 2,670,000 tons on average, of which less than one third are deposited in the country itself, the remainder being carried out over the North Sea by prevailing winds. Indeed the UK contributes almost as much sulphur to the Swedish environment as does Sweden itself, and given Sweden's commitment to reduce their emissions to one-third the 1978 level by 1995, the UK by then will actually be depositing more; that is, unless there is a fundamental change of heart in Britain's attitude.

So, on every side, we have reason to recognize that the time has come for the abandonment of nationalism and the identification of oneself as "belonging" to a national state. We all now belong to the world and the welfare of the world is a common responsibility.

Peter Bunyard goes on with his array of evidence:

> . . . it can hardly be coincidence that the worst affected forests in Europe are those downwind from the tall stacks of industry. Similarly the 400 foot high stacks of the CEGB's coal and oil fired power stations must have something to do with the burden of sulphur and nitrogen oxides reaching Scandinavia. Yet there are other sources of sulphur and nitrogen compounds which may be equally important, and which to date have been largely ignored. The discovery of

massive algal blooms in the North Sea has prompted Jim Lovelock to suggest that a major source of sulphur may be of marine origin. Indeed, nutrient runoff into the offshore environment—sewage from our cities, nitrates from farming and horticulture—is leading to eutrophication of the sea. . . . To complicate the matter still further, increased manure production because of animal feedlots and intense animal husbandry is leading to large ammonia and ammonium hydroxide releases to the atmosphere. In parts of Sweden spruce and pine appear to be dying from excess nitrate uptake of manurial origin, the algal slime covering the needles suggesting a kind of terrestrial eutrophication.

Motor vehicles are the other main sources of nitrogen oxides, but they have become such an important part of our modern way of life that no government would consider imposing restrictions on their use.

Bunyard concludes:

The tragedy is that we are already in the throes of an environmental crisis and anything we are doing at prese especially the half measures we are taking, may be too lit too late. To wait for science to give us exact answers as the cause of acidification and waldsterben, as our governm and the CEGB are intent on doing, is an act of callous ir sponsibility. We will have to act on all fronts, considering sources of pollution as potentially to blame.

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