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RADICAL THOUGHTS ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

About twelve years ago, I published an article, "Toward a Consistent Natural-Law Ethics of Killing," American Journal of Jurisprudence, 15 (1970), pp. 64-96. In that article, I briefly discussed the nuclear deterrent. My conclusion was that such deterrence includes a morally unjustifiable intent to kill persons. All who share this intent morally ought to repent and immediately cooperate in dismantling the deterrent. I also argued that nothing the Soviet Union might do nor any other expected bad consequence of dismantling the nuclear deterrent can justify the U.S. in maintaining it.

Up to now I see no reason to change the conclusion and argument I proposed twelve years ago. However, while few were interested in discussing the morality of nuclear deterrence then, everyone is discussing it now. If I had time, I might now undertake a thorough study of the many aspects of nuclear deterrence, with a view to clarifying this subject as I have tried to clarify other moral issues. However, this paper has a more modest purpose: to articulate several propositions, some of them currently widely ignored, which would be central to a more adequate treatment.

I.

Most of those contributing to the current discussion are trying to prove a single thesis: that the U.S. cannot reasonably plan to fight and win a nuclear war against the U.S.S.R. The evidence adduced for this thesis is that the probable levels of destruction in any such war would be so great that no good which might be gained could possibly warrant the losses which would be suffered by even the technically more successful side. Thus, there could be no winner in a political sense, even if one side prevailed by utterly destroying the other without being utterly destroyed itself.

I think this thesis has been sufficiently and successfully argued. Thus, in what follows I assume that the weapons component of our nuclear deterrent ought not to be considered usable in any war we plan to fight and win, but must rather be considered strictly as a capacity to execute the deterrent.

Probably the strongest argument for the position that we must be ready to fight and prevail in a war using the weapons component of the nuclear deterrent is that without such readiness the deterrent itself will become wholly detached from the realities of military power and its uses, and so will become incredible. This argument is at least plausible and perhaps cogent, for it makes little sense to have means of destruction whose use is restricted to a situation in which that use would be pointless.

However, since my position is that the deterrent itself is morally unjustifiable and that we ought to renounce and dismantle it, I am not moved by this argument for realistic planning for military use of nuclear weapons. Against an antideterrence position such as mine, this argument for a nuclear war-fighting capability is question-begging. Moreover, if one grants that the U.S. cannot reasonably plan to fight and win a war against the U.S.S.R. using the weapons component of the nuclear deterrent, then the argument that readiness to fight such a war is necessary for a credible deterrent becomes a powerful argument against the attempt to maintain the deterrent.

Many today are saying that the primary moral imperative with respect to nuclear weapons is to prevent their use under any conditions. This statement is unsatisfactory. In the first place, moral imperatives bear directly upon choices, not upon goals. The primary moral imperative is, not to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, but to judge conscientiously whether it is right to plan and threaten to use them, and then to choose policies only in accord with conscientious judgments. In the second place, even those who think we must be ready to fight and win a nuclear war will agree that we must prevent the use of nuclear weapons under any conditions. This is

precisely why they want a nuclear war-making capability: to maintain a credible deterrent and thus to prevent the use, which no one wants, of nuclear weapons.

There are certain other questions, not seriously debated by anyone, which are often confused with the central moral issue involved in nuclear deterrence.

First, in the just defense of others, people can be morally required under certain conditions to use deadly force against those who are wrongly using or preparing to use deadly force. I agree with those who hold, against complete pacifism, that one can have an obligation to impede and destroy force unjustly employed by others, and that one may use deadly means of doing this if less damaging means are unavailable or insufficient.

Second, deterrence as such is not immoral. If it is morally allowable to do something and threatening to do it will prevent someone else from doing a wrong, then one may make the threat and hope one will not have to carry it out. For instance, if it is morally allowable for a man to shoot someone trying to kidnap his child, then it also is allowable to threaten to shoot anyone who attempts such a kidnapping.

Third, nuclear weapons, despite their dangers and great destructive power, might have legitimate uses, such as the destruction of an unjustifiably invading army or fleet. This is not to say that in the present situation the U.S. is justified in planning to use nuclear weapons tactically, for that is another question. The point I make here is the more basic one: Nuclear weapons are not in themselves immoral; only the intent to use them in certain ways is immoral.

The preceding three points can be summed up. The problem about the nuclear deterrent is not that it involves death-dealing weapons, nor that these are nuclear, nor that they are used to deter. The problem, rather, is the precise intent to kill included in this particular deterrent threat.

Everyone also agrees that all wars are bad; every war should if possible be avoided. Christian moralists also will agree that wars occur only by the free choices of

those who wage them, and so all wars could be avoided if the contending parties accepted God's grace and mutually agreed to live in peace.

Furthermore, it is clear that two or more parties can be using or threatening violence without any of them having a moral justification for its actions. In such a case, it is plain that all the contending parties are under a common moral obligation to stop their wrongdoing and disarm.

Thus all agree with the sentiments expressed by saying: "No more war!" and: "Let all involved in this madness lay down your arms!" But such sentiments do nothing to clarify the moral issue central to deterrence. I now turn to this issue, and first state and defend the relevant moral norm.

To choose to kill the innocent is always wrong. The reason for this is that human life is an intrinsic good of persons, and a choice to kill persons is a will closed to this good. But a morally good will must be open to the full-being of persons. Thus, the antilife will present in the choice to kill an innocent person cannot be morally upright.

Why do I limit the norm to choices to kill the innocent, and what is meant by "innocent" here? Most Jews and Christians have thought that certain choices to kill are divinely authorized and hence justified. Among these are choices to execute certain types of criminals and to kill enemy soldiers in a justifiable war. For my present purpose, it is unnecessary to deal with these types of killing. Therefore, I set them aside by limiting the norm I state to the choice to kill the innocent.

"Innocent" here does not refer to the personal moral condition of those whose killing is excluded. Rather, it refers to those who are harmless, in contrast to the criminals and enemy soldiers who are involved in socially harmful, objectively unjust, violent behavior. Thus, the norm means that it is wrong to choose to kill anyone who neither has been nor is engaged in such behavior.

Limited to the innocent, the norm which forbids the choice to kill persons has the support of the entire Christian moral tradition. It is the bare minimum which Christian teaching demands by way of reverence for human life.

The will to kill under conditions not in one's own power has the same moral quality as the will to kill unconditionally, even though one might never carry out one's murderous intent. For example, a robber armed with a gun and prepared to kill with it if necessary is morally a murderer, even though he or she hopes to do the robbery under cover of the threat of murder without actually killing. Of course, in maintaining the deterrent we wish that it not be used. We will execute the threat only very reluctantly and only if we are forced to do so. Yet this condition does not limit our willingness to kill. It only limits our execution of this willingness.

The threat which constitutes our nuclear deterrent has been expressed in various ways. During World War II, the U.S. engaged in terroristic obliteration bombing of both Germany and Japan, culminating in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The early form of the deterrent threat was that we would retaliate massively against an enemy aggressor at a time and place of our own choosing, to do again what we had done to Japan. Later, as the U.S.S.R. acquired nuclear capability of its own, our threat was reformulated.

But the constant feature in U.S. nuclear deterrent policy has been the threat that no matter what damage an aggressor might inflict upon us, we are ready, willing, and able to respond by inflicting unacceptable damage--for example, the destruction of twenty million Soviet citizens or the destruction of twenty-five percent of the population of the U.S.S.R. and fifty percent of its industrial capacity. The official United States Military Posture statement, prepared by the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for FY [fiscal year] 1983, p. 19, issues the threat which constitutes the deterrent in the following terms:

The prime objective of US strategic forces and supporting C³ [command, control, and communications] is deterrence of Soviet nuclear attack on the US and its allies. Deterrence depends on the assured capability and manifest will to inflict damage on the Soviet Union disproportionate to any goals that rational Soviet leaders might hope to achieve. Any US strategic retaliation must be controlled by and responsive to the NCA [national command authority(ies)], tailored to the nature of the Soviet attack, focused on Soviet values, and inevitably effective.

The word "values" here is used in a technical sense, familiar to readers of works on nuclear deterrence, to refer to persons and property as distinct from military forces. This official document and others like it constitute national policy by virtue of Congress' reliance upon them in enacting the legislation which authorizes and funds the activities of the Department of Defense. Thus, in this and similar documents the U.S. issues the threat, which includes the choice, to kill persons innocent in the relevant sense under conditions not in our control. Hence, our choice of this policy is morally unjustifiable. The intent--that is, the manifest will--essential to the nuclear deterrent is murderous.

Someone might object that present U.S. policy does not include a clear and unambiguous threat to target cities as such. It seems to me that the phrase, "focused on Soviet values," is a clear threat to target cities as such. But even if all our nuclear weapons were targeted on strictly military objectives, it would not follow that the intent included in the deterrent does not encompass the death of millions of innocents. The object of our policy choice is deterrence, and the deaths of the millions of innocents are an essential part of the threatened harm. Hence, these deaths are included in what we choose; they are not merely an accepted side-effect. When destruction which is a side-effect of one's outward behavior is essential to the attainment of one's purpose, such destruction is included in what one morally does. Hence,

targeting is not the issue. The issue is the will to kill the innocent which is included in any real threat to bring about their deaths.

Some have tried to argue that the millions whose lives we threaten with our deterrent are not really innocent. They are part of a totalitarian society which is engaging in total war against us. Thus, the argument goes, those threatened somehow are participants in the unjust activities of their nation.

This argument fails. In its traditional sense, as I have explained, "innocent" refers to those who have not been and are not involved in criminal or military action. The deterrent threatens many small children, elderly persons, and others who by no stretch of the imagination can be considered participants in any unjust harm. Indeed, the Soviet peoples as a whole are oppressed peoples; they probably share far less in what their leaders are doing than we share in what our leaders are doing.

What is even more important, the deterrent threat does not bear upon anyone insofar as he or she is engaged in unjust, harmful action. It bears upon a mass of persons indiscriminately just insofar as their lives are values--that is, are of some importance to their leaders--and their deaths disproportionate to any goals which these leaders, if they are rational, might hope to achieve. Even those who might have been justly killed in a battle will be unjustly killed if the deterrent is carried out, for they will be killed, not as agents of unjust violence, but as victims of an unjustifiable exchange of hostages.

If the deterrent fails and the time comes to carry out the threat we have been making, perhaps those in authority will not do so. Indeed, perhaps even now President Reagan and a few of those close to him have made up their minds that under no circumstances would they ever give the order to carry out the threat of the deterrent. Such a decision would make sense, for if the time ever comes to execute the deterrent, there will be nothing to gain by doing so.

If our leaders have made such a secret decision, their making it is to their personal moral credit. However, the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons is only as credible as the apparent resolve to carry out the threat if deterrence fails. Deterrence requires not only assured capability but also manifest will. Therefore, our public policy, in which all of us more or less willingly participate, must remain a firm commitment to kill millions of innocent persons if the deterrent fails. Even if most of us were to reject and morally dissociate ourselves from this policy, as we can and should do, the public act of deterrence and the personal acts of those who sustain the public act will continue to include the murderous intent which alone makes the deterrent effective.

One sometimes hears the suggestion that even if our present deterrent includes murderous intent, one can conceive a deterrent without such intent. A nation might have nuclear weapons, neither intend nor threaten to make any immoral use of them, yet by their potential alone frighten an unprincipled adversary who would assume that no other nation would respect any moral boundary.

This suggestion might have been helpful had it been offered before the present deterrent policy was adopted. But, unfortunately, we are already committed to an explicit deterrent including murderous intent. Having made this threat, any attempt to withdraw or substantially weaken it without dismantling our deterrent capability would invite disaster. Our persistence in the new policy would remain uncertain, and so the U.S.S.R. would be strongly tempted to take advantage of our probably temporary unreadiness to retaliate by launching a devastating first strike.

Some will argue that our persistence in the deterrent, even though it includes murderous intent, somehow is justified by the equally murderous intent of our adversaries. But this line of argument is mere rationalization. Two wrongs do not make a right. Rather, in the willingness to be as murderous as our adversaries, we abandon any claim to moral justification in our struggle against them, and with that abandon-

ment render hollow our pretended concern for genuine human values, such as liberty and justice.

The Christian injunction that we not answer evil with evil but rather with good is not an arbitrary and idealistic divine demand. Rather, it is wise and realistic advice for salvaging the human good possible in our fallen world. If we use the evil of our adversaries as an excuse for our own murderous intent, we continue to expand and aggravate evil, mutilating ourselves first of all. For this reason, Plato also recognized that it is better to suffer evil than to do it. Thus, the injunction to respond to evil with good is neither a mere counsel for especially holy individuals nor other-worldly advice for the private lives of Christians. The refusal to match others in evil is the only way for fallen humankind, individuals and societies alike, to stop compounding human misery and to begin emerging into the light of decent human life and communion.

Utilitarians, consequentialists, or proportionalists of any sort--those who hold that one may attack a human good to attain a greater good or prevent a greater evil--might argue that the intent included in the deterrent is not truly murderous, although it is the intent to kill millions of innocent persons. The alternative, it will be pointed out, is world domination by the Soviet Union, with consequent universal oppression, denial of essential rights to freedom of speech and religion, and so on.

But this line of argument also is fallacious. There simply is no way to project the future and measure the costs against the benefits of the alternatives before us. Unilateral nuclear disarmament could lead to immense harm and misery. But the maintenance of the deterrent also risks a worldwide calamity of unprecedented proportions. Some think it might terminate life on this earth.

Marxism, despite its rejection of the title, is a utopianism. If we were to dismantle our strategic deterrent, I do not doubt that the U.S.S.R. would reduce us and other Western nations to puppet status. The U.S.S.R. surely also would take the steps

necessary, even including wars of terrible destruction, to dominate both present and potential competitors, such as China. But what then? The Soviet leadership would be confronted with an unprecedented management problem. Without its antithesis, the inadequacy of Marxism would become apparent; it no longer would have any excuse for its inability to create heaven on earth. The U.S. and other powerful opponents provide the U.S.S.R. with the excuses without which its promises and aims for the world would be totally implausible.

Notice that I am not arguing: "Better red than dead." In the first place, the disvalues in the alternatives are noncommensurable; there is no common scale on which to weigh being red against being dead. In the second place, I believe that domination of the world by the U.S.S.R. and its Marxist ideology would be a frightful evil, and that to prevent it some persons--those able to help in the common defense--ought to be prepared to suffer death. But, in the third place, the issue is not our readiness to suffer evil, but rather our willingness to do it. The murderous intent of the deterrent is a moral evil which simply is unjustifiable. Not: "Better red than dead," but: "Better anything than grave sin; better to suffer and permit Soviet domination in this world than to suffer eternal punishment in the next."

Many people find it hard to accept such a position. They are convinced that every problem one encounters in this world must have some acceptable solution, and that if one cannot solve a problem without doing evil, then one somehow becomes entitled to do it. Even certain Christian thinkers have built a theology of compromise embodying this point of view. Those who really believe that God needs human sins to get His will done in this world may hold this view. Personally I do not think this position is coherent either in itself or with the Gospel of Christ. For He made it clear both by teaching and example that the wicked always can win temporary victory in this world, but that the upright who are faithful may hope for ultimate victory.

II.

Vatican Council II discussed contemporary issues of war and peace, including the morality of nuclear deterrence. The bishops at the Council were divided on this question and unable to formulate a consensus position at that time. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 81, deals with nuclear deterrence and the arms race. The deterrent is described neutrally, neither approved nor condemned. The concept of a balance of power and any arms race to tip that balance in one direction are rejected as illusory ways to maintain peace. The arms race is characterized as a "treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree. It is much to be feared that if this race persists, it will eventually spawn all the lethal ruin whose path it is now making ready."

More pointed than this statement, and also relevant to the morality of the deterrent, is the Council's discussion of total war in section 80 of the same document. Here the Council rejects modern total war. The specific condemnation is worded as follows: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their populations is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation."

To draw the conclusion condemning nuclear deterrence, one need only add to Vatican II's condemnation of obliteration bombing the premiss that if it is morally wrong to do anything, it also is morally wrong to be willing to do it under conditions not in one's own power. The Catholic bishops of the United States took this further step in their pastoral letter, To Live in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1976), p. 34.

This pastoral, approved by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops precisely as a joint exercise of their official role as Catholic teachers, states: "As possessors of a vast nuclear arsenal, we must also be aware that not only is it wrong to attack civilian populations but it is also wrong to threaten to attack them as part of a

strategy of deterrence." As I have shown above, our nuclear deterrent is constituted precisely by this threat, regardless of the exact targeting of the weapons.

More recently, numerous American Catholic bishops have expressed opinions concerning the morality of nuclear deterrence. Most of these opinions question the morality of the deterrent, yet not many of the bishops have thought through their judgment of the morality of deterrence and drawn the logical conclusion that we ought to renounce and dismantle it at once.

Some of the bishops who have made thoughtful statements, otherwise clearly formed in the light of traditional Catholic moral teaching, suggest that although the threat which constitutes the deterrent cannot be justified in principle, it can be tolerated, perhaps as a lesser evil, provided that the deterrent framework is used to make progress on arms limitation, reduction, and eventual elimination. This position probably is influenced by Vatican II's stalemate on the issue, summarized above.

However, once one agrees that the intent to kill millions of innocent persons, which constitutes the deterrent, is immoral, one ought to say, not that it cannot be justified in principle, but rather that it cannot be justified at all.

To say that maintaining the deterrent is a lesser evil is either to hold that a moral evil may be done to avoid some other evil--a position not even Catholic proportion-
alists will defend--or to fall back on the proportionalist claim that the intent to kill included in the deterrent is morally acceptable. This claim, remember, is that the will to kill millions of innocent persons is not immoral in this case, since its evil is outweighed by something else. But there is no scale on which to do the supposed weighing; those who use this approach first choose and then call what they have chosen "the lesser evil."

The suggestion that the murderous intent which constitutes the deterrent is tolerable as a framework for disarmament efforts abuses the concept of tolerance. One sometimes must tolerate the wrongdoing of others out of respect for various goods--

such as their just liberty--which block doing anything about it. But it is logically impossible to tolerate one's own wrongdoing, since one's own immoral will is directly in one's control. It is not an alien power whose evil one might passively suffer.

In any case, to think of the maintenance of the deterrent as a framework for disarmament is unrealistic. Shortly after World War II, the Baruch plan offered a way of preventing the military development and use of atomic energy. That plan was unacceptable to the Soviet Union, and the nuclear arms race began. Since then, little headway has been made toward disarmament.

The treaty banning atmospheric tests (1963) and the SALT I treaty limiting anti-ballistic missile systems (1972) have been the most significant accomplishments. But these agreements neither limit the growth of offensive nuclear weapons nor point toward the renunciation and dismantling of the deterrent.

In the present discussion, when many are calling for a bilateral freeze on nuclear weapons development and production, it is worth noticing that the SALT process has not been a disarmament effort. As the word "limitation" in its name implies, it is an effort toward strategic arms limitation. This process originated in part as an attempt by President Johnson, toward the end of his term in office, to freeze nuclear weapons development in order to put some limit on the military budget, which got out of hand during the Vietnam war. The most recent annual report of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Arms Control (1980), p. 31, explains the SALT process:

Through the SALT negotiating process, the United States seeks to improve its security by limiting the competition in strategic arms, and by maintaining the strategic balance at lower, safer, and less costly levels.

If the SALT process had been pursued more earnestly, it would have helped more effectively to achieve this desirable goal. But even an ideally successful arms limitation and reduction process--if it develops out of a new attempt at a freeze--almost

certainly will stop short of nuclear disarmament, leave the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in an even more stable posture of mutual assured destruction, and require that we persist in the murderous intent essential for the effectiveness of its deterrent.

While the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have made little progress toward arms control, other nations have been acquiring nuclear capability. The United Kingdom, France, and China publicly acknowledge some level of capability and express some deterrent intent. Israel and India probably have some atomic weapons, but have not yet publicly acknowledged them or threatened adversaries with them. However, if the U.S. does not renounce and dismantle its deterrent, in coming years many nations probably will gain some nuclear capability and probably at least some of these will make deterrent threats against innocent persons. In sum, increasingly widespread nuclear armament, not disarmament, is what we must expect from persistence in the murderous intent of the nuclear deterrent.

Consequently, moral seriousness demands that anyone who sees the wrong in threatening to attack civilian populations as part of a strategy of deterrence--as the American Catholic bishops did in 1976--not talk about the "lesser evil" or "tolerability" of persistence in murderous intent as a framework for an effort at mutual disarmament. Instead, one should talk about the obligation of each person to repent of the deterrent in his or her own heart and to support a public policy of renouncing and dismantling it.

We should make a consistent pro-life position--that is, a position equally opposed to abortion and nuclear deterrence--the single issue of our national politics. We should encourage and support consistent pro-life candidates for president and congress. Civil and military officers whose duties require them to participate directly in making, maintaining, or preparing to execute the deterrent threat ought to be exhorted to acknowledge the murderous intent of that threat and to stop their direct cooperation in it, if necessary by resigning their offices. While it is possible that

workers might help manufacture strategic weapons designed for the execution of the murderous intent of the deterrent without sharing this intent, the morality of such involvement remains questionable, and it is altogether appropriate to exhort and help such workers to find other ways of making their living.

Refusal to pay part of one's federal taxes as a protest against the immorality of the deterrent is a morally questionable gesture. One's tax payment cannot be segregated; much of it goes for necessary and good purposes which we are morally bound to support. Nonpayment of taxes does not limit allocations to morally unacceptable programs. Rather, it shifts the burden either of taxation or of a larger deficit to persons least able to bear this burden--to the lower middle-class whose taxes are withheld, to the poor whose public support will be cut, and to those living on small, fixed incomes who suffer most from inflation. Moreover, even if one is justified in withholding taxes and informing the government that one is doing so as a gesture of protest, any publicity about such acts will encourage others to cheat on their taxes, and such cheating clearly is unfair to all in our society who are economically less advantaged.

It seems clear that most of those now talking and demonstrating against U.S. nuclear weapons policy simply do not want to stop making the deterrent threat and begin dismantling the deterrent capability. For this reason, almost no thought has been given to the politics and procedure of unilateral strategic disarmament and virtually no realistic consideration has been given to the likely results of such disarmament.

I suggested above that if the U.S. were to carry out unilateral nuclear disarmament, there can be no doubt that the U.S.S.R. would gain worldwide political domination. In such a world, the familiar system of sovereign nation states would come to an end. The U.S. and other former nations would be reduced first to puppet governments and then to administrative regions. The present Soviet managers and their

successors for many years probably would use very brutal methods. Rich in resources and industrial capacity, the U.S. would be exploited to the limit to supply products needed in less naturally well-endowed and less technologically developed parts of the world.

Still, in a situation of this sort there would be many opportunities for moral and spiritual resistance to false ideology and distorted values. The environment for pursuit of truth, for friendship in intimate relationships, for faithfulness in marriage and family life, and for holiness might well not be worse than that of the Western world at present. For now our culture is morally corrupted by the murderous intent of the deterrent and by anxious efforts to escape the terrifying prospect of the holocaust we are ready, willing, and able to inflict upon others and must expect to experience ourselves.

With the formulation of certain social and economic problems in terms of a "population explosion," reasonable terror of death from nuclear explosions has been displaced into unreasonable terror of new life. With legalized abortion, the murderous intent included in the deterrent has been executed upon millions of innocent, unborn persons each year. With the acceptance of obliteration bombing in World War II and morally indefensible counter-insurgency tactics in Vietnam, the United States adopted terrorism as public policy.

Between World Wars I and II, citizens of Western nations could observe from a position of moral superiority the U.S.S.R.'s legalization of abortion and use of murderous terrorism as an instrument of domestic and international politics. Today all that the West can claim is a somewhat greater concern about individual liberty, which arguably is balanced by the Communist nations' claim to a somewhat greater concern about social justice.

Once more, my position is not: "Better red than dead." Rather it is: Better to suffer anything than to do mass murder. At present, much attention is being focused

on the horrible destruction which will be brought about when deterrence finally fails. Emphasis on these facts can serve a purpose, since it calls attention to the probable eventual consequences of this policy. Realistically, many people will come to think about the unthinkable of unilateral nuclear disarmament only by thinking about the unthinkable of its alternative--bilateral or multilateral nuclear devastation.

However, my concern is more with what we are willing in threatening that destruction than with what we might suffer in undergoing it. My concern on this score was first aroused about thirty years ago when I became friends with a young Japanese, who was a fellow student at the University of Chicago. During World War II, I had hated the Japanese and rejoiced along with almost everyone else in our obliteration of their cities.

But here was a person my own age who had been there. He had lived in Nagasaki, a member of a Catholic family and a student in a Catholic school. The day the atomic bomb was dropped on that city he happened to be out of town visiting relatives. When he attempted to return home, he was prevented and learned that his city had been the target of our second atomic bomb. Eventually he was able to visit the place where his home had been. He found no trace of it. His home and family, his neighborhood and friends, his school and schoolmates and teachers--indeed, virtually his whole world--had disappeared in the flash of the weapon in whose use I had rejoiced.

This friendship made me aware of what a sin the United States had committed--we had committed--in adopting the policy of obliteration bombing. This awareness became the starting point for all my work in ethics and moral theology. A person's body is not a mere tool to use in pursuing his or her goals and subjective self-gratification. A living human body is a personal reality, not an object--a mere "thing-out-there" in nature. Human life is the very existence of persons; we must reverence it or we will hold nothing sacred. Therefore, we should never choose to

prevent a new person and set ourselves against the handing on of human life; we should never choose to destroy incipient life in the womb; we should never decide that defective infants and others whose quality of life is poor would be better off dead; and we should renounce the nuclear deterrent and dismantle it.

Even if we acknowledge the immorality of the deterrent and abandon it in our own hearts, many of our fellow citizens will remain firmly and sincerely convinced that this threat is somehow justifiable. It is unlikely that unilateral disarmament will be accepted soon if ever. In this situation, we must not suppose that moral issues and responsibilities are at an end. Despite the absolute unjustifiability of the murderous intent of the deterrent, additional immoralities can be either done or avoided within its framework. Upright persons must try to think out the problems of military strategy and contribute responsibly to debates concerning it, to mitigate the immorality which will proliferate if the whole subject is abandoned to amoral pragmatism.

Thus, in offering some suggestions for responsible thinking within the immoral framework of the deterrent, I do not withdraw anything said above. Moreover, I offer the following suggestions tentatively, for it is far clearer that the deterrent ought to be renounced and dismantled than what is more and less immoral while it is maintained.

I believe we tend to displace our terror of nuclear war and the moral opprobrium which properly belongs to the murderous intent of the deterrent onto related policies and activities. In doing this, we contaminate our moral judgment concerning them and wrongly oppose what we ought to support.

For example, many people reject and ridicule every effort toward civil defense against nuclear disaster. It seems to me that some distinctions need to be made in this matter. As part of a plan to fight and survive an all-out nuclear war, civil defense must be rejected by those who consider any such plan irrational. But while both strategic and tactical nuclear weapons are maintained by us and continue to

spread throughout the world, it is irresponsible to omit doing what we can to prepare to save as many persons as possible when a nuclear disaster eventually occurs. This disaster need not be an all-out nuclear war. It might be a limited exchange due to misjudgment or accident; it might be the use of one or a few atomic weapons by a lesser power. Preparations to deal with a variety of types of atomic disaster are needed. Such preparations would be costly and must be limited. But they would have incidental benefits, such as the capability to deal with an emergency arising from an accident in an atomic power plant.

Another example of contamination of judgment by misplacement of the opprobrium due the deterrent is the question of the targeting of strategic weapons and the development of new systems. Military leaders naturally resist the idea of building elaborate weapons systems which are not to be used nor even targeted on a potential enemy's military power. The moral concern about the deterrent also has been taken by some--mistakenly as I have argued--to point toward counterforce targeting as preferable to targeting cities.

These considerations have led several high public officials, beginning with Secretary of Defense McNamara in a famous speech at the University of Michigan in 1962, to suggest that Soviet nuclear weapons should be the primary target for our own deterrent. (McNamara later backed away from this suggestion.) At present, planning for the MX missile system is going forward. This system is projected to render our land-based, fixed-site missiles less vulnerable while maintaining the capacity to destroy Soviet missiles in their hardened silos.

Even in its early stages, the MX project has encountered great problems due to its size, complexity, and cost. The main objections to this project appear to be two. First, it would escalate competition in weapons which could be used only in an all-out war. Second, counterforce capability as such does not deter; instead, it destabilizes by providing a strong incentive for both sides to strike first--for each to launch weapons targeted by the other before those weapons are destroyed in their silos.

It seems to me that these considerations suggest that within the immoral framework of the deterrent, it is less immoral to forego counterforce capability and anything that might look like it. A more stable situation of mutual assured destruction will be maintained by frankly targeting cities. If so, the planning of the MX system should be discontinued and our vulnerable, Minuteman system eventually dismantled, to get rid of targets which call for a Soviet counterforce capability and preventive first strike. On this analysis, exclusive reliance on airborne and undersea missiles would be a less immoral approach to deterrence during the next few decades.

However, this analysis is sound only if it is possible to have a credible deterrent without the capacity to fight and prevail in an all-out nuclear war. As I explained near the beginning of this article, most American military leaders and many civilian strategic thinkers argue that this is not possible. If they are correct--and, as I said, their argument is at least plausible--then it is morally irresponsible to wish both to maintain the deterrent and to deny military leaders what they are asking for to be in a position to plan and conduct an all-out nuclear war. It is not morally preferable--indeed, it is profoundly immoral--to persist in the murderous intent of the deterrent without making certain of its credibility and effectiveness. Such a posture invites military disaster through immoral weakness and stupidity. It also directs people toward death without repentance.

Whether the maintenance of the deterrent without a nuclear war-fighting capability is once or twice immoral, we can still consider what is more and less immoral within such a framework.

If the U.S. were to discontinue planning the MX and begin preparing to dismantle the Minuteman system, a good deal of arms limitation and reduction might be gained from the U.S.S.R. in exchange. Up to the present, the U.S. has not vigorously pursued mutual arms limitation and reduction. Although such an effort cannot justify maintaining the deterrent, still within the immoral framework of the deterrent, we ought to gain what we can in stabilization.

Moreover, if the U.S. compounds the certain immorality of maintaining the deterrent with the arguable immorality of rendering its credibility doubtful by failing to maintain a war-fighting capability, then it will be less immoral to isolate as much as possible nuclear weapons suited only for deterrence from military plans and weapons systems which might have some rational use.

If we are unwilling to try to maintain the capability to fight and win a nuclear war yet also fail to isolate the nonrational system of the deterrent from our genuine military capacity--in other words, if we continue ambivalently to treat nuclear weapons as if they were a real part of our military force when they are not--we shall always be tempted both to rely inappropriately on nuclear weapons and to engage in an ever-expanding increase in the complexity, power, and cost of nuclear weapons systems. If we are not going to seek and maintain the capability to fight and prevail in an all-out nuclear war, reliance on nuclear weapons for any purpose is wreckless and any arms race involving them is pointless.

If we do isolate the morally indefensible deterrent as much as possible from our real and usable military power and its planning and development, we can perhaps begin to overcome another displacement of moral opprobrium. Our terror of nuclear war and bad conscience concerning the deterrent is weakening our willingness to deploy and use military power in other situations. Our judgments on all sorts of military action are marked by ambivalence.

If the U.S. is not willing to renounce the deterrent and dismantle it, I can see no moral superiority in opposing the U.S.S.R. and other Marxist nations weakly and letting them attain by a gradual, costly, and dangerous process what we will not grant them by unilateral strategic disarmament. We should not pretend that regimes like that of Fidel Castro offer a preferable alternative to right-wing authoritarian regimes in the less developed nations of Latin America and elsewhere. A fascist ruler is a national tragedy; a Communist ruler is a national tragedy and part of a worldwide menace.

Moreover, no one who opposes the maintenance of a nuclear war-fighting capability can reasonably consider nuclear weapons a complement to or substitute for conventional military power. Thus, all who oppose a nuclear war-fighting capability should agree that if the U.S. is to carry on an effective struggle against the U.S.S.R. and its allies around the world, we need a much greater conventional military capability than we now have. We need a larger defense budget, not a smaller one. Moreover, as Solzhenitsyn has pointed out, we need a far larger investment in the economic and political struggle in which we are irresolutely engaged.

I realize that this prescription for seriousness in our struggle with the U.S.S.R. and world Communism will be unwelcome to many Christians. However, the responsible alternative to serious conduct of the struggle against Marxism is not appeasement, political settlements, and conciliation processes which inevitably lead to capitulation and Marxist domination. Rather, the responsible alternative to determined struggle is the renunciation and dismantling of the deterrent.

To fight a war without the will to win is to fight a losing war. Losing wars offer no hope of gaining anything to make up for the sacrifices they demand and the harm they do. Therefore, there can be no moral justification for fighting a losing war.

Personally, I do not expect that the U.S. will conduct a coherent international policy with constancy and determination. Instead, I expect we will continue in incoherence, tolerating as a lesser evil the murderous intent of the deterrent which we admittedly cannot justify, abandoning to Communist domination people to whom we had guaranteed our support, making half-hearted efforts toward arms control, allowing the development of more and more complex and costly but weakened and inadequate weapons systems, and, finally, carrying out the murderous threat of the deterrent and experiencing a similar attack upon ourselves. Having made no preparations, we shall probably die, some mercifully quickly, but most miserably slowly.

But even that will not be the end, and for some of us it will not be the worst. For if we have kept our hearts fixed in the murderous intent of the deterrent, if we have sought to escape our anxieties in sexual licentiousness and other forms of irresponsible living, and if we have executed the murderous intent we learned from the deterrent in the antilife practices of contraception, sterilization, abortion, and the destruction of persons whose lives we consider too poor to be worth living--in short, if we have closed our hearts to goodness and destroyed our own ability to love--we must be ready to exist forever in hell.

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