

Correspondence

India's Nuclear Test

To the Editors: I have very much appreciated Professor Ashok Kapur's several contributions in *Worldview* dealing with foreign affairs. He is one of the many writers who make *Worldview*, in my opinion, unquestionably the most indispensable journal on my list. Yet I confess to a certain uneasiness in reading his apologia for India's nuclear test earlier this year ("India's Nuclear Test: They've Been Trying to Tell Us Something," *Excursus*, August).

Professor Kapur may be right about the legal position of India vis-à-vis its agreement with Canada. But that is really not the main issue that has disturbed many people throughout the world. Whatever the fine print may say in the India-Canada agreement, nuclear proliferation is a growing fact of life. To the best of my knowledge, there is no clear line between "peaceful" and "military" nuclear development. Yet Professor Kapur seems so casual in taking at face value the Indian assurance that their program . . . is purely for "peaceful" uses. . . .

We are discussing more than good intentions (although even on that score one wonders why Professor Kapur is so ready to credit the good intentions of the Indians). In international affairs good intentions must be made plausible by good behavior and must be backed up by structured ways to assure good behavior. . . . It is easy to say that Japan, Israel, and a dozen other countries could develop nuclear programs quite apart from what India may or may not do. It may also be true. But does anyone doubt that precedent plays an important role in how people and nations behave? Is it not obvious that India's example will provide further excuse for other nations which may not be so trustworthy as Professor Kapur apparently feels the Indians are? . . .

I respectfully suggest that Professor Kapur has, no doubt unintentionally, deflected our attention from

the urgent problems posed by nuclear proliferation. What he calls the "legalism" of the nonproliferation agreements, which he says are imposed "by a concert of superpowers," may not be adequate, but what is the alternative? No one would seriously suggest that every nation that has the capacity of developing a nuclear program should have an equal say in global nuclear policy. Since we are assured that nuclear technology is fast coming within the reach of anyone with access to a high-school science laboratory, such a proposal would be equivalent to chaos and would mean no policy at all. . . .

It may seem unfair to condemn India in particular, but, after all, it was India and not the dozen other countries that might have done so that unleashed this further threat to human survival. We might wish devoutly for universal nuclear disarmament and we might greatly distrust the superpowers presently calling the plays. But given the unhappy situation that prevails, it would seem that the least we can do is to clearly condemn any further spread of the weaponry of death. Since I especially respect *Worldview's* determined effort to view world developments in an ethical light, I confess to being disappointed with this particular response to an extremely ominous event.

Rachel Deyoung
Philadelphia, Pa.

Ashok Kapur Responds:

Ms. Deyoung's letter outlines the conventional wisdom in the American literature on nuclear proliferation, and one of the reasons I write about India is not to act as Government of India's spokesman (which I clearly am not) but rather to question some of the premises in the American literature on the subject. Let me try to respond to Deyoung's concerns as follows:

1. True, nuclear proliferation "is a growing fact of life." True, intentions must be backed up with behavior. But this is precisely the point. If proliferation is a growing

fact of life—and when we talk about proliferation we are talking about civilian nuclear technology, "peaceful" explosives technology, nuclear weapons, and nonweapons nuclear systems such as nuclear-powered submarines—what is the proper solution? No further proliferation, or no proliferation (on a universal and comprehensive basis) at all?

2. Regarding Indian intentions, I am not taking official Indian statements at face value simply because as a political scientist one is trained not to do so. Neither is it a question of intentions being "good." Goodness is a value-oriented thing, and to define good intentions one first needs to show "goodness in terms of what and in terms of whose values." Rather the link I make (as does Deyoung) is between intentions and behavior. This link is made in terms of my statement that India's policy is not geared to nuclear weapons development at present and therefore is "peaceful at present." This, of course, refers to the present and the foreseeable future, say two to five years, and this is just an educated guess and not something based on computer analysis. One need not believe Indian statements to analyze actual Indian commitments—in terms of development and deployment (although R & D in ballistics and space technology is going on). Before Westerners are taken in by general scenarios of chain reactions in "the" horizontal proliferation process, perhaps they should first try to assess the actual decisions and the actual facts of weapons development in the case of India and other potential proliferators. In this connection it is worth noting that the Indian military has not to date been involved in India's nuclear development. I don't want to argue whether Indian intentions are good or bad, but I would urge one thing: Indians manage to say a good deal—albeit in outline form—about their internal thinking, even though there are ambiguities and at times the difference between aspirations and expectations is not clear. It is noteworthy that the framework of Indian nuclear
(continued on p. 67)