

## A PROPOSAL FOR SURVIVAL

Santa Barbara, Calif.

Sir: Mr. Charles Burton Marshall suggests (*World-view*, January) that Dr. John C. Bennett should produce "some policy proposal . . . to serve the welfare of generations to come." With deference to both your distinguished correspondents I should like to make such a practical proposal.

In so doing I refrain with regret from extended comment on certain of Mr. Marshall's statements that contain the tragic fallacies of our present policy. But is there not a monumental illogic in his assertion: "To be in a position to avoid both thermonuclear destruction and Soviet world dominance we require a thermonuclear capability sufficient to balance that of the Soviet"? We cannot avoid thermonuclear destruction with thermonuclear capability, we can only use it for reprisal. The proposal set out below aims at doing what lies practically in our power to do to prevent the holocaust.

The millennial vocabulary has been pretty well worn out in the discussion, which makes it even more important to keep in mind that a thermonuclear attack on the United States is moderately estimated to produce sixty to seventy million deaths, with commensurate physical damage, and with illness and radiation lingering over many years. In spite of such a prospect (to which must be added the scores of millions of deaths in Europe and Russia that would inexorably result), Mr. Marshall joins the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Stanford and Johns Hopkins research groups in concluding that, since we cannot think of anything else to do, let us continue with all speed to make bombs, gas, germs, missiles, and submarines.

Suppose we were to go in the other direction? Suppose we were to junk all of our weapons of whatever kind and invite inspection by anyone of the results? Suppose we were to tell the world that we are doing so because we are convinced that it is the only practical way out of the fateful dilemma in which all are caught?

The best possible result of such a decision is that it would restore the idea of moral leadership in an apprehensive world; and that Russia would at once follow our example because of its declared eagerness to compete and surpass on grounds other than armed might.

The worst possible result is that Russia would instantly take advantage of our defenselessness to bomb the U.S. into radioactive rubble. In this case we would not be worse off than if we had engaged in a two-way war. All that would be lacking would be a regret among survivors that we had not had vengeance on our attackers. But this result seems wholly unlikely. It may better be supposed that Russia does not desire the extinction of the U.S. but that it covets our productive might.

A more possible result then is that this country would be taken over by the Reds, commissars replacing our managers and mayors, legislators and union officials, broadcasters and publishers. (We may also presume similar action in those countries of Western Europe and elsewhere for which our arms are said to provide a shield.) This is a desperate and repellent vision; and, while I do not believe for a moment that this would be the outcome, it is necessary to accept it as a possibility if one is willing to argue that unilateral disarmament is the only practical policy for this country to adopt. Red domination of this and other free nations is at least "thinkable." We can at least imagine it in all its hateful and dismal aspects, while we find the consequences of a nuclear, germ, and gas war unthinkable and unimaginable. Yet we would survive as a nation with the greatest of traditions and with the unquenchable intention of demonstrating by argument and non-violent resistance that freedom and justice are man's best and only proper organizing principles.

It might well take decades to regenerate freedom and justice. But we would have the chance to do so, a chance that by common agreement would not be vouchsafed us in the case of an all-out war which no nation could win. Should war come, the task would not be resisting or throwing off an oppressor by reasonable means; it would be the task of rebuilding civilization from savagery and chaos.

It is said that we are now following the only feasible road in seeking disarmament with ironclad agreements on inspection. This is not the "middle road" it is claimed to be, for the preparations for war continue without let-up. This argument contains, moreover, fatal weaknesses. Inspection cannot be devised that will give absolute assurance against manufacture or stockpiling of lethal weapons. Highly productive countries like the United States and Russia will always be able to maintain facilities for making such arms, swiftly convertible from peacetime industry. An inspection system is institutionalized distrust, and as unreliable as any understanding so based.

The alternatives are drastic and repugnant in the highest degree. But the important point is that there is a practical alternative to our present policy. Before this proposal (not at all original, as *World-view* readers are aware) is discarded as mere cowardice or impertinence, one may ask what would happen in the United States, among its allies in various pacts, and among the so-called uncommitted nations if Russia were to declare unilateral disarmament on analogous terms. What would be the best and worst results?

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