

# Papal Scientists Tell Reagan: A-War Futile

Washington (RNS) — A delegation of scientists sent by Pope John Paul II to spell out the consequences of atomic war told President Reagan that the medical profession would be utterly impotent in the face of nuclear explosions.

"It is tragically evident that any nuclear war would inevitably inflict humanity with death, disease and suffering in such proportions that there could be no effective recourse therefrom," the scientist said in a statement read to the president.

"Medical intervention would be futile. Radiation would provoke irreversible brain damage on huge sectors of the population and genetic damage would be transmitted to any future generations that might survive a nuclear attack," they added.

The statement summarized the findings of a study of the effects of a nuclear exchange prepared by members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences at the behest of the pope.

In a major initiative to end the nuclear arms race, the pope sent delegations of scientists not only to the United States, but also to the Soviet Union, France and Britain.

Composed largely of members of the pontifical academy, the groups were dispatched to meet with top government officials to describe what the Vatican called the "terrifying aspects" of the use of nuclear arms.

The delegation that met with President Reagan on Dec. 14 was made up of Victor F. Weisskopf, Massachusetts Institute of Technology physicist; David Baltimore, MIT molecular biologist; Marshall W. Nirenberg, a biochemist at the National Institute of Health — all academy members — and Dr. Howard H. Hiatt, director of Harvard School of Public Health.

After the meeting, Dr. Hiatt said he had told the president that "if one megaton bomb — the equivalent of one million tons of TNT — exploded over the White House, 600,000 people would be killed instantly."

The statement said, "Nuclear weapons must not be used at all in warfare and their numbers should be progressively reduced in a balanced way."

Archbishop Pio Laghi, the apostolic delegate to the United States, also attended the meeting.

# Nuke Deterrence Said Tolerable But 'Dangerous'

New York (RNS) — Cardinal Terence Cooke declared that "a strategy of nuclear deterrence can be morally tolerated if a nation is sincerely trying to come up with a rational alternative."

Cardinal Cooke, the country's Catholic military vicar, expressed the view in a Christmas letter to U.S. military chaplains.

He said that "it follows clearly" that if such a strategy can be tolerated, "those who produce or are assigned to handle the weapons that make the strategy possible and workable can do so in good conscience."

The cardinal said, however, "that the Church does condemn the use of any weapons, nuclear or conventional, that would indiscriminately destroy huge numbers of innocent people, such as an entire city, or weapons that would blow up the world."

The cardinal said deterrence "is not a desirable strategy. It can be terribly dangerous... (but it is) morally tolerable; not satisfactory but tolerable."

He said a nation may use nuclear weapons as a deterrent for the same reason police carry guns.

"Under no circumstances may a nation start a war any more than police could decide to go out and shoot people to keep them from committing crimes," he warned.

A number of American bishops have recently opposed the Reagan administration's nuclear arms buildup in public statements.

Texas Bishop L.T. Mathieson, for instance, has urged workers at a plant near Amarillo that was to assemble neutron bomb components "to consider what they are doing, to resign from such activities."



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