

A Draft for the Pastoral Letter

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conditions which justify resort to war are met, the conduct of war (i.e., strategy, tactics and individual actions) remains subject to continuous scrutiny in light of two principles which have special significance today precisely because of the destructive capability of modern technological warfare:

— Discrimination: This principle is at the

center of a Christian evaluation of war, for it prohibits all actions directly intending to take the lives of civilians or non-combatants. The distinction between combatants and non-combatants varies in different historical circumstances, and it may sometimes be hard to tell one from the other. With the mass mobilization of people and resources in our day it may be particularly difficult to judge. But there is always, for instance, a

difference between soldiers and innocent children or hospital patients. The elderly, farmers, the average industrial worker producing objects not directly related to military purposes cannot rationally be considered combatants even by the broadest definition. Justice demands that those who do not make war not have war made upon them.

— Proportionality: Each act of war must be submitted to a judgment of proportionality; this principle takes on new significance precisely because the "indirect" or "collateral" danger of nuclear and other forms of modern warfare can be enormous. This principle provides a second restraint on such actions: a strategy or tactic may be "disproportionate" even if it is not "indiscriminate" (i.e., aimed at civilians).

III Morality of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear War

This section is perhaps the one that has caused the most controversy. The bishops offer an ethical analysis of this arms race, of the eventuality of nuclear war, and of the policy of deterrence.

The Problem

The task before us is not simply to repeat what we have said before; it is first to think anew whether and how our religious-moral tradition can assess, direct, contain and hopefully help eliminate the threat posed to the human family by the nuclear arsenals of the world. Pope John Paul II captured the essence of the problem during his pilgrimage to Hiroshima:

"In the past it was possible to destroy a village, a town, a region, even a country. Now it is the whole planet that has come under threat."

The Holy Father's observation illustrates why the moral problem is also a religious question of the most profound significance. In the nuclear arsenals of the United States or the Soviet Union alone, there exists a capacity to do something no other age could imagine: We can threaten the created order. For people of faith this means we read the Book of Genesis with a new awareness; the moral issue at stake in nuclear war involves the meaning of sin in its most graphic dimensions. Every sinful act is a confrontation of the creature and the Creator. Today the destructive potential of the nuclear powers threatens the sovereignty of God over the world he has brought into being. We could destroy his work.

We live today, therefore, in the midst of a cosmic drama; we possess a power which should never be used, but which might be used if we do not reverse our direction. We live with nuclear weapons on the basis of an assumption we would not tolerate in any other area of life: We know we cannot afford one mistake. This fact dramatizes the precariousness of our position, politically, morally, and spiritually.

The nuclear escalation has been opposed sporadically and selectively but never effectively. The race has continued in spite of carefully expressed doubts by analysts and other citizens and in the face of forcefully expressed opposition by public rallies. Today the opposition to the arms race is no longer selective or sporadic, it is widespread and sustained. The danger and destructiveness of nuclear weapons are understood and resisted today with new urgency and intensity. There is in the public debate today an endorsement of the position submitted by the Holy See at the United Nations in 1976. The arms race is to be condemned as a danger, an act of aggression against the poor and a folly which does not provide the security it promises.

Moral rejections of nuclear war

To say "no" to nuclear war is both a necessary and a complex task. We are moral teachers in a tradition which has always been prepared to relate moral principles to concrete problems. Particularly in this letter we could not be content with simply restating general moral principles or repeating well-known requirements about the ethics of war. We have had to examine, with the assistance of a broad spectrum of advisers of varying persuasions, the nature of existing and proposed weapons systems, the doctrines which govern their use and the consequences of using them. As our Appendix indicates we have consulted people who engage their lives in protest against the existing nuclear strategy of the United States, and we have consulted others who have held or do hold responsibility for this strategy. It has been a sobering and perplexing experience. In light of the evidence which witnesses presented and in light of our study, reflection and consultation, we are sure of one moral imperative we should declare: a rejection of nuclear war. But we

feel obliged to relate our judgment to the specific elements which comprise the nuclear problem.

Nuclear strategy and just war theory

For the tradition which acknowledges some legitimate use of force, contemporary nuclear strategies push the moral limits beyond the permissible. A justifiable use of force must be both discriminatory and proportionate. Certain aspects of both U.S. and Soviet strategies fail both tests. The technical literature and the personal testimony of public officials who have been closely associated with U.S. nuclear strategy have both convinced us of the overwhelming probability that a nuclear exchange would have no limits.

1. Counterpopulation Warfare: Under no circumstances may nuclear weapons or other instruments of mass slaughter be used for the purpose of destroying population centers or other predominantly civilian targets. Popes have repeatedly condemned such use. For example, as early as 1954 Pope Pius XII condemned nuclear warfare "when it entirely escapes the control of man" and results in "the pure and simple annihilation of all human life within the radius of action." The condemnation was repeated by the Second Vatican Council: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation."

2. Initiation of Nuclear War: We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified. Non-nuclear attacks by another state must be resisted by other than nuclear means.

3. Limited Nuclear War: It would be possible to agree with our first two conclusions and still not be sure about retaliatory use of nuclear weapons what is called a "limited exchange." Technical opinion on this question and the writings of moralists remain divided. The issue at stake is the real as opposed to the theoretical possibility of a "limited nuclear exchange."

Deterrence

The moral challenge posed by nuclear weapons is not exhausted by an analysis of possible uses of them. Most of the political and moral debate of the nuclear age has been about the strategy of deterrence. The deterrent relationship is at the heart of the U.S.-Soviet competition which is currently the most dangerous dimension of the nuclear arms race.

Moral issues involved in deterrence strategy

The purpose of deterrence is to prevent this eventuality, but the moral problem of nuclear deterrence relates to the method by which prevention is accomplished.

The Holy Father's delicate assessment of deterrence reflects the complexity of the concept. He emphasizes these two necessary elements in any discussion on deterrence: 1. that deterrence, even if based on balance, cannot be accepted as an end in itself; and 2. deterrence must be a step on the way

toward progressive disarmament. The emphasis on these two elements helps form the basis for our judgment on deterrence in this pastoral letter.

First, John Paul II's assertion that deterrence cannot be accepted "as an end in itself" should be understood in light of the negative dimensions of deterrence. He points out that "the balance of nuclear weapons is a balance of terror. It has already used up too many of mankind's resources for death-dealing works and instruments. And it is continuing to absorb immense intellectual and physical energies, directing scientific research away from the promotion of the most authentic human values and toward the production of destructive devices."

Specifically these negative dimensions of deterrence include all of the following: 1. the intention to use strategic nuclear weapons which would violate the principles of discrimination and proportionality; 2. the human consequences if deterrence fails; 3. the political relationship which sustains deterrence, a relationship of radical distrust which John XXIII described in "Peace on Earth" as the root of our international problems; 4. the threats made or implied by deterrence give no assurance of any limits which would be maintained if deterrence fails; and 5. the diversion of vitally needed resources which are consumed by the arms race. All of these conditions are the reason we have called the arms race, with deterrence as its key element a "sinful situation," one which must be changed however long and difficult the task.

Second, in spite of all these negative elements, John Paul's assessment is that deterrence may still be judged as morally acceptable provided it is used as a step toward progressive disarmament. This provision makes it very clear that the pope's words "morally acceptable" are strictly conditioned. This assessment reflects the role deterrence plays in a world of sovereign states armed with nuclear weapons. Many argue that the deterrent prevents the use of nuclear weapons. As we noted above, that argument is not subject to conclusive proof or disproof. We are skeptical of it, but not to the point where we can simply dismiss its implications. As clearly unsatisfactory as the deterrent posture of the U.S. is from a moral point of view, use of nuclear weapons by any of the nuclear powers would be an even greater evil. We face here, then, the paradox of deterrence in the modern world. In the face of this paradox it is clear that John Paul II's statement at the Second Special Session was designed to limit the acceptable function of deterrence precisely to the one positive value it is said to have had — preventing the use of nuclear weapons in any form.

This strictly conditioned judgment yields criteria for morally assessing the elements of deterrence strategy. Clearly these criteria demonstrate that we cannot approve of every weapons system, strategic doctrine or policy initiative advanced in the name of strengthening deterrence.

On the contrary, these criteria require continual public scrutiny of what our government proposes to do with the deterrent:

1. If deterrence exists only to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by others, then

proposals to go beyond this objective to encourage war-fighting capabilities must be resisted. We must continually say "no" to the idea of nuclear war.

2. If deterrence is our goal, "sufficiency" to deter is an adequate strategy; the quest for superiority must be resisted.

3. If deterrence is to be used as "a step on the way toward progressive disarmament," then each proposed addition to our strategic system or change in strategic doctrine must be assessed precisely in light of whether it will render steps toward arms control and disarmament more or less likely.

Moreover, these criteria provide us with the means to make some recommendations and judgments about the present direction of U.S. strategic policy. Progress toward a world free of the threat of deterrence must be carefully carried out. But it must not be delayed. There is an urgent moral and political responsibility to use the "peace of a sort" we have as a framework to move toward authentic peace through nuclear arms control, reductions and disarmament. Of primary importance in this process is the need to prevent the development and deployment of destabilizing weapons systems on either side; a second requirement is to ensure that the more sophisticated command and control systems are no less open to human intervention; a third is the need to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the international system.

In light of these general principles we oppose some specific goals for our present deterrence posture:

1. The addition of weapons which are likely to invite attack and therefore give credence to the concept that the United States seeks a first strike, "hard-target kill" capability; the MX missile might fit into this category;

2. The willingness to foster strategic planning which seeks a nuclear war fighting capability;

3. Proposals which have the effect of lowering the nuclear threshold and blurring the difference between nuclear and conventional weapons.

In support of the concept of "sufficiency" as an adequate deterrent and in light of the present size and composition of both the U.S. and Soviet strategic arsenals, we recommend:

1. Support for immediate, bilateral verifiable agreements to halt the testing, production and deployment of new strategic systems;

2. Support for negotiated bilateral deep cuts in the arsenals of both superpowers, particularly of those weapons systems which have destabilizing characteristics;

3. Support for a comprehensive test ban treaty;

4. Removal by all parties of nuclear weapons from border areas and the strengthening of command and control over tactical nuclear weapons to prevent inadvertent and unauthorized use.

IV Bishops Offer Some Concrete Suggestions

How the public policymakers can move toward the promotion of peace, and how dioceses, parishes, and individual Catholics can respond to this pastoral letter. The following are highlights of their proposals.

A. Specific steps to reduce the danger of war.

The dangers of modern war are specific and visible; our teaching must be equally specific about the needs of peace. In the face

of a continuing escalation of the arms race, the control and eventually the elimination of nuclear and other weapons must proceed in several directions.

1. Accelerated work for arms control, reduction and disarmament: Despite serious efforts, starting with the Baruch Plan and continuing through SALT I and SALT II, the results have been far too limited and partial to be commensurate with the risks.

Yet efforts for negotiated control and reduction of arms must continue.

a) We emphasize the need for agreements among the great powers, and particularly between the United States and the Soviet Union. Disarmament must be a process of verifiable agreements especially between the two superpowers. While we do not advocate a policy of unilateral disarmament, we

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