

Comparing the Drafts

Continued from Page 11

justification. A justifiable use of force must be both discriminatory and proportionate. Certain aspects of both U.S. and Soviet strategies fail both tests as we shall discuss below. 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 major nuclear exchange would have no limits.

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.*

2. The Initiation of Nuclear War: We abhor the concept of initiating nuclear war on however restricted a scale. Because of the probable effects, the deliberate initiation of nuclear war, in our judgment, would be an unjustifiable moral risk. Therefore, a serious moral obligation exists to develop defensive strategies as rapidly as possible to preclude any justification for using nuclear weapons in response to nonnuclear attacks.

A serious debate is under way on this issue. It is cast in political terms, but it has a significant moral dimension. Some have argued that at the very beginning of a war nuclear weapons might be used, only against military targets, perhaps in limited numbers. Indeed it has long been American and NATO policy that nuclear weapons, especially so-called tactical nuclear weapons, would likely be used if NATO forces in Europe seemed in danger of losing a conflict that until then had been restricted to conventional weapons. Large numbers of tactical nuclear weapons are now deployed in Europe by the NATO forces and about as many by the Soviet Union. Some are substantially smaller than the bomb used on Hiroshima, some are larger. Many such weapons, if employed, would totally devastate the densely populated countries of Western and Central Europe.

Whether under conditions of war in Europe, parts of Asia or the Middle East, or the exchange of strategic weapons are immense. A number of expert witnesses advise us that commanders operating under conditions of battle probably would not be able to exercise strict control; the number of weapons used would rapidly increase, the targets would be expanded beyond the military, and the level of civilian casualties would rise enormously. No one can be certain that this would not occur, even in the face of political efforts to keep such an exchange "limited." The chances of keeping use limited seem remote, and the consequences of escalation to mass destruction would be appalling. Former public officials have testified that it is improbable that any nuclear war could actually be kept limited. Their testimony and the consequences involved in this problem lead us to conclude that the danger of escalation is so great that it would be an unacceptable moral risk to initiate nuclear war in any form. The danger is rooted not only in the technology of our weapons systems but in the weakness and sinfulness of human communities. We find the moral responsibility of beginning nuclear war not justified by rational political objectives.

This judgment affirms that the willingness to initiate nuclear war entails a distinct, weighty moral responsibility; it involves transgressing a fragile barrier — political, psychological, and moral — which has been constructed since 1945. We express repeatedly in this letter our extreme skepticism about the prospects for controlling a nuclear exchange, however limited the first use might be. Precisely because of this skepticism, we judge resort to nuclear weapons to counter a conventional attack to be an unjustifiable moral risk. Consequently we seek to strengthen the barrier against easy or quick resort to nuclear weapons in any form. Our support of a "No First Use" policy must be seen in this light.

At the same time we recognize the responsibility the United States has had and continues to have to protect allied nations from either a conventional or a nuclear attack. Especially in the European theater, the deterrence of a nuclear attack may require nuclear weapons for a time, even though their possession and deployment must be subject to rigid restrictions.

The need to defend against a conventional

attack in Europe imposes the political and moral burden of developing adequate, alternative modes of defense to present reliance on nuclear weapons. Even with the best coordinated effort — hardly likely in view of contemporary political division on this question — development of an alternative defense position will still take time.

In the interim, deterrence against a conventional attack relies upon two factors: the not inconsiderable conventional forces at the disposal of NATO and the recognition by a potential attacker that the outbreak of large scale conventional war could escalate to the nuclear level through accident or miscalculation by either side. We recognize that the deterrent effect of this inherent ambiguity is presently enhanced by the NATO refusal to adopt a "No First Use" pledge. Nonetheless, in light of the probable effects of initiating nuclear war, we support NATO's moving rapidly toward the adoption of a "No First Use" policy, but doing so in tandem with development of an adequate alternative defense posture.

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. An extract from the U.S. Military Posture Statement for FY 1983 describes certain elements of the method of deterrence:

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.*

The evolution of deterrence strategy has passed through several stages of declaratory policy. Using the U.S. case as an example, there is a significant difference between "Massive Retaliation" and "Flexible Response," and between "Mutual Assured Destruction" and "Countervailing Strategy." It is also possible to distinguish between "counterforce" and "countervalue" targeting policies; and to contrast a posture of "minimum deterrence" with "extended deterrence." These terms are well known in the technical debate on nuclear policy; they are less well known and sometimes loosely used in the wider public debate. It is important to recognize that there has been substantial continuity in the U.S. action policy in spite of real changes in declaratory policy.

The recognition of these different elements in the deterrent and the evolution of policy means that moral assessment of deterrence requires a series of distinct judgments. They include: an analysis of the factual character of the deterrent (e.g., what is involved in targeting doctrine); analysis of the historical development of the policy (e.g., whether changes have occurred which are significant for moral analysis of the policy); the relationship of deterrence policy and other aspects of U.S.-Soviet affairs; and determination of the key moral questions involved in deterrence policy.

2. The Moral Assessment of Deterrence

The distinctively new dimensions of nuclear deterrence were recognized by policy makers and strategists only after much reflection. Similarly, the moral challenge posed by deterrence was grasped only after careful deliberation. The moral and political paradox posed by deterrence was concisely stated by Vatican II:

Undoubtedly, armaments are not amassed merely for use in wartime. Since the defensive strength of any nation is thought to depend on its capacity for immediate retaliation, the stockpiling of arms which grows from year to year serves, in a way hitherto unthought of, as a deterrent to potential attackers. Many people look upon this as the most effective way known at the present time for maintaining some sort of peace among nations. Whatever one may think of this form of deterrent, people are convinced that the arms race, which quite a few countries have entered, is no infallible way of maintaining real peace and that the resulting so-called balance of power is no sure genuine path to achieving it. Rather than eliminate the causes of war, the arms race serves only to aggravate the position. As long as extravagant sums of money are poured into the development of new weapons, it is impossible to devote adequate aid in tackling the misery which prevails at the present day in the world. Instead of eradicating international conflict once and for all, the contagion is spreading to other parts of the world. New approaches, based on reformed attitudes, will have to be chosen in order to remove this stumbling block, to free the earth from its pressing anxieties, and give back to the world a genuine peace.

Without making a specific moral judgment on deterrence, the Council clearly designated the elements of the arms race: the tension between "peace of a sort" preserved by deterrence and "genuine peace" required for a stable international life; the contradiction between what is spent for destructive capacity and what is needed for constructive development.

In the post-conciliar assessment of war and peace and specifically of deterrence, different parties to the political-moral debate, within the Church and in civil society, have focused on one or another aspect of the problem. For some, the fact that nuclear weapons have not been used since 1945 means that deterrence has worked, and this fact satisfies the demands of both the political and moral order. Others contest this assessment by highlighting the risk of failure involved in continued reliance on deterrence and pointing out how politically and morally catastrophic even a single failure would be. Still others note that the absence of nuclear war is not necessarily proof that the policy of deterrence has prevented it. Indeed, some would find in the policy of deterrence the driving force in the superpower arms race. Still other observers, many of them Catholic moralists, have stressed that deterrence may not morally include the intention of deliberately attacking civilian populations or non-combatants.

The statements of the NCCB/USCC over the past several years have both reflected and contributed to the wider moral debate on deterrence. In the NCCB pastoral letter, *To Live In Christ Jesus* (1976), we focused on the moral limits of declaratory policy while calling for stronger measures of arms control. Cardinal Krol's USCC testimony in support of SALT II ratification (1979) offered a critique of deterrence policy and called for arms control steps going beyond the provisions of SALT II.

In June 1982, Pope John Paul II provided new impetus and insight to the moral analysis with his statement to the United

Continued on Page 13

States Seco
mament. C
problem of
world politi
admit to wh
distrusts oth
mount a str
then discuss

Many
preparatio
the only
some fash
utmost in
of wars, a
might lea
humanity
civilization
laboriousl

In this
"philosop
proclame
ciple: Si
modern t
label of "c
various g
of forces
called, a
"balance

Having o
concept of
introduces
mament, es
disarmame
statement al

In cu
based on
in itself b
progressiv
judged m
order to
not to b
which is
danger of

In Pope
perceive t
temporary
dimension i
its human a
nuclear w
titative gro
danger of n
the grave d
on deterren
independen
entire peop
smaller nat
dependence
reflects the
international
as a major
Peace on E
VI and Pop
forces, prev
superiority,
guarding bo

The mor
nuclear wa
protect an
justice, free
necessary f
integrity. I
John Paul
be judged r
as an end i
toward a pr

On mor
Father has
the fragil
deterrence
Speaking to
"Up to the
arms are a
prevented
that is prof
will always
and more
Paul II to
scientists o

You c
logic of
consider
and sec
ternation

Relating
statements
deterrent
and an ap
preparing
number of
as possibl
deterrence
particularly
doctrine ar
deterrent.