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DOUBLE-TALK OR DOUBLE-THINK?

A COMMENT ON THE DRAFT NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

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AFTER three years of labour the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee at Geneva has brought out its final and agreed draft of a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and has submitted it to the United Nations General Assembly. The Assembly, in turn, debated and approved the draft in its current session. It is expected that the draft treaty will soon be open for signature and—so the optimists confidently tell us—it may even be operative by the end of 1968. Had it been rejected, then, in principle, it would have had to be returned to the ENDC for further discussion and amendment.

In practice, however, this was never likely to occur. The draft that emerged from the Geneva talks was in all essential respects a Russo-American product (marginally adjusted to meet the criticisms and protestations of those lesser Powers which have been bold and concerned enough to speak out) and carries the full weight of Russian and American support. As such, it represents a triumph of long and patient negotiation; even if the central weaknesses of the proposed treaty (those with which this article is concerned) have not been catered for by anything better than verbal formulae, it is entirely understandable that the promoters of the scheme should have dreaded the prospect of returning to Geneva for more talks. But in any case the issues raised by the objections and counter-objections to the non-proliferation treaty (henceforth referred to as the NPT) cut so near the bone of the contemporary international politico-military system that it was, on any grounds, hard to believe that the draft treaty could be further and radically amended without corresponding changes in the system itself. And so, from the first, loud whispers were to be heard to the effect that the draft in whole or in essential part was not negotiable; and there are all the signs that the hesitant will continue to be subjected to a great deal of quiet arm-twisting until the treaty has been signed and ratified. In short, it would be entirely reasonable, on present showing, to predict that the NPT will duly come into force before very long—if not this year, then sometime in the next.

The NPT does, without any doubt, represent progress of a kind in an extremely difficult field of international relations. Accordingly, it is always possible and, perhaps, tempting to say, with Mr. Fred

Mulley, that 'we must not allow the best to become the enemy of the good'¹ by asking for something better. Equally, it is possible to take refuge in the oldest, superficially most persuasive, and yet perhaps most insidious of all snap diplomatic judgments: proclaim the NPT in its latest form a *fait accompli*, dismiss it thereupon from one's mental horizon and go on to other things. And yet it ought to be evident that in the case of this particular subject we really cannot afford to take the easy, 'pragmatic' way out. The proposed non-proliferation treaty, this article contends, will not deal with, still less settle, the great issues with which it is nominally concerned, nor does it hold out any reasonable prospect of so doing. And to that extent and, more particularly, because it is liable to mislead public opinion and postpone and divert pressure for change, it may well be thought liable to do a great deal more harm than good. The complacency, not to say humbug, which has characterised so much of the talk at Geneva, and the publicity emanating from it, have made a reasoned discussion of the subject extraordinarily difficult. Yet that is not to say that the effort to look at the matter of the NPT yet again should not be made.

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The draft non-proliferation treaty is not a complicated document, but nor is it a particularly straightforward one. Its key—but yet only implicit—provision is the division of the international community into two classes of states: those termed 'Nuclear-Weapon States'² and those termed 'Non-Nuclear Weapon States'. And, as is well known, the treaty's principal business is to maintain the present membership of the two classes unchanged. It could certainly be argued that both classes will, in practice, be formed of two sub-classes: those which are and those which are not signatories of the NPT. But a crude distinction into two classes alone will suffice for present purposes.

Erosion of the boundary between the classes is to be inhibited or forestalled by an undertaking on the part of the members of class A to keep nuclear weapons and techniques and materials relevant to their production out of the hands of the members of class B. And this provision is to be reinforced by the corresponding undertaking by members of class B not to acquire or manufacture such weapons and explosive devices, nor to seek to do so. Finally, the members of class B (and class B alone) will submit to 'safeguards'—*i.e.*, to periodic and systematic verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency that they are indeed fulfilling their undertaking.

The 'safeguards' issue is one which has been heatedly and openly

¹ Statement at the ENDC, January 23, 1968.

² Defined as those states which have 'manufactured and exploded a nuclear-weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to January 1, 1967' (Article IX, para. 3).

discussed. This is partly because the IAEA is not regarded with universal affection, and the prospect of its inspectors poking about in the commercially sensitive field of nuclear energy production for peaceful uses has inevitably raised the spectre of industrial espionage. It is also partly because there has been much fear that in one way or another the system would work to the commercial, no less than military, benefit of the members of class A and class A alone. In this respect the latest draft of the treaty is generally believed to be an improvement over previous drafts, and pressure for change in this direction is now much reduced—except perhaps in connection with the peaceful uses of nuclear explosives, *e.g.*, in large-scale civil engineering works. Since the production of nuclear explosives for civil purposes cannot, of course, be effectively distinguished from production for military purposes, the effect of the NPT here will undoubtedly be, as the Brazilians in particular have pointed out, to impose ‘the institutionalisation of a status of dependence’ of class B on class A for at least a quarter of a century ‘regardless of any technological breakthrough that might occur during those years’.³

But the crux of the matter of the treaty is to be found in its military implications. It specifically envisages one class of states which will continue to be governed by political and military leaders who believe they require nuclear weapons and who do in fact possess them, and a second class of states which do not, and are not, to possess them regardless of what they believe (or come to believe) to be necessary for national security. Alternatively, if, after adhering to the treaty, they decide that ‘extraordinary events . . . have jeopardised the supreme interests’ of their country they may withdraw⁴ and, in principle, go nuclear. But in view of the immense pressure that would immediately be focused on a state contemplating withdrawal, to say nothing of the strategic implications for that state of enduring the lapse of time that would necessarily ensue between, on the one hand, the decision to withdraw and the concomitant escape from ‘safeguards’ and, on the other hand, the day when home-made nuclear devices first become available and operational, it is hard to envisage a situation in which a class B state could in fact afford to withdraw. Certainly, the political and military consequences of so doing would hardly be distinguishable from those attendant on the actual acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons. It is considerations of this order that largely account for the dislike in which the proposed NPT is held by those states—most notably India—which, while by no means yet resolved on the production of nuclear weapons, are nonetheless capable both of producing them *and* of contemplating their active deployment for much the same deterrent purposes

³ Statement by Ambassador J. A. de Araujo Castro, February 8, 1968.

⁴ Article X, para. 1.

that form the theoretical basis of their production and deployment by the existing nuclear weapon states.

Broadly speaking, the line taken by proponents of the NPT has been to argue that the politico-military benefits accruing from the possession of nuclear weapons are illusory, and that the arguments against their acquisition are compelling. It is, indeed, widely understood today that even a second or third class nuclear capability is hideously expensive—and that successive generations of delivery systems are almost invariably more expensive than the bombs themselves.

It is equally clear that the once popular theory that tactical weapons (intended to do no more than stop an opponent's preponderant conventional forces) constitute *the* contemporary answer to the small or middle Power's problem of how to maintain neutrality and/or security in a dangerous world is itself hardly tenable, and that the distinction between tactical and strategic *uses* of nuclear weapons (as opposed to their nominal technical characteristics) is an unreal one. It is impossible to believe, for example, that once the threshold between the employment of nuclear and conventional forces has been crossed the first class nuclear Power will refrain from making full use of its nuclear preponderance if that be the condition of success. Again, the mere possession of nuclear weapons, even by a convinced and convincing neutral, seems only too likely to lead straight to that country's inclusion in the target lists of the other (and major) nuclear Powers.

Finally, it is abundantly clear that it is, above all, the possession of nuclear weapons by X that impels Y to go along the same route (a point to which further reference will be made), and that if Y does acquire them it, in turn, may be confronted by a newly nuclear Z as well. To cite the most obvious instance of this commonplace: India's prime cause for considering the nuclear option is the possession of nuclear—and, of course, of preponderant conventional—forces by China. But if India were to follow China in going nuclear she might be followed in turn by a nuclear Pakistan. Indian leaders must, and assuredly do, bear that grim possibility in mind.

All this, and more, is well understood. And there can be very little doubt that it is awareness of these difficulties that lies behind the plain fact that, despite the absence of a signed and ratified NPT, there are still no more than five nuclear Powers today. Nor is there the slightest evidence to indicate that any one of the states commonly included in the lists of 'potential nuclear Powers' actively proposes to move on from its present condition of having the scientific and technological *capability* to produce nuclear weapons within, say, two, or five, or ten years of the decision to do so, to the point of actually producing them. In other words, the function of the NPT is not at all the damming of an impending flood of fresh, third-rate entrants into the

nuclear club. No such flood, or even trickle, is imminent. Its central purpose is effectively to withdraw from the potential (military) nuclear Powers the ultimate *option* of going nuclear in the unspecified future. And, like most other formal international agreements, it proposes to do so by arresting the processes of change—in this case political, strategic and technological.

The first question to be asked, therefore, is whether, and to what extent, it does promise to inhibit, if not prevent, the further proliferation of nuclear weapons in the face of such counter-pressures as it is reasonable to envisage. This in turn depends on an assessment of the counter-pressures. But the NPT must surely also be judged in the light of the principle laid down by the General Assembly in 1965, namely that

The Treaty should be a step towards the achievement of general and complete disarmament and, more particularly, nuclear disarmament.⁵

The two criteria are, in fact, closely connected.

* * *

Who are the potential military nuclear Powers? Following the late Sir John Cockcroft, and judging, crudely, by probable annual output of weapons-grade plutonium in 1970, they are: Belgium (2 kg.), Canada (650 kg.), Czechoslovakia (75 kg.), West Germany (235 kg.), India (190 kg.), Israel (5 kg.), Italy (160 kg.), Japan (300 kg.), the Netherlands (10 kg.), Pakistan (60 kg.), Spain (120 kg.), Sweden (120 kg.), Switzerland (70 kg.).⁶ A recent UN study of the question has 'estimated that some eight kilograms of [weapons-grade plutonium] would be needed for a nuclear warhead yielding a twenty-kiloton explosion'.⁷ On these grounds the serious contenders (if that is what they are) must be among the following: Canada, Czechoslovakia, West Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

The case of Pakistan apart, it should be immediately evident that the only politico-strategic contexts in which the taking up of nuclear options by these particular states would make even minimal sense are two:

- a. the contingency of military confrontation with one of the existing nuclear Powers;
- b. the adoption of an entirely independent political and strategic policy on the model of the current French *tous azimuts*—or, in alternative terms, the attempt to establish an additional centre or 'pole' of world power.

⁵ General Assembly Resolution 2028 (XX), November 19, 1965.

⁶ At a Pugwash Conference at Ronneby, Sweden, in September, 1967.

⁷ *Effects of the Possible Use of Nuclear Weapons and the Security and Economic Implications for States of the Acquisition and further Development of these Weapons* (New York: United Nations, 1968), para. 54, p. 23.

It is the first context that is really critical. Only Japan and, perhaps, Western Germany would be capable of attempting, though not necessarily attaining, the latter goal; and in any case the force and implications of the second context may in all essentials be reduced to those of the first, which involves the following suppositions: first, that conflict with a class A (nuclear) state is not impossible; second, that in the event of such conflict it is unlikely that a class B (non-nuclear) state will be fully supported by any of the other members of class A, and third, that whatever drawbacks and burdens may be consequent upon the effort first to acquire and then to deploy nuclear weapons, they pale before the overwhelming and terrifying prospect of having to face a nuclear Power armed with conventional weapons alone. For while it certainly cannot be asserted positively that the possession of a second or third-rate nuclear capability will ensure the survival of a secondary Power in the event of such a confrontation—in other words, that a second or third-rate nuclear capability will suffice to deter a Power possessed of a first-rate capability—it is nevertheless abundantly clear that failure to acquire such weapons puts the conventionally-armed state squarely at the other's mercy. Nor does alliance with an existing nuclear Power offer a way out of this dilemma. The long-term viability of the NPT is contingent on the extent to which these difficulties are met.

The evolution of super-Power strategy and politics in recent years has confirmed again and again, however, that the entirely reasonable and readily-understandable first principle of Russian and American diplomatic behaviour is the avoidance of serious conflict with each other. Accordingly, if protection (*i.e.*, a guarantee) by a military nuclear Power is to be of such quality that both the protected Power *and* the potential opponent will give it full credence, at least two pre-conditions will have to be satisfied.

First, it must be clear to all concerned that the protecting nuclear Power regards the integrity and independence of the protected state as of such importance that it is itself prepared to risk war with its nuclear opponent in the former's defence. But this, in turn, will only be recognised by all concerned if it is equally clear to all that the security and integrity of the protected Power can be assimilated, as it were, into the protecting Power's own security and integrity. This may be the case for Canada and the United States—which incidentally helps to explain why Canada does *not* consider that it requires nuclear weapons. But it is difficult to think of any other instance.

Second, and as a consequence of the first pre-condition, the diplomatic and military conduct of the protected Power must be (and be shown to be) controlled in all relevant and significant respects by the protecting Power—for otherwise the protecting Power could not possibly

afford to undertake the risks involved; and if it appeared to be doing so, the hostile nuclear Power would rightly refuse to treat the undertaking seriously. Few states are content to accept satellite status voluntarily.

How closely class B states will, in the event, be guided by these considerations in determining their attitude to the NPT will depend, no doubt, on their view of the likely evolution of major international politics as they impinge on their affairs—on whether, for example, they are confident that Russia will continue to be governed by rulers who are uncertain about the precise limits of their freedom of manoeuvre in eastern Europe; on the extent to which the United States is thought liable to retreat into a neo-isolationist mood once her retirement from South-East Asia has been achieved; on whether China is thought likely to adopt harsher and more direct means of asserting her influence in eastern and southern Asia in the wake of the American withdrawal; on whether (or when) Japan will decisively abandon the 'low posture', and on how the German problem will ultimately evolve. These and other uncertainties are, of course, compounded with the fact that the three most feared and powerful states of all are, and will clearly remain, armed with nuclear weapons regardless of the fate of the NPT. And one of the three does not even propose to sign the treaty.

In bald terms, then, the fundamental urge and justification for acquiring nuclear weapons spring, in every significant case of a potential nuclear Power, from the politico-strategic implications for the potential nuclear Power in question of there being a nuclear arsenal controlled by a government whose future conduct and purposes are both uncertain and relevant to the potential nuclear Power's national security. The European neutrals' (Sweden's and Switzerland's) debate on the acquisition of nuclear weapons hinges on Russia's nuclear capability; India's debate is a function of China's possession of these weapons, as is Japan's, and so forth.

Here, indeed, lies the central problem of nuclear proliferation, one which the framers of the NPT have not really tried to solve, nor could really be expected to solve—so great a revolution in the contemporary international system would be entailed. It is the super-Powers' own possession of nuclear weapons which provides whatever real incentive to acquire them that the serious candidates for entry into the nuclear club do have. The viability of the NPT—which is to say, the extent to which the existing membership of the two classes of states promises to remain unchanged—will therefore depend first and foremost on the actions of the established nuclear Powers themselves. So long as they continue to arm themselves with ever more potent nuclear weapons those countries which have both reason to fear them *and* the capacity to produce such weapons themselves will continue to wish to retain the option of doing so. In alternative terms, those

who possess the option today will only be persuaded to renounce it finally if their fear of one or other of the super-Powers is met—either by a guarantee by the others or by the super-Power most relevant to their security divesting itself of its own nuclear arms. But individually the super-Powers can do neither one nor the other. They cannot give credible guarantees without endangering their own security by linking it to that of a minor state. They cannot disarm without radically altering the nature and content of their relations both with each other and with all actual and potential third parties.

It is presumably in an effort to cope with this problem that Britain, Russia and the United States have offered to make a solemn declaration in the Security Council of their readiness to go to the aid of any state subject to nuclear aggression or nuclear threat.⁸ It is a very curious plan. At any rate, as a 'guarantee' it is impossible to take seriously. Against whom is it directed? In the interests of whom would the United States and Russia, in particular, risk nuclear war against each other, or against China, or even against Britain and France? If it is only intended against the 'nth' Power, it clearly fails to resolve the dangers which are uppermost in the minds of almost all—if not all—of those states which are anxious to retain the nuclear option: those dangers emanating from some or all of the *existing* nuclear Powers.⁹

This leaves the other possible condition of a viable NPT: the cessation of the nuclear arms race between all class A states leading to the ultimate, but assured, dismantling of their full nuclear establishments. Up to now, the demand for moves in this direction has been met in two ways. On paper, by the inclusion of the following clause in the draft NPT:

Each of the Parties to this Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures regarding cessation of the nuclear arms race and disarmament, and on a Treaty on General and Complete Disarmament under strict and effective international control. [Article VI.]

In deeds, the response of the class A states has been entirely different and may, not unfairly, be taken as the true measure of the sincerity and seriousness of the intention expressed in the article of the draft Treaty just quoted. The Geneva discussions have coincided with the super-Powers' resolve to go ahead with their respective Anti-Ballistic

⁸ The operative paragraph of the draft resolution states that the Security Council 'Welcomes the intention expressed by certain states that they will provide or support immediate assistance, in accordance with the Charter, to any non-nuclear weapon state party to the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons that is a victim of an act or object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used'.

⁹ Asked whether the pledge represented a new, unilateral American commitment, Mr. R. J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman, stoutly replied, "No. It is not. . . . It is a reaffirmation of the Security Council's capacity for dealing with a very serious problem."

Missile systems, and with the general advance of the other nuclear Powers along the spiral path so well marked out and trodden by the Americans and Russians before them: greater arsenals, more sophisticated delivery systems, more effective ways of penetrating the opponent's defences and wreaking destruction upon him. And, not uncharacteristically, the opening of the General Assembly's debate on the NPT was marked by the detonation of the greatest-ever underground nuclear explosion in the Nevada desert.

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It should be clear from the discussion up to this point that the importance of universal nuclear disarmament is not being stressed merely as an object to which we must all piously address ourselves on general moral grounds, for all that there are very good moral grounds for doing so. Nor is it seen here as a goal which, although eminently desirable, is not in fact attainable, and is therefore only deserving of our formal recognition before we go on to more serious affairs. True, this might appear to be the substance of the Russo-American attitude to the question; at any rate it is difficult to put any other serious construction on either their words or actions to date. And it is surely this that Mr. Mulley (and many others) have in mind when they speak of not allowing the best (nuclear disarmament) to be the enemy of the good (the NPT). In fact, the contention of this article is that nuclear disarmament—or *at the very least* a clear cessation of the present lunatic arms race between the super-Powers, ABM systems and all—is the pre-condition of the NPT's success—success being defined as the effective inhibition of the further proliferation of nuclear weapons. And it is because there is plainly not going to be any nuclear disarmament in the foreseeable future that the success of the NPT is impossible to envisage.

But this is not the only weakness of the NPT that prompts criticism. There is the consideration that by diverting attention away from the recognised implications of the *existing*, ever-increasing nuclear arsenals and concentrating discussion on the possible implications of entirely *hypothetical* forces, upon the establishment of which no government has yet embarked, still less decided, the great campaign for the NPT contains within itself positive dangers of its own. These dangers may be grouped under two heads. The first head may be loosely termed *diplomatic*; the second is probably best defined as *necrotic*.

The central diplomatic danger which the NPT in its present form embodies is easily identified. It is, simply, that an NPT could provide the most promising opportunity yet for the class B states to extract a measure of disarmament from the members of class A, or at any rate from the three military nuclear Powers which participated in the Geneva

talks and which will duly sign and ratify the treaty. The latter want the treaty, and all the signs are that they want it badly; and they have clearly conceded the link between non-proliferation and disarmament. But they have not made, and on present showing will not make, any move to bind themselves treaty-wise to more than an undertaking 'to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date', and to nuclear and general disarmament. This is not an undertaking that has carried much conviction, and lack of confidence in the good faith of the super-Powers has, if anything, been strengthened by their summary rejection, in the last stages of the negotiations, of the Rumanian proposal to substitute a clearer and marginally tougher wording for Article VI. The Rumanian formulation deserves to be quoted in full:

1. Nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty undertake to adopt specific measures to bring about as soon as possible the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons and the reduction and destruction of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery.
2. If, five years after the entry into force of this Treaty, such measures shall not have been taken, the Parties shall examine the situation thus created and decide on the measures to be taken.¹⁰

It is surely in the light of the quite consistent Russo-American refusal to allow the issue of the NPT to impinge in any significant way on their own respective military postures that the Indian Prime Minister's bitter comment must be read:

We believe in the validity of a step by step approach and do realise that it is not possible for a perfect Treaty to emerge immediately. However, it is reasonable to expect the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Commission [*sic*], which was designed to devise measures for disarmament, to come forward with some concrete step, even though small, in this direction. The present draft Treaty does not promote disarmament. And as long as the elaboration of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon Powers continues unchecked, it does not advance the security of the world. Measures which do not involve an element of self-restraint on the part of all States—nuclear-weapons States as well as non-nuclear-weapons States—cannot form the basis for a meaningful international agreement to promote disarmament.¹¹

In short, if the non-military nuclear Powers now duly succumb to the already intense Russo-American pressure on them to rally round and sign—a pressure symbolised and, indeed, expressed in the joint appearance of Messrs. Kuznetsov and Goldberg before the Political Committee of the Assembly on April 26—a unique opportunity for progress towards real disarmament will have been lost.

¹⁰ ENDC Document 223/Rev. 1, March 8, 1968.

¹¹ Statement in Parliament, March 14, 1968.

The second objection raised by the diplomatic implications and background to the NPT is marginally more complex, but only superficially less substantial. As the Indians and the Rumanians, most notably, have pointed out, the NPT enshrines a clear discriminatory principle. The well-established principle of the legal equality of states, already severely dented by certain provisions of the UN Charter, is dealt yet another blow, some states being specifically accorded the right to be a great deal more equal than others in respect both of the question who may and who may not maintain a military nuclear establishment and that of how the verification system is to operate.¹² There can be no doubt that few secondary and tertiary Powers regard this further erosion of the principle of the equality of states with equanimity. But it would seem to be less a sentimental attachment to legal forms that moves them than an uneasy feeling that something important is being surrendered in exchange for no clearly defined or substantial *quid pro quo*. It is, indeed, recognised that behind the formal issue of legal equality lies, once again, the very real politico-strategic problem of how the NPT relates—or fails to relate—to nuclear and, ultimately, general disarmament:

Le Traité instituera une discrimination juridique durable entre Etats selon qu'ils sont possesseurs ou non d'armes nucléaires. Y consentir représenterait pour les Etats non possesseurs un lourd sacrifice qui ne se conçoit sans contre-prestation. Comme c'est avant tout leur sécurité qui est mise en péril par la poursuite de la course aux armements, des progrès devraient être réalisés dans le domaine de sa limitation.

Thus the Swiss Government on the link between the formal and the substantive implications of the draft treaty.¹³

This brings us to those dangers, implicit in the NPT in its present form, which, for want of a better word, I would term necrotic. They are well known, hardly disputed, and have often been rehearsed. Yet in practice they are almost invariably ignored; and it is because the NPT project seems likely to divert attention from them once again, and in the most unfortunate of all ways—*i.e.*, by purporting to offer a means of coping with them, that they are worth reviewing, however briefly, here. For this purpose one can hardly do better than pick out a few key passages from the impeccably authoritative report of the UN Secretary-General's consultative group on the *Effects of the Possible Use of Nuclear Weapons*, already alluded to.

¹² However, the British Government, 'to assist [the Geneva] negotiations . . . have decided that, at such times as international safeguards are put into effect in the non-nuclear weapon states in implementation of the provisions of the treaty, they will be prepared to offer an opportunity for the application of similar safeguards in the United Kingdom subject to exclusions for national security reasons only'. Statement by Mr. Mulley in Parliament, December 4, 1967.

¹³ *Aide-mémoire* transmitted to the American and Russian co-Chairmen of the ENDC, November 17, 1967.

There is one inescapable and basic fact. It is that the nuclear armouries which are in being already contain large megaton weapons every one of which has a destructive power greater than that of all the conventional explosive that has ever been used in warfare since the day gunpowder was discovered. Were such weapons ever to be used in numbers, hundreds of millions of people might be killed, and civilisation as we know it . . . would inevitably come to an end in the countries involved in the conflict. Many of those who survived the immediate destruction, *as well as others in countries outside the area of conflict* . . . would suffer from long-term effects of irradiation and transmit, to their offspring, a genetic burden which would become manifest in the disabilities of later generations.¹⁴

The effects of all-out nuclear war, regardless of where it started, could not be confined to the Powers engaged in that war . . . Neighbouring countries, and even countries in parts of the world remote from the actual conflict, could soon become exposed to the hazards of radio-active fall-out . . . At least within the same hemisphere, an enduring radio-active hazard could exist for distant as well as close human populations, through the ingestion of foods derived from contaminated vegetables. . . Given a sufficient number [of bombs] no part of the world would escape exposure to biologically significant levels of radiation. . .

The fact that a state of mutual nuclear deterrence prevails between the Super Powers does not, as we know all too well, prevent the outbreak of wars with conventional weapons involving both nuclear and non-nuclear nations; the risk of nuclear war remains as long as there are nuclear weapons.¹⁵

. . . The reciprocal technological development and sophistication of nuclear warheads and their associated weapons systems which [result from the effort to maintain a state of nuclear deterrence] constitute a spiralling nuclear arms race. Short of mutual agreement, it is a race which has no end [and which] cannot be expected to slow down until concrete steps are taken which lead to disarmament and which promote the security of all nations.¹⁶

And finally,

The basic facts about the nuclear bomb and its use are harsh and terrifying for civilisation; they have become lost in a mass of theoretical verbiage. It has been claimed that the world has learnt to live with the bomb; it is also said there is no need for it to drift unnecessarily into the position that it is prepared to die for it. The ultimate question for the world to decide in our nuclear age—and this applies both to nuclear and non-nuclear Powers—is what short-term interests it is prepared to sacrifice in exchange for an assurance of survival and security.¹⁷

The answer of the nuclear Powers—and first and foremost of the two most powerful among them—to this last question is, as the matter of

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 1. Italics added.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the NPT shows, loud and clear: *no* short-term interests of any significance are to be sacrificed at all.

It is, of course, perfectly apparent that there can be no simple, rapid dismantling of the existing nuclear establishments without corresponding changes in the structure of international politics in general, and of super-Power politics in particular. For example, it can hardly be expected that Russia and the United States will agree to restrict themselves to conventional weapons so long as China's nuclear establishment remains intact, even if they themselves succeeded in a preliminary re-fashioning of the guide-lines of their policies towards each other. That the Chinese would probably not themselves have developed nuclear weapons had the United States and Russia not already done so does not, of course, in itself affect the validity of this proposition (if valid it is).

Again, a decision by one of the existing nuclear Powers to divest itself of its weapons would not seriously affect its continued command of the techniques of their construction: which is one reason among many why an agreement to dispose of existing weapons would itself be valueless unless accompanied by a credible system of verification. Yet, on present showing, international inspection within Russia and China, no matter how respectable the underlying purpose, is and will long remain unthinkable to the governing élites of either state. It is thus impossible to envisage a lasting solution of the problem on the basis of changes in the conduct of their *external* affairs alone. Then there are certain territorial problems, chief among them that of Germany, which have been frozen in their present uncomfortable, and yet not wholly unsatisfactory, forms as a direct consequence of the nuclear deadlock. What of them? In short, nothing is easier than the drawing up of a long list of entirely formidable reasons for disbelieving in the practicability of reversing what cannot but appear to be the current irreversible and headlong drive towards ever greater and ever more horrifying accumulations of destructive power.

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In discussions of this kind it is customary, at this point, to suspend further judgment and substitute for the language of analysis the language of hope. It may be disguised by argument along the lines 'progress must be gradual'. It is often said in favour of the NPT that since it follows the agreement on the non-nuclearisation of Antarctica and the Partial Test-ban Treaty, it, in turn, might be followed by still better things in years to come. But such a hope cannot be more than pious. And if one were to insist on making such a false extrapolation from the admittedly undeniable, but nevertheless very small, achievements in the field of disarmament to date, others would surely be

equally justified in making a comparable extrapolation into the future from the current rate of armament. Nor could it be denied that progress in the former field is pitiful when compared with growth in the latter.

Thus it seems to me that conclusions of a very different and much gloomier order are unavoidable. Briefly they are these :

First, that the contemporary international system of sovereign, competing and ridiculously unequal states is becoming, if it has not already become, fundamentally incompatible with human survival. The Grotian concept of the regulation and limitation of war is defunct in the age of ABC weapons because the prime incentive both to acquire and employ ABC weapons is itself provided by the incidence of war—in any form and with any weapons—and of war-like postures. States as we know them are clearly unwilling and unable to surrender the right to go to war and the right to demonstrate their capacity to do so—at any rate until there ceases to be cause to suspect hostility in others. In other words, the ending of all major forms of international competition—military, political, economic, ethnic, and cultural among them—is the *sine qua non* of a secure and perpetual peace. Unfortunately, the message of the Geneva discussions has been that while both the super-Powers and the non-nuclear Powers dimly perceive the validity of this commonplace in relation to the *non-nuclear* Powers, the super-powers are unwilling or incapable of seeing its infinitely graver implications for themselves.

It therefore follows, *second*, that the view we take of the system proposed at Geneva and implied in the NPT must depend *inter alia* on what confidence we are prepared to place in the capacity and will of the preponderant Powers themselves to abstain from actions likely to increase the incidence of international conflict—any conflict, anywhere—on the one hand, and to assert such control and influence as they have over other states which are disposed to adopt hostile courses of behaviour on the other hand. The merest glance at two great arenas of contemporary armed conflict, the Middle East and South-East Asia, and recollection of recent Soviet activity in the former and American activity in the latter, are hardly encouraging in this respect.

Third, the Geneva debates and the form the NPT has taken constitute a demonstration of the incapacity of the minor Powers to induce the greater Powers to deal with a matter which is of overwhelming concern to us all, and to fail, moreover, in a forum where the fiction of the equality of states is more carefully honoured than in any other and their position correspondingly strong. It is surely not too much to class this failure of nerve on the part of those non-nuclear weapons states which participated in the ENDC discussions with other symptoms of the emerging bankruptcy of the United Nations system.

Fourth, the assumption by the nuclear Powers of a unique right

and capacity to bolster their respective military establishments with nuclear weapons, coupled with the arrogant demand that the non-nuclear states abstain from following their example, bodes ill for the future. The logic of the Russo-American position at Geneva is akin to the logic of the British and French pressure on Czechoslovakia in September 1938, if not of the Munich Conference itself: the weak must not complicate affairs for the strong because the latter alone are equipped to deal with the central international issues. To the question, when and how they, the strong, will begin to do so the answer today, as always, is not quite yet. Talking of pie in the sky is, perhaps, the oldest of political ploys. But in the present context it is not merely inadequate, it is monstrous.

All told, then, the matter of the NPT suggests that the auguries for the future are poor. They are poor in respect of the NPT itself as a specific means of inhibiting further proliferation of nuclear weapons—both vertical and horizontal. And they are poor in that the NPT offers no cause to believe that the long-awaited step towards a solution of the more fundamental and very much graver need to liquidate existing nuclear arsenals is at all in prospect.

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