

EXCURSUS 2

David N. Whiting on THE BISHOPS AND THE BOMB

A newly resurgent ban-the-bomb movement grows bolder, more broadly based, and better organized in the United States with each passing day. Religious leaders, Christian and Jewish, are prominent in the movement as always, but now it is the Roman Catholic hierarchy that forms the vanguard—with the backing of the pope himself.

John Paul II underscored the dangers of nuclear arms just before Christmas, when he dispatched a battery of scientists to meet with leaders in the U.S., the Soviet Union, Britain, and France and discuss with them recent findings on the biological impact of nuclear war.

In the last three years no fewer than fifty U.S. Roman Catholic bishops—a sixth of the total—have joined Pax Christi, an international Catholic peace organization that promotes disarmament. While its American membership is still small—five thousand of the 50 million U.S. Catholics belong—the number is swelling rapidly. Dr. Joseph J. Fahey, a founder of Pax Christi's eight-year-old American chapter, believes that 10 million Catholics in the peace movement is a realistic goal.

The president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop John R. Roach, spoke out firmly at the bishops' meeting in Washington, D.C., last November: "The church needs to say 'no' clearly and decisively to the use of nuclear arms."

It was in the dry, wind-swept Texas Panhandle in spring, 1981, that the campaign by members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy had its start. As Amarillo's bishop, Leroy T. Matthiesen, relates the story, a parishioner—a man employed at a plant where nuclear weapons are assembled—had asked him whether the neutron bomb was a sin. Matthiesen pondered and prayed and within months embarked on a series of nationwide tours with the purpose of condemning the arms race. "The choice is really between nonviolence and nonexistence," he asserts.

At about the same time, Seattle's bishop, Raymond G. Hunthausen, had begun to propose that people withhold their federal income taxes as a protest against nuclear arms. His actions were triggered by the announcement that a Trident nuclear-powered submarine base was located nearby. "To protest the Trident is but a logical extension of all the things the Church has been saying about peace," Hunthausen contends.

Another recent recruit to the antinuclear cause is the archbishop of San Francisco, John R. Quinn, past president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Last October, Quinn, citing development of the neutron bomb, called for a day of fasting each month until the nuclear race is abandoned.

What began not long ago with the lonely speeches of Matthiesen, Hunthausen, and Quinn has gathered momentum. Roman Catholic bishops throughout the nation are denouncing nuclear armaments in general—in public speeches, newspapers, and over the air. For Sister Margaret Galiardi, director of communications and development at the ten thousand-member Intercommunity Center for Justice and Peace in Greenwich Village, all the activism at the top means that the Church is at a turning point. "There's a growing awareness and consciousness that we're really faced with the destruction of the planet," she says.

Although a few Catholic clergymen, such as Father

Daniel Berrigan, have long decried publicly the development of nuclear weapons, it is the bishops' involvement that undoubtedly has popularized the cause today. Nuns and priests in places like Chicago, South Bend, and even Nazareth, Kentucky, are making collective public statements against nuclear arms. Some three hundred priests have already signed newspaper advertisements and more are planned.

The National Council of Catholic Women, the nation's largest Catholic women's organization, last fall pledged to "work tirelessly for disarmament and the abolition of all nuclear weapons." The council's eight thousand member groups are devoting themselves this year to converting government and religious leaders to the antinuclear cause.

Allies in the antinuclear movement cut across almost the entire spectrum of the established religious community in the United States. Evangelist Billy Graham has publicly decried the arms race. Mennonites, Quakers, and the Lutheran Church in America challenge Washington to take steps toward unilateral disarmament. The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States advocate multilateral disarmament. The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. pushes for an arms freeze. The Central Conference of American Rabbis called as long ago as 1978 for postponing development of the neutron bomb. And the National Council of Churches, representing thirty-two Protestant and Orthodox church affiliates with a combined membership of forty million, pleads for an end to the production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

What will be the impact on the Roman Catholic Church if it is branded a "Peace church"? Most supporters of the disarmament movement contend that the Roman Catholic Church has consciously thrust itself into the eye of a gathering storm and that firm statements on nuclear weapons from Catholic officials will cause greater numbers of people to flock to the Church than will leave it. Their opponents contend, however, that political activism of this sort could seriously erode both the Church's authority and its popularity. Nonetheless, the first steps appear to have been taken.

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EXCURSUS 3

Samuel Hux on LITERATURE AND HUMAN PARADOX

It's hard to get a moral handle on Odysseus. One critic has argued that since *odysseasthai* means essentially "to cause pain, and to be willing to do so," Odysseus' name roughly is "Trouble." His career bears it out. It's not hard to imagine a Dino De Laurentiis spectacular, a spaghetti Western called "A Man Named Trouble." Which is not to say Odysseus is a roughneck without culture. He spares the suitors' minstrel Phemios, for Phemios has a job to do: sing the hero's praises. Then Odysseus turns back to a captive, chopping off his nose, ears, hands, and feet, feeding his genitals to the dogs. Homer gets a kick out of Odysseus: He's a riot.

It used to be thought that one couldn't be truly civilized without some appreciation of the Homeric epics. You may recall the civilized virtues: respect for the mind, for tradition, for the value of *peaceful deliberation*, and so on. Is there a