

The World Council has not been quite so prone as the U.N. to designating special years and emphases. These have often been criticized for being shallow and contrived, yet they have a way of transcending their limitations and thus perhaps pleasantly surprising their critics.

Prior to the Seventh Special Session of the U.N. on the New International Economic Order there was wide apprehension about disastrous confrontation and perhaps the disintegration of the organization itself as a consequence. Wise statesmanship prevailed, and a way ahead was opened.

As the World Council meets in Africa under the theme "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites," it is likely that the underlying unity of faith and of participation in a common humanity will see the Council safely through the theological and ideological tensions that will and should surface. It should emerge stronger and better, giving its member churches a clearer view of their tasks and guidance and courage in carrying them out.

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EXCURSUS III

The Illusion of "Maturity" & Who Should Be the Next President

The continuing nostalgia boom has not yet got around to replaying some of the golden oldies of American public madness. Perhaps it is just as well. Nobody wants to pick up on the nineteen fifties' debate about whether one is morally justified in shooting the improvident neighbor who seeks refuge in your family bomb shelter. The public hysteria about things nuclear, it is said, is well forgotten. It is even suggested by some that Americans have attained a new "maturity" about the balance of terror. The more likely explanation is that we have been persuaded to resign ourselves to the apparently insoluble. It is but an example of the syndrome so brilliantly described by Ernest Becker in his *The Denial of Death*. Ours is a determined complacency reinforced by denial and deceit. J.V. Cunningham's epitaph for one man may be the future's judgment of our generation: "An old dissembler who lived out his lie/Lies here as if he did not fear to die."

Our dissembling may not be able to prevail, however, against recent signals from the Ford Administration. From time to time the Secretary of State calls for a new "great debate" about U.S. foreign policy. At the same time, his penchant for

secrecy about the crucial issues makes it hard to know what we are to debate. It is by no means clear that the Administration would welcome a great debate about America's nuclear strategy. Nonetheless, evidence accumulates that such a debate is urgently needed, if it is not already too late. In truth, the signals of recent months have the feel of decisions already made. Perhaps the American people are simply being informed belatedly of the fate our leaders have chosen for us. We must hope that is not the case.

The troubling signals are in the form of recent statements about nuclear "first use," "flexible response," and "civil preparedness." The three are tightly linked. We begin with the last. A few months ago there surfaced a very important study by the Defense Department's Civil Preparedness Agency (DCPA). Subsequent statements by the Secretary of Defense make clear that the study is not simply an instance of Pentagon bureaucrats whiling away their time in the infinite elaboration of Dr. Strangelove scenarios. They apparently want it known that they are deadly serious about this one.

The DCPA "feasibility study" has to do with putting millions of Americans into mine shafts in the event of a "limited" or all-out nuclear war. "Our estimates now," says a DCPA official, "are that under Crisis Relocation Planning criteria, there is a potential for sheltering 50 million people in level, dry and readily accessible mines." In reading the study one should keep in mind how such a program would actually be implemented and what it would mean for the character of American society.

DCPA says it has already discovered space for six million people in some two thousand mines. Places like Montana, Utah, and Missouri offer great possibilities. Seventy per cent of Missouri's population, for example, could be fitted into that state's mines and caves. Pennsylvanians are also lucky because of their state's many coal mines. "The entire population of Pittsburgh could be sheltered in mines within 70 miles of the city." Under "Crisis Relocation" people in "high risk" areas such as major cities or near military installations would be evacuated to "low risk" areas during times of "international tension."

Of course, all this would take more time than the thirty minutes nuclear missiles need to reach their targets. "Most authorities have concluded," says the DCPA study, "that it is probable that a period of increased international tension will provide a period of strategic warning prior to an attack. Given two or three days and good plans, a successful relocation of population could be achieved." Defense Secretary Schlesinger says he agrees this is the most likely scenario for the outbreak of nuclear war.

As we move to nuclear "flexibility," the key thing is having "options." Schlesinger informed Con-

gress this year that he assumes the Soviet Union is already in a position to evacuate its cities, thus giving the Russians greater flexibility. The first option in America's Crisis Relocation plan would be exercised if the Soviet threat was just against our missiles. That would mean the "relocation of the population from high risk areas near key military installations and the protection of the rest of the population against fallout." Schlesinger says this could keep deaths "well under one million." The second option would be in the case of an all-out Russian attack. That means "the evacuation of the bulk of the population from our major metropolitan areas" and could preserve as many as 70 million lives.

The plan is not perfect of course. But if it "worked perfectly," says the DCPA, American deaths could be limited to 50 to 135 million in the event of an all-out attack. According to DCPA director John E. Davis, testifying before a Senate subcommittee in April, "Phase One" of Crisis Relocation has already been worked out. Schlesinger confirms the judgment that it should be possible to keep a large population in the mines for up to two weeks. An official publication notes that "While many large mines are not located within or next to major metropolitan areas, they are close enough to be reached within two or three days by city dwellers." Since "an intense international crisis" would presumably take at least that long to announce itself, the logistical problems should not prove insurmountable.

Crisis Relocation is, as one might expect, part and parcel of other shifts in nuclear planning. In a June 25 news conference President Ford pointedly refused to disavow the first use of nuclear weapons. On July 1 Schlesinger stated: "Under no circumstances should we disavow the first use of nuclear weapons." Evidence of Schlesinger's touching confidence in human rationality is contained in his May 4 statement to a Senate subcommittee about containing nuclear war: "If we were to maintain continued communications with the Soviet leaders during the war and if we were to describe precisely and meticulously the limited nature of our actions, including the desire to avoid attacking their urban base, in spite of whatever one says historically in advance that everything must go all-out...political leaders on both sides will be under powerful pressure to continue to be sensible." In short, there is no reason why sensible people should lose their heads while killing millions.

Herbert Scoville, former Assistant Director in the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, notes that we are now witnessing a major reversal in nuclear planning. "The U.S. cold war policy of maintaining the freedom of action to use nuclear weapons whenever it saw fit was gradually becom-

ing eroded by custom and even by formal treaty commitment. Now, however, there is evidence of a major reversal of this trend. Instead of just being reluctant to commit itself to a no-first-use policy, the U.S. has apparently started on a campaign of atomic threats." Writing in *Arms Control Today*, Scoville suggests that this reversal is part of "the post Vietnam-Mayaguez syndrome." One of the lessons Ford, Schlesinger, and others supposedly "learned" from Vietnam is that the next time we must move more rapidly to deploy our full military resources, including nuclear weapons.

"The groundwork is being laid for public acceptance of such a policy," writes Scoville, "which is the logical culmination of the goal of acquiring a flexible nuclear response....Escalation to a nuclear level is now being considered less dangerous than a prolonged conventional stalemate." Scoville concludes: "We can't afford the dangerous luxury of using nuclear threats to demonstrate our resolve in the post-Vietnam climate. Actions taken now to restore our national ego could...lead to our ultimate devastation." Of course, more than national ego is involved. After the Vietnam debacle it may be necessary for the U.S. to give assurance of its military resolve to those who must depend on American power. But the dangers inherent in nuclear saber rattling are entirely out of proportion to that need.

Given the short time factors involved in nuclear delivery, and given what we know about human nature in crisis, Schlesinger's assurances about rational behavior in a limited war are entirely implausible. Scoville puts the question pointedly: "Since the fate of mankind may depend on the result, can we afford the risk that Schlesinger's judgment might be wrong?" In addition, the proliferation of nuclear weaponry (India, Israel? Egypt? terrorists?) threatens to make a shambles of absurdities out of the Pentagon's finely tuned scenarios.

The answer is nuclear disarmament. Admittedly, that is easy to say, but, alarmingly, it is not being said very much these days. The American people have not become more mature about the balance of terror, they have become more resigned. It is not growth but regression to accept the unacceptable. This numbing resignation is sustained by the infernal difficulty in "getting a handle" on the subject of nuclear warfare. In strategic discussions everything seems turned upside down, words do not mean what they seem to mean. For example, it is said the U.S. is in greater danger if Russia is vulnerable and thus tempted to launch a first strike. Therefore, we must help the Russians build their nuclear capacity. In a bizarre twist of détente the two superpowers collaborate in seeking safety in greater jeopardy. Given this kind of logic, it is understandable that most Americans are prepared

to leave the debate to the experts. To give into that temptation is undemocratic in principle and, quite possibly, deadly in consequence.

A new great debate about nuclear weaponry is urgently needed. Indeed, there is the risk of reviving the kind of bomb shelter hysteria we had in the 1950's and early 1960's. That risk can be minimized, however, and is in any case less dangerous than the denials and deceptions that presently pass for maturity. There is no certain road to disarmament, but in this election year that candidate should become President who can point the way toward a world delivered from nuclear terror. The sadness and the sickness is that, as of now, there is not a candidate in sight who even has that hope on his public agenda.

RJN

EXCURSUS IV

A Sort of Disengagement at the U.N.

Henry Kissinger had to stay over in the Middle East, putting the final touches to the second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement. For that reason his address to the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly was read to that august body by Patrick Moynihan, the newly appointed American ambassador. The address may be seen as a sort of disengagement too, as at least a temporary veering away by the United States from a head-on confrontation with the so-called Third World. But it was more than that. The address contains massive policy proposals (the text runs to over twenty-six pages of single-spaced typescript, and it took Moynihan well over an hour to read it) and a remarkable quantity of good sense. Those in this country who have criticized Kissinger for being unresponsive to the needs and demands of the poorer nations should, if not applaud, at least recognize this potentially far-reaching step. The initial response, at any rate, from Third World delegations was surprisingly favorable, and there followed a marked deescalation of anti-American rhetoric on the banks of the East River. Together with the setbacks to the campaign by the radical Arabs to throw Israel out of the United Nations and the voting down of the latest Cuban proposal to give international legitimacy to the (largely fictitious) Puerto Rican liberation movement, Kissinger's address counts as a third American success in the thoroughly antagonistic United Nations context this year. This is a rather cheering record. It should be cheered much more than it has been.

The address contains one major proposal, the setting up within the International Monetary Fund of a new agency to give compensatory loans to Third World nations suffering from fluctuating world prices of the commodities they export, up to \$2.5 billion or more per year and a potential total of \$10 billion in outstanding loans. This proposal touches directly on one of the most crippling problems of the poorer nations—their vulnerability as exporters of raw materials in a world market over which they have very little control. Some commentators have observed that this proposal has the potential magnitude of the Marshall Plan.

The address further contains a number of other very concrete proposals—on the expansion (by 400 per cent) of the resources of the International Finance Corporation, on the transfer of technology, on international agreements governing the operation of transnational enterprises, on trade concessions to Third World manufactured products, on the building up of food reserves, on aid to the poorest nations. Some of these proposals are, of course, highly technical, and their merits are by no means unanimously agreed upon by economists. And there have been notable omissions, of course. The address does not go into the issue of "indexing" (linking commodity prices to the rate of inflation, one of the pet projects of the Shah of Iran). The discussion of transnational enterprises does not mention the problem of "exporting profits" (foreign corporations failing to invest an adequate proportion of their profits in the host countries, one of the persistent peeves of Third World critics). Nevertheless, the address is full of highly specific, concrete economic propositions, most of them touching directly on the urgent interests of the poorer nations.

If the address is long on concrete proposals, it is short on rhetoric. That in itself must have come as a relief to an audience accustomed to a very different mix. Kissinger made a few succinct rhetorical forays—against materialist ideologies that fail to deliver the material goods, against an ideology of nonalignment that has produced a new bloc, against the newly rich oil countries that claim to speak for the poor whose misery has been sharply increased by the hiked-up oil prices. Every one of these points could have become major emphases in the address (and, in my opinion, justifiably so) by an American secretary of state bent on confrontation. Kissinger limited himself to just a few side remarks on these topics. The overwhelming bulk of the address was positive, nonpolemical, matter-of-fact. As he put it: "The nations assembled here have a choice: We can offer our people slogans, or we can offer them solutions. We can deal in rhetoric, or we can deal in reality. My government has made its choice." Again, this stance deserves cheers.