Robert J. Myers on
THE VIEW FROM NATO

During a trip to Brussels and London in early October, a
group of American religious leaders gained first-hand knowl-
edge of NATO's perspective on nuclear deterrence and the
defense of Europe and sought opportunities to speak with
Europeans holding different points of view. The visit, or-
ganized by the Council on Religion and International Affairs
(CRIA), was underwritten by NATO itself. As expected, each
member of the CRIA delegation had his own interpretation
of the information and opinions offered. I record here my
impressions of the week's visit and some reflections on
NATO's "flexible response" strategy.

At the austere and low-slung NATO headquarters in Brus-
sels the group spent a full day with NATO staff, including
Secretary-General Joseph M. A. H. Luns, NATO military
officers, and a number of ambassadors to the organization,
among them the United States' David Abshire. Luns, urbane
and courtly, a former foreign minister of Holland and now
more than a decade in his NATO post, made NATO's po-
sition clear. NATO is a defensive organization composed
of fifteen European countries and the United States and
whose effectiveness depends on the maintenance of un-
animity. Soviet strategy since the end of World War II has
been to separate Europe from the United States, but since
the signing of the NATO pact in 1949, the allies have held
together, and the nuclear shield has been successful in
protecting them from Soviet misadventures. Given the re-
solve and determination to compete with Soviet nuclear
weapons at every level, there is no reason why peace cannot
be maintained.

Of greatest concern to NATO and individual mem-
ber-states at present are the intermediate nuclear weapons
that the USSR has built up over the last several years—in par-
cular the 340 SS-20 missiles which, with a range of 5,000
kilometers and sporting three warheads apiece, can reach
every one of the NATO capitals. Nothing in the NATO ar-
senal could match this intermediate weapon and thus the
decision was made in December, 1979, to develop Pershing
II and cruise missiles in the United States and, if the Soviets
failed in the meantime to remove the allegedly destabilizing
SS-20s, to deploy them on NATO soil. At the same 1979
meeting it was also decided that attempts would be made
to reach additional arms control agreements with the Soviet
Union. President Reagan's recent "Zero Option" plan on
intermediate weapons was offered in the hope that the USSR
would remove those weapons in exchange for a promise
by NATO not to deploy its new weapons.

Soviet Party leader Andropov countered the Reagan pro-
posal with one of his own: an offer to reduce the number
of SS-20s from 340 to 120. To NATO, however, an imbal-
cence remained, and it is for this reason that deployment of
the new American-made intermediate weapons will begin
toward the end of the year. After five years the assigned
number of weapons will be in place in West Germany, Italy,
Great Britain, Belgium, and the Netherlands. NATO experts
have concluded that this deployment will restabilize the de-
terrent balance—albeit at a higher level of potential destruc-
tion. Arms control talks may then continue at whatever pace
the two superpowers find desirable.

Yes, said Luns in reply to a question, the U.S. Catholic bishops' letter on nuclear weapons has caused NATO a number of problems, but Europe's bishops have rallied round.

At Channel Command on the H.M.S. Warrior in Northwood, Middlesex, an identical analysis of NATO plans and prospects was offered by Sir William Snively, KCB, the man at the top. These headquarters—serving both NATO and British fleet operations—bustled with NATO representatives and British sailors; it was from here that the British task force was directed in the Falklands campaign.

NATO's defensive posture was emphasized here: While the Soviets, through the Warsaw Pact, are seen as having the means of attack and support, NATO's conventional forces are strictly defense oriented. In the traditional scenario of a future war in Europe, the Soviets will enter West Germany with massive numbers of tanks and, should NATO forces begin to fall back, its commanders might call on tactical nuclear weapons. The other side would then be required to negotiate or use such weapons in turn, to the effect that much of Central Europe might well be destroyed. If hostilities continued, the next stage would be the use of intermediate nuclear weapons—wreaking destruction on most of Europe and, if the Pershing II and cruise missiles were in place, on a substantial area of the western Soviet Union as well.

The intermediate missiles are important to European NATO members for their role in "coupling" U.S. strategy and overall NATO strategy. As the Europeans see it, the U.S. might, after an exchange of tactical weapons, flinch at unleashing its strategic ICBM forces for fear of retaliation by the enemy on the U.S. itself.

The point of departure for NATO, then, is the familiar strategy of deterrence. And most would agree with its scenario should deterrence fail: that once tactical nuclear weapons are used, the escalation to intermediate-range and strategic weapons is a foregone conclusion. The Church of England—one of the groups that Secretary-General Luns cited as "rallying round"—has called the nuclear deterrent "morally" on the assumption that it permits efforts toward arms control and weapons reduction to proceed. But that assumption is not shared by many others in Europe. Among West German farmers on the border with the East, for example, contrary feelings are strong enough to have prevented the planning of nuclear bases in their fields. One expects that this sort of tactical weapon will be withdrawn from the NATO arsenal either unilaterally or as part of ongoing arms control negotiations. The antinuclear, dubbed "peace," movement in Europe is probably not strong enough to prevent the deployment of the new American-made intermediate weapons, but the sentiments it voices with ever-growing force and an ever-greater number of adherents raise doubts about whether NATO will be able to summon up the political will to make use of such weapons.

This bodes ill for the success of the deterrent strategy, whose key, as many of the NATO briefers pointed out, is uncertainty in the minds of the other side about what the NATO response to a provocation might be. One can recall President Richard Nixon's "mad dog" theory vis-a-vis North Vietnam: Let them worry about the fact that we might do anything. Is this, in any event, something that makes for successful deterrence? After all, if a potential aggressor is uncertain about his target's response, he might just be willing to take a chance.

It was apparent, even on a short visit to Great Britain, that its antinuclear-deployment movement is growing strong, though not sufficiently strong to ensure the carrying out of the radical programs recommended by such groups as the Council on Nuclear Disarmament or the British Council of Churches. The latter, in calling for unilateral nuclear disarmament, evokes a high moral principal: The weapons threaten destruction of God's creation. But there is also a hint of the desire to opt out, leaving the problem of dealing with the Soviets to other countries. We British will take the disarmament initiative, its peace movement appears to be saying, and then there will be no reason for the Soviets to use nuclear weapons against us. Scrap our strategic Polaris force, prevent the basing of NATO missiles on our soil; if the USSR threatens to use its weapons in other parts of the world, that's their problem.

In London, at a meeting with The Reverend Canon Paul Oestricher, secretary of the British Council of Churches' International Affairs Committee, and a rather austere-looking group of fellow clergymen, another possible consequence of unilateral disarmament was confronted, that is, the domination of Great Britain by the Soviet Union. Their renewal of the "better red than dead" argument of the early 1960s raises the issue of other ethical rankings. For example, is the preservation of life the most important ethical value? To many Americans, Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" is still operative and the rights that the Preamble to the Constitution calls God-given are still ascendant.

What is certain where NATO is concerned is that Soviet intransigence on the intermediate-missiles matter and the growing antinuclear movement will lead to continuing tension in Europe. Over the long run this can only weaken the "unanimity" of the NATO alliance on how best to defend Europe. Even in the U.S., the whole idea of NATO's "flexible response" strategy has been brought into question, most notably by Robert S. McNamara in the fall issue of Foreign Affairs. He flatly concludes that "nuclear weapons serve no military purpose whatsoever. They are totally useless—ex-
cept to deter one's opponent from using them."

As to NATO's "opponent," its attachment to nuclear weapons is rather easily understood when one analyzes its geographic situation and economy. Without such weapons, despite the large conventional forces available through the Warsaw Pact, the Soviets' writ, in my view, would not run very far. In fact, nuclear weapons production and development is the only modern sector of the Soviet economy; and to the Soviet Union's way of thinking, the gains it stands to make over the long run through its nuclear threat probably outrun the dangers of the ongoing weapons buildup.

There is, of course, another sort of deterrence that nuclear weapons have effected. Because every conflict has the potential for escalating into a superpower nuclear engagement, nuclear nations are loath to enter the fray, and currently about twenty conventional wars proceed unchecked. This was the situation in which President Carter found himself vis-à-vis the Iranian hostages, as the late Hans Morgenthau explained in *Worldview* in June, 1980:

The anarchic character of the international system forces Carter, following historical convention, to contemplate physical violence, even nuclear war, as the ultimate factor in the settlement of international issues. Yet the irrationality of such violence makes him shrink from the use even of conventional violence lest it might escalate into nuclear war. Thus in an international crisis the president acts with utmost caution—if he acts at all—and he compensates for the lack of provocative action with bellicose talk.

We have at the moment a situation not unlike the one facing Carter: how to respond to the USSR's tension-building probes in Central America and the Middle East, and to the stalled arms talks. Certainly, unilateral disarmament would produce substantial change in the superpower relationship, but if growing numbers of Europeans seem willing to pay a possibly steep price for the lifting of the nuclear threat, it is not one most Americans are willing to bear.

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EXCURSUS 2

Tinley Nyandak on TERROR IN TIBET

Recent events in Tibet have once again propelled that troubled Asian land into the Western press. Since 1950, when China first invaded Tibet, the Chinese presence has been the source of outrage and tragedy. By 1959 the Chinese had assumed complete control of Lhasa, the capital, leading to the dramatic flight of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader, and the mass exodus of thousands of Tibetans into India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Since 1959 an estimated one million Tibetans have died as a result of Chinese occupation, and more than three thousand temples and monasteries have been razed. In late August of this year the level of oppression in Tibet rose sharply and suddenly. Perhaps not irrelevant is the fact that earlier that month some forty foreign journalists visited Tibet, and shortly thereafter their articles appeared in the international media. Most of the articles focused on Tibetan dissatisfaction with Chinese rule and included conversations with Tibetan dissidents, who expressed their desire for independence under the leadership of the Dalai Lama. Jeff Sommer of *Newsday* wrote in his August 15 article that "In the streets, in their homes, in monastery corridors and deserted parks and alleyways, Tibetans said their dream is to see their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, come back from his exile in India. Most said they hoped the Dalai Lama would somehow come up with a way of ousting Chinese officials."

Similarly, Michael Weisskopf noted in the *Washington Post* of August 13: "When foreign correspondents arrived last week, dissidents were armed only with literature. They roamed the bazaar at night, quickly slipping notes to the visitors and dashing off. Several letters written in Tibetan were addressed to the United Nations from 'the people of Tibet.'"

Weisskopf added that one letter, partly written in English, urged Beijing to "stop genocide, stop butchery" in Tibet, and called for independence. Dissidents also told Weisskopf that Chinese opposition again had been forced underground because of an intensified public security dragnet that had jailed thousands of activists and executed many leaders. According to these dissenters, the Chinese still hold 2,500 political prisoners in Tibet.

The August clampdown involved mass arrests, including five Tibetan deputies (elected officials of Tibetans in exile) who were visiting relatives, searches of private dwellings, and a curfew in Lhasa and other major cities. The Chinese declared the arrests were a move to round up black marketers and Tibetans without residential permits and ration cards. They have admitted, however, that those arrested include political activists.

But the events in Tibet did not gain wide publicity in the West until United Press International and the *New York Times* reported in October that nine Tibetans had been executed—and that more executions were expected. A Nepalese diplomat stationed in Lhasa confirmed that on October 1 five Tibetans were executed after they and twenty-six fellow prisoners were paraded through the streets in an open truck—a spectacle staged as a warning to others. On September 30 the Dalai Lama issued a statement from New Delhi asking the U.N., Amnesty International, and the International Commission of Jurists to stop the executions. "The standard method," commented the Dalai Lama, "is a bullet in the back of the head. The executions may also be in public, in which case all members of the victim's family will be forced to attend the execution dressed in their best and applaud and thank the Chinese authorities for eliminating anti-social and reactionary elements."

In Tibet, the Chinese claim that these mass arrests and executions are part of their current nation-wide campaign against crime. The Associated Press reported on October 17 that 700,000 had been arrested in China since August, and they quote one Chinese source as saying "Some have been executed, while others have been exiled or sent to labor reform camps for re-education." Recent Tibetan visitors to Tibet bring word of a Chinese announcement that a second round of mass arrests will be conducted in Tibet in October and a third will begin in January.

From 1962 to 1976 there were nine resistance movements and forty-four uprisings in Tibet, all crushed by an intense public security dragnet because of an intensified public security dragnet that had jailed thousands of activists and executed many leaders. According to these dissenters, the Chinese still hold 2,500 political prisoners in Tibet.

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From 1962 to 1976 there were nine resistance movements and forty-four uprisings in Tibet, all crushed by an occupation army of more than 320,000 troops. In the last three years there has been some relaxation in relations, but recent events suggest that once again terror and brute force are to reign in Tibet.

Tinley Nyandak is editor of *News-Tibet*, a magazine published by the Office of Tibet (New York), which represents the Dalai Lama.