

in the magazines

In "Morals and Nuclear War," an article published in the November issue of the British Catholic monthly *Blackfriars*, Mr. Herbert McCabe, O.P., finds that since "nuclear weapons are for the destruction of cities, [they] are not legitimate weapons of war. Apart from one or two improbable targets they are weapons whose function has murder built into it..." The logical consequence of applying Christian principles to nuclear warfare, Mr. McCabe writes, is that "we may not use nuclear weapons. It does not matter how good the effect might be, it does not matter whether somebody else such as the enemy has used them first. The thing being wrong in itself it cannot be justified by any circumstances."

While unilateralists and their opponents may agree that the use of nuclear weapons is wicked, Mr. McCabe continues, they differ in their attitude toward the maintenance of these weapons. Unilateralists would like to dispose of all nuclear arms now in existence on the theory that the "tension of nuclear competition" creates a "vicious spiral which can only be broken by breaking it." Opposed to this argument is the "deterrent" or "balance of terror" theory which holds that the possession of nuclear weapons is what prevents them from being used. Mr. McCabe, however, sides with the unilateralists in their opinion that deterrence is only feasible in a two-power world, that the spread of nuclear weapons will make it impossible to contain local wars.

"When you are in a runaway car going down a steep winding hill towards a precipice, you can either devote your intelligence to keeping it on the road as long as possible before the inevitable smash, or you can take the risk of jumping out now and perhaps being killed, but perhaps being permanently safe. The unilateralist wants to take the risk now. If I may declare an interest. . . . I think he is right."

The position of Walter Lippmann as "the national public philosopher" has recently been subjected to an attack by Max Ascoli, editor and publisher of *The Reporter*. In his editorial for November 9, Mr. Ascoli criticizes Lippmann for urging a negotiated settlement with Russia as the only alternative to nuclear destruction. The "abstract" discussion on whether or not to negotiate with Russia is compared by Mr. Ascoli to "pulling petals off daisies," and is in his view "based on the assumption of a choice that no sane person can possibly make. The fact that war cannot be wished for as an end in itself has led to the conclusion that we must have negotiations as an end in themselves. Because of his authority, Lippmann's responsibility for this trend is second to none."

Mr. Ascoli confesses himself "confused" by the "peculiar meanderings of Lippmann's reasoning" on the question of the two Germanys. "His passionate desire to avoid a thermonuclear war is not exclusive with him," Mr. Ascoli writes. "A deeper reason [for Lippmann's attitude] can be found in his conception of the Soviet Union—the conception of a diplomat who sees in the Soviet Union little more than an unusually bothersome competition in the old balance-of-powers game."

In the meantime, Mr. Ascoli's own views on the German question have brought him under attack by readers who, as he reports in the issue of November 23, accuse him of having turned into "a toughie, a right-winger, a reactionary." Mr. Ascoli protests that his views have been consistent—consistently opposed to negotiation when "there is so little that is negotiable."

"After the Wall," he writes, "even less was left that was negotiable about Berlin, for the Communists unilaterally took nearly all they could possibly have gained from negotiations. And yet after the Wall, negotiation-mongering in our midst started with unabated fury. . . . Since the Wall, I have kept hammering—with greater urgency, to be sure—on the same ideas about Berlin, the Russians, and negotiations. But as long as these were general ideas, nobody seemed to mind. When events made them relevant to a tragic reality, I was told that I had moved to the right of my former position."

Eugene Rabinowitch, editor of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, calls on the federal government to implement a nation-wide fallout shelter program. In a November editorial he writes: "The only kind of shelter program which could have any effect on the outcome of a nuclear conflict would be a systematic effort directed from Washington, combined with systematic preparation for handling the post-attack situation. Haphazard construction of shelters by individual citizens hoping to assure their own and their families' survival in a general holocaust will neither protect them, nor help the country as a whole. . . . A state contemplating nuclear war as an alternative to compromise or retreat—as America is now—has the duty to face the survival aspects of its military program as frankly as it now faces the problem of military attack and retaliation. Our present complete lack of preparation in this area is part of the nightmarish quality of power politics in our time—a power contest in which both sides threaten nuclear war, but neither wants to face such a war as a realistic possibility."

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