DISARMAMENT: THE GREAT MISCONCEPTION

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As in treating the ills of a single body, so even more in treating the ills of the body politic, one of the commonest mistakes "physicians" make is to waste time by concerning themselves with symptoms rather than with causes. This, in a nutshell, is what is wrong with the campaign to save mankind from war through disarmament. If a substantial curtailment of armaments could be accomplished, it would certainly reduce the incidence of death and destruction should a war break out. But it has almost no bearing, in and of itself, on the actual prevention of war.

In 1910 Andrew Carnegie set up the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, hoping to eliminate, as he put it, "the foulest blot upon our civilization." Yet the years since then have witnessed not only the two bloodiest conflicts in history but also the greatest advance in weaponry since war began. As a result the dangers of death and destruction have multiplied so fantastically that they have become almost "total," and mankind now languishes in the dismal position of depending for peace chiefly upon an uneasy balance of terror.

It is not the least bit surprising, therefore, that many people all over the world should be agitating for disarmament. To them it seems that they are going at the problem the right way, which is to say directly. The trouble however is that, because of their insistence on finding a quick, simple, easy solution, all their efforts are likely to go for naught. Bertrand Russell in England, Linus Pauling in America, and thousands, perhaps even millions, of humbler people elsewhere have an idealistic passion for disarmament that is little short of pathetic. Their pitiful campaign resembles nothing so much as the crusade against the munitions manufacturers carried on by their naive forebears in the 1920's and 1930's. Indeed, in some cases the evangelical zeal of these "workers for peace" verges on the preposterous, bringing to mind an observation of the late Charles Arbuckle: What can be said of men with good hearts but poor heads? Obviously, only one thing: they are good people—but in the poorest sense of the term!

For two generations now it has presumably been the progressive, enlightened and liberal point of view to favor disarmament—much in the same way as sound, straight-thinking conservatives are always expected to oppose inflation and to favor balanced budgets. But for those who would assure humanity that it is possible to end the scourge of war, the obligation to be as wise as a serpent is at least as great as that of being as gentle as a dove. How naive today seem the assurances of thirty years ago that peace would be secure if only there could be an end to private profit in munitions making! Much of the profit of this kind has long since been taken out of the armament business in capitalist countries and all of it has obviously been eliminated in Communist states. Yet the danger of war not only remains but the greatest threat of war comes from the very countries where the possibility of profiteering on the making and selling of arms does not even exist.

There is another hard slice of recent history however which should be even more instructive. Following their victory over the Central Powers in 1918, the Allies not only disarmed the beaten enemy but went much further. They disarmed themselves, and this to an extent somewhat comparable in net effect to the kind of nuclear (as distinguished from conventional) disarmament for which there is such widespread agitation today. In addition they organized the League of Nations to insure that, from then on, all international disputes would be solved by peaceful means. Indeed they went even further; in 1928 they sponsored and signed the Pact of Paris absolutely renouncing war as an instrument of national policy.

The strategy behind all these well-intentioned efforts was exactly the same as that which underlies or animates the "movers and shakers" of the disarmament movement today: that disarmament will guarantee security and thus insure peace. It failed then and the probabilities are equally strong that it will fail now. For the correct strategy calls for a different order of priority: from security to peace to disarmament.

As E. B. White wrote in The New Yorker in his notable "Letter From the West," the great flaw in the campaign for disarmament is its irrelevance to the problem of preventing war: "Unfortunately, disarmament doesn't have much to do with peace. I sometimes wish it had; it enjoys such an excellent reputation and commands a lot of attention... (But)
I am afraid that blaming armaments for war is like blaming fever for disease:"

No one needs to be a political scientist to see this for himself. All that is necessary is that he be reasonably tough-minded. There are only two reasons why any nation ever needs armaments. One is to perpetrate aggression. The other is for defense in case of attack, whether deliberate, accidental or otherwise. Only the second constitutes a good, which is to say a morally justifiable, reason for maintaining armed forces. Consequently if the first could be eliminated, the second would cease to have much effect.

But there is the rub. Unless and until an effective global constabulary is established, no country will expose itself to the risks that genuine disarmament would entail. To be sure it may give lip service to the idea. Its statesmen may plead and protest that arms reduction is the cardinal objective of its foreign policy. And its diplomats may participate in one disarmament conference after another. But no nation will actually disarm.

By the very nature of things every participant in a disarmament meeting comes to the conference table harboring mental reservations. Not that a government will instruct its delegation not to consent to a reduction in arms of any kind. As a matter of fact it may well select the ablest negotiators possible and urge them to do everything within their power to persuade the other participants to agree to substantial all-around reduction. (On arriving at Geneva for the 17-nation U.N. Disarmament Conference on 11 March 1962, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said he was under instructions from President Kennedy to make "every effort" toward disarmament.) But it goes without saying that unless its highest policy-makers have succumbed to pacifism—and that has not happened yet—the one thing they will insist upon is that their delegation reject outright any scheme which would leave the country in a relatively weaker position than it enjoyed before.

This point is fundamental. Once a nation consents to a net reduction in its military strength vis-à-vis a potential enemy—this on the assumption of there having been some rationality behind the previous scale of its armaments—there is no logical stopping-place short of complete disarmament, that is to say of exclusive reliance on "soul-force." Given a fair, full trial, the power of love might justify total disarmament, but no nation to date has been willing to give it such a trial. This applies as much to peace-loving India and Burma in the Orient as to peace-loving Norway and Switzerland in the Occident. For as B. K. Nehru, New Delhi's Ambassador to Washington, said on an American television program, India had rejected Gandhi's policy of pacifism as impractical even before the country achieved independence.

It is therefore wholly unwarranted to encourage people to believe that disarmament is the practical way to peace. This is not merely wishful thinking: it is harmful thinking. Disarmament is more nearly the last step in the process of building a peaceful world than the first. There is only one possible qualification. Substantial unilateral reduction in the scale of their military establishments on the part of Soviet Russia and Communist China would greatly brighten the prospects for peace because, on the record, they are not only the regimes with the largest armies but also the ones which have shown the greatest "yen" for aggression.

- Peace is not the mere absence of war. Intrinsically it is the presence of justice, and justice is the product of government—not just any kind of government but responsible, democratic government. Peace (and disarmament) depend upon general security from attack but this in turn depends on the availability of a genuinely supra-national constabulary as an arm of at least a nuclear democratic federal world government.

Let there be no blinking of these hard facts: (1) As long as the obsession with national sovereignty is stronger than concern for justice, there will be neither true disarmament nor peace. (2) Until in every country political power is organized democratically, which is to say in such a way that those who exercise it are accountable through orderly procedures to the people they govern, the danger of irresponsible, and conceivably aggressive, use of its armed forces will remain an ever-present possibility. (3) Peace and disarmament are feasible objectives. They can be achieved, but only through the creation of institutions of a kind and strength able to perform, without resort to arms, the function now or hitherto so crudely performed by war, namely some "final" settlement of international disputes.

Political scientists are, like doctors of medicine, normative rather than naturalistic scientists. They prefer justice to injustice and peace to war, just as physicians prefer health to illness and life to death. As such they have no more important task than to help their countrymen understand the prerequisites of peace. At the very least they have an obligation not to remain silent when philosophers and statesmen assure the peoples of the world that they can have the wonderful boons of disarmament, security
and peace without first subduing their own nationalism.

Never in all the history of politics has it been so imperative that men "think straight" about peace as now. The soul-force in which most pacifists and proponents of disarmament believe is an asset of tremendous worth, but its creative power can be demonstrated only in the operation of institutions based on the appeal of mind to mind and heart to heart. The need of the hour therefore is to get on with the building of such institutions.

Redoubling the agitation for disarmament will get humanity nowhere. Nor does the oft-heard plea to "strengthen the United Nations" hold much more promise. The U.N. is an organization of nations based upon the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states—with each member being peace-loving simply by legal definition. That is its strength and that is its weakness.

At this stage in history mankind plainly needs an organization loose enough to enable all the members of the family of nations to qualify for admission and participation. Only an organization based on the principle of "sovereign equality" can accommodate at one and the same time over a hundred states varying from the democratic to the despotic and from the advanced to the primitive. But by the same token such an organization must remain an organization. It cannot become a government dispensing true justice, for only a government of flesh-and-blood people can do that.

The U.N. is much like the American Confederation before 1789, which Alexander Hamilton called a "would-be government of governments" and therefore "a monstrosity" that would not work. This may overstate the matter somewhat, but the point should be clear: the U.N. may do something useful here and there to maintain the peace, but it can never, by itself, guarantee peace because it cannot operate in terms of assuring actual justice either to nations or to individuals. Only a bona fide democratic government of a federal union of nations and peoples practicing democracy among themselves can ever guarantee the kind of justice that will persuade men not to resort to arms. The ultimate need therefore is for a federal democratic world government.

Obviously mankind is not ready for such a global commonwealth today. But does this mean that nothing can be done? Not at all. In the face of an immediately insoluble problem the course of wisdom is not to let the situation fester but to do what can be done to put it, as Abraham Lincoln said, "in the course of an ultimate solution."

The implication for coping with the issue of peace and disarmament is plain. Let the democratic nations of Orient and Occident—those who are dedicated above all to freedom and justice for the individual—form now, inside the United Nations Organization, an open "Union of the Free." Let this Union, in line with the Charter, pledge its armed might to help every nation defend itself against attack. After that let the Union grow, over the generations and the centuries, until its membership embraces the whole world.

Then, but not until then, will disarmament become practical. For with the assurance of justice, men and nations will be at peace and the need for arms will have disappeared. The true goal is the rule of law and the way to achieve it is through the erection, slow and painful though it may have to be, of a democratic world government.

correspondence

"AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY"

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Dear Sir: Mr. Pfaff's condescending approach to my book The Two Faces of American Foreign Policy, (worldview, April 1963) does not discourage me from answering: he is otherwise polite and serious, rare qualities among Liberal reviewers. Let me profit by the occasion.

There are, it seems to me, two controversial issues on which Mr. Pfaff and I differ. One is the problem of de Gaulle which, however, transcends even that towering figure because it has to do with the nature of politics. Calling de Gaulle a "creative conservative" would sound ludicrous to any Frenchman today, with the exception of François Mauriac. Men as ideologically distant as Professor Louis Rougier and M. Maurice Duverger agree on the Jacobin character of the General's policies. As Rougier points out, the American insurgents charged Lord North with the same breach of contract with which de Gaulle is charged—by the still honest segment of