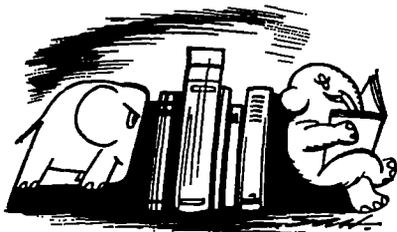


the USSR. Samizdat has surfaced everywhere, including labor camps in Siberia, and at every level of Soviet society.

The *Chronicle of Current Events*, though at one time halted for two years, is still issued regularly. It notes dissident activity in all parts of the USSR and includes details of arrests, interrogations, trials, and protests. Several other journals have sprung up in imitation of it, notably in the Ukraine and in Lithuania, where it speaks for the struggle of Catholics for religious freedom.



Protest letters signed by prominent citizens and addressed to Soviet leaders are continually leaked to the Western press and prove an ongoing embarrassment to the regime. They are often the first step on the road to human rights dissent for those who sign them, Andrei Sakharov being a notable example. The struggle has touched laborers as well as the intelligentsia, the religious as well as the atheistic.

Boiter points out that dissidents have finally realized what John Stuart Mill said over a hundred years ago: "that religious liberty is the mother of all human liberties." Yet repressions against the Jews and Protestant evangelical groups, such as the Hutterites, stem from czarist times. What the Soviet Government has done is extend religious repression to all groups by a series of measures built into law. The Soviet constitution guarantees separation of church and state, yet Soviet law forbids the giving of religious instruction to both children and adults. And any believer may be prosecuted for failure to fulfill any state obligation, even when it conflicts with his faith.

Dr. Boiter sets forth evidence of a religious upsurge in the Soviet Union. The evangelicals reacted strongly to a state amalgamation plan and to Khrushchev's subsequent effort to reduce the number of churches. Among the Russian Orthodox—whose church numbers over 70 million adherents, by official estimate, and where there is a tradition of government regulation—

dissent centers on the irrationality of the regulations of the Council for Religious Affairs. Jewish dissent has focused on the right to emigrate as the government continues its fierce anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic campaign. Half of the Soviet Union's 5 million Catholics live in Lithuania, where they constitute some 80 per cent of the population. Because Catholicism is a "Western" religion and Lithuania was incorporated into the USSR only after World War II, there is a link between the nationalistic, ideological, and spiritual aspirations of the Lithuanians, strengthened by the election of a Polish pope. As a result, samizdat is widespread and 71 per cent of young Lithuanians are Roman Catholic communicants. In Central Asia the Soviet Government has stressed modernization. It has also largely ignored Muslim religious activity and may still command the loyalty of the population.

If the religious revival in the Soviet Union is of "noteworthy proportions," Boiter nonetheless perceives the regime as even more repressive and better organized to implement its repressions than was Stalin or Khrushchev. The government still wishes to eliminate religion and correctly perceives religious practice as a form of dissent.

Roy Medvedev defines a dissident as "someone who disagrees in some measure with the ideological, political, economic, or moral foundation that every society rests on, including the Soviet Union. But he does more than simply disagree and think differently; he openly proclaims his dissent and demonstrates it in one way or another to his compatriots and the state."

This definition and Medvedev's analysis of the contradictions in the Soviet constitution regarding civil rights are the assets of a generally unsatisfactory book. The book is presented in question-and-answer format so that Medvedev's responses are along the parameters defined for him by his questioner. A subsequent interview, by Vittorio Zucconi, another journalist, is included as a postscript but adds nothing new.

Medvedev believes in communism; his dissent, therefore, is limited to those elements in Soviet life and government that block the road to true communism. Though he is vehement in condemning Stalin and Stalinism, he does not suggest that there is something fundamentally amiss in a system that allows a leader the unchecked power to

liquidate literally millions of people.

It is significant that, though his twin brother, Zhores, was stripped of his citizenship, Roy Medvedev has remained in Moscow. There he writes and publishes, relatively undisturbed by Soviet authorities—a tame tiger, saying relatively little that is not already sanctioned or tolerated by the regime.

APOCALYPSE: NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE IN WORLD POLITICS

by Louis René Beres

(University of Chicago Press; xvi + 315 pp.; \$20.00)

James T. Johnson

The responsibilities of power and the exigencies of the nuclear age continue to fuel the production of books on the possibility of war. Some have been thoughtful and worthwhile, others not. There have been books on the law of war and on limited warfare; on just war tradition and on defining moral restraints to war; on deterrence strategy and on the arms race generally or the nuclear race in particular; on personal reactions to war and on military history. It is easy to think of a number of major books in the last twenty years in all these categories, and easy to recall one or more in the last five or six years—which suggests the extent of the continuing concern to explore and debate the problem of warfare.

Louis René Beres's *Apocalypse* is a book on the possibility—or, rather, the possibilities—of nuclear war in the near future and how to avoid it. Beres argues for three such possibilities: (1) nuclear war between the superpowers, (2) nuclear war as a result of proliferation, and (3) nuclear terrorism. He follows a mode of investigation common among political scientists, that of "alternative scenarios"; each path to possible nuclear war defines one such scenario. The very familiarity of the terrain he leads us through raises the question: Is yet another book on the imminence of a nuclear doomsday really needed? The answer is different for each of the three scenarios Beres considers.

The discussion of nuclear war between the superpowers raises the greatest doubt about whether *Apocalypse* makes a genuine contribution to understanding and debate. Given an argu-

ment that goes back to 1945 and has occupied some of this country's best minds, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to affect the momentum of debate on the large questions, and this book does not do so. Indeed the very title, incorporating the words "apocalypse" and "catastrophe," suggests that the author's aim is not so much to shed light as to add heat. Fortunately, while there is heat aplenty, there is a good deal of light as well. Three aspects of Beres's treatment of the superpower scenario tend to redeem it: his facility with detail, a serious discussion of particular contemporary threats to nuclear stability between the superpowers, and a thorough consideration of how to reduce or eliminate the risk of catastrophe.

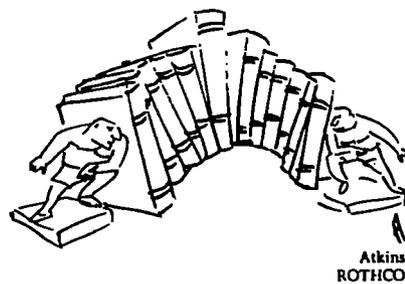
Detail is always helpful. The discussion enlivens an otherwise old debate by reminding readers of the scope of destruction a present-day nuclear exchange could bring and the enormous difficulties of limiting such destruction. The consideration of how to reduce risk is important in two ways. First, by highlighting the possibilities of an accidental first detonation of a nuclear weapon leading to nuclear war, Beres underscores the necessity for effective military, political, and technical controls over such weapons. Second, by considering changes in strategic and tactical military planning vis-à-vis nuclear weapons, he points to threats to stability and the particular patterns of escalation that are most worrisome today. Beres's own position is clear throughout. The superpowers are currently playing with fire. This dangerous game must end, and the way to stop it is (1) by ending the arms race, (2) by getting rid of nuclear weapons arsenals, and (3) by transforming "the characteristic behavior of the superpowers in world politics." A tall order. Beres's chapter on preventing superpower nuclear war is a lucid and cogent statement of the case for arms control, disarmament, and international reconstruction, but much longer on *why* these ends should be achieved than on *how* to achieve them.

Both proliferation and terrorism are relatively recent phenomena and only now is a literature on them being generated. Beres's book is a useful contribution to a new debate.

In this context "proliferation" refers to the numerous "mini-arms races" between such hostile neighbors as India

and Pakistan, Israel and the Arab states, South Africa and the black African states surrounding it. Though the megatonnage involved is far smaller than that possessed by the superpowers, it is not insignificant; and the consequences of even a local nuclear war between such powers, Beres shows, could be serious for the world at large. These consequences would be magnified enormously if such a local nuclear war triggered a superpower nuclear exchange.

Nuclear terrorism, like proliferation, has been made possible by the widespread availability of fissionable material under conditions of poor security in civilian nuclear power plants. Here too the danger posed by one nuclear device is amplified by the possibility of its acting as a trigger for a larger war.



Proliferation can be controlled, Beres argues, only as part of a larger effort involving restructuring the strategic relation between the superpowers, aiming at a return to strategies of "minimum deterrence." The keystone of the effort to control proliferation, he believes, must be the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1970; yet it must be strengthened by certain realistic measures. Incentives for renouncing nuclear weapons must be strengthened through "preferential treatment in terms of security assistance, materials, equipment, services, and technical aid." Inspection must be strengthened to minimize cheating; security must be tightened on nuclear fuel; and some parts of the world "must be declared nuclear-free zones." These are reasonable and realistic measures, though politically difficult.

This is the sort of book that will be overtaken by events in a relatively few years. In the meantime its scope and detail, and the readiness of the author to propose solutions to problems that often appear insoluble, make it worth attention by those who are interested in attempting to overcome the dilemmas of the age of nuclear weapons. **WV**

VISITANTS

by Randolph Stow

(Taplinger, 189 pp., \$9.95)

John Tessitore

Some years ago a few of us made a habit of gathering in the office of a certain English professor—his awesome intellect rivalled only by his indefatigable liver—shamelessly helping ourselves to the beers he kept stored in an old rhinoceros of a refrigerator and ruminating about the "good old days" when Faulkner lived on Jack Daniels by the week and Scotty and Zelda rounded out the evening with a dip in the fountain at the Hotel Plaza. Inevitably, as the beers ran low and the lies stretched thin, someone would say to the Learned Man: "But J—, what about today? Who's writing good fiction now?" And each time the Learned Man would lower his head sadly and reply in low, broken tones: "There's no more good news."

The fact is, more than a few fiction enthusiasts have been forced to conclude that the recent novels of our "major" British and American authors only confirm the verdict. "All the good stuff is coming out of Latin America," said a friend in the mid-1970s, and of course since then the excellence of such authors as Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes has popularized this observation. But *Visitants*, Randolph Stow's seventh novel, is good news, forcing us to reconsider the state of English-language fiction and, with it, our own nationalist prejudices.

An Australian, Stow is one of several voices emanating from that enigmatic land that have lately made an impact on the Northern Hemisphere. In film and fiction, the variety and quality of Australian artists tempts a comparison with America's Southern Renaissance—that burst of talent in the '20s and '30s that included Erskine Caldwell, Katherine Anne Porter, John Crowe Ransom, and, of course, William Faulkner.

Stow himself is principally in the Anglo-Saxon tradition; and he is most specifically indebted to the most extraordinary and puzzling member of that tradition, Joseph Conrad. Set in Papua, New Guinea, in the late 1950s, at the very end of Australian rule, *Visitants* invokes in character and tone the Malayan stories of Conrad. Like *Lord Jim*, the novel presents two cultures in