

Romero, frequently in the form of "advertisements" by bogus groups claiming "Christian" authority, and also in regular news stories. For example, the murder of a priest and four young men when a weekend religious retreat was stormed by security forces was reported in the Salvadoran press as a defensive maneuver provoked by those inside the "guerrilla training center." To counter these lies the populace depended on the Church, principally the Church radio station, YSAX, which broadcast Romero's Sunday mass, and on the archdiocesan publication, *Orientación*. Shortly before Romero's death YSAX was bombed; in response, a Costa Rican short-wave station transmitted his mass to all Central America while people arrived with tape recorders at the cathedral itself in order to disseminate further the archbishop's message.

Brockman quotes extensively from Romero's moving homilies and his pastoral letters on the urgent issues confronting his Church. There is much to reflect on in them: "...the peace in which we believe is the product of justice. Violent conflicts...will not disappear until its last roots disappear. Therefore, while the cause of the present misery and the intransigence of the most powerful minorities, who will not tolerate the least changes, are maintained, the explosive situation will become worse"; "...the fear of Marxism keeps many from confronting the oppressive reality of liberal capitalism. Before the danger of a system clearly marked by sin, they forget to denounce and combat the reality implanted by another system equally marked by sin."

In his fourth pastoral letter Romero discussed the implementation of the "preferential option for the poor" pledged by the bishops at Puebla. To do this, he said, the Salvadoran Church needed to "know and denounce the mechanisms that generate poverty," to support the "aspirations of workers and campesinos who want to be treated like free and responsible persons," to evangelize "anew" in all Church celebrations, and, finally, to dedicate itself to the "pastoral accompaniment" of all Christians who found a vocation in legitimate political activism in popular organizations. It was Romero's active vision of community that so threatened the rulers of El Salvador.

In early February, after his last trip to Rome, Romero wrote to human

rights advocate Jimmy Carter, who had just announced U.S. military aid for the "new" government: "It would be unjust and deplorable for foreign powers to intervene and frustrate the Salvadoran people, to repress them and keep them from deciding autonomously the economic and political course that our nation should follow." He also called upon the consciences of the Christian Democrats: "As a political force of our people, it is urgent that they see from what point it is most effective to use that force on behalf of our poor—whether isolated and impotent in a government dominated by a repressive military or as one more force incorporated in a broad-based design for a popular movement." Most Americans' awareness of Salvadoran history begins at this

junction: Napoleon Duarte joined the junta on March 16, Oscar Romero was murdered on the 24th, and until the March, 1982, elections the United States claimed the junta as its own.

Just two weeks before his death, Romero had responded to a journalist's inquiry: "A bishop will die, but the church of God, which is the people, will never perish." Father Brockman dedicates his excellent biography to the memory of Dorothy Kazel, Ita Ford, Jean Donovan, Maura Clarke, and "all who have given their lives for the gospel in El Salvador." The tragedy he recounts is also a triumph, and not just for Oscar Romero but for the thousands upon thousands who struggled along with him—a triumph, still incomplete, of the Salvadoran people.

COMMON SECURITY: A PROGRAMME FOR DISARMAMENT
Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament
and Security Issues under the Chairmanship
of Olof Palme

(Pan Books [London and Sydney]; xxi+202 pp.; £1.95)

William T. R. Fox

Western strategies for security, mutual deterrence, and an American nuclear umbrella over NATO never have been wholly consistent with each other; but they are being questioned today as they have not been for many years. There are also widespread doubts about the zeal of the superpowers for slowing the arms race. A-plague-on-both-your-houses kind of pacifism in Europe, especially among the young, the Protestant, and the more northerly situated, and spreading sentiment in North America for a nuclear freeze all testify to grass roots discontent with current security arrangements. Those closer to the corridors of power on both sides of the Atlantic may be troubled too.

Common Security, the report of a self-styled independent commission convened and chaired by Olof Palme, then former Social Democratic prime minister of Sweden, reflects this worry. The commission's seventeen members have formulated a program to redirect the East-West arms race onto a "downward spiral." Together with the Bundy-Kennan-McNamara-Smith article in *Foreign Affairs* last spring, which calls for a fresh look at the United States commitment to undertake a nuclear first strike to defend its Western European allies,

Common Security may be raising to a new level public debate on how best to exorcise the threat of nuclear holocaust.

Palme commission members came from seventeen countries, including all superpowers and second-tier powers save China. These politicians and diplomats from the Communist East, capitalist West, neutral North, and non-aligned South met a dozen times over the course of eighteen months and, remarkably, produced and agreed unanimously upon a report that makes specific and significant proposals. Among the group, all of whom had had key roles in the conduct of their nation's foreign affairs, were Giorgi Arbatov, Egon Bahr, David Owen, and Cyrus Vance. That these four, as well as twelve others, could put their names on the commission's report suggests that occasionally reason triumphs over ideology. (The French member did "suspend his participation" in January, 1982, for reasons not specified in the report.)

Efforts to escape from what John Herz has taught us to call the "security dilemma"—the greater the effort at unilateral security, the greater the increase in all-around insecurity—often have seemed like efforts to square the

circle. For the special case of nuclear arms and the avoidance of World War III, *Common Security* offers some highly plausible proposals for escape from the dilemma. The most specific is for "a battlefield-nuclear-weapon-free zone" (BNWFZ) in Central Europe, initially three hundred kilometers wide and with its center along the eastern border of the Federal Republic facing the DDR and Czechoslovakia. This zone also would be free of chemical weapons—and of clothing and masks for military personnel to mitigate the effects of nuclear and chemical weapons as well. Such a zone would provide a time-break; for, as the report declares, it is the up-front battlefield weapons that would be used promptly and without first asking Washington or Moscow if they are to be used at all.

Recognizing the salience of the "no-first-strike" issue, the report observes that no proposal has been made yet linking agreement on substantial East-West parity in conventional weapons in Europe to mutual commitments to no first use of atomic weapons. This is an avenue the commission might well have explored further. David Owen's introduction to the British edition of *Common Security* does go further and appears willing to support some upgrading of Western conventional forces if that is necessary to make a no-first-use pledge feasible.

The commission report pays lip service to the goal of general and complete disarmament in some unspecified future and refers in passing to the agitation for a nuclear freeze; but its authors' concerns are with more immediate and practical things than general and complete disarmament, and they are far more ambitious than those of the proponents of the freeze. What they want right away is not a freeze at the present high and dangerous level of 40-50,000 nuclear weapons in the world but a genuine reduction of stockpiles.

Europe is the critical arena and the one in which thousands of battlefield nuclear weapons are now deployed. Although the U.S. and the USSR have 95 per cent of the world's nuclear weapons, it is on the European soil that lies between them that one must test measures meant to lessen fear of surprise attack and thus slow down the arms race—measures to take the profit out of rattling atomic bombs at moments of political crisis as well as measures like the BNWFZ and the

commitment to give advance notice of large-scale maneuvers.

Olof Palme and his group emphasize throughout that no one expects either side to disarm unilaterally; it is balanced reduction the commission calls for. There is a place, they say, for arms self-control, particularly in the development and deployment of weapons that create serious problems of verification. They might have added that each superpower ought to be careful not to acquire military capabilities that signal foreign policy intentions it in fact does not have.

Apart from specific proposals, the report contains some general counsel. It is usually unwise to link arms control negotiations to the solution of other crit-

ical East-West problems, they believe. It is also unwise for either side to make military plans which assume that the use of nuclear weapons in East-West conflict can be kept limited. Those who make critical policy decisions are reminded too that they must remain sensitive to the conditions that contribute to an intensified arms race, and the commission discusses some of these in detail: the asymmetries in defense needs and weapons acquisition that open the way to claims that with respect to one or another weapons system the other side is "ahead"; the technological hubris and corporate interests that can lead research and development establishments to promise security via superiority; and the

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raising of "data issues," despite a lack of reliable and agreed-upon information on present and prospective arms dispositions, in such a way as to create substantial fear.

Common Security has a good deal to say about a strengthened role for the United Nations in assuring Third World security, but this is a somewhat separate and less compelling part of the analysis. The big decisions to achieve common security by winding down the arms race are in the hands of a very few governments. Theirs is the responsibility, and theirs is the opportunity.

WAR IN SPACE

by James Canan

(Harper & Row; 186 pp.; \$13.95)

William Rosenau

The growing nuclear freeze movement has generated scores of new books on strategic nuclear weapons, the medical effects of nuclear war, and the economic impact of military spending. But most have paid little attention to a force that is crucial to understanding the arms race: technology.

James Canan, *Business Week's* Pentagon correspondent, has filled this important gap. Ostensibly, *War in Space* is a survey of recent developments in military space technology, such as "hunter-killer" satellites, particle beam weapons, and laser battle stations. But *War in Space* is more than just a survey of the deadly new systems that the superpowers are developing in their race to control space. Canan presents, in capsule form, a history of some of the major defense policies and weapons technologies that the U.S. and the Soviet Union have developed over the last three decades.

The author argues persuasively that available technologies—heavier-than-air aircraft, liquid-fueled rockets, controlled fission—sooner or later get translated into weapons. X-ray lasers, chemical lasers, and particle beams, while still experimental; inevitably will be developed unless arms control comes back into fashion. "More and more," Canan writes, "the U.S. will tend to consolidate its defenses and attacking forces in space. It will be driven to do this not only by territorial imperatives but also because it simply cannot afford the skyrocketing costs of build-

ing all the earth-based weapons that military services covet."

Some of the new military space technologies are awesome. The Air Force's KH-11 "Keyhole" spy satellite, for example, has a camera lens that is so powerful that it "had no difficulty taking pictures of Iran that were so detailed as to differentiate among the mullahs by the bushiness of their beards." Scientists and engineers are making rapid advances in missile guidance systems as well. Soon missiles will be able to pick out their targets by their shape alone, which will increase their "kill" probability to almost 100 per cent. And for a mere \$500 billion, the Pentagon will be able to build and deploy a laser battle station in space that will shoot down incoming Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Much of what Canan has to say about these new weapons (and the history of postwar U.S. defense policy as a whole) is tinged with skepticism. Unlike most of the legion of journalists who cover the Pentagon, Canan is willing to acknowledge that interservice rivalry, congressional pork barreling, and defense contractors have as much to do with the development of new weapons as do the true requirements for national security. He quotes former presidential science advisor Jerome Weisner approvingly:

"Election rhetoric always has the consequence of feeding the arms race. It brings out the frustrated proponents of new weapons systems. It stimulates a flood of 'background' stories about the inadequacy of our military capabilities, and it generates worldwide concern about our nation's good sense."

War in Space is a fast-paced, highly readable introduction to U.S. defense policy and the people who make it. Anyone wishing to understand the dynamics of the arms race is urged to put Jonathan Schell's *Fate of the Earth* back on the shelf and pick up *War in Space*. (WV)

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CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM

by F. E. Peters

(Princeton University Press; xi+225 pp.; \$14.50)

Robert J. White

As Iranian troops drive across the Iraqi frontier, Kurds clash with government troops in northern Iran, and Lebanon continues to be overwhelmed by the seemingly endless cycle of sectarian violence and foreign interference which has plagued that mountainous republic since the 1975-76 civil war, it sometimes seems impossible to identify the issues or isolate the parties. There is cause for celebration, then, in the arrival of a book that helps us to understand some of the historical complexities—political, sociological, and religious—of a world composed of Jews, Muslims, and Christians, of Shiites, Sunnites, and Druzes, of Monophysites, Maronites, and Melchites.

Children of Abraham is a lively and illuminating study of the heritage shared by three of the world's great religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. F. E. Peters argues that while these three often regard one another today with hostility and suspicion, they took root in the same rich spiritual soil of the Near East and hold many beliefs in common, not least of which is the affirmation of a divine revelation in written form dictated, for the most part, by one and the same God: the Jews' Yahweh, the Christians' God the Father, and the Muslims' Allah.

Rather than offering a comprehensive history of the "children of Abraham," Peters selects certain issues and institutions and indicates parallels and differences. Beginning with the return of the Jews from exile in Babylonia in the sixth century B.C. and concluding with the Middle Ages, when the chief institutions, religious practices, and ethical codes of the three religions had crystallized into forms still recognizable today, the book contains chapters on community and hierarchy, law, scripture and tradition, liturgy, asceticism and mysticism, and theology.

Peters underlines some of the ways in which the Bible, New Testament, and Koran differ as literature. The Bible is a savory mixture of myth, prophecy, legal enactments, historical narrative, and poetry composed over a