TALKING OUR EXTINCTION TO DEATH: NUCLEAR DISCOURSE AND THE NEWS MEDIA

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A partir d'une approche linguistique critique, l'auteur entreprend une revue de tout ce qui appartient à la notion de "nukespeak" dans la littérature de langue anglaise. Son article évoque l'importance de formuler un nouvel objet d'analyse: la reproduction sociale du discours sur le nucléaire lorsqu'il foule le champ stratégique de l'information médiatique.

Nuclear weaponry depends, more than any weaponry in the past, it seems, upon structures of information and communication, structures of language, including non-vocalizable language, structures of codes and graphic decoding. But the phenomenon is fabulously textural also to the extent that for the moment, a nuclear war has not taken place: one can only talk and write about it... The terrifying reality of the nuclear conflict can only be the signified referent, never the real referent (present or past) of a discourse or a text. At least today apparently (Derrida 1984: 23).

Is the 'reality' of nuclear war a reality contained within language? Certainly in light of the post-structuralist critique of Western forms of epistemology, particularly its attendant emphasis on the inscription of the individual in a complex matrix of symbolic practices, it appears reasonable to assume that the 'nuclear phenomenon' is indeed the culmination of multiple issue fields produced in discourse. Such a presupposition will, of course, spark considerable consternation on the part of those researchers posited within a traditional Durkheimian, positivistic approach to social reality, one where that reality is assumed to be an empirical 'fact' external to the (essential) individual. However, while acknowledging that the very effectivity of social relations then surfaces as a point of debate, the question of determination will here be posed strictly in terms of the language-reality relation. After all, if to isolate a single element of nuclear discourse and attribute to it the capacity to arbitrarily define reality is somewhat fanciful (as could be incorrectly inferred from Derrida's statement above), so too is a view of social meaning as the stable, invariant property of a discursive product. Therefore, in advancing an effort to elucidate the means by which nuclear discourse is actualized within news text, it is this notion of effectivity which must be privileged theoretically.

As a concrete manifestation of specific ways of knowing, nuclear discourse contains fragmentary traces of other, often contradictory, discourses (those of Nation, Sovereignty, Duty, Geo-politics, Economics, Defence, Deterrence, Peace, and Security are common). Accordingly, in endeavoring to secure the discursive terrain

of the 'nuclear phenomenon' as an object for analysis, it is crucial that the symbolic scheme through which it is organized be distinguished from the dominant structure of institutional relations. Hence the particular attractiveness of recent research accomplished under the general rubric of discourse analysis, with its radical reformulation of the news media as a field upon which struggles over signification transpire. One where competing (non-exclusive) meaning systems are inflected so as to interpellate the addressed individual (through active practice) as concrete subject (see Pecheux, 1982). Having first accounted for the specificity of the news media's location within capitalist social relations, their role in the mobilization of discursive formations as 'newsworthy' (a status demarcated by an expressive unity achieved through various narrative devices), and the consequent hierarchical ordering of voices within the produced text, emerge as key focal points for critique. Furthermore, the occupational strategies, professional ideologies, and typification schemes employed by newsworkers during the selection, construction and presentation of news events may then be set in relation to those claims to facticity immanent at the level of textual discourse. In this way, the (legitimated) social structures that they are working to reproduce will also be accentuated (see Corner, 1983; Lerman, 1983; van Dijk, 1985).

This paper proposes to begin the task of identifying a new topic of inquiry for mass communication research through initiating a call for sustained analytical treatment of nuclear discourse as it is embedded in those systems of knowing routinely processed by the news media. No attempt will be undertaken here to advance potential strategies for the further refinement of discourse analysis of this type (see instead Allan, 1987; Allan in Hackett, forthcoming). Rather, this paper is offered as a critical review of the English-language literature pertaining to the notions of 'nukespeak' and the 'nuclearization of language', much of which is located within the domain of critical linguistics. In outlining the general contours of the proposed conceptual framework, this paper will first draw upon George Orwell's novel *1984* and the linguistic program of Newspeak detailed there, before proceeding to research conducted on the nukespeak problematic itself. It should be noted that the respective studies have been categorized into different sections for purposes of thematic, and not necessarily methodological coherence. Each will be assessed here in terms of its potential usefulness for generating insights into the social configuration of nuclear discourse as it traverses the strategic field of the news media. This paper will conclude with suggestions regarding the direction of future investigations.

Rethinking News As Discourse

A view to outlining a new conceptual basis for the situation of the social (re)production of public discourse within the complex system of the mass media as an institutional apparatus has only recently been recognized by some media theorists as a necessary prerequisite for the continued advancement of more sophisticated notions of meaning construction; hence a new focus on the work of certain linguists concerned with the language of the media (see Davis and Walton, 1983; Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew,

1979). In the course of the past three decades, theoretical perspectives such as symbolic-interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology have sparked a considerable upheaval within the field of linguistics (generally defined). Consequently, a number of divergent approaches have emerged, some of which are in direct opposition to what many recognize to be the dominant framework for the analysis of language practice, namely that provided by studies of transformational generative grammar. Of interest here is critical linguistics, an approach which set about attempting to demonstrate that language is an integral part of the social process (thus the 'language' and 'society' division indicative of sociolinguistics collapses) and, as such, is implicated in the prevailing forms of economic and social organization (see Fowler and Kress, 1979). If the precise institutional and organizational conditions and practices of linguistic production have been left relatively undertheorized (often simply asserted within a text-context dynamic), critical linguistics has proven capable of providing the necessary tools to explore how discursive practices are themselves the site of linguistic conflict where particular 'realities' are systematically 'filtered out'. Through accentuating the productive dimension of discourse, the integration of the text with the social context of its articulation is then confirmed (the effect is itself anchored in a certain modality of power) and thus, in this way, new understandings of how prevailing modes of social control are systematically ex-nominated (Barthes, 1973) may be realized. As will be discussed below, this is achieved primarily through explicating a discourse's conditions of existence in addition to the internal form of its signification.

In thinking of news as discourse, certain key assumptions usually associated with conventional research on the production of news accounts are problematized. For example, in the past studies have often revolved around the notion of partisan 'bias', thereby suggesting that the political or ideological role of the news media could be reduced largely to questions of 'balance', 'impartiality', or 'objectivity' (see Hackett, 1984, for a critique of this paradigm). It was only in the course of engaging in an intensive theoretical reworking of several of the central organizing concepts of text-centred research that some practitioners of critical linguistics adopted an alternative strategy to recentre the field around the term discourse (often redefined, after Foucault, 1977, as language grasped as utterance; that is, as systematically organized modes of speaking) and the political, economic, and ideological processes which mediate relations of control (see Connell and Miles, 1985; Hall, 1986, 1982; Morley, 1983). In treating news as discourse, the consideration of the prohibitions surrounding speech could also be allowed for as they, in a given conjuncture, partially demarcate 'what can and should be said' (Pecheux, 1982). Moreover, in distinguishing analytically news discourse from the constraints and definitions which constitute the media organization itself (that is, as specific signifying practices), the means by which news texts accomplish certain 'meaning effects' for the audience could then be better theorized.

This last point indicates for analysis that news be recognized as a system or series of systems of meaning; that within news discourse, constructions of the audience are inscribed; and, finally, that the interconnections between knowledge and power be identified in relation to the means by which that audience is constituted as a social object in the actual news account itself. While recent appropriations of discourse theory are indeed beginning to demonstrate the extent to which social knowledge is arranged within preferred meanings and interpretations, attempts to illustrate this process diachronically remain scarce (see van Dijk, 1985). As will be outlined below, many of the studies concerned with nuclear discourse provide new directions for work of this nature. Prior to undertaking a critique of that material, however, it is first necessary to commence with a discussion of George Orwell's novel *1984*. As acknowledged by a number of inquiries into the political structuring of the nuclear issue field by the mass media, his notion of 'Newspeak' is a crucial launching point for a reconsideration of the interrelationships between nuclear politics and discourse (see Beedham, 1983; Chilton, 1983; Fowler and Marshall, 1985; Hodge, 1985a; Hook, 1984a; Knelman, 1985; O'Toole, 1985).

George Orwell's *1984*

Much has been written about Orwell's sagacity as his portrayal of 1984 society has proven to be increasingly evocative in the decades following the novel's publication; even today the work is considered to be a remarkably catalytic one. While many of the themes of which Orwell wrote so eloquently have provided a helpful framework to the study of linguistic control of nuclear ideology, it is his startling portrait of the means by which a fictitious state is able to maintain and reproduce its hegemony through the reification of preferred discursive practices that deserves particular attention here. Described in considerable detail are the strategies and techniques exploited by Oceania's ruling class to delimit the bounds of possible thought of its citizenry, achieved primarily through the inflection of state discourses on public knowledge. With this novel, Orwell effectively illustrates a linkage between language and the larger patterns of the distribution of power within a class society: a precept absent from much of the non-Marxist linguistic analysis of the period. Of prime importance for those engaged in research on the power/language paradigm, however, is Orwell's notion of 'Newspeak' and the static, closed semantic system it embodies, for he argues that it is the underpinning element upon which the central asymmetry of power relations within Oceania is configurated.

As envisioned in the novel, a discursive practice sanctioned by the sate is an explicit form of domination, hence the formulation of Newspeak as a mechanism of control serving to define an 'official' reality where 'War is Peace', 'Freedom is Slavery', and 'Ignorance is Strength'. It is the Oceanic state's insidious plan to narrow the range of possible thought (on the part of its population) through the imposition of the Newspeak program, the consequences of which are carefully interwoven throughout the text. As the 'ultimate political language', Newspeak functions as a restricted code

designed to reinforce and legitimize Oceania's power structure. Practitioners of Newspeak accomplish this work in a number of ways, such as through the falsification of those records on which world history is based (so that they correspond to the Party's current views). As a popular Oceanic slogan dictates: 'Who controls the present controls the past', thus the continuous manipulation of 'factual data' produces the effect of 'stopping' history. To the extent that the 'popular memory' relies on such documentation, the notion of a common past or heritage ceases to exist. In its place is a kind of continuous present in which the Party always acts correctly: "Day by day and almost minute by minute, the past was brought up to date... All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary" (Orwell, 1954: 39).

The replacement of 'Oldspeak' (terms or expressions considered undesirable because they possess orthodox or secondary connotations) with Newspeak is also critical, as to the extent that oppositional views are dependent on terms such as these ones, thinking is made safe for Oceania's ruling class. Furthermore, this literal destruction of a counter-vocabulary is complemented by the extensive use of euphemisms in 'official' discourse. Overt examples include the names given to various state apparatuses: the 'Ministry of Truth' is responsible for falsehoods, the 'Ministry of Plenty' for managing scarcity, the 'Ministry of Peace' for conducting war, the 'Ministry of Love' for torture and terror, and the 'Ministry of Minitrue' for propaganda. In establishing Newspeak as the sole medium of expression for the world view and 'mental habits' proper to the citizenry, the state succeeds in exercising a form of thought control which makes speech as nearly as possible independent of consciousness. Future citizens, fully conversant in Newspeak, will be virtually incapable of committing most 'crimes' due to an inability to imagine them in the first place.

While the importance of Orwell's notion of Newspeak for the purposes of this paper is evident, it should be acknowledged that serious reservations have been expressed regarding the deterministic nature of his views on language (see Chilton, 1984; Hodge and Fowler, 1979; and Slater, 1975). Given limitations of space here, perhaps one of the more pronounced examples may suffice: namely Orwell's implied thesis that language largely determines thought. As he writes, "a Party member called upon to make a political or ethical judgement should be able to spray forth the correct opinions as automatically as a machine gun spraying forth bullets ... the language gave him [sic] an almost foolproof instrument..." (Orwell, 1954: 265). He repeatedly points out that it is due to the state's capacity to control a subject's mind through the structure of language that it is subsequently able to control the behavior of its citizenry. Surely, however, the imposition of certain linguistic devices, in and by itself, would prove inadequate as the sole means of reinforcing state hegemony. After all, coercive state apparatuses are clearly required to enforce Oceania's reified conceptions of reality, thus state practices of censorship, 'disinformation', and 'language reform' are made as chillingly effective as they are only through the implicit threat of further coercive measures by the 'Ministry of Love' and the 'Thought Police'. This latter point,

if not acknowledged explicitly by Orwell, does allow him to escape the charge of propagating an extreme view of Whorfian linguistics.

The Politics Of Nuclear Language

Despite the brevity of this overview of Orwell's contribution to the examination of certain aspects of the interrelationships between politics and language, it is clear that his approach has much to offer the proposed conceptual strategy. While a full exposition of potential refinements to his view of the language-reality relation would undoubtedly prove to be a worthwhile exercise, here an emphasis shall be placed on the problem of 'nuclear reality'; specifically, as it emerges from within the larger configurations of power realized in nuclear discourse. In contrast with what may be termed 'Orwellian linguistics', discourse analysis privileges the notion that elements constitutive of this 'reality' do not contain or possess a single, intrinsic meaning, which then determines the order of linguistic units. Rather, the language of nuclear war is to be treated as a system formed of linguistic signs, which, conversely, inflects the ordering of the social world; meaning thus becomes a productive practice. Such a radicalized conception of 'nuclear reality' as discursive system may then provide for the effectivity of changes within the social sphere as they transform the fixed positionality in which that discourse must sustain itself. Accordingly, it may then be 'unpacked' in terms of the particular structure it possesses; its subsequent 'meaning' being an effect of the various symbolic conventions at work.

Almost at once a new methodology for mass media analyses can be extended to consider how certain meanings are being produced at the expense of alternative types. Questions may then be advanced regarding the kinds of meaning that are possible if, in a systematic fashion, the parameters of socially located meaning systems are organized so as to delimit the range of potential meanings to a preferred or dominant one. In developing the tools to conceptualize the operation of discursive processes as they work to construct order within a social system, discourse analysis, in turn, establishes a space for the examination of the dominant representations of nuclear reality. That is, it secures for the theorist the means to discover to what extent and by what means the social relations of speaking that reality are themselves structured in dominance. This is a significant break from earlier efforts which often characterized the mass media, after Althusser, strictly as a unified Ideological State Apparatus (ISA); one equated with a specific formulation of political power where only the interests of a ruling class are represented. Moreover, there existed a marked tendency to invoke the ideological realm as a final, all encompassing explanation of the various characteristics of the media's role and position in the social formation (usually in some form of implicit functionalism). This problem remains a serious one for research undertaken in media studies to this day, given the degree of difficulty associated with rendering ideology into a practicable concept (see Coward and Ellis, 1977; Hall, 1982; Knight, 1982; Thompson, 1984).

In tracing further the more pronounced implications of Orwell's Newspeak program for recent efforts to theorize nuclear discourse, the most pertinent research to be drawn upon revolves around the questions of the 'nuclearization of language' or, similarly, 'nukespeak'. A close reading of that (English-language) literature suggests that while efforts to provide an analytically precise definition of nukespeak are significant in number (see Aubrey, 1982; Beedham, 1983; Chilton, 1985b, 1982; Fawcett, 1985; Fowler and Marshall, 1985; Hilgartner *et al* 1982; Hodge, 1985; Hodge and Mansfield, 1985; Hook, 1985, 1984a, 1984b; Kress, 1985; Moss, 1985a, 1985b; O'Toole, 1985; Van Belle and Claes, 1985), they have consistently proven that the notion is an elusive one. Generally, most formulations appear to be organized around a number of common linguistic elements or themes, the most prominent of which include the use of euphemism, jargon, modality, negativity, the non-realization of agency, syntax and vocabulary to construct and reinforce a 'neutralizing language' which serves to facilitate the legitimization of certain militarization processes. One question which then arises concerns the applicability of such a construct for analyzing the Soviet equivalent of nukespeak. Certainly this type of research would provide a fascinating point of comparison, as well as underscoring the complexity of what is often a relational series of utterances vis-a-vis the 'enemy'. An extensive search of the literature, however, has yet to produce a systematic study of this nature (see Keen, 1986, for an examination of visual metaphors and the mechanism of enmity in Soviet propaganda); its import for future research must therefore be accentuated.

For Chilton, who has been recognized as the originator of the term itself (see Beedham, 1983; Fawcett, 1985), to employ the notion of nukespeak is essentially to make three claims. First, that there is currently in use a specialized vocabulary for speaking about nuclear issues which relies on habitual metaphors and preferred grammatical construction; second, that this variety of English is 'ideologically loaded' to the extent that it works to justify 'nuclear culture'; lastly, that this is of importance to the extent that language affects how people think and therefore act on related issues (Chilton, 1982: 95). Hook makes an important addition in terms of the notion of perspective. He suggests that the term nukespeak implies a fundamental choice between a view of nuclear 'reality' from the 'top down'; that is, from the 'official' definition, or 'bottom up', which signifies the 'victims' position (Hook, 1985: 67). Further, Hook contends that "the perspective of the victims has been consistently excluded from the hegemonic nuclear discourse... [as they] ...are most commonly viewed from the perspective of the executioners" (1985: 67). Such a configuration allows for the consideration of the choice itself, precisely as it is reproduced through the social framing of the predominant ways of speaking nuclear issues, as an explicit manifestation of particular relations of domination and resistance.

Characteristic of much of the work completed on this problem to date is the view of nukespeak functioning as a conscious attempt on the part of the nation-state to facilitate the continued production and deployment of nuclear weapons. Often the primary focal point for this type of analysis is that nukespeak is designed to ensure

that the nation-state's policy on defence and security issues is perceived by the public as constituting the only sensible, rational and correct approach. The terminology and grammatical constructions attributed to those individuals and institutions positioned within the dominant nuclear discourse are therefore defined as controlled responses directed at potential threats to the nation-state's legitimacy (for a general discussion of the 'maleness' of related scientific discourses, see Easlea, 1983). Some evidence for this line of inquiry is provided through studies of 'official' rhetoric (see Franck and Weisband, 1971; Glasgow University Media Group, 1985; Halverson, 1971; Hook, 1984b; Kress, 1985; Lapp, 1956; Luostarinen, 1986; Moss, 1985a; Nash, 1980; Rapopart, 1980; Richardson, 1985; Smith, D., 1987; Wander, 1984; Weart, 1985), as they illustrate certain advantages for the nation-state in propagating national 'self-defence', as opposed to propagating war, to maintain its continuous 'arms race'. In this way a world poised on the brink of a 'nuclear exchange' is both necessary and desirable if 'global stability' is to be maintained. The declaration of a 'winnable' or 'limited' 'conflict' becomes euphemized as 'pushing the button', 'pulling the nuclear trigger' or making 'the ultimate decision'. Moreover, only after 'thinking the unthinkable' can a 'general nuclear response' be 'set into motion' (where the 'three Rs of winning' are 'reload', 're-constitution' and 'refire'). 'Their' cities and towns then become 'soft targets' to be 'removed' with 'clean', 'surgical strikes'. Precisely what size the 'nuclear footprint' will be when a 'target of opportunity' is 'neutralized', however, depends upon the 'success radius'. As a result, while expressly denying their intention to sustain the 'arms build up', the 'superpowers' simply demonstrate their 'need to uphold their ability to wage war'. Clearly, the term 'defence' is central here, since as an ideonym for the term 'war' it would indeed appear to allow the nation-state's military activity to be made synonymous with a perceived right to defend itself.

The Rhetoric of Defence

In returning, temporarily, to the society Orwell envisioned in *1984*, certain readily discernable similarities between the imaginary world of Oceania and the present practice of global politics emerge as interesting points for further discussion. Oceania is committed to a permanent war with either Eastasia or Eurasia; since the early 1950s, such has also been the case between the United States and the Soviet Union. For example, commencing in the early 1950s a series of fictitious 'gaps' have been exploited for the purposes of legitimizing various demands for increased budgetary allocations to the military sector.

In the case of the United States these include "bomber 'gaps' (1953-1957); missile 'gaps' (1959-1962); antiballistic missile or 'ABM' 'gaps' (1963-1967); security 'gaps' (1972-1973); civil defence 'gaps' (in the sixties, seventies and again currently); [and] spending 'gaps' (intensified by the Reagan administration...)" (Knelman, 1985: 70; see also Ewen, 1980; Luckham, 1984). Similarly, President Reagan's 'window of vulnerability' would appear to signify an (underlying) rationale for the United States'

'military build-up', a strategy partially reified through a 'peace through strength' and 'nuclear forces' as 'sheltering arm for freedom' logic. As many commentators have pointed out, President Reagan has often sought to posit this rationale within the terms of a Christian imaginary ("The Lord will give strength to his people; the Lord will bless His people with peace"). Like Orwell's Big Brother, the Reagan administration struggles to explain through its preferred rhetorical devices (including a lexicon of morality) why national 'security' is contingent upon a sustained 'arms race'. A (now infamous) statement attributed to former Secretary of Defence, Caspar Weinberger, appears to declare that war is in fact peace: "The only war we want is the war-which-never-was. But the war-which-never-was is a war which was never fought because we were prepared to fight and win it." More subtle examples include describing the 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization' or 'NATO' as the 'world's greatest peace movement', the 'Missile Experimental' or 'MX' as 'The Peacekeeper', the 'Strategic Defence Initiative' as 'Star Wars' or a 'peace shield'.

In the novel *1984* it is the character Emanuel Goldstein, 'Enemy of the People' and author of the banned book *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectives*, who argues that war "helps to preserve the typical mental atmosphere that a hierarchical society needs ... the object of war is not to make or prevent conquests of territory, but to keep the structure of society intact" (Orwell, 1954: 173). The ruling elite of Oceania consciously work to extract a popular consensus by presupposing a common will dependent on the existence of a villain: namely, Goldstein, the target of the 'Two Minutes Hate'. For the Reagan administration in the mid-1980's, the Soviet Union is the target; it is an 'evil empire' and 'the focus of evil in the modern world'; its people are 'monsters', 'squalid criminals' and 'enemies of the human race' (that this rhetoric 'softened towards the end of President Reagan's tenure deserves further scrutiny). In his first press conference after the 1980 election victory, President Reagan is reported to have stated: "I wouldn't trust the Russians around the block. They must be laughing at us because we continue to think of them as people" (Knelman, 1985: 30). Hence the appropriateness of Thompson's claim that "we can kill thousands because we have first learned to call them 'the enemy'" (Thompson, 1980: 51). Furthermore, he contends, it is within language itself that "wars commence. We kill each other in euphemisms and abstractions long before the first missiles have been launched" (1980: 51). If nuclear warfare is 'unthinkable' for the citizenry of the Western countries, he suggests it is because it is much more difficult to conceptualize the possibility that such a war would be inflicted upon 'us', and not the 'enemy'. The human mind, he argues, is the 'ultimate doomsday weapon' due to this apparent willingness to think the enemy 'Other' to death (1980: 52).

Connell (1982) elaborates on this notion through an assessment of the 'red scare' as a rhetorical device, pointing out that if used as a premise the construct "removes the initiative from 'us', and places it squarely on 'them'. 'They' are positioned as the aggressors, 'we' merely respond to their clearly hostile initiatives in an attempt to deter" (Connell, 1982: 24-25). Communism, he maintains, has been constituted as a 'folk

devil'; that is, as a useful threat requiring continuous service to retain popular credibility (1982: 25). Connell cites the role played by various cultural forms, including 'anti-communist' films and 'spy' novels, arguing that they function to mobilize the 'red scare' theme and thereby make a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union appear to be inevitable 91982: 25). Similarly, several critical studies have been undertaken of the persuasive methods exploited by President Reagan in his official speeches and pronouncements (See Knelman, 1985; Luostarinen, 1986; Moss, 1985a; Nelson, 1987; Smith, D., 1987; Smith, J. 1987). Using evidence gathered from a textual analysis of various 'popular texts', including a speech made by President Reagan on arms negotiations, Moss argues that particular myths are consciously employed to structure public ways of thinking in the interest of ideological consensus (Moss, 1985a: 45-45, 62) Further, his findings suggest that 'defence' rhetoric is underpinned emotionally and philosophically by abstractions such as duty, honour and obligation, and that these general cultural structures are becoming synonymous with the 'military cast of mind' (1985a: 62). Consequently, generalized common-sensical constructions are partly controlled by the language of 'military culture' (1985a: 62). One attempt to illustrate the component structure of President Reagan's discourse is that of Luostarinin (1986) who argues that at least four distinct levels of abstraction are discernable. They are identified as: first, the level of myth: Harmony and God—Anarchy and Stan; second, the level of group identification: Liberty and the USA-Repression and the Soviet Union; third, the level of politics: Fight against communism-Alliance between crime, communism and terrorism; and fourth, the level of day to day politics: Peace initiatives—Military build-up (Luostarinen, 1986: 5). Thus to decode President Reagan's messages is to continuously move up and down what Luostarinen calls the 'abstraction ladder', the end result being that an illusion of a controllable world is created through the use of enemy imagery as a political tool to increase integration and decrease social tension and confrontation (1986: 11-17).

Dismantling Deterrence

In the Western world, each 'new' development in nuclear policy is premised upon some reference to 'Soviet expansionism' or 'the Soviet threat' (see Connell, 1982; Ewen, 1980; Kaldor, 1982; Knelman, 1985; Luckham, 1984; see also Halverson, 1971; Walker, 1987). Consequently, Beedham argues, "the nuclear arms debate is prejudiced, linguistically and conceptually, towards the government's view by the very language in which official channels present it" (Beedham, 1983: 15-16). In the process of examining the political inflections of certain semantic structures associated with 'national self-defence' and the 'threat from outside', particularly as they are dispersed in 'official' discourse, the word 'deterrence' emerges as a primary focus of analysis (see Chilton, 1985b; Kress, 1985; Marullo, 1985; Pasquinelli, 1985; Pietila, et al, 1983; Van Belle and Claes, 1985; Vigor, 1975; Wander, 1984). The two meanings associated with the English language verb 'deter' - 'inspiring fear' and 'holding back an aggressor' - lack a direct equivalent in the Russian language. According to Vigor, therefore, "the Russian mind is singularly ill-equipped to apprehend the notion of 'the

act of deterring' and not much better to apprehend that of the 'thing that deters'" (Vigor, 1975: 476). This Russian 'failure' to fully conceptualize the Western notion of the 'deterrent value' of nuclear weapons has, in his view, severely limited the potential for a 'truly meaningful debate' with the Western states (1975: 477).

In sharp contrast to Vigor's position are the views of Chilton who considers this type of linguistic reasoning to be both absurd and dangerous, arguing that it rests on two fundamental misconceptions: first, the notion that the absence of a lexical item in a language implies an inability to comprehend the corresponding concept; and the second, the notion that the concept of deterrence is an objectively given category to be independently named in several languages (Chilton, 1985b: 103-04). Chilton assumes an alternative stance by insisting that conceptual limitation can not be inferred, particularly given that different cultures have formed in their military strategy various stable concepts and lexical items; examples include the Russian 'otpugivat' ('to frighten off'), the German 'abschrecken' ('frighten off') and the French 'dissuader' ('dissuade') (1985b: 104). To further substantiate this claim, Chilton moves to question the role of language in conceptualizing the domain of strategy. Findings from a rigorous linguistic analysis of the 'ideologically conditioned knowledge' which 'deter', 'deterrent' and 'deterrence' signify suggests that, despite common claims to the contrary, nuclear weapons do not imply 'deter', but rather 'use' (1985b: 127). One brief example from his study is a quotation attributed to British Prime Minister Thatcher suggesting that 'deterrence has deterred'. Chilton points out that as it is possible to state both that 'the (nuclear) deterrent deters the Russians' and that 'the (nuclear) deterrent does not deter the Russians' (a prerequisite for continuing nuclear armament production), a precise distinction between semantic and pragmatic factors can not be made; that is, the notion of deterrence is ideologically determined in specific ways by the user (1985b: 125-127).

Further attempts to dismantle the 'theory of deterrence' as an ideological construct include the work of Van Belle and Claes (1985) who offer an examination of 'NATO' defence policy where 'words play as big a part as arms'. The 'official doctrine of NATO policy' is based on 'mutual deterrence', the logic of which they contend rests on a confusion between "the most spiritual power—belief—with the most material power—destruction by nuclear arms" (Van Belle and Claes, 1985: 99). By assuming a perspective on deterrence which defines it as a semiotic behavior, the authors are able to analyze the 'psycho-logic' of the notion: firstly, in terms of closed systems of inference; secondly, in terms of culturally entrenched stereotypes and stories, and; finally, in terms of 'psycho-pathological relations' between persons (1985: 95-101). NATO's 'deterrence discourse', they conclude, connotes that the 'enemy' or the 'other' is not seen as a 'real' other; rather it is always compared with an 'ideal image' of self (e.g. 'democracy' or 'freedom'), thus the dominant notion of deterrence is itself based upon a 'fundamental mistrust' (1985: 101). If the 'spiral of armament' is to be stopped, this mistrust must be eliminated through the development of an international dialogue that has as its subject the politics of deterrence itself (1985: 101).

Kress (1985) offers a complementary approach to the 'politics of deterrence' formulation by placing a new emphasis on the capacity of language to function as a form of 'social action'. A basic anti-Soviet attitude, he contends, is present in all pro-nuclear deterrent texts (or constructed by its absence). Therefore, to devise strategies to alter the present ideological determinations of these texts, the social determination of linguistic practice must be theorized without precluding individual differences *vis-a-vis* the reader's role (Kress, 1985: 66-67, 81-84). Strictly defined efforts to explicate linguistic action can not, he insists, account for how such arguments are embedded in those discourses which constitute the social life of most individuals, including discourses of work, the family, morality, nationalism, sexism and patriarchy (1985: 84). Kress's conclusion is thus similar to that of Van Belle and Claes to the extent that the very basis of the motivating ideology of pro-nuclear texts must be analytically privileged if the long-term ideological-political realignments articulated through strategic texts are to be brought about (1985: 84-86).

It is clear that the degree to which the word 'deterrent' has been transformed into a synonym for nuclear weapons delimits the terrain for alternative efforts to (re)articulate the need for eliminating their production. Moreover, this 'security rationale' and its privileged claim on 'reality' even appears to further mystify oppositional ways of formulating counter-definitions of what is 'at issue', thereby posing a significant difficulty for any organized political intervention. This partial review of the literature would suggest that the deterrence construct appears to act as a dominant principle of pro-nuclear arguments, and when it is transferred to the deterrent 'value' of nuclear missiles (that is, the assumed value in the implicit claim that these weapons are actually 'working' to deter the Soviet Union from aggressive action), then the concept itself is reified in relation to the missile's explosive capacity. If calls for disarmament are met with calls not for rearmament but for deterrence (Beedham, 1983: 22), and if 'deterrence strategy' is based on 'preserving the balance of MAD (mutual assured destruction)', then the continuation of the race to build evermore powerful weapons will have been effectively secured by the nation-state.

Discourses of Dissent

The principal theme drawn from the literature on nukespeak and dissent is that nuclear discourse works to structure the dominant ways of speaking nuclear reality. As several of the above theorists have attempted to demonstrate, the primary organizing element structured into this hegemonic discourse is the unequal distribution of power to communicate. The struggle over access to the means of mass communication notwithstanding, to gain the 'credibility' required to be appropriated by the news media the counter-hegemonic discourse often adapts itself to the constraints of nuclear discourse. However, the extent to which the constant threat of marginalization, of being found guilty of 'bias' or 'emotionalism', forces speakers so posited to articulate their stance in such a way that the news media ascribe to its 'newsworthy' status is a continuing question. Moreover, the degree to which proponents of nuclear

disarmament will cater to the dictates of the dominant discourse, defining themselves in terms of the institutionalized notions of respectability and prestige necessary to be considered a voice deserving inclusion in public 'debate', has also been left largely unexplored.

Richardson (1985) attempts to address this relationship through a textual analysis of, firstly, arguments employed by the British government against opponents of nuclear weapons (during February to May 1983) and, secondly, speeches made by British Prime Minister Thatcher and two defence ministers. Through considering the political speech as a discourse genre, different levels of meaning in the language used by Conservative ministers are differentiated to determine the 'official attitude' towards the 'anti-nuclear lobby'. Richardson examines various elements of Thatcher's discourse, arguing that each has "different rhetorical pay-offs depending upon the inferential frameworks deployed in specific subsections of the audience" (Richardson, 1985: 39). Thus while Thatcher's rhetoric is not reproduced 'uncritically' by the intended audience, there exists a common thematic element which formulates 'defence dissenters' as 'the other' and consequently as an irrational and morally suspect force to be condemned (1985: 42-44). Similarly, Kress (1985) looks to formulate a linkage between multiple 'official' discourses as they conjoin and conflict in texts of oppositional 'genres'. A Campaign for Defence and Multilateral Disarmament pamphlet; a Socialist Workers Party handbill; a diocesan news-letter; a rally speech by a peace movement 'leader'; and a peace group news letter, are included in Kress's research sample. Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from his analysis is that the primary characteristic of these texts is their constitution around a cold-war representation of the Soviet Union (or, again, structured by its absence) which, in turn, acts as the motivating ideology for discourses within the nuclear issue field (1985: 85-86). Only through the study of generic forms, Kress contends, may one theorize the means by which the pro-nuclear establishment has institutionalized control of or access to a whole range of genres currently 'closed off' to anti-nuclear groups (1985: 82).

Fowler and Marshall (1985) examine various press and government texts to 'bring to the surface' the systems of belief and perception most favorable to the direct actions of British government (paradigms). They argue that the language used constitutes a 'diffuse ideological assault' against any development within the culture that threatened the dominant paradigms (Fowler and Marshall, 1985: 21). For example, news reports of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) attempts to render problematic the 'ethics' of an arms race are implicitly structured in such a way as to define the group as a threat to the very basis of the rationalized defence posture. While concluding that what is at 'stake' in the larger ideological conflict is the dominant system of officially sanctioned assumptions about public attitudes and actions, their analysis offers only tentative evidence to support such a claim, and leaves untheorized the role played by either language or ideology. Perhaps the most comprehensive examination of CND coverage is the case study undertaken by the University of Birmingham's CCCS Media Group (1983). This project, commissioned by the CND

itself, identifies the primary thematics of the debate through which the public discourse on disarmament is structured. Having rejected the notion of 'media bias', the group locates several 'traps' as they are inflected in the coverage. Examples include: the Defence/Deterrence trap ('NATO is the best peace movement'); the Red trap (demonstrations are organized by communists); the class trap (CND is not representative of working class people); the gender trap (CND is connotatively 'feminine'); the youth trap (CND's members are young, naive and deviant); and the race trap (CND is Eurocentric). The discursive practices through which the news media work to construct an account of the various demonstrations appear to simultaneously ensure that the group's marginalization from 'mainstream' avenues of protest will be effectively reinforced. Only by transforming such 'traps' into 'openings', the researchers argue, will CND realize a new basis for its struggle for a counter-hegemony.

Minutes To Midnight

Work on nuclear discourse is explicitly political: efforts to facilitate the articulation of alternative knowledges pose a direct threat to the current reproduction of mass acquiescence to the 'nuclear phenomenon'. As detailed above, to disrupt the processes through which nuclear discourse places people (as historical subjects) within modes of identification working to secure preferred relations of inference, new critical and emancipatory positions must first be located and then reinforced. For discourses of dissent to intervene against the prevailing structures of 'obvious', 'common-sensical' knowledges about the dominant nuclear reality (and the socially contingent nature of its phallocentric truth), they must succeed in transcending the boundaries established through discursive lines of demarcation (see Pecheux, 1982). This may be best achieved through a number of interrelated strategies, such as explicating the means by which these counter-hegemonic knowledges are denied ascendancy into 'official' knowledge, or, similarly, attempting to identify as a site of struggle the patriarchal assumptions on which such discourses have come to depend. Another would be to address the very multiplicity of the discourses at play in news text (as well as the conditions of their hierarchical legitimacy for 'newsworthiness') and the 'naturalness' of their alignment with the 'real'. Furthermore, the operational rules and codes of newsgathering as routinized work could be examined, including its attendant reliance on the 'official sources' and 'expert opinions' found within bureaucratic support systems, in relation to the sense-making practices of the newsworkers themselves.

The conceptual tools of discourse analysis may also prove well suited to assist with the further exploration of how an antagonistic differentiation could be imposed within the larger, public dispersion of nuclear discourse. After all, the 'official' lexicon made available for newsworkers to draw upon not only helps them to construct a general framework of facticity within their respective news accounts, it may also structure each account so as to reify a technical or scientific authority set above 'reasonable' opposition. Associations of order, efficiency and institutional control may then be actualized within the produced text, at least to the extent that those determinate power

relations effected through narrative closure remain embedded within the realm of a 'taken-for-grantedness' understood implicitly by both newsworker and newsconsumer alike. Accordingly, having first rendered the pertinent concepts inaccessible to the non-specialist, the 'inside' language barrier (necessary for reinforcing the materialized practices of 'official' ways of knowing) is then itself preserved. Given the potential implications for nuclear discourse, Thompson's (1980) concern with the form of 'normality' so configured is particularly important. In his view, 'inside' language works to habituate the addressed individual to certain expectations, thus not only does it encourage resignation to the problem of nuclear war, it also beckons on the event (Thompson, 1980: 51).

This paper has attempted to argue for the importance of formulating for investigation a new object of analysis: the social reproduction of nuclear discourse as it traverses the strategic field of the news media. Practitioners of media studies are well placed to elaborate upon present theoretical efforts to counteract the nation-state's 'official' discourse by opening it up to the broader forms of critique and contestation through the re-definition of its primary elements. This practice of criticism may even, in turn, be correlated with socio-political involvement as institutions currently posited within counter hegemonic discourses (not necessarily limited to groups involved with the advancement of specific peace and disarmament causes) hold vast potential for assistance in the realization of this critical agenda. Such an approach could severely limit the ease with which nation-states articulate the relatively stable stereo-types and narrative syntagms of the Cold War binarism (particularly its external 'Other'). Evidently, until this 'nuclear reality' is transformed, 'the Balance of Terror' will continue to preclude a clear appraisal of the nation-state's legitimate defence needs. This while the minute hand of the 'doomsday clock' ticks ever closer to 'midnight' and the practices of discourse management become increasingly refined.

Endnotes

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