
PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements

1-1-1961

Disarm to parley: A case for unilateral disarmament

W. M. Ferry

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/prism>
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Ferry, W. M., "Disarm to parley: A case for unilateral disarmament" (1961). *PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements*. 229.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/prism/229>

disarm to parley

*A case for
Unilateral
Disarmament*

by W. H. FERRY

20¢

EDITOR'S NOTE

Though the subject of this pamphlet is one of grave concern to all Americans—survival in the face of the threat of thermonuclear war—the author points out that his solutions will not find popular acceptance. The Peace Education Program of the American Friends Service Committee feels that this point of view should be given an opportunity for expression and it is in the spirit of furthering discussion on the vital issues of disarmament and peace that the pamphlet is being published. It was originally delivered as an address entitled “The Case for Unilateral Disarmament” on December 2, 1960 before the American Association for the United Nations in Santa Barbara, California.

W. H. Ferry has had long experience in newspaper work and as a consultant in labor relations. More recently he was partner in a public relations firm in New York City.

PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAM
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Introduction

On January 13, 1960, a letter that I wrote advocating unilateral disarmament was printed in the *Santa Barbara News-Press*. Though it was far from an original suggestion, the proposal was in general greeted with the outrage usually accorded ideas on their first appearance. Since that time, the idea has got into the open a bit, and while it has not achieved respectability, it still is making an occasional appearance in discussion. I welcome this development, because I continue to believe that unilateral disarmament is the practical way out of our agonizing dilemma.

Mr. Herman Kahn, a physicist and military strategist of international reputation on the staff of the Rand Corporation, has argued many times for what he calls a more realistic and calm attitude toward nuclear war.¹ He has said he wants to change the atmosphere, to persuade people that nuclear war is not, in the words of President Eisenhower, "madness," but the opposite: both possible and under certain circumstances manageable.

Many would agree with Mr. Kahn. I have been reminded often that unilateral disarmament is politically unacceptable today. Indeed, one can hardly be unaware that the entire drift of the country has been in the opposite direction. One day soon we may find ourselves committed to a "doomsday machine," a device capable of blowing up the entire earth. Aside from the fact that it might take ten years and tens of billions of dollars to build, a doomsday machine even to the most stalwart patriot might seem to have certain shortcomings. But since it may be technically possible to construct, what is there in our present logic against the notion? If it would give us the "balance of power" that haunts the dreams of statesmen and strategists, are we not in honor bound to build it?

I shall leave the argument for the doomsday machine to those who are more persuaded of the rhetoric of deterrence than I am. Moreover, I do not intend to spend much time in reciting the grisly threats that thermonuclear warfare has in its cupboard. For those who might not be fully aware of the consequences of present programs I recommend a pamphlet called *Community of Fear*.² My purpose in the following pages is similar to Mr. Kahn's. I, too, wish to change the atmosphere. I want to see the calm discussion of unilateral disarmament made possible; and to that end, I propose to dissect the so-called "realism" on which present policies are based.

¹ Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 651 pp.

² Harrison Brown and James Real, *Community of Fear* (Santa Barbara, California, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1960), 40 pp.

Machiavelli Reincarnated

As a beginning, let us imagine that Mr. Khrushchev has recalled Machiavelli and asked his advice on how to achieve his main aims.³ And let us assume that chief among these aims is eventual domination of the globe. I think that Machiavelli might say something like this:

"Prince, it is obvious that your weapons cannot assist you in achieving a single important goal. If you use them, whatever the situation or pretext, three things will follow. First, you will render some of the best industrial and building sites on earth useless and uninhabited. Second, you will be fearfully bombed yourself, which cannot be expected to endear you to your subjects. Third, those people now labeled neutral and uncommitted will never trust or follow your lead. But I need not speak further on this line; I am sure we agree that your stockpiles of great bombs and missiles are good only for national vanity, and perhaps to balance the arms of your adversaries, but otherwise far more trouble than they are worth."

Machiavelli continues, "We both know also that the remarkable gains that your country has made in the last half-generation have been made not mainly by force of arms but by deviousness. You have succeeded by infiltration. You have provided simple Communist answers to immense problems of social organization for people who want to share in the plenty of industrial society. Your diplomacy has been wily and farsighted. Your encouragement of scientific development has won you respect, if not friendship, in many parts of the world. You have a considerable accomplishment in the field of peaceful economic competition. And despite heavy arms burdens you have so far managed to keep your own subjects relatively happy; though I must confess that they appear to be far easier to satisfy than I would be.

"What I wish to propose, Prince, is that you lay down your arms. Not today or tomorrow, but after preparation of the kind I shall now outline. First and most difficult, you must bring China into your plan. Second, you must make menacing noises at the West, more menacing even than you made at Paris and in New York. The object here is to get the West to commit itself even more expensively to arms build-ups, and to enter into more and more "defense" pacts and economic aid agreements with other countries. Next, your various negotiators in Geneva and elsewhere will denounce their opposite numbers from the West as intractable and thirsting only to go to war. Fourth, you will prepare your nation for peacetime production and life. You will make plans for shifting missile and arms factories into civilian goods. You will figure out how the officers and men of the Russian army can be converted into schoolteachers, mechanics, technical assistance teams, farmers, civil servants, white collar workers, colonizers. This will all take time but

³ I am indebted to a colleague, Hallock Hoffman, for many of the ideas in the following reincarnation.

should not be a difficult problem since yours is a systematic economy whose ends and means are directed from the top. These arrangements can, moreover, be made publicly, for the West can be trusted not to believe its eyes. In fact, these days it is a curious penchant of both East and West to call things by their opposites. A writer named Orwell called this language of opposites Newspeak. So evidence of peace preparations on your part, it may be confidently predicted, will be regarded in Washington as preparation for war."

Machiavelli smiles out of the window of the Kremlin and continues, "Before I come to the final points, I wish to say that I realize that the steps I have been describing are not simple to take. I have mentioned China already, and that will be a tough nut to crack. You'll probably fare best in Peking by showing that what you are going to do is in the most orthodox Marxist line. I appreciate also that you will have domestic tribulations, especially with your older and more warlike and less imaginative colleagues in this building. Some of the brighter and more open-minded chaps will see that the method I am suggesting is the swift and cheap way to their heart's desire, world domination. Others, I understand, want your job, and may denounce you as spineless or treasonable in espousing such a course. But in such bureaucratic infighting you have no peer between Tashkent and Leningrad. My advice here would therefore be supererogation.

"We come now to the fifth step. You will call a special meeting of the United Nations, and give your call so portentous a sound that the heads of state of the entire world will come to New York. You will announce that as of the date of your address, Russia is disarming down to the arms needed for domestic police. The army is being disbanded. Military detachments are being recalled and demobilized. The assent of China, and its cooperation in this action, has been obtained. The borders of the USSR will henceforth be open to all. Anyone who cares to do so may inspect any part of Russia without let or hindrance.

"Russia is taking this unprecedented action, because it is genuinely a peace-loving power. Russians see that the arms race can have no end except war of an immensity that will leave the world bloody and impoverished for generations. Against its wishes the Soviet was forced into the arms race by the West. Now, at the height of its power, demonstrably able to excel in this frightful competition, Russia chooses to act for humanity. For it is now clear that to continue to prepare for war is sooner or later to bring war on. There can be no winners, only losers, in modern war. The Soviet is moreover confident that in a world at peace its aims will be achieved because of the superiority of its doctrines.

"The atomic materials of the Soviet will be delivered to the United Nations, except for those amounts needed for peaceful atomic power plants in Russia and other countries. Russia offers to take a leading part in the formation by the UN of a Peace Force. Interplanetary rocket research by the USSR and other scientific developments of the utmost

significance to mankind will likewise be de-nationalized and turned over to the United Nations."

Machiavelli pauses for a long moment and resumes, "And, Prince, you then say what you intend to do with the capital set free by unilateral disarmament. You are, I believe, spending something around 30 billion dollars a year for war? This, the UN learns, will be committed in the future as follows: 15 billion to the upbuilding of the Soviet economy, and that of its neighbors and old friends. The next 10 billion is to be spent, beginning at once, to meet the needs of the so-called neutral and underdeveloped countries. Some of this amount will be channeled through the United Nations, to the extent that the organization can handle such tasks and to the degree that other UN members are willing and able to share in the effort. The Soviet offers to underwrite, out of its savings on arms, the cost of administering this vastly expanded UN machine. The last 5 billion is to be set aside—and, Prince, if I do say so myself, I think this is rather a pretty suggestion—this final 5 billion will be set aside for the use of the United States and its allies—to be thought of as a Reverse Marshall Plan. This is not only a poetic but a necessary provision, since the West clearly has no plans whatever for coping with peace."

Machiavelli stands and looks down at Khrushchev. "Prince, you end this most memorable of speeches with a statement of your expectations. You expect that some of the satellites—Poland, Hungary, Rumania, others—will pull away—but you expect also that they will return before long. Where, after all, will they have to go?

"You expect that the neutral and ambitious new nations will turn to the Soviet in gratitude. You expect that Africa and Indonesia will come to your side with pledges of good will, and that it will not be long before South America throws off its thralldom to the United States to join you. In the United Nations Russia's voice will instantly become the dominant one. You expect that the Soviet's offer of capital and technical assistance will be taken up everywhere.

"You do not expect that the United States or other Western nations will bomb Russia—what good would it do? You do not expect that the West will attempt to take Russia and China over. You expect that the force of world opinion will stifle such suggestions before they are even made. The West will, in any case, be facing the prodigious task of keeping its own economies afloat. You expect that the United Nations will accept the several challenges you have laid before it: that of making great new stocks of atomic materials available where they will be of the most use, that of enormously extending technical assistance, that of forming an international Peace Force.

"Alas, because of the suspicions which have been converted into the way of life called the cold war, the West cannot be expected soon to follow your lead. No, the West must be expected to disbelieve you indefinitely, and to spend years inspecting and probing into every cave in the Urals, every snowbank in Siberia.

"Most of all you expect that the West will be thrown into the utmost confusion. Think of its international arrangements—pacts, economic aid, CIA adventurers, military bases, and exports of troops—billions in missile installations, submarines, warning systems, and the like! Think of all of this as the response to a single image of Russia, the image of a bloodthirsty and crafty beast, all claws and fangs, waiting to pounce. I need not elaborate this figure of speech, for it is the picture of the West you have sought to give your own subjects. But think what happens when, in a twinkling, this beast is transformed into a harmless dove!

"Confusion is doubtless too mild a way of describing what would ensue in the West. The domestic economy, especially of the United States, would be thrown into great disarray—how great may be surmised by the total unwillingness of its leaders to make any preparation for peace. Should they keep on making Polaris submarines, a full line of missiles, warplanes, and so on? Why? What for? These will be hard questions for the West to answer. But the true chaos will be psychological. Someone will have to be blamed for the debacle. Scapegoats are needed when anything goes wrong, and the search for them will be frantic. Remember Pearl Harbor?

"But what you finally expect, Prince, is that your step will lead to peace. Peace, peace, there's the idea. You will offer your assistance to the United Nations not only in getting an international Peace Force under way but in the far more immediate task of keeping down the distribution of atomic weapons and gas and microbes to other nations. You could come close to dictating in the UN how these controls and curbs are to be imposed. You may expect your good offices to be used in many places besides the UN, for you will now be known as the country that broke the most vicious circle man has ever known, the circle of lethal logic. But now I am getting into details, and I shall desist. As you see, my advice is simply conceived: it merely reverses the present attitude. In a word, disarm to parley—and win. Think it over, Prince."

And Machiavelli returned to the sixteenth century.

The politics of peace

I favor unilateral disarmament by the United States. In advocating it, I do not wish to be associated with Machiavelli. Peace is the purpose I have in mind, not domination. *By unilateral disarmament I mean that I believe that this country should lay down its arms, scrap its warplanes, missiles, and submarines, disband its troops, and leave itself only the organization and weapons needed for local police and for normal patrols of its borders.*

Needless to say, I should want such a step to be taken only after informing those with whom we have alliances of our intentions and giving them time to make their own plans. I see nothing wrong with similarly informing the Soviet and much to gain by doing so. The object is peace, not scoring points on Russia. Detailed plans for dealing with the unprecedented psychological and economic strains on our coun-

try would need to be made beforehand. Our atomic war materials would be entrusted to the United Nations, which we would aid also in establishing a Peace Force, and in greatly expanding its programs in less developed countries.

Most of all I would, before the event, put the best brains in the country to work on the question brilliantly posed by Walter Millis: How would power be used in international affairs if war were forsworn as an instrument of policy? What would power mean? How, in a completely disarmed world, would issues be resolved that throughout history have been adjudicated by the threat of force or by war itself?⁴ President Eisenhower's dictum is that "war is unthinkable." In a reversal, many Americans today believe that peace is unthinkable. This inability to visualize a politics of peace may be much of the explanation for our unwillingness to negotiate seriously about disarmament. The difficulty is in the American imagination. It is not disarmament that so much bothers the citizenry as the inability to imagine how arguments, large and small, would thereafter be settled. It is admittedly difficult to think of national power irrevocably separated from national arms, which are the historic means of enforcing political decisions. Berlin is a prime instance. In the case of that troublesome phoenix it would probably appear to the Russians as much as to ourselves that arms and only arms are the means of deciding the city's fate.

Lest this appear to be conclusive on the need for war-making capabilities, however, we had better at the same time have a look at Cuba, and indeed at all of South America. Our arms capacity does us little if any good there. The Caribbean situation shows how little we really understand about power divorced from force. Hence the singularly inept measures we have adopted in that area. We have always preferred muscle to mind. So a prime prerequisite to unilateral disarmament would be an analysis and understanding of power in a world in which war no longer can decide anything except the extent of national suicide. It would take two to three years, perhaps more, but I gladly accept the need for "lead time" to put unilateral disarmament into effect.

Several schemes for unilateral action have been put forward of which the most thoughtful is that of Charles E. Osgood, of the University of Illinois.⁵ However, to the best of my knowledge, no one has tried to make the expert appraisal of the possibilities of unilateral disarmament that Mr. Kahn and his colleagues at the Rand Corporation have, for example, made of thermonuclear war. Suggestions to competent groups that such a study be undertaken have been turned down. The

⁴ See Walter Millis, "The Peace Game," *Saturday Review*, Sept. 24, 1960.

⁵ This is a plan for disarming by stages, in the expectation that action first taken by this country will be matched by the Soviets. Osgood's argument is that the important thing is to turn around while there is still time, that it is open to the United States to take the initiative, and that we have everything to gain by thus bringing the force of world opinion to bear. See Charles Osgood, "A Case for Graduated Unilateral Disengagement," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April, 1960, pp. 127-131.

literature on the subject is almost non-existent. The unending abundance of intellectual effort that is going into the support of the arms race will, I conjecture, appall the historians of the future, if there is a future. That the choicest minds of our generation should, being thus occupied, find no time for the fundamentals of world peace and world community is the ultimate disaster of dogma.

Possible consequences of unilateral disarmament

I wish to make it as clear as I can that I do not think unilateral disarmament would be pleasant, or painless, or easy for the country to bear. And I realize that such a move would not guarantee peace. As long as nuclear weapons exist anywhere there is the chance of catastrophe. But the possible repercussions of unilateral disarmament would surely appear worthy of serious inquiry.

What would be the consequences? In the few public discussions of this suggestion that I know about, no one has yet said that he believed the Russians would bomb this country, or any other country from which our atomic arsenal and military apparatus had been withdrawn. The most drastic consequence seen is that the Reds would take over. In this view, the nations of the world, the United States included, would sooner or later become Soviet satellites.

This is a fiercely disagreeable prospect. But by terms of the argument, I must accept the possibility that this will happen. I must stipulate each and every detail of such a take-over: Congress turned into a puppet, our governors replaced by functionaries from the Kremlin, jackbooted soldiers with Red Stars on their shoulders on street-corners, and Communism replacing democracy as the American way of life.

I do not believe for an instant that this would be the outcome; far from it, as I shall argue in a moment. But I must be willing to agree on the worst results of my policy that anyone can foresee. My opponents might, after all, be right.

My critics, however, make the old error of confusing the *possibility* of a Soviet takeover with the *probability* of such an action. Where they are also wrong is in declaring that, because they think it will happen, Communist domination is the purpose of my proposal. I think that democracy is demonstrably the most just form of government. I regard freedom and justice as the navigating stars for mankind. I differ mainly with my critics, perhaps, in having a higher respect than they for the durability of these virtues. I have confidence in their staying power, and believe they will finally prevail over any adversity. I am against the police state and for the democratic ideal; but I cannot see how our present programs are helping our ideals or hurting the police state.

Possible consequences for other countries

I do not subscribe to the notion of Russia's overwhelming competence in managing the affairs of other countries, or in any other department, for that matter. There is a limit to everything, and certainly a limit to the ability of any nation to run the world in the face of a unanimously adverse public opinion. If the Soviet were to disarm tomorrow would we know how to set about running things throughout the Red bloc, assuming for the moment the desire to do so? Would we know how to use our arms to cope with the peaceful resistance we would meet everywhere at our attempts to dominate? I think not.

This is not to say that other countries, now considered under our care, might not fall into the Soviet camp. This would appear a callous abnegation of trust until one considers the alternative, and can only be condemned finally if it can be argued that thermonuclear war would be better for the country in question than falling to the Reds. That is to say, if the alternatives are what I believe they are for this country—unilateral disarmament or the Third and last World War—it is only an extension of the argument to apply it to other countries caught in the squeeze between the two great powers—Japan or Great Britain, for example. The lively controversy in England over unilateral disarmament centers on the question whether the so-called nuclear shield is not in fact an invitation to annihilation.

There is some reason to expect, on the other hand, that the reaction from other countries to unilateral action by us would be gratitude and thanksgiving. Others can see perhaps more soberly than we can what a modern war would mean. They are not dazzled by technology's triumphs, nor do they have the heady sense of power that accompanies immense strength. *Theirs has not been the good fortune to live in a rich nation, geographically insulated from the wars of recent generations, theirs not the sensations of inherent superiority that such luck has engendered in the American people.* They are merely frightened, and hoping against hope that the two great threatening brutes will find a way to live together before the worst occurs. I think that the weight of world opinion will be thrown to that nation that acknowledges the futility of the arms race and takes the irrevocable step toward ending it, while at the same time looking to the United Nations as the chief instrument for maintaining peace and balance in the world. Much as we may console ourselves with the *bizarre proposition that the more arms the more peace,* we do not deceive others who know from experience that such preparations have never yet spelled anything but ultimate conflict.

The alternative—war

The other alternative is war. My opponents, who favor preparing for war, must be willing to go to war and must be willing to argue that when thermonuclear war comes, it will prove to be a better way of

accomplishing American aims than the method I am proposing. My opponents must stipulate the most drastic consequences of the course they advocate, as I have done.

For this alternative, however, one need not do any imagining of what would happen. Daily the facts and forecasts pile up. Both sides boast of their overkill ability. A vivid definition of this completely modern word is provided by James Real.⁶ Overkill means, he says, "pouring another bucket of gasoline on a baby that is already burning nicely." I shall not even use the most frightening data available; that is, I shall not insist on the most drastic consequences, which would be annihilation. Let me just use an estimate which says that a "moderate attack" on the U.S. would kill 60 million at once, seriously injure another 20 million, and destroy about half the homes and 35 per cent of the industry of the nation. This estimate dates back to early 1959; presumably in the intervening two years there have been enough of what are laughingly called technical improvements to raise that figure. But let it stand. Let stand beside it the 20 to 30 million Russians that we might be able to destroy in retaliation. And beside this let us eliminate from the face of the earth the whole of Great Britain, large parts of West Germany, France, Turkey, and other countries serving as advance missile bases. When the words "Give me liberty or give me death" are spoken, this is what is meant. When Patrick Henry spoke in Williamsburg in the eighteenth century war was still an acceptable means of settling disputes. It is no longer acceptable, it can no longer settle anything.

Yet this is the alternative. It seems to me an impractical, not to say immoral, alternative. It is certainly impractical to embark on a course which you know has no chance of bringing you where you want to go. I take it that American aims, in their simplest expression, are to survive, to prosper, and to carry the banner of freedom and justice into the world. Wiping out half of the population and most of the industry and culture of our nation would not appear to be a recommended way for accomplishing such tasks.

There are some who, faced with these alternatives, choose war. One of the most intelligent editors I know says, for example, that he thinks defense of Berlin would be worth 60 or 70 million American lives. When reasonable men have thus looked the odds in the eye and opted for catastrophe, the argument would appear to be ended. But the question must still be answered, by what right may we decide to destroy the centuries-old accumulation of civilization and devastate the world for who knows how many generations to come?

Justifications for present policies

At this point perhaps it would be as well to have a brief look at the justifications of our present policies. The main claim is that arms and more arms are the only way to provide national security. This is a curi-

⁶ Unpublished paper, 1960.

ous proposition. We have been spending larger and larger amounts for many years, and today we feel far less secure than when we started. Kenneth E. Boulding remarks that "unconditional national security . . . can no longer be obtained by expenditures on unilateral national defense, no matter how great. . . . It is a commodity which is no longer on sale, and which cannot be purchased at any price."⁷

The next claim is that the theory of deterrence has proved itself; a balance of terror exists, and we have had no war. This is an even more curious argument. Both sides have the capacity any day to upset the balance by creating new weapons. What will happen to the balance when China and other ambitious nations get the bomb is spoken of in the hushed tones reserved for the near-dead. Presumably the world would then be ruled by terror alone. If we are so certain that the famous balance is the only way to be secure, we ought to be negotiating systems of inspection designed to make sure that the Russians are exactly as strong as we are, and we as strong as they, and sharing our technologies and secrets to this end.

A third pillar of present policy is described in those classic phrases of contemporary Newspeak, "arm to parley" and "negotiate from strength." The American aptitude for confusing slogans with success is at its highest here. We are nearing the half-trillion dollar mark in arms costs, and we are assured that in all the world there is none so mighty. So negotiations should be running along at top speed. But negotiations are instead bogged down everywhere in the marshes of suspicion and hate. The fact is that we do not know what we would like to achieve by negotiation.

The fourth claim is related to the third. We are told that ironclad arms control and inspection agreements are what we must have, otherwise we'll just have to keep on doing what we are doing. This has a sort of plausibility at first glance. On closer examination we see that we are setting up an impossible condition. The deadlock at Geneva results from the recognition of this ultimate impossibility. There is no way, for example, of detecting arsenals of germ, gas, and poison warfare. Neither Russia nor this country appears disposed in the slightest to take the lead in the United Nations in establishing the minimum international machinery that would be needed to prevent a disarmed nation from re-arming if it decided to do so. The intense and complicated quarrels about arms control make it evident that it will be far easier to get rid of all arms than of some of them, or a few at a time. Behind all the thunder about ironclad agreements is the inescapable realization that there is no way of destroying the knowledge of how to make modern instruments of war. Accompanying this is the realization that inspection itself is, in a well-known phrase, institutionalized distrust. An inspection system, far from representing basic agreement, must always stand as a reminder of perilous disagreement.

⁷ Seminar Paper, Church Peace Union, Highland Park, Illinois, 1960.

A final observation on the mythology of arms control and inspection: The various systems of control and inspection put before the world today would be worked out primarily by the two great powers. But there are many other nations whose rivalries are intense—Israel and the Arab world, India and Pakistan, China and its neighbors, and others. As things now stand any one of these sub-systems could escape or disregard agreements on arms control—for will not we and Russia have our hands full controlling and inspecting each other? It would not do to despair utterly of finally reaching some kind of agreement on control and inspection; but whether such an arrangement merits the great hope expressed for it seems dubious in the extreme.

Necessity for self-restraint

I conclude that we are deluding ourselves when we think that we can defend the undefendable, control the uncontrollable, and inspect the uninspectable. The villain in today's great melodrama is not Russia, not the United States, but the versatility of technology. If any system of restraint and non-recourse to arms can be made to work in the face of this versatility it will have to be self-imposed. It will have to be an honor system. The inspecting and controlling and policing will have to be done by each nation as a matter of honor and good politics. Self-restraint is not difficult when we know that the penalty is death; out of such realization self-policing becomes habit. Few of us yield to the impulse to drive into the left-hand lane. We are not coerced into driving on the right. We have got the habit of survival on the highway, all except about 40,000 of us each year.

Thus one of the bases for unilateral disarmament is self-restraint as the practical means of arms control, and confidence in its habit-forming properties.

The world certainly needs a police force, and I should expect that the United Nations in the fullness of time would find a way of providing it. But the police force can only be made to work in a world where self-policing has become habitual, just as police forces in modern states depend on the respect for law and self-discipline of the majority of the populace. If the authority of domestic police was based on inspection of homes it would soon turn out to be no authority, and the result would be either a police state or anarchy.

Why is unilateral disarmament rejected?

I think there are two reasons why unilateral disarmament is not taken seriously, both closely connected with the chief tenets of the U.S. arms program mentioned earlier.

First, the U.S. can scarcely be much interested in unilateral disarmament when it does not favor complete and general disarmament. If it did, it would leap at Khrushchev's repeated offer to "work out any type of controls" the West would like to have in return for our agreement to

total disarmament in four to five years. As I read the evidence, there is little interest in Washington in any kind of disarmament, to say nothing of total disarmament. We are opposed to any brand of disarmament mainly, I repeat, because we cannot imagine how we would fare under conditions of peaceful competition.

Let us, for example, consider the imagination at work in a city like Santa Barbara. How would this city, now replete with research into present and future conflict, vote if given a choice between the present situation and total disarmament with inspection? How would Los Angeles County and its aircraft and missile industry vote? We seem to think that American influence and American arms are an equation; that we should be able to maintain our markets and prestige only so long as they are secured by inventories of bombs. We keep talking about the power of the democratic doctrine in the battle for the minds of men. But even close to home, as in Central America's tiny countries, how do we carry on our battle for the minds of men? By sending warships to the Caribbean. It is interesting though sad to reflect that we did not make even a gesture toward consulting with the Organization of American States before embarking our armada. We should not have warships to send if we disarmed unilaterally; what arguments would we use in Central America instead?

The other impediment to consideration of unilateral disarmament and, up to now, to almost any kind of disarmament, is the mass media—our newspapers and television. With scarcely a single important exception they stand entranced by present policies. There is no criticism. What little debate goes on is about whether we are spending enough, and on the right hardware. No propaganda package emitted by the Pentagon seems to be too big to be swallowed by television and disgorged on the public. Neither TV nor press points to nor tries to analyze even the more blatant absurdities—for example, the proposition that we should simultaneously arm and disarm, or the cruel description of the great bombs as defense weapons. The concepts of security and defense themselves have, in the mass media, become sacred and unexaminable texts.

Even a television commentator or editorial writer should know that there is no defense in thermonuclear war. They have, after all, the direct testimony of a President of the United States on this point. Yet any statement made by "our side," no matter how self-evidently nonsensical it may be, is likely to be received with editorial raptures. At the same time anything said by the other side is condemned as instant propaganda. So we have the unedifying spectacle of the networks first filling our eyes with puffs from the Pentagon and then solemnly denying air time to Khrushchev on the ground that they do not want Americans to be taken in by propaganda. It is the press that demands of candidates an irreproachable ferocity toward Russia. Since it has abandoned its own duty to criticize the so-called defense effort, the press looks on other critics as crazy or disloyal. I suspect that a disinterested observer would not find much to choose between in a comparison of the performance of the

controlled Russian press and the American free press in this area. It is unpleasant to think of a "party line" in the United States; is there some other way to describe it?

Related to the uncritical acceptance of the premises and programs of the cold war is the press's remorseless portraying of the Soviet as the Ultimate Evil, now and forevermore. It is instructive to speculate on what the press will do if, as strategists are already suggesting, it becomes politic for this country to ally itself with Russia against the awakening leviathan, China. Until then the story that the Soviet is planning daily to strike the West will be propagated sedulously with no evidence whatever to support it. The press will also note indignantly that Russian papers are calling us warmongers who are determined to wipe Communism from the face of the earth. In the black-and-white world of the mass media the idea of unilateral disarmament can expect to find no place.

A question of morals

Up to this point my effort has been to keep the argument practical: against the arms race as an impractical way of achieving our goals, against the mirage of foolproof inspection and arms control, and for unilateral disarmament as the most practical chance we have of obtaining peace.

But at bottom I believe the question to be not practical but moral. There are many dramatic ways of posing the moral issue. Let me take two sentences from a letter to an English newspaper. The letter says, "One of my earliest memories is a film about the Lidice massacre, in which the population of one village was wiped out. I am now asked to approve plans for the elimination of whole cities, if not whole countries, and perhaps even of the human race."

But now I must confess that I do not know what to make of the moral question. I believe in man's moral sense, in his conscience as the guide away from the evil and toward the good. My answer to the moral question is that I would not vote for nor contribute in any way to the destruction of millions of people, their homes, and their civilization no matter what the pretext or provocation. This sounds mushy and sentimental. Yet there is great self-interest, too. The guilt remaining after such an action would be excruciating for a nation to live with. The stain of Hiroshima is on all Americans today. But what of the tremendous majority of my countrymen, all equipped with consciences and moral sensibilities every bit as good as my own, whose answer to the question about pressing the button is just the opposite one, and on whose express consent our present policies are based? I like to think that my aversion is moral, but perhaps it is something else, perhaps even garden-variety cowardice.

Then there is the undoubted fact that, with rare exceptions, the learned clergy and scholars of ethics bring their great learning and prestige to the side of the arms race. Theirs is a vast literature, and it is doubtless a blind spot in me that I cannot follow their arguments,

for at the beginning of their articles I always think that they are going to come to conclusions just opposite to those they do in fact reach. Some of my best friends are priests, preachers, and scholars, and many are greatly troubled over the dilemma. I have no reason to think that they are not speaking out of the depths of their hearts and knowledge. But their moral messages are ambiguous; at any rate, they do not get through to me. Risking some injustice I may perhaps say that such messages seem to be paraphrased with succinctness on a stamp recently announced by the Post Office. The stamp is one of its "Credo" series. The inscription reads "And this be our motto, in God is our trust." The picture on the stamp is that of an exploding bomb.

In spite of the moral lessons taught by my elders and betters, I must continue to put my faith in unilateral disarmament, for *I believe peace to be better than war, survival better than suicide, civilization better than barbarism, compassion better than vengeance*. Unilateral action represents those possibilities better than any other approach that I know about. Unilateral disarmament is far from a perfect solution to history's most tangled conundrum, but there is no perfect solution.

A question of sensitivity

One more point on behalf of unilateral disarmament is a point that is only second cousin to the practical and moral arguments. Let us assume, with the authors of *Community of Fear*, the continuation of the cold war program for years ahead. I suggest that this would be the next worst thing to war itself in its effects. The cold war, as we have seen, has already pretty well reduced public discussion in this country to a dull chorus about the hated enemy and the overwhelming might and right of our side. Slogans have been so successfully substituted for the truth that efforts to peek behind them are denounced as treasonable, or as debilitating to the general "will to resist." If public discussion has already become so corrupted, think what it will be after another decade of increasing economic dependence on the arms race and increasing psychological dependence on the image of the Enemy!

Under the impact of the arms race, Science has become prime minister of the realm. Wisdom, politics, and morals have all been ousted from our highest councils by technology, whose injunction is to do whatever it is possible to do. The result is a dehumanization of society, and the brutalizing of us all. None resists when a new military horror is developed; on the contrary, applause rolls across the land. We are well content to know that we now have the ability to overkill Russia eight or nine times. How long has it been since any political leader has inquired whether it is wise to continue on our present course? The questions of our leaders are of quite a different order: should not we do whatever it is possible for us to do? If we don't, the Russians will, won't they? Wisdom has apparently been put on the shelf for the duration, perhaps forever. So far has the dehumanization of man progressed that few even

notice any more that wisdom and compassion have gone, and that reason is dispossessed by technology. The degrading of our common life is so well along that it is hard to imagine a weapon development that would occasion general public revulsion.

Conclusion

I have tried to say what I believe to be promised by the continuation of our present programs. I have sought to suggest that self-righteousness, that ugliest of sentiments, is at the heart of our folly. My deepest conviction is that war will come if we persist in wild hypocrisy, sloganeering, and enemy-building, if we persist in following military technology wherever it takes us, and especially if we persist in making any step toward peace conditional on a longer step by the other parties involved in the cold war. For the United States has no monopoly on self-righteousness and exaggerated notions of self-interest, and the other parties will themselves think of making concessions only on condition of uncedable concessions by the West.

Unilateral disarmament has been attacked as the counsel of cowardice. Yet it would take great courage and vision and confidence in American ideas to put down our arms for the sake of humanity. It takes neither courage nor vision, only taxes, to keep on our present course.

Unilateral disarmament thus seems to me dictated by practical self-interest and by a moral concern for civilization and for the future of humanity itself. These cannot be served by thermonuclear war. The Third World War will produce no victor, only the vanquished. No one has shown how thermonuclear war can assure the survival, to say nothing of the triumph, of American institutions and values. *Unilateral disarmament would be a great nation's attempt to turn away from technology toward wisdom, away from armed force toward new conceptions of politics and power.* We may only hope and work against the fatalism that ours is the last generation, condemned by its own fantastic ingenuity and its disregard of humility and reason: in Auden's words,

We are lived by powers we pretend to understand;
They arrange our lives; it is they who direct at the end
The enemy bullet, the sickness, or even our land.

It is their tomorrow hangs over the earth of the living,
And all that we wish for our friends; but existence is believing
We know for whom we mourn and who is grieving.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Pamphlets

Alternatives to the Arms Race, by W. H. Ferry. Philadelphia, American Friends Service Committee, 1960. 6 pp. 5¢. An abbreviated statement of the ideas presented in *Disarm to Parley*.

Community of Fear, by Harrison Brown and James Real. Santa Barbara, California, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1960. 40 pp. 25¢. Analyzes the nature of the arms race and the possible consequences of its perpetuation.

Sanity and Survival, by Jerome Frank. San Francisco, Acts for Peace, 1960. 16 pp. 20¢. A well-known psychiatrist suggests a nonviolent alternative to war.

Speak Truth to Power, A Quaker Study of International Conflict. Philadelphia, American Friends Service Committee, 1955. 72 pp. 25¢. Presents an alternative to violence in settling international problems.

Books

The Arms Race, by Philip Noel-Baker. London, Atlantic Book Publishing Co., 1958. 579 pp. \$4.80. A Nobel Peace Prize winner appraises the world situation and the prospects for securing a disarmament agreement.

Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare, by Bertrand Russell. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1959. 92 pp. \$2.50. The eminent philosopher, mathematician, and Nobel Prize winner for literature, speaks out boldly on war and peace.

Daedalus, Special Issue on Arms Control. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 89, No. 4, Fall, 1960. \$2.00. Articles by Herman Kahn, Henry Kissinger, Kenneth Boulding, Erich Fromm, and others.

Defense in the Nuclear Age, by Commander Sir Stephen King-Hall. Nyack, N. Y., Fellowship Publications, 1959. 234 pp. \$2.75. An argument for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-Reduction, A Key to Initiative in Foreign Policy, by Charles Osgood. Urbana, Ill., University of Illinois, Institute of Communications Research, 1960. 82 pp. Mimeographed. Suggests "a strategy that would use mutual capacity for nuclear annihilation to support actions designed ultimately to eliminate this very capacity itself."

Nuclear Weapons, Missiles, and Future War: Problem for the Sixties. Comp. and ed. by Charles McClelland. San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Co., 1960. 235 pp. \$1.75. Articles by Bertrand Russell, Joseph Alsop, Philip Noel-Baker, Richard Nixon, and others.

Who Wants Disarmament?, by Richard Barnet. Boston, Beacon Press, 1960. 141 pp. \$3.50. Gives concise account of the conferences between U. S. and U. S. S. R. since 1946, examines America's position on disarmament, and studies the problem of arms control.

Published as an educational service
by
Peace Education Program
American Friends Service Committee
160 North 15th Street
Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania

Other AFSC offices:

AUSTIN 3, TEXAS
705 N. Lamar Blvd.

CAMBRIDGE 38, MASS.
130 Brattle St.
P. O. Box 247

CHICAGO 7, ILLINOIS
300 W. Congress Pkwy.

DAYTON 6, OHIO
915 Salem Ave.

DES MOINES 12, IOWA
4211 Grand Ave.

HIGH POINT, N. C.
1818 S. Main St.
P. O. Box 1307

NEW YORK 3, N. Y.
237 Third Ave.

PASADENA 20, CALIFORNIA
825 E. Union St.
P. O. Box 991

PHILADELPHIA 2, PA.
1500 Race St.

PORTLAND 15, OREGON
4312 S. E. Stark St.

SAN FRANCISCO 21, CALIFORNIA
2160 Lake St.

SEATTLE 5, WASHINGTON
3959 15th Ave., N. E.

The American Friends Service Committee attempts to relieve human suffering and to seek for nonviolent solutions to conflicts — personal, national, and international. Based on the religious principles of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, the AFSC is supported and staffed by people of many faiths. In addition to its Peace Education Program, the AFSC works in the United States and about 20 other countries on community relations, seminars and institutes for adults and young people, relief and rehabilitation, and social and technical assistance. Its work is carried on without regard to race, creed, or politics. It is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.