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1-1-1960

Danger has alternatives

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Recommended Citation

Ferry, Wilber H., "Danger has alternatives" (1960). *PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements*. 354.

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INCLUDES

PROPOSAL FOR
U.S. UNILATERAL
DISARMAMENT

BY W.H. FERRY

P. 9

has

alternatives

15¢

A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

Somewhere some poor bloke looked at a radar screen and thought he saw something and knew that if he hesitated a thousandth of a second his own country would be wiped off the face of the earth. So he pushed a button and the world went crazy. . . . This is the explanation given in the film *On the Beach* for the start of the Third World War. A piece of fiction? It could be; but many scientists and military men have said that the fear of SURPRISE ATTACK has become so strong in the minds of some that a flock of geese flying in front of a radar screen would be enough to set the retaliatory mechanism in motion. The fear of surprise attack is a real danger, both in the United States and in the Soviet Union, as David Singer points out in the article from *The Nation* reprinted below. It is time for us all to face this danger, to recognize, and to do something about it.

One man's suggestion for something to do about the whole problem of armaments, of which surprise attack is only a part, is contained in "Alternatives to the Arms Race," reprinted on page 9 of this pamphlet.

SURPRISE ATTACK

by J. David Singer

DURING THE current wave of euphoria which seems to have gripped the world in the wake of the Khrushchev and Eisenhower "journeys to peace," it may be in poor taste to speak publicly of surprise nuclear attack, but it may also be that it is just such a period as this which most requires a rather brutal analysis of Soviet-American relations. Even before the journeys — symbolic expressions of the peace-urge — were made, many were contending that military technology had in a sense made itself obsolete, and that the destructive power of the nuclear mis-

sile was so great as almost to guarantee that it would never be used. Man's faith in this "balance of terror" is touching, but is also indicative of the basic human tendency to deny the existence of dangers too great to be comprehended and too complex to be analyzed. One is reminded of superstitious villagers living on the slopes of a volcano or in the possible path of an avalanche.

On the basis of a current study of Soviet and Western military strategy, this writer believes that the danger of surprise nuclear attack — in either direction — is as great, if not great-

er, now and for the next several years than it has been at any time since the cold war began. Let me try to summarize the evidence.

FIRST of all, the two military coalitions are still very much in a state of mutual hostility, and while there is increasing evidence that each desires to restrict the resultant conflict and competition to the non-military realm, little has happened to hasten the elimination of violence. More precisely, as long as each side retains its capacity for military attack, the other must assume that such capacity might be utilized. As I suggested in an earlier article ("New Hope for Disarmament," *The Nation*, Oct. 10, 1959), "each elite will inevitably equate the other's military *capability* with his military *intentions*." Since most Americans find it almost impossible to believe that the Soviet could honestly fear an attack initiated by ourselves, let us first examine the situation as it looks to the Kremlin.

At the outset, there is the orthodox Communist ideology which has consistently postulated that the "capitalist camp" is inexorably compelled to seek the destruction of the "Socialist camp." Sometimes it is argued that the attack will come when the "imperialists" are powerful enough to carry it out successfully and with little fear of retaliation. Other times the argument is that it will come when the West sees that "Socialist victory" is almost inevitable, and strikes out in a last, desperate effort to stave off defeat.

From the Soviet viewpoint, this classic Leninist-Stalinist doctrine is supported by some significant historical experiences. The expeditionary forces — with American contin-

gents — which were landed in Russia following the First World War have been continually interpreted—rightly or wrongly—by Soviet leaders as abortive attempts to overthrow the Bolshevik regime by violent intervention. Similarly, the jockeying of England, France and the United States during the late 1930s was interpreted by the Russians, then as now, as an effort to drive the Nazis and the Soviets into a war of such mutual destructiveness that the Western powers could then step in at the end and divide up the spoils, thus obliterating Bolshevism at little loss to themselves. (That this was not an altogether unfounded notion may be established by reference to Western actions and communications of the period.) Even the delay in opening the second front during World War II has been viewed by the Soviet as further evidence of ill will on the part of their wartime allies.

TURNING to the present, there is an even stronger basis for the Kremlin's fear of surprise attack. Despite our protestations, they see the Western air bases on their periphery not as defensive or even retaliatory sites, but as springboards for aggression. For example, the IRBM sites in England, Italy and Turkey have been and are being built above ground, with little attention paid to their protection. And while our purpose in building them in this fashion was primarily to achieve speed and economy, the Soviet strategist interprets the decision differently. If, he reasons, the West established the sites only for retaliatory purposes, they would have been more adequately protected; since they were not, it must follow that they are designed for launching a surprise,

strike-first blow, after which what happens to them becomes unimportant. In sum, if the function of these launching sites is indeed merely to retaliate, would they have been left so vulnerable as to endanger their retaliatory capability?

Furthermore, the entire military posture of NATO is such as to encourage the Kremlin in its suspicions of Western intentions. All of the normal accouterments of a purely defensive effort have been under-supported in Europe and elsewhere; no real effort has been made to match the Warsaw nations in ground troops or conventional weapons. Conversely, heaviest emphasis has been upon strategic air power which, the West argues, is for purely retaliatory purposes. But since the same capability can be used for both strike-first and strike-back missions, the Soviet must operate from the less naive interpretation.

Thus, the general outlines of the Western military posture are such as to engender a high degree of fear in Soviet ranks, particularly when coupled with the not infrequent threats uttered by high-ranking U.S. political and military officers.

There is a tendency in the West to discount the fears of attack articulated by the Kremlin as propaganda designed to defame the United States and its allies. But two recent scholarly studies of Soviet military strategy, despite sharp disagreements on other points, come to the same conclusion on this one. In *War and the Soviet Union*, Herbert Dinerstein notes that when Tank Marshal Rotmistrov argues (in *Military Thought*, February, 1955) that surprise attack plays "an important part in the strategy of the United States and Great Britain," the So-

viet Marshal is reflecting the "official Soviet appraisal." And in *Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age*, Raymond Garthoff likewise concludes that "the dominant Soviet image of American military strategy is a massive, surprise air blow with weapons of mass destruction."

All in all, there seem to be several excellent reasons for Soviet strategists to assume the probability of a Western-initiated surprise attack.

TURNING the coin over, do we find the same sort of fear on the Western side? And if so, is the fear equally justified? Without belaboring the arguments which are all too familiar to Americans, the answers must likewise be in the affirmative. Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia since World War II all lead to an image of aggressiveness. In addition, there are the repeated Soviet references to inevitable "showdown" and ultimate "Socialist victory," coupled with similar assertions in the still unrepudiated writings of Lenin and Stalin. There is also the increasing military power and technical prowess exhibited by the USSR in recent years. The Soviet now has, or soon will have, enough ICBMs to carry out a successful massive attack upon Western Europe and North America. Their submarine fleet is now estimated to be about 500-600 strong, with perhaps a hundred of them able to launch an IRBM from the relative safety of the ocean's depths.

Thus, it would seem that there is at least as much justification for fear of massive surprise attack on the part of Western strategists as among their opposite numbers in the USSR. And we have not yet dealt with some of the more subtle forces

that make even greater the legitimacy of this reciprocal fear.

ONE SUCH force today is that of military technology and its dramatic impact upon the role of time in strategy. This takes two forms, each equally ominous. The first has to do with the speed with which one side can deliver a stunning blow upon the other. In the pre-World War I days, a surprise attack of any significant magnitude was almost impossible; reserves had to be mobilized and rail transportation converted to military purposes. Even in the pre-World War II era, destructiveness could arrive no sooner than the 200 or so miles per hour limit imposed by the aircraft of the day, and — assuming a state of near alert — there was always the ability to counter any attack with defensive craft and AA fire. But in the waning days of that war, the German V-2 ballistic missile gave us the forewarning of things to come. Here a weapon of considerable magnitude could be delivered from fifty miles away in a matter of minutes. More to the point, it could not be detected until on its final, downward trajectory, seconds before it landed on its target; and there was almost no way of intercepting it. Had the Nazis been able to produce the V-2 six months sooner, and to increase its range earlier, the Axis might well have come out victorious.

Today, each side has land- and sea-based IRBMs with ranges up to 1,800 miles, capable of delivering megaton nuclear warheads at speeds up to Mach 15 (fifteen times the speed of sound), and the USSR already is believed to possess a “significant” number of operational ICBMs, with about a hundred launching

sites, and ranges up to 6,200 miles. The warning time is even less than that for the V-2, interception is currently impossible, and destructive power staggering. Either side could destroy most of the other’s industrial and population centers, as well as its retaliatory military bases, with less than twenty minutes’ warning time and with little chance of effective defense. The strategic impact of such a surprise attack is so great that it could conceivably lead to military victory in less than twenty-four hours.

The mutual awareness of such a possibility makes the situation more, rather than less, dangerous. Realizing the implications of a successful surprise attack upon itself, each side assumes that the other must be considering it. Thus begins the vicious psychological cycle which leads in turn to consideration of both preventive and pre-emptive attacks. If the planners on one side become convinced that the other is about to strike first, they have little choice but to try beating the adversary to the punch. Suppose that Western intelligence agencies begin to piece together enough evidence to persuade them (correctly or not) that the Soviet is planning such a strike in late October, as soon as the harvest is in. The natural response is to strike first. Suspecting that this is the Western decision, the Soviets (even if they had not originally intended a first strike) must now decide, in turn, to forestall this tragedy by getting in the first strike themselves. And so it goes, until one side or the other precipitates nuclear World War III through a “preventive” attack.

Even more likely, however, is the stumbling into war by what is called

a "pre-emptive" strike. Here one side or the other picks up enough radar information (via Dewline or backscatter technique) to convince them that an attack has just been launched. Again, this information may or may not be accurate, but the risks of waiting are so great that a "counterattack" must be launched instantaneously. By error or miscalculation, this "retaliatory" blow may turn out to be, instead, a strike-first rather than a strike-back blow.

This highly unstable situation is made even more perilous by the second form which the impact of technology upon time may take. Here reference is to the fear of major technological "breakthrough."

Suppose, for a realistic example, that Western strategists become convinced that the Soviet is on the verge of producing a successful anti-missile device. With such a breakthrough, the Kremlin could be assured of delivering a devastating blow to the United States or Europe while suffering far less damage from a retaliatory blow. This might well tempt Khrushchev to exploit his enormously significant, if temporary, advantage. And even if it did not have this effect, United States or NATO strategists might well *assume* that it did. Thus the West might decide to strike first.

These are not the ungrounded fears of the paranoid, but rather the kind of calculations which do and should take place daily in military and political circles on both sides. Not that either side *wants* nuclear war. To the contrary, each wants desperately to avoid it, but the exigencies of the situation and the way in which the strategists have responded to these exigencies suggest that current and recent Soviet-

Western behavior can only make more likely this nuclear holocaust.

AWARE of the dead-end which the constant and reciprocal increase of retaliatory fire power may lead to, those who make and study national strategies have recently begun to explore some new alternatives. This exploration is characterized by a degree of intellectual sophistication which would jar those who still believe in the "military mind" stereotype. The strategist of today, in the West or in the Soviet bloc, reads more, thinks more and writes more regarding the complexities of his profession; and while few can be said to have developed the requisite broad view of international politics, most have become far more rigorous and systematic in their analyses. It may be small comfort for those of us outside the decision-making ranks, but this trend does at least promise greater accuracy in predicting the other side's response.

Having said this, we move on to some of the less obvious and less traditional techniques which are now under consideration.

One approach, currently much in vogue, is to attempt to make one's retaliatory capability not only more powerful, but *less vulnerable*. One way of doing this is to move missile-launching sites underground, with greater protection via reinforced concrete, etc. Such sites could then be capable of launching a devastating counter-blow even *after* a surprise attack, unless they received direct hits. But as guidance systems improve (and they are being improved rapidly) direct hits can be anticipated with increasing certainty, and it will merely be a matter of putting a powerful enough warhead on the missile to penetrate the pro-

tection given the retaliatory site. Furthermore, the greater the destructiveness of the warhead, the less need there is for accuracy: a near miss by a five-megaton warhead is just as effective as a direct hit with one megaton. So the underground site may merely encourage the building of bigger warheads. And, of course, installation costs and building time are much greater for protected or underground sites.

Another way of decreasing the vulnerability of one's retaliatory power is to shift from fixed to mobile missile sites; trailer trucks, railroad cars, naval vessels and submarines all come under this category (with the last-named getting most of the attention). Again, the idea is that by making retaliatory sites more difficult to *detect*, the potential aggressor will be deterred by the knowledge that no matter how sweeping and saturating his first strike is, most of the retaliatory force will survive to deliver a speedy reprisal. Here the prospects are somewhat brighter, but they should not be exaggerated. Not only do the same arguments regarding fixed "hard" sites obtain, in that the larger weapon can destroy without a direct hit, but other considerations also enter.

IT IS naive to think that, as some have argued, the submarine is "virtually undetectable." Underwater detection techniques are improving quite rapidly, and it is probably only a matter of time before the seas will be just as susceptible to electronic monitoring as are the skies today. And the irony is that the same NATO people who are convinced that the USSR cannot hope to operate effectively underseas against the Western ASW (anti-submarine war-

fare) system also believe that U.S. submarines can maneuver and fire with near impunity.

Finally, the number of missile-launching submarines necessary to present an effective deterrent retaliatory force is well into the hundreds, considerably beyond what either side has or is willing to build in the next few years. And since only a nuclear-powered submarine can stay underwater for any long period of time — and thus avoid rapid detection — both sides would have to multiply many times over the handful of *Polaris* or *Golem*-equipped vessels now in operation.

Thus, a mobile and evasive retaliatory force may have some likelihood of deterring a surprise attack, but it cannot be viewed as even approaching a solution of the problem.

Still another approach to surprise attack, and one gaining increasing prominence, is in the area of passive, or civil, defense. If, it is contended, each side can protect most of its population from destruction by combining an effective early-warning system with a large number of fallout shelters, the other will be able to do less damage and thus be less inclined to strike first. Here is one of the more fatuous lines of reasoning to emerge from the distorted world of the cold war. For clearly, as long as no serious civil-defense program exists on either side (and this is certainly the case today), there is that much less inclination on each side to believe that the other is planning a nuclear strike. Conversely, such a program, once launched, might well persuade the other that the motivation is to protect industrial and military workers from retaliation *after* striking the first blow. In a sense, unprotected

civilians are a highly persuasive indication of peaceful intent, and each side may well regard the other's exposed population as a hostage to peace. Furthermore, almost any shelter system can be partially compensated for by stepping up the size and radioactivity of the warheads employed. There may be a good case for civil defense, but it has yet to be made, and as a deterrent to surprise attack it makes no sense at all.

LET US turn now from the threat-of-reprisal as a deterrent to surprise attack to some less known, but perhaps more promising, techniques. If, as has been suggested, the real danger lies not in a cold-blooded decision to instigate World War III by unprovoked surprise nuclear attack, but in its launching by accident and miscalculation, our efforts should be in the direction of reducing the chance of miscalculation. This in turn requires that each side have *more* information about the other's intentions and behavior, rather than less. The primary objective here is to have each side as certain as possible that the other is not planning a surprise strike, and that any "evidence" to the contrary be quickly and credibly rejected. The same holds true of information tending to persuade one side that the other has already *launched*, or *not* launched, an attack.

Now it is clear at the outset that no amount of verbal protestation by one side or the other will be sufficient for these purposes. The fear and suspicion sown by fifteen years of cold war is too deep. A more reliable and authentic assurance is required, one which can be relied upon to inform not only when at-

tack or plans for attack *are* under way, but when they are *not* under way. That is, any reliable monitoring system must be equally able to supply negative as well as positive *believable* information.

In the present transition period from aircraft to missile delivery, how can these requirements be met? To be more precise, how can each side *know* that those radar blips are birds and not planes, commercial and not military craft, meteors and not missiles? How can each know that those SAC flights are for training and not attack, or that an atomic explosion was a civilian accident and not a military strike? Moreover, not only must both countries know the truth, but there must be assurance that each knows that the other knows it. Otherwise country A, fearing that country B will "retaliate" in ignorance, may itself be tempted to strike first, after all. And what about the so-called "catalytic strike" launched upon one or both sides by a third party which calculates a gain for itself out of a Soviet-Western war? As long as there is no agreement on a test ban, and nuclear weapons threaten to proliferate, this problem will become increasingly pressing.

IT WOULD appear that a combination of techniques is essential if the necessary information is to be communicated rapidly and reliably. First, there must be some form of aerial inspection as originally outlined in the Eisenhower "open skies" proposal. Inspection aircraft must be flown on a round-the-clock basis, at a variety of altitudes, over Western, Soviet and in-between territory. Equipped with closed-loop TV, infrared cameras, radar, stabilized bi-

noculars and long-distance radio-transmission equipment, these craft could provide much of the needed negative information promptly, accurately and continuously. As the national satellite programs (such as Project Samos) develop, satellites could gradually replace the manned aircraft. In addition, the "back-scatter" technique revealed by Project Tepee could be employed. This is a technique for detecting a flying missile by observing the ionization of the air in its wake. There is also under development a promising new "over-the-horizon" radar system known as Madres.

Parenthetically, even if no agreement for avoiding surprise attacks is negotiated in the near future, the West would be wise — if unorthodox — to share its missile-monitoring information with the Warsaw Pact states. This would be one more way of giving them a greater warning time, hence a longer response time, and thus reduce any temptation for them to launch a totally unnecessary pre-emptive strike. Likewise, the side which first perfects a solid-fuel missile propellant ought to make it available to the other. Since the count-down time for solid-fueled missiles is less than for the liquid-fueled, they can be held back for a longer period, giving more time to determine whether the opponent has in fact mounted an attack.

Beyond all this, it would probably be essential to station observers on the ground at some fraction of each side's launching sites, and in their aircraft and submarines. And it may well be that for each side to reveal to the other the positions of its of-

ensive-retaliatory weapons (there is little difference), would actually increase rather than decrease its security: its launching sites would then become hostages to its own good faith.

Regardless of where the observers are posted, they must be provided with an independent and reliable communication network connecting all observation teams with key strategic command posts on each side. It is estimated that at least a thousand observers would be needed; preferably they should be recruited from U.N. personnel of neutral nationality, plus some from each of the two blocs involved.

The problems are great and the considerable innovations, political and technological, necessary for solutions may not be forthcoming. And even the institution of a reasonably reliable scheme against surprise attack would not provide the final answer to the present terrifying armaments race. There is far more to it than this. But any system which can break through the current stalemate, help stabilize the balance of terror, and perhaps set the precedent for a subsequent attack on weapons-testing, production and deployment, can only be welcomed. And as important as the atom-testing ban and political settlement may be, the prevention of surprise attack is by far the most urgent issue. It should be given top priority, both in the political councils and research laboratories of the world. Time is *not* on the side of mankind.

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ALTERNATIVES TO THE ARMS RACE — DRASTIC BUT THINKABLE

by
W. H. Ferry

The following letter was written to the *Santa Barbara News-Press* by W. H. Ferry, Vice-President of the Fund for the Republic. It appeared in the January 13, 1960 issue of the *News-Press* and is reprinted here with permission of the editor.

Editor, News-Press: When one says that war is unthinkable, it must be taken as a literal statement, i.e., nuclear war cannot be thought about. We have no vocabulary, no recourse to imagination sufficient to deal in logical terms with the prospect of 60 or 70 million American corpses, to say nothing about the carnage accompanying a nuclear attack, and to say nothing of the effects of radiation lingering over generations.

Perhaps this is one reason why all current assessments of the impasse between Russia and the United States end up in the same sterile and hopeless formula: Arms and yet more arms.

In commenting on the reports of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Stanford and Johns Hopkins research groups your editorial (Jan. 8) comes to the same fruitless conclusion, that since we cannot think of anything else to do, let us continue with all speed to make bombs, gas, germs, rockets, missiles and submarines.

Suppose we were to go in the other direction? Suppose we were to junk all of our weapons of whatever kind? Suppose we were to tell the world that we are doing so because we are convinced that it is the only practical way out of the fateful dilemma in which all are caught?

The best possible result of such a decision is that it would give us the unquestioned moral leadership of an apprehensive world, that Russia would follow our example because of its declared eagerness to compete and surpass on grounds other than armed might, and that all could turn to the solution of humanity's pressing problems.

The worst possible result is that Russia would instantly take advantage of our defenselessness to bomb the U.S. into radioactive rubble. In this case we would not be worse off than if we had engaged in a two-way war. All that would be lacking would be a regret among

survivors that we had not had vengeance on our attackers. But this result seems wholly unlikely. It may better be supposed that Russia does not desire the extinction of the U.S. but its submission as a nation and great production center to Communism.

Another and more possible result then is that this country would be taken over by the Reds, commissars replacing our managers and mayors, legislators and union officials, broadcasters and publishers. (We may also presume similar action in those countries of Western Europe and elsewhere for which our arms are said to provide a shield.) This is a desperate and repellent vision; and while I do not believe that this would be the outcome, it is necessary to accept it as a possibility if one is willing to argue that unilateral disarmament is the only practical policy for this country to adopt. Red domination of this and other free nations is at least "thinkable." We can at least imagine it in all its hateful and dismal aspects, while we find the consequences of a nuclear, germ, and gas war unthinkable and unimaginable. We would survive as a nation with the greatest of traditions and with the unquenchable intention of demonstrating by argument and peaceable resistance the power of freedom and justice as man's best and only proper organizing principles.

It might well take years or decades to regenerate freedom and justice. But we would have the chance to do so, a chance that by common agreement would not be vouchsafed us in the case of an all-out war which no nation could win. Should war come the task would not be resisting or throwing off the hand of an oppressor by reasonable means; it would be the task of rebuilding civilization from barbarism and chaos.

It is said that we are now following the only feasible road in seeking disarmament with iron-clad agreements on inspection. This is not the "middle road" it is claimed to be, for the preparations for war continue without let-up. This argument contains, moreover, fatal fallacies. Inspection cannot be devised that will give absolute assurance against manufacture or stockpiling of lethal weapons. Highly productive countries like the U.S. and Russia will always be able to maintain facilities for making such arms, convertible almost overnight from peacetime industry. An inspection system is institutionalized distrust, and as fragile as any understanding so based.

The alternatives are drastic and repugnant in the highest degree. But the important point is that there is an alternative to our present policy.

FOR FURTHER READING

1. *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.
2. *The Broken Shield*, A Look at the Anti-Missile Missile and America's Military Defense. Reprinted by American Friends Service Committee, 1958. 24 pp. 10¢. Five articles by Don Schwartz which appeared first in the *Chicago Sun-Times*.
3. *An Idea Whose Time Has Come?* Reprinted by American Friends Service Committee, 1959. 7 pp. 5¢. Reprints from Canadian and American newspapers and magazines point out that the idea of voluntary surrender of power, once proclaimed only by a few prophets, has become politically relevant.
4. *The Morals of Extermination*, by Lewis Mumford. Reprinted from *The Atlantic*, October, 1959, by American Friends Service Committee. 16 pp. 10¢. ". . . most Americans do not realize that (a moral breakdown) has taken place or, worse, that it makes any difference." Mumford calls for a new approach to foreign policy.
5. *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.
6. "Surprise Attack and Disarmament," by Thomas C. Schelling. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, December, 1959, pp. 413-418. Identifies the surprise attack problem with the vulnerability of retaliatory forces.

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