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## NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an unparalleled threat has loomed over mankind—the atom bomb. The revolting escapades of the fundamentalist terrorists can neither obscure nor avert this threat. Of course, there are, apparently, worse threats, such as hidden galaxies that, according to astrophysicists, are moving from the outer reaches of the cosmos towards the solar systems of the Milky Way. But these are the result of cosmic forces, for which the human race cannot be held to account.

The atom bomb is an entirely different matter. The acquisition of a human war-making power that can wipe out earthly civilization in one stroke is a circumstance most extraordinary. On an historical scale, the harnessing of nuclear power—whether for peaceful or military purposes—is, perhaps, the most fateful scientific and technical achievement of the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps Alexander Blok's tragic outlook on the world was not so accidental:

The twentieth century...Still more homeless  
The gloom of life, still more terrifying;  
Still more black and more enormous  
Falls the shadow of Lucifer's wing.<sup>1</sup>

Up to this point, it had been understood that it was the Creator—the Supreme Being—who was unquestionably responsible for the continuation of life of the human race. In the years before the war, the religious philosopher Sergei Bulgakov wrote:

"Although a person has the opportunity to hasten his own demise through suicide, he does not have the ability to put off its inexorable approach; as for the death of the world, he knows neither the day nor the hour, for it is completely according to the will of the almighty Heavenly Father."<sup>2</sup>

Having created and amassed murderously destructive weapons such as the atomic bomb, mankind arrogated unto himself divine prerogatives, for the destruction of human civilization as a result of nuclear war would be tantamount to Bulgakov's "death of the world"—since we have no reliable knowledge about the existence of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. The question could be raised: Is a man who is sinful by nature, capable of rationally handling something that has superhuman potential?

### TWO PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES

During the years that have passed since the invention of nuclear weapons, the public's attitude towards them has been somewhat transformed. At first, many people regarded the nuclear bomb as something exotically menacing, yet at the same time too extravagant to be used in an actual war—the cruel and, to a great degree, politically motivated American bombings of two Japanese cities notwithstanding. Afterwards, people became accustomed to the



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nuclear bomb as an unavoidable element of the Cold War between the socialist bloc and the capitalist camp.

Against this background, two contrasting approaches to the nuclear problem emerged: that of the state-minded activists and that of the pacifists. On both sides of the political and ideological front, state-minded activists supported and promoted the nuclear arms race in the interest of national defense. The pacifists, on the other hand, criticized the hydrogen bomb as a weapon of genocide and called for a ban on the use of nuclear weapons, an end to testing them, and, ultimately, nuclear disarmament.

Gradually, as high-ranking politicians became more convinced of the dangers posed by the uncontrolled accumulation of nuclear weapons, elements of the pacifist ideology penetrated the thinking of the state-minded activists as well. This motivated the main rivals in the “bipolar” standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States to begin negotiations aimed at limiting and reducing their nuclear arsenals. The concept of nuclear non-proliferation was thus born, strengthened through an international treaty, and became an important instrument for promoting global stability.

Is the atom bomb something good or something evil? Should we celebrate its invention or should we mourn? Is it possible to form an unequivocal judgment on this matter?

Evidently, this issue cannot be resolved simply by voting. The result of such a referendum, say, among the residents of Hiroshima or Nagasaki would be predictable: it would be negative. This is confirmed by the ceremonies held every year in these cities to commemorate the victims of the dropping of the atomic bombs. Nuclear scientists, however, might see it differently, since they are not prepared to be indiscriminately included among those who visit evil upon human beings.

Not that long ago, Nikolai, the metropolitan of Nizhny Novgorod, found an unexpected facet of the whole nuclear issue when he made an observation about the results of the work done by researchers at the Arzamas-16 nuclear laboratory: “Perhaps it was the prayers of Father Seraphim that helped create the weapons that stood guard over Russia and for the well-being of which Saint Seraphim prayed by the stone in the Sarov Forest.”<sup>3</sup>

There is much that is seductive in this argument. In a certain sense it follows the tendency to bolster the authority of the Orthodox Church in Russia. All the same, the inclusion of this postscript referencing a popular saint in the state programs to develop and improve the Soviet Union’s nuclear weapons unavoidably raises questions. Something in the depths of one’s soul resists lending the aura of sainthood to the atomic bomb, the use of which would usher in Armageddon.

Atomic weapons gave rise to a host of problems in global politics. The moral and ethical contemplation of the phenomenon of the atomic bomb does not allow for simplification. Here, religiously partisan inflexibility interferes with objectivity.

American physicists, who worked on developing the atomic bomb at great personal sacrifice, at first focused on countering the nuclear ambitions of Hitler’s Germany, which, fortunately, were never realized. Afterwards, the founding fathers of the United States’ nuclear capability provided for the “deterrence” of Stalin’s communism. In the Soviet Union, this American activity was perceived in a different light—as a challenge and direct threat to its security; hence, the corresponding motivation of Soviet scientists and weapons designers working at the secret Arzamas-16. Under conditions of extreme political confrontation, the boundary between “good” and “evil,” where nuclear weapons were concerned, was interpreted in the United States and the Soviet Union from opposing positions. Simply put, a high moral and ethical purpose was accorded only to the nuclear weapons of one’s own nation, while the moral and ethical symbolism served the interests of political propaganda.

Tense discussions about precisely which nuclear weapons—Soviet or American—were a negative influence on the global balance of power were conducted even at the diplomatic level. The following story comes to mind:

When U.S.-Soviet negotiations on nuclear and space-based weapons were renewed during the first half of 1985, the U.S. side tried to show that Soviet heavy ICBMs (a total of 3,000 nuclear warheads) represented a destabilizing element in the nuclear standoff and, conse-

quently, should be the first to be reduced. To counter this approach, the Soviet side called for a reduction that would take into consideration the long-established structures of the strategic nuclear forces (SNF) of the Soviet Union and the United States and would not make it necessary to modify the weapons, given the immense additional expense that this would unavoidably entail. Claims regarding the supposedly destabilizing characteristics of the Soviet SNF were declined by the Soviet delegation.

Echoes of the negotiations' rhetoric reached journalists. A cartoon appeared in the U.S. newspaper *International Herald Tribune* depicting a U.S. MX ICBM and a Soviet SS-18 heavy ICBM as two combatants squaring off. On the casing of the U.S. missile, along with its official designation, *Peacekeeper*, the cartoonist added an inscription saying that it was a noble, peaceful, and even god-fearing weapon. In contrast, the Soviet missile was characterized with particularly negative epithets: evil, aggressive, and inhuman. It's not without reason that its NATO classification is *Satan*.



A cartoon of the times, depicting "good" U.S. "Star Wars" fighters combating the Soviet "evil empire."

During an official UN event, when speaking with his American colleague Ambassador James Goodby, the author showed him a clipping of this cartoon to support his argument. I wanted to re-emphasize the point that one should not use national origin to discriminate between nuclear weapons systems that are comparable from the standpoint of their influence on the strategic situation. The U.S. representative, it seemed to me, recognized a subtle sense of humor in the cartoonist. The discussion surrounding the heavy ICBMs, however, would not subside for many years to come.

### "EVIL IS GOOD"

The nuclear bomb did not fall from the sky onto the head of a stunned human race—it was the product of a long race to acquire a superweapon. Politics—and the persistent tendency to resolve emerging international problems with the threat or actual use of force—encourages military and technological rivalry.

Violence and war have been a part of human society since prehistoric times. There was a time when it was fashionable to become caught up with calculating the relative periods of war and their absence in world history. It turns out that peace makes up a very small percentage of the total. In the final analysis, peace and war evidently have always existed side-by-side on planet Earth.

In one of his films, the brilliant filmmaker Stanley Kubrik masterfully depicts the evolution of the tools of armed conflict. Two groups of hairy prehistoric *homo sapiens* are making their way towards one another through a dense thicket of trees. In the clearing a fight between them breaks out over living space. The cavemen gleefully beat each other senseless or to death with whatever comes to hand. Only two combatants remain alive. One of them grabs a nearby white



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shinbone—the leftovers of some previous battle—and inflicts the final blow. The victor falls on his back and, in a gesture of triumph, throws his weapon into the sky. Suddenly the bone, circling higher and higher like a bird into the blue sky, turns into a spaceship floating in orbit, as if it were something from "Star Wars."

Today, a number of countries possess weapons of unprecedented power. Mankind has acquired the ability to commit an act of self-annihilation. The worst, however, has not come to pass. Why so?

Proponents of an increase in nuclear might have an unequivocal answer: it is because the countries participating in the military standoff mutually deter one another via intimidation. The fear of the ultimate retaliation is what keeps both sides from resorting to nuclear aggression.

The primary moral deficiency of nuclear weapons—their excessive and indiscriminate destructive force—instills a terror that stupefies even the most cocksure of strategists. It turns out that the moral deficiency of nuclear weapons is not at all a vice, but rather a virtue, inasmuch as it prevents war from erupting. An evil beginning ends up turning into good.

The moral and ethical duality of the atomic bomb was noted at the dawn of the nuclear age by Reinhold Niebuhr, a prominent American theologian and political thinker:

"...the necessity of using the threat of atomic destruction as an instrument for the preservation of peace is a tragic element of our contemporary situation. Tragedy elicits admiration as well as pity because it combines nobility with guilt."<sup>4</sup>

Could the nuclear bomb be considered an eloquent expression of the contradictory and tragic development of human civilization as a whole?

#### **FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STATE-MINDED ACTIVISTS**

The Cold War, which broke out after the defeat of the Axis powers and which essentially represented a systemic, decades-long global crisis in international relations as a whole, was distinguished by an extraordinary increase in tensions in the global arena. This gave rise to acute crises and, occasionally, major wars on the Korean Peninsula, in Indochina, in the Middle East, over Berlin and Cuba, and so forth. The Cold War had numerous components. Its engine was, first and foremost, the political and ideological confrontation between socialism and capitalism.

In the Soviet Union, politicians were displeased by Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech that he gave in March 1946 in Fulton, Missouri, with the American president in attendance. It was not entirely clear from the speech of the British prime minister, who, specifically, had lowered the curtain, but, from that moment on, cartoons depicting Churchill in the newspaper *Pravda* were of an exclusively hostile nature. The capitalist west was proclaimed to have "curtained off" the Soviet Union in an attempt to undermine the socialist order. The response of the Soviet leadership came during the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (1952), at which Stalin declared that the West had thrown overboard the banner of bourgeois-democratic liberties. This was a severe condemnation.

The second, no less significant, component of the Cold War was the tense U.S.-Soviet competition to amass nuclear weapons. In 1945, neither the leadership of the United States, nor that of the Soviet Union, was inclined to contemplate the moral and ethical aspects of the atom bomb. Atomic weapons represented, above all, a new and inescapable dimension of power politics. Matters concerning these weapons were filed away under the heading of "national security," and only a limited circle of highly trusted people had access to the information. Atomic programs were given the highest priority in both Moscow and Washington. Here, ethics were not a consideration—only politics. That's how the state-minded activists thought and acted.

Harry Truman, having assumed the U.S. presidency upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945, and disturbed by the Soviet Union's growing international stature as a result of WWII and subsequent geopolitical shifts, was concerned less with the alliance than about confrontation with Moscow. Hence, the discussion that Truman initiated with Stalin at the Potsdam conference in the summer of 1945 in regard to American weaponry that had become unprecedented in its power as a result of the first test of an atom bomb at Alamogordo. The president sought to translate atomic might into the language of diplomatic pressure.

At Potsdam, Stalin, who was warned in advanced by his intelligence services about the impending American test, did not appear to be alarmed. According to Georgi Zhukov, upon returning from a session at the conference, the following exchange occurred among the members of the Soviet delegation: "...Stalin told Molotov in my presence about a conversation he had with Truman. Molotov immediately replied: 'They upped their ante.' Stalin laughed and said: 'Let them. We should talk this over with Kurchatov about working faster.' I understood that he was talking about the atom bomb."<sup>5</sup>

Stalin did not leave any notes for posterity. His death was sudden. His views on the atomic bomb are only known from what was said by the people who knew him.

The former Soviet intelligence agent Pavel Sudoplatov tells about one noteworthy episode. At the end of 1945, a U.S. delegation headed by Secretary of State James Byrnes arrived in Moscow to participate in a session of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The delegation included James Conant, one of the heads of the American nuclear project, as well as Averell Harriman, the U.S. ambassador to Moscow. The American representatives proposed to the Soviet side that they begin to cooperate in the area of atomic energy, and they also offered to share the secrets of the atomic bomb with the Soviets in exchange for a Soviet promise not to produce it. Essentially, this offer was in the spirit of the Baruch Plan that was subsequently put forward and which was rejected by Moscow as being designed to consolidate the American atomic monopoly.

Sudoplatov, who was officially presented to the Americans as Molotov's assistant, recalls: "...On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, at a dinner in honor of the American delegation at the Kremlin, an important conversation took place that I was privy to in my capacity as one of those who was transcribing this conversation in detail. Molotov, commenting on the remarks made by Byrnes and Conant about a possible schedule for transferring data about the U.S. atomic bomb to the Soviet Union, joked: 'Would you, by any chance, like to retrieve from your vest pocket the drawings of the atomic bomb that you brought with you to Moscow?'"

Stalin abruptly cut Molotov off. Even I was astonished by his disrespect towards his comrade-in-arms in the presence of the Americans. I will always remember his words:

"Atomic energy and the atomic bomb—these belong to all mankind, they are not a topic for jokes. I propose a toast to the great American physicists who made this remarkable discovery."<sup>6</sup>

Presumably, Stalin was just as distrustful of U.S. diplomacy. At that moment, however, he evidently had not made up his mind about the conceptual principles that would later form the basis of the "Baruch Plan," and he considered it necessary first to clarify the substance of the American position. The atomic problem was too serious for hurried and superficial thinking. This is why Molotov's joke was neutralized.

Another eyewitness account of Stalin's views on nuclear weapons is provided by Milovan Djilas, who, in early 1948, was a guest at one of Stalin's traditional midnight dinners and recounts the following words of the supreme leader:

"Stalin was speaking about the atomic bomb: 'It is a powerful thing, pow-er-ful!' His words were full of admiration, which let everyone know that he would not rest until he also had this 'powerful thing.' He never mentioned, though, that he already had it, nor that the Soviet Union was already developing it."<sup>7</sup>

In 1949, on the eve of the first Soviet atomic bomb test, Yuliy Khariton, one of the directors of the Arzamas-16 nuclear center, briefed Stalin about the progress that had been made. After his report, Stalin asked: "Would it be possible to build two bombs out of the same amount of plutonium?" Khariton replied that this was impossible. As an experienced weapons specialist, Stalin would delve deep into details. Incidentally, the code for the first Soviet atomic bomb was *RDS-1*, or *Stalin's Jet-Propulsion System-1*. The second one (which was tested in 1951) was coded *RDS-2*. In the West, the Soviet bombs were dubbed *Joe-1* and *Joe-2*.<sup>8</sup>

As is well known, at the dawn of the atomic era, the prominent Danish physicist Niels Bohr, and before him, the Englishman Ernest Rutherford, expressed doubts as to whether mankind would ever be able to learn to master the energy of the atom. According to Bohr, in order to do so, the economy of an entire nation would have to be turned into a huge factory working exclusively to develop a bomb.

After 1945, however, due to political expediency, Washington and Moscow would not spare any resource to develop, perfect, and accumulate a nuclear and, subsequently, nuclear missile capability. Going down this road became something of a national idea (obsession) for both countries. Given the military and political confrontation, the concept of deterrence, which was enjoined to prevent nuclear conflict, intensified the nuclear rivalry. The arsenals of nuclear



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warheads held by both superpowers numbered in the tens of thousands. Nuclear cataclysm was a very real threat hanging over the world. Herein lay the destructive logic of the Cold War, in accordance with which an instrument of deterrence was converted as a result of the unrestrained race for military superiority into a weapon of nuclear holocaust.

A great deal of effort was spent preventing this slide and detouring world politics towards the limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons. The most important impetus (as well as a consequence) of this change in direction was the weakening and, subsequently, the end of the Cold War.

## **TOWARDS A PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE**

As has already been noted, another feature of Cold War politics, along with the nuclear arms race, was the irreconcilable ideological rivalry between the world of capitalism led by the United States and the world of socialism as it was personified by the Soviet Union and its allies. The Soviet leadership assumed that the outcome of WWII confirmed the historical principle according to which mankind would progress towards a communist order.

Already in retirement, Molotov, when speaking with Felix Chuyev about the mood of the Kremlin in the post-war period, noted:

“Stalin steered matters towards the death of imperialism and the ascension of communism... We needed peace, but according to American plans, two hundred of our cities were subject to simultaneous atomic bombardment. Stalin’s thinking was as follows: ‘World War I pulled one country out of capitalist slavery. World War II created a socialist system, and the third world war will put an end to imperialism forever.’”<sup>9</sup>

For Molotov, the main point was the ideological principle, the vision of the historic perspective. But his thinking also implies, as far as one can tell, a victorious outcome for the forces of socialism in the impending nuclear conflict.

Two forces were colliding in the world arena: the American side, which placed its hopes in its monopoly of atomic weapons, and the Soviet side, with its huge conscript army that had demonstrated its effectiveness in combat on the battlefields of WWII. Well-informed politicians were well aware that the time was near when the Soviet Union would have its own atomic weapons.

The combination of both factors—the political and ideological rivalry and the reliance on atomic weapons—made the stand-off between the superpowers particularly explosive.

On the American side, a typical example of ideological intolerance reinforced by atomic ambitions was James Burnham’s book *The Struggle for the World*, which was published in 1947, not long after Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton. Burnham analyzed the world situation from two vantage points: from the angle of aspirations to global dominance (here, in his opinion, there were two genuine contenders—the United States and the Soviet Union) and from the point of view of the role that atomic weapons would be able to play in global politics.

Burnham recognized that the atomic bomb represented a mortal threat to mankind. If it became accessible to several nations, war with all its destructive consequences would be inevitable. In order to avoid this, according to Burnham, what is needed is a monopoly on the atomic bomb. Such a monopoly would become possible by establishing a global empire. If it is built by the Soviet Union (to confirm this possibility, Burnham provides detailed diagrams that are intended to show the global scale of Soviet expansionism), then a totalitarian order will emerge. If, however, the United States ends up heading the empire, then it will be about the triumph of democracy.

Burnham demanded that Washington stop vacillating in its foreign policy between isolationism and the appeasement of communism. The doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations should also be rejected.

If the Soviet Union obtains atomic weapons, it will deploy them and win victory, warned Burnham. If the United States, however, would stop its foot-dragging and inflict pre-emptive atomic strikes, victory would be theirs. Burnham wrote: “Let us suppose... that when the war begins the Soviet Union does not yet have atomic weapons. Then, of course, there will be no immediate retaliation to the initial mass atomic attack by the United States. This means that the first stage of the war will be a gigantic victory for the United States.”<sup>10</sup>

The overall conclusion of Burnham's book was as follows: "The reality is that the only alternative to the communist World Empire is an American Empire which will be, if not literally worldwide in formal boundaries, capable of exercising decisive world control."<sup>11</sup>

Plans for pre-emptive war put forward by Burnham and other American ideologues remained unneeded. Sober-minded politicians in Washington could not fail to take into account that the United States did not have enough war matériel to guarantee that, even with a nuclear monopoly, it could inflict damage on the Soviet Union with impunity. If it started a war, it could lose Western Europe. Then, in August of 1949, the atom bomb appeared in the Soviet arsenal. The KB-11 design bureau at Arzamas-16 had caught up to the Manhattan Project on which scientists at Los Alamos were working.

## A TERRIBLE SIN

Another influential school of American political thought put forward recommendations that essentially rejected the dangerous radicalism of the adherents of the pre-emptive use of atomic weapons. To a great degree, this was the tone of George Kennan's article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," which appeared under the pseudonym "X" in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. In it, Kennan proposes focusing on the containment of communism through primarily political means.

In his memoirs, Kennan characterized the confused state of mind among politicians in Washington in the early post-war years as follows:

"At that time, it was almost impossible to see how Europe could be saved. We were still caught in the fateful confusion.... The economic plight of the continent was rapidly revealing itself as far worse than anyone had dreamed, and was steadily deteriorating. Congress was in an ugly frame of mind, convinced that all foreign aid was "operation rathole." The Communists were at the throat of France. A pall of fear, of bewilderment, of discouragement, hung over the continent and paralyzed all constructive activity. Molotov sat adamant at the Moscow council table, because he saw no reason to pay us a price for things which he thought were bound to drop into his lap, like ripe fruits, through the natural course of events."<sup>12</sup>

While sharing Burnham's displeasure towards "soft-headed liberals," who were inclined towards the "appeasement" of communism, Kennan nevertheless rejected the argument that the Soviet Union was willing to wage war. In his unsent letter to Walter Lippman (1948), he stressed:

"The Russians don't want to invade anyone. It is not in their tradition. They tried it once in Finland and got their fingers burned. They don't want war of any kind. Above all, they don't want the open responsibility that official invasion brings with it. They far prefer to do the job politically with stooge forces."<sup>13</sup>

Given these premises, Kennan explains the meaning of his anonymous article, which ushered in an era in Washington politics:

"In writing the X-Article, I had in mind.... ...the fact that many people, seeing that these concessions had been unsuccessful and that we had been unable to agree with the Soviet leaders on the postwar order of Europe and Asia, were falling into despair and jumping to the panicky conclusion that this spelled the inevitability of an eventual war between the Soviet Union and the United States.

It was this last conclusion that I was attempting, in the X-Article, to dispute. (...) ...I saw no necessity of a Soviet-American war.... There was, I thought, another way of handling this problem.... This was simply to cease at that point making fatuous unilateral concessions to the Kremlin, to do what we could to inspire and support resistance elsewhere to its efforts to expand the area of its dominant political influence, and to wait for the internal weakness of Soviet power, combined with frustration in the external field, to moderate Soviet ambitions and behavior. The Soviet leaders, formidable as they were, were not supermen. Like all rulers of all great countries, they had their internal contradictions and dilemmas to deal with. Stand up to them, I urged, manfully but not aggressively, and give the hand of time a chance to work.

This is all that the X-article was meant to convey."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Kennan advocated a firm policy of containment of communist expansionism. The U.S. Marshall Plan, which provided financial help to rebuild the economies of Western Europe, and the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949, can be considered a practical expression of that policy. At the same time, however, he was not one to toy with the atomic bomb in a threatening manner. Kennan did not advocate moving away from the perspective



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of a sharp rivalry between capitalism and socialism, but he was categorically against provoking a military confrontation between the two systems, especially using atomic weapons.

In the years to come Kennan continued to remain faithful to this far from inconsequential attitude of his towards the atomic factor in foreign policy.

Kennan was not alone in his beliefs. In early 1952, at the height of the war on the Korean Peninsula, the influential thinker Reinhard Niebuhr, while heaping criticism on communist ideology and the Soviet regime that America was confronting, and worried about the turbulent political movements in Asia, also warned against relying on military, economic, and technological superiority as a means of altering the course of history.

With obvious sympathy, Niebuhr concurred with the apprehensions towards U.S. foreign policy that had become widespread in Western Europe:

"The fact that the European nations, more accustomed to the tragic vicissitudes of history, still have a measure of misgiving about our leadership in the world community is due to their fear that our 'technocratic' tendency to equate the mastery of nature with the mastery of history could tempt us to lose patience with the tortuous course of history. We might be driven to hysteria by its inevitable frustrations. We might be tempted to bring the whole of modern history to a tragic conclusion by one final and mighty effort to overcome its frustrations. The political term for such an effort is "preventive war." It is not an immediate temptation; but it could become so in the next decade or so."<sup>15</sup>

Like Kennan, Niebuhr advised American leaders not to lose their heads and to wait out the "long run" of history while taking such measures as are necessary to combat the more immediate perils.<sup>16</sup> The United States, according to Niebuhr, "should be ready to engage in a patient chess game with the recalcitrant forces of historic destiny."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Niebuhr, in contrast to Burnham, warned against unleashing a pre-emptive war against the Soviet Union. The American theologian, incidentally, captured the moral ambivalence towards nuclear weapons. Niebuhr wrote that a nation such as the United States:

"...finds itself the custodian of the ultimate weapon which perfectly embodies and symbolizes the moral ambiguity of physical warfare. We could not disavow the possible use of the weapon, partly because no imperiled nation is morally able to dispense with weapons which might insure its survival. All nations, unlike some individuals, lack the capacity to prefer a noble death to a morally ambiguous survival. (...) Yet, if we should use it, we shall cover ourselves with a terrible guilt. We might insure our survival in a world in which it might be better not to be alive."<sup>18</sup>

## **DOUBTS IN SCIENTIFIC CIRCLES**

Doubts about the moral and ethical legitimacy of atomic weapons as a means to achieve political ends began rather early to worm its way into the souls of American theoretical physicists.

At first, everything in this regard had been going smoothly—working in the atomic field to overtake Nazi Germany did not raise any concerns. The very idea of the potential for an atomic monopoly in Hitler's hands spurred a redoubling of efforts. The situation began to change when the possibility of using the atomic bomb against Japan surfaced.

In the summer of 1945, while employed by the Los Alamos laboratory, Edward Teller, at the behest of Leo Szilard (who at that time was working at the University of Chicago), attempted to organize a petition of scientists to call upon the Truman administration to reject the notion of bombing Japanese cities, citing humanitarian considerations and the lack of an obvious military necessity. When the head of the Manhattan Project, Robert Oppenheimer, found out the nature of the document that Szilard was behind, he strongly resisted the initiative, indicating that the issues surrounding the use of nuclear weapons had to be decided exclusively by politicians, who have the trust of voters and who, in their actions, rely on being well-informed about the numerous factors inaccessible to the general public. Teller backed down, acknowledging the cogency of Oppenheimer's arguments.

The doubts were revived when information about the aftermath of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, reached Los Alamos. Teller recalls:

"The colloquium that week was a viewing of the early pictures showing the destruction of Hiroshima. I remembered Szilard's suggestions; the scenes were particularly troubling and I wondered whether such devastation had been necessary. Then, just three days later, on August 9, 1945, the plutonium bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. I remember telling Laura Fermi, 'If this goes on, I want to leave.' But then, on August 14, the big news arrived: Japan had surrendered! The war was over. Celebrations, elation, and relief continued until late in the night. And I was fully as glad as everyone else. But I continued to regret that the bomb had not been demonstrated."<sup>19</sup>

In Teller's opinion, a nighttime explosion at a height of 10 kilometers over Tokyo Bay would have been sufficient to induce the requisite psychological effect, convincing the Japanese of the futility of resistance while, at the same time, sparing an inordinate number of victims. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the work that had begun in earnest to develop the hydrogen bomb provoked a new round of discussion in the United States with respect to the moral legitimacy of nuclear weapons. Teller and several other prominent American scientists had no reservations about the issue. No restraint on the part of the United States in this, they believed, would stop corresponding Soviet programs. Moreover, the United States could not allow itself to fall behind militarily without risking its national security interests.

There was, however, discord over this approach. Hans Bethe managed to avoid moving to Los Alamos to take part in the work on the hydrogen bomb. A secret report of the General Advisory Committee, signed by James Conant and Robert Oppenheimer, among others (although not by Glenn Seaborg, who adhered to a different point of view), contained a warning against developing the hydrogen bomb in view of its "limitless destructive power and the danger that it might become a 'weapon of genocide.'" A separate report signed by Enrico Fermi and Isidore Rabi laid out similar views.<sup>20</sup>

In March 1950, Albert Einstein expressed the anxiety of this group of scientists in an article entitled "Arms Can Bring No Security":

"The armament race between the United States and the Soviet Union, originally supposed to be a preventive measure, assumes a hysterical character. On both sides, the means to mass destruction are perfected with feverish haste behind the respective walls of secrecy. The H-bomb appears on the public horizon as a probably attainable goal. Its accelerated development has been solemnly proclaimed by the President. If successful, radioactive poisoning of the atmosphere, and hence annihilation of any life on earth, has been brought within the range of technical possibilities. The ghostlike character of this development lies in its apparently compulsory trend. Every step appears as the unavoidable consequence of the preceding one. In the end, there beckons more and more clearly general annihilation."<sup>21</sup>

Essentially the same doubts roiled the minds of leading Soviet physicists.

In 1955, after the first comprehensive test of a Soviet hydrogen bomb, the leaders of the atomic project—academicians Kurchatov, Alikhanov, Aleksandrov, and Vinogradov—sent a letter to the party leadership saying that, with the development of superweapons, a world war becomes impossible. It would lead to the destruction of mankind and, therefore, a new kind of international politics was necessary. Malenkov supported this pacifist letter, while Khrushchev took advantage of his party comrade's political shortsightedness to overthrow him.<sup>22</sup>

The introduction of pacifist or, better to say, common sense perceptions into the realm of the state-minded activists did not always go smoothly. A typical episode is provided by academician Andrei Sakharov in his memoirs. After the aforementioned successful test of a hydrogen bomb at the Semipalatinsk Test Site in November 1955, the participants of that event were invited to a reception with the inner circle of Marshal M. I. Nedelin, the Commander in Chief of the Rocket Forces. Sakharov recalls:

Nedelin nodded to me, inviting me to propose the first toast. Glass in hand, I rose and said something like: "May all our devices explode as successfully as today's, but always over test sites and never over cities."

The table fell silent, as if I had said something improper. Everyone froze. Nedelin smirked and he, too, arose glass in hand and said:

"Allow me to tell a parable. An old man wearing only a shirt is praying before a lit icon: 'Guide and harden me, guide and harden me.' His old wife, who is lying on the stove, can be heard to say: 'Just pray to be hard, old man, I can guide it in myself.' Let's drink to getting hard."



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The Marshal's parable was not meant to be a joke. Nedelin considered it necessary to rebut my unseemly pacifist sentiment and to put me and anyone else who might be thinking along the same lines in our place. The point of his story (half lewd, half blasphemous, which made it even more unpleasant) was clear to me and everyone else. We—the inventors, scientists, engineers, and craftsmen—had made a terrible weapon, the most terrible weapon in human history; but its use would lie entirely outside our control. The decisions—'the guiding,' in the words of the parable—would be made by them—those who were at the top, the top of the Party and military hierarchy.<sup>23</sup>

The situation was practically identical to the argument between Teller and Oppenheimer at Los Alamos in 1945, with Nedelin playing the role of Oppenheimer.

Global public opinion did not remain indifferent to the militarization of international politics and the increasing nuclear danger, setting in motion a broad movement for peace. Together with leading scientists, politicians, artists, and social activists, representatives from churches of various denominations played a highly visible role in this movement.

In concert with this initiative, Soviet diplomacy started campaigning for a multilateral agreement that would lead to the incremental banning and destruction of nuclear weapons under international supervision.

Within the context of the Cold War, these proposals seemed propagandistic to many. It is possible that, to a certain extent, they were, but at the same time, this was propaganda that was for peace and against nuclear war and nuclear blackmail. It played a positive role by showing that the threat of nuclear war could be categorically eliminated only with the complete and total destruction of nuclear arsenals.

It became necessary, however, to further escalate the arms race, set off what was known as the *kuzkina mat*, a bomb with an explosive yield in the dozens of megatons, and, in October 1962, to endure the acute Cuban missile crisis in order for politicians to finally understand the necessity to pull back; to not build up, but rather to limit and reduce nuclear arms for the sake of their own security and international stability.

## **A LESSER EVIL**

The mechanism of nuclear deterrence is an outcome of the politics of confrontation typical of the Cold War years. To no less a degree, however, this concept was an almost unavoidable product of the existence of nuclear weapons in the hands of two or more nations. The nuclear bomb in the hands of another country is too terrifying a weapon not to see it as a potential threat to your own security. Therefore, if, for example, there are two nations, each having a nuclear deterrent arsenal, a situation of *mutual* deterrence automatically arises between these two nations.

Nevertheless, apparently following Soviet tradition, Russian military doctrine avoids using the term "mutual" in this context. At any rate, insofar as it applies to U.S.-Russian nuclear deterrence, this would seem to be an objective, existential given.

At some point around the early 1960s, the concept of "mutual assured destruction (MAD)" became the most important element of the system of nuclear deterrence. This is the punishment that the participants in deterrence promise to each other in the event of the outbreak of nuclear war. This mutual threat deters them from aggression—peace, i.e. nuclear stalemate, reigns.

The corresponding government agencies assiduously worked to ensure that the promised destruction would be virtually guaranteed. At some point, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, declared the precise levels of destruction necessary to ensure such guarantees. For his part, the systems theorist Herman Kahn presented detailed analyses of the extent of the damage that would be inflicted by either the Soviet Union or the United States depending on the number of nuclear explosions on their territory. Eventually, the "futurology of nuclear war" all but developed into a specialized branch of political science.

Within the framework of deterrence, the absence of war is predicated upon the threat of mutual nuclear destruction, i.e., the balance of terror, which, in and of itself, creates serious complications for anyone who would attempt to evaluate the mechanism of deterrence from the standpoint of Christian ethics. Perhaps, as a consolation, an argument could be made for

choosing the lesser of two evils: nuclear war is bad, yet peace guaranteed by MAD, while not ideal, is vastly better than war. It was not without reason that, in 1646, the staunch adherent and interpreter of Christian morality and classical jurist Hugo Grotius noted: "...When it is impossible to avoid making a choice, then the lesser evil replaces good."<sup>24</sup>

## IS DETERRENCE SUSTAINABLE?

The question arises: how sustainable is nuclear deterrence? Is it possible to rely, with complete assurance, on this mechanism to keep the peace?

The ideology of deterrence in its current form is supported by many theoretical arguments, from concrete military calculations to the strictly psychological. Deterrence is counted on to influence the behavior and perception of reality among certain people (government leaders and their military subordinates), who, at the same time, are of sound mind and not subject to influence by various fanatical factions. In a world vulnerable to irrational motives, the logic of deterrence evaporates. Admittance to the club of nuclear deterrence has to be closed to extremists.

One central tenet is the concept of the credibility of deterrence. In order for the hand of a putative enemy to be stayed from trying to reach for the nuclear button, he has to be aware that the potential victim of his aggression possesses enough military power to inflict irreparable damage in an unavoidable retaliatory strike. But that, in and of itself, is not sufficient. Deterrence is only truly credible if a potential aggressor knows that the intended victim of his attack has the determination to unleash his nuclear power in retaliation. The concepts of credibility and determination are linked within the framework of deterrence strategy.

Having the necessary will is not a trivial matter. It is possible to be confronted with a serious dilemma such as reconciling oneself, on the one hand, to the loss of major targets on one's territory as a result of an enemy nuclear missile attack or, on the other, to give the "o.k." to a retaliatory nuclear salvo with the realization that this will result in total nuclear collision. These are precisely the options afforded by the "nuclear suitcase," which is always close at hand among the top officials of the nuclear superpowers. As noted in a report issued by the Scowcroft Commission (1983):

"Deterrence is not, and cannot be, a bluff. In order for deterrence to be effective we must not merely have weapons, we must be perceived to be able, and prepared, if necessary, to use them effectively against key elements of Soviet power."<sup>25</sup>

Different methods and channels are used in order to communicate to a probable opponent that the will (or readiness) to resort, under certain conditions, to the use of one's nuclear arsenal for the purpose of retaliation does indeed exist.

The most obvious and public of these is the announcement of various military and political doctrines. In the United States, examples of this are the doctrine of "massive retaliation" (1954) and the doctrine of "flexible response" that replaced it (1961), which is still in effect in one form or another to this day.

Incidentally, the demise in the concept of "massive retaliation," which implied a powerful nuclear strike against particular sites targeted by the United States, was largely connected, according to some critics of this posture, with the loss of the credibility of this threat in the eyes of the presumed enemy. It implied that the United States was prepared to respond with the massive use of nuclear weapons to an even somewhat minor threat to its interests. When the United States had overwhelming military superiority, such intimidation could be counted on to be fruitful. However, as the U.S.-Soviet nuclear balance reached a state of equilibrium due to the successful military build-up in the Soviet Union, it became impossible to count on victory in a nuclear conflict. Critics in the United States began to say that "massive retaliation" represented either an empty declaration or an absence of policy, i.e., in the practical sense, a concession of defeat. It is difficult to make the decision to confront one's enemy if the only possible response—massive retaliation—would mean total catastrophe.

The doctrine of "flexible response," which called for a graduated response to a perceived threat (in other words, depending on the extent of the danger confronting the United States),



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was called upon to confirm Washington's willingness to resort to nuclear weapons if there was no other alternative. It was presumed that pushing the nuclear button as a retaliatory response, knowing that this would not be the end of the world, would then be much easier. "Massive retaliation" was not eliminated—it became a component of "flexible response" in the event of the most extreme circumstances.

It is noteworthy that one of the arguments against the doctrine of "massive retaliation" was the idea that nuclear weapons, due to their enormous and indiscriminate destructive power, destroyed the relationship established by Carl von Clausewitz between war and politics. This argument stressed that nuclear war could not be a means of achieving rational political objectives, inasmuch as it would only lead to total destruction. The emergence of the doctrine of "flexible response," which features both options—"massive retaliation" and "limited nuclear war"—represented an attempt to reestablish and apply Clausewitz' dictum to nuclear weapons. If we are speaking about an exchange of only a limited number of nuclear strikes, then why not, in keeping with Clausewitz, consider such a war as a continuation of politics by other means? The truth, though, is that there is still the terrible danger of a "limited" nuclear war becoming an all-out nuclear war, and then the precept of the German theoretician would be destroyed along with civilization. In this case, however, another possibility could help—maintaining the stability of deterrence after the commencement of combat operations. In other words, the nuclear duel, once begun, could be "theoretically" contained.

It should be noted that the concept of MAD, which is closely tied to the massive use of nuclear weapons, excludes the concept of victory in a nuclear conflict, which cannot be said about a controlled, i.e. limited, nuclear war. Here the emphasis is placed on a variant where one opponent will back down and not want to ascend further up the ladder of escalation, and he will be the loser.

All things considered, the objective of ensuring the credibility of American deterrence is served by the appearance, from time to time, in the general and scientific press, of information about the compilation, deep inside the Pentagon, of lists of targets on Russian territory that would be subject to nuclear strikes in the event of war (the same practice existed in relation to the Soviet Union). A special agency—the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff—is responsible for this, and its duties include developing plans for conducting nuclear war in accordance with the political directives issued by the secretary of defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This practice is in complete accord with the philosophical premise of Herman Kahn in his groundbreaking work *On Thermonuclear War*: "Usually the most convincing way to look willing is to be willing."<sup>26</sup> One question remains, however: is there a fundamental difference between a procedure for selecting targets for the requirements of deterrence and using the same procedure to prepare for actual military operations? This provides reason for certain Russian authors to accuse the Pentagon of a lack of sincerity.

Thus, if you want nuclear peace—prepare for war. And proclaim it loudly. Otherwise, nuclear deterrence loses its force and becomes feeble and ineffectual.

At times, deterrence requires noisy and threatening propaganda.

There was speculation about the possibility of using American nuclear weapons in Korea and Indochina. During the 1973 war in the Middle East, there were announcements in Washington that nuclear forces had been placed on combat alert. In the spring of 1999, events associated with the start of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia awakened public nuclear activism in Russia. State-run television ran a broadcast segment in which the then-chairman of the State Duma, Gennady Seleznev, held a direct phone conversation with the commander of a missile base outside of Moscow, during which they discussed the status of targeting U.S. facilities with Russian missiles. This was unprecedented since, even during the darkest years of the Cold War, nothing like this would have been shown on television. A few days later, President Boris Yeltsin, then in China, unexpectedly confirmed Russia's robust nuclear capacity in the presence of television journalists.

Are not politicians taking on far too much responsibility by resorting to nuclear saber-rattling in order to convince their opponent in the international arena? It would seem that, by relying on this approach, one should not lose sight of the fact that the nuclear bomb is fundamentally different than the conventional one. The new weapon does not fit into the old political and diplo-

matic packaging. The risks are enormous. One would think that the nuclear argument is applicable only when real and basic national interests are at stake. Otherwise, everything might end in a catastrophic conflict over something trivial or in a bluff.

Nuclear deterrence generates a certain degree of stability, but, clearly, far from total stability. A number of indicators show that this stability is quite relative.

From the standpoint of its reliability, the system of deterrence has some weak points. One of them is its dependence on the functionality of its computer systems. A launch initiated by a signal from a national MEWS warning of an incoming enemy missile attack could, if it turns out to be a false alarm, be the first act of war. One is converted unwittingly from a defender into an aggressor. Furthermore, there will be virtually no one around to analyze the outcome of the conflict. And does it really make a big difference what the cause of the nuclear exchange was: a flock of wild geese that the electronic warning system mistook for an enemy missile salvo, or an actual nuclear attack, against which it would be impossible not to retaliate. The result is the same—nuclear desert, with its last flames flickering from beneath toxic ash and ruins.

In an article on the workings of nuclear deterrence written in the mid-1980s, the U.S. observer Norman Cousins, attempting to make sense of these issues, noted that, during the period from 1981 to 1985, the screens of U.S. military computers displayed warnings of a possible missile attack against the United States more than 100 times. Fortunately, there was enough time to determine that these were false alarms. Cousins writes:

“Since there is no reason to believe that Soviet computer technology is superior, it becomes necessary to recognize that erroneous blips have turned up on Soviet computer screens. But America’s very success in placing missile launching platforms close to Soviet borders has reduced the time available for Soviet experts to check for possible computer errors. For example, American Pershing-2 missiles are less than ten minutes away from major Soviet targets. Since that may not provide enough time to rule out the possibility of computer error, Soviet decision-makers may have to bet the life of their nation on guesswork. That puts not just Soviet and American citizens but all the world in jeopardy because of computer error or malfunction. The presence of Soviet submarines with missile launchers not far off America’s coasts has a similar effect on American defense strategy.”

In Cousins’ opinion, it is far from clear how it would be possible to differentiate a real attack from an act of provocation undertaken by a third party, for example, from a submarine for the purpose of starting a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States:

“A third party that thinks it is in a position to profit from a war between two other nations could conceivably launch its missile at one or the other, thus setting off a nuclear chain reaction. Theoretically, the U.S.-Soviet hot line is designed to guard against such a possibility. But there is an absurdity in the theory. The United States has spent hundreds of billions of dollars to defend against the possibility of a surprise attack; the underlying assumption is that a surprise attack is not just a realistic possibility but the most likely one in the event that an enemy should decide on war. One can readily imagine the ‘Alice in Wonderland’ quality of a telephone call made in expectation of learning the truth if, indeed, the receiving party actually launched the attack.”

Cousins also warned about the dangers of sabotage:

“Elaborate precautions have been built into the system to protect against irresponsible individual pre-emption of decision-making. Each member of the four-man team attached to a silo has a quarter of the key required to activate the missile. Even if one man should go berserk and try to dispatch a missile, the other three would stand in the way. Unfortunately, the system is not foolproof. It does not protect against the possibility of a conspiracy among all four members, or of one or more members overwhelming the others.”

Cousins reaches the conclusion that

“Most likely, however, a nuclear war would erupt without anyone having a clear idea of what went wrong. Human scientific genius has created the ultimate irrational situation in which the conditions of life could be shattered beyond recognition or repair, with the survivors, such as they are, left to guess how it all started.”<sup>27</sup>

This is similar to a maxim that appeared in Hugo Grotius’ epochal work:

“Of the two, who took up arms with righteousness is unknown.”<sup>28</sup>

The extremely limited time available for a rational and fully justified decision in a crisis situation is shown by an analysis of the concept of nuclear deterrence undertaken by Alexei Arbatov on the pages of the Russian press:



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“...The leadership will act based on the reports of subordinates and their assessment of the situation, the re-evaluation of which, or the abandonment of previously developed operational plans, would be possible only by taking the chance that a retaliatory attack would not take place at all. Essentially, the role of the leadership is reduced to a formality, to the reaction of a trained monkey that pulls a lever to get a banana when it sees a light go on.”<sup>29</sup>

The risks inherent in deterrence rapidly increase when, instead of a bi-polar nuclear confrontation in the global arena, there emerges a nuclear multi-polarity despite the principles of non-proliferation. It would be ill-advised to rely on the technical imperfections of the bombs and missiles possessed by the newest members of the nuclear club. The growing arsenals of India and Pakistan are stark evidence of this.

This means that the peacemaking potential of nuclear weapons is hardly without reproach. Nuclear weapons in and of themselves are double-edged and fraught with global catastrophe. Hope should be placed on sober thinking, good will, and the psychological stability of politicians and their closest aides, who have control over offensive nuclear arsenals. This is, of course, impossible to pull off without the appropriate technology, despite all its flaws.

### **ON NUCLEAR “DELUSION”**

The Cuban Missile Crisis and having to deal with its aftermath was a harsh lesson for politicians, but the Cold War was not ended by this burst of nuclear danger. The arms race continued.

Nevertheless, a breach emerged in the edifice of the Cold War—the opposing sides, in their efforts to preserve national security and strengthen international stability, began to search for ways to reach agreements designed to reduce military rivalry. As a result of these initiatives, the Limited Test-Ban Treaty (in the atmosphere, outer space, and under water) was signed in 1963. A major breakthrough was the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968.

The U.S.-Soviet negotiations on strategic weapons—both offensive and defensive—that were begun in November of 1969 constituted a new page in the effort to place real limits on nuclear arsenals. Within the framework of these negotiations, the following agreements were prepared and signed during the Soviet-American summit in Moscow: the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was of unlimited duration, and the Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. Then came another step forward. In 1979, at the summit in Vienna, Leonid Brezhnev and President Jimmy Carter signed the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT-II). This historic achievement was accompanied by a reduction in international tensions, which came to be called the policy of detente.

However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, all of this seemed to start unraveling, beginning with the prolonged Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In 1980, the Democratic administration of President Jimmy Carter approved Directive PD-59, which called for ensuring an adequate nuclear response along the entire spectrum of possible Soviet aggression. Various options for waging war against the Soviet Union using nuclear weapons were publicly discussed in the United States. A massive nuclear strike was not ruled out. In the spring of 1983, with the Republicans already in power, President Ronald Reagan announced a program for developing an extensive anti-ballistic missile defense system known as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

In late August-early September 1983, a war of words broke out over the downing by Soviet air defenses of a South Korean airliner that had strayed into Soviet airspace in the Far East. In November of that same year, the United States began to deploy its medium range missiles in Europe within a 10-minute flight time to Moscow. The Soviet Union announced countermeasures and the suspension of its participation in the Geneva talks with the United States on nuclear-related matters. An oppressive atmosphere of war hung over the world.

During this period of a renewed militaristic outlook in Washington, the voice of the old man of American political science—George Kennan—rang out loud and clear. He condemned the escalation of nuclear hysteria. In the second edition of his book *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-*

*American Relations in the Atomic Age*, which came out in 1984 and which included his public appearances from 1950 on, Kennan says that, as early as 1946-1947, when he was a top official at the American National War College, he began to find himself “instinctively rejecting the suggestion that the nuclear weapon should ever again play a serious part in American strategy.” The use of the atomic bomb against Japan was viewed by Kennan as “a regrettable extremism.”<sup>30</sup>

In 1949, immediately after the first test explosion of an atom bomb in the Soviet Union, the issue of developing the hydrogen bomb was raised in the United States. In January 1950, at the end of his three-year service with the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, Kennan sent a memo to the attention of Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In this memo, which he considered the most important of his career, Kennan came out with a recommendation to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons, reach agreement with other nations to ban their use, and investigate the possibility of establishing international control over them.

By all accounts, Acheson did not circulate this document. The subsequent decision by the U.S. administration to begin developing the hydrogen bomb compelled Kennan to quit government service, but not for good, as would become clear.

With his unique polemical temperament, Kennan drew attention to the negative aspects of American political life at the juncture of the Carter and Reagan administrations. Kennan especially objected to the deliberate search for an external enemy and the increased use of chauvinistic language. These tendencies, in the opinion of the American historian and thinker, were fraught with false judgments, which, in turn, could lead to dangerous behavior. Kennan writes:

“Observing then, in the years of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the seemingly inexorable advance of this hysteria of professed fear of and hostility to the Soviet Union, but finding so little objective reason for it, I could only suspect that its origins were primarily subjective; and this seemed to me to suggest something much more sinister than mere intellectual error: namely, a subconscious need on the part of a great many people for an external enemy—an enemy against whom frustrations could be vented, an enemy who could serve as a convenient target for the externalization of the evil, an enemy in whose allegedly inhuman wickedness one could see the reflection of one’s own exceptional virtue. Perhaps all this was not unnatural in the light of the frustrations and failures American society had been suffering at that time: such things as Vietnam; the inexplicable student rebellion; the hostage crisis; inflation; growing and uncontrolled crime and pervasive corruption and cynicism of every sort in our own country; a feeling that the development of our society was out of control. But such states of mind, more often subconscious than consciously experienced, were powerful and insidious ones. They offered great temptations to the politician anxious to avoid involvement with the bitter internal issues of the day and eager to reap, instead, the easy acclamations usually produced in our society by a vigorous ringing of the chauvinist bell. And the moods that they produced—the sweeping militarization of the American view of East-West differences; the assumption of deadly and irreconcilable conflict; the acceptance of the likelihood, if not the inevitability, of a Soviet-American war; the contemptuous neglect of the more favorable possibilities—these, and the official behavior that flowed from them in the halls of government, seemed to me to represent a situation of immense, immediate, and—what was most tragic—quite unnecessary danger.”<sup>31</sup>



In Kennan’s judgment, the main threat, which was unprecedented in its scale, was hidden in the continuation of an uncontrolled nuclear arms race. Nothing good could come of the atmosphere of mutual accusation and suspicion that existed in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. In these circumstances, Kennan admonished, “anything could happen.”<sup>32</sup> In May 1981, during a speech given upon receiving the Albert Einstein Peace Prize, Kennan emphasized:

“Adequate words are lacking to express the full seriousness of our present situation. It is not just we are for the moment on a collision course politically with the Soviet Union, and that the process of rational communication between the two governments seems to have broken down completely; it is also—and even more importantly—the fact that the ultimate sanction behind the conflicting policies of these two governments is a type and volume of weaponry which could not possibly be used without utter disaster for us all.”<sup>33</sup>

“To my mind,” said Kennan, “the nuclear bomb is the most useless weapon ever invented.”<sup>34</sup> It is necessary to drastically reduce the stockpiles of this weapon; according to Kennan’s calculations, 20 percent of the existing nuclear arsenals would be sufficient for deterrent needs. As a first step, it would be possible to proceed with an immediate 50-percent reduction in all types of nuclear arms, including delivery systems, while monitoring through national technical means.

In 1981, Kennan reaffirmed his appeal to government officials in Washington to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons out of a sense of simple foreboding—any deployment of nuclear weapons on the battlefield would be fraught with the danger of escalation.<sup>35</sup>

Kennan's opposition to nuclear weapons was imbued with a distinctive moral and ethical tone:

"For this entire preoccupation with nuclear war is a form of illness. It is morbid in the extreme. There is no hope in it—only horror. It can be understood only as some form of subconscious despair on the part of its devotees—some sort of death wish, a readiness to commit suicide for fear of death—a state of mind explicable only by some inability to face the normal hazards and vicissitudes of the human predicament—a lack of faith, or better a lack of the very strength that it takes to have faith, as countless of our generations have had it before us.

I decline to believe that this is the condition of the majority of our people. Surely there is among us, at least among majority of us, a sufficient health of the spirit, a sufficient affirmation of life, with all its joys and excitements and all its hazards and uncertainties, to permit us to slough off this morbid preoccupation, to see it and discard it as the illness it is, to turn our attention to the real challenges and possibilities that loom beyond it, and in this way to restore to ourselves our confidence in ourselves and our hope for the future of the civilization to which we all belong."<sup>36</sup>

Such was Kennan's reaction to the widely publicized discussions in the United States—in Congress and on television—about the adoption during the last months of the Carter administration of the doctrine of "countervailing strategy," which represented yet another modernization of the doctrine of "flexible response." It should be said that sometimes the high-level participants of those debates could not help but admit that the strategic logic was leading them into territory that was far removed from common sense. An example of this would be an excerpt from the hearings on the question of the "doctrine of countervailing strategy" held by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on October 16, 1980:

"Secretary Brown. I am saying we keep all the options open and they [the Russians - *author*] should not think that we would give no response, because we have no credible response.

Senator Glenn. I get lost in what is credible and not credible. This whole thing gets so incredible when you consider wiping out whole nations, it is difficult to establish credibility.

Secretary Brown. That is why we sound a little crazy when we talk about it.

Senator Glenn. That is the best statement all the day."<sup>37</sup>

Evidently, wandering about in the maze of nuclear-political philosophy willy-nilly forces one, to quote Herman Kahn, "to think about the unthinkable." Moreover, the Christian conscience, Kennan emphasized, recoils at the thought that nuclear weapons would condemn massive numbers of peaceful citizens, in no way connected to the combatants, to death and suffering. Even worse, Kennan continued, nuclear strategists consider it completely acceptable to use innocent people as hostages to be sacrificed, if needed, as punishment for certain unacceptable actions of their governments.<sup>38</sup>

According to Kennan, the main sin of nuclear weapons is that their widespread use would inflict irreparable damage on mankind:

"Even trifling with the nuclear weapon, as we are now doing, we are placing at risk the entire civilization of which we are a part."<sup>39</sup> "Who are we then", inquires Kennan, "to place under the threat of destruction the entire environmental framework in which, according to God's will, human life should proceed? Is it not a direct violation of the Biblical injunction to honor one's parents and forebears to be ready to place at risk the achievements of the cultural past, which would inevitably perish in the flames of a nuclear war?"<sup>40</sup>

Kennan reaches the conclusion that:

"...*the readiness to use nuclear weapons against other human beings—against people whom we do not know, whom we have never seen, and whose guilt or innocence it is not for us to establish—and, in doing so, to place in jeopardy the natural structure upon which all civilization rests, as though the safety and the perceived interests of our own generation were more important than everything that has ever taken place or could take place in civilization: this is nothing less than a presumption, a blasphemy, an indignity—an indignity of monstrous dimensions—offered to God!*" [emphasis added by the author.]<sup>41</sup>

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND SAINT SERAPHIM

The nuclear problem is our Cold War legacy. The sharp ideological and political confrontation of that era, it would seem, has receded into the past, but the nuclear topic is far from being a dead political issue.

In 2003, the nuclear weapons problem revealed itself in an unlikely way during the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of Saint Seraphim of Sarov by the Russian Orthodox Church. What at first glance would seem to be an exclusively internal Church event has been used to promote a contemporary Russian socio-political agenda.

Prokhor Isidorovich Moshnin—the Seraphim of Sarov—was born in 1754 and died in 1833. He was canonized in 1903. A half-century later, in 1953, the Soviet Union tested the world's first hydrogen bomb, which was developed in the closed city of Arzamas-16 (now once again known as Sarov). The nuclear center is sited where the monastery at which St. Seraphim lived his monastic life once stood. Though, at the time the bomb was tested, there was no celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the saint's canonization—neither in the church nor among the atomic scientists.

Today, the coincidence of these commemorative dates and the location they are associated with—the centenary of the canonization of the saint and the 50-year anniversary of the invention of the hydrogen bomb—has supplied a pretext for attempts to mystically combine religious fervor with the work done to develop weapons of mass destruction. One Russian newspaper, in its chronicling of the celebrations that were held in Sarov (Arzamas-16) in August 2003 on the occasion of the 100-year anniversary of the canonization of Seraphim of Sarov, wrote: "If Saint Seraphim had not permitted the creation of the nuclear bomb here, it never would have happened."<sup>42</sup> In other words, it would not have been possible without the blessing of Seraphim, even though he himself never said anything of the kind.

The history of the life of St. Seraphim is witness that he was far removed from military matters—even the Napoleonic invasion of Russia that occurred during his lifetime was unable to interrupt his many years of seclusion at the monastery. Seraphim was much more devoted to saving souls, and became renowned for his miraculous acts. According to the Orthodox encyclopedia's accounts of the main events in Seraphim of Sarov's religious life:

"Saint Seraphim of Sarov teaches: 'Sow it in the good soil, sow it in the sand, sow it on the rock: somewhere a seed may germinate and grow in glory to God.' Even a humble sowing of good, with the mercy of the Lord, can grow and bear fruit for those dearest to us and for others and for our own souls."<sup>43</sup>

The monastic life of Seraphim of Sarov is a religious epic in devotion to helping the poor and the suffering.<sup>44</sup>

The radicalism of the Russian revolutionary era completely disrupted the veneration of the newly canonized St. Seraphim. The Bolsheviks, in thought and deed, adhered to the doctrine of militant atheism. Lenin's slogan *proclaiming active struggle against priesthood* did not bypass the Sarov compound, which was closed down in 1919. At the beginning of the 1920s, the relics of Seraphim were removed from the cathedral built by Emperor Nicholas II and disappeared from Orthodox religious life for many long decades.

Then came a time when the new authorities persecuted believers and clergy. They tore crosses out of churches, threw down church bells, and burned ancient icons that had been prayed to for centuries. Many priests were swept up by the iron broom of repression.

In order to beat religious spirituality out of people and further humiliate the church, the state pursued a policy of converting churches into storage facilities, cattle barns, community centers, workshops, and even prisons. A munitions factory was located on the grounds of the Sarov monastery up until the Nuclear Center was founded.

The Sarov compound was attractive to the founders of the Nuclear Center primarily because it was easy to establish an isolated and tightly guarded zone there. Part of the laboratory was housed in the monastery's buildings.



One should not presume that the Nuclear Center could somehow have guaranteed that the old structures would be preserved and maintained. The destruction of monasteries and churches was an integral part of a deliberately aggressive policy on the part of bolshevism. Demolition of the Sarov monastery began as early as the 1930s, the same time when Christ the Savior Church was torn down in Moscow.

The first Soviet atom bomb, born at the Nuclear Center, was tested at the Semipalatinsk Test Site on August 21, 1949. There is no evidence to show that any of the scientists working on the project were thinking at that time about Seraphim of Sarov or anything holy. The opposite is much more likely. In the early 1950s, the main cathedrals of the Sarov complex were destroyed. The convenient pretext was that the buildings were old and run-down. The demolition, however, took a long time—the walls turned out to be so strong that they had to be dynamited several times.

At the end of the 1950s, after Stalin's death and at a time when it was Khrushchev's turn to fight the Church, an order was received to demolish the still-existing bell tower, since it was giving away the facility's location. The Center's top officials managed to dissuade Moscow from doing this. Incidentally, until very recently, a television antenna that served the city took the place of the bell tower's cross. When during the summer of 2003, in conjunction with the 100-year anniversary of the canonization of St. Seraphim, the antenna was replaced with an Orthodox cross, the residents of the city had to go temporarily without television. This upset many people. As for the Church of Seraphim of Sarov, before it was recently renovated, it housed a theater of the arts; the altar had been destroyed.

Dare I say that the spirit of St. Seraphim, more than likely, would have had little to say about the development within the walls of the former Sarov compound of atomic and hydrogen bombs. Seraphim was a deeply peaceful holy man, and he never encroached upon the territory of the glorious patrons of Russian arms, Sergey Radonezhsky and Alexander Nevsky. As for the monastic life of St. Seraphim, it would seem that he would not have been able to either forbid or inspire the creation of the nuclear bomb. The political circumstances of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century were hidden from him by a thick veil of time. Attempts to ascribe to St. Seraphim patronage of the atom bomb are tantamount to an attempt to change the past, which, to the best of our knowledge, even God cannot do.

The intellectual and spiritual bridges with which some apologists try to connect Seraphim of Sarov with the atomic and hydrogen bombs are unconvincing. They essentially rely on a quote not from St. Seraphim himself, but from an acathistus written 70 years after his death on the occasion of his canonization in 1903. "Rejoice, shield and protector of our Fatherland." Meanwhile, it is no secret that neither by the sword nor by the bomb did the humble Seraphim protect the Russian land, but rather by his faith and Christian preaching, which called people to moral purification.

Arbitrary allusions ranging from a *tsar-bomba* museum artifact to a reliquary with the newly obtained relics of Seraphim of Sarov look like artificial ideological inventions that add neither holiness to the sainted miracle-worker and healer nor technical perfection to the Soviet bomb. It would seem that one cannot insert Orthodox tradition into the nuclear bomb without violating Christian morality and without unwittingly becoming like fundamentalist extremists who called in their own time to the creation of, for instance, an "Islamic" atom bomb. It would seem that any attempt to attach to the atom bomb a label, be it of Islamic, Confucian, Anglican, Buddhist, Catholic, or Orthodox origin, could only add an additional dimension to the historic dispute among the various religious faiths. Is it worth sowing the seeds of dissension and rupturing the world along the lines of one civilization or another? It would be a step backward towards the era of religious wars.

Reconciling the very humble Seraphim with the nuclear bomb is an unnatural image. It would hardly be possible for most people, whether believers or non-believers, to ask for physical or spiritual healing from a patron of the 50-megaton *kuzkina mat*, after the explosion of which the islands of Novaya Zemlya, it is rumored, shifted their geographical coordinates, and herds of deer, blinded by the unprecedented flash in the sky, wandered for some time afterward around the tundra.

What is worthy of admiration in the history of the epic Christian life of *starets* Seraphim is that the memory of the miracle worker could not be erased, despite all the ravages that have befall-

en the Sarov monastery. The life of St. Seraphim cannot be linked to the atom bomb. Something is not right here.

After the closed zone was established around the KB-11 design bureau in 1946-47, the city of Sarov began to be referred to by the following code names: Moscow, Center 300, Kremlev, Privolzhskaya kontora, and Arzamas-16. Its historical name was restored in 1995. Earlier, in 1991, the newly acquired relics of Seraphim of Sarov were transferred to the convent in Diveyevo.

Although, for security reasons, Sarov still has a pass system in effect all around its perimeter, the restoration of sacred Orthodox objects and places associated with the name of St. Seraphim can be regarded, with complete justification, as redemption for the debasement suffered by the Orthodox faith and church at the hands of bolshevism. It seems that a time will come, and ways and means will be found to completely restore the Sarov monastery as a place of pilgrimage for anyone who so desires, and not just certain individuals.

One should not, though, ignore history and undertake the “nuclear privatization” of St. Seraphim within the borders of the closed city, i.e. unite his preaching with the state matter of upgrading first the Soviet, and now the Russian nuclear arsenal. Render unto God what is God’s and unto Caesar what is Caesar’s.

The scientific feat of developing a Soviet nuclear bomb, thanks to which strategic parity with the United States was achieved, has in no way been forgotten. A model of the bomb is kept safely and reverently in the city’s Museum of Nuclear Weapons. And that is exactly where it belongs, not in a church. The Soviet-Russian nuclear bomb does not need the blessing of the church. In a church, it seems, one is to pray not about the atom bomb, but about preserving and strengthening peace on earth.

No one should be deluded by the coincidence of location. That St. Seraphim and KB-11 carried out their work on the territory of the Sarov monastery is a noteworthy historical fact occasioned by fate and, to a certain degree, the deliberate anti-religious policies of the state. There is no other way to understand this situation. Indeed, if you rely on another, mystical point of view, it is possible to imagine, for instance, that there is a connection between the holiness of the Solovetsky monastery and the Gulag, which, in the 1930s, flourished on its grounds. One could also take the Andronikov monastery in Moscow. After the October 1917 revolution, one of the first Soviet concentration camps was set up there to hold alien elements. Is it possible for there to be a relationship between this and the brilliant *Holy Trinity* created by Andrei Rublev within the walls of the monastery? Probably, yes, but only as a sign that highlights the militant godlessness of the authorities that converted a sacred place into a temporary prison.



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## THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The nuclear thinking of mankind is constantly evolving. The atom bomb is alternately being mercilessly cursed or praised for its stabilizing characteristics. Meanwhile, it’s worth noting that both the stabilizing and destabilizing effects on international politics that are derived from the nuclear weapon have a common underpinning—the weapon’s ability to cause a global catastrophe of unprecedented scale. Mutual nuclear deterrence is based on the fear of such a possibility.

As noted above, the concept of MAD, which compels a potential aggressor to sit quietly, represents a pragmatic choice of the “lesser evil.” No matter what is said, one should consider it a fair statement that all-out nuclear war represents an absolute evil. On the contrary, a nuclear world filled with anxiety is an absolute good. In aphoristic and paradoxical form, this was expressed by Bertrand Russell, who gave us the notion of “Better red than dead.”

Do the peacekeeping and intimidating functions of nuclear arsenals therefore imply that they should be absolved of immediate condemnation as an instrument of possible global catastrophe? Hardly, since despite the sincerity in its official names and titles, the nuclear weapon in all its incarnations was and still is what it is: a means of mass destruction. The principle of limiting and reducing nuclear weapons, which entered the flesh and blood of international politics in the 1960s and 1970s, along with the principle of the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, embody

a powerful moral and ethical imperative. To adhere to these principles from this point on means to work for the mitigation of international tensions, against military threats, and for peace and stability. On the contrary, abandoning these principles is a concession to global evil.

Steps to support nuclear deterrent forces have a positive moral and ethical meaning if they are taken within the framework of maintaining parity, i.e. in accordance with the principle of sufficiency. There is no contradiction here. This is a given in today's nuclear world.

One should always keep the moral ambiguity of the nuclear weapon in mind. It is a reliable guide that can be counted on to prevent us from falling into nuclear euphoria in hopes of political gain. This is important for both politicians and physicists to understand.

The same dilemma exists with physical sciences and the humanities. Which should be given preference? Neither of them should. Both are equally necessary. It would be impossible to do without the humanities, i.e. without morals.

The nuclear weapon is one of the harsh realities of our era. It is so harsh that contemporary Russian military doctrine rejected the unilateral renouncement by the Soviet Union of the first use of nuclear weapons. This change, one would suppose, was occasioned by the objective requirements of national security. The actual scale and nature of the threat might force one to resort to an extreme measure of restraining aggression, should it occur, by using nuclear arms on the battlefield.

Demagogic attempts to play the atomic card for "flag-waving" patriotic reasons as a "bargaining chip" in discussions about the necessity of "restoring the greatness" of Russia are objectionable. It's no secret that although the bipolarity of the Cold War era has collapsed, U.S.-Russian nuclear parity even now continues to fill its systemic role in ensuring the global balance of power. In the nuclear sense, the world is still primarily "bipolar" as opposed to multipolar and even more so to unipolar. Authoritative reports in the media about the practical steps being taken by Russian authorities to modernize and maintain the operational readiness of their ICBMs, SLBMs, long-range bombers, anti-missile systems, and air defenses show that our nuclear deterrent capability has been maintained at a sufficient level. Alarmism is harmful and out of place here. Nuclear capability must, on the one hand, provide a convincing nuclear deterrent while, on the other, not appearing confrontational, since this would damage stability.

The new dangers that have emerged in the international arena, which are primarily linked with the further spread of nuclear weapons and the more acute threat of terrorism, have marginalized the idea of nuclear disarmament as untimely and utopian. It is very seductive to accord the nuclear weapon the role of arbiter—"The Great Inquisitor"—something that is sorely needed to prevent nations from engaging in mortal combat for their own selfish interests.

Meanwhile, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the importance of the peacekeeping function of nuclear weapons in relationships among states. This approach would be tantamount to acknowledging the fatal inevitability of continuing the nuclear arms race and having these weapons continue to spread across the earth's surface. The predominance of force as a factor in politics would never end.

The doctrine of "limited nuclear war" does not provide a way out of the nuclear dead end. Proposed during the Cold War era, it induced a false sense of security in comparison with a total nuclear cataclysm. Under the influence of this military policy, the illusion of nuclear weapons suitable for achieving rational political objectives also arose. It is most fortunate that the formulations of this doctrine remained only on paper. Recently published top-secret Warsaw Pact materials show that a "limited" nuclear showdown between NATO and the Warsaw Pact would have left most of Europe in ruins. And this is without factoring in the dangers of escalation inherent in any use of nuclear weapons in an actual war.

In the face of global challenges of unprecedented scale—global warming, environmental destruction, epidemics, mass starvation, energy crises, etc.—mankind, for the sake of self-preservation, ultimately cannot avoid thinking about the necessity of making the transition to a qualitatively new type of cooperation in the global arena. Although there have been many contradictions, this transition is already occurring through globalization, meaning an increase in interdependence among states and their interests. As for the so-called "anti-globalists," who

in their idiotic rage smash storefronts and set fire to the vehicles of respectable citizens, it would seem that they sing with the alien voice of the masters of international terrorism. Confused young people make up for their unhappiness with their own social dislocation at the expense of people who have never done anything wrong to them. No doubt among these disheveled anti-globalists is a large percentage of paid provocateurs.

The stand-off along the demarcation of “socialism vs. capitalism,” which polarized the world during the Cold War, no longer exists. The direct threat of a global military catastrophe has been averted. The prerequisites for harmonizing national interests, for a joint effort to combat what are probably the main plagues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—international terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons—have materialized.

Mankind’s dependence on nuclear weapons to guarantee the absence of war will gradually fade into the past. Nuclear weapons will be replaced by rigorous international agreements overseen by the U.N. Security Council and stipulating strict control over the military activity of nations up to and including taking collective enforcement actions in the event of a violation of the prevailing peace.

The core of such an order would be a ban on nuclear weapons. This is not likely to happen overnight, as nations will approach nuclear disarmament in parallel with an advancing humanization of the entire system of international relations and the reinforcement of mutual trust. Within a context of confrontation, political squabbling, and active rivalry in military build-up, it would, of course, make no sense to pose a practical question about total and comprehensive disarmament. To freeze like a deer in the headlights before nuclear weapons is, however, also unacceptable and essentially immoral. The world deserves a better fate than to sit on the nuclear powder keg.

The contrariness of human nature is a serious argument in favor of nuclear disarmament. To avoid the devil’s temptation, the nuclear weapon, in the final analysis, must be taken away from us.

Certainly, the intriguing issue of deadlines remains: when, exactly, will it be possible to begin the systematic destruction of the prolific nuclear genie that has long been out of the bottle?

The program proposed by Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev in January 1986 stipulated that nuclear weapons would be destroyed by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One recalls how, at the U.S.-Soviet negotiations on nuclear and space-based weapons in Geneva, we, the Soviet diplomats, in accordance with our instructions, justified this approach in discussions with our counterparts. Our mission was made easier by the fact that we, understandably, devoted most of our attention to immediately practical problems in the area of arms limitations, reinforcing the ABM treaty, solving the problem of intermediate-range missiles, and deep cuts in strategic offensive weapons. We would, however, inevitably touch upon the theme of achieving a nuclear-free world.

In mid-1986, during an unofficial discussion, the U.S. assistant secretary of defense, Richard Perle, with whom I was privileged to prepare the draft Nuclear Risk Reduction Center Agreement, became interested in my personal views regarding how long it would take for nuclear disarmament to occur in light of the fact that nations had yet to reconcile politically. My reaction to Perle’s question, which was filled with skepticism, boiled down to saying that agreements to reduce nuclear arsenals on the way to disarmament would go together with changes in the very nature of relations among states, all the while moving away from Cold War traditions.

Perle, of course, did not believe that nuclear disarmament would happen any time soon. In the best-case scenario, according to him, it would not happen before the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At the time of our conversation, this seemed like something far over the horizon—a remote and vague future. Twenty years after our meeting, the timeline indicated by Perle has moved substantially closer in time. It’s interesting what he would have said if commenting on a problem he himself had brought up.

The difficulties of moving along the path of reducing the nuclear threat are obvious, but should not be turned into dead ends. The preservation of political tension, the return to old disputes and the search for new ones, and attempts to, one way or another, reanimate Cold War mores, will not yield any dividends.



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The color photographs taken by U.S. rovers of Martian deserts, where, as near as anyone can tell, oceans once existed, give one cause to think. What turned Mars into a trackless void? What caused the reversal of the magnetic field that, at one time, protected the Martian atmosphere, which has all but disappeared? The analogies with Mars serve as a warning and provide an incentive to take action.

The general director of IAEA, Doctor Mohammed ElBaradei, at a speech given upon the occasion of his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 2005, emphasized:

"I have no doubt that, if we hope to escape self-destruction, then nuclear weapons should have no place in our collective conscience, and no role in our security. To that end, we must ensure—absolutely—that no more countries acquire these deadly weapons. We must see to it that nuclear-weapon states take concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament. And we must put in place a security system that does not rely on nuclear deterrence."<sup>45</sup>

Given that ElBaradei is Muslim, these words embody a de facto ecumenical call for nuclear disarmament.

Now that passions surrounding the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty have died down, it would be possible to seriously take up the issue of the gradual renunciation of the concept of MAD by drafting broad U.S.-Russian agreements on mutual security, as opposed to mutual danger. These agreements could serve as reliable bulwarks against both nuclear terrorism and potential nuclear saboteurs.

At some point during U.S.-Soviet negotiations on limiting and reducing strategic arms, the principle of "parity and equal security" was formulated and successfully adopted. This was a time of acute political and ideological confrontation. In the new, post Cold-War era, the principle of "mutual security" would require the replacement of only one term.

Nuclear disarmament is on the agenda of the current Russian foreign policy doctrine. It seems that this component could be strengthened and made more concrete as a final objective, some type of beacon in the cause of eliminating the nuclear threat.

One should not succumb to over-optimistic dreams about a world completely free of conflict—that will obviously never come to pass. To resolve, however, emerging disputes without resorting to war or the threat of force, without brandishing, so to speak, a nuclear shin bone—it's difficult to find constructive alternatives to such a world order.

Here the main prerogatives belong to the U.N. Security Council. Under its aegis, it would be possible to establish an effective international mechanism for monitoring existing nuclear arsenals. Such a monitoring system would make it possible to eliminate the likelihood of unexpected nuclear aggression and/or to clearly identify the source of such danger. As a result, nuclear weapons, while yet on the verge of being completely banned, would be deprived of their gloomy aura as a terminator of mankind.

## **ON EXHIBIT**

An exhibit organized in the second half of the 1950s at Moscow's Gorky Park, presumably to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, comes to mind. In oversized paintings rendered in traditional Japanese style, the husband and wife team of artists—the Marukis—depicted the grief and suffering that befell the residents of these cities, incinerated by the atomic firestorm of August 1945. Here were the harrowing scenes of Dante's inferno on earth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A hell created by people.

Leafing through the pages of the guest book, as is my habit, I came across the following entry: "Why show this to people? This will surely happen again." One visitor did not want other visitors to be upset by the pictures of the inevitable fate of mankind.

As of now, however, it has been possible to avoid repeating the tragedy of the Japanese cities, despite the fact that many theoreticians were predicting an imminent atomic exchange. Thanks to the will of God. Thanks to adherence to the covenants of the doctrine of deterrence, which are nourished by the unquenchable instinct of self-preservation. And thanks to the tireless

work of diplomats enlisted in the cause of limiting nuclear arsenals, and also thanks to a capricious destiny that has not yet abandoned people.

There is, however, insufficient basis for unconditional optimism. Faith in the future of world civilization has to be bolstered by unflagging joint efforts directed towards the prevention and, in the final analysis, elimination of the risk of nuclear catastrophe. People will become accustomed to living in a world without the threat of mutual destruction. Only then it will be possible to manage without mutual nuclear deterrence or intimidation.

The moral ambivalence towards nuclear weapons is closely tied to their purpose—helping to preserve international stability. On the one hand, nuclear weapons hold the threat of catastrophe while, on the other, securing the balance of military power. In both cases, the goal is the same: to prevent the unleashing of aggressive fantasies. When, as a result of fundamental political changes in the international arena, nuclear weapons cease to be a factor in global parity, the dualistic formulas that must now be used when assessing nuclear weapons from a moral and ethical standpoint will be forgotten on the one hand, while, on the other... The atomic bomb will be used solely to destroy dangerous asteroids hurtling towards Earth. Instead of being the terminator of mankind, the atomic bomb will finally become its savior. 🐘

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Lucy Vogel, "A Symbolist's Inferno: Blok and Dante," *The Russian Review* 29 (January 1970), pp. 38-51.

<sup>2</sup> S. N. Bulgakov, *Sochineniya v dvukh tomakh [Collected Works in Two Volumes]* (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1993), Vol. 2, p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> *Zavtra* No. 507 (August 2003), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Niebuhr Reinhold, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. vii-viii.

<sup>5</sup> G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya [Reminiscences and Reflections]* (Moscow: Novosti Publishers, 1995), p. 336.

<sup>6</sup> A. P. Sudoplatov, *Raznyye dni taynoy voyny i diplomatii. 1941 god [Some Days in the Secret War and Diplomacy. 1941]* (Moscow: OLMA-Press, 2001), p. 314.

<sup>7</sup> Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2002), p. 174.

<sup>8</sup> *Izvestiya*, February 28, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Felix Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym: iz dnevnika F. Chuyeva [Molotov Remembers Conversations with Felix Chuev]* (Moscow: TERRA, 1991), p. 90.

<sup>10</sup> James Burnham, *The Struggle for the World* (New York: The John Day Company, Inc., 1947), pp. 244-245.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>12</sup> George Kennan, *Diplomatiya vtoroy mirovoy voyny. Glazami amerikanskogo posla v SSSR Dzhordzha Kennana [translation of Memoirs: 1925-1950]* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2002), pp. 257-258.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>15</sup> Reinhold, pp. 145-146.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Teller, *Memoirs. A Twentieth-Century Journey in Science and Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Publishing, October 2001), p. 215.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.



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<sup>22</sup> *Izvestiya*, April 17, 1994, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> Andrei Sakharov, *Vospominaniya v dvukh tomakh. Tom pervyy [Memoirs, Volume I]* (Moscow: Human Rights Publishers, 1996), pp. 270-271.

<sup>24</sup> Hugo Grotius, *O prave voyny i mira [On the Laws of War and Peace, translation of De jure belli ac pacis (Paris, 1625)]* (Moscow: State Publishers of Political Literature, 1956), p. 538.

<sup>25</sup> Report of the President's Commission on Strategic Forces, April 1983, pp. 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 287.

<sup>27</sup> Norman Cousins, "High-Tech Arms Leave Little Time to Avert Disaster," *International Herald Tribune*, February 8-9, 1986, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Grotius, *On the Laws of War and Peace*, p. 569.

<sup>29</sup> *Independent Military Review* 358 (December 5-18, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. xiv.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp xxii-xxiii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>37</sup> "Nuclear War Strategy," Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Ninety-Sixth Congress, Second Session on Presidential Directive 59, September 16, 1980 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>42</sup> *Zavtra* 507 (August 2003), p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Pravoslavnaya entsiklopediya [Orthodox Encyclopedia]* (Moscow: Rusizdat, 1999), p. 450.

<sup>44</sup> Saint Seraphim spent more than 25 years (1784-1810) as a hermit in the "wilderness," surviving an attack by robbers, during which he was badly beaten. During this time, he passed 1,000 days and 1,000 nights in prayer on a rock in a remote forest, living on grass. In 1810, Seraphim went into seclusion in a monastery. Then, in 1820, he came out of seclusion and began to receive believers, who came to him for consolation and healing. Seraphim of Sarov had a heart filled with pious love for people. He rejected black clothes and went around in a white cassock. He brimmed with pastoral joy and faith in the Risen Christ throughout the year. He greeted everyone with "Good day, my dear! Christ has risen!" His biographers report that, since childhood, Seraphim had enjoyed the special patronage of the Mother of God, who appeared to him on more than one occasion. Not far from the Sarov monastery—in Diveyevo—he founded and looked after a convent.

Reverence for Seraphim of Sarov began while he was still living, and after his death, people from all over the country came to his chambers. The canonization of St. Seraphim took place at the behest of archimandrite Seraphim (Chichagov), who told the story of the *starets'* life to Emperor Nicholas II. In 1903, the entire imperial family attended the canonization ceremony in Sarov. Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, who dreamed of having a son, bathed while praying in the miraculous spring of Saint Seraphim, and soon became pregnant, giving birth a year later to the heir to the throne, her son Alexei. The grateful emperor decreed that a cathedral be built in Sarov, and St. Seraphim's relics were enshrined there.

<sup>45</sup> *IAEA Information Bulletin*, December 10, 2005, p. 2.