

European Nuclear Disarmament

Ken Coates

This abridged article was published in Spokesman 38, in 1980, and was later included in the collection Eleventh Hour for Europe, which appeared in 1981.

‘Remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.’

Russell-Einstein Manifesto, 1955

The most dangerous decade in history ...

At the end of April 1980, following some months of consultation and preparation, an appeal for European Nuclear Disarmament was launched at a press conference in the House of Commons, and at meetings in a variety of European capital cities. The text of the appeal reads:

We are entering the most dangerous decade in human history. A third world war is not merely possible, but increasingly likely. Economic and social difficulties in advanced industrial countries, crisis, militarism and war in the Third World compound the political tensions that fuel a demented arms race. In Europe, the main geographical stage for the East-West confrontation, new generations of ever more deadly nuclear weapons are appearing.

For at least twenty-five years, the forces of both the North Atlantic and the Warsaw alliances have each had sufficient nuclear weapons to annihilate their opponents, and at the same time to endanger the very basis of civilised life. But with each passing year, competition in nuclear armaments has multiplied their numbers, increasing the probability of some devastating accident or miscalculation.

As each side tries to prove its readiness to use nuclear weapons, in order to prevent their use by the other side, new more ‘usable’ nuclear weapons are designed and the idea of ‘limited’ nuclear war is made to sound more and more plausible. So much so that this paradoxical process can logically only lead to the actual use of nuclear weapons.

Neither of the major powers is now in any moral position to influence smaller countries to forgo the acquisition of nuclear armament. The increasing spread of nuclear reactors and the growth of the industry that installs them, reinforce the likelihood of world-wide proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby multiplying the risks of nuclear exchanges.

Over the years, public opinion has pressed for nuclear disarmament and détente between the contending military blocs. This pressure has failed. An increasing proportion of world resources is expended on weapons, even though mutual extermination is already amply guaranteed. This economic burden, in both East and West, contributes to growing social and political strain, setting in motion a vicious circle in which the arms race feeds upon the instability of the world economy and vice versa: a deathly dialectic.

We are now in great danger. Generations have been born beneath the shadow of nuclear war, and have become habituated to the threat. Concern has given way to apathy. Meanwhile, in a world living always under menace, fear extends through both halves of the European continent. The powers of the military and of internal security forces are enlarged, limitations are placed upon free exchanges of ideas and between persons, and civil rights of independent-minded individuals are threatened, in the West as well as the East.

We do not wish to apportion guilt between the political and military leaders of East and West. Guilt lies squarely upon both parties. Both parties have adopted menacing postures and committed aggressive actions in different parts of the world.

The remedy lies in our own hands. We must act together to free the entire territory of Europe, from Poland to Portugal, from nuclear weapons, air and submarine bases, and from all institutions engaged in research into or manufacture of nuclear weapons. We ask the two superpowers to withdraw all nuclear weapons from European territory. In particular, we ask the Soviet Union to halt production of the SS-20 medium range missile and we ask the United States not to implement the decision to develop cruise missiles and Pershing II missiles for deployment in Europe. We also urge the ratification of the SALT II agreement, as a necessary step towards the renewal of effective negotiations on general and complete disarmament.

At the same time, we must defend and extend the right of all citizens, East or West, to take part in this common movement and to engage in every kind of exchange.

We appeal to our friends in Europe, of every faith and persuasion, to consider urgently the ways in which we can work together for these common objectives. We envisage a European-wide campaign, in which every kind of exchange takes place; in which representatives of different nations and opinions confer and co-ordinate their activities; and in which less formal exchanges, between universities, churches, women's organisations, trade unions, youth organisations, professional groups and individuals, take place with the object of promoting a common object: to free all of Europe from nuclear weapons.

We must commence to act as if a united, neutral and pacific Europe already exists. We must learn to be loyal, not to 'East' or 'West', but to each other, and we must disregard the prohibitions and limitations imposed by any national state.

It will be the responsibility of the people of each nation to agitate for the expulsion of nuclear weapons and bases from European soil and territorial waters, and to decide upon its own means and strategy, concerning its own territory. These will differ from one country to another, and we do not suggest that any single strategy should be imposed. But this must be part of a continental movement in which every kind of exchange takes place.

We must resist any attempt by the statesmen of East and West to manipulate this movement to their own advantage. We offer no advantage to either Nato or the Warsaw alliance. Our objectives must be to free Europe from confrontation, to enforce détente between the United States and the Soviet Union, and, ultimately, to dissolve both great power alliances.

European Nuclear Disarmament

49

In appealing to fellow Europeans, we are not turning our backs on the world. In working for the peace of Europe we are working for the peace of the world. Twice in this century Europe has disgraced its claims to civilisation by engendering world war. This time we must repay our debts to the world by engendering peace.

This appeal will achieve nothing if it is not supported by determined and inventive action, to win more people to support it. We need to mount an irresistible pressure for a Europe free of nuclear weapons.

We do not wish to impose any uniformity on the movement nor to pre-empt the consultations and decisions of those many organisations already exercising their influence for disarmament and peace. But the situation is urgent. The dangers steadily advance. We invite your support for this common objective, and we shall welcome both your help and advice.

Several hundred people, many of whom were prominent in their own field of work, had already endorsed this statement before its publication. They included over sixty British MPs from four different political parties, and a number of peers, bishops, artists, composers and university teachers. The press conference, which was addressed by Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Mary Kaldor, Bruce Kent, Zhores Medvedev, Dan Smith and Edward Thompson, launched a campaign for signatures to the appeal and by Hiroshima Day (August 6th, the anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Japan) influential support had been registered in many different countries. Writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Olivia Manning, John Berger, Trevor Griffiths, J.B. Priestley and Melvyn Bragg had joined with church leaders, political spokesmen, painters (Joan Miro, Vasarely, Josef Herman, David Tindle, Piero Dorazio), Nobel Prize winners and thousands of men and women working in industry and the professions. British signatories included the composer Peter Maxwell Davies, the doyen of cricket commentators, John Arlott, distinguished soldiers such as Sir John Glubb and Brigadier M.N. Harbottle, and trade union leaders (Moss Evans, Laurence Daly, Arthur Scargill and many others). It was generally agreed that a European meeting was necessary, in order to work out means of developing the agitation, and in order to discuss all the various issues and problems which are in need of elaboration, over and beyond the text of the appeal.

The Bertrand Russell Foundation is working on the preparation of this Conference. A small liaison committee has been established to coordinate the work in Great Britain, and various persons and groups have accepted the responsibility for co-ordinating action in particular fields of work. For instance, a group of parliamentarians will be appealing to their British colleagues, but also to MPs throughout Europe; academics will be writing to their own immediate circles, but also seeking international contacts; churches are being approached through Pax Christi; and an active trade union group has begun to develop.

‘A demented arms race ...’

1980 began with an urgent and concerned discussion about rearmament. The Pope, in his New Year Message, caught the predominant mood: ‘What can one say’, he asked, ‘in the face of the gigantic and threatening military arsenals which

especially at the close of 1979 have caught the attention of the world and especially of Europe, both East and West?’

War in Afghanistan; American hostages in Tehran, and dramatic pile-ups in the Iranian deserts, as European-based American commandos failed to ‘spring’ them; wars or threats of war in South East Asia, the Middle East, and Southern Africa: at first sight, all the world in turbulence, excepting only Europe. Yet in spite of itself Europe is at the fixed centre of the arms race; and it is in Europe that many of the most fearsome weapons are deployed. What the Pope was recognising at the opening of the decade was that conflicts in any other zone might easily spill back into the European theatre, where they would then destroy our continent.

Numbers of statesmen have warned about this furious accumulation of weapons during the late ‘seventies. It has been a persistent theme of such eminent neutral spokesmen as Olof Palme of Sweden, or President Tito of Yugoslavia. Lord Mountbatten, in his last speech, warned that ‘the frightening facts about the arms race ... show that we are rushing headlong towards a precipice’.¹ Why has this ‘headlong rush’ broken out? First, because of the world-wide division between what is nowadays called ‘North’ and ‘South’. In spite of United Nations initiatives, proposals for a new economic order which could assist economic development have not only not been implemented, but have been stalemated while conditions have even been aggravated by the oil crisis. Poverty was never morally acceptable, but it is no longer politically tolerable in a world which can speak to itself through transistors, while over and again in many areas starvation recurs. In others, millions remain on the verge of the merest subsistence. The Third World is thus a zone of revolts, revolutions, interventions, and wars.

To avoid or win these, repressive leaders like the former Shah of Iran are willing to spend unheard of wealth on arms, and the arms trade paradoxically often takes the lead over all other exchanges, even in countries where malnutrition is endemic. At the same time, strategic considerations bring into play the superpowers, as ‘revolutionary’ or ‘counter-revolutionary’ supports. This produces some extraordinary alignments and confrontations, such as those between the Ethiopian military and Somalia and Eritrea, where direct Cuban and Soviet intervention has been a crucial factor, even though the Eritreans have been engaged in one of the longest-running liberation struggles in all Africa: or such as the renewed Indo-China war following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, in which remnants of the former Cambodian communist government appear to have received support from the United States, even though it only came into existence in opposition to American secret bombing, which destroyed the physical livelihood of the country together with its social fabric. A variety of such direct and indirect interventions owes everything to geopolitical expediency, and nothing to the ideals invoked to justify them. Such processes help promote what specialists call the ‘horizontal’ proliferation of nuclear weapons, to new, formerly non-nuclear states, at the same time that they add their pressure to the ‘vertical’ proliferation between the superpowers.

Second, the emergence of China into the community of nations (if this phrase

can nowadays be used without cynicism) complicates the old pattern of interplay between the blocs. Where yesterday there was a tug o' war between the USA and the USSR, with each principal mobilising its own team of supporters at its end of the rope, now there is a triangular contest, in which both of the old-established contestants may, in future, seek to play the China team. At the moment, the Chinese are most worried about the Russians, which means that the Russians will feel a constant need to augment their military readiness on their 'second' front, while the Americans will seek to match Soviet preparedness overall, making no differentiation between the 'theatres' against which the Russians see a need for defence. It should be noted that the Chinese Government still considers that war is 'inevitable', although it has apparently changed its assessment of the source of the threat. (It is the more interesting, in this context, that the Chinese military budget for 1980 is the only one which is being substantially reduced, by \$1.9 billion, or 8.5%).

Third, while all these political cauldrons boil, the military-technical processes have their own logic, which is fearsome.

Stacked around the world at the beginning of the decade, there was a minimum of 50,000 nuclear warheads belonging to the two main powers, whose combined explosive capacity exceeds by one million times the destructive power of the first atomic bomb which was dropped on Hiroshima. The number grows continually. This is 'global overkill'. Yet during the next decade, the USA and USSR will be manufacturing a further 20,000 warheads, some of unimaginable force ...

Limited war: the end of Europe?

In spite of détente, and the relatively stable relations between its two main halves during the past decade, Europe remains by far the most militaristic zone of the contemporary world.

At least 10,000, possibly 15,000, warheads are stockpiled in Europe for what is called 'tactical' or 'theatre' use. The Americans have installed something between 7,000 and 10,000 of these, and the Russians between 3,500 and 5,000. The yields of these weapons range, it is believed, between something less than one kiloton and up to three megatons. In terms of Hiroshima bombs, one three-megaton warhead would have the force of 250 such weapons. But nowadays this is seen as a 'theatre' armament, usable in a 'limited' nuclear war. 'Strategic' bombs, for use in the final stages of escalation, may be as large as 20 megatons. (Although, of course, those destined for certain types of targets are a lot smaller. The smallest could be a 'mere' 30 or 40 kilotons, or two or three Hiroshimas). Towns in Europe are not commonly far apart from one another. There exist no vast unpopulated tracts, plains, prairies or tundras, in which to confine a nuclear war. Military installations nestle among and between busy urban centres. As Zuckerman has insisted 'the distances between villages are no greater than the radius of effect of low yield weapons of a few kilotons; between towns and cities, say a megaton' ...

President Nixon first propounded the doctrine of limited nuclear war in his *State of the World* message of 1971. The USA, he said, needed to provide itself

with ‘alternatives appropriate to the nature and level of the provocation ... without necessarily having to resort to mass destruction’. Mountbatten, of course, is quite right to find it all incredible. ‘I have never been able to accept the reasons for the belief that any class of nuclear weapons can be categorised in terms of their tactical or strategic purposes’, he said.

As Lord Zuckerman put it to the Pugwash Conference:

‘I do not believe that nuclear weapons could be used in what is now fashionably called a “theatre war”’. I do not believe that any scenario exists which suggests that nuclear weapons could be used in field warfare between two nuclear states without escalation resulting. I know of several such exercises. They all lead to the opposite conclusion. There is no Marquess of Queensberry who would be holding the ring in a nuclear conflict. I cannot see teams of physicists attached to military staffs who would run to the scene of a nuclear explosion and then back to tell their local commanders that the radiation intensity of a nuclear strike by the other side was such and such, and that therefore the riposte should be only a weapon of equivalent yield. If the zone of lethal or wounding neutron radiation of a so-called neutron bomb would have, say, a radius of half a kilometre, the reply might well be a “dirty” bomb with the same zone of radiation, but with a much wider area of devastation due to the blast and fire.’²

Pressure from the Allies has meant that Presidential statements on the issue of limited war have swung backwards and forwards. At times President Carter has given the impression that he is opposed to the doctrine. But the revelation of ‘directive 59’, in August 1980, shows that there is, in fact, a continuous evolution in US military policy, apparently regardless of political hesitations by Governments. Directive 59 is a flat-out regression to the pure Nixon doctrine. As the *New York Times* put it:

‘(Defense Secretary) Brown seems to expand the very meaning of deterrence alarmingly. Typically, advocates of flexible targeting argue that it will deter a sneak attack. But Brown’s speech says the new policy is also intended to deter a variety of lesser aggressions, ... including conventional military aggression ...’

Obviously, as the *NYT* claims, this is liable to increase the likelihood that nuclear weapons will be used’.³

Where would such weapons be used? That place would experience total annihilation, and in oblivion would be unable to consider the nicety of ‘tactical’ or ‘strategic’ destruction. If ‘limited’ nuclear exchanges mean anything at all, the only limitation which is thinkable is their restriction to a particular zone. And that is precisely why politicians in the United States find ‘limited’ war more tolerable than the other sort, because it leaves a hope that escalation to the total destruction of both superpowers might be a second-stage option, to be deferred during the negotiations which could be undertaken while Europe burns. It does not matter whether the strategists are right in their assumptions or not. There are strong reasons why a Russian counter-attack ought (within the lights of the Soviet authorities) to be directed at the USA as well as Europe, if Soviet military strategists are as thoughtful as we may presume. But the very fact that Nato is

being programmed to follow this line of action means that Europeans must awaken to understand what a sinister mutation has taken place, beneath the continuing official chatter about 'deterrence'.

The fact that current Soviet military planning speaks a different language does not in the least imply that Europe can escape this dilemma. If one side prepares for a 'theatre' war in our continent, the other will, if and when necessary, respond, whether or not it accepts the protocol which is proposed for the orderly escalation of annihilation from superpower peripheries to superpower centres. The material reality which will control events is the scope and range of the weapons deployed: and the very existence of tens of thousands of theatre weapons implies, in the event of war, that there will be a 'theatre war'. There may be a 'strategic' war as well, in spite of all plans to the contrary. It will be too late for Europe to know or care.

All those missiles and bombs could never be used in Europe without causing death and destruction on a scale hitherto unprecedented and inconceivable. The continent would become a hecatomb, and in it would be buried, not only tens, hundreds of millions of people, but also the remains of a civilisation. If some Europeans survived, in Swiss shelters or British Government bunkers, they would emerge to a cannibal universe in which every humane instinct had been cauterised. Like the tragedy of Cambodia, only on a scale greatly wider and more profound, the tragedy of post-nuclear Europe would be lived by a mutilated people, prone to the most restrictive and destructive xenophobia, ganging for support into pathetic strong-arm squads in order to club a survival for themselves out of the skulls of others, and fearful of their own shadows. The worlds which came into being in the Florentine renaissance would have been totally annulled, and not only the monuments would be radioactive. On such deathly foundations, 'communism' may be installed, in the Cambodian manner, or some other more primary anarchies or brutalisms may maintain a hegemony of sorts. What is plain is that any and all survivors of a European theatre war will look upon the days before the holocaust as a golden age, and hope will have become, quite literally, a thing of the past.

A move towards European Nuclear Disarmament may not avoid this fearful outcome. Until general nuclear disarmament has been agreed and implemented no man or woman will be able to feel safe. But such a move may break the logic of the arms race, transform the meanings of the blocs, and begin a unified and irresistible pressure on both the superpowers to reverse their engines away from war.

We must act together ...

If the powers want to have a bit of a nuclear war, they will want to have it away from home. And if we do not wish to be their hosts for such a match, then, regardless of whether they are right or wrong in supposing that they can confine it to our 'theatre', we must discover a new initiative which can move us towards disarmament. New technologies will not do this, and nor will introspection and conscience suddenly seize command in both superpowers at once.

We are looking for a *political* step which can open up new forms of public pressure, and bring into the field of force new moral resources, Partly this is a

matter of ending superpower domination of the most important negotiations.

But another part of the response must involve a multinational mobilisation of public opinion. In Europe, this will not begin until people appreciate the exceptional vulnerability of their continent. One prominent statesman who has understood, and drawn attention to, this extreme exposure, is Olof Palme. During an important speech at a Helsinki Conference of the Socialist International, he issued a strong warning. ‘Europe’, he said, ‘is no special zone where peace can be taken for granted. In actual fact, it is at the centre of the arms race. Granted, the general assumption seems to be that any potential military conflict between the superpowers is going to start someplace other than in Europe. But even if that were to be the case, we would have to count on one or the other party – in an effort to gain supremacy — trying to open a front on our continent, as well. As Alva Myrdal has recently pointed out, a war can simply be transported here, even though actual causes for war do not exist. Here there is a ready theatre war. Here there have been great military forces for a long time. Here there are programmed weapons all ready for action ...’⁴

Basing himself on this recognition, Mr Palme recalled various earlier attempts to create, in North and Central Europe, nuclear-free zones, from which, by agreement, all warheads were to be excluded. (We look at the history of these proposals, below). He then drew a conclusion of historic significance, which provides the most real, and most hopeful, possibility of generating a truly continental opposition to this continuing arms race:

‘Today more than ever there is, in my opinion, every reason to go on working for a nuclear-free zone. *The ultimate objective of these efforts should be a nuclear-free Europe.* (My emphasis.) The geographical area closest at hand would naturally be Northern and Central Europe. If these areas could be freed from the nuclear weapons stationed there today, the risk of total annihilation in case of a military conflict would be reduced.’

Olof Palme’s initiative was launched exactly a month before the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, which gave rise to a Final Document which is a strong, if tacit, indictment of the arms race that has actually accelerated sharply since it was agreed. A World Disarmament Campaign was launched in 1980, by Lord Noel Baker and Lord Brockway, and a comprehensive cross-section of voluntary peace organisations: it had the precise intention of securing the implementation of this Document. But, although the goal of the UN Special Session was ‘general and complete disarmament’ as it should have been, it is commonly not understood that this goal was deliberately coupled with a whole series of intermediate objectives, including Palme’s own proposals. Article 33 of the statement reads:

‘The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements or arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the zone concerned, and the full compliance with those agreements or arrangements, thus ensuring that the zones are genuinely free from nuclear weapons, and respect for such zones by nuclear-weapon States, constitute an important disarmament measure.’

European Nuclear Disarmament

55

Later, the declaration goes on to spell out this commitment in considerable detail. It begins with a repetition:

‘The establishment of nuclear-weapons-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, constitutes an important disarmament measure,’

and then continues:

‘The process of establishing such zones in different parts of the world should be encouraged with the ultimate objective of achieving a world entirely free of nuclear weapons. In the process of establishing such zones, the characteristics of each region should be taken into account. The States participating in such zones should undertake to comply fully with all the objectives, purposes and principles of the agreements or arrangements establishing the zones, thus ensuring that they are genuinely free from nuclear weapons.

With respect to such zones, the nuclear-weapon States in turn are called upon to give undertakings, the modalities of which are to be negotiated with the competent authority of each zone, in particular:

- (a) to respect strictly the status of the nuclear-free zone;
- (b) to refrain from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against the States of the zone ...

States of the region should solemnly declare that they will refrain on a reciprocal basis from producing, acquiring, or in any other way, possessing nuclear explosive devices, and from permitting the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory by any third party and agree to place all their nuclear activities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.’

Article 63 of this final document schedules several areas for consideration as nuclear-free zones. They include Africa, where the Organisation of African Unity has resolved upon ‘the denuclearisation of the region’, but also the Middle East and South Asia, which are listed alongside South and Central America, whose pioneering treaty offers a possible model for others to follow. This is the only populous area to have been covered by an existing agreement, which was concluded by the Treaty of Tlatelolco (a suburb of Mexico City), opened for signature from February 1967.

There are other zones which are covered by more or less similar agreements. Conservationists will be pleased that they include Antarctica, the moon, outer space, and the seabed. Two snags exist in this respect. One is that the effectiveness of the agreed arrangements is often questioned. The other is that if civilisation is destroyed, the survivors may not be equipped to establish themselves comfortably in safe havens among penguins or deep-sea plants and fish, leave alone upon the moon.

That is why a Martian might be surprised by the omission of Europe from the queue of continents (Africa, Near Asia, the Far East all in course of pressing; and Latin America, with the exception of Cuba, already having agreed) to negotiate coverage within nuclear-free zones. If Europe is the most vulnerable region, the

prime risk, with a dense concentration of population, the most developed and destructible material heritage to lose, and yet no obvious immediate reasons to go to war, why is there any hesitation at all about making Olof Palme's 'ultimate objective' into an immediate and urgent demand?

If we are agreed that 'it does not matter where the bombs come from', there is another question which is more pertinent. This is, where will they be sent to? Clearly, high priority targets are all locations from which response might otherwise come. There is therefore a very strong advantage for all Europe if 'East' and 'West', in terms of the deployment of nuclear arsenals, can literally and rigorously become coterminous with 'USA' and 'USSR'. This would constitute a significant pressure on the superpowers since each would thenceforward have a priority need to target on the silos of the other, and the present logic of 'theatre' thinking would all be reversed.

Nuclear-free zones in Europe

If Europe as a whole has not hitherto raised the issue of its possible denuclearisation, there have been a number of efforts to sanitise smaller regions within the continent.

The idea that groups of nations in particular areas might agree to forgo the manufacture or deployment of nuclear weapons, and to eschew research into their production, was first seriously mooted in the second half of the 1950s. In 1956, the USSR attempted to open discussions on the possible restriction of armaments, under inspection, and the prohibition of nuclear weapons, within both German States and some adjacent countries. The proposal was discussed in the Disarmament Sub-Committee of the United Nations, but it got no further. But afterwards the foreign secretary of Poland, Adam Rapacki, took to the Twelfth Session of the UN General Assembly a plan to outlaw both the manufacture and the harbouring of nuclear arsenals in all the territories of Poland, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal German Republic. The Czechoslovaks and East Germans quickly endorsed this suggestion.

Rapacki's proposals would have come into force by four separate unilateral decisions of each relevant government. Enforcement would have been supervised by a commission drawn from Nato countries, Warsaw Pact adherents, and non-aligned states. Inspection posts, with a system of ground and air controls, were to be established to enable the commission to function. Subject to this supervision, neither nuclear weapons, nor installations capable of harbouring or servicing them, nor missile systems, would have been permitted in the entire designated area. Nuclear powers were thereupon expected to agree not to use nuclear weapons against the denuclearised zone, and not to deploy their own atomic warheads with any of their conventional forces stationed within it.

The plan was rejected by the Nato powers, on the grounds, first, that it did nothing to secure German reunification, and second, that it failed to cover the deployment of conventional armaments. In 1958, therefore, Rapacki returned with modified proposals. Now he suggested a phased approach. In the beginning,

nuclear stockpiles would be frozen at their existing levels within the zone. Later, the removal of these weapon stocks would be accompanied by controlled and mutually agreed reductions in conventional forces. This initiative, too, was rejected.

Meanwhile, in 1957, Romania proposed a similar project to denuclearise the Balkans. This plan was reiterated in 1968, and again in 1972.

In 1959, the Irish Government outlined a plan for the creation of nuclear-free zones throughout the entire planet, which were to be developed region-by-region. In the same year, the Chinese People's Republic suggested that the Pacific Ocean and all Asia be constituted a nuclear-free-zone, and, in 1960, various African states elaborated similar proposals for an all-African agreement. (These were tabled again in 1965, and yet again in 1974).

In 1962, the Polish government offered yet another variation on the Rapacki Plan, which would have maintained its later notion of phasing, but which would now have permitted other European nations to join in if they wished to extend the original designated area. In the first stage, existing levels of nuclear weaponry and rocketry would be frozen, prohibiting the creation of new bases. Then, as in the earlier version, nuclear and conventional armaments would be progressively reduced according to a negotiated timetable. The rejection of this 1962 version was the end of the Rapacki proposals, but they were followed, in 1964, by the so-called 'Gomulka' plan, which was designed to affect the same area, but which offered more restricted goals.

Although the main Nato powers displayed no real interest in all these efforts, they did arouse some real concern and sympathy in Scandinavia. As early as October 1961, the Swedish government tabled what became known as the Undén Plan (named after Sweden's foreign minister) at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. This supported the idea of nuclear-free zones and a 'non-atomic club', and advocated their general acceptance. Certain of its proposals, concerning non-proliferation and testing, were adopted by the General Assembly.

But the Undén Plan was never realised, because the USA and others maintained at the time that nuclear-free zones were an inappropriate approach to disarmament, which could only be agreed in a comprehensive 'general and complete' decision. Over and over again this most desirable end has been invoked to block any less total approach to discovering any practicable means by which it might be achieved.

In 1963, President Kekkonen of Finland called for the reopening of talks on the Undén Plan. Finland and Sweden were both neutral already, he said, while Denmark and Norway, notwithstanding their membership of Nato, had no nuclear weapons of their own, and deployed none of those belonging to their Alliance. But although this constituted a *de facto* commitment, it would, he held, be notably reinforced by a deliberate collective decision to confirm it as an enduring joint policy.

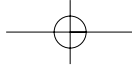
The Norwegian premier responded to this *démarche* by calling for the inclusion of sections of the USSR in the suggested area. As long ago as 1959, Nikita Khrushchev had suggested a Nordic nuclear-free zone, but no approach was

apparently made to him during 1963 to discover whether the USSR would be willing to underpin such a project with any concession to the Norwegian viewpoint. However, while this argument was unfolding, again in 1963, Khrushchev launched yet another similar proposal, for a nuclear-free Mediterranean.

The fall of Khrushchev took much of the steam out of such diplomatic forays, even though new proposals continued to emerge at intervals. In May 1974, the Indian government detonated what it described as a 'peaceful' nuclear explosion. This provoked renewed proposals for a nuclear-free zone in the Near East, from both Iran and the United Arab Republic, and it revived African concern with the problem. Probably the reverberations of the Indian bang were heard in New Zealand, because that nation offered up a suggestion for a South Pacific free-zone, later in the same year.

Yet, while the European disarmament lobbies were stalemated, the Latin American Treaty had already been concluded in 1967, and within a decade it had secured the adherence of 25 states. The last of the main nuclear powers to endorse it was the USSR, which confirmed its general support in 1978. (Cuba withheld endorsement because it reserved its rights pending the evacuation of the Guantanamo base by the United States.) African pressures for similar agreement are notably influenced by the threat of a South African nuclear military capacity, which is an obvious menace to neighbouring Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Angola, and a standing threat to the Organisation of African Unity. In the Middle East, Israel plays a similar catalysing role, and fear of an Israeli bomb is widespread throughout the region.

Why, then, this lag between Europe and the other continents? If the pressure for denuclearised zones began in Europe, and if the need for them, as we have seen, remains direct there, why have the peoples of the Third World been, up to now, so much more effectively vocal on this issue than those of the European continent? Part of the answer surely lies in the prevalence of the Non-Aligned Movement among the countries of the Third World. Apart from a thin scatter of neutrals, Europe is the seed-bed of alignments, and the interests of the blocs as apparently disembodied entities are commonly prayed as absolute within it. In reality, of course, the blocs are not 'disembodied'. Within them, in military terms, superpowers rule. They control the disposition and development of the two major 'deterrents'. They keep the keys and determine if and when to fire. They displace the constituent patriotisms of the member states with a kind of bloc loyalty, which solidly implies that in each bloc there is a leading state, not only in terms of military supply, but also in terms of the determination of policy. To be sure, each bloc is riven with mounting internal tension. Economic competition divides the West, which enters the latest round of the arms race in a prolonged and, for some, mortifying slump. In the East, divergent interests are not so easily expressed, but they certainly exist, and from time to time become manifest. For all this, subordinate states on either side find it very difficult to stand off from their protectors.



European Nuclear Disarmament

59

But stand off we all must. The logic of preparation for a war in our 'theatre' is remorseless, and the profound worsening of tension between the superpowers at a time of world-wide economic and social crisis all serves to speed up the gadarene race ...

Footnotes

1. *Apocalypse Now?* Spokesman, 1980, p. 3
2. F. Griffiths and J. C. Polanyi: *The Dangers of Nuclear War*, University of Toronto Press, 1980, 1980, p. 164.
3. Editorial, August 1980.
4. This speech is reproduced in full in *European Nuclear Disarmament: A Bulletin of Work in Progress* (Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation), No. 1, 1980.

