

Editorial



Nuke count: who do we believe?

Last week Leonid Brezhnev proposed that by 1990 the United States and the Soviet Union each cut their arsenals of medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe by two-thirds. To no one's surprise, the United States rejected the plan on grounds that it would preserve a Soviet advantage in Europe.

This all happened just a few months after Reagan proposed the "zero option" plan, whereby we would not put more nukes in Europe if the Russians would dismantle all those they already have. The Russians, of course, don't like this plan. They contend that medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe are at rough parity, and that Reagan's plan would give the United States an advantage.

At the core of the problem is the disagreement as to how many medium-range nuclear missiles each side already has. The Russians claim that each side has about 1,000 such weapons while the Americans claim that the Soviet Union has 3,825 and the United States a paltry 560.

One interesting facet of the whole estimation process is that there doesn't seem to be any agreement as to which weapons should be classified in the medium-range nuclear category. We don't know what they are, but we do know that whatever they are, they've got 3,825 of them and we only have 560.

Such wildly differing totals are not easy to create. A certain amount of practice and expertise must go into the

project from both sides to find measures so different that they produce the figures each claims.

Who do we believe? The easy thing would be to just believe the American reports; the Commies are out to get us, after all. But to do so is to fly in the face of any number of lies our government has told us in the past (see Vietnam history for more on this topic.) But surely we cannot trust the reports from the Russians either, as they so consistently ensure that "truth" conforms to the party line.

The result is that the process of nuclear disarmament gets nowhere, and the actual number of weapons each side has remains a mystery. One could as easily derive a reliable estimate of nuclear weapons by throwing darts at a numbered board as by reading government figures.

A larger problem here is that not only are governments willing and able to generate lies, but they also must believe the lies they generate and act in accordance with them. Suppose we go to the bargaining table claiming the Russians have a rough 7-1 advantage (3,500-500) in medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe and then negotiate a deal for bilateral reductions of those numbers. Sure, it's a long shot. By our own version of the situation, we will have lost, no matter what the outcome is in fact.

The only way the rest of the world can be sure that the United States-Soviets negotiations are working for real is actually to see both sides dismantling missiles. In the meantime, stay tuned for the latest "facts."

New Rightists lack diverse views

There is an ongoing debate as to what effects the new "Religious Righteousness" will have on education. These debates have largely centered on issues such as the teaching of creationism and the moral content (or lack of it) in our school libraries.

But, as life-and-death as those things may seem, there appears to be little argu-

Rightists portend is the underlying, long-range effects that they may have on society.

Translated to the arena of higher education, this means an ignoring of the very thing that a university functions for: the pursuit of knowledge, specifically wide-ranging and aesthetically varying knowledge.

What the New Righteousness represents is diametrically opposite from what a university ideally represents. Emphasizing single issues is a tactic which goes against the grain of sowing educational oats — the very function of a university in its "purest" sense.

Timothy S. Healy is both a religious and education-oriented person. As president of Georgetown University, Healy, a Jesuit, heads one of the nation's leading Catholic universities.

In the recent issue of *America* magazine, Healy penned an article entitled "The New Righteousness and the University." In it, he voiced his concern that the New Rightists, through their emphasis on narrowing issues, may lead to a "value free" atmosphere at our nation's universities.

"When we let our politics grind down to single issues, we argue not about truth and falsehood but about right and wrong; we declare that those who differ from us are not in error but are evil," Healy wrote.

"The distrust of reason which gross simplification involves . . . denies diversity,

overextends revelation . . ." he said. And, Healy added, when issues are simplified "the imaginative, the contemplative, the symbolic, we comfortably ignore."

Such words cause me much worry about the situation at our country's institutions of higher learning. The imaginative, the contemplative and the symbolic are what students and faculty members are supposed to comfortably explore, not ignore.

The situation hasn't been classified as critical yet, but serious, yes. When an individual such as Healy expresses his concern, then it's enough to concern me as well.

Healy wrote that our nation's universities have always been mirrors for our nation's conscience. When our country suffered through the agony of the Vietnam War, our universities showed the anguish more than anywhere else, Healy said.

And, if universities are indeed mirrors to our nation's conscience, then heaven help us if the New Righteousness takes hold on even a small portion of our nation's society.

For a university is a business as much as your average gas station or grocery store. The number of services they provide depends directly on how much money they have. What really scares me is not that the New Righteousness may have a direct effect on higher education. I hope and believe that we have the collective smarts to deny such dingbat simplicity.

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Nuclear survival: 'logic of madness'

In case of a nuclear warning, according to my handy civil defense booklet, I am to calmly pack my car with a set of essential items, including extra socks, a plastic drop-cloth, shaving articles, and my credit card.

Thus supplied against the worst, I am to drive in a leisurely way to my designated "host community," Laconia, N.H., where the people will be eagerly waiting my arrival along with the rest of the fleeing urban hordes.

Together with the citizens of Laconia (presuming they have not also chosen "The Relocation Option" and driven leisurely with their credit cards to Canada), I shall build a new shelter or share the already well-stocked "pre-planned snack-bar shelter" of my hosts.

If, despite all of this protection, some of us in the snack-bar shelter suffer from radiation sickness, I need not



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worry. All I have to do is follow the first-aid hints: "If the patient has headache or general discomfort, give him one or two aspirins every 3 or 4 hours (half a tablet for a child under 12)."

I share all of this information in a public-spirited way in order that you, too, may feel comforted in the knowledge that your government is worried about public safety in this, the hazardous nuclear age.

As T.K. Jones, deputy undersecretary of Defense for Strategic and Theater Nuclear Forces, told Bob Scheer of the *Los Angeles Times*, "Everybody's going to make it, if there are enough shovels to go around . . . Dig a hole, cover it with a couple of doors and then throw three feet of dirt on top. It's the dirt that does it."

When I first began leafing through my booklet from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and "camera-ready newspaper columns," I couldn't decide whether to giggle or shiver. The calm, chatty descriptions of how to survive nuclear war with just a touch of inconvenience had what Yale psychiatry professor Robert J. Lifton calls "the logic of madness." "Each step follows logically, but is all wrong and utterly unrelated to what would actually happen."

To evacuate urban populations, for example, as Tom Halstead of Physicians for Social Responsibility puts it, "You have to have: (1) days of warning time, (2) receptive host communities, (3) a docile and cooperative evacuation population, (4) nice weather and (5) cooperative enemies."

It's not surprising that the Reagan administration, which talks increasingly of nuclear-war-fighting as another option, is in favor of beefing up civil defense. Nor is it surprising that opposition groups think civil defense planning is worse than absurd, it's immoral.

One side believes that nuclear weapons are just another big bomb; the other believes that they are the weapons of annihilation.

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ment, or indeed concern, on what effects the New Righteousness will have on education in the long run, particularly at the university level.

The specialty of the New Righteousness is single-issue politicking. For them, focusing energy on a certain issue correlates to increased visibility and added importance.

The New Righteousness is, in its truest form, like a bastardized version of a Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial. One of my most horrifying dreams is of Jerry Falwell place kicking a copy of "Brave New World" through a goalpost while saying "You do one thing long enough, you get to be good at it. I do one thing, and I do it well."

And if that thing is relentless pursuit of mediocrity, so be it. The New Rightists have a right to follow their beliefs. But the clear and present danger that the New