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September, 1961.
There was an old man called Michael Finnegan
He grew weapons on his chin in a
The wind came out and blew them in again.
Poor old Michael Finnegan.
Begin again.

I. The Arms Race

THE crisis over Germany and Berlin has led to an acceleration of the arms race between the two Great Powers. The United States Administration has received Congressional approval for a substantial increase in the arms budget, and the Soviet Government has cancelled the reduction in defence expenditure which had been announced for this year. Among the American plans are an increase in military manpower, the building of fallout shelters on a national scale, and the retention in use of B47s, a rather 'soft' and old-fashioned bomber. (We shall explain the use of the word 'soft' later.) The only light on the Russian plans is the cancellation of the manpower reduction which was announced for this year, as well as the cancellation of the proposed reduction in defence expenditure.

In other words, the arms race is on again at full blast, after a period of apparent caution and reasonableness. Both Powers have, since the present round of the Berlin affair began, boasted of being the strongest power in the world. This no longer means the strongest to defend its own people, it means the strongest to obliterate the people of the other power. And this is the direction that the arms race will continue to take; less and less defence from arms, more and more power to attack and destroy.

Moreover, the Berlin problem appears extremely difficult of solution in an armed world; Khruschev will not permit reunification and free elections without guaranteed neutrality for Germany, because such a course would lead Germany straight into NATO, and thus bring Western bases much nearer the Soviet heartland. Adenauer will not permit the neutralisation and disarmament of Germany alone, because that would make the West Germans into a 'second-class people'. The deadlock is only soluble in the framework of a general disarmament agreement, as both Adenauer and Khruschev agree.

The Berlin question is only one of the local political conflicts made insoluble by military considerations, and the increased solubility of local political conflicts is only one of the benefits which might flow from disarmament. The other benefit is a reduction in the likelihood and practicability of war in general, and thus of the tension that makes each local political conflict a potential ignition system for total catastrophe.

Such a multilateral agreed disarmament could be approached in two rather different ways: in a single controlled swoop consisting of various dovetailed stages, but with a clear end in view and a binding timetable; and on the other hand by successive partial measures, at the end of each of which the powers would be free to look around at the world and see if they liked it, without commitment to go any further. We set out below
versions of these two different approaches or policies which we hope are fair representations of what those who urge them hold them to be, and which are cast in a form that makes them susceptible of comparison. Those who are used to considering these matters primarily in the context of Labour Party politics will find unilateralism related to these two policies on page 7.

The Dangers

Before setting out the policies, let us recapitulate the dangers of the uncontrolled arms race. Many of the single dangers of the present arms race are rather like the single dangers of previous arms races. What is different, and this colours and underlies every statement which can be made about it, is that in this arms race we are not merely risking war as we have known it, not merely the loss of millions of lives and damage to the economy of this or that nation which can be repaired in a decade, as Germany was repaired between 1945 and 1955, but we are risking our civilisations themselves. It is sometimes argued that because people talked the same way in the 1930's ("the bomber will always get through") and were proved wrong, we may be wrong again now. Those who do argue thus are very ignorant of modern weapons and defence systems. One may logically risk a part of one's population and one's economic capacity for the attainment of collective purposes; one cannot logically risk the whole of one's population and the whole of one's economic capacity for any purpose whatever. When there are no survivors, no purpose can have been achieved.

Bearing in mind what the stakes are, let us now list the individual dangers of the present arms race. We set out here six such dangers, not because it would be impossible or even useless to set out six or twelve more, but because much the greater part of what we have to avoid can be fitted in under one or other of these six headings. The order they are set out in does not reflect an assessment of their relative gravity, but only convenience in deploying the argument.

1. The Nth Power Spread (so-called from the 'Nth power problem', or the problem of what to do about more and more powers getting nuclear weapons. This was called the 'Fourth Power Problem' before France became the fourth power). It is not wise to postpone thinking about this matter because one doubts this or that estimate of the length of time it will take a given country, for instance China, to develop, or be given, her own nuclear weapons. No one can say when China or West Germany or Israel or any other power will have nuclear weapons, but equally no one should doubt that the consequences will be equally grave whether they have them to-morrow or in ten years' time. The more powers there are with nuclear weapons, the more likely does it become that they will be used, on purpose or by mistake, as policy, in anger, in madness or despair. The harder also does it become to achieve disarmament or arms control. Nor are nuclear weapons the only danger; the spread of technology also makes inevitable, in default of political arrangements to prevent it, the
spread of chemical and biological weapons. It is true that a technology of safety spreads with the technology of weapons, but technology in general unfortunately spreads faster than political wisdom.

2. *Surprise Attack*, including in that both pre-emptive strikes and catalytic strikes. A pre-emptive strike occurs when state A uses its bombers and rockets to destroy the bombers and rockets of state B on the ground. It is to lessen this danger that both sides are building invulnerable rocket bases, e.g. submarines. A catalytic strike occurs when C, being an ally of A, strikes B in such a way that B must strike A as well as C in order to forestall the strike A would have made against B in retaliation for that made by B against A’s ally, C. The most likely cast for this scenario at present is A: the U.S.A.; B: the Soviet Union; C: Britain. It follows from the declaration in successive defence White Papers that Britain would meet a conventional attack in Europe with thermonuclear weapons; and from the absence of any such declaration in NATO or U.S. statements.

3. Destabilisation Resulting from Technological Break-through.—The whole nature of possible warfare, and consequently of deterrence, has been revolutionised by technological break-through not once since 1945, but three times. That means about once every five years. But since the break-through cycle in men’s minds, in our habits of thought—one could call it the conceptual lead-time—is at least one generation, we are out of phase with our own products. Every day we run risks, which only become apparent to us years afterwards, because of this difference in phase; war changes every five years, men every thirty. The present conceptual fashion favours an increase in the conventional strength of the West, and the idea of limited non-nuclear actions to extinguish ‘brush fires’. How that one will look five or ten years from now is anybody’s guess. If we risk blowing the world up every day it is partly because we only imperfectly understand what we’ve got. As technological break-throughs come faster, this conceptual anachronism will become still more pronounced.

4. Political unrest and moral deturbation, arising from the development of more horrible weapons and from the still spreading knowledge, because it is not nothing, not a sort of moral vacuum, that we try to defend with our weapons and our policies. In shorthand it is what we call our way of life, but the shorthand conceals a highly sensitive web of political arrangement, of moral assumption, of comfortable custom, of individual perception and innovation. Pressure from the communist system, and even more the domination of the communist system, would deturbate it. But so up to a point does the mere knowledge of the existence in the world of devices capable of destroying humanity, and so even more does the mortally flippant talk and writing of those who envisage their use with calm, and even sometimes with complacency.

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1 'Where military policy is concerned, the effect of peace is to exempt the conventional wisdom from any test by experience.' J. K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, London, 1958, p. 128.
5. Accidental Nuclear War. The more weapons there are, the more likely does it become that one of them will be launched accidentally, or even go off in its owner's face accidentally. One may multiply and improve safety systems, but one can never make accident impossible. Weapons are nothing but a 'go-off' system, and the go-off system cannot be interfered with by the safety system. Until the go-off system itself is eliminated, which means disarmament, accident cannot be made impossible.

6. Escalation. (This is the technical word for the process by which a war might begin with small weapons, but continue to be fought with ever larger ones until one reaches the thermonuclears themselves.) The possibility of limited war, that is to say fighting without escalation, has been ventilated by many students over the years, and some very ingenious structures of sanction and interest have been outlined which might permit a war to remain limited. The examples of recent wars which have been fought in the nuclear age, but have yet remained conventional, have been adduced, and even the possibility of limited nuclear war has been canvassed with some ardour. But the fact remains; forces with a nuclear capacity have never yet faced each other in the field, and to claim to know how they would behave, or how the governments behind them would behave, is to guess. We have not seen one account of how a war between nuclear powers might be limited which has not contained at least one implausible assumption; sometimes it is that limitation itself will always be more attractive to both sides than the chance of victory, sometimes it is that the forces of one side are better trained than those of the other, sometimes it is even that they will prove morally superior. The opinion of a growing number of students seems to be that the idea of limited nuclear war is a unicorn. If one considers for instance the confusion of views which prevailed in the Korean War, on our own side alone, between the American Administration, its allies in the U.N., the Republican opposition, and the commander in the field, it would be rather chimerical to hold that any line of limitation could be held in the much more confusing circumstances of a nuclear war. A future war once begun might escalate, or it might not. The fact that it might is sufficient.

The Policies

These are the dangers; these are the facts of our environment, the unavoidable context of our political activity. Three broad policies are being advanced as a guide to action. They are first, to seek safety in ever more, and ever more lethal and complex weapons systems. Second, to seek by this or that unilateral adjustment of our weapons systems in the West, without explicit agreements, to make their use less likely, and to confine their use as far as possible if they are used. And third, to seek an explicit agreement on general comprehensive disarmament under international inspection and control. We shall leave aside the first policy, which we take to be one now actively favoured by few people, although still pursued by
most governments, and shall compare the mitigations offered by the second and third policies respectively to each of the six dangers in turn which we outlined above.

For this exercise in comparison we need headlines, and for succinctess' sake we shall call the two policies 'disarmament' and 'arms control'. They are not black and white, but shade off into one another. Nobody supposes that general disarmament under full inspection can be achieved overnight, and one might regard the stages which would be necessary to achieve it as arms control. Equally, few people suppose that if general disarmament proved possible under a copper-bottomed system of inspection, it would not be preferable to limited arms measures. Such measures are therefore usually regarded as steps towards disarmament even if that end seems indefinitely remote.

But there are degrees of emphasis in the way these not contradictory policies are advanced, which make it fruitful to consider them as alternatives in so far as they are guides to immediate action. and in this pamphlet they are so considered.

2 Arms Control or Disarmament?

The policy of arms control seeks to mitigate the dangers of the arms race one by one. It holds that we in the West should do all in our power to make our weapons deterrent, and not provocative or aggressive. The step for the immediate future will be to turn over as quickly as possible from soft-based or vulnerable missiles to hard-based or invulnerable ones. We should also increase, probably the number, and certainly the dispersal of our missiles, so that even after an attack, enough would remain to retaliate with. Further, we should seek to reassure the communist powers, by declaration and by planting items in their intelligence services, that our weapons exist for retaliation, and not for aggression. We should point them at their cities, not at their missile sites, and we should proclaim that this is what we are doing; this tallies with the ancient device of taking hostages. To reduce the risk of misinterpretation of isolated events, of the odd missile being launched, or even landing on the other side and going off, we and the communist powers might go so far as to exchange a sort of special ambassador. Such special reassurance units, or even the inspectorate which might be set up as a result of the test ban, could also be used to inspect and control whether missiles on both sides were in fact pointing in a retaliatory manner at cities, and not in a pre-emptive manner at missile sites.

Stable Deterrence

Under this stabilised system of thermonuclear strategic deterrence, smaller deterrence systems would operate. At each level, small nuclear weapons systems, conventional weapons systems, tactical air forces, naval
forces, infiltration, intelligence, industrial mobilisation, and recruiting policy, we should seek to convince the other side of our deterrent intentions and our retaliatory capacity. If small wars were to break out, the existence of large, larger and largest weapons systems in a state of stable deterrence would tend to keep them small.

If this structure of stabilised deterrence were to prove durable, it might in time so reduce the temperature of international affairs that the level of arms on the two sides could begin to be reduced; but that would be a matter of wait and see. In the meantime, some agreement, whether tacit or explicit, to prevent the further development of the arms race, would be entered into. Examples are the test ban, geographical arms embargoes and the non-militarisation of space.

The whole policy would make use of the capacity of human beings, and thus of governments, to judge each other’s intentions correctly without explicit agreement, and even without explicit communication. Those who advance it base the argument partly on analogies, for instance with the mathematical construct of games theory, or with the behaviour of children under discipline.¹

**General Disarmament**

The policy of disarmament, on the other hand, holds that the arms race is best dismantled in a coherent but flexible manner. A general treaty would be negotiated which would bind the signatories in a declaration of intention to disarm, under inspection, down to national police levels, and would set up an international organisation both to devise the steps to be taken towards this agreed goal, and to administer them as they are accepted. The signatories would then proceed, by these agreed stages, to divest themselves of their military capacity in such a way that at no stage does one side secure a more than trivial and passing military advantage, and under a system of inspection such that all the powers can be sure that what is declared is true, and that what is undertaken is done. The process would only stop when the powers have come down to the levels of internal security forces; these levels would themselves be defined after negotiation, and be controlled by the international organisation. Concurrently with the later phases of the procedure, a standing United Nations force should be built up. Some American advocates of this policy urge that an agreed and equal number of ICBMs should be left outstanding on each side, to act as a ‘transitional deterrent’ until the general disarmament all around them has gone so far that both sides agree it is safe to destroy them.

**Unilateral Disarmament**

One might regard unilateral nuclear disarmament as a separate fourth policy, but it is not; it is a form of limited arms control. One should not

¹There are also parallels with English analytical philosophy; e.g. Gilbert Ryle’s *Concept of Mind.*
look at the political overtones of limited arms control and unilateral nuclear disarmament, one should not look at the people who favour these things; they are indeed very different from one another. One should look only at the policies themselves, since what is advocated is more interesting than who advocates it. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is a form of limited arms control in that it proposes not comprehensive disarmament, but nuclear disarmament only; in that it proposes not general disarmament, but arms control by one country only; in that it proposes not agreed and controlled disarmament but unconditional and uncontrolled disarmament; in that it rests on the assumption that action without agreement, and even without communication, will in itself induce other countries to take desirable actions; in that it seeks to reduce the provocativeness of our weapons systems rather than the whole complex of weapons systems themselves; in that it is advocated as something which might later lead on to general comprehensive disarmament; in that it envisages we should be able to fight limited wars; and in that it rests on an analogical construct not fully related to human nature as that may be pragmatically understood; where the arms controller thinks of mathematics or of children, the unilateral nuclear disarmer thinks of virtue and example.

This is a striking list of things which are common to the two positions, so striking as to justify the assertion that one is only a particular form of the other. If there is a fence in these matters, the adherents of general comprehensive disarmament are to be found on one side of it, and the ‘arms controllers’ are to be found in company with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on the other.

The criticisms we make below of ‘arms control’ apply in large measure also to unilateral nuclear disarmament. We would only add a historical note at this point: unilateral nuclear disarmament might have brought general disarmament nearer at a time when Britain was the only Nth power; and it might have been possible as a partial measure, without comprehensive disarmament, at a time when nuclear weapons were not yet diffused throughout the British armed forces. Neither of these conditions any longer holds good, and the policy is now anachronistic.

Comparing the Policies

Let us now proceed to the comparison of these two major policies, No. 2 and No. 3, or arms control and general comprehensive disarmament.

To avoid waffling, we are going to adopt a rather rigorous procedure. We will take the list of the dangers of the arms race and see which of the policies is, in respect of each danger in turn, the more possible, the more probable, the more plausible, and the more viable. This set of adjectives—possible, probable, plausible, viable—has, we believe, a more than mnemonic value, and we must define the words in it. By possible, we mean free of internal contradictions. We say that a policy or recommended system is more or less possible according as the model one may construct of it in one’s mind is a logical and self-consistent model. We say that a policy or
recommended system is more or less probable according as the model one may construct of it will fit in with reality, will be a true representation of real or likely situations. Does it accord with what we know of human nature, of politicians in a crisis, of America, Russia, China, France?

By plausible we mean likely to be welcome. We say that a policy is more or less plausible according as it is likely to be acceptable, in terms of one’s knowledge of them, to more or less of the governments and peoples on whose acceptance its functioning would depend. Is it understandable? Is it attractive?

By viable we mean that a policy must not carry the seeds of its own decay and supercession; it must be self-adapting. Stability, for instance, is one form of viability, but in a time of very rapid technological change, it is a weak form, and above all a temporary form. We call a policy more or less viable according as it takes account not only of present situations, but also of future ones, both those which it will have brought about itself, and those which will have arisen for other reasons.

1. The Nth Power spread

To meet this danger, arms control has until now proposed a self-denying ordinance, based on the presumed success of the test ban negotiations. This always looked like a non-starter; France was never interested in a test ban, and it is now clear that Russia is not either. Although it is possible, the policy falls down on the score of probability. Disarmament, in that it envisages an inspected and controlled abolition of weapons systems down to national police levels, also offers a possible answer to the problem of the development of independent nuclear capacities. To see how it stands the test of probability we must consult our present knowledge of how nations do behave. France is the case in point. Ever since de Gaulle began his independent nuclear weapons programme, he has been proclaiming that he would not abandon it if a test ban agreement was reached, but only if an agreement was reached between the older nuclear powers to cease the production of nuclear weapons, and to begin to abolish existing stocks. Since no other power has yet declared that it has begun a nuclear weapons programme, no other power has yet declared the terms on which it could abandon it.

A Nuclear China?

The question of China also arises. Now it seems likely that the Russians are not only interested in disarmament because they fear American aggression, or are convinced of the illogicality of the arms race, or wish to devote their economic resources to a housing programme or to Asia and Africa. If these were their only motives, they would not have begun so suddenly

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1 As we write, it appears that a cut-off in the manufacture of weapons—grade fissile material may be advanced by America as a limited measure of arms control. Unless it includes reduction of stocks as well, France and China will not be interested.
to press for it, or continued so ardently as they have in recent months. It seems very likely they want disarmament now, suddenly and ardently, because China is breathing down their necks: not only demanding nuclear weapons, but also threatening, by developing her own in time, to take the decisions on disarmament within the communist camp out of Russian hands and into her own. And the fact that Russia's reaction to this is to press for immediate and general disarmament indicates that Russia (who knows China better than we do) believes this is the best way to avoid China's becoming a nuclear power. Put it the other way round; the Russians would not bother to press for disarmament if they believed that China would ignore a treaty and go ahead on her own. They would seek to keep their lead over China, in another arms race of the familiar sort. We know France, and they know China. To judge by their present attitude, they believe China would behave as France has already declared she would.

What we know of France, and may deduce about China, is the best indication we have what the attitude of other powers may be later on. In providing for the cessation of production of nuclear weapons by the great powers, and the inspected destruction of their stocks, disarmament offers a probable solution of the Nth power problem.

Now is it plausible? The countries which might be able to develop their own nuclear weapons are groaning at the prospective expense and unpopularity and watching each other like cats, hoping that their adversaries and enemies will not do anything that makes it necessary for them to develop these weapons. A whole industry, (because inspection would be an industry) seeking to guarantee that the need would not arise, is certainly a plausible means of making it less likely to arise.

A Policy of Threat

Is disarmament viable in this respect? Would it prevent an aggressive or insecure government from taking things into its own hands in a disarmed world, developing nuclear weapons secretly, and suddenly seeking advantage by threat? The policy offers two means of preventing this. The first is the operation of the proposed international judicature or control council, which would declare the treaty to have been broken, and the consequent action of the proposed international executive which would, by military force if necessary, physically destroy the offending manufacturing capacity. But it would not be necessary to rely wholly on physical

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1 All it would need for this would be a superiority over the offending power in lightly armed ground troops. It need not, if the inspection is adequate, have a superiority in the weapons which could be made by the offending manufacturing capacity, since this capacity would have been detected before it came into production. The difficulties of creating a system by which an international force would always be believed to be capable of playing its part in this manner, and disposed to do so, are large. But although the West wants a standing force and the East wants national contingents to be made available as occasion demands, it is hopeful that the two sides should agree that such a thing is needed at all.
action. The second means of prevention would be the effects of a disarmed world itself on the calculations of the government concerned. To rise up alone as a treaty-breaker, as an upsetter of the status quo, would be to court great political unpopularity in a world where competition was beginning to flow in new channels, and the foreknowledge of this unpopularity would be a heavy weight in the balance against any such course of action. (It was world opinion which drove the nuclear powers into the test-ban talks.)

Disarmament offers a possible, probable, plausible and on the whole viable answer to the Nth power problem. Arms control offers a possible one, but it is not probable or plausible.

2. Surprise Attack

Arms control envisages unilateral hardening of bases, possibly reinforced by the stationing of inspectors at missile sites to check that the missiles are not pointing at missile sites on the other side, which might suggest pre-emption. A further stage would be that the inspectors, after an agreement on the abolition of missiles for warlike purposes, should check that they are not carrying warheads or satellites of military value. Disarmament on the other hand envisages the inspected non-manufacture of both military missiles and warheads, and the inspected destruction of existing stocks.

Technical Problems

The relative possibilities of these plans are rather hard to assess; both have built-in technical difficulties. Under arms control it will be hard to be sure you have identified all the missile sites, and are really being shown the true trajectory computations and not fakes. Under disarmament, it will be hard to be sure you have found all the reactors capable of producing weapons-grade fissile material, all the factories capable of assembling missiles, and all the existing stocks of either. While no one means of inspection can give very good security, a planned combination of all possible means, scanning right across the field, could give a very much higher degree, and one which, with experience, could well become acceptable. Equally, no combination of means can now, or probably ever, give total security. But we have always been satisfied with less than a hundred per cent. security in our defence arrangements. Earlier in our history, we accepted imperfect security against defeat, and we were sometimes defeated. Recently we have been accepting imperfect security against total obliteration, though we have not yet been obliterated. There is no reason why we should demand a much higher degree of security in defence by inspected disarmament than we do in defence by weapons. Any higher degree would be an advantage. It is the unacceptable degree of security offered by modern weapons which has promoted the whole search for arms control policies. What precise degree of security is obtainable by inspection can only be found out by very much more research than is yet being
done, as the American pioneers in this field, such as Wiesner, Brennan, Feld and Orear, do not fail to point out. But there is no doubt that it is high.

Both policies have difficulties on the score of possibility, but it seems clear that disarmament offers a much more probable solution than arms control. To begin with, arms control relies on hardening of bases, before or during the setting-up of limited inspection. But the hardening of bases, whether by mobility, by physical means such as burying, or by secrecy (e.g. Polaris), cannot remove the other side's fear of surprise attack. When we speak of 'first-class weapons' we mean weapons which can be used only for a first strike and cannot, because of their vulnerability, be used for a second strike. But when we speak of second-strike weapons, we do not mean weapons which cannot be used for a first strike; we mean weapons which can be used for a second strike as well as for a first strike. We should speak more truly if we called a vulnerable weapons system a 'first strike system' and an invulnerable weapons system a 'first-or-second strike system'. It is an exaggeration to say that softness equals provocation, and hardness equals deterrence; it is true to say only that hardness gives somewhat more provocation and somewhat more deterrence than softness. Part of the present precipitate American drive towards an invulnerable retaliatory capacity against rationally launched surprise attack probably springs from America's particular experience at Pearl Harbour. ('Deterrence' only works against a rational enemy; no irrational attack can be deterred, that is no attack motivated by despair, madness, panic, or bad intelligence.)

The Inspectors' Job

Under a policy of limited arms control, inspectors would be either stationed for an indefinite time at missile sites, or irregularly invited, and entitled to inspect the alignment of the missiles, and possibly their top ends. But they would not be entitled to inspect their bottom ends, since that is where the fuel is, and fuel might be a legitimate secret. The political friction inherent in such arrangements makes the policy highly improbable. Under disarmament on the other hand, the whole economy and society of a country would be opened to the inspectorate in ever wider and wider circles as part of an agreed process toward the day when everything is open and nothing found. Political frictions would arise, but they would be more tolerable since it would be generally known that they were transient; they could be accepted as the temporary price for the achievement of a manifestly desirable end. Under arms control there is no end in sight, and what causes friction to-day is likely to cause a total breakdown to-morrow.

1 A big civil defence programme, including preparation for the evacuation of cities, which is at present being urged in some quarters in America, forms part of a first-strike system and is thus provocative. It is only if you are preparing to strike first that you have time to evacuate your cities against the expected retaliation.
It is technically easier to determine the existence or non-existence of any arms industry at all than to distinguish an illegitimate part of a permitted arms industry, and it is politically very much easier. This gives disarmament a clear advantage on the score of probability.

**Tacit Communication**

In considering plausibility, the first thing that must strike us is the presence in arms control of a strong element of reliance on tacit communication, and its absence in disarmament. The first communication which must be made if one is attempting to set up a balance resting on tacit communication is a question, namely: ‘Will you agree to set up a balance by tacit communication?’ Now, whether or not this question has been tacitly asked of the Russians, it has certainly been explicitly asked, and it has been most explicitly answered, the answer being No. Unless there is some reason to suppose that this explicit No means a tacit Yes, one must conclude that the proposal is implausible.

Some adherents of arms control hold that as soon as the Russians understand it, they cannot but accept it, and that it is our duty in the West to keep on helping them to understand arms control until that day. The same argument could be applied to Christianity as well as to arms control, or to multiparty democracy, or to capitalism. There are many things we believe and accept and wish they would too. But when they do not, we no longer think it will suffice to go on spelling out the facts to them, to raise our voices when the foreigner cannot understand us. The whole situation arises because the Russians think differently from us, and if the authors of one particular brand of Western arms control policy believe that by repetition and elucidation they can sell it to a society which has long since rejected our religion, our politics and our economics, they are salesmen indeed. One of the principal exponents of limited arms control, Dr. T. C. Schelling, has described the different situations which arise when two sides are considering the same datum and either communicating about it, or not communicating about it. He says: ‘The possibility of communication does not make ... A, B, C a less natural order for those letters’. The Russian alphabet begins A, B, V.

There is no doubt also that most governments and peoples would feel safer and better protected against backsliding with an explicit treaty, properly signed, ratified and lodged, than in merely watching wordless communication between the two mammoth powers. Their nods and becks might, for all we knew, betoken an agreement to chew us all up.

The plausibility of general disarmament as a whole may be conveniently discussed here, under the heading of surprise attack.

**The Soviet Attitude**

Limited arms control is one of the alternatives open to the Western Governments, and it has been decisively rejected by the East. General disarmament, which is the other alternative open to the West, has been as
decisively acclaimed and adopted by the East. Since an acceptable degree of security is no longer within our own grasp, and since the two policies are, as regards their immediate application, alternatives, we must regard disarmament as the more plausible. But the fact that the Russians have themselves so ardently embraced it, creates a fear that, simply because they have embraced it, it is to our disadvantage. It should not be necessary to dwell on the fact that general and comprehensive disarmament subject to full inspection is not specifically or originally a Russian idea, that it would not matter if it were, that it has been the declared final aim of all governments for years, that it became in March, 1961, the first common aim in world policy ever to be adopted by the British Commonwealth, and that, if two hostile systems are seeking agreement, it is not the wholehearted adoption of this or that proposal by one side which may make agreement impossible, but on the contrary the willingness of the other to fall into the trap of regarding wholehearted adoption as evidence in itself of a trap.

This particular difficulty is more fruitfully considered if one regards comprehensive and general disarmament as the price the Russians ask for inspection, and inspection as the price the Americans ask for disarmament. The U.S.S.R. has an objection, arising from its experience, to inspection without guaranteed disarmament. The U.S. has an objection, arising from its experience, to disarmament without guaranteed inspection. Fitted together like this, the two attitudes suggest a highly plausible course of action in which the differences are merely a matter of haggling.

**Transitional Deterrents**

There is another difficulty or implausibility to be faced, the transitional deterrent. This is a part of the presently favoured version of disarmament in the U.S., and of course it is nothing compared with the continued existence of ICBM forces of unlimited size, or of a size limited only by tacit agreement, which are part of the arms control approach. (Indeed it has been argued that the best level of ICBM balance for arms control would be a good deal higher than what either side has now: suggestions vary between fifty, and more than a thousand.)

The transitional deterrent was presented to the Russians as part of a disarmament scheme at the International Conference of Scientists in Moscow in December, 1960. They did not like it at all. It may be that if general disarmament is adopted as Western policy, the transitional deterrent will prove to be the greatest obstacle to agreement. Since the Moscow conference, it has been roundly attacked in the Soviet press by some of the men concerned with the technicalities of disarmament. They call it "concealing a weapon behind your backs", and they regard it as vitiating the whole policy to a point where it becomes almost as bad as limited arms control. Now why is this? Is it simply because they fear the transitional deterrent may not prove transitional enough, that it may prove so permanent that they will not be able to induce China to accept the equality of general
comprehensive disarmament? It may be so, but it may equally be a reflection of the uncertainty in the presentation of the American case about the number of ICBMs which are to be transitionally left outstanding. If the proposed number were pitched below the lowest credible estimate of the number of ICBMs which the Russians now have operational, their objections might weaken. It is no good saying to them: ‘Let us transitionally stabilise at 300 ICBMs’ if they have only got 30 this year, or whatever the figure may be. They want disarmament before the Chinese dominate the situation. However, the more this matter can be classified as a possible solution to the inspection problem of hidden stockpiles, and the less as a carry-over of deterrent strategy, the more likely it is to be sorted out.

**Fears of Espionage**

And now for viability. The solutions of arms control to the problem of surprise attack are not viable in so far as they rest on tacit communication; not viable because not plausible. In so far as they rest on partial measures of inspection they are not viable because not probable; the improbability being inherent in the political friction which would arise from such measures, and from the Russians’ inevitable and often proclaimed suspicion of anything which they can dub ‘licensed espionage’. Disarmament on the other hand offers a viable solution because the incentives not to re-arm, not to start mankind back up the arms race again, would be the same as in the case of Nth powers; that is, alternative modes of competition, world opinion, and a U.N. force.

But these incentives might prove inadequate. In a disarmed world, either side could choose to re-arm, calculating that their advantage lay that way, or in a mistaken belief that the other side was already re-arming. If they did, the other side would race to re-arm faster, and we should be back where we are now. But it would take either side perhaps a couple of years to build up a nuclear striking force from scratch, or indeed any sizeable force, using only that knowledge which is ineradicable from memory and from paper. The point is that you can do a lot more reconsidering and consulting and temper-keeping and negotiating in two years than you can in ten minutes, or whatever the present warning time is. Comprehensive disarmament offers time to think again; stable deterrence does not. The whole logic of disarmament is that it removes the threat of thermonuclear war from ten minutes ahead to, say, two years. More than that no policy can do.

**The Concealed Stockpile**

There remains also the problem of the concealed stockpile. No combination of means of inspection will ever give 100 per cent certainty that a major power has not concealed some nuclear bombs before the treaty comes into force, or that, having done so, it could not suddenly improvise a delivery system (tramp steamers, couriers) which could make a threat to the other side. This fact is often taken as a grave objection to the idea of
general disarmament, but it seems to us a short-sighted one. It leaves out the continued operation of mutual deterrence. Thus, at present, I do not strike, because my adversary can retaliate. In a disarmed world, I do not re-arm, because my adversary could re-arm too, and I do not suddenly brandish my concealed stocks, because he may equally suddenly counter-brandish his. If an inspection system allows a certain possibility of cheating, I know that he may have cheated at least as effectively as I have.

3. Technical Break-throughs

Arms control offers as a solution to the problem of destabilisation arising from technical break-through, a tacit agreement that it will not be in anybody’s interest to seek break-throughs. Disarmament offers a controlled absence of weapons, which a fortiori involves an absence of developments in weapons. Both are possible. But a tacit agreement to avoid weapons improvement is not probable. Like so much else in the policy, it rests on mutual trust. And if we can trust our adversaries to see advantage in the same direction that we do, namely, in not developing bigger and worse weapons, we can trust them to desire a justly disarmed world. It takes no more trust to do the latter than the former, possibly less.

Disarmament on the other hand, provides an answer which is possible, probable, plausible and rather viable. The only reservation is under the head of viability; technological break-throughs can occur in the potentiality of the drawing-board as well as in the actuality of weapons systems themselves. If this happened in a disarmed world, as it no doubt would, one would have to reckon on an increase in the horror of the war which could result after re-armament, and possibly on a reduction of the time necessary to re-arm. But this result would surely act as a restraint on the will to re-arm, not as an incentive to it. The re-established openness of science would combine with the effects of inspection to ensure that the battle of the drawing-boards stayed on the drawing-boards.

4. Political Unrest

Political unrest and moral deturpation arise from the development of more horrible weapons and growing knowledge of present ones. When you get a technological break-through in visible actuality, you cannot avoid the political consequences. But when you get a technological break-through in the potentiality of the drawing-board, it will have very little political consequence; it will remain science fiction to the man in the street. Disarmament has the edge here in providing a probable, plausible and viable solution. As regards existing weapons, arms control has nothing to offer, since it does not provide for the abolition of any weapons system. At present the overt political unrest caused by the arms race is confined mainly to this country, with rumblings in Germany and Japan. But as existing weapons spread around the world and as the peoples come more fully to understand what they mean, it seems inevitable that there will be unrest wherever there is free political expression, and it is not everywhere likely
to be as peaceably expressed as it has been in Britain, nor the police as tolerant in dealing with it. In proposing the permanent abolition of the things which cause the unrest, disarmament provides an answer to this problem which meets all four of our requirements.

Moral deturbation is a more shadowy matter. One may or may not believe that the difficulty of explaining to children why they are under instant threat of incineration at every moment of every day makes it difficult to explain anything else to them, as for instance that they should not kill, steal or loaf. But in any case moral deturbation goes with, and can be removed with, political unrest.

5. Accidental War

In relation to accidental war, arms control has a rather well-developed and individual solution; it is the 'special reassurance force'. This would be a kind of special envoy who, if a missile was accidentally launched from the country where he was posted, and even if it landed on the other side and went off, would telephone at once to his principal at home and pass on to him the explanations and apologies he would have received from the government of the country where he was posted. It amounts in fact, to giving the American Embassy in Moscow a tied line to the White House, and vice versa. This is possible. It is even probable, in the sense that such a partial system, without general disarmament, would not conflict with what any power would regard as its vital interest or security. But it is not very plausible, in that the man in the street would not think very much had been achieved. He would think: 'Thank you for your efforts to make the world safer, but I thought embassies were supposed to do that kind of thing anyhow.' On the other hand, the solution is viable. If it works to begin with, it would probably go on working, even though repeated explanations and apologies might begin to pall.

Disarmament, on the other hand, is good all along the line. If a system gives a risk of accident, the abolition of the system is a possible, probable, plausible and viable means of abolishing the risk.

6. Escalation

Arms control offers as a solution an exact balance of forces, or a balance as exact as can be obtained, at all levels. If war breaks out on a small scale and with small weapons under conditions of equality, the existence of larger weapons in a similar equality will make it to nobody’s interest to allow the war to get larger. This is a possible solution; it is a good model in itself. But is it probable? Does the model accord with reality? Nobody would go to war if they were perfectly convinced of the existence of a balance at all levels; such a war would by definition be a stalemate. It is, of course, theoretically possible to achieve such an up and down balance. But it is most improbable that even if it did exist, everybody would always believe it to exist. A mistaken assessment of the degree of balance could lead to warlike initiative just as well as a lack of balance.
itself. What is improbable cannot long seem plausible, and the policy is not viable either. The longer a balance or a conviction of balance endured, the more unreasonable would it seem to continue locked in such an expensive and prohibitive clinch. Governments would arrive in time at the view that it would be equally effective, as well as much safer and much cheaper, to remove the balance into the potentiality of the drawing-board. The programme would be bound to tail off into general disarmament. It is simply a very long and risky way round.

Degrees of Imbalance

The solution offered by disarmament to the escalation problem is certainly a possible one. Under the heading of probability, though, it involves a danger which must be taken very seriously; the danger of engendering, on the way down to disarmament, an imbalance marked enough to give rise to a temptation to secure political advantage by attack or threat of attack. Now what degree of imbalance will produce such a temptation? It is often assumed that any degree of imbalance whatever will do so. To determine whether this is so, we should consult precedent. Is the peace kept at present, for instance, by a very accurate balance? In fact it is not. Estimates differ, but it seems probable that the U.S. and allies could deliver more megatons on the soil of metropolitan Russia than could Russia on the soil of the metropolitan U.S.A., and this is an imbalance, a material imbalance, quite irrespective of first or second-strike posture. It is certain that Russia and her allies have more troops and a greater conventional armament in Europe than America and her allies have, and this too is an imbalance. The two imbalances cut different ways, and it would perhaps be arguable that there is a balance of imbalances. But ten years ago, between say 1945 and 1955, the American superiority in strategic striking power was surely such that any Russian superiority in conventional capacity, imbalance for imbalance, was outweighed. And yet the peace was broadly kept. The argument of ‘moral asymmetry’—that the West is better than the East and that is why 1945-55 were fairly peaceful years—is more likely to appeal to the West than to the East, or even to the neutrals. This is precisely what they are neutral about.

Conversely, one may indeed suppose that if either side had chosen in the last fifteen years to remain completely without military capacity in the face of the military capacity of the other, the armed side would have taken advantage of the situation. It is a question of deciding where along the line from a military balance of one to one, to a military imbalance of infinity, the danger line comes. Since it is not possible to determine this point, we must err on the side of safety.

Safe Agreements

An imbalance during the process of disarmament could come about in one of two ways; either because the agreements on successive phases in the destruction of military capacity had been badly drawn, and permitted
an imbalance to arise; or because one side was breaking the agreement and was not detected. Disarmament offers agreements, the proper drawing of which depends on the skill and knowledge of the two sides. We must remember that they would be drawn up by international teams, working from data internationally secured, in an international organisation. There is no particular reason for either side to fear being tricked into agreements so ill-drawn that they permitted a dangerous imbalance on the way down. Earlier disarmament proposals, nationally proposed by both East and West, were drawn up in precisely this way, each offering military advantage to its author, and consequently they were always rejected by the other side. But the two sides are coming ever closer, and successive proposals are becoming increasingly proposals for safe disarmament, and not for the safe acquisition of strategic advantage.

3 The Need For Bold Solutions

A TreatY may be well drawn for safety, as far as the undertakings in it are concerned, and may yet be broken. Arms Control for all that it rests in the main on the possibility of tacit communication between the two sides and on a common understanding of common dangers, is seldom advanced without the recommendation of some areas of mutual inspection. As we have seen, it goes with a test ban inspectorate, an inspection of big rocket sites, and there is the suggestion of a special re-assurance force, which amounts, to a form of inspection. In other words, the policy recognises that some things are too important to be left to tacit communication and common understanding: they must be inspected.

Total Inspection

Disarmament, on the other hand, holds that everything is too important to be left to tacit communication, and that everything must be inspected. Not only is total inspection safer than partial inspection; it is also politically easier because it does not give rise to the friction at the edges which partial inspection does. There are no edges. It is thus more probable. Moreover, what the Russians object to, what probably any nation would object to when it came to consider it (and we do not hold the common view that the Russians have done less homework on all this than the West; they have simply done a different sort of homework) is not the inspection of disarmament, of the destruction of arms and the continued non-existence of arms, but the inspection of arms in existence. One would not object to a civilian installation being open to inspection, except on commercial grounds, when the objection would probably be surmountable. One would not object to the inspection of the destruction of a declared weapon. One might not object to inspectors searching for undeclared weapons. One might even not object to an inspector standing beside a declared weapon which was due for destruction in a year’s time. But one would certainly
object to a situation where every weapon, irrespective of whether it was earmarked for destruction or not, had an inspector standing permanently beside it. This would be a weapon in being, part of a force in being, which exists because it might have to be used. An inspector would deprive it of some of its utility, and to suggest the presence of such an inspector is to suggest that one’s adversary give breakfast to a spy. Once again, the arms control proposal leads, by its extreme implausibility and lack of viability, straight into general disarmament, which says one should destroy the useless weapon.

The viability of general disarmament with respect to the danger of escalation is good but not infinite. It simply adds one more rung at the bottom of the ladder itself. In an armed world the rungs, reading downwards, are perhaps thermonuclear war, small nuclear war, conventional war, brushfire, police putsch, armed peace. The rung that disarmament adds at the bottom is disarmed peace. There would be just one more fence, and that a tall one, to cross on the way up to the destruction of civilisation. That is good, and adds viability.

The Prospects for Disarmament

Our fourfold grid, possibility, probability, plausibility, and viability is certainly only one of many possible ways in which this problem can usefully be considered. But, for what it is worth, the result of this comparison is clearly that general comprehensive disarmament is to be preferred to limited measures of arms control as a policy aim. It is not markedly more possible but it is considerably more probable, considerably more plausible, and overwhelmingly more viable. Its sole implausibility is its extreme boldness, which is alarming to some. Dr. J. B. Wiesner, President Kennedy’s Special Assistant for Science and Technology, has described it as “bold agreement and careful administration”. One may be tempted to prefer arms control because it seems cautious, pragmatic, wait-and-see; it appears to burn no boats. But in hard fact disarmament burns no boats either, since one may always declare the agreements void and re-arm. Nothing is lost, if the inspection is effective. Caution itself suggests that we had better rely on open inspection than on the tacit communication, common understanding, and good intelligence which are so necessary to arms control, and so lacking in the present world situation.

The danger to civilisation in general is such that all agree we must avert it either by easing up on our present courses, or by reversing them outright. But disarmament prospects, like many other things in the thermonuclear age, invert the usual rules of politics. Speed is now safer than delay; boldness of intention is now safer than caution of intention. But caution of execution remains as necessary as ever, and is now more possible than ever before, because of the development of the modern sampling and communications techniques on which inspection would rely.
In Conclusion

We have not in this pamphlet been arguing specifically within a Labour Party context; it would have been something of an insult to the Party to do so, since these are world issues, and must be seen in a world context. If our reasoning is right, it is clear what action the Party should take. We said above that general comprehensive disarmament had for long been the policy of all governments, but there is no need to convince the British Labour Party that the British Government has not done very much about this declared aim. This is not because they entirely prefer an uncontrolled arms race, it is because the matter is very complicated, very unpleasant to consider, and politically very alarming, and also because they are dependent on American policy in this field as in others, and American policy is confused.

But one cannot avoid the impression that the Labour Party has made it rather easy for the Government to do nothing, or at least to do not enough, because the Labour Party has been so divided. It seems to us that much of the rancour between the two wings of the Labour Party on disarmament policy is due to the fact that neither appreciates how rapidly general and comprehensive disarmament is becoming possible. In this, both wings are a little like the Conservative Government; general disarmament is the declared final aim of the Government, and of both wings of the Labour Party. If the two wings of the Labour Party could come together and push for what they both believe is the best course, and neglect the partial preliminary measures which divide them, they would be able to exert a real pressure on the Government towards what it, too, really knows is the best course.

There was never much of a case for the British Deterrent; but there is now an overwhelming one for a Commonwealth initiative in Disarmament.
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