

## *The Politics of Disarmament*

SINCE WARS begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. To this proposition the governments of most of the civilised people of the world are formally dedicated, if anything at all is meant by the opening words of the constitution of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation. Yet the minds of men remain, it seems, painfully confused about how those defences are to be constructed.

There are those to whom disarmament is a subject of almost entirely academic interest, if, indeed it interests them at all. They have grown accustomed to apparently endless disarmament negotiations at the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva, in the United Nations and elsewhere. They are convinced that no one is really serious about the subject, that no one is in fact prepared to take the military and political risks that might be inseparable from drastic disarmament agreements and that the whole complex of disarmament negotiations is no more than a gigantic public relations exercise designed to keep public opinion quiet while the serious business of power politics occupies the real attention of international statesmen. There are others for whom disarmament is a matter of passionate emotional commitment. They often equate disarmament with their private vision of an ideal world—a world from which armed forces and the threat of violence have been totally and finally removed. They, too, believe that all that stands in the way of the achievement of this world is the perversity and obduracy of politicians.

Finally there are those who suggest, and are prepared to argue with cogency, that in any case the process of disarmament would be in itself dangerous and destabilising and that the existing conflicts and pressures between nation

States in effect resolve themselves into a balance of power that provides substantially more security than would be available in a disarmed or a disarming world. This theory has been reinforced in the minds of many observers by the introduction into the military equation of the nuclear weapon.

Much of this confusion springs from the basic failure of the political mind to comprehend the nature of the scientific revolution that has overtaken it. The cleverness that has released appalling forces is unmatched by the wisdom needed to understand and control them. There is, it seems, no disposition to accept that in the search for international sanity we are unlikely to achieve what we have so far failed to achieve except by means that we have not so far used.

Within this general framework of obsolete political philosophy lies a more specific failure of public commitment. The traditional apathy towards foreign affairs—an apathy that sturdily ignores the truth of John Kennedy's observation that while domestic policy can only defeat us, foreign policy can kill us—bedevils with arguments left over from pre-nuclear politics the crucial search for a means of controlling the power of nuclear weapons. At one end of the scale the sensitivities are blunted by what H. G. Wells called "the crazy combative patriotism that plainly threatens to destroy civilisation." At the other end political realities are ignored in the clamour for quick solutions whose attractions owe more to their potential for moral catharsis than their likely effect on the international scene. In the pursuit of peace unilateralism and patriotism are equally irrelevant.

In the attempt to relate the conduct of international affairs to some coherent political philosophy it is necessary to engage in a subtle and flexible intellectual process which has been vividly described by a Belgian observer as "con-

trolled schizophrenia." It relates to the process of seeking to achieve long-term aims of peace, and equity and morality in international affairs while, understanding, and accepting, that the world in which we operate is combative, inequitable and often immoral.

This dichotomy is especially pressing in the esoteric *demi-monde* of disarmament negotiations. The realities of power politics, as distasteful and even offensive as they may be, cannot be ignored even in the search for peace. It is crucial to understand and to accept what are in the present political structure of the world the practical and realistic aims of disarmament negotiations—what is it that is really achievable in arms control and disarmament—and secondly, what is the nature of the obstacles that stand in their way.

LET US TAKE, to begin with, general and complete disarmament, which is the declared aim of most of the world's civilised governments. It is important to be clear at the outset exactly what general and complete disarmament means. It does *not* mean a world in which there are no weapons and no armed forces and from which the sanction of violence or the threat of violence has been totally removed. This would presuppose a transformation in human nature, and especially in the patterns of group behaviour, of an entirely revolutionary kind. There is little prospect that such a transformation will take place in the lifetime of any of us. What general and complete disarmament *does* mean, at least to the negotiator and the statesman specifically concerned with these problems, is a world structure in which the size and power of national military establishments have been progressively decreased to a level at which they will be capable only of meeting the requirements of internal security and providing a residual ability to defend communities against attack from outside.

At the same time it will have been necessary to evolve an international system for preserving the international rule of law, for the settlement of disputes and for keeping the peace. This is, *a priori*, a system which will involve a substantial element of armed force. Just as a national police force relies in the last analysis upon the sanction of force to maintain the rule of law in the national community, so it will be necessary for an international police force to

be able to apply or to threaten the sanction of force to preserve the rule of law in an international community. It can be argued that in a highly-articulated and sophisticated international society the sanction of *economic* and *political* pressure might eventually take the place of the sanction of force. But unless there is a major revolution in political philosophy and an unexpected transformation in the patterns of human behaviour, any international society will have to dispose of some sort of international police force. The size and scope of this police force and the nature of the weapons with which it is armed will of course have to be very carefully calculated but it seems clear that as a basic criterion it will have to be strong enough and well enough armed to defeat any possible combination or conspiracy of individuals or of nation states that might seek to upset the rule of international law.

THIS CONCEPT of general and complete disarmament, which lies behind the two existing draft treaties that have been tabled at the disarmament talks, one by the United States and one by the Soviet Union, modest an aim as it may be to some of the more passionate advocates of comprehensive disarmament, seems in itself very unlikely to be achieved in the near future. So far as the immediate political climate is concerned, the complex and interlocking power structure of the world is so impregnated with suspicion and mistrust, that it seems, on present evidence, unlikely that there will be within the next ten or fifteen years any serious move by the great powers towards any really substantial reduction of national military forces. One has only to consider the bitter ideological and political struggle between Communist China and the Soviet Union; the growing confrontation between the United States and China which has its focal point and possibly its flash-point in the dangerous crisis in Viet Nam; the present consternation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and the signs of spreading polycentrism in the Communist world to realise that the governments of most of the great countries of the world at the moment are far too preoccupied with questions of power politics and military security to give much serious attention to the possibility of comprehensive measures of disarmament.

This is not to say of course that any country would therefore be justified in forsaking the aim as one of the central elements of foreign

policy, since the barriers to disarmament are entirely a matter of political will. If there *were* ever purely technical, as opposed to disguised political, obstacles in the way of general and complete disarmament—for instance, because of genuine belief that the means of verification would prove inadequate—these obstacles have now largely disappeared. The economic arguments against comprehensive disarmament have never been convincing. It has been suggested that to implement drastic measures of disarmament, especially in highly industrialised societies, would disrupt economies and create insoluble problems of unemployment and poverty. Most of the serious studies that have been done on this subject show this to be a fallacy. Just as highly industrialised economies were converted from an all-out war effort to a largely non-military and civilian basis at the end of the two great wars of this century, so it would be possible to convert existing military economies to a peaceful basis without serious economic and industrial disruption. It would of course be necessary to engage in a substantial degree of central planning and it would be necessary to spread the period of transition over several years. But neither of the disarmament plans at present tabled at Geneva visualises the achievement of general and complete disarmament, even after agreement had been reached, in less than five years; and in this time it should be within the power of an organised political community to divert its resources and its labour force from military to civilian activities.

THE DIFFICULTIES, therefore, in the way of disarmament are not technical and they are not economic. There remain the military arguments—the suggestion that disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, would be dangerous and “destabilising.” It is suggested that a strategic stalemate has developed; that the possession by the two great power blocs of the world of the capacity to inflict incalculable and totally unacceptable destruction upon one another has provided a sort of nuclear umbrella, or balance of terror, in which nuclear war is impossible and even major conventional wars of the 1914 or 1939 type are extremely improbable. This impression of balance in strategic confrontation has brought about a relaxation in the sort of political activity that seeks resolution of international tensions; and there is a tendency to regard the nuclear stale-

mate as permanent and even comfortable, making serious measures of arms reduction not only unnecessary but undesirable or even positively dangerous.

This concept of the strategic balance, the permanent nuclear stalemate, is potentially a dangerous illusion. Even if it has existed in the twenty years since the end of the Second World War, it is arguable that it no longer exists. And it is more than arguable, it is clearly demonstrable, that the political and technological pressures of the next ten to fifteen years might well destroy it completely. It is, in fact, highly probable that we are moving into a period of unprecedented danger in the international balances of power.

Let us assume that there *is* a measure of uneasy stability at the moment. (It can hardly be said that the nuclear weapon has abolished war. There is after all one of the cruellest and most destructive wars of the century going on at this very moment in South-east Asia.) But let us argue that in terms of the larger political confrontations of the world there is a precarious and uneasy balance. How long is it likely to last? And what are the emergent factors in the world power structure that are likely to upset it?

Let us take first the central illusion of the theory of strategic balance—the illusion of bipolarity. This is based upon the assumption that the stability of the world depends entirely upon the equilibrium of confrontation between the two great nuclear super-powers—the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies. While this has arguably been the case for the last fifteen or twenty years, we cannot rely upon it being so for much longer.

The emergence of Communist China as a world power is likely to provide complications in the next ten or fifteen years which to say the least it would be very foolish to ignore. The simple recital of a few facts about China is enough to indicate its enormous potential. By most calculations it has a population now of about 700 million. It has one of the largest standing armies in the world. It has begun a series of nuclear tests, the very first of which turned out in the event to indicate a state of technological development which took most Western observers by surprise. Beyond these simple facts we can only speculate on crucial matters like the rate at which the population of China will grow, the way in which its military potential will develop and how it will use this

military potential to support and develop its foreign policy and finally, of course, what that foreign policy is likely to be. There are those who argue that China has no sound economic or industrial base from which to build up an enormous military establishment or to develop a sophisticated nuclear weapons system. Others will say that provided the political decision is made there is no doubt that by the 1980s China could have not only the largest and most powerful organised army in the world but also a nuclear weapons system capable of inflicting extensive damage on any potential enemy, including the Soviet Union and the United States: and that its exploding population will drive it inexorably into expansionist and aggressive foreign policies, even if its ideologies do not.

The missing factor in all this speculation, of course, is any clear assessment of what exactly the aims of Communist China really are. It is comparatively easy to assess the current military capabilities of China and to make a series of extrapolations to show what those military capabilities might be in twenty years' time. What we are unable to do at present is to assess exactly how the foreign policy of China is likely to develop over the same period—whether to take just two over-simplified possibilities it is likely to be defensive or expansionist, nationalist or Marxist. This is a gap in our knowledge to which I should like to refer again a little later. At this stage my concern is to suggest that if China should wish to, there is no reason why she should not, before very long, decisively upset the entire strategic balance of the world and destroy the last illusions of a nuclear stalemate.

BUT IT is of course not only China that erodes the transient bipolarity of the nuclear confrontation. Apart from the five existing nuclear powers there are a dozen or more countries in the world which have the technical, scientific and industrial base upon which to build a nuclear weapons system if they should consider it in their interests to do so. This possibility, usually referred to loosely as the problem of nuclear proliferation, I believe to contain within it the seeds of as great, if not a greater danger than the development of an effective Chinese nuclear capability. The danger of nuclear war by political miscalculation is likely to grow in direct proportion to the number of nuclear powers that exist in the world. I realise that there are cogent and often persuasive arguments against this

view, but to me they are not convincing. So far those countries that *have* nuclear weapons are engaged in the major political and ideological confrontations of the day. All except China are members of the two principal military alignments—the Warsaw Pact and the Western Alliance. Many of those countries that are capable of making nuclear weapons—the potential or “near-nuclear” powers—are outside these major confrontations and some of them are engaged in bitter local rivalries. If a small country engaged in a direct confrontation with another small country in the same area should make or acquire a nuclear weapons system, the temptation to use it in pursuit of its immediate national aims might well become irresistible. And I think we should have no doubt in our minds that, if nuclear weapons were used in some local conflict, the possibility of containing that conflict would be remote. The great powers would almost certainly become involved and the threat of a major exchange of nuclear weapons would be enormously increased. Having expressed the belief that the spread of nuclear weapons from country to country would be a development of appalling danger, it is necessary to answer the question—is it likely to happen?

The crucial factor in this debate is the problem of the sixth nuclear power. It seems arguable that if we can prevent the present number of nuclear powers from increasing at all, the possibilities of keeping the international dialogue alive and of moving on to more comprehensive and effective measures of disarmament will remain. If, however, *one* more country decides to take the step of becoming a nuclear power then I believe that there will follow almost inevitably a sort of “domino effect” or “chain reaction.” This may well mean that in ten or a dozen years after the emergence of the sixth nuclear power the number may grow to fifteen or even more. And here it might be worthwhile to interpolate a comment on the subject of so-called “peaceful nuclear explosions” or “plowshare” devices. I am sure that no one will be deceived if a non-nuclear country should carry out such a “peaceful explosion.” Nor, I suspect, would the intention be to deceive anyone. A device that can shift a million tons of earth in a desert can shift it in the middle of a city. It is, for all practical purposes, a weapon; and if the number of nuclear weapon powers begins to grow, whether the fact is demonstrated by open weapons testing or by the fiction of peaceful explosions, the roads to

disarmament—all roads—might be finally and irrevocably closed.

I HAVE REFERRED to the growth of Communist China and the possible spread of nuclear weapons as two of the greatest dangers to the precarious peace that most of us enjoy at the moment.

A third is the possibility of some great breakthrough in weapons technology. Already there are signs of a significant and qualitative change in the arms race amongst the advanced military nations. This is not so much a matter of nuclear technology as of a revolution in what are called military "systems." Spectacular advances in the techniques of computation and control within weapons systems, within military establishments, and within the industrial complexes that develop and manufacture military weapons systems are making possible the evolution of military mechanisms on a scale and complexity that up to now we have not been able to contemplate. This is a revolution that is particularly significant in such fields as the automated control of weapons systems, and one of the most significant developments in this field has been the advance towards a system of ballistic missile defence. Recent developments, some of them no more than a few months old, have revived and nourished the belief that it might after all be possible to develop an effective system of defence against ballistic missiles. Now there are a number of intricate and highly complicated arguments for and against the deployment of such defence if it should become scientifically possible. Without rehearsing all these arguments now I must say that in my view the trend towards ballistic missile defence is an extremely dangerous one.

I am not convinced that these defensive systems can ever be fully effective, and the result of deploying them would be to upset the strategic balance, to lift the arms race into a new and ruinously expensive dimension, and to create political and strategic problems that might well entirely disrupt existing systems of collective security. An even more disturbing possibility is that ballistic missile defence might inject into nuclear strategy the destabilising element of automatic response.

There is, I suggest, nothing inherently stable in the present strategic balance. And yet the penalties of any serious upset in that balance are now greater than they have ever been before.

The enormous stockpiles of nuclear weapons that now exist are capable of creating destruction on a scale that no one can even remotely imagine. We are moving into a period of great and growing danger and the immediate and urgent question that we must ask ourselves is what can be done in the field of foreign policy and international relations to reduce those dangers and to make the world a less precarious place to live in.

SO FAR AS the actual growth and development of Communist China is concerned it is a phenomenon that we can do very little about, even if we should want to. We cannot, by any means that any civilised person or government would contemplate, halt the development of Communist China or the growth of its military potential.

I believe that what we can do, however, is to try to exercise some influence upon the way in which it uses that power. We shall not be able to do this so long as China remains isolated from the community of nations as a whole. There can be no substantial improvement in the international political climate until China is brought into international negotiations. There can be no serious attempt at comprehensive disarmament so long as China remains disinterested in the subject. One of the first steps towards bringing China into the normal traffic of international affairs is to bring China into the United Nations. There are, of course, obvious difficulties in the way of what seems such a clearly desirable step. There is the problem of what happens to Chiang Kai-shek's régime. It seems evident at the present that Communist China would not contemplate taking a seat in the United Nations alongside the Chinese nationalists; it is, indeed, doubtful whether Peking is seriously interested in the United Nations while the United States maintains its present military and political posture in Asia. The very least the rest of the world can do is to find some way of removing the obstacles to Chinese admission. If Peking then refuses to come through the open door it will be clear for everyone to see where the blame really lies.

Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is a more subtle and complex problem. It will only be done in the context of an effective and comprehensive non-proliferation strategy which will have to include an effective non-proliferation treaty, an end to all nuclear testing, including the testing of weapons underground, and acceptance by the nuclear powers of the world of the



fact that they cannot expect the non-nuclear powers to engage in a permanent self-denying ordinance while the arms race amongst the nuclear powers continues. This is not to suggest that all these measures should be included in one large cumbersome and hard-to-negotiate package deal; but simply to say that if the nuclear powers want to persuade the potential nuclear powers to sign a treaty of non-proliferation they will themselves have to show some signs of flexibility and good intent. The nuclear powers themselves will have to find some way of at least freezing the level of their nuclear armaments and eventually of making some positive reduction in their stockpiles and weapons systems. The difficulties in all these areas of disarmament and arms control are of course enormous. One of the most obvious is the need for each step in the disarmament process to be effectively controlled and verified. But there are other problems as well. Apart from the general cloak of inhibition cast over disarmament negotiations by the war in Viet Nam, each single avenue towards even the most modest and partial measures of disarmament seems for the moment to be blocked by formidable obstacles.

The search for agreement on a non-proliferation treaty between the Soviet Union and the West has run aground on the rocks of Russian mistrust of Western Germany and the Russian belief that the Western Alliance is bent upon a course of action that will result in giving West Germany what they call access to nuclear weapons. Here I think it important to say that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany have consistently made it clear that they have no appetite for nuclear weapons. And no plan exists in the Western Alliance that would allow the control of nuclear weapons to pass out of the hands of those who exercise it at present. This is not to suggest that there is not room for flexible and imaginative policies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Two distinguished Americans have already pointed the way. Speaking in the United States Senate in June, 1965, Mr. Robert Kennedy said:

But if a non-proliferation treaty can be concluded, it will be in the national interest of every nation. We should therefore continue with increased concern, our search for a form of nuclear guarantee to West Germany and other countries of Europe which meets their needs without meeting with rejection by the Soviet Union—such as might evolve from the allied consultation device suggested at the NATO meeting by Defense Secretary McNamara.

In June of this year Dr. Henry Kissinger, testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was rather more specific: speaking of plans for joint nuclear forces he said:

As I have already pointed out, the so-called "hardware solution" does not seem to me fruitful. Since the problem is essentially political, the Special (McNamara) Committee should be given every opportunity to work and should be expanded to include political functions.

SO FAR AS a comprehensive test ban is concerned the possibility of an agreement to ban the testing of nuclear weapons underground remains remote so long as the Soviet Union and the West cannot agree upon effective methods of inspection and verification. So far the West insists upon a number of "on-site" inspections to guard against any clandestine breach of an underground test ban; while the Soviet Union insists that such inspections are no longer necessary and refuses unequivocally to accept them. Here, again, there is more room for manoeuvre than is immediately apparent in these rigid positions. Proposals for international processing of seismic data—the raw material of scientific techniques for detecting and identifying underground explosions without "on-site" inspection—have been put forward in the disarmament negotiations in Geneva; and the International Assembly on Nuclear Weapons, a non-official meeting of disarmament experts held in Toronto in June this year, set out a proposal for a trial period of agreement not to test nuclear weapons underground, coupled with an idea for verification by a system of challenges and invitations. It is significant that the plan was put forward by an American and received with encouraging interest by the Russian scientists and diplomats at the Assembly.

Measures of nuclear disarmament among the nuclear powers, although these might make it easier for non-nuclear powers to sign a non-proliferation treaty, would also make it more difficult for the nuclear powers to extend a guarantee to a non-nuclear power against the possibility of attack or blackmail by a nuclear power that had not signed the non-proliferation treaty. The position of India and China in this context is obviously of crucial importance. Apart from this sort of inhibition, any serious deployment of anti-ballistic missile defences would clearly make discussion of nuclear disarmament academic for many years. Although the dangers of this have been the subject of much discussion in the press, in diplomatic exchanges and in

disarmament negotiations (perhaps the most significant contribution to the debate being a speech by the United States delegate to the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee in August) there is no sign of any imminent agreement, tacit or otherwise, not to develop ballistic missile defences.

By any standards the picture at present seems on the surface to be a gloomy one. The possibility of agreement on general and complete disarmament seems remote. And even progress on the most modest measures of arms control designed to reduce the danger and destructiveness of war seems for the moment to be blocked by insuperable obstacles.

Is it possible to trace any lines of foreign policy, any future patterns in international relations that might break this tragic deadlock? In the immediate future it seems clear that the key lies with the United States and the Soviet Union. For too long these two countries, and the alliances that have grown up around them, have been locked in a confrontation across central Europe that owes much of its rigidity to a whole set of old-fashioned and obsolete cold war clichés and assumptions. The problems of the last quarter of the twentieth century will not be problems of Central Europe. The danger that the Red Army will flood across the river Elbe and engulf the whole of Western Europe is no longer the threat that it was thought to be in the cold war years. And the idea that the armies of NATO will engage in any schemes to roll back the frontiers of the Warsaw Pact is utterly unreal. This is not to say that we can at once dissolve our military alliances because the military threats have receded. Of course the process of disarmament is bound to include the progressive erosion of military alliances, which are irrelevant to a disarmed world. For the moment, however, alliances are necessary defensive organisations. But we must regard them not just in that light.

They are even more essential as a base for the development and co-ordination of rational foreign policies. The real problems that will confront us in the last quarter of this century are not those of central Europe; they are the problems of the third world of Africa and Asia—the problems of developing nations, the problem of exploding populations, the problems of race and the feeding of hungry millions. The great confrontations that will grow out of that will not be those between capitalism and communism, between the planned society and

private enterprise; the great confrontations will be between the prosperous countries and the poor, between the complacent and the oppressed and possibly, unless we begin to conduct our international affairs in a more intelligent manner, the most appalling conflict of all—that between the coloured peoples and the white. If this broad diagnosis is valid it seems self-evident that the United States and its allies on the one hand and the Soviet Union and its allies on the other must free themselves from their cold war prison and find together some common ground for dealing with these problems. The improvement of East-West relations in Europe is no longer simply an option of foreign policy. It is an imperative historical necessity.

In the long run even this will not be enough. It will be no use exchanging one confrontation for another or one cold war for another.

We shall have to assist at a political revolution if we are to control the instruments of military power that have come with the scientific revolution. It will be no good, for example, preventing the spread of nuclear weapons if in order to do so we have to deny to developing countries the immeasurable advantages of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We shall have to face and solve problems of great complexity—how, for example, to deal with plutonium—a commodity that is essential for the fuelling of the new generation of fast breeder reactors, but which is also the basic and significant ingredient of an atomic bomb; and how to deal with the problem of the “Plowshare” nuclear explosion without depriving non-nuclear countries of what might seem, to them at any rate, to be a revolutionary and indispensable engineering device?

EVEN IF we can solve some of the immediate problems and remove some of the more pressing dangers to survival, we shall still be faced with the need to construct an international society relevant to the sources of power, both peaceful and military, which we can now deploy. We cannot afford to go on conducting international affairs according to the political philosophies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We must begin to look seriously at social, political and even scientific concepts that have long been acceptable and familiar to us—concepts like the sanctity of the nation state, nationalism, patriotism and the assumption that the conduct of human affairs is necessarily a function of aggressive instinct and of recurrent conflict and tension.

ONE THING, however, seems to stand out above all the others in our approach to the political attitudes of the future. It is that before we can move from the out-dated but still prevalent concept of the nation state, even tentatively, towards the ideal of world government, we must first begin to accept that relations between states should be conducted on a basis of morality at least as binding as that which governs the conduct of affairs between individual human beings. As Henry Stimson once said, the nuclear weapon "constitutes merely a first step in a new control by man over the forces of nature too revolutionary and dangerous to fit into the old concepts... it really caps the climax of the race between man's growing technical power for destructiveness and his psychological power of self-control and group control—his moral power." We cannot accept indefinitely the Spinozan concept that a nation can lie and cheat and steal and kill so long as it does it in the interest of its citizens.

Nor can we be uncritical of the Hobbesian proposition that the citizen bears an unlimited liability to the state so long as the state is able to protect him and his interests. We have to be critical if only because it is extremely doubtful that the nation state acting independently can any longer guarantee either the survival or the prosperity of the individual. This guarantee may have been relevant to the world in which bows and arrows, or cannon, or even thousand-bomber raids were the limit of one nation's frightfulness in pursuit of another. In the day of the hydrogen bomb it is a philosophy of despair and disintegration. As that most compassionate of American statesmen Adlai Stevenson has said, "It took a scientific revolution to produce the nuclear weapon; it will take a political revolution to control it."

In the long term the sort of changes in group behaviour and national attitudes necessary to sustain such a revolution will clearly be a matter of education in the very broadest sense. This will involve, as a basic element, a new approach to the formal education of children. The "crazy

combative patriotism" to which H. G. Wells referred is, in his view, a by-product of the history lessons at school which "take the growing mind at a naturally barbaric phase and... inflame and fix its barbarism." There is a clear need to teach children less of the moral asymmetry of national power politics and more of what makes human beings behave as they do because they are human beings, not because they are Englishmen or Germans or Chinese. As Dr. Hans Thirring powerfully argues, if children are to grow up to be citizens of a world community their education must be international.

There is much more to the process of education than the syllabuses and textbooks of schools. A remarkable study in *New Society* of 7th July brought home the need to question the scale of values that allows young minds to be influenced by "war comics" and other pulp magazines into accepting blindly the national stereotypes of the Japs, the Jerries, and the Reds. The study concluded that the effect upon children of reading this sort of material is far from trivial and that it may also be long lasting.

The development of new political philosophies and new insights into individual and group psychology, international systems of education and the perfection of supra-national organisations are essential elements in any comprehensive pursuit of peace; but the safety of mankind is too precariously balanced to allow us the luxury of long-term thinking and planning without the need for urgent action. The political revolution must begin soon if, as Pandit Nehru believed, the human spirit is to prevail over the nuclear weapons. The first signs that the revolution has begun will be the acceptance by the great powers of the risks—political and military—without which the most modest steps in arms control and disarmament are impossible. Unless we are prepared to take these risks it must be said, as soberly and undramatically as it is possible to make such a statement, that we may not survive much longer.



# Some Stevens Letters

WALLACE STEVENS was born on 2 October 1879. His father was a lawyer and small businessman in Reading, Pennsylvania, his mother a Zeller, of Dutch descent. It was a reading household, and one in which the children were taught the importance of making one's way in the world; but it seems not to have been opposed to a certain gaudiness and gaiety of language. At sixteen the poet, writing from his grandmother's house in the country, describes to his mother "the piping of flamboyant flutes, the wriggling of shrieking fifes with rasping dagger-voices, the sighing of bass-voils, drums that beat and rattle, the crescendo of cracked trombones," in a local band, runs through the detail of the house in the same style, and describes himself as "jeune." But he was to reach his thirties before gaudiness rubbed off the prose on to the verse.

At Harvard (1897-1900) he was President of the *Advocate* and kept a journal, but did little in poetry to confute his father's opinion that "the afflatus is not serious." It is interesting to learn that he disliked "art for art's sake," writing in his Journal that "art must fit in with other things, it must be part of the system of the world" (29 March 1899); it could be maintained, against the common view, that he stuck to this always. After Harvard he tried to make a living by writing, but although he enjoyed living in New York ("this electric town that I adore") there were not enough journalistic assignments, and he entered New York Law School in 1901. He spent three hard-working

and solitary years there. "The old Biblical injunctions to make the earth fertile and to earn one's bread in the sweat of one's brow are one's first instructions," he noted in April 1903. "Here I am, a descendant of the Dutch, at the age of twenty-five, without a cent to my name, in a huge town, knowing a half-dozen men and no women" (7 February 1904). There were long solitary walks: "How clean and precise the lines of the world are early in the morning! The light is perfect—absolute..." (18 April 1904).

In 1904 he met his future wife, and money became more important, "my thoughts must be constantly on that subject," (24 March 1907) but his own practice was not successful and he became a company lawyer. The Journal and letters to his wife occasionally offer pre-echoes of the poetry to come: "Your letter was in major, the weather is in major..." (19 January 1909; see *Collected Poems*, p. 404, etc.). He married in 1909.

In view of the common curiosity about the combination in Stevens' life of metropolitan poetry and provincial insurance, it is interesting that his success in both worlds began at much the same time; he joined the Hartford Accident and Indemnity in August, 1913, and was soon appearing in *Poetry*, writing the poems which would be collected in *Harmonium* (1923) and discussing them with Harriet Monroe. These letters are the first of a great many in which Stevens, contrary to the practice of most modern poets, freely discussed with scholars and enthusiasts the interpretation of his poems.

In 1915 he dined with Duchamp and looked at his things, "but naturally, being without sophistication in that direction, and with only a rudimentary feeling about art, I expect little of myself" (3 August 1915)—which is evidence not only of modesty but of the curiously late maturing of a taste. Another significant

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