was one-sided, it would end the war having, by its own act, destroyed the claim that it possessed a system of human values which was worth fighting and dying for. Its institutions would deserve no more respect or loyalty than those of Hitler's Germany.

This is something which is being recognised more and more widely. Colin Gray, the spokesman for the American strategic right wing, has this to say in the article discussed on page 19:

> It would seem to be virtually self-evident that a country like the United States that has a founding state ideology of commitment to the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of individual Americans, cannot credibly threaten to initiate an "exchange" of nuclear strikes against essentially civilian targets. As an operational strategy for compellent effect, such an idea affronts American values both in the sense of an absolute ethic (targeting non-combatants is morally wrong) and in the sense of an ethic of consequences (it would licence an intolerable attack on American society).

"Better dead than red" may, of course, be used to express a sentiment which is not a moral judgment at all, but merely a personal preference. If someone tells me that he would prefer to be a victim of a nuclear attack than be subject to Russian hegemony, I would not claim the right to disbelieve him. But such a preference can hardly be very widely shared. The inhabitants of Warsaw already suffer what we would have to suffer if we surrendered to Russian blackmail. Yet in the worst days of martial law, can anyone really believe that what the Polish people wanted was for the West to put them out of their agony by dropping a nuclear device upon the centre of Warsaw?

II. THE LOGIC OF DETERRENCE

4 Threat and Execution

Many people would agree with the argument so far, and accept that there can be no justification for actually fighting a nuclear war. Even a government pamphlet setting out to defend the British independent deterrent begins by saying: "Talk of fighting a nuclear war is dangerous nonsense, because there can be no winners in such a conflict." It is a good thing, however, that there is a spate of books describing the horrors of nuclear war, for it is necessary to keep reminding people of what the world would be like afterwards in order to bring home that there is no desirable goal which can rationally be pursued by launching such a war.

At this point the debate about nuclear weapons becomes really serious and difficult. Some say: "These weapons can never be used in a war that would be sane or moral, therefore we should get rid of them." Others say: "We must keep and modernise these weapons as a deterrent, because this is the only safe way to prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war which we all agree would be an ultimate disaster." Thus the pamphlet quoted in the paragraph above says: "The strategy of deterrence has held firm, despite the increasing international tensions of recent years, because it would be madness for either side to launch an attack on the other."

If that is how the strategy of deterrence is enunciated, there seems a paradox at its core. If A tries to deter B from something by threatening to launch a nuclear attack on B, A is threatening to do something which on A's own account it would be madness

for him to do. If B thinks that A means what he says, B must think that A is mad; if B thinks A does not mean what he says, then B must think that A is bluffing. Either way, then, B must think that A is either mad or lying, so how is A's threat supposed to provide a reason for B to act or to desist from action?

Perhaps when the British government says that it would be madness for either side to launch an attack on the other, what it really means is that it would be madness to initiate a nuclear attack on the other side, thus inviting nuclear retaliation. A second strike in retaliation for an attack on the other side is perhaps not, in the view of the government, something which is to be regarded as a piece of madness. It is this readiness for a second strike which provides the deterrent to an attack from the Soviet side.

Perhaps it is not quite as mad to retaliate when one has already suffered devastation as it is to attack first and invite annihilation. From a moral point of view, there is little to choose between the first attacker and the second, since two wrongs do not make a right. And it would not in fact, so I have argued, even be rational from the point of view of self-interest for a country which has undergone a nuclear attack to launch a retaliatory strike. Nonetheless, it is worth examining more closely the structure of the strategy of deterrence.

There are those who agree with the main conclusion of the previous chapter that nuclear war waged on populations or causing disproportionate numbers of civilian deaths is morally unacceptable, but who accept with various qualifications the policy of possessing and deploying nuclear weapons as a deterrent. It is with that position that I shall be concerned in the present section of my argument.

Those who, while renouncing full-scale nuclear war, defend nuclear deterrence, fall into two classes. There are those who justify possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent on the grounds that some uses of those weapons may be legitimate, and there are those who defend the possession of nuclear weapons as a deterrent while agreeing that the use of them in all

circumstances must be wrong.

I have already agreed that it is possible to imagine uses for at least some nuclear weapons which would be legitimate. Considered in themselves, none of the traditional criteria for the conduct of just war would rule out the interception of ballistic missiles, the use of nuclear depth-charges on submarines, or the explosion of a nuclear weapon as a demonstration shot in an uninhabited area. In concrete circumstances, of course, such activities might be intolerably provocative or dangerous, and might well be intended as an expression of a resolve to proceed to more nefarious uses of nuclear weapons; but in the abstract they are morally defensible. But it would be folly to conclude that because some uses of some nuclear weapons are legitimate, that makes all possession of any nuclear weapons legitimate. The legitimacy of the possession of nuclear weapons depends on the purposes for which they are kept and the likely ways in which they would be used. The defenders of deterrence do not claim that deterrence can be maintained by the threat of these marginal uses alone.

The crucial question is this. Is there any use of nuclear weapons which is both ethically justified and sufficiently extensive to underpin the deterrent threat? Can a potential aggressor be deterred by a threat to do anything less than launch a murderous attack? Or must it be the case that any threat which is sufficient to act as a deterrent to our potential enemies must be a threat whose execution would be immoral?

Morality and the Nuclear Threat

Before discussing this question we may begin by agreeing readily that the nuclear powers are in a position to inflict intolerable damage on an adversary without making use of all the capacity they possess: in order to deter they do not need to threaten to wage war to the limit of their strength. The superpowers could execute a deterrent threat with only a fraction of their present arsenals: this is one of the most frequent complaints of critics of the arms race. Even a minor nuclear power like the

United Kingdom has the physical power to cause, with a single one of its Polaris submarines, damage on a scale which no Soviet government is likely to think tolerable.

But to say that the damage which a deterrent threatens is less than a deterrer could inflict if unrestrained does not settle the question of whether such a threat of damage is justified. The Polaris warheads, for instance, in order to carry out a threat adequate to deter the Soviet Union, would have to be targeted on cities or military targets in densely populated areas. If the argument of the previous part of this book is accepted, the execution of such a threat could never be justified.

Defenders of the deterrent argue that a targeting strategy sufficient to deter need not involve any massive attacks on cities as such. An attack aimed at wrecking economic effort, transport systems and structures of command, in conjunction with a discriminating bombardment of forces in the field, could well cripple an aggressive regime in wartime and sap its will for military adventure, while leaving the great majority of its population intact. Even such an attack would, beyond doubt, cause a large number of non-combatant deaths; but these deaths would neither be the purpose of the attack nor out of proportion to the presumed goal of warding off totalitarian conquest with the slavery and deaths which this would bring in its train. In absolute terms, the number of deaths could well be substantially less than the number thought tolerable in the war against Hitler.

Hence, it is argued, there could be a scale of strike large enough to rob an aggressor of the will to continue a war, and yet limited enough so that the expected harm to civilians is less than the evil expected if the aggression is successful. It is no doubt difficult to decide in advance, and in ignorance of the exact nature of the aggressor and scale of the aggression, the precise target-plan and mix of weapons of different yields required for such a judicious onslaught. But its possibility is sufficient to justify the maintenance of the capability to administer such a blow should the occasion arise.

This argument may be presented in two forms. In one form, the argument goes that it is essential to the credibility of a deterrent that it should be accompanied by a thought-out and credible war-fighting plan, whether or not the plan was ever to be put into operation in the event of deterrence failing. In the other form, it is suggested that it might actually make sense to carry out such a plan in action. It could not, it is admitted, be carried out without huge non-combatant casualties, even though such casualties would not be the aim of the action. When it came to the point, the moral decision would have to be made by weighing these unsought casualties gravely in the balance against the desired political objectives of the war, seeking honestly to decide whether the objective sought was in proportion to the undesired but inevitable damage to innocent life. It may be that in practice no circumstances will arise which would justify a strike on such a scale. But the mere possibility that they may is enough to justify the present retention of the deterrent along with the appropriate war-fighting plans.

A Limited Attack

Such an argument, in my view, is the most powerful form that an ethical defence of the deterrent can take. I shall argue that nonetheless it is inadequate.

It is difficult to decide how far such a limited attack on Warsaw Pact targets would be possible: one would need to know much about the economic geography and military dispositions in the Soviet Union. We do know that no corresponding attack on Great Britain would be possible. In Operation Square Leg, a government simulation of a Soviet attack on this country carried out in October 1981, no bombs were assumed to have fallen on inner London. It was assumed that five targets, such as Heathrow, were hit around the periphery. Nevertheless the consequences, which are described in *London after the Bomb* (Oxford University Press, 1982), include 5m dead in the London area within two months of the attack. Even allowing for the lesser density of the population in many

parts of eastern Europe, the result of an attack on military and economic targets in Warsaw Pact countries is likely to be tens of millions dead. And of course many of the targets presented by the Warsaw Pact armed forces, on the hypothesis of an invasion of the West, are in friendly Nato nations.

But suppose even 20m Russians, Poles, Czechs and their allies are killed in such an attack. Is that not better than that the West should succumb to totalitarian domination? Is it not a lesser number of deaths than were thought tolerable in the war against Hitler?

There is something grotesque in the idea that because the allies were justified in going to war against Hitler, any war against a totalitarian enemy is justified if it causes fewer deaths than were lost in Hitler's war. First of all, the great majority of deaths in Hitler's war were caused not by the allies, but by Hitler's armies, Hitler's police and Hitler's gaolers: it is absurd to suggest that because we were justified in going to war against Hitler we would be justified in any future war in causing as many deaths as he did. Secondly, few would now claim that even all the deaths inflicted on the allied side were justified. The lives lost in the bombing of Hamburg, Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the western allies, the lives taken by the vengeful Russian troops in their victorious advance westward: these hardly provide a paradigm for the measurement of proportionality in future wars. Can we be certain that the war did more good than harm, in the sense that the world was a better place in 1946 than it was in 1938, or even than it would have been in 1946 had there been no war? Even if we can, that does not mean that we can lump together all the deaths caused in the war and say that the good it did was worth the loss of all those lives.

Even if we waive these difficulties, the comparison with the Second World War leaves out of account the most important thing: that the Third World War would be fought, as the Second was not, against an enemy who is himself armed with nuclear weapons. Even if a damage-plan could be devised which would satisfy the strictest scrutiny in accordance with the

principles of non-combatant immunity and proportionality, putting it into action against an enemy prepared and willing to launch massive retaliation would be an act of reckless folly. The criteria for just war-making include, it must be remembered, not only proportionality and non-combatant immunity, but also the hope of victory.

Defenders of the deterrent, faced with this objection, make two responses. First, they say that a victim of aggression cannot necessarily be held responsible for the response of the aggressor to the victim's self-defence: a woman has no absolute duty to submit to rape, for instance, even if she believes that resistance will lead to further violence. Hence, any Russian retaliation to a limited western attack would be their responsibility and not ours. Secondly, we have no reason to assume that western resistance on these lines would inevitably lead to an unlimited counter-attack on our cities. In a nuclear war neither side would want escalation; both would be looking for ways to end the struggle; the Soviets would be no less anxious than the Nato allies not to put the cities of their homelands at further risk.

The first response commits an error opposite to that committed in the value judgment about the death-toll in the Second World War. It is a mistake to lump together all the deaths in a war and regard both sides as equally responsible for them: there is a difference between the lives a nation takes and the lives it loses. But it is an equally distorting error to suggest that a government can entirely escape responsibility for the loss of lives which it brings upon its own side by its attacks on an enemy. The major responsibility for such deaths does, of course, rest on the aggressor who causes them; but responsibility also rests on the side which, foreseeing the possibility of such retaliation, goes ahead with its own attack.

It is correct, as the second response reminds us, that there would be no certainty of a massive Soviet response to a limited western attack: in matters involving human choices and decisions, in times of passion and confusion, there can be no scientific prediction or justified certainty in advance of the

outcome. But in order for it to be rational to desist from a course of action, it is not necessary that it should be certain to have a catastrophic result: it is sufficient that catastrophe should be a consequence that is more or less likely. After all, the main reason for saying that it is not certain that the Soviets would opt for massive retaliation is that *they* would fear a western response in kind. But that in turn is uncertain. The mere risk of such a response on our side is supposed to be sufficient to make them, as rational human beings, think twice about launching their attack. But should not the risk of their attack, at the earlier stage, provide an equally strong reason for refraining from the limited attack? Moreover, if the Soviets are deterred from a counter-attack against urban centres, it is because they are afraid of an all-out assault on their population. But this, according to the defender of the deterrent, is something that would be immoral in itself, and the threat of which plays no part in the deterrent strategy.

5 Deterrence Without Use

It seems, then, impossible to defend the view that there can be a use of nuclear weapons sufficiently devastating to underpin the deterrent threat, while sufficiently discriminating to be capable of non-murderous execution. What of those who defend the deterrent while agreeing that no actual use of nuclear weapons is defensible? There are those who are resolved never actually to press the nuclear button, and yet who wish to retain nuclear weapons as a deterrent. This seems to be the policy recommended by the Catholic bishops in the United States, and in Britain by Cardinal Basil Hume: use is forbidden, deterrence is permissible.

The qualified approval given by these authorities to deterrence was no doubt influenced by the statement of Pope John Paul II to the United Nations special session in 1982: "In current conditions, 'deterrence' based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself, but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable." The American bishops, in spite of their profound scepticism about the moral acceptability of any use of nuclear weapons, stopped short of an unequivocal condemnation of deterrence, though they rejected any quest for nuclear superiority or plans for prolonged periods of repeated nuclear strikes, and they insisted that deterrence must be a step on the way to disarmament, towards which they recommended a number of specific proposals.

Cardinal Hume, in an article in *The Times* on 17th November

1983, wrote that

> The acceptance of deterrence on strict conditions and as a temporary expedient leading to progressive disarmament is emerging as the most widely accepted view of the Roman Catholic Church.

It would be wrong, the Cardinal said, to apply to the policy of deterrence the same moral condemnation that would be given to the actual use of nuclear weapons against civilian targets, which was something that nothing could ever justify. Since the purpose of deterrence was to avoid war, servicemen could be commended, and not blamed, for taking their part in maintaining it. But the condition that deterrence should be a stage towards disarmament was crucial: a government which failed to reduce its weapons and limit their employment could expect its citizens to be alienated from its defence policies. And finally deterrence had to be seen as a means of preventing, not waging, war: "If it fails and the missiles are launched, then we shall have moved into a new situation. And those concerned will have to bear a heavy responsibility." How they should carry out this responsibility Cardinal Hume did not say. Presumably, whatever they do, they must not use nuclear weapons in the way he has already condemned, "as weapons of massive and indiscriminate slaughter".

The Cardinal admits that his position is a strange one. There is a tension between the moral imperative not to use such inhuman weapons and a policy of nuclear deterrence with its declared willingness to use them if attacked. To condemn all use and yet to accept deterrence places us in a seemingly contradictory position. Many, even among the Catholic Church, are yet to be convinced that if all use is wrong, deterrence is still permissible. Some, convinced of the wrongness of the use of the weapons, deplore the lack of an authoritative and unequivocal condemnation of deterrence. Others, accepting the Pope's judgment that deterrence, as things are, is tolerable, take issue with the American bishops' outspoken "no" to nuclear warfare.

Is the position represented by Cardinal Hume in fact self-contradictory? Would a deterrent operated by people who believed that nuclear weapons must never be used be either credible or ethical? Would there be any point in retaining bombs that one was resolved never to drop and missiles one was determined never to launch?

It can, I think, be argued that such a policy is perfectly consistent with deterrent theory, as well as in accord with the demands of proportionality and non-combatant immunity. The point of deterrence is to provide an input to the practical reasoning of a potential adversary. If an adversary proves to be undeterred, then the deterrent has failed to be effective at the time when it was purported to be effective, and cannot, as it were, be made retrospectively effective by a retaliatory strike. Thus far, then, deterrence without use seems possible.

The difficulty in a deterrent policy of this sort is that if it is announced to the enemy in advance, it is not obvious that the possession of nuclear weapons would continue to deter. The proponents of deterrence normally regard it as essential that the possession of the weapons should be accompanied by the threat, explicit or implicit, to use them if need arise. Those who wish to defend deterrence while opposing use therefore have to be prepared to maintain that it can be legitimate to threaten what it would not be legitimate to do. Is this a defensible ethical position?

It may be argued that the threat to use nuclear weapons cannot be justified, for if it is insincere it involves deception, and if it is not insincere it involves the intention to do what we have agreed it would be wrong to do. This argument moves a little too fast, and it is worthwhile to take it to pieces to see how far it works and how far it does not.

It is difficult to deny the moral principle that if it is wrong to do X, it is wrong to intend to do X. The principle is not an idiosyncrasy of Catholic moral theology. The point has been well put by Barry Paskins in a contribution to *Ethics and Nuclear Deterrence* (Croom Helm, 1982). One cannot argue, he says, that

the intention to wage all out nuclear war is less immoral than the action itself:

> If I plan to beat you up and do so, then there is more for me to reproach myself about than if my plan is thwarted. This indicates one thing that might be meant by holding that the intention to beat you up is "less immoral than" the deed and could be applied to any immoral deed *considered in retrospect*. But retrospection is not the issue. The question is whether looking forward, deliberating what to do, one can in good faith ask whether a conditional intention is as immoral as the act intended. The answer is surely that the question, if clearly evisaged, is bound to be disingenuous. Prohibiting an action sets limits to what may be purposed, selected, intended, done: separate prohibition of intention is otiose.

The intention which Paskins is discussing is, as he says, a conditional one: it is not the intention to launch the missiles, period, but the intention to launch the missiles *if attacked onself*. But this does not affect the argument in this case. It can sometimes be legitimate to intend to do X if A, when it would not be legitimate to intend X *simpliciter*: it is all right to intend to imprison someone *if duly convicted* when it would not be all right to intend to imprison him come what may. But a case where intending to do X if A is legitimate must be a case where actually doing X in circumstances A is legitimate. But if X is some action which is not allowed, whatever the circumstances, then an intention to do X is no more legitimate for being a conditional one.

Moral theologians can be found who are willing to argue that the conditional intention involved in the strategy of deterrence is not an immoral one. Thus, Clifford Longley in *The Times* of 7th February 1983 summarises one argument to this effect, which he attributes to Fr Gerard Hughes:

> I intend to do some immoral action only in certain definite circumstances. Suppose I also believe that only by having this intention can I be sure that those circumstances will never occur; and suppose that it is my moral duty to try to prevent those circumstances from occurring; the situation then is that only by intending to do an immoral act can I do my duty of preventing those circumstances

> from occurring. Is it now clear that that intention is an immoral one?

Hence, Mr Longley suggested, there was a logical fallacy in the arguments of theologians who oppose deterrence. The article drew a reply, two days later, from Bishop B.C. Butler:

> There is certainly a logical fallacy in the above suggestion. For it is impossible to intend to respond to a situation which you are certain will never arise. No one can intend to do what he knows he will never have occasion to do. Hence, if deterrence were certain to succeed permanently, it could continue as a policy, though there would be no intention of translating it into act. Unfortunately, such certainty, as is generally admitted, is not attainable.

This reply seems to be decisive against those who maintain that it is morally acceptable to have a conditional intention to do something which they agree to be morally unacceptable.

The Deterrer's Intentions

It may, however, be questioned whether the maintenance of the deterrent does involve a conditional intention to launch a nuclear attack. The intention of Nato in maintaining a nuclear capability, it is sometimes argued, is not to launch a nuclear attack but to deter a Soviet attack on the alliance. But this argument fails to recognise that the two intentions are not incompatible with each other. The purpose or ultimate intention of maintaining the deterrent is no doubt to dissuade the Soviets and their allies from attacking; but the means chosen of dissuasion is the threat of launching, in the event of an attack, a nuclear counter-attack. Insofar then as the threat involves an intention to attack, that conditional intention is a part of the means to the ultimate purpose of deterrence. The threat is made *in order to* keep the peace, and when X is deliberately done *in order to* bring about Y, X is a means to Y and is something which is itself intentional.

The crucial question is whether the threat to use nuclear weapons if attacked does necessarily involve the conditional intention to use them. The maintenance of the deterrent involves

the making of plans for the use of nuclear weapons, the training of servicemen to use them if commanded, the exploration of various consequences of their eventual use. It may well be that the leaders of the West do have, as things are, a quite firm intention to use the weapons in certain specific circumstances, and that these intentions are communicated to the commanders who operate the deterrent in their private briefings. But must a deterrent necessarily involve such intentions? On the part of the supreme policy makers, probably not. For the deterrence to remain effective, the most that is required is that they should not have ruled out the option altogether; that they should, as it were, reserve the right to make a nuclear attack.

It must I think be conceded to defenders of the deterrence strategy that it is misleading for the arguments for and against the morality of the policy to be framed in terms of the intentions of the deterrer. It must be agreed that something less than an intention to use the weapons may be sufficient to deter a potential attacker. A mere willingness to use the weapons will suffice, a willingness which consists in preserving their use as a genuine option.

It is correct to make a distinction between intention and willingness: there can be a great difference between the two states of mind in degree of certainty and resolve implied. But making the distinction does not have a great effect on the course of the moral argument. If it is true that it is wrong to intend to do what it is wrong to do, it is equally true that it is wrong to be willing or ready to do what it is wrong to do. Any argument for the one proposition is an equally good argument for the other. If the wrong in question is an absolute wrong, then it is absolutely wrong to be ready to commit it, just as it is absolutely wrong to intend to commit it. To say that something is absolutely wrong is precisely to say that it is not a permissible option.

To reach a final assessment of the morality of the deterrent we have to ask what exactly it is that does the deterring. As things are the deterrent has two elements. One is the physical element, the nuclear hardware and the power it gives to each

side to destroy the other: this is what has been called "the existential deterrent". The other is the political element, the declared intention or readiness of the two sides to use the hardware to destroy the enemy society in certain circumstances. McGeorge Bundy, who introduced the term "existential" into this context, explained his reason as follows:

> My aim in using this fancy adjective is to distinguish this kind of deterrence from the kind that is based on strategic theories or declaratory policies or even international commitments. As long as we assume that each side has very large numbers of thermonuclear weapons which *could* be used against the opponent, even after the strongest possible pre-emptive attack, existential deterrence is strong. It rests on uncertainty about what *could happen,* not in what has been asserted.

Behind each alteration in the strategic plans of the West over recent decades has been a desire to couple the possession of nuclear weapons with a credible threat to use them. Proponents of limited nuclear warfare say that there is a gaping hole in the strategy of MAD: it depends on issuing a threat which the United States could never dare to implement. Critics of the policy of limited war-fighting say that it rests on a premise which hardly anyone in responsibility believes, that nuclear war, once begun, could be kept strictly controlled.

The critics on both sides are right: there is no credible and rational declaratory policy to be enunciated as the justification of nuclear weapons. Even in peacetime, strategists have not been able to present a plan for nuclear weapon use against the Warsaw Pact countries which commands substantial assent among those who would have to carry it out. In wartime any possibility of rational decision would be ruled out by the constraints of timing and the difficulty of maintaining a unified command.

An American president, deciding whether to respond to a Soviet nuclear attack on the mainland of the United States, would have to verify the source of the attack, evaluate the damage it was likely to do, and choose between alternative strategies of defence or retaliation within the 30 minute flight

time of an inter-continental missile. In Europe the nuclear weapons which could be used to initiate a nuclear exchange are of many different kinds under many different command structures. Nuclear artillery, battlefield support missiles, and naval weapons are all controlled by different organisations. Army divisions, aircraft carrier groups, fighter squadrons, commando teams and air defence units all have their own nuclear weapons. Theatre nuclear weapons are controlled by seven different command organisations, operating in six different languages, and with no common political goals or structures. Decisions whether or not to respond to Russian attacks would involve identifying whether the attack was nuclear or conventional, since on both sides many of the tactical weapons can be fitted with either kind of warhead. Such choices would have to be made within the ten minutes or so that it takes a Soviet cruise missile such as the Shaddock to reach its target. In such conditions, no pre-ordained unified battle plan could possibly be carried out.

Does the Deterrent Work?

Since no credible plan for the use of our deterrent weapons can be enunciated, it may seem a matter for wonder that the deterrent works at all. Does it, in fact, work? There are two things which can be meant by this question. One is: does it keep the peace? The other is: is it effective in instilling fear?McGeorge Bundy, in the article quoted on page 28, addresses the first question:

> Consider the familiar appeal to history in our current debates over the defence of Europe: "Deterrence has worked for the last 35 years". So it has, if what we mean is that the Soviet Union, barring the quite special case of the blockade of Berlin (which actually preceded the alliance and was lifted shortly after its signing) has never resorted to force in its relations with Nato. But it is only an assumption, and one not open to proof, that the nuclear weapon was indispensable to this result.

Bundy goes on to argue, convincingly, that Russian respect for the freedom of West Berlin since 1971 has not rested on any

immediate risk of nuclear war following any interference with it.

But whether or not deterrence works to keep the peace or not, it certainly does work to instil fear. We are each afraid, very much afraid, of the other's deterrent, whether or not this is a rational fear, and whether it is a fear of a rational strategy, or a fear of an enemy's possible suicidal madness. In order to assess the morality of the deterrent, it is important to realise that the fear instilled by it has very little to do with the intentions proclaimed by those who control it. The reason that the possession of nuclear weapons by A works as a deterrent on B is that B *does not know* whether or not A will be mad enough, when the time comes, to launch a nuclear counter-attack. It is a nation's power rather than its willingness to use nuclear weapons that is the essence of the deterrent. And however wicked it may be actually to use nuclear weapons against cities, however wrong it may be to be willing to do so, can the mere possession of a power be something which is immoral in itself?

To answer this question, several points have to be borne in mind. First of all, if our enemies do not know whether we would retaliate by bombing their cities, neither do we. This is so whether "we" means the electorate, the military command, the cabinet or the prime minister. Even the president of the United States does not know what any of his successors would actually do in the event of a Russian attack; he does not know what orders he would himself give in any actual crisis. There exist, of course, many strategic plans worked out in detail, but which of them, if any, is ever put into use no human being can foretell.

The real reason why the way in which we maintain the power to destroy an enemy population is immoral is that in order for the nation to have the power, individuals in the nation must have the willingness to exercise the power. Everyone involved in the military chain of command from the top downwards must be prepared to give or execute the order to massacre millions of non-combatants if ever the government decides that that is what is to be done. It is true that this is a conditional willingness: it is a willingness to massacre if ordered to do so. It is true

that it is accompanied, in every member of the armed forces I have ever spoken to, by a profound hope that those orders will never be given. Nonetheless, it is a willingness which is required and insisted upon in all the relevant military personnel.

It is this which is really wrong with the deterrent strategy. To a pacifist, who thinks there should not be armies, navies or air forces at all, it probably seems no great extra iniquity that the military should be trained in readiness to massacre. To someone like myself, who thinks that the military profession is in itself an honourable and indeed noble one, it is very horrible that we should be following a policy which makes it a mark of the good serviceman to be willing, in the appropriate circumstances, to commit murder on a gigantic scale.

Defenders of the deterrent will argue that the conditional willingness to engage in massacre which is an essential element of the policy is a slight and almost metaphysical evil to weigh in the balance against the good of preserving the peace. The moral blemish with which this may taint us in the eyes of the fastidious is at best something to be put on the debit side, along with the financial cost of the weapons systems, against the massive credit of maintaining our independence and our security from nuclear attack. Unilateral disarmament might perhaps make our hands a little cleaner and save us some disagreeable expense; but so far from reducing the risk of war it might actually bring it nearer.

Peacetime Planning Matters

It may seem absurd to concentrate so much attention on the present intentions, attitudes and options of those responsible for the operation of the deterrent. Surely there is a huge gap between mental states of this kind and actual deeds in warfare: is it not infantile idealism to insist so heavily on purity of intention in policy-makers and strategists? After all, even Christians do not seem to take very literally the saying of Jesus that he who lusts after another woman is an adulterer, or St John's teaching that he who hates his brother is a murderer. Surely it is elsewhere that we should be looking for the morally

relevant features of our nuclear policies: we should be weighing up the risks of deterrence against the risks of disarmament.

We shall come to weigh up the risks in a moment. But we must first insist that it is not, in this case, unpractical idealism to focus attention on the peacetime attitudes of those in power and those who serve in the armed forces. In an old-fashioned war there was much time for reflection, for changes of mind, for cabinet discussion, for weighing the pros and cons of strategies, for investigating and evaluating alternative options and battle plans. The actual decisions of the British war cabinet in the Second World War were very different from anything that the members of the cabinet would have foreseen or planned before the war. (Not, of course, that the changes of mind were always an improvement from the ethical point of view!) But in the Third World War all will be different: the speed with which decisions will have to be taken will mean that the peacetime attitudes and planning of those involved will play the decisive role.

If a nuclear exchange should ever take place, the key links in the causal chain which will have led up to it will be the options drawn up in peacetime and the pre-war intentions, attitudes and mental inclinations of those who take the eleventh- hour decisions which ignite the holocaust. This fact was well dramatised in a sequence in the film *The Day After*. The American personnel who have, in a matter of moments, launched the intercontinental ballistic missile for which they are responsible discuss whether they are obliged to remain at their post by the empty silo. They are persuaded to go home and await there the incoming Soviet missiles. "After all," they say, "the war is over now; we have done our duty."

There will, however, one hopes, be a moment for change of heart or last-minute repentance on the part of those who now proclaim that if it comes to the crunch they will launch a nuclear attack rather than surrender. This, indeed, is the key issue at the heart of the ethical debate about deterrence, the question: "What do you do if the deterrent fails?" This is the

question which Cardinal Hume declined to answer, but it is the crucial one. In argument with defenders of the deterrent, there always comes a point where one wishes to put this question to one's interlocutor:

> Suppose that deterrence breaks down: suppose, that is, that you are faced with a choice of carrying out the deterrent threat, or of forfeiting the good things which the deterrent was meant to protect. What do you do then? I accept that the whole point of having a deterrent is to prevent being faced with the choice of using it or surrendering; but one can have no certainty that this choice will never have to be faced. Suppose that it fails, and you are faced with the choice: what, in your heart, do you think you should do?

If my friend says that if, God forbid, it ever did come to such a point, then obviously the only thing to do is to surrender—if he says that, then I know that fundamentally we are morally at one, and we can settle down in a comparatively relaxed way to discuss questions of risk and danger and expense. But if he says "Well, I hate to have to say it, but if you are committed to the deterrent, you have to stick to what you believe in and you must go right on and use it if it ever comes to the crunch"—if he says that and means it, then I can only tell him, quite soberly, that he is a man with murder in his heart.

6 The Dangers of Deterrence

Let us now consider the dangers involved in deterrence and in disarmament. If our deterrent policies are based on a fundamental willingness to commit murder, we cannot continue with them unaltered. But anyone who wishes to propose a change must show that he appreciates the dangers involved in alternative policies, and must compare them with the dangers of our present courses. He must be prepared to face and answer the charge that his proposals will make the risks of war increase rather than diminish.

There is also another motive, from the opposite quarter, for an examination of the dangers of deterrence and disarmament. Not all the opponents of our present policies base their opposition on an objection to the threat they present to innocent Warsaw Pact lives: many, perhaps most, of those who demonstrate against Nato nuclear weapons do so because of the dangers which those weapons hold out for the lives of innocent people in our own countries in the West. Some readers, indeed, may have grown impatient that so much of this book has been devoted to showing how the possession of nuclear weapons makes it likely that we will kill people unjustly: is it not time to say something about the likelihood that we will be killed ourselves?

The objection to nuclear weapons on the grounds of their dangerousness is well founded, but it is an argument of a different kind from those considered hitherto. If a policy is murderous, then it ought to be given up, and that is an end of

the matter. But if a policy is dangerous, that does not settle by itself whether it should be abandoned. It needs to be shown that it is more dangerous than alternative policies, and that is a more complex and difficult question.

What is it for a course of action to be dangerous? A danger is a likelihood of a bad consequence, so in assessing the extent of danger there are two factors to be considered: the badness of the consequence and the likelihood of its occurrence. In comparing two dangers we have to compare not only the comparative evil of the anticipated outcomes, but the comparative likelihood of their coming to pass.

A defender of the deterrent may well admit that all-out nuclear war is a greater evil than communist domination: not all deterrent theorists believe that it is better to be dead than red in that sense. But though nuclear war is worse than communist domination, it is argued, unilateral disarmament presents a much greater risk of communist domination than the maintenance of deterrence presents of nuclear war. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that nuclear war is 10 times as bad as communist domination; still, unilateral disarmament makes communist domination virtually certain, while maintenance of the deterrent presents no more than a 1% risk of war. Hence the deterrent policy is 10 times as rational as unilateral abandonment of the deterrent.

The Risk of War

Many arguments of this pattern have been presented: the mathematics naturally tends to vary from this simple form, and the particular odds and valuations can be the topic of lengthy argument. Defenders of the deterrent emphasise the enormity of the evil of totalitarian domination, and estimate the Soviet threat to western countries as urgent and substantial. They offer comparatively low estimates of the damage done by a limited first use of nuclear weapons, and of the likelihood of escalation to full-scale war. Their opponents tend to minimise the Soviet threat and emphasise the dangers of escalation. On

both sides the arguments take the form of the weighing of two kinds of risk: the risk of nuclear war, and the risk of communist hegemony.

To discuss the matter purely in these terms involves a serious confusion. Talking of the risk of war involves the fallacy of considering war as a self-generating event like a storm or a flood. It takes more than one side to make a war; a nuclear war between the superpowers would be something that the West had to be a party to no less than its enemies. The risk of war is not something which can be assessed without reference to our own future policies and decisions. This may seem a trifling point. No doubt there is a moral distinction between the things we do and the things that are done to us, but to the victims of war it makes little difference who started it. Perhaps our enemies cannot go to war with us without our complicity, but they can certainly attack us without our leave. From the prudential if not from the moral point of view, the risk of nuclear attack is every bit as much to be feared as the risk of a two-sided nuclear war.

However, even the wickedest enemy is unlikely to launch a nuclear attack for no reason. He is likely to do so either in retaliation or to gain some military or political objective. We can avoid an attack of the first kind by renouncing first use of nuclear weapons; and we can avoid an attack of the second kind, if in no other way, by conceding the military or political objective of the enemy before he attacks. No doubt this would be an intolerably humiliating thing to have to do. But let us be clear that humiliating retreat is one of the options open: it is not something ruled out by logic, metaphysics, or morality. We may indeed be grateful that at the moment when the world came closest to nuclear war, during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, humiliating retreat was the option which was chosen by one of the protagonists, namely the Soviet Union.

The risk that we incur if we disarm is not a risk of nuclear war, nor a risk of nuclear attack: we abolish the first by disarming, and we can avoid the second, if necessary, by surrender. The

principal danger that we bring closer if we disarm is not war or nuclear catastrophe: it is the possibility of being forced to surrender by the mere threat of nuclear attack. This is the main danger which has to be weighed against the dangers of our present policies.

In order to weigh up the dangers of deterrence and disarmament it is important to separate in detail the risks which are incurred by both courses. The risks, on both sides, can be classed in six groups: risks which concern future actions on our own part; those which concern Russian nuclear attack; those which concern nuclear strikes by third parties; those concerning what is called "accidental nuclear war"; those which concern conventional attack; and those which can be summed up under the head of nuclear blackmail. The dangers listed towards the end of this catalogue are those specially associated with disarmament, and will be considered in the final section of this book; those listed nearer the beginning are specially associated with deterrence and will be considered now.

A nation which possesses nuclear weapons, or even simply the know-how to produce them, runs the risk that its leaders, in the event of crisis, will use them in a murderous way. This is so whether or not the nation declares its unwillingness to use nuclear weapons; it is so even if a nation actually disarms. But the risk is obviously diminished to the extent that the strategic policy is made less immediately dependent on the more murderous options, and this is something which is favoured by many even among those who would oppose unilateral disarmament.

The risk of murderous use by one's own side is in one way the most important of the risks which advocates of disarmament seek to lessen. But in another way there is something rather odd in talking about this as a risk at all. To describe as a risk what we or those acting in our name might do in a crisis is something which smacks of trying to distance oneself from one's responsibilities. Taking risks about one's own future actions is not in the same category as taking risks about dangers arising from

natural causes or the intervention of third parties or acts of God. To treat it as if it were the same kind of thing is a form of bad faith, in the sense which has been explored in detail by writers such as Sartre.

Cases of this kind of thing in private life are not hard to find. Let us suppose that someone is anxious to put an end to an affair which is threatening to wreck his marriage. If, notwithstanding his resolve, he continues to frequent places where he is likely to meet the beloved he wants to give up, his friends are likely to regard his actions not just as imprudent, but as calling in question the sincerity of his desire to save his marriage.

The matter is not so simple in the case of public policies, where governments are acting in the name of their citizens. Moreover an administration which presses a nuclear button may be a different administration from the one which set up the button to press. But the principle remains the same, that a risk about a future decision for which one has a responsibility is a risk different in kind from risks about actions outside one's control. Each succeeding administration must bear in mind not only its own policies but the likely policies of the successors to which it hands on its arsenal; and each citizen, in assessing the dangers of the possession of nuclear weapons by his own country, must remember that in a democracy each succeeding administration acts in the name of the whole citizenry.

The most palpable risk in the possession of a nuclear armoury is that each nuclear weapon installed in one's own country is one more nuclear target for the nuclear warheads of an adversary. When the British Labour government decided to give the United States Air Force facilities in Britain in 1951, Winston Churchill commented: "We must not forget that by creating the American atomic base in East Anglia, we have made ourselves the target and perhaps the bull's eye of a Soviet attack." In 1979 and 1981 President Brezhnev gave an undertaking that the Soviet Union would not use nuclear weapons against states that did not possess them or station them on their territory. No doubt it would be unwise to rely on the unsupported word of a

Soviet leader, but it would indeed be in the interest of any power not to resort to nuclear attack unless it were regarded as absolutely necessary. A victory which hands over to the victor a country devastated by nuclear war is a hollow victory; and many of the collateral disasters of a nuclear war are likely to fall on aggressor as well as victim. The one thing which really seems to offer a country a motive for nuclear threats and nuclear attacks is the prevention of such attacks and such threats against itself.

It must never be forgotten that nuclear weapons are not just a means of waging war to achieve other goals, such as territory, economic advantage and political domination, but a powerful motivation for war in themselves. The desire to remove the nuclear threat of an adversary provides the most valuable prize to be won by warfare, whether nuclear or conventional, in the nuclear age. It is clear that, rightly or wrongly, many Soviet observers see the deployment in Europe of Pershing-2s, with their 50kt warheads only eight minutes flying time from the outskirts of Moscow, as an enhancement of the threat to the Soviet Union comparable to the increased threat to the United States when the Russians attempted to install missiles in Cuba. The temptation to embark on an enterprise to remove them must be strong: no doubt it is counterbalanced by fear of the strategic deterrent.

Nuclear War by Accident

Many people regard one of the greatest risks attendant on the possession of nuclear weapons as that of nuclear war occurring by accident. Strictly speaking, it is not possible for war to be made by accident: it must involve human decision. There is a risk, and a horrible one, of a nuclear explosion occurring by accident: a nuclear warhead may explode as a result of human negligence. There is also a risk that due to the malfunction of information gathering or processing systems, decision-makers in the governments of superpowers may launch attacks on the basis of faulty data. In 1979 a mistake by an operator in the

North American Aerospace Defence Command (Norad) headquarters near Colorado Springs led to the transmission of an erroneous message that the United States was under nuclear attack. Fighters were scrambled and sent airborne from three separate bases, and missile and submarine bases switched to a higher level of alert. Several months later a similar message, which led to 100 B-52 bombers being readied for take-off, was the result of a failed chip in a mini-computer. In each case the error was discovered before harm was done. Full nuclear war cannot be launched except by the decisions of human beings, whether in the East or the West or elsewhere.

Nonetheless, there is a danger that the structure of military organisations, and the tight linkage which now exists between information-gathering and attack-launching systems on both sides, may lead to the outbreak of a nuclear war which nobody on either side really wants. The seriousness of this danger has been soberly documented in Paul Bracken's chilling study *The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces* (Yale University Press, 1983).

The danger, according to Bracken, arises from three factors: the vulnerability of the communications systems on both sides; the predelegation of powers from the supreme commands to local commanders; and the strategies of decapitation strikes.

The central American Norad headquarters in Colorado Springs has been hardened against attack, but competent judges doubt whether it is invulnerable: the Soviet Union probably has missiles of sufficient power and accuracy to destroy it. But even if it survives, it is dependent on a constant flow of information from satellites and elsewhere, which is processed in other sites presenting a soft target for an early attack. Without this, it will be impossible to make decisions with knowledge of what attacks have been made or are pending, what damage has been done, what forces remain on each side. Even if decisions can be taken, it is necessary for the communications system to continue to function if they are to be communicated to commanders in the field. How can the supreme command

direct the war if it cannot keep in touch with the men actually launching strikes on the enemy? And how can war be limited if it cannot be directed? As nuclear strategies have become more complicated, the ability to carry out these strategies has been declining. The more complicated the strategy, the more elaborate the system of command and control which is necessary. No adequate system has been built, because no one has any idea how to build it.

Instead, an elaborate system of predelegation of powers appears to be in force. The president and the joint chiefs of staff constitute a National Command Authority (NCA). As one NCA is destroyed, it is replaced by another, and that in turn by another. If subordinate commanders are unable to communicate with the current NCA, they are in wartime circumstances authorised to release nuclear weapons on their own authority. As each link to headquarters is broken, individual commanders, down to bomber pilots and submarine captains, have predelegated authority to proceed. The purpose of this is to prevent a Soviet attack on the supreme command or the communications system from immobilising the American strategic force. The disadvantage of it is that it would make a nuclear war almost impossible to bring to an end. A Soviet Union which wished to surrender after the NCA had been cut off from its communications network might have to negotiate a ceasefire with each of the five separate commands immediately subordinate to it. In peacetime, of course, there is no predelegated authority to fire if communication is interrupted, but the war system, in the Pentagon jargon, is programmed to "fail safe" in peacetime, and to "fail deadly" in war. Low-level nuclear initiative on the American side would lead to semi-automatic response from the Soviet side. Such exchanges would lead to a total collapse of communications, leaving all surviving nuclear units authorised to use their weapons at their own discretion.

American difficulties in controlling a nuclear war would be matched by equal difficulties on the Soviet side. This makes it almost incredible that American strategy since PD-59 has

called for early strikes on the enemy's command and control structure. Such a declaratory strategy is highly dangerous in two ways. First, it is likely to lead to the adoption by the Soviet Union of dangerous policies such as launch-under-attack plans. Second, it means that at the beginning of a war, the United States would be cutting off all possibility of bringing it to an end. To "terminate the war on advantageous terms" you need to have someone left to negotiate with. The danger facing the world, Bracken maintains, is that the superpowers may have institutionalised a major nuclear showdown. They have built the most complex technological apparatus ever conceived, without devising any method of controlling it. Because of the instabilities of the command structures of the superpowers, it is a real possibility that 200m people may be killed for no purpose at all.

Bracken's ultimate warning is more alarming still:

> Instead of asking whether nuclear *war* can be controlled, it is more important to ask whether nuclear *alerts* can be controlled. If forces cannot be safely put on alert without the alert process becoming so provocative and dangerous that the alert order is tantamount to a declaration of war, then two dangers follow. First, alerts may directly lead to war, through accident or inadvertence—or through compelling an opponent to pre-empt merely to protect himself. A full dispersal and alerting of theatre nuclear weapons in Europe would surely force the Soviets to think about this. Second, the dangers of alerting may be so apparent as to paralyse political leaders into taking no action whatsoever. Here, virtually all room for manoeuvre would be removed and political leaders, especially in Europe, would be faced with a decision of being either "red or dead".

Pascal's Wager

It has been well said that the way to decide about the risks of deterrence and disarmament is to apply the kind of reasoning put forward by Pascal in his celebrated wager argument. Pascal maintained that we ought to believe in God because the penalties for not believing in him if he existed amounted to infinite loss, while the penalty for believing in him if he did not exist was

merely a degree of modest but unnecessary self-discipline. Similarly, the worst case outcome of deterrence, namely nuclear devastation, is so much more catastrophic than the worst case outcome of disarmament, Russian domination, that the course which leads to it should be avoided no matter what the relative probabilities of the two outcomes of the different strategies.

Pascal's wager is not successful as a motive for believing in God because it involves a flight from the pursuit of truth on a matter where, on Pascal's own principles, it was a matter of enormous consequence that one should be guided by the truth. But in adopting a policy concerning nuclear weapons we are not anxious to attain metaphysical truth nor to predict the future of the universe: we are looking for a strategy to minimise danger under conditions of high uncertainty. Pascal's hell was a literally infinite loss; nuclear devastation cannot claim to be infinite in the same sense. But the Pascalian policy is appropriate wherever the evils in the worst case outcome are incommensurable in scale, and the havoc of the aftermath of nuclear war is indeed an evil disproportionate to any political goal to be achieved by the possession of the deterrent.

Even if we attempt, then, to base our nuclear strategy on the calculation of risk, the policy of deterrence seems to be objectionable. In the next section we will consider the risks involved in alternative policies, for those too are undeniably great. But once again it must be said that attempts to base nuclear policy on the calculation of risk alone leave out of account the most important moral point. This is the principle, basic to European morality since its enunciation by Socrates, that it is better to undergo wrong than to do wrong. The principle holds good even when the evils in question are, considered in isolation from the question of who perpetrates them, comparable in scale. But of course the evil we would do if we used nuclear weapons in a major war would be incomparably greater than the evil we would suffer if the worst came to the worst after nuclear disarmament.

III. THE REALITIES OF DISARMAMENT

7 Unilateral or Multilateral?

Almost everyone, nowadays, professes to be in favour of disarmament. It seems to be generally agreed that the existing stockpiles of the superpowers go beyond anything which could be rationally or ethically justified. But despite repeated statements of the urgency of disarmament, not only in the United Nations but also by the leaders of the nuclear powers, there has been notoriously little progress towards that goal.

On the basis of what has been said in the previous chapters, the arsenal of the West is objectionable on three grounds: that much of it can only be used, in practice, in ways that are murderous; that much of it is superfluous in the sense that it goes beyond the strategic and political purposes it is supposed to serve, leaving aside any moral evaluation of those purposes; and that much of it increases the risk of nuclear attack by providing extra targets likely to attract the attention of a potential aggressor. But what conclusions in practice should be drawn from the ethical objections to the nuclear arsenal? If the argument hitherto has been sound, then the deterrent policy which the nuclear weapons now serve is a morally unacceptable policy based upon a willingness to kill millions of innocent people. It seems clear, then, that this policy must be given up, and that if the weapons are to be retained at all it must be for some totally different purpose. But can we justify the retention of the weapons if we give up the deterrent policy, or must we immediately and unilaterally disarm?

Different opinions are strongly held here even among those