Powell's 1968 speeches, this has been the approach that has organised Tory responses. The fact that it is not shouted out loud at the moment should not fool us. For it is there within common-sense thinking all the time, and it is to be found at work in the critical places. Also in June of this year, the Scarman inquiry into the Brixton 'festival of the oppressed' opened. Interviewed beforehand about what he had learned from a visit to Brixton, Scarman commented that he had learned something he had known all along: 'Black people and white people as individuals can get along perfectly well, it's when they get into groups, when the herd instinct takes over, that trouble starts.' Can you see the connection between this casual statement, and the discussion above of multiculturalism? If it isn't obvious, then we have not done our job properly. For Scarman was unthinkingly expressing a pure Powellite position in which blacks and whites formed opposed herds - and hardly anybody noticed.

For many years now, black people have increasingly faced official racism in every situation where they are defined a *problem to be coped with*. As teachers, students and intellectuals on the left, we should not shun the obvious contribution we can make in *thinking racism properly*.

Martin Barker and Noel Parker

(Martin Barker's book, *The New Racism - Conservatism and the Ideology of the Tribe*, is due to be published in September 1981 by Junction Books, London.)

Nuclear Disarmament Democracy and Internationalism

Martin H. Ryle

Many *Radical Philosophy* readers will no doubt have seen the TV debate (Panorama, September 1980) between the multilateral 'disarmers', led by 'Lord' Chalfont, and, representing CND, Edward Thompson, Mary Kaldor and Bruce Kent. Many, too, may have shared my regret that Thompson and Kaldor found themselves drawn, in the early part of the programme, into a debate on force levels and NATO/Warsaw Pact strategic intentions which offered a fine parade-ground for Chalfont's brand of 'rationality' to go through its manoeuvres. It was clear that the pro-H-bomb lobby, once they had been able to fix those terms for the debate, were in their element.

The other day, the representative of a local nuclear disarmament organisation, asked by Radio Brighton whether her position was not 'airy-fairy' given the levels of Soviet weaponry, replied: 'To disarm will, I admit, be an act of faith.' This answer kept her clear of the strategists' labyrinth, and invoked the essential dimension of moral choice (if ever an issue showed the absurdity of trying to disinfect politics of moral 'contamination', nuclear disarmament is that issue). But to many listeners it must have seemed a bald response; seemed, too, an opting out of political debate. I felt, as I had done when watching Panorama, that the nuclear disarmament movement, refusing the corrupt terms of its adversaries, must develop forms of argument which, while retaining the force of moral conviction, also shift the discussion onto new political terrain. It is time we set up, and made explicit, our *own* premises for future argument.

In doing so, we are certain to invoke democratic ideals. We are going to appeal over the heads of the elites to the mass of the people - certain victims of any nuclear war. Recent disclosures have highlighted the extent to which the nuclear decision-making process has evaded such measures of democratic-parliamentary control as do exist (I am thinking of Callaghan's Gang of Four approving the Chevaline programme, and of the cruise missile decision made 'on our behalf', but behind our backs, in Brussels). It is also clear (see *New Statesman*, 2 and 9 October 1980) that 'Home Defence' plans are being developed which will allow our political-military leaders to help themselves, if war seems likely, to the most frankly totalitarian measures: appointment of unelected Controllers, use of troops to crush demonstrations, strict state management of all news and information, and retreat of Top People to heavily guarded secret bunkers where they will be able to implement the holocaust without being inconvenienced by the mob whom it will destroy. The distinction between the rulers and the ruled, problematic though it may be in principle, will here be given the most absolute and concrete expression.

But to publicise this possibility is also, as we are seeing, to evoke a resurgence of democratic forces against its realisation. The arguments of the disarmament movement must appeal to, and foster, this democratic consciousness.

Another theme of the coming struggle will be the creation of a European solidarity in resistance to the threat of nuclear war. The politics of disarmament are implicitly internationalist - nowhere more so than in relation to the *unilateral* nuclear disarmament which the movement in Britain will be striving to impose on its own government.

I believe that these two themes of democracy and internationalism are intimately linked. In what follows, I try to indicate their interconnection, and to sketch some lines along which the necessary political arguments may be developed.

The Nature of Nuclear War

Until recent times, wars were fought between specialised groups - soldiers; and military convention, as expressed for instance in the code of the International Red Cross, used to lay upon those soldiers the obligation of respecting the neutrality of civilians. Pillage, rape and indiscriminate slaughter often enough made a mockery of all that; still, it might be said that the bureaucratisation of war, its integration with the other activities of the sovereign state, formerly went along with an attempt (though the phrase blazons its own absurdity) to keep war humane. 1939-1945 saw an appalling growth in the destructive power of weaponry - saw, in particular, the 'technique' of aerial bombardment; and there was a corresponding erosion of the principle of the neutrality of civilians. This double process, which can be traced through the saturation bombing of European and Japanese cities, reached its satanic culmination at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then, chemical weapons have increasingly been used; in its defoliation of great tracts of land, its merciless blitz upon Hanoi and Haiphong, and its massive use of 'anti-personnel' (anti-people) weapons against the population of South-East Asia, the USA military has maintained, on a barely reduced scale, the tradition of 1945, and has demonstrated that when the modern 'advanced' state goes to war, no notion of distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants will fetter its pursuit of victory. And if victory for all that eluded General Westmoreland's bloody grasp, this is now attributed, in influential US circles, to his reluctance to use the ultimate, thermonuclear weapon.

Modern warfare involves, then, the erasure of the line between different kinds of 'personnel'. In the theatre war of the nuclear strategist's fantasies, one heap of corpses, on the plains of Germany or Poland, will be troops, 'legitimate' targets; but another, far bigger, will be victims of 'collateral effects'.

When we compare this with previous wars, we see a difference not of degree, but in kind. Armed forces can no longer be said to protect or defend civilians; instead, they plainly threaten the civilians of either side with a violence against which there is no defence. Indeed thermonuclear war *inverts* the old relation of civilian to military 'personnel', for while the citizens of either side would be helpless, in the event of such a war, beneath the hail of bombs and missiles, those who visited this fate upon them would at least enjoy such meagre protection as our technology has devised against its own cataclysmic powers. In the warfare of machines, the one with the best chance is the one who is most nearly assimilated to a machine. The flesh of soldiers, if war happens, will be lost to sight beneath grotesque protective clothing (see *Radio Times*, 11 October 1980; and *Sanity*, October 1980). The bomber pilots will scream along the stratosphere while the earth blazes. And the ultimate controllers will be buried beneath layer upon layer of concrete.

The relative immunity of the Top Brass is naturally a well established principle of war: no military tradition is more significant. What is new, today, is the scale on which the Generals are preparing to sacrifice their victims: we are talking about the death of tens or hundreds of millions, at the bidding of perhaps half a dozen. Another novelty: the High Command no longer needs people to fight its war; a handful of picked men can prepare the warheads, press the buttons (the engines of destruction are already built); and the multitude are called upon only in that other role, the role of target, which has always been the least advertised aspect of a conscript's duty. In one sense, this means a terrifying accession of power to the military: as with the labour process, so in war too the refinement of technique reduces almost to nothing the role of human agency, which begins to reside solely in the will of those 'in charge'. But there is another side to the matter, and it is here that space has perhaps been cleared for our arguments, and for a historic change in human consciousness: for war now stands deprived of that fatal glamour, that complex subjective meaning, which it had (at least prospectively) when armies of human beings confronted armies of others who themselves wore guns, and whose broad human likeless had been lost beneath a narrow obtrusive likeness, a reciprocal readiness to kill. The technical 'advances' which have rendered our participation superfluous, and which mean that war (if it happens) will be a matter of our compulsory acquiescence in our own destruction, show war clearly as something that is *done to us*. The mass of the Russian or Polish people would no more be active agents, at the crucial moment, than would their counterparts in America or Britain. We know, today, our common humanity with the Berlin bus-driver, the Moscow schoolkid, the Cracow waitress ... and we know that they may be declared our enemies, tomorrow, and exterminated on our behalf before they have been through that formerly transforming rite, the donning of a uniform. Now that it is only by technological proxy that they are preparing to slaughter one another - now, too, that they must confront the prospect that no-one will survive - perhaps the peoples of the 'developed' world will remark something else they have in common: their mutual terror beneath their mutual threat.

In the new context, where they are so visibly no more than victims, where war offers no scope for acts of heroism (or of cowardice), millions perceive an old truth: that the enemy is the military machine itself, the controlling elite and the structure which supports it.

This does not absolve us. We are anything but innocent, since it is we who maintain that structure. Collectively, internationally, we are potential victims of our own machinery of murder. It is we who must dismantle it.

This leads us from the realm of military hierarchies to the political realm. War has hitherto, and increasingly, been resisted by the recalcitrance of conscripts (whether formally, as conscientious objection or draft-card burning, or in the less articulate modes of desertion and 'cowardice'). Now that there is no need for conscripts, the resistance has to take the form of political and social struggle. Also, it has to begin, and succeed, before war starts.

Our arguments, in stimulating and vivifying the struggle, have to grasp a paradox: we (the non-elite, the mass of the people) are *responsible* for a situation in which we are *deprived* of responsibility. And if that seems to leave us powerless, we can only seize power back by asserting, and demonstrating, that we *already have it*.

But this dialectic must not deprive us of today's liberal truth, and today's slogan: We are many (those of us who have our fingers on no button), while they are few (those who might destroy us all).

Democracy

One objection to the slogan 'We are many, they are few' would begin from the claim that we (in Britain) are already exercising our political control. It is we who *chose* Mrs Thatcher, with her Trident missiles and her appearances in full-page arms advertisements in the *Wall Street Journal* (see *Daily Mirror*, 8 Oct 1980); we may not have our fingers on the buttons, but we pay the salaries of those operatives; we pay for the subs and the bombs, and we are fellow-unionists with those who design, build and service them. Therefore don't the Poles (for instance) have every right to see us as materialised in Trident and Cruise missiles (... and don't we, for our part, have a more than equal right to speak of the 'threat' from the Warsaw Pact nations, since there really is no sign, in the East, of popular dissent from Soviet defence policies)?[1]

In answer to this, we must certainly point out that the likes of Mulley and Pym, when they push through their decisions on Chevaline or cruise missiles, have in fact preferred to circumvent Parliament, and indeed the Cabinet, Nor must we forget how the reality of political conflict is obliterated in the media fiction of 'consensus', by which highly controversial decisions, provided only that the government has made them, are announced, prior to any debate on them, with all the dead objectivity the TV voice can muster (see E.P. Thompson, *Writing by Candlelight*, Merlin, 1980, pp.248, 260ff.). So long as we are silent, we are assumed to assent; and it takes 70,000 of us to fill Trafalgar Square before a swelling volume of protest merits two minutes of 'the News'.

Still, the consensus does support the adopted policy: independent British deterrent (though a recent poll showed 70% opposed, anomalously, to Trident); full and abject NATO membership; general willingness to act as unsinkable USAF aircraft carrier. This, it will be said, is what we voted for; this is our collective choice, and the outcome of our power.

Before pursuing this argument, let us consider these two propositions:

(a) Britain is a democracy.

(b) At any time, the decisions of perhaps half a dozen people (not necessarily British, for what that's worth) could lead to the mass murder of 'enemies' we have never met, and to the mass murder ('pre-emptively' or in retaliation) of ourselves.

Now proposition (b) *is the case*. It is easy to rehearse the 'justification' for this: we must be ready to respond instantly to a Soviet attack; military hierarchies are never democratic, that would make them hopelessly unwieldy; *their* leaders certainly won't take time to consult the populace as to whether it wants the holocaust; so our 'security', the defence of our 'vital interests', forbids such consultation on the part of *our* leaders. Here we see very clearly how nationalism traps the people of both sides within a reciprocal/mutual logic - a logic, too, which ('defence' being at the heart of the modern state) feeds back into the entire political structure, fostering and 'justifying' the intensification (in the East) or the extension (in the West) of frankly arbitrary state power. And we also see clearly what would be the condition for the destruction of this justifying logic - the unilateral conquest, by the peoples of one bloc, or (as a first step) of some part thereof, of the control of the defence of their own country which currently lies in the hands of 'leaders'. And unilateral nuclear disarmament (for there is no sense in which the H-bomb can be a 'people's weapon') would be the sign that such a conquest was effectively being made.[2]

Placing ourselves again within the frontiers of our own country (though we should note here how our arguments *cannot* remain within those frontiers), what are we to make, given the truth of (b), of our first proposition - that Britain is a democracy? We can only say that the implied definition of 'democracy' is of a peculiar and narrow (though perhaps widely accepted) kind. Popular power is reduced to the point where it becomes a matter of *choosing our leaders*. In place of any continuous exercise of control, we acquiesce in a process by which our collective authority is from time to time handed over to representatives who are then authorised in principle to take even the steps which will lead to the destruction of those they represent. We have seen how these leaders then push the process of delegation further - push it, so to speak, away to the far side of the wall they have built up, and blithely infringe even the limited definition of democracy within which they have won power: they hand on 'our' authority to the Gang of Four, or to NATO's Nuclear Planning Group. We have seen, too, how in the run-up to war, those in power would isolate themselves physically from the pressure of public opinion - from us; and it can be argued that the totalitarian procedures which would then be instituted are the extension of tendencies already operative. The point lies less in the possible suspension of normal routines than in the fact that our 'democracy', as perceived by those whom it has put in power, already offers the political and ideological preconditions for such a suspension.

Even within the set-up, there are countervailing forces. It is not fortuitous that the challenge, within the Labour Party, to the supremacy of the NATO apologists (Healey and Owen were both in the Chevaline Gang; as for Rodgers...) goes along with, or indeed takes the form of, a determined struggle to rewrite, within the parliamentarian arena, the definition of democratic control and accountability. Nor can any radical movement turn its back disdainfully upon Parliament and what it represents: power *does* lie there, and also the electoral system amounts, historically, to a genuine and vital extension of popular power. Within its limits, it does institute a form of democracy.[3] But it is at the same time clear that 'defence' offers the most glaring instance of a tendency by which Parliament is becoming the instrument, not of our control over the state, but of the State's control over us. It is this tendency, I take it, with its concomitants of official secrecy and official (dis)information, to which Thompson refers when he speaks, in *Protest and Survive*, of the degeneracy of our political culture under the dead weight of 'deterrence'.

Now it is within this deformed culture that we chose Mrs Thatcher, and that we have been choosing our whole defence policy. It is stupid to write off (as 'false consciousness' or whatever) the popular will as expressed in general elections: part of our struggle is a struggle to change that will, and then to oblige a more accountable Parliament to enact it. But it is worth reflecting on the truth in the anarchist *graffito*: 'Whoever you vote for, the government will get in'. 'Voting for the Government', if that is all we have, is not enough; and it *is* a profoundly degenerate democracy whose electors are deprived, at the crucial moment, of the choice between life and death. We are entitled to ask, when we think of Thatcher's government and of its majority at the polls, how far the specific choices we make are affected by the narrowing of the horizon within which *all* choice is made. A truly democratic society cannot *by definition* be one whose people cannot choose

between life and death. The nuclear disarmament movement will be striving to politicise and democratise (how far should one write: repoliticise, redemocratise?) our culture - to give people the sense of their own power. We must show how Home Defence means nothing less than the reinforcement of the elites in their theft of our most vital right; how its hellish 'scenario' depicts a whole population powerless to avert its own extinction. And we must explode the fiction which is implied, the Tory-bureaucratic fiction of our impotence: we must assert our power, now, before it is too late.[4]

Internationalism

Writing of the importance of establishing an international movement for disarmament, one is in a tradition of honourable defeat.[5] The premises of the argument are too plainly a series of truisms, truisms whose rational and human force have repeatedly proved the merest impotence against the force of circumstances, of history. Here they are:

(1) War brings no advantage to the troops, or the great mass of the civilians, of the combatant nations. When the war ends, millions of them are dead, and almost everyone is poorer and hungrier.

(2) The political-financial-military-diplomatic elite not only runs the war; it contrives to prevent any common initiative for peace which ordinary people may be making. Thus (now) 'Lord' Chalfont, Muskie and Gromyko meet, they claim, to pursue the disarmament we all desire. But we know well enough that they and their predecessors have not reduced our common arsenal by so much as one megaton.

(3) But if those elites in part owe their power to the disposition of economic and political forces within the state, a crucial role has also been played by the ideology of nationalism, which has blinded the people of one side or another, often of both, to the truth of (1), and by which we have endorsed the credentials of the most bellicose 'representatives', and tolerated the erection of vast military machines. 'We' have needed the military because 'they' have had it, or because we have believed 'we' could gain by destroying 'them' - and it is nationalism which has written the definition of 'we'.

More extraordinary, nationalism has sometimes fired the murderers/victims of the carnage with an enthusiasm for their own inhuman role.

It is with this last factor - the ideology of nationalism - that I am here concerned. I believe that the nuclear disarmament movement should make nationalism the target of a sustained ideological counter-offensive.

There is a real sense in which wars begin in *consciousness*. I am not so naive as to ignore the connections between capitalism/imperialism and war, or the concrete economic pressures which have in that sense 'produced' war. We know that the military might of the superpowers guarantees their hegemony over client states in Europe and elsewhere, and that the whole globe is the scene of struggle between rival interests, a struggle which currently takes the form of war in many places. But this does not mean that capitalism/imperialism have led to war *of themselves*, by an automatic 'law' which we can do nothing to affect. War involves a complex of human agencies, which has *crucially* included the willingness, in the end, of soldiers to fight - a willingness which now becomes, as I have argued, a generalised political acquiescence in state policies, quite particularly nuclear weapon policies, which tend towards oblivion.

I have already sketched the thermonuclear context in which that acquiescence, and the nationalist ideology which underlies it, have nowadays, and with ever-growing difficulty, to subsist. It becomes impossible to maintain that war will advance anyone's interests, however narrowly construed, when we will all perish miserably if such a war occurs. The very existence of nuclear weapons, because it adds immeasurably to our common peril, begins to engender a common pressure for survival; and as against this, nationalism, since all parties in a nuclear war are infallibly defeated, can no longer hold out its one concrete incentive, the prospect of victory. When Chalfont (or was it Hill-Norton?) - for the Radio 4 'debate' of which I'm thinking was between Tweedledum and Tweedledee - pronounces that 'this idea of a European nuclear-free zone will not *work*', he dismisses, as if it were some bit of 'political' or diplomatic *bricolage*, what will be, insofar as we can create it, an authentic response in consciousness (*that* kind of 'idea') to a terribly altered material reality.

To the extent that it is precisely their reliance on militarism and nationalism which affords to the elites their purchase on internal power (and this seems to me primarily an *ideological* question[6]) - to that extent, those elites can be expected to subvert and neutralise internationalist initiatives. The demand for *unilateral* disarmament is an instance of just such real internationalism, and we know what forces will be resisting it. Thatcher's administration clearly cherishes the belief that to promote a Cold War will be well worth the arms 'investment': it will make it easier to sell vicious class policies to the electorate, and to distract attention (as Tony Benn argued in Trafalgar Square) from the disastrous failure those policies are encountering. But the ideology of nationalism to which Cold War rhetoric appeals has never rested on weaker supports. It probably flourishes as noisomely as ever in certain 'influential' quarters, well frequented by military gentlemen and other VIPs. But here as elsewhere the Tories may come to regret that they have cut themselves off so effectively from contact with the mob, who fought the last war, and who may have holidayed since then in Italy, Germany, Yugoslavia; who have seen their football team play against Russian or Czech sides; who insisted on watching those beastly Moscow Olympics. Everyday facts like these are dissolving the basis for nationalism - a basis, always, of ignorance. The idea that British self-interest is justified by the innate superiority of the Briton does not stand up to the experience of international travel, the development of electronic media with their leaping of map-drawn boundaries, the growth of cultural, academic and sporting links. The nature of modern weapons itself renders militaristic nationalism absurd. And it is directly challenged by non-governmental international meetings (such as the recent Sofia conference, with over 2,000 delegates; such as the forthcoming international conference of mineworkers, set up by the NUM in London for next June) which make disarmament and peace their primary concern. As well as developing arguments against nationalism, the nuclear disarmament movement will be demonstrating in practice how far nationalism is

already dead.

Of course, there is more to it than that. The passing of aggressive nationalism in Europe is only the precondition for the birth of internationalism. The populations, and not just the possessing classes, of the 'developed' world, and quite particularly of the USA, enjoy a material standard of life whose basis is the world economy which plunges millions into starvation. In this sense, their allies benefit from the joint nuclear hegemony of the superpowers - *we* benefit, when we eat meat three or four times a week, turn up our central heating, drive around one to a car... A European popular movement based solely on common solidarity against common terror will not be addressing itself explicitly to the global injustices from which Europeans collectively do so nicely.

On the other hand, military spending (£250,000,000,000 for 1980) is itself the factor which more than any other distorts the world economy, and in that sense any move which halts and reverses the arms race makes for a less hungry world, and also begins a process (in consciousness as well as in the economy) which can lead to global internationalism.

Humanism and Class

As CND again becomes a mass movement, it is inevitable, and right, that this will provoke political discussion on the left. The debate, which has already begun,[7] will revolve around the question of whether, or how far, the issue of nuclear weapons can be considered outside the framework of class relations. It will be apparent that I am of Thompson's view, and agree that 'the bomb is not a class issue: it is a human issue'. I cannot properly develop this point here, for it cannot be dealt with in a few paragraphs, but I should like to conclude by saying something about the vocabulary which I have used, and which I regard as consistent with the emphasis that the campaign should place on democracy and internationalism.

There are pitfalls here in the matter of tone and style: a recitation of facts may make up the justest, and most effective, narrative of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and an over-reaction is doubtless possible even to the chill 'neutrality' of scientistic euphemism: 'collateral effects ...' But if we must show delicacy in our handling of a humanistic vocabulary, that does not mean we should eschew it altogether.

The left has long been ambivalent about humanist terminology - about invocations of our common humanity, or of our 'rights'; references to 'ordinary people' (rather than to the proletariat); the frank use of morally laden terms; a stress placed upon the stuff of experience itself (suffering and deprivation, or for that matter joy and love). The objection is that such language, just because it appeals to what people have in common, obscures (in theoretical discourse) the centrality of class, and leads (in political rhetoric) to confusion and vacillation about the nature of the enemy. There is a sense in which these objections hold good in the case of nuclear weapons: certainly these exist, East and West, as elements in the structures of class/bureaucratic power of whose degeneracy they are the sign, so that to 'theorise' them properly would be to invoke those structures (and not just as empty generality); certainly, too, we need not waste time appealing to the 'humanity' of those who control the weapons - the Thatchers, Healeys, Brezhnevs and Carters whose decisions threaten *our* humanity.

But I am at once aware of the problematic elasticity of that phrase: 'those who control the weapons'. Here, might not a Marxist want to say, 'But it is the bourgeoisie as a whole, the State on its behalf, which controls them', - from which it follows that we must show this, and demand nothing less than the overthrow of the state. Again, space does not allow me to discuss the validity of the claim itself.[8] What I would say, however, is that to put the argument in those terms is to reject the participation in the disarmament movement of thousands who may be 'guilty' of contradiction in that they do not believe themselves to be revolutionaries, while yet being committed to the struggle against nuclear weapons. To appeal, on the other hand, to the principles of democracy, and to moral and humanitarian feeling, is to accept terms which (for better or worse - for better *and* worse) have, in our political culture, and among the working class at least as much as among the middle class, far greater currency than do the terms of class war.

I am conscious of what may seem the opportunism, even the unprincipled opportunism, of this view. But there is another side to it: principle, too, upholds my position. For it is clear that a successful campaign on the issue of nuclear weapons *will* have to confront, and defeat, the power of the State, or at least of entrenched elites within it. To that extent, disarmers are engaged in a revolutionary project willy nilly. Many of them, indeed, clearly recognise it as such: when Ian Devison, vice-chairperson of CND, spoke at Trafalgar Square in October 1980, he said, 'If we cannot bring the Establishment to see sense, we shall have to break the Establishment'. And that remark was greeted with the afternoon's loudest and most sustained applause.

But this revolution, if we can make it, is not one whose form and course our study of history allows us to predict. The alliances which are being forged, the strategies which are being developed, the way people are meeting and talking and educating themselves and one another - this cannot be fitted into patterns extrapolated from the class struggle in 19th-century Britain, or from the Russian and Chinese revolutions. The Marxist and socialist left will rightly want to bring its contribution of theory and analysis; the organised labour movement will have a decisive role to play. But the left will have to be ready to learn as well as to teach.

If the language of humanism generates questions within the boundaries of the class state, it is unquestionably appropriate in the international field - appropriate, there, just because it *is* universal, more universal than the language, not of class, but of nationalism. When, canvassing, you knock at someone's door and she or he says (talking about the bomb, and about the Russians), 'They have children too', this recognition of common humanity is clearly a basis for relations between the British and Soviet peoples; just as clearly, *no* such basis can be found in the mutual terror which the weapons engender, and which is maintained by the diplomats in their multilateral non-initiatives. The growing movement which calls for an end to weapons of mass destruction responds to the imperative of simple passions: love (for one's lover, children, friends), and the fear of death, their death and one's own - a fear made unmanageable because nuclear death means death, too, for the history and culture without which we cannot imagine ourselves or our descendants. In that sense - in its relation to our deepest physical and psychological needs - disarmament, like hunger, is a simple issue in a complex world. Whatever else it is about, the struggle is also about saving, and extending, some space for human life itself.

* Martin Ryle's *The Politics of Nuclear Disarmament* is due to be published shortly by Pluto Press.

Footnotes

1 Like most people, I 'know' about Eastern Europe only what I can glean/decipher from my reading of the British press. On this basis, I would suggest that these are some of the factors which will be taken into account by those active in the new European Nuclear Disarmament initiative:

(a) The Soviet government has some claim to represent, vis-a-vis the USA, the interests of peace and disarmament. That claim is anything but unquestionable; indeed it is altogether called in question by the deployment of SS-20 missiles, and by the invasion of Afghanistan. Nonetheless, nobody who studies the facts can avoid the conclusion that the West has consistently set the pace in nuclear escalation. For a lucid (and frightening) exposition, see Mike Pentz's pamphlet, *Towards the Final Abyss?* (available from CND). For a discussion of the international politics of detente, see John Cox, 'Goodbye to Detente?', *Marxism Today*, September 1980.

(b) It follows from (1) that the peoples of Eastern Europe are not *altogether* unjustified if, however reluctantly they find themselves incorporated within the hegemonic Soviet bloc, they see the Soviets as also genuinely defending them against Western aggression.

(c) The kind of democratic insurgence which is possible in this country, and which explodes from below the whole international posturing of 'arms control', will be less likely insofar as these two factors (a) and (b) dominate, and circumscribe, popular thinking in the Eastern bloc. At the same time, to build any kind of popular protest movement is clearly harder in those countries - though not uniformly so in all of them (we all know what has been happening in Poland).

(d) The dissidents whom one easily regards as the likely initiators of anti-nuclear protest have their own reasons for caution or reluctance. It is one of the effects of superpower domination that dissidents and protestors are inclined to see the enemy as being first of all on their *own* side of the 'frontier'. Some Eastern dissidents (so E.P. Thompson argued in a recent letter to the *Guardian*) regard the West as their ally against internal repression, and look with ambivalence or disquiet on initiatives over here which may seem to weaken their defenders.

These considerations emphasise the need for those who dissent from Western nuclear weapons policy to explain carefully to our colleagues in the East the grounds on which we do so. It is, at all events, very important that popular protest against nuclear arms should be encouraged to develop 'across the frontier'. Once the two movements are moving forward side by side, the logic of the situation means that they will at every step reinforce one another against state power, East and West.

2 If we can abolish nuclear weapons, the first step will already have been taken on the road which leads to the destruction of the military hierarchy whose apex (or nadir) they are. There may nonetheless be circumstances in which populations will be obliged to defend themselves against aggression, whether from foreign armies or from internal repressors. We have already seen (in Vietnam, in Zimbabwe) the form which this defence takes: it is based on guerilla war, on the arming of the people. The 'people's war' is, or at least tends to be, democratic in its military structure. Its basis is not coercion, but solidarity.

There are two grounds for my assertion that the H-bomb can never be a 'people's weapon'. First of all, the technology involved itself imposes a hierarchical structure of command: these are not weapons that can be carried by people. Secondly, I do not believe that there are any circumstances under which the population of one country would democratically consent to use such weapons against the population of another.

3 It is worth observing that the limit of parliamentary democracy as currently conceived was reached some fifty years ago. From 1832 to 1928, we see a progressive widening of the franchise; but (apart from the relatively unimportant lowering of the voting age to 18), there has latterly been no progress along that road, and nor can there be. Nonetheless, virtually all our 'politicians' seem to believe that what we now have in Britain is the eternal Incarnation of the Idea of Democracy: anyone who suggests change is seen as threatening that sacred edifice. But then these same politicians similarly believe that Money will always be with us, and that the needs of Money are coincident with the needs of human beings.

4 In asserting that power, we will naturally be making use of existing political institutions, particularly the Labour Party and the Trades Union movement. Already the Labour Party conference has reaffirmed a unilateralist commitment; the TUC general council has expressed its opposition to the cruise missile programme; UCATT (Midlands Region) has called upon its members in the construction industry to black all work connected with cruise.

But we need to widen our horizons, and to think in terms of possibilities which have not been on the agenda for many decades. The potential is here for the building of a mass movement of enormous dimensions. Already people are joining the nuclear disarmament campaign who have never participated in political action: they are educating themselves, mobilising friends and colleagues, learning/teaching/creating the meaning of solidarity. CND activists cannot rest content with operating by way of existing structures, even where those structures are truly democratic; we must go out onto doorsteps, and foster the grass-roots movement.
If such a mass campaign is built, British politics will be profoundly changed. History will be made. If readers are sceptical about my enthusiasm, I can only invite them to put their scepticism to the test by becoming involved themselves.

5 It happens that I have recently been working on a number of journals dating from the period immediately before the Second World War. Of course the arguments against militarism and war which were advanced then bear a broad similarity to those advanced today. But it is essential to take full account of the historical developments, and especially the developments in the weapons themselves, which place us now in a situation for which there is *no* precedent. War has always meant suffering and death; never before has it meant the certain extinction of human civilization.

6 By this I mean that the weapons cannot be used against internal dissenters. They are rather too indiscriminate for that. But Thatcher's militarism and nationalism, by harping on the 'possibility' of a war which would destroy us all, perhaps induces in some people a sense of powerlessness, torpor, fatalism. In the nuclear age, nationalist ideology turns back upon the people of the nationalist state: we cannot export that violence (as Thompson puts it in *Protest and Survive*), so it turns back on us in the form of terror.

But here, as elsewhere, the Tories have achieved the opposite of what they intended. Just because powerlessness, against such a threat, is intolerable, we are driven to assert our power. They have terrorised us, not into acquiescence, but into revolt.

7 Some of the lines along which it will be taking place can be seen by comparing Thompson's article in the September 1980 *New Left Review* with the reply to it in the SWP journal *Socialist Review* (1980/9).

I should acknowledge here what will already be clear to those who have read *Protest and Survive* - that Thompson's recent writing has been constantly in my mind as I have written this. It would be difficult to overestimate the contribution he has made to the resurgence of the nuclear disarmament campaign; and difficult, in my view, to pay sufficient tribute to the quality of that contribution.

8 It should be said, however, that individual capitalists might quite consistently advocate nuclear disarmament, for the simple reason that while the weapons exist, nuclear war is possible. After nuclear war, there will certainly be no more capitalism. We may indeed have reached the point where the ideological 'advantages' of Cold War politics begin to seem too dearly bought even to those they benefit, since their price is the current possibility, and growing likelihood, of Hot War.