The following is quoted from "Why Trust the Soviets?" by
Richard J. Barnet, from World Policy Journal, Spring 1984, p. 473:

"U.S.-Soviet relations have deteriorated so seriously that
little can be done to improve them until the political leadership
of both superpowers makes the repair of the relationship its top
priority. An essential step in that direction is to change the
foreign policy and military doctrine of both nations to reflect
the two fundamental realities of the nuclear age: that nuclear
weapons are militarily and politically useless except to threaten
retaliation against a nuclear attack; and that the security of
the United States cannot be improved by inducing greater in-
security in the Soviet Union, and vice versa.

Foreign policy: a tragedy of errors

June/July 1984

by George Ball

FOR THE PAST TWO decades U.S. foreign policy has
followed a dismal pattern.

With inadequate thought and little foresight the makers
and managers of our policy lead the United States to inter-
vene in areas only marginal to our interests. Then, as oppo-
sition emerges, they feel compelled to raise the ante. The
area or issue in question, they proclaim, is "vital" to the
United States—whatever that may mean—and our country
must, therefore, pour in more and more resources to sustain
an inherently untenable position.

As those efforts generate increasing skepticism on the
home front, our leaders redefine the issue in terms of "pres-
tige" and "credibility," announcing in strident tones that any
change of course would have a catastrophic effect on the
United States' standing with other nations, both friendly and
unfriendly. Thus they move the issue out of the realm of

reality and physical power into the fantasy world of symbols and slogans or—as they prefer to call them—political concerns. In the end, when manifest futility and a resultant weariness finally force our country to extricate itself from an impossible situation, the President tries to blame the disaster on Congress or on misguided public opinion.

Our lamentable experience in Vietnam first established that pattern. Because our government mistook an anti-colonialist civil war in Southeast Asia for a critical encounter in the Cold War struggle, it squandered unconscionable amounts of our manpower and material resources in a hopeless and—in relation to U.S. interests—a largely irrelevant struggle. Our leaders justified our initial intervention on the "domino theory." "The battle against Communism must be joined in Southeast Asia with strength and determination to achieve success there," said Vice President Johnson in May 1961, "or the United States, inevitably, must surrender the Pacific and take up our defenses on our own shores." After the fatuity of that thesis began to show through, the emphasis was shifted from the military consequences of withdrawal to the preservation of the United States' prestige, with President Nixon defending our illegal incursion into Cambodia with the assertion that the United States must not "act like a pitiful helpless giant." No one confessed error. When the people of the United States finally had had enough and Saigon fell, both Nixon and Henry Kissinger still blamed our disorderly flight on the cowardly reluctance of Congress to waste more lives and material resources in endless killing.

What clearly emerged was that we did not maintain our prestige and authority by obstinately staying put. Instead, we impaired the confidence of our friends in our good sense and diminished our reputation throughout the world—to say nothing of the psychological, political and economic damage we did to the fabric of our society and to the relations between the people and their government.

Pursuing a similar pattern in Lebanon, President Reagan has unconsciously impersonated the good old Duke of York, celebrated in a nursery rhyme for marching up the hill and marching down again. In a sense the error was not Reagan's but former Israeli Prime Minister Begin's. Since the Reagan Administration had no Middle East policy of its own, it slavishly followed Israel's lead, supporting its misconceived military adventure and trying to sweep up after the Israelis had abandoned their own strategic design.

Once more our actions followed the established pattern: the Administration undertook to assist a minority, the Gemayel Maronite faction, to establish hegemony over more

George Ball was undersecretary of state from 1961 to 1966 and permanent representative to the United Nations in 1968. His book on U.S. policy in the Middle East, The Passionate Attachment, *will be published next year.*

numerous opposition factions. Then, in the search for a rationale for meddling in a country only marginal to our interests, the President tried to bend and squeeze and force Lebanon's fierce internecine struggles into the Procrustean frame of the Cold War. "If Lebanon ends up under the tyranny of forces hostile to the West," he announced, "not only will our strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean be threatened, but also the stability of the entire Middle East."

When that failed to inspire the country, he fell back on the shopworn slogan of "credibility" and, out of frustration, ordered our fleet to fire its big guns indiscriminately at Shi'ites, Druze, Syrians or anyone else who got in the way. Only when the absurdity of our predicament threatened to precipitate a Congressional revolt did the President finally withdraw the Marines while announcing that we were not withdrawing.

In our futile effort to maintain our prestige and authority we seriously depleted what was left of it and in the end we bequeathed, as our legacy to the area, a greatly strengthened Soviet influence.

In spite of the fact that these events should have raised doubts about the established pattern, the Administration's addiction remains unbroken. The President is still applying his own brand of Brezhnev Doctrine in Central America and the Caribbean, while hyperbole still does yeoman service. The now familiar rhetoric continues to be read off White House teleprompters: 10,000 young insurgents in San Salvador are, we are warned, critically menacing U.S. security while New York is imperiled by 500 Cuban construction workers in Grenada.

Nor is there any restraint on our destructive exuberance. We mine harbors and commit other acts of war, using blood-stained former Somoza henchmen in a futile effort to bring down a Nicaraguan government with which we still maintain formal diplomatic relations. Our leaders are once again involving our country in a civil insurgency it cannot win, while stooping to tactics that darken our good name in world opinion and alienate a whole generation of young Latin Americans.

In defense of its record of spectacular failure the Administration proudly boasts that the United States has won a major political victory by forcing European governments to overcome internal resistance and accept Pershing II and cruise missiles on their territory. Although what has actually occurred is militarily unimportant, symbols once more gain the upper hand, as the Administration instinctively employs the only kind of argument it seems to understand: unless we force the acceptance of the missiles we will lose face in a propaganda war with the Soviet Union.

DURING LAST YEAR'S long debate few asked whether the missiles served a critical military purpose. Even before it deployed SS-20 medium-range ballistic missiles, the Soviet Union had the capacity to devastate all of Western Europe
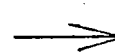
with its intermediate-range SS-4s and SS-5s and with that portion of its SS-11 intercontinental strategic missile force then targeted against NATO. So the new deployment changed little; the SS-20s added only a minor increment to the Soviet arsenal. By the same token, NATO did not need land-based missiles in Europe to counter the SS-20s. Even had it been shown — and it was not — that there was some vital military need for a specific counter, we could have achieved that without stirring political emotions by deploying further nuclear submarines in European waters.

Still, the new Soviet deployment disturbed some of our NATO allies who saw it as disturbing what was referred to, in obfuscating jargon, as the "Euro-strategic balance." Some feared that, as the SALT negotiations reduced the Soviet threat to North America, it would leave Western Europe vulnerable to an increasing number of SS-20s, thus "decoupling" the security of Europe from that of the United States. Such a contention seemed an odd contradiction of General de Gaulle's thesis that the more the United States became vulnerable to nuclear attack the less it would be willing to sacrifice New York to save Paris.

It was against this background that the NATO ministers reached the famous "dual-track decision" in December 1979. They hoped that an arms control agreement would make Europe-based missiles unnecessary. The decision itself called for prompt ratification of the SALT II Treaty and inclusion of the cruise and Pershing in negotiations, but, as everyone knows, those negotiations did not prosper.

Meanwhile Europeans continued to cling to the assumption — more theological than rational — that the United States' willingness to use nuclear weapons would be significantly influenced by where they were based, ignoring the fact that the President of the United States retains the sole decision as to whether to use nuclear weapons, wherever located. If the Soviets should ever undertake a conventional attack, the Kremlin would certainly make clear that any nuclear re-

sponse would be met by an attack not merely on European but U.S. targets as well.

The consequences would thus be the same. A U.S. President would be no more likely to break the nuclear taboo by authorizing the launching of missiles in Europe than by launching Minutemen in the American Midwest or submarine-based missiles in the North Sea. Nor would the Soviets determine the target for their nuclear response by the location of the launching sites; they would care only that the missiles were falling on Moscow.

THIS CONFLICT of perceptions is important because it illustrates a fundamental difference in attitude between Americans and Europeans regarding the role of nuclear weapons in the defense of Europe, a difference primarily conditioned by history. For the United States the advent of nuclear weapons and of delivery systems to carry them across the ocean came as a brutal shock, since it meant that, for the first time in history, U.S. soil was vulnerable to foreign attack. Thus most Americans would welcome the elimination of nuclear weapons and a restoration of the conditions that prevailed before Hiroshima.

Europeans, however, see the problem quite differently. Accustomed to two or three major wars a century, they regard the existence of nuclear weapons as the major reason they have avoided war for 40 years. For the first time in history they can envisage nuclear weapons as providing the means to break the war cycle.

Thus many Europeans find it psychologically essential to believe that the United States would use nuclear weapons to resist a conventional Soviet attack. Their reliance on that article of faith does not, as has often been alleged, result solely from their wish to avoid the expense of adequate conventional force. It has far deeper roots.

In dealing with this highly nuanced problem we have played into Soviet hands in two ways. First, the President's strident denunciation of the Soviet Union as the "focus of evil" and the "evil empire," and his compulsive attacks on its activities and even legitimacy, fed European fears that the United States might rashly lead the superpowers into a major war. Second, the Administration erred in overemphasizing the contention that the emplacement of the missiles was militarily essential and in making their acceptance a test of fidelity to NATO. This quite ignored the fact that their real purpose was the political objective of mollifying European concerns. Thus the United States was not seen as responding to a European request but rather as demanding the emplacement of the missiles in order to bolster its own defense strategy. The result was to stir up quite unnecessary resistance from those sensitive to any suggestion of U.S. dictation.

Nor was that the only mistake for, once the "peaceniks" had begun their demonstrations, our government followed the familiar pattern of moving from reality to slogans. If
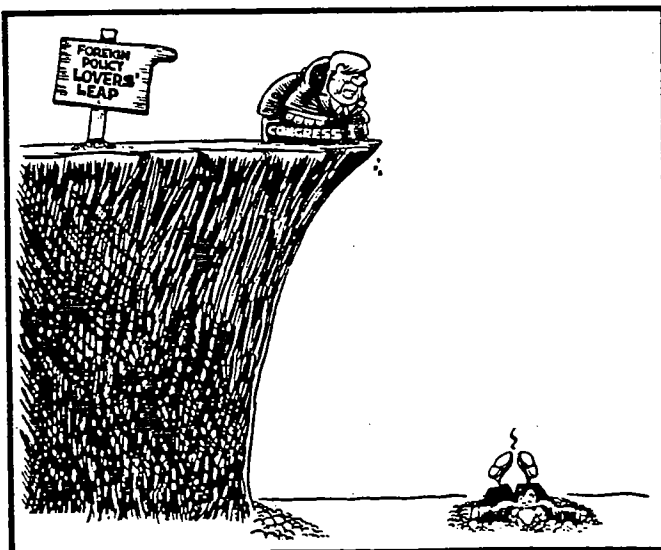
Huck, United States

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the Europeans did not accept the missiles, the West would appear weak and divided and the Soviets would gain a great propaganda victory.

It was the kind of error U.S. governments have repeatedly made. Once a U.S. administration is committed to respond to a request from another government the very exuberance of its actions turns a response into a demand.

To be sure, the issue soon got beyond the point of no return. Once it had been posed in terms of an East-West test of strength it was essentia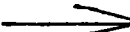l that we win, but the fact that the missiles are now being put in place does not end the matter. The harm that our insensitivity has done to the fabric of European politics is not yet fully known; indeed I think it likely that the trauma of the contest has left European peace movements with a residue of strength they did not possess before. Moreover, we cannot yet fully assess even the short-term results. The issue could still result in the overturn of the Dutch government, and it has certainly given comfort to elements in Britain and Germany who mutter mindlessly that they would rather be Red than dead. □

The following is from the opening remarks of C. Maxwell Stanley, President, The Stanley Foundation, at the Fifteenth United Nations Issues Conference (International Information Policy), April 13-15, 1984: (Reprinted by permission of the author)

For many years the nonaligned nations, mostly of the Third World, have promoted the concept of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) contending that they are unfairly treated by the existing information and communications systems dominated by developed nations. They view the new information order as the route to "justice." Just as vigorously, many elements of the existing system contend that the proposed new information order is a threat to "freedom" of the press and electronic media. The already heated debate has been intensified by the announced decision of the United States to withdraw from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The manner in which UNESCO has dealt with the subject undoubtedly contributed to the Reagan administration's justification for the announced US withdrawal.

Importance of Information
It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of the free flow of information and of its accompanying communications systems. We live in a world which year by year becomes more interdependent. Interdependence affects every facet of global and national life: security, economic and social development, environmental protection, and human rights. Sound decisions by nations and by international organizations dealing with such problems are best based upon information that is accurate and timely. Information is also extremely important to the world of commerce. Millions of dollars may ride on accurate information influencing a transaction. Small wonder then that there is worldwide concern about the development and control of information and the management of communications systems.

History

The concern about flow of information and development of press and media capabilities in the Third World has been on the international agenda for nearly 40 years, beginning with the efforts of UNESCO shortly after its conception in 1946.

Unfortunately, this rudimentary awareness did little to stem the growing imbalance in the flow of information. Just as the North has remained dominant in economic development, so has it remained preeminent in the information field. Understandably, the South is concerned about the injustice of this imbalance.

Along with the historical growth and eventual domination of information flow by the North has come a commendable tradition of freedom of the press. Not always perfect and not always free from manipulation, this traditional aspect of information flow in the North has proven its worth time and again. So the historical record shows both injustice felt mostly in the Third World and a determination to maintain the positive tradition of press freedom in the developed world. The clash of these trends came to a head in the mid-1970s.

In 1976 the UNESCO General Conference, held in Nairobi, took up a draft of the Declaration on Mass Communications. Some provisions of this declaration called for government control of the media and set off alarms in the West. Thus began a protracted debate which in the early days generated more heat than light. Much attention was focused on unfortunate proposals such as the one to license journalists. While such a proposal has not been adopted, Western journalists and governments have been understandably concerned.

However, the elevated level of debate at UNESCO has served the positive purpose of calling developed countries' attention to the genuine problems which exist in the information and communications systems. For example, the dominance of the four Western-based news agencies—United Press International, Associated Press, Reuters, and Agence France-Presse—and the Eastern-based Tass has historically raised the ire of the Third World whose representatives charge that the selective reporting of these agencies has over time created a distorted picture of life in the developing countries. Journalists in the North are finding some legitimacy in complaints that reporting on the Third World too often focuses on catastrophes and *coups d'état*, and that such reporting unfairly represents the full range of events in developing countries. Likewise, they see that complaints about a one-way flow of information from North to South are largely true. That flow affects the image that people in the Third World have of themselves and of their countries; it sometimes crowds out the establishment of indigenous news and information services and spreads Western cultural values to developing countries in ways that are sometimes disruptive to traditional life patterns and mores. Some representatives in the Third World further charge that these distortions create a self-fulfilling prophecy for developing countries by creating doubt and inhibiting the flow of economic resources necessary for development.

The debate on how best to address these and related problems has gone on for more than eight years. Much of the inflammatory rhetoric has died down. Constructive steps have been taken. Efforts like the International Programme for the Development of Communications (IPDC) appear to hold some promise for making real progress on communication imbalances. Other UNESCO programs and bilateral efforts offer assistance to journalists and to media in developing countries. Within the developing world, efforts to broaden information sources have been attempted with varying degrees of success. The Nonaligned Pool, a news service which disseminates government news releases, is one which has both supporters and critics. However, all of these efforts combined are still far too small and are plagued by the political differences that separate North from South.

Political Situation

The information and communications issue is but another element of the ongoing North-South controversy. With minor exceptions, current communications systems are owned and operated by private sector organizations of the developed nations of the North. The contending nations, claiming inequitable treatment, are of the South.

To a remarkable degree, the controversy over the new information order parallels that concerning the proposed New International Economic Order (NIEO). The roster of participants is largely the same: the more developed nations versus the less developed nations. In both cases, the South, citing growing interdependence, wants a more equitable deal—a larger piece of the action. The South looks toward government action and the help of international organizations to address the problems. The North holds a bias toward private sector initiatives.

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In both cases, East-West political differences also intervene. For political reasons, the Soviet Union and its client states tend to side with the South on both the information and development issues. They do so despite the paucity of their economic aid to developing nations and their own rigidly controlled information systems. In both cases, Westerners, particularly Americans, often contend that the proposals of the South reflect Marxist and communist concepts and unduly stress the role of governments.

The efforts of any international organization to multilaterally deal with global issues is basically a political endeavor; issues concerning information and communications are no exception. However, injection of extraneous and controversial political issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict is inevitably divisive and counterproductive. Such politicization in UNESCO deliberations has increased the difficulty of reaching agreement on the new information order. Achieving agreement on information and communications issues is difficult enough without overloading debate by injecting elements of the East-West controversy or burdening it with unrelated controversies.

The objective of this conference, after reviewing the current situation, is to propose recommendations which will contribute to an agreement on policies fostering improved information and communications systems and programs. Not having your expertise, it would be inappropriate for me, as your chairman, to suggest what these recommendations might be. However, after some study of this subject, 10 years of managing *World Press Review* (a monthly magazine which excerpts material from the press outside of the United States), and nearly 40 years of watching the United Nations debate equally difficult issues, I feel confident in offering a few observations and questions concerning our discussions here as well as the ongoing efforts of the world community to deal with this issue.

Consensus and Controversy

Are there areas of agreement concerning the information and communications issue? There appear to be few, and too often the agreement is superficial. First, most people will acknowledge some merit in the contentions of the Third World: imbalances need to be overcome and the one-way flow of information from North to South must be moderated. Second, most agree that media in the North can improve the quality of reporting on the Third World. Third, there is consensus that the media systems in many Third World countries need to be strengthened; this involves the training of personnel and transfer of technology among other things. Fourth, most people acknowledge that international organizations have a role to play in addressing these problems. Finally, nearly everyone is for both freedom and justice.

It is when we begin to consider specific steps to achieve these broad goals that controversies become clear. To which groups or agencies should communications aid be targeted? How much aid is needed? Who should control the funds? Will press freedoms be adequately protected? What is adequate protection?

One of the factors which underlies many of the issues is that while news media in the North are largely in the private sector, media in many developing countries are government owned and controlled. Thus, Third World governments seek assistance for state-owned facilities while Western nations would much prefer to help private media in the Third World. That basic difference also impacts on questions about which institutions and organizations should play a role in addressing information and communications problems. What should UNESCO or other intergovernmental organizations do? Where should bilateral assistance and private sector efforts be directed? What are the commercial interests of the private sector and how heavily should they be weighed? Answers to such questions must be found as efforts are made to increase mutual understanding, achieve compromise, and implement cooperation between North and South.

Understanding

Fundamental in dealing with the information and communications issue is the development of a broader understanding on the part of both sides. Today there is still a high level of misunderstanding and mistrust which fosters controversy. North and South have differing concepts of justice and freedom. While these values are generally held in esteem by all, the manner in which they apply to questions concerning information and communications is not mutually understood.

Likewise, there appears to be misunderstanding over the nature of the New World Information and Communication Order. Is it to be seen as a general concept which establishes objectives for an improved information balance? Or is it
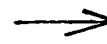
intended to be a precise blueprint for structuring communication systems? If it is the latter, then concern about adequate protection of freedom will be greatly heightened. Is there not need for a more precise definition of the new information order?

Misunderstandings are exacerbated by some of the rhetoric advanced by both sides. Especially in the early days of the debate, harsh rhetoric and radical ideas were pushed to the fore by supporters of the new order. They were met with equally shrill rhetoric from opponents. That time has passed and some progress has been made. Unfortunately, the earlier time has left a residue of misunderstanding and bitterness that continues to plague progress on this issue. A new beginning based on positive attempts to understand the concerns and problems of each, whether or not they prove reconcilable, is needed.

Cooperation
The Third World cannot change the information and communications systems by itself. This is true no matter how valid its criticisms of the present system and however worthy the desired changes. The South can muster the strong majority of votes in UNESCO and other international organizations where the one-nation, one-vote system prevails. However, resolutions of these bodies will not produce desired results without the cooperation of the private sector information and communications systems of the North and the support of its governments.

Cooperation is unlikely without agreement on the nature and the programs of the new information order, and such agreement is unlikely without compromise by both the North and the South. A compromise is unlikely until the level of misunderstanding is reduced and until both sides recognize that a better balance in the information and communication areas is in their common interests.

"If a stable state of mutual nuclear deterrence is to prevail— the only state which is tolerable in a nuclear world—there will have to be political compromises.

"Nuclear slogans and anti-nuclear slogans, stances on nuclear issues, all the over-simplifications, obscure the basic fact that the world cannot afford, and never will be able to afford, a nuclear war. There are no politics about the nuclear realities. There are politics about nuclear illusions. The two have to be kept apart if both sides in the East/West conflict are to escape from the nuclear trap in which they are now mutually held. Ignorance about the reality will keep them there. As Paul Valéry once said, we always move into the future backwards. It should surprise no one that in a world so fundamentally transformed by "The Bomb", even if recently transformed, we are already conditioned as we are impelled along a road paved with outworn nuclear convictions, and with dogma enshrined in fading secret memoranda. Ignorance about present nuclear realities can only help deprive the world's political leaders of the authority which their constituents have every right to expect from them."

Thoughts

The College's annual Faculty Fall Conference is an occasion for welcoming new faculty and administration, planning for the school year and discussing an announced topic. This year the College addressed "Liberal Arts in Technological Society." Following a morning talk by noted authors Amory and Hunter Lovings, three faculty members—Alvin Boderman, Sociology; Sam Williams, Religion; and Keith Kester, Chemistry—spoke on "What Do the Liberal Arts Have to Contribute to a Technological Society?" In his opening remarks, Professor Boderman insisted that a primary aim of the liberal arts is to encourage students to form their own moral convictions. Professors Williams and Kester tested that assertion by addressing the question of nuclear war. We are pleased to publish Professor Williams's challenging remarks and, in the spirit of moral inquiry, the Bulletin welcomes responses from its readers.

It would be appropriate, perhaps, for someone from Armstrong Hall to address a topic such as "The Opportunities and Perils of Modern Technology from a Humanist Perspective." But since David Finley (Political Science) has suggested that our discussion focus on specifics and examples, I want instead to raise one particular question with no clear answer, at least for me—the question of the College's responsibility with regard to the most serious problem created in our day by technology: the manufacture and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and the resulting threat of nuclear annihilation. I am assuming that our discussion of this one problem could yield insights and further questions related to a number of the issues raised by the Lovinses this morning.

Two or three years ago, one of the more remarkable human beings of our time, Elie Wiesel, survivor of a holocaust hardly imaginable, spoke at Colorado College. If my memory of his address is accurate, he appealed movingly for a sustained commitment to working for ways of averting the *ultimate* holocaust for planet Earth. How have we responded at Colorado College?

Last year, in an attempt to "break the ice" on the first day of a new block, I asked the students in my class: What is your most serious persistent concern? One student after another after another spoke of personal matters, concerns limited to his or her individual adjustment and success. Only one student, among the last to speak, mentioned the problem of nuclear war and the fate of the earth.

Last year, on the way to a faculty meeting, I asked a colleague—whom I admire for his social sensitivity and moral seriousness—if he was in any way involved in the debate about nuclear weaponry. The answer was No, and I was surprised. Upon reflection, however, I was even more taken with my reaction of surprise. Why should I be surprised that a colleague had done nothing when I had done no more?

I am puzzled by this: Why are we who work here, on whichever side of the Ph.D., so little concerned about the possibility—some would say the probability—of nuclear war? Or, to focus on our overt behavior rather than the landscapes of our minds, our thoughts and feelings, why are we so little involved as individuals and as an institution, in this great issue? Are we sleeping, or are we hiding? Or are we simply refusing to get caught up in a faddish issue irrelevant to our main task?

I do not know how to explain our apparent indifference and lack of involvement, but there are some possiblities:

1. We're just too busy. We have committee meetings to attend, classes to prepare for, a curriculum to revise, to publish; and, as for our students, there is so much we need to teach them before they graduate.

2. We really don't need to do anything because the threat is much overdrawn, much exaggerated. The leaders of nations are not so stupid as to blow us all up. In spite of all the rhetoric, if and when the critical moment comes, neither our side nor theirs will push the button.

3. There is nothing we can do. Whichever way it goes, our destiny is set; what will be, will be. At best, we could only accelerate or delay the inevitable. And even if the future were malleable, any sensible person would have to recognize that there is nothing that Colorado College can do. The College has neither the resources to make a difference nor the necessary access to important people who set national policy. We here are concerned, but we are powerless.

4. Relax! This too will pass. Humanity has faced uncounted threats of different sorts in the past and has survived them all. We will survive this one as well. Somehow, either by good fortune or by divine providence, we'll make it through.

5. No, we probably won't make it. No matter what we do, we likely do not have a future. But our worthiest course of action is to live our last months or years with dignity, doing what we have been doing as well as we can, fulfilling the everyday tasks which have always been our real work. Let us not panic or whimper. Let the race die as it has lived.

6. The inability of human beings to live together in harmony on this planet is convincing evidence that we are a flawed species unworthy of survival. Extinction is the fate *right* for us. But not to worry. Although our extinction is regrettable, there is consolation in the thought that a cosmos, or a master designer, which could bring *us* forth must be capable of other such experiments; surely one of them, in one aeon or another, will succeed where we have failed. We only need to realize that time really *is* relative!

I suspect that for many of us the fundamental reason for a lack of involvement in the nuclear issue, the actual reason underlying whatever explanation any of us might articulate, is our inability *really* to believe that it could happen. We have enough trouble conceiving of and facing up to our own personal deaths—and you know some of the ways that we play the avoidance game, individually and culturally. To conceive of the obliteration of human life, sentient life, on this planet pushes our minds far beyond accustomed limits. To imagine annihilation of our species long before our star goes dead is as difficult, in its own way, as trying to get our minds around the distance of twelve billion light-years (the distance from our speck of dust, I read, of the quasar PKS 2000-330). In what we believe and refuse to believe, are we not still at least as tendentious and superstitious as we are rational? The mind tends to recoil, in self-protection, from what is too terrible, too threatening, to contemplate as a real possibility. And so, while we *acknowledge* that it could happen, I suspect that we really don't *believe* it.

But enough of speculation. Now to a barefaced assertion and my central questions.

The assertion is this: The threat of nuclear war is *the* most serious and urgent moral issue of our time, *qualitatively different* from any other. Thus it is more serious by far than totalitarianism and political oppression; more serious than racism and poverty and sexism; more serious than the pollution of our air and water and the accelerating consumption of the planet's unrenewable resources. Nuclear war is the *ultimate* moral issue today not because it would cause horrible suffering and death for hundreds of millions of individual human beings (to say nothing of other forms of life) but because it would destroy human civilization and obliterate the human species. *It would rob the cosmos of the human future.*

The first question is this: Is the university morally obligated to involve itself in the most urgent moral issue of our time? One

answer is No: such involvement would run counter to the fundamental nature and purpose of the university. Obviously, another answer is Yes: such an obligation proceeds from the very *existence* of the university *as* a moral fact. That is, the university is built upon the conviction that knowledge is *better* than ignorance; and "better" is a moral judgment. And an even deeper assumption underlying the very being of the university is this: the continued existence of human civilization and the human species itself is a good worthy of personal commitment lengthened into perpetuating institutions.

A second question is a version of the first: Should *Colorado College* be involved in the nuclear issue in ways that it now is not, that is, programmatically, institutionally?

In the first place, does the College, as an institution have a responsibility not now being met toward the world beyond our doorstep, the local community and the nation—not only through its graduates, in the long run, but right now, directly? *If* so, what specific institutional commitments would be appropriate and what are our resources? Should the College seek ways to help the citizens of this area confront the prospect of futurelessness? Should designated representatives of the College engage in scheduled conversation or debate with other groups and individuals? The presence of NORAD, Peterson Field, and the Air Force Academy in the Pikes Peak region might present us, as an institution, with extraordinary opportunities. Should we establish our own Alternatives to War Institute or undertake such a project in concert with other members of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest? Should we identify—and advertise—ourselves as a college dedicated, above all, to the survival of humanity? Would specific cooperative ventures with the Air Force Academy contribute to the end I've been describing? What might be done to marshall our energy and imagination and the insights of the past, so that if the bomb does fall we can say goodbye without the regret of responsibilities unmet?

Another set of questions concerns our obligation, individually and as an institution, to our students. Should the continuing revision of our curriculum not take into account the most urgent moral issue of our time? Should we be any *less* concerned about insuring the future than about learning the past? Is the study of other cultures and different perspectives more important than contributing to the *survival* of those cultures, those perspectives? Can we meet our obligation simply by providing our students with the intellectual skills to discover and analyze the dangers that threaten, or should we be more direct and "pushy"? Should we provide our students with factual information they may not have—for example, the immediate and long-range effects of one nuclear explosion, or the statistical probability of a nuclear exchange between superpowers in the 20th century? Should we push further and *force* our students to face what they would rather ignore? Should we press the moral questions raised by the military *preparation* for futurelessness? Even against their will, should we work to rouse our students from the sweet sleep of what has been called "psychic numbness"? And if the answer to all or any of these questions is Yes, *how* might we integrate the nuclear issue into our curriculum while remaining, genuinely, a liberal arts college?

Before I conclude, let me add a note in order to prevent a possible misimpression. I am not suggesting that we join—and urge our students to join—some arm of the peace movement. That is only one possibility. Rather, I am suggesting that in our courses, in our curriculum, in our life as a college community, we raise the nuclear issue to at least the level of importance that we have recently given, for example, to the concerns and contributions of Blacks and women. We could be impelled by this faith: that conversation and study at a small liberal arts college *could* yield insights, prospects, possibilities for the avoidance of war that have not been worked out before. And if you want precedents for unexpected consequences from unlikely beginnings, we could begin by talking about that son of Israel with an Egyptian name, Moses!

We all live, I believe, by symbols which strike deeper than mere concepts. And from a variety of sources, we carry with us particularly vivid images which have assaulted our consciousness—and sometimes our conscience. From the unpleasant experience of reading Elie Wiesel's *Night*, two pictures remain fixed in my mind. The first is that of Moche the Beadle as he tells his fellow villagers what he has witnessed, the slaughter of a train full of Jewish prisoners, and tries desperately, and futilely, to warn them of the fate that awaited them all. "'What an imagination he has!' they said. Or even: 'Poor fellow. He's gone mad.'" The second image is that of a woman, Madame Schachter, who, on the train to Auschwitz, made the flesh of her fellow passengers creep with her mad cry, "Look at the fire! Flames, flames everywhere . . ."

There are those in our world—are they mad or the sanest among us?—who can see the flames. Shall we ignore them—as an institution, and individually, as teachers, at Colorado College? So far, I myself have achieved no more than the courage of the weak and timid, a troubled conscience. Is that enough? The American theologian Gordon Kaufman, immediate past president of the American Academy of Religion, said in his presidential address last winter: "Can we continue, in the name of 'neutrality' and 'objectivity,' to pursue our academic work in . . . aloofness from the potential disaster that confronts humanity?" His answer is No. To agree with him is to affirm that too many saints and martyrs, too many soldiers and politicians, too many artists and philosophers and scientists, too many "ordinary" men and women through the ages have invested too much in this grand experiment, the human enterprise, for us to remain aloof from the most urgent issue of our time. If Kaufman's query and his answer have merit, the questions that we need to discuss are: What should Colorado College attempt and how might we insure a success appropriate to our means? €

LAUCKS FOUNDATION, INC.
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SANTA BARBARA, CA. 93150-5012

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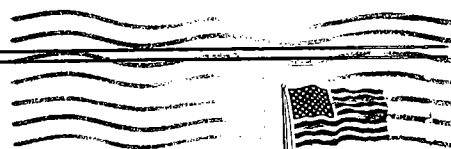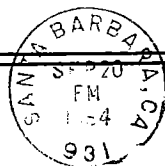
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3815 42nd AVE. N.E.
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