BARRIERS TO DISARMAMENT

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St. Louis, May 1, 1986,
First International Conference, International Philosophers for the Prevention of Nuclear Omnicide,
Special Interdisciplinary Panel, "Towards Preventing Nuclear Omnicide. "

Disarmament means diminishing the decision power of the war-making institutions. It means diminishing their budgets; it means diminishing the number of weapons in hand; it means diminishing the number of persons—civilian and uniformed—under their control.

The institutions are the name of the game. Discussion about making peace that does not deal with the reduction of the decision power of the war-making institutions is not to the point.

In April 1962 the government of the United States in the person of President Kennedy presented with quite a public flourish a 10-year plan to be carried out in three stages for reversing the arms race. In September 1962 the Soviet Union presented a parallel plan. Those plans were never negotiated because in October 1962 there was a Cuban missile crisis, and there were reasons acceptable in both governments for terminating the exploration of options for reversing the arms race.

Why were there no further moves to reverse the arms race? The focus of this discussion is on the United States, for the reason that we simply have overwhelmingly more data on the behavior of the U.S. government, and for the more important reason that the U.S. government is our responsibility.

As participants in various groups we act on the beliefs that we carry concerning what is possible and what is proper in society. Therefore I propose to review a series of conventional beliefs that ostensibly favor the pursuit of an arms race, the better to lay bare the barriers to reversal of the arms race.

First there are military considerations: the classic idea that more arms yield more power. But, in truth, with the mass production and availability of nuclear weapons, we confront a new condition: it is really not possible to destroy a person or a community more than once. Therefore the measure of nuclear weaponry is now in multiples of overkill which is humanly, militarily, scientifically a perfectly preposterous idea. So more arms no longer necessarily mean more power.

Second, it has been assumed that military superiority, the greater abundance of weaponry and forces, can be used to extend political power. But that is apparently no longer feasible among the heavily armed nuclear powers. Also, it is not even feasible when heavily armed major states undertake military action against guerrilla forces. Such forces are able to withstand opponents that are superior numerically in terms of firepower of weapons, under three conditions: where the guerillas have a cadre of people who are prepared to sacrifice their lives; where there is support of a surrounding population or a part of a government; and where the opponent is unable to differentiate the guerilla fighters from just ordinary people. Hence the inability of the militarily superior U.S. forces in Vietnam to overcome the opponent, and the inability of the Soviet militarily superior forces in Afghanistan to overwhelm their opponents.

Third: we are commonly given to understand that armed forces can be used to deter extension of political control by military means. But only small nations are reliably deterred in this way. The U.S. is not deterred as in its operations in Vietnam. The Soviets are not deterred from their military operations as in Afghanistan.

Fourth: it is often held that military power can be used to assure internal political control. But that was inoperative in recent events in the Philippines as well as in Haiti. The rule seems to be that when a population is no longer prepared to accept the orders given by decision makers, then those persons cease to be decision makers, as decision-making means not only the issuing of commands but

the readiness of the population to accept and to implement. Given that unreadiness there is a checkmate to the quality of the commands really being effective decisions.

Fifth: we are told that military force and the conduct of the arms race can be of benefit in certain ways economically. After all, the military goods are money—valued and therefore they add to the gross national product. But statistical studies demonstrate that there is a negative correlation between intensity of military expenditure and the rate of national economic growth. Statistical studies now being completed at my university will demonstrate that while the conduct of industrial operations on a cost—minimizing basis promotes the mechanization of work and the growth of productivity, the size of military expenditures and expenditures for military research are systematically, but negatively, correlated with productivity growth. It is further important that the military product, whatever its money value, is functionally limited as it cannot be used for ordinary consumption or as a means of production. The jet-powered fighter plane is a technological masterpiece, but you can't eat it, wear it, ride in it, live in it, and you can't make anything with it. Hence, the military product, from the standpoint of the productive requirements for the conduct of life, has a negative, detracting effect.

Sixth: there is a long tradition that understands that military force has been widely used, certainly in the historically capitalist countries, to support business investment; hence the classic theory of imperialism to support investment and to support trade. But there is, in recent decades, ambiguity in the explanatory power of this theory. For while elements of a classic imperialism pattern continue, it is also the case that major military operations, as by the government of the United States in Vietnam, had no traceable connection with investment or trade in that area. There had been only minuscule trade and investment from the United States in Vietnam or adjacent countries. So the U.S. government's war-making there could not be accounted for with classic imperialism theory.

Apparently, the managerial tradition, as in private firms, which includes an imperative to enlarge decision power, is a professional imperative among government-based managers as well. So managerial hierarchies that are government-located also have an imperative to enlarge their decision power. Hence under the conditions of a state capitalism there is a readiness to use military force for the enlargement of decision power of state managers. In that case, the use of decision force has a directness and convenience not present in the older tradition. For when the political chiefs of a state are not only the chiefs of the largest aggregation of industrial firms, facilities, and employees— but also the commanders of armed forces—then there is an ease in the use of the military power for the enlargement of managerial control that is historically unprecedented. I gave considerable detail on the nature of this state managerial ism in a volume published in 1970, titled Pentagon Capitalism (McGraw-Hill).

Seventh: we have also been told repeatedly and emphatically that military research and allied technological developments yields great benefit on the civilian side from what is called "spin off. " That is to say, there may be collateral use of military technology in the civilian realm. If that were the case, then the countries with the largest investments and the greatest intensity of military research would be by all odds the countries most advanced in civilian technology. But that is not the case. The star performers in the development of civilian industrial technology, and in allied industrial productivity, since World War II have not been the United States and the Soviet Union, but instead Japan and Germany. That difference is to be seen in virtually every class of industrial products.

Militarism could not continue without popular approval, at least tacit, with the larger part of the set of popular beliefs that supports the war system. Plainly, there has been long support for military institutions, and for the Cold War, for nationalist, cultural, assorted ideological, even religious reasons. But by 1982 there was massive support within the population of the United

States — 70 percent of the populace and more — for curtailing the further production of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems — the freeze. More recently a poll of college students found that a heavy majority favored active initiative by the federal government to reverse the arms race.

Hence we have to confront the question: why d id the Republican and Democratic conventions reject the move to halt an arms race? What other factor was operating on this group of political institutions, indeed on the whole society? How could it happen that the will, apparently of 70 percent of the population, could be put aside as easily as it was? What was the controlling factor in this condition? To explain these events we have to take into account the characteristics of, and the decision power exercised by, the war-making institutions in American society.

The war-making institutions are not only the armed forces and the Department of Defense. They include the Department of State, the intelligence agencies, major parts of the Space Agency, major parts of the Department of Energy. The network includes 35,OOO industrial firms that are prime contractors to the Department of Defense, a hundred thousand firms that are subcontractors. It includes a third and more of the engineers and scientists of the country who are working for these institutions. It includes important networks of major laboratories, exclusively devoted to the requirements of these governmental bodies, like the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore Laboratories. One of the chiefs of Livermore announced recently that there is now a "renaissance" in the development of nuclear weapons. You would think he was talking about something important, like a cure for the common cold or some other development that would enhance the quality of life. No, his "renaissance" is a few percent's increase in the k illin g power of nuclear weaponry.

What is the meaning of the power of these institutions? I stated earlier that this can be defined in terms of their managerial decision-making. Concretely, what does that mean?

The state managerial control is above all control of production and allied economic resources of every kind. Thus, in the United States from 1951 to the present day, the annual

budget of the Department of Defense exceeded the net profits of all corporations every year. Therefore, in finance capital terms, the military budget is the largest capital fund in the economy of the United States. Moreover, if you compare the military budget as a capital fund to civilian capital formation, the result is very different from the oft-recited statement that the U.S. military budget is only 6 or 7 percent of the gross national product, meaning the annual money value of all new goods and services produced.

Why capital funds? Because when those sums are used, they set in motion the enterprise resources otherwise termed "fixed" or "working" capital. Fixed capital is the money value of land, buildings, and machinery; working capital, the money value of all the other resources needed to set an enterprise in motion. If you compare the military budget as a capital fund to new civilian capital formation in a given year, then by 1979 for every $1OO of new civilian capital formation in the U.S., the Department of Defense received $33 of capital funds for its purposes.

In England this ratio was 32 to a 1OO, in Sweden 28 to a 1OO, in France £6, in West Germany 2O. The Japanese ratio was 3.7 to a 1OO, removing all mystery with respect to the remarkable technological industrial development in Japan. The brains and hands of Japan's technologists have been applied to life—serving civilian technology with greater intensity than in any other industrial country in the world.

Of course the Soviet Union is of interest to us in this matter. There are no official data. My estimate: 66 to a 100, a ratio that signals industrial distress. All told then, in the United States, about 6 million persons are governed by the staff of the central administrative office headquartered in the Department of Defense, the largest managerial central office in the United States, and very possibly in the world.

There are no comparable data on the Soviet Union. But we can understand with some confidence that their armed forces are based upon a comparably large mi1itary—industry base. Also,

the Soviet military-serving firms enjoy conditions of power and privilege—including salaries, access to materials, manpower, and machinery—that are not accorded to lower—priority enterprises. Thereby in the Soviet system those who operate the military economy enjoy special conditions of power and privilege.

Against this background we can understand something that might otherwise be a mystery. The executive branch of the government of the United States does not employ a single person to think about the problems of how to reverse an arms race. For that would translate into how to diminish the decision-power of the executive branch. There is a staff of 2OO in what is called the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The word "disarmament" has a certain decorative function there today; it is not reflected in any traceable activity of any person in the agency. In the U.S., initiatives on disarmament have been left to persons and groups outside the executive branch.

On the vital matter of planning for conversion from military to civilian economy: there is now a proposed law (H.R. 229) with the sponsorship of 54 members of the Congress. H.R. 229 would set up a systematic machinery for moving from military to civilian economy. In parallel with a disarmament process it would cause advance planning for conversion in every military-serving factory, laboratory and base. Thereby, in parallel with international agreements to disarm, H.R. 229 operations facilitate removing money and decision power from the war-making institutions. The capability of moving from military to civilian economy is at the core of a dismantling the war-making institutions.

Two years ago the first U.S.—Soviet symposium on economic conversion met in Moscow under the U.S.-Soviet Program for Cultural and Scientific Exchange. I regret to report that a second meeting in New York City in 1986 was deferred as the Soviet colleagues declined to participate. This is a most regrettable asymmetry. While it has been possible for independently organized engineers, economists, and others in the United States to develop competence, to do studies, to publish on topics of economic conversion, there has been no comparable number and

group of people on the Soviet side. Evidently, in the U.S.S.R. there is even less awareness than in the U.S. that economic conversion planning is indispensable for finding the resources of appropriate quality and size for effecting major improvements in industrial productivity.

In the United States, I envision a two-track political operation by an American peace movement: one, pressing for an internationally agreed reversal of the arms race; the second, setting in motion economic conversion planning. By proceeding on these two tracks we will have the best possible chance for addressing not only a halt but a reversal of the arms race. I've been asked by the officers of SANE to convene a National Economic Conversion Commission. I am going to do that, and, as the plans for such a commission come to fruition, I am going to invite Soviet colleagues to set up a parallel commission. I regard these actions as having a central part in opening discussion on how to remove decision power from the war—making institutions and setting in motion a nationwide dynamic for moving vital technical and other economic resources from military to civilian economy.