

They are conflicts about turf. The situation is always the same when you get the collapse of empires – empires which have held areas in some kind of stability. Successor states and successor groups come up which dispute with one another as to where the legitimate rule is going to be.

I think it was inevitable with decolonization there would be conflicts, and that these conflicts . . . were likely to spill into wars. Now, I don't see it as the West flogging arms to the Third World. I see it as the Third World coming to the West and saying sell us your arms. And I get very angry when I hear the Third World complaining at the United Nations that the West sells them arms which they want. Dammit, they don't have to buy them. They buy them because they see political purposes in having them . . .

. . . So I think that this knee-jerk feeling that it is the arms manufacturers of the Western world in search of profits who are provoking and causing some of these conflicts in the Third World does not stand up to examination. The Third World are grown-up people; they have real problems, they have real conflicts. And to regard them as simply the puppets of arms manufacturers is, frankly, so insulting to them that I wonder they don't rise up in all their majesty and object.

R.G.: You have an ambivalence, it seems to me, toward the peace movement. I mean, you write that often the questions they, the peace movement, pose about Western defence postures are entirely legitimate. And yet, you have . . . a sense of exasperation.

. . . Is your root criticism of the peace movement that it refuses to

come to terms with the reality of power in the world – the nastiness of power, the perpetuation of power, no matter what else one can do?

MICHAEL HOWARD: I suppose you could put it like that. I think that there are a number of issues which they simply do not factor into their equation. And the principle issue, perhaps, is the extent to which our peace-loving culture in Western Europe and in the North Atlantic world is part of a state system which does need power to keep it going and to protect it? Now, what does one mean by power? Power is the effect, the capacity to control one's environment and to prevent other people controlling your environment; the capacity not so much to have your own security system as to prevent yourself being part of someone else's security system, is not a bad way of looking at it.

If one looks at the problem in Western Europe, the neutralists would say, well, we are part of the American security system so we are impotent. To which one has to say, yes, we are part of the American security system but this is a decision which was taken by our own statesmen as being the lesser of two evils. The alternative – well, there are two perceived alternatives. One is to become part of the Soviet security system, which is self-evidently rather undesirable. The other is the belief that we can somehow be non-aligned between these two great powers. But non-alignment does require its own kind of power to keep the other people out.

Why not be neutral is quite often asked. To which I reply rather boringly, it takes three people to make a neutral. It is not simply you who decide you're going to be a neutralist between A and B. Both A and B have got to agree that you're

going to remain neutral – as has been discovered by countries like Belgium throughout history. So the problem of power, I'm afraid, is the capacity to control your environment, to control your territory to prevent anybody else controlling it. Which does involve a strong element of military capability.

R.G.: . . . The reasons why they [the peace movement] rail at those in authority, the establishment, the professionals – they march against them for two reasons. One, that these people – who are terribly impressive because they know all the jargon, and throw-weights and all this kind of thing, and have all these offices, and they look impressive – have in the past been singularly stupid, murderously stupid. 1914 – a grotesquely unnecessary war . . . that almost destroyed Europe. And this was the Establishment's war, as it were. And so . . . can you have any faith in the children or the successors to that establishment? The second one, of course, is accident. That with all those missiles, somebody somewhere is going to push the wrong button and that is the end of mankind.

And is the peace movement ultimately not right on this? One, that the bureaucracy, the establishment, is ultimately stupid. And second, that accident is inevitable?

MICHAEL HOWARD: Bureaucracies and statesmen are cut from the same cloth as other people. They have their own wives and their own children; they are part of their society. It is simply their job to specialize in these very, very nasty things. And if you don't like the answers they come up with, then it is your job to try to think of other answers. And this is my exasperation with the peace movement. On the whole, they don't.

The second point, accident.

Yes, but it's not just the peace movement that is concerned about this. Everybody is. And the problem of actual – well, it breaks down into two elements. The preventing of technical malfunctioning – how do you stop everything from going off? On the whole, the record is pretty good on this . . .

. . . Misperception – bad judgments in a crisis. Well, this is what worries me. It is there. And the problem of what in the jargon is called crisis management does seem to me to be the really central one which has got to be addressed. Again, on the whole the record is not bad. When the two sides have approached the brink, they've been fairly cool; they've thought, they have drawn back. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 – the one time since 1945 when I have been really terrified – was managed. 1973 was also very hairy occasionally. Again, very alarming, but it didn't actually get near the seriously dangerous point. It doesn't mean it might not happen, but there is nothing whatever that one can do to create a world in which this might not happen – except a world in which there are no nuclear weapons whatever, which is a world different from the one in which we are living.

It is a world in which there are no sovereign states. It's a world in which there is a world government, a world government which commands the consent and the legitimacy of all the different cultures in the world, be it Russian, be it American, be it British, be it Arab, be it Israeli. And that isn't the world that we've got to cope with. And to think of such a world is, quite frankly, a cop-out. It is a refusal actually to tackle the existing problems which we have to tackle head-on. □

