

# The planet to

James Young  
(CUP)

The reason the superpowers have not blown up the world yet, so the public understands, is because of the nuclear stalemate theory, also known as deterrence — neither country will launch a first strike attack for fear of massive retaliation.

But Queen's University history professor Robert Malcolmson thinks deterrence, as practiced, is an illusion. It has been as successful in preventing a nuclear holocaust as smoking has in preventing lung cancer.

In his recent book, *Nuclear Fallacies: How We Have Been Misguided Since Hiroshima*, Malcolmson argues that while the public accepts deterrence as an article of faith, military

and pacifist Bertrand Russell sympathized with threatening a preventive attack, thus forcing the Soviet Union to agree to arms control on American terms.

One of the many recent statements advocating nuclear war fighting was made by strategist Richard Burt, who called for American forces "capable of waging a large scale, sustained nuclear campaign," just before he assumed a senior position in the State Department in 1981.

And in 1984, in complete contradiction to its original meaning, two other strategists wrote: "Deterrence is no longer deemed distinct from — or antagonistic to — the capabilities to conduct nuclear war operations."

*Nuclear Fallacies* explains that plans for nuclear weapons use are based on the illusion of "controllability", with strategists recently writing that the U.S. "must possess the ability to wage nuclear war rationally."

Malcolmson, however, summarizes the view of independent observers, who see any use of nuclear weapons as "a veritable cosmic stab in the dark, a desperate roll of the dice with apocalyptic implications."

The book also examines the fundamental contradiction in deterrence theory, namely the production of weapons that are not supposed to be used.

This defies thousands of years of military thinking which defines weapons as instruments of victory and soldiering as an active, aggressive profession. Here, Malcolmson quotes former U.S. admiral Gene LaRocque: "Military men have always been unsatisfied with the

**"In short, we inhabit a world in which the military-technological tail is commonly wagging the political dog."**

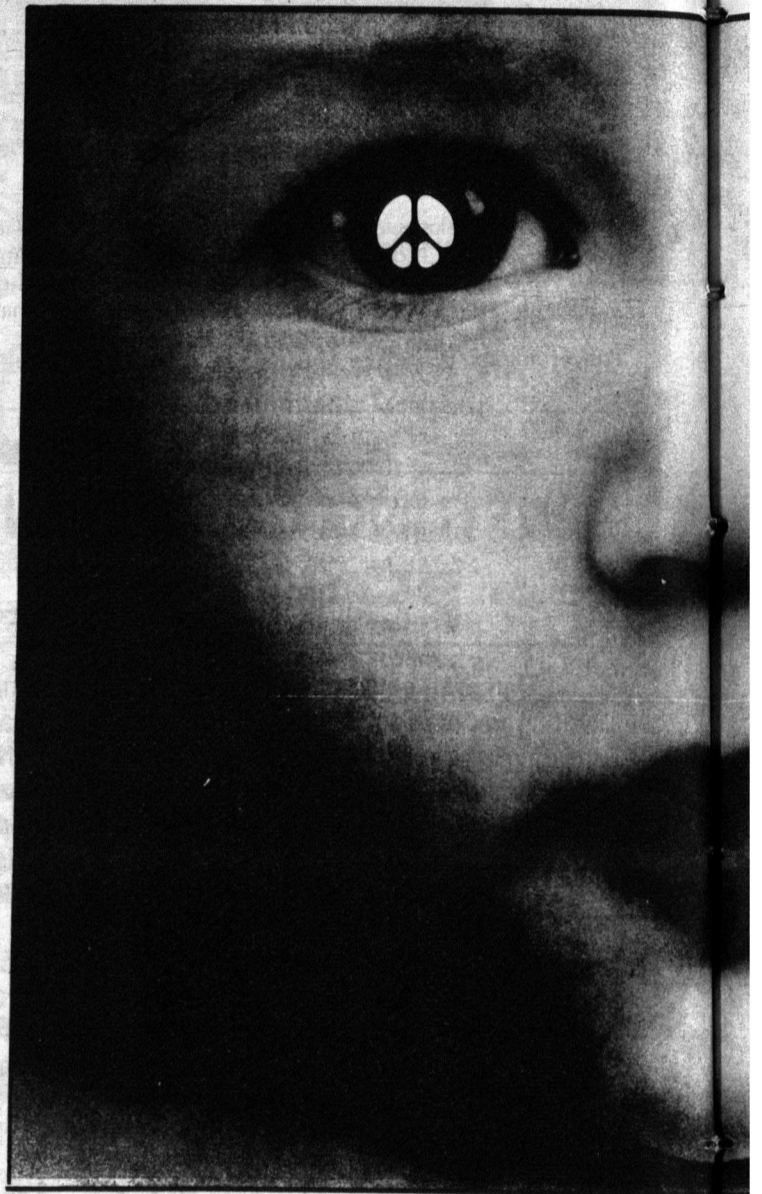
strategists use the term elastically and have planned since 1945 to use nuclear weapons in ways which are "sensible", "controlled", "flexible", or "limited".

"In actual historical experience, in the circles that truly count — the military and bureaucratic elites — important chunks of deterrence thinking have become universally accepted," writes Malcolmson.

Nuclear war planning developed before the Soviet Union acquired its own deterrent retaliatory force in the mid-1960's.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, for example, the U.S. considered a "preventive" attack on the Soviet Union.

Malcolmson describes how U.S. Secretary of Defence James Forrestal suggesting this to journalist Walter Lippmann over lunch one day in the spring of 1948. Even more surprising, we learn how British philosopher



limitation of a purely deterrent policy which strikes them as too passive, too inflexible, too limiting, too demoralizing and even too immoral."

In the final analysis, Malcolmson argues that even the pure theoretical version of deterrence, which advocates a retaliatory strike only, is tragically flawed. He says the most sensible way to deal with the outbreak of nuclear conflict would be to assume political control of the situation, by restoring diplomatic

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