



THE BRUNSWICKAN

Boredom is a vital problem for the moralist, since at least half the sins of mankind are caused by the fear of it.

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OPINION...

Faltering wisdom

Rick Hutchins
Editor-in-Chief

The great thinker Bonar Law once said: "There is no such thing as inevitable war. If war comes it will be from failure of human wisdom." On the 40th anniversary of nuclear devastation in Hiroshima it would be appropriate to seek the wisdom that has guided us from that fateful day to our present state of ignorance and potential armageddon.

It is now, in our time, that a generation of men and women, so lavishly endowed with genius must compel the leaders of this world to seek wisdom in past mistakes and search for a "deterrence" based on a mutual desire for peace — not power.

Many people believe that the current threat of nuclear war is based on fear, a Machiavellian philosophy that we must build huge walls to protect us from the enemy, whomever they may be, and defend ourselves so extensively that no power will attack in "fear" of huge losses. This attitude, based more on paranoia than wisdom has served the super-powers well, it has also brought us to the brink of nuclear war.

I do not believe that men and women driven by fear can seek a just and lasting peace, nor can our super-powers ignore the fact that "the walls" we have built are becoming more "offensive" than the "deterrence" we were led to believe they would be. The "wisdom" that nuclear weapons are a security blanket which benefit only those who own them, it does not ensure peace and stability.

As we digest the flow of information confirming the enemies of our democratic tradition more often than not we see only the weapons and leaders, we seldom attempt to understand the vast differences in experience and tradition that separate us. It is in this area that wisdom is most needed. If we continue to concentrate solely on "weapons reductions," "de-escalation," "limited arms talks" and "unilateral restraints," we are only serving to postpone further confrontations. Weapons are the instruments of destruction but it is ideology, power and fear that must be overcome to ensure a lasting peace. Albert Schweitzer, a man of infinite wisdom knew that human nature brought us to distrust those whom we do not know and that the "walls" we have built only serve to block a potential understanding or common bond. As he once said; "We wander through life together in semi-darkness in which none of us can distinguish exactly the features of his neighbour. Only from time to time, through some experience that we have of our companion, or through some remark that he passes, he stands for a moment close to us, as though illuminated by a flash of lighting. Then we see him as he really is."

The wisdom of Albert Schweitzer is not enough to bring peace but it can lead us to a better understanding of each other. If we choose to see only the enemy, then he/she will thus only see us as the enemy. For peace, if that is what we truly desire, we should forever conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend.

Some may say this is "utopian idealism" or "Liberal drivel" but it must be understood that the leaders who have driven us to the brink of destruction are also those who refuse to seek not a viable solution but only a temporary deterrent. It is difficult to believe that persons motivated by fear and power can justify peace when they spend their lives putting it in jeopardy.

I too fear Soviet expansionism, policies of de-stabilization and the spread of communist ideology. We must always fight against these principles but fight by proving ours the better system. We cannot travel the globe brandishing the sword of justice, with reckless abandon, more bent on anti-communism than a true and just society. It is in this area that both super-powers have alienated the rest of the world. The "Nuclear" threat has turned the U.S. and the Soviet Union into the most menacing and potentially volatile war machines mankind has ever seen. The irony being that their awesome power makes the rest of the world a potential battle ground. Just as the Americans bombed Hiroshima to bring "lasting" peace to the world, so too can either super-power once again drop nuclear weapons, but this time with no hope for mankind, let alone peace.

In the tenth century, Foreign Ambassadors used to be called to Constantinople in order that they might be impressed with the military splendor of an all-powerful empire. There were, as Harold Nicholson once described: "Interminable reviews at which the same troops emerging from one of the gates entering by another, came round and round again carrying different kinds of armour. In order to dazzle ... [by]- glamour and mystery, mechanical devices caused the lions on the steps of [the emperors] throne to roar terribly."

By 1985, one has the feeling that both the American and Soviet empires, like that of Byzantium, are also held together by smoke and mirrors. Not that firepower is not available — rather, the real question would be whether the nuclear capacity will ever be used to service extended global commitments?

If, as both superpowers outline nuclear weapons are to act as a deterrent to war then what potential for conflict exists? Let us consider Adolf Hitler. As the world stood by this madman built a virtual war-machine, unopposed and impervious to foreign pressures. The world was afraid of a possible confrontation and thus allowed Germany's huge build-up. By the time the allies took action war was once again upon us and destruction reigned supreme. It is simple to draw a parallel between Hitler and the arms race. The proliferation of nuclear arms has progressed virtually unharnessed, the world has sat by in fear of conflict and confrontation with the superpowers, and thus accepted its imminence. Unlike Hitler however the potential still exists to reverse the trend toward destruction. As you will find outlined in the pages of this special *Brunswickan* edition, many groups and individuals are taking action, seeking to increase our wisdom and draw on our support. It is a massive undertaking to mobilize public support but it is based on a belief in principles of all humanity, the right to live in peace, free of fear and destruction.

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