

THE NORTH COAST
STIMES EAGLE

In a dark time the eye begins to see.

- Theodore Roethke

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DETERRENCE & CIVIL DEFENSE

by Chuck McLaughlin

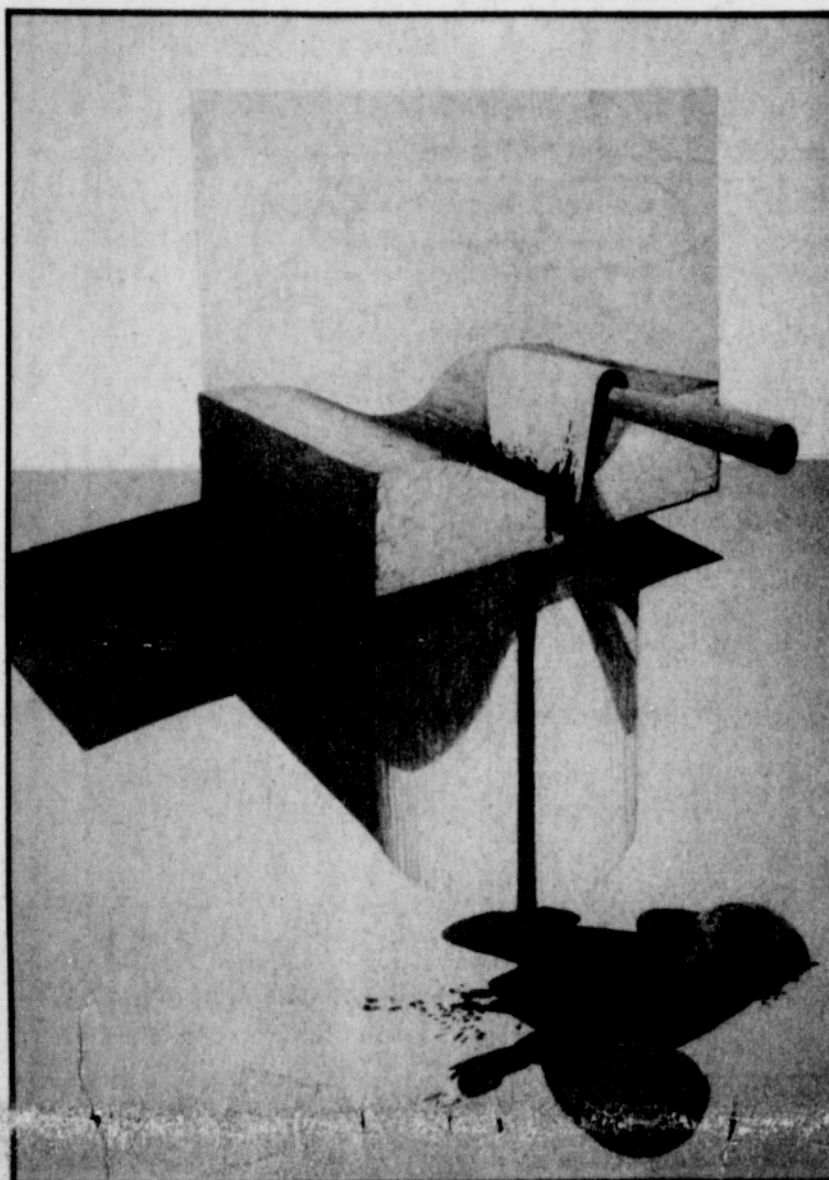
Whether or not one perceives the recent airing of the television film "The Day After" as an ideological artifice designed to promote a political advantage in the ongoing nuclear weaponry debate or simply an attempt to objectively portray the probable consequences of a nuclear attack, one fundamental perception prevails: Such a scenario is unacceptable. Nuclear war is unacceptable — period! Yet the "unthinkable" is being thought; and the people of the United States and Russia, possibly the human race, stand astride the abyss of self-destruction, dazed and deluded by thirty-five years of "cold war" and the convoluted logic of their leaders whose actions belie their declaratory policies.

How did we arrive here? Where and when did we begin to travel the yellow-brick-road of fallacy that leads us not to the wonderful old land of Oz but rather toward the valley of Megiddo and the hellfires of Armageddon? Ah, yes. Now I remember! It was long ago: World War II, Yalta, Truman, VE day. I was just a kid, sixteen and in the South Pacific. The world was aflame and the good guys were beating the hell out of the bad guys. It was near the end for Hitler and two of the "heavyweights" of the Allied forces, Roosevelt and Churchill, were meeting with Stalin at Yalta to, among other things, persuade the Russians to hang in there after the imminent German surrender and the focus of the war shifted to the Pacific theater.

The convening of the Yalta Conference in February of 1945 found Soviet forces controlling Poland, Hungary, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia, the eastern portion of Germany and poised to take Berlin. The Soviets were up-front in declaring their national security necessitated Soviet dominance over eastern Europe and the disposition of the American negotiators to make diplomatic concessions to accomplish Allied objectives resulted in the subsequent solidification of Soviet power over this area. This solidification of power was later portrayed by the U.S. as a "betrayal" of the Yalta agreement and became one of two major sources of contention between the United States and the USSR.

The "Declaration on Liberated Europe", which emerged from the conference, assured the liberated people of Europe representative and democratic governments responsive to the will of the people. Unfortunately semantic difficulties immediately arose as the term "democratic government" to Stalin meant a communist form of government and that a free election was truly free only if it excluded political parties opposed to the communist party, "the true party of the people." Relations were further strained by our country's insistence that Soviet control of eastern Europe was an aggressive act in violation of the Yalta agreement and, revealingly, that such control denied American industry access to the East European marketplaces and jeopardizing economic opportunities in western Europe as well.

Following President Roosevelt's death shortly after the conference adjourned, the new Truman administration opted for a policy of firmness in all negotiations with the Soviet Union, a policy no doubt in part inspired by our development and monopoly of the still secret atomic bomb. The administration's concept was that if a policy of firmness and patience were maintained, Soviet leaders would be impressed that it was pointless to pursue policies of aggression and would be moved instead to adopt a more conciliatory, cooperative attitude toward the United States. As aptly put by one foreign policy expert, "The illusion of postwar American-Soviet cooperation was thus replaced by another illusion: that through American sternness and reprimand the USSR would be forced to modify its position and acquiesce to American aspirations in Europe and around the globe." Such pomposity on our part did little to persuade the Russians that we were well-intentioned and, it seems, we gave little thought to the question of how tough we would have to be, in what form, for how long and to what expense we would go to force our adversary to "behave" cooperatively. We also showed little appreciation of the unique national



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and ideological motivations behind Stalin's postwar actions. Consequently, Soviet reaction to our bluster and audacious demands took the form of a crash program to develop their own atomic capability, a goal realized in 1949 with the explosion of the first Soviet atomic device. Hence the beginning of the ongoing madness of the nuclear "arms race."

As an American nuclear policy, deterrence derives from the "theory of containment" advanced by former Ambassador George F. Kennan in his article entitled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" which appeared in the July 1947

THE DAY BEFORE

The day after "The Day After" approximately twenty people gathered in a Cannon Beach home to discuss the effects and ramifications of the movie. In much the manner that meetings of the same sort were held in cities and towns all around the country, strangers and friends from Seaside, Manzanita and Cannon Beach offered their differing points of view about nuclear holocaust. Many ideas, feelings, political ideologies and plans of action centering around nuclear issues were aired in a stimulating exchange. There being no rigid structure to the meeting, comments bounced from idea to idea, spurring new thoughts and reactions; and though everyone had something different to say, the meeting ended in a circle, uniting all in a spirit of comradery and showing in this human microcosm that differing opinions can be respected and accepted.

Though several plans of action were suggested, some felt the need to discuss specifically what people can do about our nuclear "problem." So another meeting will be held Sunday, December 4 at 7:30 p.m. at 188 East Madison in Cannon Beach. This time the structure will be more rigid. It is suggested people come with ideas in mind and those who want to present them will be allocated a specific amount of time to do so. Then the group will brainstorm on additional ways to carry out that idea. The rigidity will allow the group to focus their thoughts and hopefully come up with some concrete actions people who are concerned about the arms race can take.

- Barbara McLaughlin

issue of Foreign Affairs. Kennan's thesis maintained that "The main element of any United States' policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." Russian policies were seen as attempts to "secure itself against antagonistic forces at home and abroad, the external threat being the capitalistic system." Assuming his analysis were true, we see Russia as paranoid as the United States — even more so because of frequent invasions of its territory by the Poles, French and Germans and resultant losses of millions of its citizenry at the hands of the invaders, who, significantly, launched their attacks from eastern Europe. And one should not forget that the United States had already engaged in a nuclear war against the Japanese, manifesting a willingness to utilize the awesome power in our possession when considered in our own interests and an attitude that nuclear war was acceptable as long as we alone possessed the capability to wage such a war.

On March 12, 1947 President Truman appeared before a joint session of Congress and delineated an expansionistic foreign policy which supported an interventionist position, set forth themes justifying American foreign involvement, which were implemented in Korea, Viet Nam and, most recently, Grenada, initiated economic and military aid to nations resisting communist "aggression," and introduced the policy of attempting to "scare hell out of the American people" to gain Congressional support for dubious foreign policy actions. Financially and militarily the U.S. embarked upon a course of action the Truman administration assured us was mandatory "if democracy was to be preserved." Most important to our topic was the President's expressed belief that his policies would be effective only by "making our nation's military capabilities sufficiently visible to deter any potential aggressor." The willingness to use our new-found power should deterrence fail was implicit and historical precedent was established at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Although deterrence as an element of national policy or diplomacy was not a new concept in international relations in 1947, following the Russian detonation of its own atomic bomb in 1949, it had assumed a vastly new significance. When war was restricted to conventional weaponry or when only one nation possessed nuclear weapons, it was possible for warring nations to determine when destruction of their national values and/or population was imminent and opt to surrender, as did the Germans in May of 1945 and the Japanese the following August. However, a nuclear war involving two or more nations possessing stockpiles of nuclear devices was a different matter. And this possibility now existed.

So Russia's coming into possession of nuclear capability in 1949 forced the United States to reassess the value of military offensive use of nuclear weapons. It was now painfully aware that it could never again employ them against another nation with impunity. America was thus compelled to think of nuclear weapons not as a means of defeating a potential enemy in combat, but instead only as a means of deterring an enemy attack. It was readily seen by both Russia and the United States that the devastating blasts, thermal and radiation effects of nuclear bombs would most probably not be inflicted on target nations in small, gradual increments and that retaliatory strikes would also likely be massive. Even if a so-called "limited" exchange occurred, it most likely would erupt into a full scale nuclear war, resulting in the same scenario. Thus the mutual devastation that was believed would follow such an exchange rendered the traditional concepts of victory and defeat meaningless. To be successful, nuclear deterrence had to be limited to the potential as opposed to the actual application of force; and if nuclear weapons were ever employed in battle, deterrence would have failed. Here we have a stunning paradox of commitment, by now in both Russia and the United States, to expenditures of billions of dollars, at the expense of vitally needed social

CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX