

Tribute to Martin Luther King . . .

(Excerpts from the address of Congressman Ron Dellums (Dem-Calif.) at Oregon State University, January 15, 1984.)

I consider the Reverend Martin Luther King to be one of the most brilliant, prophetic, revolutionary figures of our time. I would like to begin by quoting Dr. King, whom I perceive to be an extraordinary man of peace and a voice for peace and sanity in this world.

In the course of challenging America's illegal, immoral and insane involvement in the adventurism that came to be known as the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King said that we are dropping bombs on North Vietnam that are exploding in the ghettos and barrios of America. And I perceive that to have been an eloquent statement, not only challenging the insanity of the technology of death, the concept of war, but also the resulting set of priorities that deny our capacity to address the human misery of the people of our own country.

It is against the backdrop of that statement that I choose to make my few remarks here today. I believe that you and I must come together with an extraordinary sense of urgency to build the most powerful peace movement that we can for three important interrelated reasons.

One is that I believe that this planet, at this very moment, stands in the imminent danger of the potential of thermonuclear war. Number two; that our militaristic interventionist foreign policy is inappropriate as we evolve into the decade of the '90s. And three: the resulting set of priorities are killing our people and destroying our capacity to address human misery that is real.

The first part: This planet is in imminent danger from the potential of a nuclear holocaust. And I say that for three considered reasons: One, I believe at this very moment the leadership of this country is moving America beyond the concept of nuclear deterrence to the development of a war fighting capability with enormous, dangerous and frightening implications. Secondly, under the guise of modernizing America's nuclear forces we are developing the technology that may very well take us beyond the bounds of arms control, never to return again, with enormous, frightening and dangerous implications.

And number three: There are certain nuclear weapons that, by virtue of how they shall be deployed, I will argue, are taking us up to the brink of thermonuclear disaster.

To the first point: We are going beyond nuclear deterrence to the development of a war fighting capability. Back when McNamara, when he was Secretary of Defense, attempted to define nuclear deterrence in some qualitative fashion, he said that once this nation developed a nuclear capability to destroy 70 percent of our adversary's (and we were speaking of the Soviet Union at that time and are still speaking of the Soviet Union) infrastructure and 30 percent of their population. If we talked about destroying 30 percent of America's population we would be talking about in excess of 60 million deaths—a level of megadeaths that none of us can comprehend or that all of us collectively cannot comprehend. I don't even know how the human mind can embrace the notion of 60 million deaths.

But if you accept this definition, once you develop the capacity to destroy 70 percent of their economic infrastructure and 30 percent of their population, you will have achieved what McNamara defined as an acceptable nuclear deterrent. At that time we considered that to be 400 strategic nuclear weapons. So once you develop 400 million nuclear weapons, to develop capacity beyond that is a gross waste of resources—human, economic, and technological resources—because to inflict that level of damage on another nation would not allow them to emerge as a civilized society in modern times. The present system at this very moment goes beyond 400 strategic

weapons.

Why am I now saying we are moving to a war fighting capability? I answer that question by asking the following question. Why are we, at the present moment, developing the capacity to increase the range of our nuclear weapons, increase the accuracy of our nuclear weapons, and increase the explosive capacity of our nuclear weapons if we are not considering ultimately using nuclear weapons? So we are developing a war-fighting capability with enormous implications.

This administration is submitting a budget to Congress in the last three years that said we must develop the capacity to fight, survive and win a nuclear war. . . . I believe that anyone who thinks that one can fight and survive a nuclear war is by definition certifiably mentally disturbed. Yet we are developing this capacity to destroy life.

But we are going, now, far beyond deterrence. The MX missile is a first-strike nuclear weapon with increased speed, increased accuracy and increased capacity to destroy life. A Cruise missile is a war-fighting weapon; the Trident missile is a war-fighting, first-strike nuclear weapon. We are preparing to move beyond the notion of deterrence and I believe all the people who talk about civil defense as a way of preserving human life—the way we preserve human life on this planet with respect to nuclear weapons is to never cross the political and intellectual threshold because once you make nuclear war thinkable, acceptable, and possible you will make it ultimately inevitable.

So it behooves all of us to focus as powerfully as we can on those weapons that destabilize our lives because they are war-fighting weapons. The notion of nuclear weapons and war-fighting are a contradiction. You and I must challenge this very powerfully.

Secondly: I mentioned that our planet is in danger because, under the guise of modernizing our nuclear forces, we are developing exotic levels of nuclear technology that, in my humble opinion, will take us beyond the bounds of arms control.

The Cruise missile is a small, compact, extremely deadly nuclear weapon. Don't let its size and its white color make you think that's an angel flying across the sky. This is a very deadly nuclear weapon, but it's very difficult to determine whether that warhead is a traditional warhead or a nuclear warhead. You can put this weapon on virtually anything. You can put it on a fishing trawler on the high seas. So a satellite takes a picture. Is that a fishing trawler or is that a launcher for Cruise missiles?

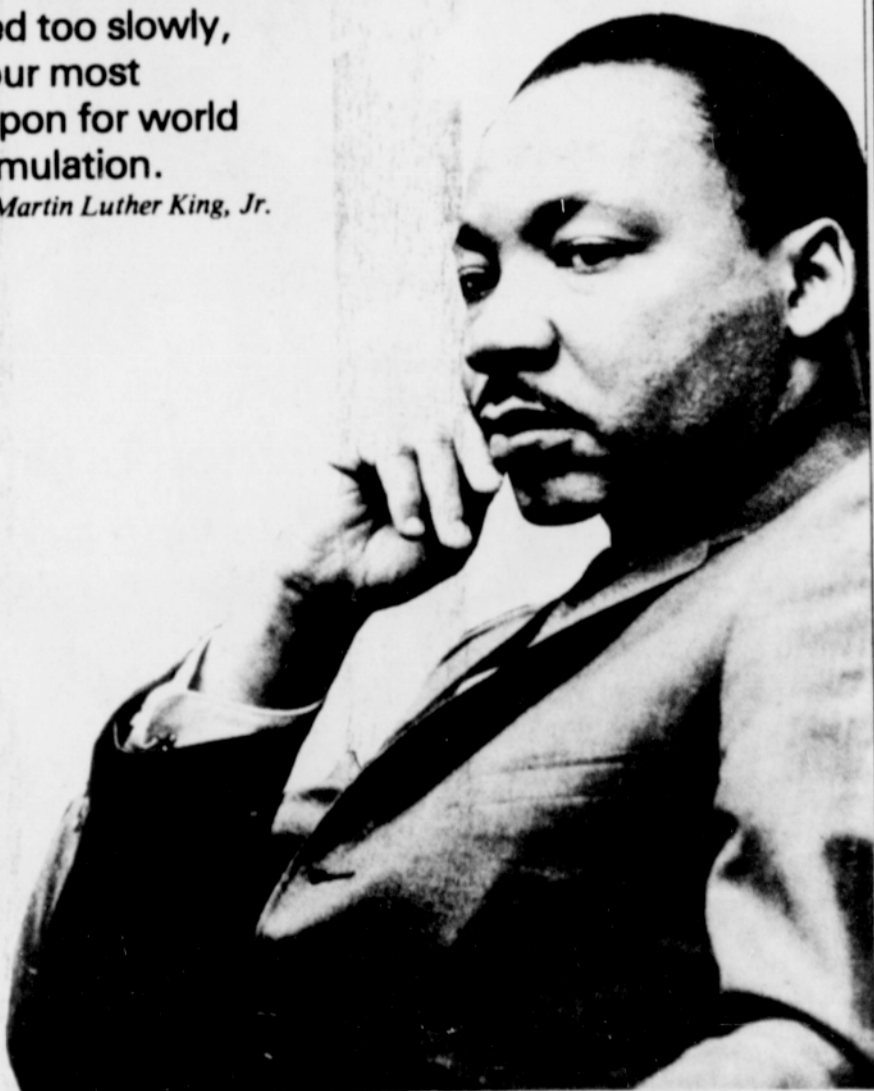
I believe that if we expand the Cruise missile technology we are going to change the face of the earth, because we are going to change the whole concept of nuclear weapons and we are going to bring ourselves closer and closer to the brink of thermonuclear war.

There are people who believe in the principle of the freeze, and I'm one of them, but I want to go far beyond the freeze. . . . I'm simply saying, "Stop going forward with the development of weapons that give us the war-fighting capability; weapons that give us a first-strike capability; weapons that are destabilizing; weapons that by virtue of their technology will take us beyond the bounds of arms control. And, yes, I am saying, that on a unilateral basis we must take some unilateral action in order to preserve the integrity within which we can bilaterally negotiate away the madness we've already developed."

Third, I think we are in danger by virtue of a certain type of deployment that brings us to the verge of a thermonuclear war. We are talking about the deployment of the MX missile. . . . When you put that 1,000 group of warheads aimed at the Soviet Union and couple it with many other highly accurate missiles you clearly have developed a pre-emptive first strike capability

History has thrust upon our generation an indescribably important destiny—to complete a process of democratization which our nation has too long developed too slowly, but which is our most powerful weapon for world respect and emulation.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



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