

THE TABLET

The international Catholic weekly

Volume 238 No. 7500

ISSN: 0039 8837

7 April 1984

Viewpoint

A question for disarmers

Cecilia Hatt

326

Editorials

Yesterday's battle in the coalfields

327

Great things to do in Europe

327

Articles

The signs in Moscow

Richard Owen

328

The future of the welfare state (3)

What to do next

Michael Fogarty

329

God as mother

Margaret Hebblethwaite

330

Notebook

332

The Church in the world

Obituary

333

337

The living Spirit

Felicitas Corrigan OSB

338

Books

Adrian Johnson; Elizabeth

Jennings; Harold Morland;

Mary Midgley; Judith Hughes;

Daniel Counihan; John Griffiths

339

Arts

Jacynth Ellerton; Maryvonne

Butcher; Bryan Appleyard

343

Letters

345

Editor

John Wilkins

Assistant Editor

Margaret Mullen

Literary Adviser

Rivers Scott

General Manager

Hugh Kealy

Advertising

Charles Meares

Circulation

Gilbert Allier

Subscriptions

Jane Mossendew

Directors: Tom Burns OBE: *Chairman*, The Lord Harvington AE: *Deputy Chairman*, George Bull, Patrick Dolan, Alfred Latham-Koenig, Frank Doria Pamphilj, Michael Phelan, John Wilkins.

Trustees: Major General The Duke of Norfolk KG CB, CBE MC: *Chairman*, The Rt Hon. The Lord Hunt of Tanworth GCB: *Vice-Chairman*, Walter Bell CMG, George Bull, Tom Burns OBE, Patrick Dolan, Dr Jack Dominian, The Lord Forte, Ian Fraser CBE MC, Prof. T. W. Glenister CBE TD, Graham Greene CH, Sir Paul Grey KCMG, The Rt Hon. The Lord Harvington AE, Henry Keswick, Alfred Latham-Koenig, Caroline Miles, A. J. F. O'Reilly, Frank Doria Pamphilj, Michael Phelan, Peter Railing, Sir William Rees-Mogg, Paul Sieghart, Gerald Thompson. *Hon. Secretary:* Judith Bennett.

©1984 The Tablet Publishing Company Ltd
48 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HB

Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at New York, NY. Published weekly except Christmas and Easter.

Viewpoint

A question for disarmers

Do unilateralists really want peace and reconciliation? They say they do. Why, then does their behaviour seem designed to set people against one another?

The campaign of the Greenham women, for instance, has witnessed more to the need of many people to feel part of a group united in an altruistic purpose than to any articulate programme by which that purpose might be achieved. The Greenham protesters lay great stress on their feelings of mutual goodwill and alienation from those outside the group. I quote from Maggie Redding's article "Peace Women" (*The Tablet*, 21 January): "But our easy, relaxed and happy way of keeping the peace was in contrast to [the soldiers'] stiff, guarded manner, their uniforms, walkie-talkies and jeeps." Ms Redding is here making unnecessary emotional capital out of a neutral circumstance, a soldier's habitual demeanour whilst on duty. Does it not occur to her that she does not understand the soldiers and is not trying to?

Such self-righteousness seems to be a feature also of Catholic Peace Action. Dan Martin's account, "Making Peace at the Ministry of Defence" (in the Southwark archdiocese's *Justice and Peace News*, July 1983), culminates in these words: "He left immediately, looking as if he was rushing away from something he could not control or understand" — this of a magistrate who had just given a few members of Catholic Peace Action a one year's conditional discharge and of whose personal character they knew nothing. For them, because he was a representative of the law, he must be a hostile and bewildered outsider.

These are trivial, if irritating, incidents. More serious is Catholic Peace Action's statement of 16 March, distributed outside the Ministry of Defence to justify the daubing of the building with the word "Repent": "We pray in the place where planning for genocide continues day after day — the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall. In sorrow and love we bring a message of repentance to the MoD workers." Much could be said about this. Setting aside the grouse that "genocide" is the wrong word — what divinely infused knowledge gives Catholic Peace Action the right collectively to convict ministry workers of sin and to call for their repentance? If, as they imply, they regard thousands of inoffensive civil servants as the spiritual progeny of Mengele, why is their protest so culpably mild? If they do not, what possible justification have they for such monstrously uncharitable lan-

guage? What tasteless arrogance, too, having deliberately provoked arrest by acts of petty vandalism devoid of Christian content, then wrongly to describe this as civil disobedience and claim kinship with real martyrs elsewhere whose witness to the Gospel actually is illegal and involves them in real danger. There are, I believe, many Christian multilateralists who would recoil from such unjust and unintelligent protest.

On 20 March, I attended a meeting in London at which Mgr Bruce Kent, general secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and Fr Gerard Hughes spoke about "Christians and Nuclear Weapons". In his final comments, Mgr Kent asked why those who believed in multilateral disarmament were not as conspicuous as CND in demanding an end to the nuclear arms race. Perhaps the supporters of multilateral disarmament initially expected their views to be represented by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and found instead the waters of debate hopelessly muddled, and themselves reviled, by those who should have been their allies.

The proportion of Catholics in the armed services is above the national average; the proportion of practising Christians of all kinds in the Ministry of Defence is high, possibly higher than that of other government departments. The civil service and the military have their consciences; they know a great deal about the nuclear issue and, moreover, understand what they know, yet they are more constrained than most of us from making their opinions public. Is it not unjust for CND to castigate them for silence? It is not easy to suggest practical arms limitations within the deterrence system when louder voices are insisting that there is no moral distinction between policies of deterrence and war-fighting strategies, nor is it likely that organisations like CND can make useful representations to a government, or to NATO, in whose good faith they refuse to believe. One suspects, indeed, that they have less interest in making such representations than in maintaining the purity of their opposition — an undefinedly adversarial posture which admits the possibility of total pacifism without having to defend any of its disadvantages.

Christian multilateralists can take heart from the fact that the American bishops' pastoral letter *The Challenge of Peace* is, by contrast, an ideal example of theological argument and direct recommendations for action which is thorough, precise and charitable.

Cecilia Hatt