

From the Letters section

Nuclear-arms paranoia

My heartfelt thanks to Dr. John E. Mack for his perceptive article, "But what about the Russians?" (March-April, page 21). Many of us are concerned about "nuclear-arms paranoia" and are trying to persuade our leaders to do something about it. We have been stuffed with facts about the dangers of nuclear warfare, but an understanding of the unconscious motives of those who are possessed by this paranoia, along with a gut realization of what such warfare would do to millions of people, can do even more to get us involved. Especially moving were Mack's quotes from concerned teenagers.

ELIZABETH S. HELFMAN, M.A. '34
Southbury, Conn

When Mack finally gets around to the question, "... What about the Russians?" he gives non-answers.

He writes: "We are utterly ignorant of each other, of our cultures, histories, and intentions." Is he serious? I am old enough to recall similar nonsense about Hitler's Germany. Wiser heads who suggested reading *Mein Kampf* as an earnest of Nazi intentions were pooh-poohed. Those who urged a hard line against Hitler were called hysterical. Those who saw evil in Fascism and Nazism were said to be believers in a devil theory. Germany, we were told, sees itself ringed by hostile powers. "Once Hitler incorporates the Saar, absorbs the Rhineland, Austria, the Sudeten-Germans . . . Germany will be content."

George Kennan, approvingly quoted by Mack, writes of "the commonality of many of their problems and ours as we both move inexorably into the modern technological age." What common-

ality? Improved gulags? Are we to take Kennan's wishful thinking as a surety of Soviet intentions?

Since the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, the rulers of the Soviet Union have murdered, conservatively estimated, some sixty million of their own people. How many imprisoned? Six million political prisoners at any one time, Solzhenitsyn estimates. This does not count the dead or imprisoned in the Soviet satellites, in Communist China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan—wherever Communism has ruled. How many witnesses, Dr. Mack, do we need to attest to the character of Soviet culture, history, or intentions?

To fear such a system appears to me profoundly rational. To consider it evil is commonsense. To trust it, foolhardy. To oppose it, morally imperative. It does not help the cause of freedom and peace to paper over Soviet realities. Or to bury our heads in the sand like the ostrich and ignore Soviet intentions.

Ours is a difficult task, and the first priority is to defend the West and its freedoms. Throughout the postwar era, the American deterrent has kept the nuclear peace. Renouncing it now would bring on war. It is the unprecedented Soviet build-up of nuclear and conventional arms that has created the present atmosphere of peril.

It is not "better to be dead than red," it is better to be neither. Sixty million souls surely attest to that. Deterrence is not as pleasant as Mack's illusions, but it will keep us—and Mack—alive and not red.

Pace, Dr. Mack. It is not the "hostility and fear dominating U.S.-Soviet relations and the nuclear proliferation growing out of this fear that most acutely threaten our survival," it is the totalitarian night.

THOMAS R. BROOKS '50
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Many thanks to Mack. I had begun to fear that the subjugation of Eastern Europe and the invasion of Afghanistan were signs that the Soviet Union might really be aggressive after all.

MARK C. BUCHANAN '70
Hyden, Ky.

In his article, Harvard psychiatry professor John E. Mack joins Berkeley professor Michael Nagler in calling for a "paradigm shift" away from aggressiveness and belligerence and toward peace. Students of the social sciences will recall that the idea of a paradigm shift was developed by Thomas S. Kuhn in his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn's theory is complex, but in essence it is that the scientific understanding of the world progresses by means of sudden shifts

in perspective in which one model or "paradigm" replaces another. An example of this idea offered by the physical sciences is the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. In the social sciences Marxists have argued that Marxism is a paradigm shift beyond classical economic theory. Under any circumstances, paradigm shifts become possible when scientific research has accumulated enough new information to make possible a theoretical synthesis that is more inclusive than preceding theories, and differs from them in important ways. The appalling dangers to the entire human species inherent in nuclear arsenals and the arms race certainly suggest that a fresh perspective is needed in international relations—one that can avert nuclear war and open up the possibility of unlimited human development. Fortunately, while science has made possible nuclear weapons, it also can suggest the best ways to abolish the weapons and avoid nuclear war.

A key insight is that it's now possible to develop a statistical analysis of strategies for ending the arms race and averting nuclear war. This makes it possible to at least partly remove the evaluation of strategies from the realm of opinion and conjecture, and place it on an objective, scientific footing. For everyone who understands and respects the scientific method, the value in being able to do this is obviously considerable.

To facilitate analysis, we can divide strategies for ending the arms race and avoiding nuclear war into four kinds. The "Establishment" strategy, which has United States and Soviet versions, is to strive for either arms superiority or arms parity, that is, to continue the arms race indefinitely on the assumption that the other side won't be able to keep up. The U.S. version rests on the conjecture that because the Soviet Union has only half the industrial base of the United States, and an inflexible, totalitarian political system, the Soviet Union's economy will be exhausted by the military expenditures exacted by arms competition, and that this will lead to crippling ethnic and nationality conflicts, and perhaps revolution. The Soviet version stems from the theoretical Marxist promise that because of its capitalist character, U.S. society must undergo a socialist revolution generated by class conflict. The parallel between the U.S. and Soviet theories is striking.

Arms control, a second strategy, preserves the principle of "deterrence," but seeks to control the arms race through bilateral agreements verified by inspection. Arms control of the type expressed by the SALT I and SALT II agreements seeks to slow the arms race. "Freeze" arms control seeks to halt the nuclear-arms race at its present arsenal