12 Nuclear arms and policies

The military tasks which the defence forces of the Atlantic Alliance must prepare to discharge are so varied in their nature and their geographical setting that I propose to study them under five heads; first, in this chapter, the place of nuclear weapons in the Western armoury; then, the Northern Theatre of Operations; next the Central-German Front; then the Southern Theatre, and, lastly, the tasks of the Allied Navies with in and beyond the Treaty Area.

There is a fundamental political difference between the attitude of the United States, their allies and the non-Communist peoples in general to the whole question of using nuclear weapons of mass destruction and the attitude of the CPSU. To the former it is a matter of conscience; to the latter, not. To the former, who are directly or indirectly heirs of the Christian civilisation and its humane derivations, there is an ingrained repugnance to the wholesale killing of human beings, even in the exercise of a nation's natural right of self-defence. The danger of an enemy inflicting such a holocaust upon our own society does not, for many, annul this repugnance, which found its most forthright expression in the declaration of the second Vatican Council (1963—5) that: 'Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas with their population is a crime against God and man himself and merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.'

The unescapable requirements of defence against a power which recognises no superior criterion of conduct, human or divine, compel the governments of other states to be ready to repel force with equivalent force. Yet we find throughout the
history of nuclear arms from 1945 to today a persistent, though largely ineffective, effort to limit and then reduce them, to prevent their proliferation, restrict the testing of them, etc. We have already noticed the recurrence of anti-nuclear and disarmament movements in several of the NATO countries and the deeply rooted hope of the Americans of finding in their Communist adversaries some common desire for peace and stability. And the basis of all this reaction of the civilised conscience, in this second half of the twentieth century, to the weapons of mass destruction is, simply, respect for the value of human life.

That basis is entirely lacking in the minds of the Soviet leaders. Their own morality, as Lenin\(^2\) taught, ‘is entirely subordinated to the interests of the proletariat and the needs of the class struggle’, as they understand it, and the cause of the World Revolution.

The merit of any course of action, whether of war or peace, is judged solely by its practical use at any given time to advance that cause, with which their own Russian ambitions are identified; and there is no moral distinction between any military devices or types of weapon, conventional, nuclear, chemical or biological. They will avoid inter-state war so long as ‘peaceful coexistence’—in which arms-control palavers with their rivals have their part to play—advances the ‘correlation of forces’ to their advantage. They are unlikely to precipitate war unless they can see the quasi-certainty of success. But they must be ready at any time to fight and win, which involves the accumulation of the most modern and powerful armaments, including, in particular, intercontinental nuclear missiles designed to destroy those of their opponents in a ‘first strike’ and the means to survive ‘second strike’ retaliation. We have seen in earlier chapters the nature of the strategy and current tactics of the CPSU in which such American and NATO concepts as ‘deterrence’, ‘flexible response’, ‘escalation’ and ‘mutual assured destruction’ have no place, and something of the quantity and quality of their own nuclear and conventional arms.

I have put first the ethical principle or prejudice\(^3\) concerning the indiscriminate destructive power of nuclear explosives, because it is something of which every democratic government is obliged to take account—a fact which itself inevitably tilts the strategic balance in favour of the Soviet Union.