

## EDITORIAL

### The Comforts of Unreason

Writing recently on the subject of national security, Professor Laurence Martin concluded it was possible that, more than any other factor—more than technological evolution or particular strategic developments—it was the evolution of public attitudes towards defence which would have the most decisive influence on the effectiveness of Western security policies from now until the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> It might be added that this influence is likely to be asymmetric: there will be no corresponding public pressures within the Soviet bloc nor, for that matter, in China, Vietnam or Cuba.

One of the factors affecting public attitudes towards defence in the West is the Peace Movement. After 38 years of cold war against the Soviet Union, many people want out. This is the most natural and, in a perfect world, the most sensible course imaginable. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world. The search for peace, which in the nuclear age is more crucial than ever before in mankind's history, therefore has to be a rational, careful, patient, but nevertheless determined, process. The comforts of unreason, which so easily lead us to accept false information and to embrace hollow doctrines, must be registered. Respect for the truth, which characterizes the Judeo-Christian tradition of the West, has become our main line of defence against the cultivated ignorance of alien ideology. In Canada, where for many years international affairs and defence policy have been relegated to the margins, the vacuum of knowledge is particularly dangerous.

Hence the importance of well researched material to inform those with a sincere interest in peace and security. In 1982 five Canadian institutes jointly published a report on future security options.<sup>2</sup> *Canada and Western Security* provides valuable facts and insights and deserves a wide audience. It concludes that improved security and the reduction of nuclear weaponry must go hand-in-hand. In the same year, this Centre published *No Substitute For Peace*<sup>3</sup> as a contribution to the United Nations debate on peace and disarmament. Because people from all walks of life have found it useful, a second edition is now being printed. Canadians ought not to fear the evolving power of public attitudes for this is merely an expansion of democracy. Yet Canadians should beware public attitudes founded on ignorance.

In 149 B.C. the Carthaginians were tired of successive cold and hot wars against the Romans. They wanted out. So they agreed to send 300 children from their noblest families as hostages, on the assurance that "the freedom and autonomy of Carthage would be preserved." Hardly had these innocents departed when Rome presented the next demand: "If you are sincerely desirous of peace, why do you need any arms? Come, surrender to us all your weapons and engines of war, both public and private." This was agreed, and Carthage disarmed unilaterally.

The next Roman ultimatum was delivered with what one historian has described as unparalleled cynicism and arrogance. Here is an excerpt:

Bear bravely the remaining command of the Senate. Yield Carthage to us, and betake yourselves where you like within your own territory at a distance of at least ten miles from the sea, for we are resolved to raze your city to the ground.<sup>4</sup>

Which is precisely what the Romans did, after smashing the brave but hopeless resistance of unarmed citizens, who had realized too late the penalty of unreason.

#### Footnotes

1. Laurence Martin, "National Security in an Insecure Age," *Naval War College Review* (Newport, RI, September—October 1982), p. 6.
2. R. B. Byers, Margaret MacMillan, Jacques Rastoul, Robert Spencer, Gerald Wright, *Canada and Western Security: The Search for new Options* (Atlantic Council of Canada, Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, Research Programme in Strategic Studies, York University: Toronto, 1982).
3. David Charters, Dominick Graham, Maurice Tugwell, *No Substitute For Peace* (Centre for Conflict Studies, U.N.B.: Fredericton, 1982).
4. Donald Armstrong, "The Delusion of Appeasement," Walter F. Hahn and John C. Neff, eds., *American Strategy for the Nuclear Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. xxi - xxiii.