Final Draft, August 1, 1960

STATEMENT OF

The Committees of Correspondence

We, the undersigned, have joined together because we fear that, unless we and others can offer an alternative to the search for security through nuclear deterrence, civilization will be destroyed by war. We hope, too, that as we seek for an alternative, we will also be developing new modes of social growth. The present dependence on mass violence as the ultimate arbiter of conflict, and the investment in armaments, plunge us into a current so awesome, fascinating and demanding that the complex and courageous steps that must be taken to end the arms race elude us. We have not given up hope although we recognize the obstacles to peace, and the radical changes which it eventually would require in our society and in the world. We must have the courage of our imagination, questioning the values that the Cold War has entrenched; we must put our faith in man's potentialities for growth rather than in machines for destruction.

With this fear and this hope in mind, a group of us met at Bear Mountain, New York, in March, 1960, and began work on the Statement that follows and made plans to create Committees of Correspondence to carry forward the debate and discussion begun at Bear Mountain. This Statement is not a finished declaration or blueprint, but a step toward further analysis and research, specific proposals, and political action to come. We ask others to help us to enlarge our understanding, to bring us new tools of thought and action, to imagine and then chart a future. We hope to contribute ideas and moral and organizational support for a debate across the country. Small as is the chance for a rebirth, great as looms the spector of destruction, we want your help in seizing the chance.

THE GROWING CRISIS

Weapon developments of the past decade have swiftly and decisively altered the nature of war. Only within the past five years have thermonuclear weapons been tested from airplanes. Intercontinental missiles have been tested only during the past three years. We are now constructing long-range submarines, each autonomous, each able to obliterate more than a dozen cities. In a score of countries, reactors are now producing plutonium, a nuclear explosive. We cannot long entrust our lives to small numbers of men with the means of mass death at their fingertips, men filled with fear and conditioned to accept without question orders to kill tens of millions of individuals.

Willingness and ability to destroy other populations do not provide security. Limited conflicts may grow uncontrollably. Temporary shifts in military power may motivate a country to initiate a preventive war. In situations of tension, failures of men and equipment can lead to disaster. Other countries, in their local feuds, may ultimately involve the major powers. The spread of nuclear weapons to many countries, some with shakier traditions than those of the present nuclear powers, creates still greater instability. Dangers from repeated risks mount toward certainty. Against these dangers nuclear deterrence provides no security at all.

Even if the spread of nuclear weapons does not bring about a blundering or accidental catastrophe, reliance upon nuclear deterrence creates a moral climate that is plainly corrupting, for it inevitably tends to commit us and our opponents to policies which may condemn the unborn and the non-belligerents to extermination. By mutual provocation and propaganda, military personnel on both sides acquire the power to affect the moral climate of our time, to project their ethic on the whole of life as it has developed on earth.

We reject reliance upon weapons of mass destruction, and the logic of deterrence, as the final arbiter of international conflict.

THE NEED FOR ALTERNATIVES

We have become so accustomed to reliance upon nuclear deterrence, disguised as "security," that its rejection creates a vacuum that appears equally frightening at first glance. Conflicts among nations exist and will continue to exist, and we must consider how to keep alive our basic values and defend our tradition of liberty in the absence of the self-defeating policy of deterrence. Today the choice before thinking Americans who are concerned about the future of the nation and of mankind is not total surrender versus total annihilation. This idea is either a deliberate invention to support the massive retaliation doctrine and the Cold War, or the stark formulation of helpless fear. The question before the United States today is whether to abandon all initiative in the international situation and continue to be guided by the logic of deterrence and the arms race; or to take up the initiative once again and experiment imaginatively and courageously with ways to slow down and end the arms race. We call for unilateral steps toward disarmament both on principal and as a practical strategy which represents neither surrender to Communism nor wishful fantasy, since no country courageous and rational enough to thus disarm would be an easy victory for any form of dictatorship. We risk a great deal in reliance on nuclear arms: we must be willing to take risks in pursuit of peace.

Thus, if we had acted on this perspective at Geneva, we would have accepted the risk that there might be some undetected small-yield nuclear explosions in exchange for the establishment of a supranational authority in the area of arms control. Now in the aftermath of the Summit collapse, we should at least resist the urge to resume our own testing. The same determination to risk for peace would prevent us from undertaking a program of civil defense, as this would provoke counter moves from the other side, and increase the psychological danger of war by making war seem more tolerable. The conversion to constructive work of laboratories now engaged in developing chemical and biological poisons might be another form of unilateral initiative we could take. In an age when the security of all nations is threatened by the nuclear arms race of the major powers, these would be actions in the interest of all nations, which would enhance rather than reduce our security.

POLITICAL CHANGE

As we move in this direction, we must begin to think about the new role of force in the world, and about the deployment of the enormous energy and skill that have gone into the building of the war machine; we must think of meaningful employment for those Americans who have been heavily dependent for incentive upon military competition with the Communists. The reliance upon military deterrence, far from effectively countering Communism, has turned our attention from these problems, and the vaster problems

of adequate policies to deal with world conflict. Plainly, our attitude immobilizes those elements within the Iron Curtain countries which seek increased international contact and exchange and who (notably in Poland) hope for relaxation of the Cold War as the necessary condition for slow accretions to their freedom. In the same way, our preoccupation with nuclear competition with the Soviets tends to obscure our even more intractable conflicts with China. These first generation revolutionaries, engaged in the early stages of forced industrialization, seem less humane, and may have less reason to be frightened of nuclear war than the Russians: our present policy gives them incentives towards acquiring, through a reluctant ally or under their own steam, a nuclear "capability." Slim though the chances may be to influence China's internal political life, we must nevertheless seek to end China's international quarantine, initiate an exchange of people, ideas and goods, and bring the mainland Chinese into major international negotiations. We must try to change the international atmosphere, to break through the vicious circle of distrust which transforms negotiations into propaganda battles, and deepens the world's despair.

The myopic focus on military strength blinds us to our overriding common interests with all countries. We have a deep responsibility to contribute effectively and promptly to the economic and social development of other countries, instead of drawing them into the nuclear conflict. The great populations of Asia, Africa, and South America seek a more representative influence on world affairs. Only the creation of political and economic structures capable of realizing the technical possibilities and human potentialities can meet the needs of these dynamic societies. We must not impose the Cold War upon them, but encourage new solutions which do not necessarily parellel either the Soviet or the American systems. Sacrifices for the benefit of world growth and development, for abolishing hungar, disease, and degradation, must replace the sacrifices of mass death in war.

imposing CW terms on all - even Communist Chinese

We believe that in this interdependent world, threats to the security, or obstacles to the future of any group, endanger the future of us all. Purely national loyalties have become an anachronism. We must create a deep loyalty to all men, a loyalty capable of supporting international institutions, and the reign of law in international life.

THE AIMS OF SOCIETY

Any large society will contain fanatics who are willing to kill people in pursuit of absolutist aims or out of sheer, if well-rationalized, destructiveness. But most of the men who are involved in the policy of deterrence are neither fanatics nor personally destructive. We must therefore ask why so many of them are either blind to where their actions lead or cynical about it - even despairing - or lacking in the imagination to contemplate consequences and possibilities. In our judgment, the continued acceptance of deterrence as the basis of defense reflects a deep malaise from which, in varying forms and degrees, both the Western and Communist blocs suffer. Men who do not value their own or others' worth as individuals, who find life boring and sterile, may also lack the zest, inventiveness, and sense of solidarity that might unite them in a search for new approaches to the problem of survival.

Instead of using our abundance to develop our humanity, many of us have let the values of production and consumption dominate us. Means which should serve our material and spiritual needs and help us more fully to realize our human potentialities have instead become ends in themselves. Deprived of control over circumstances, we often sink into apathy and irresponsibility. Or driven by insecurity and fear, we strike

out violently against others and ourselves, destroying the fabric of community which might support our self-realization.

If we are to meet our present crisis, we must reorganize radically our approach toward life. We must replace blind response to political and economic pressures with an effort to shape our political and economic environment. We must create the means for the decentralized control by citizens over the essential parts of our society.

CALL TO ACTION

We ask people consciously to reject the idea that democratic values can now be defended or international problems any longer solved by military means.

We ask people with knowledge, insight, and skill to turn away from developing military technology, from providing rationalizations for nuclear deterrence, and from planning for organized violence. We ask instead that they join with us in constructing alternatives.

We ask you to join with us in a concerted effort to press these considerations on the attention of our government and of our fellow citizens. We invite all with similar convictions to unite with us in establishing Committees of Correspondence for the development and dissemination of our ideas and for an unremitting struggle for life.

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