FROM: Phyllis Schlafly

68 FAIRMOUNT, ALTON, ILLINOIS 62002 (618) 462-5415

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NUCLEAR FREEZE: REHASH OF "RATHER RED THAN DEAD"

Twenty years ago, the slogan was "rather Red than dead." Today, the slogan is, let's have a "U.S. nuclear freeze." The propagandists have changed, but the pitch is the same; the tactics are the same; the objective is the same, namely, to persuade the American people to abandon their inalienable, constitutionally-guaranteed right of self-defense.

If the nuclear freeze agitators are looking for a logo to identify themselves, I suggest an umbrella. The umbrella bears the symbolism of the 1938 "Peace Declaration" of the Munich Conference, from which British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned (carrying his umbrella) to assure the West that he had secured "peace in our time."

"Our time" lasted only one year. In 1939 Hitler invaded Poland and started World War II. The eternal lesson of Munich is that agreements with greedy totalitarian dictators promote war.

Twenty years later, in 1958, Lord Bertrand Russell, prominent British Socialist, pacifist, and author of the book called "Why I Am Not A Christian," advocated surrender to Hitler's partner-in-aggression, the Soviet Union. He coined the slogan "rather Red than dead" as the rallying cry of an agitating assortment of extreme leftists, pacifists, and scientists who could be pressured into beating their breasts with a guilt complex because they had developed the atom bomb.

The 1958 "rather Red than dead" syndrome first emerged in the churches at the Fifth World Order Study Conference of the National Council of Churches of Christ assembled in Cleveland, November 18-21, 1958. This Conference produced a report called "The Power Struggle and Security in a Nuclear-Space Age."

That report issued a call to "unilateral" nuclear disarmament wrapped in language to appeal to Christians: "Since we as Christians could not ourselves press the button for such destruction, we must declare our conviction that we cannot support the concept of nuclear retaliation."

The "rather Red than dead" agitators were not successful because, in 1958, we had the good fortune to have a President who believed in defending our freedom and independence

against any aggressor. Dwight Eisenhower's ideology was best expressed in a line which has since been inscribed on the aircraft carrier that bears his name: "Until war is eliminated from international relations, unpreparedness for it is well nigh as criminal as war itself."

The Eisenhower Administration deserves full credit for the Triad of strategic defenses that protect our country today. It was the Eisenhower Administration which placed the orders for 1,054 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 41 nuclear missile-firing submarines, and 600 B-52 bombers -- numbers which have since been reduced but never increased.

From the time Eisenhower left the White House until Ronald Reagan entered it, the unilateral-disarmament advocates had no need to demonstrate. A freeze on building all additional strategic weapons was imposed by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara in 1961, kept in force by him for eight years, continued for the next eight years by Henry Kissinger, and then continued for the next four years by Defense Secretary Harold Brown (a former McNamara "Whiz Kid").

At the end of the 1961-to-1981 period, and after the expenditure of hundreds of billions of defense dolars, our ICBM total was still 1,054, our nuclear submarine total is still only 41, and our fleet of B-52 bombers had shrunk (through crashes and attrition) to only 316. Our 20-year nuclear weapons freeze not only did NOT cause the Soviets to follow suit; it actually encouraged the Soviets to accelerate their own weapons-building program. In other words, OUR nuclear weapons freeze accelerated the RUSSIAN arms race.

Now that we have a President who truthfully admits in his news conference that the Soviet Union does have "a definite margin of superiority," and who believes that the first obligation of government is to defend its citizens, the "rather Red than dead" propagandists have reemerged. Again they are using some clergy as propaganda conduits, this time under a front called "Clergy and Laity Concerned."

The lessons of history are so plain that it is painful to recite them. Agreements with aggressors, concessions and weakness invite war. A U.S. nuclear freeze encourages the enemy to accelerate the arms race. The anti-defense cackling of clergy and laity against defense is just a political ploy to sabotage the Reagan defense budget.