

Preface

How should we account for the fact that, since 1945, the world has avoided nuclear war? After all, a nation that has developed weapons generally uses them in its wars. For example, immediately after the U.S. government succeeded in building atomic bombs, it used them to destroy Japanese cities. Furthermore, a nation that has devoted vast resources to developing weapons does not usually get rid of them—at least until it develops more powerful weapons.

But, since August 1945, no nation has used nuclear weapons to attack another, and only a relatively small number of nations have chosen to build them. Also, those nations that have developed nuclear weapons have gravitated toward nuclear arms control and disarmament measures: a Partial Test Ban Treaty; Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties; Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties; and a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Why have they adopted these policies of nuclear restraint?

The conventional explanation is that the danger posed by nuclear weapons has “deterred” nations from waging nuclear war and, overall, has created a situation of nuclear safety. In the words of its proponents, there has been “peace through strength.” But this explanation fails to account for some important developments. Since 1945, nuclear powers have not waged nuclear war against non-nuclear powers. Sometimes, in their confrontation with non-nuclear powers, they have suffered military defeat rather than resort to nuclear war. Why? Moreover, if nuclear deterrence works, why bother with nuclear arms control and disarmament treaties? Why worry about nuclear proliferation? Why not simply build, test, and deploy nuclear weapons, free of international constraints?

These unanswered questions alert us to the fact that something is missing from the conventional explanation.

This book argues that the missing ingredient is a massive nuclear disarm-

mament movement—one that has mobilized millions of people in nations around the globe and, thereby, saved the world from nuclear war. It suggests that omitting this nuclear disarmament campaign from explanations of nuclear restraint makes about as much sense as omitting the U.S. civil rights movement from explanations for the collapse of racial segregation and discrimination.

Although the case for this explanation is presented briefly in this book, it is laid out in far greater detail in a scholarly trilogy of mine, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*. The first volume, *One World or None*, carries the story of the movement and its impact through 1953. The second volume, *Resisting the Bomb*, examines these items from 1954 to 1970. And the third volume, *Toward Nuclear Abolition*, chronicles movement activism and response from 1971 to the present. Collectively, these three books run almost 1,800 pages and contain thousands of footnotes. They are based on very extensive research in the files of disarmament organizations and in formerly secret government records, interviews with a broad range of antinuclear activists and government officials, and numerous memoirs, periodicals, and other published materials. Therefore, readers desiring a fuller account of the world nuclear disarmament movement than provided by this book, plus a listing of the many sources upon which it rests, are urged to consult these three hefty volumes.

When I began this project some two decades ago, I believed that the worldwide struggle against nuclear weapons had been ineffectual. After all, I thought, the Bomb has not been banned. But as I plunged into the research—and particularly into the previously secret files of the U.S., British, Soviet, and other governments—I began to realize that government officials were not only deeply worried about popular opposition to nuclear policies (or at least *their* nuclear policies!), but were forced to compromise with this public opposition. Thus, although I do not wish to give the impression that the current campaign for nuclear disarmament is all-powerful or will in all circumstances be able to fend off the nuclear ambitions of government officials, I think it is vital for the public to understand what has saved the world from nuclear war in the past—and may do so again in the future.

Finally, let me express my thanks to the many people who have helped me with the task of putting this study together—and particularly to my wife Dorothy, who has never doubted the necessity of building a new and better world.

L.S.W.