

## Book Department

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### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLITICS

LOUIS RENÉ BERES. *Apocalypse: Nuclear Catastrophe in World Politics*. Pp. xvi, 315. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. \$20.00.

The purpose of this book, according to Beres, is to signal the enormous danger of nuclear catastrophe in world politics and to suggest a strategy for world-order reform so that this danger can be avoided. The danger arises from the possibility of the United States and the Soviet Union using weapons from their immense nuclear arsenals, from the possibility of other states using nuclear weapons as a consequence of the proliferation of nuclear capabilities, and from the possibility of terrorists causing nuclear explosions. The first two parts of the book explore these possibilities and their consequences. The third part of the book, which accounts for somewhat less than 30 percent of the total pages, advances proposals to minimize these possibilities.

The book is effective in sounding the alarm. Dangers outlined in general terms are illustrated by scenarios that

are both chilling and plausible. Because the danger of nuclear catastrophe is appalling, it may seem to be a cavil to raise the issue; nevertheless, at times Beres is unduly pessimistic. It is most unlikely that there will be 100 countries with nuclear weapon capabilities by 1995; and even though the People's Republic of China may have rhetorically supported proliferation, its behavior has been as cautious as that of the nuclear superpowers. The danger is real enough even with more realistic and conservative assumptions.

The more important criticism of the book is that the proposed strategy for world-order reform is not very promising. It is mainly a compilation of proposals that are by now long familiar. The superpowers should adopt strategies of minimum deterrence, accept a comprehensive test ban, renounce the first use of nuclear weapons, and support effective arrangements for nuclear-free zones. Successful nonproliferation appears to depend on the simultaneous acceptance by the superpowers of a dispersion of power and tightened bipolarity. Targets of terrorists must be protected, ways must be found of thwarting the realization of terrorists' objec-

tives, and governments must be willing to bargain with terrorists.

That elements of this strategy appear to be—and are—contradictory is not the most serious problem. The most serious problem is that this strategy was available and pursued, at least to some extent, during the 1970s, yet the danger of nuclear catastrophe may be even greater in the early 1980s than it was in the late 1960s. Creative new suggestions firmly based on an analysis of why this strategy produced such limited results are urgently needed.

Beres achieved one of his purposes—signaling the danger—and he succinctly summarizes the conventional wisdom about how to avoid the danger. Even though specialists will find little new in the book, it should be widely read. Perhaps more was not achieved in the 1970s because the public had become complacent. Reading this book would surely jar one's complacency.

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GEOFFREY BEST. *Humanity in Warfare*. Pp. xi, 400. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. \$25.00.

Even "in the most unpromising circumstances of war, humanity can often quite surprisingly break through," claims Geoffrey Best, author of *Humanity in Warfare* and professor of history in the School of European Study, University of Sussex. Defining humanity as the observance of "prohibitions and restraints on how" human beings fight wars, and asserting that historical attempts to preserve and exercise that humanity have generally been clothed in "codes of custom and even law," Best assigned himself the task of tracing such restraints from the middle of the eighteenth century to the present.

In the pursuit of his objective, Best rejects the "just war" approach since, among other things, wars are "just" or "unjust" according to who defines them. He also makes clear that, for all human beings, it is a moral and practical victory to limit the nastiness of war, even

when we are frustrated by our failure to abolish it and regardless of whether a given war is adjudged just or unjust.

The author begins his study in the middle of the eighteenth century because there existed what he calls an "enlightenment consensus" on the law of war and limited warfare, despite the legal, philosophical, and political differences within that consensus. He then shows how the latter was disrupted, where not destroyed, by the revolutions in the latter half of the century and by the Napoleonic wars. However, the human need to limit the cruelties of warfare expressed itself in the reemergence of ideas and movements in the half-century preceding World War I which gave birth to the Red Cross, the first Geneva Conventions, and the regulations and conventions which resulted from the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907. In the rest of the work, Best shows how the two world wars wreaked havoc on those efforts and presents the post-World War II attempts to create legal frameworks to control warfare.

The book, thoroughly researched and supported by elaborate notes and a rich bibliography plus a chronological guide, is a significant contribution to our understanding of the sociopolitical forces within which attempts at controlling the conduct of war have taken place. It lacks balance in some areas—for example, it is Eurocentric and does not sufficiently consider what F. Brown, in *Chemical Warfare: A Study in Restraint*, shows to be technologically conditioned restraint. But such is minor. Best, like Louis Henkin in *How Nations Behave*, demonstrates that law can be a bearer of human ideals, notwithstanding our falling short of its commands; and that it can help us to understand, if we are willing to emphasize it through a focus on human rights, that "men and women are not citizens of their nations alone."

The work was written for all who have an interest in understanding the struggle to limit warfare. With Sydney Bailey's *Prohibitions and Restraints in War* and F. Bonkovsky's *International Norms and National Policy*, one has the