

# NUKEWATCH

# PATHEPOWER

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News & Information on Nuclear Weapons, Power, Waste & Nonviolent Resistance

## Teaching Terrorism

### Editorial

*Aggressive militarization under the rubric of defense against terrorism threatens to provoke a chain reaction among nuclear nations, big and small, that, once set in motion, may prove impossible to control. No military confrontation anywhere is the world is free from this ominous and ever-present danger.*

—Helen Caldicott,

*The New Nuclear Danger*

The U.S. government's thinly veiled threats to wage indiscriminate and even nuclear war against Iraq, "rather like the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima" -- to quote "Shock and Awe" author Harlan Ullman of the National Defense University -- have not been so publicly or thoughtlessly pronounced since the Reagan era. The President, Pentagon spokesmen and lesser policy makers have spouted the euphemisms "overwhelming force," "full force and might," "all our options," and even "the severest of consequences," with what has to be called obliviousness. It hardly seems possible that George W. Bush's reference to the "severest" consequences is understood by him to mean the radiation, firestorms and cancers of hydrogen bombs.

Perhaps the broader function of Bush's nuclear blackmail is to frighten Al Qaeda's agents, but since suicide seems to be their mode of operation, death threats are unlikely to impress them. What seems more likely is that loaded threats to use "all our options" are meant to teach the U.S. public to tolerate and accept actions taken by our own government that are intolerable if practiced by anyone else.

In all likelihood, the Pentagon and the White House have no intention of using their thermonuclear weapons. They don't need to. The non-nuclear munitions available to them are more than adequate to burn down whole cities -- as the Gulf War I and the destruction of Kabul have demonstrated. Instead, the White House's swaggering,

"safety off" cocking of the nuclear trigger is a blatant expression of globalized armed robbery.

Just as stick-up artists don't have to fire their guns to get what's in the till, but only aim at the teller and appear mad enough to shoot, the government's open threats of nuclear war teach a lesson. Namely, that the current 8,800-warhead U.S. nuclear arsenal still has a role to play in military and political life -- and must not be threatened by international appeals for its abolition.

Coming from the highest federal authorities, this lesson can hardly be missed by anyone from 8th grade civic students to grey-haired pensioners. As Justice Brandeis wrote in the *Olmstead* case, "Our government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or ill, it teaches the whole people by its example." Indeed, U.S. threats of nuclear war teach the whole world.

The example, "Fight terror with terror," is not one that will bring peace to urban areas, suburban neighborhoods or international relations. On the contrary, as FBI whistle blower

Coleen Rowley said in a letter to her boss Robert Mueller Feb. 26, there is no way the FBI "despite the various improvements you are implementing, will be able to stem the flood of terrorism that will likely head our way in the wake of an attack on Iraq." Even Secretary of State Colin Powell said Feb. 12, about terrorist reprisals in the event the U.S. attacks Iraq, "I'm sure there will be some blowback as you mentioned. And that is to be expected." The White House says it seeks the public's safety, but its wars and threats of war only perpetuate an endless cycle of terror.

--John LaForge



Photo by The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Jan./Feb. 2003

**At Tonopah Test Range in Nevada, a heavy B-2 Stealth bomber test drops a "B61-Mod 11," which according to the Pentagon is an "earth-penetrating" nuclear weapon that can burrow into the ground before detonating.**

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### Philip Berrigan, October 5, 1923 - December 6, 2001

*I die with the conviction, held since 1968 and Catonsville, that nuclear weapons are the scourge of the earth. To mine for them, to manufacture them, to deploy them, to use them -- is a curse against God, the human family, and the earth itself. Because of myopic leadership, the greed for possessions, a public chained to corporate media, there has been virtually no response to these realities.* -- Phil Berrigan, Nov. 23, 2002

On Dec. 6, 2002, Philip Berrigan, 79, a longtime anti-nuclear activist and advocate for peace, died at Jonah House, the community he co-founded in Baltimore, Maryland. He died surrounded by family and friends two months after being diagnosed with kidney and liver cancer.

The youngest of six brothers born to Thomas Berrigan and Frida Fromhardt in northern Minnesota, Philip played semiprofessional baseball before joining the Army during World War II. He later wrote of the experience, "I was a highly skilled young killer. I thought that's what patriots do. God may tell us not to kill, but when the state calls, we must obey. We must become remorseless killers, willing to use any means to defend against the enemy."

After the war, Phil graduated from Holy Cross College and was eventually ordained a Josephite priest. In 1957 he began working in an inner-city church in New Orleans. There he came to admire and love his Black parishioners, and became forever intolerant of racism and injustice. He later wrote, "I set out to discover why my black parishioners lived in ghettos, why their children attended all-black schools, why hospitals refused black patients, why the police routinely beat and even killed black citizens."

The experience radicalized him, and he came to realize that the injustices of racism were directly tied to the evils of capitalism and militarism. He began to oppose the escalating war in Vietnam by writing, speaking, picketing and petitioning members of Congress. In 1967 and '68, Philip joined others in raiding selective service offices and destroying draft files, for which he was given six years in prison.

During his nearly 40 years of resistance to war and violence, Berrigan focused on living and working in community as a way to model the nonviolent, sustainable world he was working to create. At Jonah House, which he founded with his wife, Elizabeth McAlister, in 1973, community members live simply, pray together, share duties, and attempt to expose the violence of militarism and consumerism. The community was born out of resistance to the Vietnam War; later the focus became ongoing resistance to U.S. nuclear policy.

Community members act and support each other in Plowshares actions that symbolically disarm weapons of mass destruction, aiming to enact Isaiah's biblical prophecy "to beat swords into plowshares."

As a result of Philip's draft file and six plowshares actions, he spent 11 years in prison. He wrote, lectured and taught extensively, publishing six books, including an autobiography, *Fighting the Lamb's War* (Common Courage Press, 1996).

Philip is survived by his wife, Elizabeth McAlister; three children, Frida, Jerry and Kate; and brothers John, Jim, Jerry and Dan. He was a spiritual leader of the antinuclear movement, one of its most dramatic and articulate spokespersons, and will be sorely missed. At the same time, many will follow in his footsteps by practicing nonviolent resistance to nuclear weapons and war.

