

**Lawrence S. Wittner.** *The Struggle against the Bomb, vol. 3: Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1971 to the Present.* Stanford Nuclear Age Series. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. vii + 657 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$75.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-8047-4861-6; \$32.95 (paper), ISBN 0-8047-4862-4;

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The third volume of Lawrence Wittner's magnum opus can be compared to Peter Jackson's *Return of the King*, the final film in his three-part rendition of John Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. In Lawrence Wittner's final book and in Jackson's film, political leaders (kings, princes, presidents, and prime ministers), of all complexions, eventually realise that they cannot deny, resist, or finally prevail against the organized and directed power of popular and righteous social and political movements. Only when such movements diminish in numbers, lose their focus, or direct their attention elsewhere can political leaders resume action according to their own interests.

Political power ultimately depends on the maintenance of a legitimate relationship between the powerful and the powerless. Political leaders, who blur and subvert moral and ethical values or act in illegitimate ways, will eventually have to respond to determined and mobilized challenges to their political will if they wish to retain power. What gives both the Tolkien and Wittner trilogies their epic quality is that political leadership (in mythology and reality) does not take kindly to criticism or challenges to power, especially when it strikes at the heart of their military or coercive capability. On the contrary leaders will, wherever possible, resist challenges to power, authority, and legitimacy as long as they can.

Wittner's account of the ways in which political and military leaders, in all nuclear nations, resisted scientific advice, religious and humanitarian concerns, and the largest political movement in history--for over thirty years--gives his three volumes an olympian, heroic quality similar to Tolkien's fiction. Frodo and all the other characters in *Lord of the Rings*, for example, were obsessed by the cosmic power available to all who held and possessed the ring. They knew what they had to do to rid themselves of its demonic control

but resisted doing so because of its seductive political and military charm.

So too political leaders from 1945 onwards have been attracted and repelled by the cosmic power accruing to all those who possess nuclear weapons. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the key scientific developers of the atomic bomb, used graphic language to describe its power. After seeing the first atomic blast, he stated that "I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

Wittner's trilogy is outstanding because he has painstakingly documented the stories of endless numbers of ordinary individual citizens, prominent scientists, and courageous politicians from all around the world, over a sixty-year period, as they developed the largest political movement in history. This movement has many different strands, but all emerged in some form or other in response to manifest threat and danger. The antinuclear movement represented (and represents, for it remains in a latent state ready to be reactivated, as occasion demands) a global effort to deny the genocidal and suicidal capacity of nuclear weapons to any human being. The movement has had its ups and downs, but there is no doubting that the world would be a much more dangerous place had it not existed and had nuclear weapons never been challenged as "legitimate" weapons of war. Wittner has done what no other historian has done before, which is to weave the national and global threads of this movement (western and non-western, aligned and non-aligned) into a fascinating whole. Wittner calmly evaluates the impact of the antinuclear movement on different aspects of national and international nuclear policy formation. It is an astonishing achievement which clearly establishes the power of informed public opinion in the development of what is ethically, politically, and militarily acceptable behavior. No

matter what role these weapons may have played in maintaining the central global balance during the Cold War, the reality is that most people consider them unacceptable weapons of war. Wittner demonstrates clearly how this happened as individual citizens all around the world resisted the nuclear option.

Students of the struggle against the bomb must consider the following four questions. Why political leaders took so long to develop some basic means for controlling and abolishing nuclear weapons when many of the scientists who had developed them realized their "original sin" as soon as they had unleashed the genie from the bottle? Why political leaders have resisted the common-sense understanding of the genocidal and suicidal nature of such weapons, when most of their citizens understand, intuitively, that these are not just more powerful weapons but qualitatively different from all that have gone before? Why states which have resisted such weapons in the past (e.g. India and Pakistan) have now acquired nuclear weapons? Why the current Bush administration in the United States is so intent on unravelling the nuclear arms control and disarmament achievements of the twentieth century, while pursuing pre-emptive war to prevent weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of possible enemies?

In these magisterial volumes, Wittner tackles all of these questions. His trilogy is an encyclopaedic and comprehensive benchmark for anyone wishing to understand why nuclear armed states have been so besotted by achieving a seat at the high table of global destruction and why they have gone to such extreme efforts to undermine and resist those who oppose or challenge their nuclear desires.

In the first volume (1945-53), Wittner demonstrates how the original developers of the bomb were appalled at its power, and took immediate steps to place controls on its use even before it was dropped on Hiroshima. This initial resistance to nuclear weapons was linked to the post-war desire, of many, for world government and an end to the narrow sovereign interests of the national security state. The desires of the World Federalists (with their slogan of "One World or None") were focused on the development of the United Nations as a first step towards the international rule of law and an authority capable of placing restraints on the unbridled power of the

largest and most powerful states. This movement was paralleled by an equally strong "moral" resistance to such weapons. The early opposition to nuclear weapons, therefore--especially from those who survived the first blasts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki--effectively challenged its legitimacy as an acceptable weapon of war. Nuclear weapons, for example, fail all the criteria for a just war since they are unable to distinguish combatants from non-combatants or the guilty from the innocent. Wittner establishes that the early global resistance to the bomb was spontaneous, visceral, and widespread.

These early opposition movements emerged against the post-war development of the Cold War and the subsequent competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for global dominance. Those nations with imperial ambition had to have the bomb. In 1946, Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary (in a Labour Party government), declared: "We have got to have this thing over here whatever it costs.... We've got to have the bloody Union Jack flying on top of it" (vol. 1, p. 279).

In the 1950s, atomic power and nuclear weapons were associated with "top dog" nations. The bomb was the ultimate manifestation of the iron fist that lay beneath the velvet glove of modern nation states. States that had such weapons were not going to concede to those who wished to constrain their military power within multilateral and global institutions. They were certainly not going to accept any "na=ve" notion of state systems being subject to the global rule of law. As Wittner notes, however, these same states were somewhat surprised at the widespread opposition to the bomb and tried to counter it by underlining the peaceful purposes of nuclear power and the peaceful purposes of the ultimate weapon. This worked for a while, but failed to quell the opposition that arose from the 1950s through the 1970s.

In his second volume (1954-70), Wittner brilliantly documents the ways in which individual citizens and prominent global intellectuals, such as Norman Cousins, Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein, and Albert Schweitzer, were outraged by the atmospheric nuclear tests of the 1950s and the nuclear powers' callous disregard for the health and welfare of their own citizens as well as the citizens of other states. It was during this period that the older national and international pacifist

organizations transformed themselves into a broad-based (pacifist and non-pacifist) global movement working for an end to nuclear testing and nuclear disarmament. Wittner brilliantly compares the evolution of the movement in the West with developments in developing countries and within Communist regimes. The antinuclear movements expanded in response to the growing awareness of the dangers of radiation and the heightened levels of caesium and strontium ninety within the atmosphere and oceans. He documents the ways in which each national movement evolved, developed their platforms, and mobilized constituencies. Although many of these movements went into quite steep declines at the end of this period it was impossible for policy makers to ignore the challenges from the antinuclear movement at its height in the 1960s.

Some U.S. and U.K. policy makers were so incensed by its power that they chose to confront and undermine the antinuclear movement. It is sobering to read just how much official effort went into discrediting the movement's leadership and besmirching its membership. The more enlightened policy makers, however, entered into dialogue with the leadership with the end result that many governments consolidated their non-nuclear and/or antinuclear foreign and defense policies.

Despite their best effort to subvert the movement, the nuclear states were eventually forced into some tentative steps towards controlling the production, deployment, and use of nuclear weapons. This was the era of the partial test ban treaty, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (which remains the major international instrument for constraining the development of nuclear weapons today), the ABM and SALT I treaties, and a variety of other arms control measures.

By the early 1970s, the antinuclear movement was dispirited and derailed by the Vietnam War and other hot manifestations of the Cold War. The movement that did evolve during the 1950s and 1960s, however, had proven to be surprisingly effective in further de-legitimizing nuclear weapons as acceptable instruments of military or foreign policy.

In his third volume (1971 to the present), Wittner identifies a range of factors which precipitated a renewal of the antinuclear movement in the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The UN Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 proved to

be a useful kick start to the re-awakening of the movement. Within America itself, the near meltdown of Three Mile Island in March 1979 raised new questions about nuclear safety. This was extrapolated into wider discussions about what might happen to people and the environment were nuclear weapons to be used in the event of war. Around this time the Soviet Union began developing and deploying intermediate-range nuclear missiles (SS 20s) and targeting Western Europe. The United States in turn announced plans to develop and deploy neutron bombs and a new generation of cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. The 1970s and 1980s were therefore a period of considerable nuclear anxiety and perceived danger. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the Carter administration decided to punish it by reducing high-level contacts between Moscow and Washington and by abandoning the Salt II Treaty. It was against this backdrop that the antinuclear movement started to revive in the late 1970s.

One of the important points that Wittner makes is that individual citizens and the antinuclear movement leadership have a very acute sense of nuclear danger. When the leadership senses such a period it mobilizes; when it feels that the danger is being dealt with or has been dealt with it goes into temporary abeyance. Thus the antinuclear movement has experienced numerous cycles of expansion and contraction over the past sixty years.

What distinguished the movement in the 1970s from that of the 1950s and 1960s was the fact that, although it had particular national growth nodes (e.g. IKV in the Netherlands, CND in the U.K., and the antinuclear movements in Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and the Philippines), communications and transport technology had advanced to the point where it became possible to contemplate a systematic transnational antinuclear people's movement. Thus, within the Asia Pacific region, for example, networks of antinuclear movements emerged to agitate for a nuclear free Pacific and a South East and North East Asian nuclear weapon free zone. Similarly, in Latin America there was a strong desire to give shape and meaning to a Latin American Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.

A similar tendency began in Europe as well. E. P. Thompson, Mary Kaldor, and others, for example, formed the European Nuclear

Disarmament Campaign (END), which aimed at uniting people across the iron curtain in a popular movement to reduce East/West competition. In the late 1980s this had a catalytic effect on a wide range of other movements for political transformation and human rights as well. For example, Jan Mient Faber and Mary Kaldor moved from END to the development of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly because they quite rightly realized that nuclear weapons fill vacuums where trust, relationships, and confidence between states and peoples have broken down. There is a need, therefore, to generate more confidence and trust between states and civil society organizations--and between states themselves--if nuclear weapons are to lose their political rationale. In the United States, Randall Forsberg and others sought to unite a range of organizations in a call to halt the nuclear arms race in what became known as the Nuclear Freeze campaign.

All of these organizations, and others like them in other parts of the world, received an additional boost when Ronald Reagan and colleagues from the Committee on the Present Danger (a number of whom have been resurrected in the current Bush administration) took over the White House and decided to pursue "Peace through Strength." This meant a rapid re-armament program and the appointment of officials like Richard Perle and Ken Adelman, who actively campaigned against arms control and urged the development of new missile and weapons systems. Known as "The Prince of Darkness," for example, Richard Perle publicly contemplated fighting and winning a nuclear war. These largely unilateral initiatives generated the same sort of anxiety then as George W. Bush's bellicose initiatives do now.

The sense of heightened danger became particularly acute when Reagan identified the Soviet Union as an "Evil Empire" (similar to George Bush junior identifying an axis of evil and naming Iraq, Iran, North Korea, and later Syria) and linked this to Armageddon theology and revelations about the end of the world. These events, coupled with a proposal to deploy INF missiles in Europe in response to the Soviet SS20 deployment, the development of Star Wars proposals, and many other decisions, generated anxiety in the military commands of both the Americans and Soviets as well as huge demonstrations across the European continent. This European development was paralleled in the

United States. The Freeze campaign, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the American Friends Service Committee, and others persuaded a significant body of American public opinion to push policy makers to return to serious arms control and disarmament measures.

Wittner documents the ways in which all of these demonstrations started shaking policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic and within the Soviet Union itself. In the United States, for example, Reagan was advised by his officials to start expressing more peaceful rhetoric because he was beginning to generate anxiety among his own Republican constituency. In response, Reagan started talking about nuclear wars being unwinnable and therefore never to be fought. (At the same time, some of his policy makers were engaged in quite aggressive nuclear policies, which they disguised with considerable doublespeak. For example, the MX missile program was renamed the peacekeeper program.) This was a very bleak period for the antinuclear movement, but these stimuli spurred it into action as individual citizens started doubting the rationality and restraint of those with fingers on different nuclear buttons.

Similarly, on the other side of the iron curtain, Soviet policy makers were equally unable to reactivate dormant as sclerotic decision makers such as Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko reinforced and sustained nuclear military options. It was only with the advent of President Gorbachev that relations began to change and the antinuclear movement felt that there was a leader of a major nuclear power who understood their concerns and goals. It was his vitality and willingness to explore new options which eventually started easing East/West tensions. He did so through a series of bold initiatives such as a unilateral nuclear testing ban and the initiation and eventual ratification of the INF Treaty, which ended the deployment of all intermediate range nuclear missiles. Wittner describes how these initiatives were followed in reasonably quick succession in the 1990s by START I and II, the decommissioning of U.S. and Soviet tactical nuclear weapons, and the eventual dissolution of the Soviet Union. Wittner analyzes the different ways in which many of these initiatives emerged in response to options canvassed and advanced by the antinuclear movement--even though the nuclear decision makers would be reluctant to make any such acknowledgement.

Once again, however, as the 1980s came to an end, the membership of the antinuclear movement started declining in direct correlation to the perceived diminution of nuclear danger. In recent years, although much diminished in size, the movement has had some success with the landmark case brought to the World Court and Abolition 2000, the antinuclear abolitionist movement that emerged out of the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs. The World Court case was spearheaded by New Zealand activists (including a prominent magistrate) in collaboration with International Lawyers against Nuclear Arms. This case sought to declare the production or use of nuclear weapons illegal under international law. The Court agreed that, in general, nuclear weapons were not a legitimate weapon of war. As the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* turned its Doomsday clock away from midnight, however, the individual members of the antinuclear movement turned their attention elsewhere. In 2004, the movement does not command the same membership as it did when confronting the threatening environment of the 1980s. This is not to say that it is now a spent force. Rather, it is just going through one of its latent phases. It is highly possible, for example, that it will be reactivated if the 1995 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty signed by 152 nations is been undermined by a unilateral resumption of U.S. testing of low yield nuclear weapons.

The gains made by the antinuclear movement in the 1980s and 1990s are being systematically attacked from a number of sources, however. First, there has not been sharp international condemnation of the entrance of Israel, Pakistan, and India into the nuclear club, although a war has been fought against Iraq (ostensibly to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction programs), and North Korea is being challenged over its nuclear intentions. Second, the Bush administration, under the influence of many who participated in Reagan's Committee on the Present Danger and the more recent Project for a New American Century, has taken a number of steps. It has rejected the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, thereby preventing its implementation; rejected the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty so that it can advance a new national missile defence system; agreed to develop new, low yield nuclear weapons, to use as part of a counter-proliferation strategy; stalled the pursuit of deep cuts in the

nuclear arsenals of both Russia and the United States (more than 30,000 nuclear weapons remain in existence); and decided to pursue a defense policy aimed at full-spectrum dominance on land, sea, and air, and in space, which challenges if not undermines a range of arms control treaties. The administration has also expanded the U.S. defense budget; U.S. military might is now greater in terms of scope and lethality than that available to any other military power in world history. The U.S. defense budget is \$379 billion after a recent rise (in 2003) of 14 percent, the biggest rise in twenty years. The defense budget is larger than the combined total of the next nine biggest defense spenders. The United States is responsible for about 40 percent of the world's military spending. The extra \$48 billion increase requested is equivalent to what the entire world spends on international development assistance. The administration has utilized the war on terror to justify expanding its own military capacity (nuclear and non-nuclear) while demanding that other states restrain their rearmament. And along with the United Kingdom and a coalition of the willing, it engaged in a non-authorized, pre-emptive strike against Iraq in pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, while doing little if anything to advance its own reduction and elimination of such weapons.

The challenge facing the antinuclear movement and indeed all peace movements is how to respond to the unilateral and often unbridled military actions of the United States and other powers which seek to guarantee their security through military means. Perhaps the movement will be stung into action again by the development of U.S. national missile defense systems around the world or by U.S. desire to locate and deploy bases in as many strategic locations as possible. Perhaps the peace movement will begin exploring new ways of reactivating the 1950s concern for thinking in terms of One World or None.

One thing is certain: the threats from modern terrorism, asymmetric warfare, and religious conflict are not helped by a unilateral assertion of power, contempt for the United Nations, or national reliance on missiles, weapons of mass destruction, or other quick technological military fixes. Nor is security advanced by the development of hard state systems pursuing a narrow conception of national security. On the contrary there is a need for bold and courageous

thinking about more cooperative, deliberate approaches to the pursuit and achievement of human security.

Wittner's magnificent trilogy has brilliantly documented how individual citizens organize and express concern when confronted by real and present dangers to their own security and the security of others. His study demonstrates clearly how individuals and groups are capable of offering sane, alternative policies to those pursued by those wedded to military solutions.

2004 represents another instance of clear and present danger to citizens all around the world. The antinuclear movement should broaden its focus to link individual citizens and civil society groups across the world in pursuit of new politics, new orientations to security, and new institutions capable of building multilateral networks to constrain the world's most powerful nations.

I sincerely hope that new antinuclear and other peace movements may emerge in response to the current war in Iraq, the never ending war against terror, and double standards in relation to weapons of mass destruction. I trust that they will be local, national, regional, and global in scope, and that they will engender new sanity in the twenty-first century. As these new movements emerge, I hope that Wittner continues to document and analyze their evolution, since he has undoubtedly established his reputation as the world's foremost chronicler of a movement that will remain as long as these weapons continue to exist.

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