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ABSTRACT

President Reagan's Fiscal Year 1987 budget was an attempt to increase dramatically spending on national defense, on nuclear weapons, while cutting back on social programs. The increases for almost all nuclear weapons indicate the Administration of the United States saw its major responsibility as one of providing a strong military, one centered on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons. Children today must live with the knowledge that at any instant the entire human race might be annihilated. Authors have been including this topic among the subjects dealt with in children's literature, such as Dr. Seuss's "The Butter Battle Book." Other picture books that can be read as allegories of the current arms race are "Drummer Hoff" by Barbara and Ed Emberley, Louis Armstrong's "How to Turn War into Peace," and Toshi Maruki's "Hiroshima's Flash." Judy Blume's book, "Tiger Eyes," offers a subtle statement on the frightening reality of the arms race and the delicate balance between world peace and world obliteration. Older children will find John Hersey's "Hiroshima" and Masuji Ibuse's "Black Rain," which recount the actual bombing of Hiroshima and its after effects, presenting blunt and detailed descriptions. There are also a number of books available which are intended to help parents introduce to their children and explore with them the realities of nuclear war--books which expose children to these realities without plunging them into a state of despair, but rather show them positive activities to help prevent the negative possibilities. (MS)

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Materials for Children about Nuclear War

President Reagan's Fiscal Year 1987 budget was, once again, an attempt to dramatically increase spending on national defense, on nuclear weapons, while cutting back on social programs. The following figures obtained from the Defense Department indicate the President's proposed budget allocations for Fiscal Year 1987 (the figures in parentheses indicate the percentage difference from the 1986 budget allocations): Star Wars, \$4.8 Billion (+74%); Trident II Missile, \$3.1 Billion (+10%); MX Missile, \$1.8 Billion (-27%, down because of a 1986 cap placed on the program); Midgetman Missile, \$1.4 Billion (+124%); Trident Submarine, \$1.7 Billion (+17%); Anti-Satellite Weapon, \$.3 Billion (+42%); and Tomahawk Cruise Missile, \$.9 Billion (+9%).

These huge increases came at a time when the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, signed into law in 1986, demanded a reduction of the Fiscal Year 1987 budget from its projected \$170 billion to \$144 billion. Yet the proposed Department of Defense budget was \$320.3 billion, an 8.3% increase above inflation over the 1986 budget. The only ways of off-setting these discrepancies were to increase taxes, something the President vowed to fight against, or to decrease funding to social programs. In his State of the Union address, the President said he would not reduce spending by "taking from those in need." Yet his Fiscal Year 1987 budget called for reductions in spending for low-income programs by \$17 billion, including reductions in Medicaid (\$1.7 billion), Child Nutrition (\$549 million), Food Stamps (\$406 million), and Aid to Dependent Children (\$1.3 billion). All together, Reagan's budget proposals called for cut backs in domestic programs of \$35.4 billion.

The meaning of all of this is obvious. The Administration of the United States saw its major responsibility as one of providing a strong military,

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one centered on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons. The following trade-offs are the result of spending for the military as opposed to spending for civilian needs and indicate even more clearly the extent of this commitment: Just 7% of the fiscal spending on the military from 1981 to 1986 equals \$100 billion; that same amount could have been spent rehabilitating the United States steel industry so that it would once again be the most efficient in the world. The \$34 billion spent on the navy's F-16 fighter program is equal to what it would cost to upgrade America's machine-tool stock to bring it to the average age of Japan's. The \$11 billion overrun as of 1981 on the navy's Aegis-cruiser program could have been used to pay for a comprehensive effort to produce cars that get 80 to 100 miles per gallon.

The House Budget Committee supplied the following figures on the President's Fiscal Year 1987 budget allocations for a number of domestic programs (once again, the figures in parentheses indicate the percentage difference from the 1986 budget allocations): Subsidized Housing, \$3.0 Billion (-77%); Mass Transit, \$1.2 Billion (-67%); Federal Crop Insurance, \$.24 Billion (-33%); Job Training, \$2.9 Billion (-17%); Guaranteed Student Loans, \$2.3 Billion (-30%); and Vocational Adult Education, \$.5 Billion (-47%).

The Reagan administration rapidly shifted budget allocations from domestic programs to national defense. Why? According to Soviet Military Power, 1986, a publication put out each year since 1981 by the Defense Department, "The United States, together with our allies and friends, must maintain the military capabilities required to deter and, if necessary, defeat Soviet aggression against our vital interests" (p. 156). Counterforce Issues for the U.S. Strategic Nuclear Forces, put out by the Congressional Budget Office, January, 1978, estimated that Soviet Nuclear forces in 1985 would consist of the following:

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2,438-2,688 total launchers; 8,294-8,794 total warheads; 10,111-10,211 total megatons. According to the same study, in order to "maintain the military capabilities required to deter and, if necessary, defeat Soviet aggression against our vital interest," the United States would need to have the following nuclear forces as of 1985: 2,180 total launchers; 13,904 total warheads; and 3,332.5-3,629.5 total megatons.

The bomb dropped on Hiroshima had 12.5 kilotons. According to Peace Links: Women Against Nuclear War (747 8th st., S.E., Washington, D.C., 20003), the total amount of firepower used in World War II equalled 3 megatons. The total nuclear arsenal in existence today (1987) equals 18,000 megatons, or 6,000 times the total amount (including the two nuclear bombs used) of World War II. One Poseidon Submarine, carrying over 200 warheads with a firepower capability of 9 megatons (3 World War IIs) could destroy all the large and medium sized cities in the world.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union have nuclear arsenals capable of destroying the entire earth many times over. And even given the argument that the very thing preventing nuclear war is the build-up of nuclear weapons, it has to be admitted that the build-up is exacting a tremendous cost, both in terms of economics (as the above figures amply demonstrate) and, perhaps even more importantly, in terms of the psychological effects of knowing that at any instant the entire human race might be annihilated. Robert Jay Lifton, Indefensible Weapons: The Political and Psychological Case Against Nuclearism, begins his discussion:

We are just now beginning to realize that nuclear weapons radically alter our existence. It is true that none of our actions, problems,

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or symptoms is caused by nuclear weapons alone. But it is also true that nothing we do or feel--in working, playing, and loving, and in our private, family, and public lives--is free of their influence. The threat they pose has become the context for our lives, a shadow that persistently intrudes upon our mental ecology."

Children today have this omnipresent "shadow" to deal with, and numerous important writers of children's literature have begun including it (to the dismay of some adults who apparently believe that the shadow does not exist, at least for children) among the subjects dealt with in children's literature. Dr. Seuss, whose rhythms and rhymes and imaginative illustrations have delighted children for years, came out with The Butter Battle Book, an allegory of the contemporary arms race, in 1984. In it, the Yooks, who eat their bread with the butter side up, live on one side of "the wall"; the Zooks, who eat their bread with the butter side down, live on the other. The picture book begins with a grandfather taking his grandson out to the wall to explain to him the history of the build-up of ever more powerful weapons. Beginning with nothing more than simple slingshots, the two sides get caught up in creating ever more powerful weapons to outdo each other. The book ends with the grandfather balancing precariously on the wall, along with a grandfather from the other side; each holds the latest weapon in his hand, the "Bitsy Big-Boy Boomeroo," a bomb no bigger than a bean that can blow up all of the enemy in an instant. The young boy calls out for his grandfather to be careful. Everyone else has retreated into holes in the ground.

While the book contains the same play with language and illustrations that have delighted young children in Dr. Seuss for years, there is a problem. Throughout most of the book, the grandfather is telling his grandson the story

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in a relaxed manner--as something that has slowly developed through the years--; yet the book ends up with the grandfather on the wall ready to "make history! / RIGHT HERE! AND RIGHT NOW!" The final words come from the grandson:

"Grandpa!" I shouted. "Be careful! Oh, gee!

Who's going to drop it?

Will you . . .? Or will he . . .?"

and then from the grandfather, standing on the wall:

"Be patient," said Grandpa. "We'll see.

We will see . . ."

In order to create this dramatic ending to this allegory of the cold war, Dr. Seuss has had to ignore that most of the story has been told by the grandfather to his grandson in past tense. The shift from past tense to present tense takes place in the following lines:

As I [the grandfather is speaking] raced for that Wall, with the

bomb in my hand,

I noticed that every last Yook in our land

was obeying our Chief Yookeroo's grim command.

They were all bravely marching,

with banners aflutter,

down a hote! For thair country!

And Right-Side-Up Butter!

That's when Grandfather found me! [the boy speaking]

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At this moment the grandfather is racing to the wall. Are we supposed to believe he then stops to calmly, slowly, tell the boy the history of the build-up we just read? When does/did the grandfather tell his grandson the story? If he did it before his dramatic rush to the wall, some of it could not have been included (the dialogue above, for instance). If he did it after his balancing act on the wall, then, of course, the immediate dramatic possibility of blowing up the world was resolved, since they are both alive at a later date, and even so this would contradict the present tense dialogue taking place at the wall. Though, obviously, it is legitimate to shift to present tense in literature for dramatic emphasis and though that is being done here, that alone does not justify Dr. Seuss's flaw in logic here. Perhaps, it can be assumed that Dr. Seuss is purposely mixing tenses and narrators to emphasize that, if the Bitsy Big-Boy Boomeroo (nuclear weapons) ever were dropped, there would be no one left to tell the story.

Whatever the reason (even if it is simply a flaw in logic) for the time frame problems, The Butter Battle Book is a good book, a humorous, imaginative presentation, in simple terms of the current situation between the United States and Russia. Children may not be able to understand all the complexities of the arms race, but they can relate to the absurdity of the battle between the Yooks and the Zooks and how it relates to the "bigger, better, best" mentality. In this book, children see adults behaving like children, bad children at that. A fun book (filled with funny words and illustrations) has taught a lesson which either immediately or in the future the children can apply to the nuclear arms race.

Unfortunately, many librarians, apparently because of the obvious allegory, have placed the book in the adult sections of their library. The book can be read on at least two levels, as many important critics of children's liter-

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ture have pointed out might serve as a criterion of good children's literature (think of the possible levels fairy tales can be read on), and one of those levels might be considered an adult level, but that seems a strange reason for depriving children of enjoying the book on one level (I'd hate to see the same logic used to deprive children of fairy tales), even if the second level is beyond them, a claim I'd hesitate to make.

Another picture book that can be read as an allegory of the current arms race, though it is usually placed in the children's section of libraries and is one of the most popular books among children, is Drummer Hoff. It was adopted from an old English poem by Barbara Emberley and illustrated by her husband Ed Emberley in 1967. Experts recommend it for ages 3-7, and it was awarded the prestigious Caldecott Award for best picture book in 1968. Younger children, ones who certainly don't comprehend the intricacies of national defense, love the bright colors and repetitious rhymes, venting their zeal with squeals of excitement when the cannon finally fires off, "Kahbahbloom," on the second to the last page. The continually repeated refrain, "But Drummer Hoff fired it off," seems to suggest that the firing of the cannon (named "Sulton") is a glorious event. Drummer Hoff is lucky to be able to do it. However, a closer look shows some disquieting elements. The man bringing the powder has a wooden leg; the soldier packing the load into the cannon has only one eye. Ed Emberley concluded his Caldecott Award acceptance speech:

The book's main theme is a simple one--a group of happy warriors build a cannon that goes "KAHBAHBLOOM." But, there is more to find if you "read" the pictures. They show that men can fall in love with war and, imitating the birds, go to meet it dressed as if to meet their sweethearts. The pictures also show that men can return from war

sometimes with medals, and sometimes with wooden legs.

The book can have two endings. Many people prefer to stop at the "KAHBAHBLOOM" page. And for some purposes that is where the story should end. But others prefer to go on to the next page, which shows the cannon destroyed. The men have gone, and the birds and flowers that appear to be merely decorative through the first part of the book are in the process of taking over--again. The picture of the destroyed cannon was purposely put on a half page to keep it in its proper place as a minor theme. The main theme of the book is, I repeat, a group of happy warriors building a cannon that goes "KAHBAHBLOOM." The books' primary purpose is, as it should be, to entertain.

I can only speculate as to why this allegory is considered appropriate for children by many of the same people who would not consider The Butter Battle Book acceptable. Perhaps the allegory is less obvious in Drummer Hoff. As Ed Emberley mentions in the above passage, many people do not go to the final page, where the desolation of war is suggested. Numerous libraries even rip that page out of the book.

Yet another picture book offering an allegory of the current arms race is Louis Armstrong's How to Turn War into Peace, illustrated by Bill Basso. In this book, published in 1979, Susie and you (a young boy) are building sand castles on the beach. Since you are right next to each other, "you're in a POTENTIAL TROUBLE SPOT." The picture book, aimed at young children (and de;oghtful for all ages), continues from this point through an allegory of the cold war, using and explaining the terms commonly used to discuss such a state of affairs--incident, dispute, conflict, adversary, warning signal, threat, violence, evaluating the opposition's force, weapon deterrent, credibility,

successful reprisal, invasion, address your allies, surprise attack, mobilize your troops, goal, strategy, tactics, temporary cease fire, fresh provocation, resume the hostilities, neutral observer, negotiate a settlement, diplomacy, shuttle diplomacy, make proposals, buffer zone, compromise, arbitration, proposal attractive to both sides, disarmament, peace.

The two children building their sand castles have a fight and settle it peacefully, in the process exploring the various stages of conflict and how to avoid it. The illustrations have a cartoon flavor about them, which fits the half-serious tone of the book. It is a fun way of introducing children to the language of diplomacy, though some adults have told me that the pictures showing the fighting will encourage children to fight. This argument sounds to me the same as the argument that The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a racist book because of the use of "nigger," and my reply would be to stop reading things out of context. How to Turn War into Peace is exactly that--how to settle disputes peaceably.

Another picture book about nuclear war, a bluntly realistic book, is Toshi Maruki's Hiroshima No Pika (translated "Hiroshima's Flash"), which appeared in 1982 and is recommended for ages 10-up. Though it is a picture book, the graphic details of the text and illustrations can hardly be aimed at young children. The book follows the experiences of Mii and her family from the bombing of Hiroshima through the effects of the Atom Bomb Disease years later. Here is a brief passage:

Mii never grew after that day. Many years have passed, and she is still the same size she was when she was seven years old. "It is because of the Flash from the bomb," her mother says. Sometimes Mii complains that her head itches, and her mother parts her hair,

sees something shiny, and pulls it out of her scalp with a pair of tweezers. It's a sliver of glass, imbedded when the bomb went off years ago, that has worked its way to the surface.

Mii's father had seven wounds in his body, but they healed and for a while he thought he was getting well. Then one day in autumn after the Flash, his hair fell out and he began coughing blood. Purple spots appeared all over his body, and he died.

I would not recommend this for young children, because it is so blunt. Nevertheless, children do understand the difference between make-believe (a book, a work of art, a television show) and real life, and the illustrations in this book are abstract (obviously not literally real), so I would not be as upset about children reading this book as I assume many adults would. And the standard recommendation of ten years and older I agree with. It is a powerful anti-nuclear war statement (perhaps more valuable for adults than children), and that may be what is needed. I offer the same hope Toshi Maruki offers in the epilogue:

I am now past seventy years old. I have neither children nor grandchildren. But I have written this book for grandchildren everywhere. It took me a very long time to complete it. It is very difficult to tell young people about something very bad that happened, in the hope that their knowing will help keep it from happening again.

Another book for ages ten and up, though not a picture book, is Judy Blume's Tiger Eyes. In addition to offering her familiar bibliotherapy of a controversial

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subject (in this case the violent death of a parent), this book offers a subtle statement on the frightening reality of the arms race and the delicate balance between world peace and world obliteration. After her father is killed while being robbed, Tiger Eyes moves with her mother and brother to stay with her aunt and uncle, until her mother can get herself back together. Her Uncle Walter is a very important scientist at Los Alamos, involved with the continuing development of nuclear weapons. As the story unfolds, the community of scientists and their families, which at first seems to be held tightly under control, each of its members filled with an unusually strong sense of civic responsibility, begins to show cracks (children who are alcoholics, and so on). Finally, Uncle Walter, representing those in charge of nuclear weapons, loses control, blowing up in an angry fit at Tiger Eyes. At the end of the story, when Tiger Eyes moves back to Atlantic City with her mother and brother, she pats Aunt Betsy on the back. Aunt Betsy says, "And I'll be so worried about you." Tiger Eyes replies, "You don't have to worry, Aunt Betsy. We're going to be all right." By this time, the reader is reading dual meanings into this statement ("we" also meaning the human race), and the irony is obvious.

Judy Blume's books get banned all the time, because she constantly deals with controversial subjects--divorce, menstruation, death, and so on. At the same time she is extremely popular among younger teenage children. I would not argue with those who claim her style, diction, rather narrow upper middle class values, and often overly simplistic solutions to serious problems leave something to be desired. However, I would argue with those who think children in their early teens should not be exposed to the subjects of her books. And in Tiger Eyes she has surprised me by how subtly she has presented a serious issue.

Two other books aimed at approximately the same age group, 10 and up, are Karl Bruckner's The day of the Bomb, 1962, and Eleanor Coerr's Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, 1977, both accounts of Sadako Sasaki, who died of leukemia

at the age of twelve as a result of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Before dying, she attempted to fold a thousand paper cranes, an ancient symbol of peace and hope in Japanese culture. She died before she could finish, but her school mates finished the folding for her. She has since become a symbol of peace, and there is a monument to her in Peace Park, Hiroshima.

Other than the usual arguments about introducing children (even those 10 and up) to such subjects as death and war, it would be hard to condemn books such as these two dealing with the death of Sadako. In fact, her classmates, children twelve and thirteen years old, became the driving force behind one of the major groups pushing for the end to nuclear hostilities in the world, thus, serving as a major argument against those who say children at those ages are too young to encounter such aspects of life.

For older children, ages 15 and up, two "classics" of ten assigned in high school classed, especially the first, John Hersey's Hiroshima and Masuji Ibuse's Black Rain describe the actual bombing of Hiroshima and its after effects. Hersey's book is a journalistic masterpiece, following the lives of six survivors of the atomic explosion. Masuji Ibuse's book, written by a Japanese writer, is based on the diaries and interviews with survivors of the same bomb. It moves more into fiction than Hersey's book, allowing for an even more emotional expression of the real results of atomic weapons.

Make no mistake, these books are blunt, detailed descriptions of the aftermath of a nuclear explosion. Here is a sample picked at random from Hiroshima:

By nightfall, ten thousand victims of the explosion had invaded the Red Cross Hospital, and Dr. Sasaki, worn out, was moving aimlessly and dully up and down the stinking corridors with wads of bandage and bottles of mercurochrome, still wearing teh glasses he had

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taken from the wounded nurse, binding up the worst cuts as he came to them. Other doctors were putting compresses of saline solution on the worst burns. That was all they could do. After dark, they worked by the light of the city fires and by candles the ten remaining nurses held for them. Dr. Sasaki had not looked outside the hospital all day; the scene inside was so terrible and so compelling that it had not occurred to him to ask any questions about what had happened beyond the windows and doors. Ceilings and partitions had fallen; plaster, dust, blood, and vomit were everywhere. Patients were dying by the hundreds, but there was nobody to carry away the corpses.

Here is a similar passage from Black Rain.

Here, too, the corpses came floating one after the other down the river, and it was a sickening sight to see them butt their heads against the piers of the bridge and swivel round in the water. Near its center, the bridge reared in a hump about a yard high, and on what one might have called the crest of the wave a young foreigner with fair hair lay dead with his arms clasped about his head. The surface of the bridge was distorted and undulating. (p. 108)

There are a number of books out meant to help parents introduce and deal with the subject of nuclear war with children. Though already a bit dated, one of the best of these is Watermelons Not War! A support Book for Parenting in the Nuclear Age. It was put together by the Nuclear Education Project, five women who came together as a group after the Three Mile Island accident-- Barbara Signer, Kate Cloud, Ali e Evans, Hayat Imam, and Ellie Deegan. Its

subject matter extends beyond nuclear war to nuclear power of all forms, and it explains in easily understood terms how nuclear energy works. More importantly, it deals with the realities of living in a nuclear age and how children can be exposed to these realities without being plunged into a state of despair; in fact, the main thrust of the book is to show children positive activities to help prevent the negative possibilities. A number of poems, drawings, and statements from children are included. Lists of organizations and resources (somewhat dated) working for peace and a better understanding of atomic energy are included, as are lists of books for children and for adults that deal with peace (such as Munro Leaf's The Story of Ferdinand), and war (for example, Jean Merrill's The Pushcart War).

A letter by Dr. Helen Caldicott praising the book is included as an "Afterword." It begins:

Watermelons Not War reiterates the need for every parent to face the nuclear weapons dilemma. But we don't have much time. The children know it. . . .