

# Nuclear proliferation problem greater now

George Weigel reminds us in his latest column (CR, June 19) that there was indeed a time, not so long ago, when the bishops of America were willing to seriously discuss important issues of peace and justice. I agree with him that “Today, it is virtually impossible to imagine the bishops’ conference taking on a project of the magnitude of ‘The Challenge of Peace.’”

Too bad they have become so timid.

Approval of a recommendation made by Baltimore’s Bishop Frank Murphy to Cardinal Bernardin to allow the public to see the bishops’ struggle in their efforts to reach agreement during the course of the drafting process was a major reason for its final success in changing public opinion. We struggled along with them to define the meaning of just war theory for the modern age. Later on, those of us who were opposed from the outset to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, including the Pope, were mindful of such criteria.

Even if Iraq did not have the nuclear weapons, which were part of the justification for another episode in the long history of American efforts to bring about regime change elsewhere, many countries do have such weapons. The world would be better off today if nobody had them. That was the view of most of the bishops then and may – who knows – still be their view. But instead of calling for their immediate abolition, they took a moderate view, a conditional acceptance of them, while working towards the day when those kinds of swords would be turned into plowshares.

Ironically, there was a fleeting opportunity for an agreement between the US and the USSR to do just that when Reagan and Gorbachev meet at Reykjavik in 1986. But Reagan wouldn’t agree to stop work on his star wars defense delusion as part of such a deal, and the U.S. Congress probably wouldn’t have ratified such an agreement anyway, so the moment passed. Nuclear proliferation is an even greater problem now than it was then.