

# VILLAGE VIEW

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On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan; a second atomic bomb descended upon the Japanese city of Nagasaki three days later. The bombs virtually wiped out those cities and most of their inhabitants. On August 14, Japan surrendered; formal papers were signed aboard the U.S. battleship *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay in September, 1945.

The world's most devastating war came to an end.

And yet, the war had hardly begun. It continues to this day. Not, perhaps, with steady shooting; not always with bombs dropping; not continually with young men dying in battle (although that occurs periodically in smaller non-nuclear wars such as that in Korea where 30,000 Americans died and over 100,000 were wounded, and in Viet Nam where 541,000 U.S. troops were committed and 46,063 American servicemen died in combat before the United States withdrew in 1973), but intermittently.

Among all the combatants in World War I, more than ten million soldiers died and 20 million were wounded. In World War II, nearly 15 million American men and women served; over a million of them were killed, and nearly 700,000 suffered non-fatal wounds. There are no reliable figures for the number of civilians killed in World War II.

The business of war continues.

By 1976, the Defense Department of the United States was reported to be spending \$130 million a year to research lasers, "death rays," to shoot down pilotless planes, pierce armor plate, and blast incoming missile warheads. The M-1 tank is capable of knocking out the best Russian tank, and each costs \$1,000,000. Underground testing of atomic weapons (by both the United States and USSR) has continued. Both China and France exploded nuclear devices by 1973. Since then, India has become a nuclear power.

In the decade between 1965 and 1974, the United States spent approximately 742 billion dollars on national defense. And another thousand billion dollars has been poured into the defense effort since 1975. Now, we are told we must increase our defense budget even more.

There is no limit to the insatiable demands of the military. The United States already has the capacity to deliver the equivalent of one million bombs the same size as that dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

The Russians, in all probability, have as much fire-power as our own country does; maybe more. According to the President, Russia does have an even greater capacity for destruction than we do.

How many cities are there in the United States? There are not a million cities and towns in the world! If there were, and each were precisely the same size, each would have a population of only 6,000 people.

No country on this planet needs more nuclear weaponry. We don't need any more, nor do the Russians. We can be atomized only once; they can be atomized only once. Building

more tools for killing and destruction is totally senseless.

Back in the early '50s, shortly after World War II ended, and while this nation was the sole possessor of atomic power, millions of taxpayer dollars were spent to build a nationwide system of Civil Defense in case the Russians launched an attack calculated to cripple this nation before we could deploy our atomic bombs to retaliate. From 1950 to 1953, I was employed as secretary to the Executive Director of Civil Defense for the State of Illinois.

In those three years, a comprehensive plan was developed for the defense against atomic attack of every city and town in the state. Because the work was classified I can't describe the details of the plan; in the first place, I have no knowledge of whether the information has since been de-classified; in the second place, it was a long time ago (30 years), and I have forgotten most of the details, anyhow.

In any case, I am certain that any plans that might have been made to defend the civilian population, then, are totally obsolete, now. The appreciation that hundreds of nuclear strikes might reach this continent simultaneously had not then dawned. The possibility that a single atomic bomb of the size we had used to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki might be targeted for the city of Chicago (and might or might not hit the intended target) was the extent of the thinking.

In the interim, of course, far more powerful bombs have been developed, as well as ones of more limited force. Nuclear warfare has been refined in the past 30 years.

The feared Russian attack on this country never materialized, Russia has, of course, built its own arsenal of atomic weaponry. And whenever there have been escalations on one side, efforts have been made by the other side to equalize or surpass the power of the other. Each nation now has the capacity to destroy the other, entirely, and to retaliate, against whoever strikes the first blow.

The initial effect of nuclear war between our two countries would be to atomize every city of both nations. The secondary effect would make the entire northern half of the globe uninhabitable. No one and no thing north of the Equator, and perhaps large areas south of the Equator, would survive. And once the dust and ash settled, it could be centuries before more than half the land-mass of the world was habitable.

That's how things stand right this minute. Such devastation is almost incomprehensible, but when you have spent three years, eight hours a day, five days a week, working with plans for defenses against weapons of such destructive force, you reach a point of understanding and comprehension that the possibility does exist.

How do you live with that knowledge and still maintain your sanity? You stop thinking about it and pretend it's only a nightmare.

The President of the United States has not had the benefit of that experience. Even though he unquestionably has the knowledge, he has had one or two other things to think about, both before and since he became President. His military advisors, though, have had intimate knowledge of the dangers for many years. They know, intellectually and emotionally, what nuclear war on a global scale will mean. Perhaps they, too, have stopped thinking of the consequences and, like me, treat the possibility as a bad dream. Or perhaps, collectively, they have not retained their sanity.

Who can tell?

For the record, it's time to call a halt; time to work for peace instead of war; time to use our wealth to improve this world and conditions in which its people live, rather than continue to build even more massive preparations for