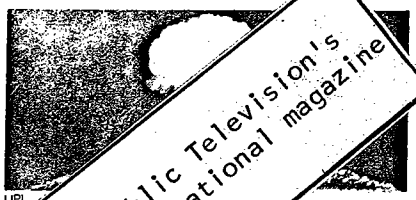
THE NUCLEAR SHADOW 1



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The question of a nuclear end to civilization was one that public TV continued to raise during the election campaign. The issues surrounding it will come up again and again as America enters what Ronald Reagan has called a "most dangerous decade." This is not a nice subject, but it is the most important subject of all. As background, *The Dial* asks three questions in this and subsequent issues. The first:

Why Are the Russians More Scared of the Bomb Than We?

Simple. They think we're reckless and determined to end it all.

BY LARS-ERIK NELSON

My train slid to a halt in a silver birch forest on the frontier just northwest of Leningrad. Men in olive army uniforms clambered aboard and barged down the corridor. "Into your compartments," a pink-cheeked young border guard barked. The foreigners who had been standing in the corridor and watching the little red farmhouses and birch groves of Finland glide by were puzzled. Reluctantly, we stepped back into the individual compartments, and the doors clanged shut.

A sudden hammering on the door of my compartment, and a customs agent and a border guard, in nearly identical uniforms, stepped in. The agent saluted smartly and began his search. He was looking in my compartment for someone who might be trying to sneak into the Soviet Union. He looked under the mattress, under the berth, and in the closet. He looked in the overhead baggage rack. No hidden people. He turned to me.

"Do you have any Bibles?" he asked. "Any religious postcards? Any gold?"

No on all three counts.

"What are these?" he asked, riffling the pages of some notebooks.

"My thoughts."

The agent handed my thoughts over to the border guard for further study. Then he rummaged through one of my suits, finding a Russian-language edition of Mikhail Bulgakov's classic novel, *The Master and Margarita*. The book was confiscated.

Saluting again, the agent disappeared. The train rolled into Russia, cleansed of its contraband. I walked out of the compartment and stood again in the corridor. A young Finn who sold fishing equipment emerged from the next compartment, white and shaken. We leaned side by side on the railing below the window, looking out again at

Lars-Erik Nelson, the diplomatic correspondent for the New York Daily News, *recently traveled through the Soviet Union. From 1967 to 1969, he lived in Moscow as a correspondent for Reuters.*

the birch groves and the little red farmhouses.

"From me, they took two fishing nets," the Finn said presently.

"Why?"

"They told me that fishing with nets is illegal in the Soviet Union." We looked out at Russia in silence and pondered our attempted crimes.

Russia today, as always, behaves in many ways like a country at war. It is at war with books, with mysterious enemies who carry notebooks, with intruders who would plunder its riches with fishing nets. It is at war with religious postcards. Today, sixty-three years after the Bolshevik Revolution, forty-seven years after Franklin Delano Roosevelt recognized the USSR, thirty-five years after the end of World War II, and over eight years after the inauguration of détente, Russia is still apprehensive. It is an elephant afraid of mice.

But this is an old nervousness. The Marquis de Custine, a French nobleman who toured the Russian Empire over 140 years ago, reported being confronted everywhere by secrecy and suspicion, a wariness of outsiders coupled with an intense desire to show that Russia really was like any other country.

De Custine's notes on the czarist autocracy of the 1830s were contemporaneous with Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. The observations of both are penetrating and in many ways clairvoyant. The difference between them is that De Tocqueville was studying only people, and De Custine people *and* a monarchy. The irony that struck me as I toured through the Soviet Union recently, from the Finnish frontier to the melon market in Tashkent, was that just as the American characteristics jotted down with such accuracy by De Tocqueville have survived, so have the Russian traits noted by De Custine—except that in Russia they have survived the revolutionary transition from czarist government to Communist one and have been handed down from nineteenth-century nobleman to twentieth-century worker.

I was shocked, returning to the Soviet Union last summer after an eleven-year absence, to find that the Russian people, whom I had always regarded as skeptical of Communist party propaganda, were now accepting it. People who in De Custine's day had looked to America as the land of liberty and hope and who even during my own two-year stay there in the late 1960s had basically liked America are now fearful of us, suspicious that we are about to make war against them—or at least stir up other enemies who will make war. It was also disconcerting to find that from their perspective, they can make a pretty good case.

Their perspective, of course, is not simply a mirror image of ours. Words and concepts have different meanings that Russian-English dictionaries cannot convey. "We have completely different psychologies, completely different moral standards," a thirty-six-year-old lawyer said as we sat on a park bench near Leningrad's Neva River and watched children playing in a sandpile. "Your country and mine look at the world in completely different ways."

One obvious reason for the difference is a basic sense of security that Americans take for granted and that Russians cannot. We are insulated by two oceans and are bounded north and south by friendly countries. Russia has a 4,000-mile frontier with China, which it views as a deadly foe. And the average Russian regards even his country's allies—Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary—as temporarily tamed enemies. In Kiev, I asked the cabdriver taking me to the memorial at Babi Yar what he thought about the independent trade unions that were just then arising in Poland.

The Russian people think that we will start the next war. Our current military programs are the proof, they say.

The Russian people tell themselves that *they* would never start a war, they who suffered so much in World War II.

"Those Poles," he sneered. "Not a steady people, not hard workers. They don't know what it means to work. And they already live better than we do. What have they got to strike about? Maybe we should teach them a lesson."

"Let there be no more war" is a prayer I was to hear dozens of times in three weeks, but to a Russian, it was a prayer that had a very specific meaning. "No more war" means no war on Soviet soil, no repetition of the holocaust of 1941 through 1945, which cost at least twenty million lives and which is blamed to this day for so many shortcomings in Soviet life. "No more war" does not, to a Russian, mean no invasion of Afghanistan or no intervention in Czechoslovakia or no deployment of nuclear missiles aimed at the cities of Western Europe. "No more war" means perfect security for the Soviet Union and its political leaders.

But when taxed about their own provocative actions—a military buildup that has put their economy on a war footing, the intervention in Afghanistan, and the needlessness of the SS-20 missiles—Russians are thunderstruck.

"But we would never start a war," a middle-class, well-educated Moscow matron told me as we shuddered in a chill wind on Gorki Street. "It is inconceivable that the Soviet Union, we who suffered so much in World War Two, would ever start a war."

A long-haired young man in Leningrad—obviously a privileged member of society, because he had been allowed to visit Great Britain—earnestly assured me: "Leonid Brezhnev is really a peace-loving man. He is truly committed to peace, to no more war. He was at the front himself. He knows what war is."

Given these viewpoints, common to so many Russians today, why is their government acting so militaristic and aggressive? It says it's doing so because of us.

They fear that Presidential Directive 59, which retargets U.S. nuclear missiles away from cities and toward military and political objectives, is a move preparatory to attack. Actually, the purpose of PD 59 is to give the president flexibility in *responding* to Soviet nuclear aggression; he would have an alternative to ordering a massive destruction of Soviet cities. Russians assume that President Carter, well-intentioned but ignorant of foreign affairs, was persuaded to sign the directive by Zbigniew Brzezinski, his Polish-born national security adviser. Brzezinski, vaguely Prussian-looking with his hawklike visage and crew cut, perfectly fits a stereotype of Russian literary and political tradition—the czar's wicked adviser.

(Ironically, the Russians I talked with were much less perturbed by the thought of Ronald Reagan as President than they were by four more years under Carter. Though Russians see Reagan as a hawk who defines his militant views in terms of resisting the Soviet Union, they think he has some redeeming features: They do not believe he will continue Carter's human-rights crusade; they think his ties to big business will keep him from imposing new grain and technology embargoes on the Soviet Union; and they hope that his affection for Taiwan will undo the most fearsome of all links, the U.S.-China connection. Finally, Soviet Communists are most comfortable with a foreign leader whom they can easily pigeonhole into their Marxist-Leninist world view, even if he is a reactionary imperialist. Communists are much less at ease with liberals, reformers, and social democrats.)

In terms of nuclear strategy, PD 59 is defensible, a more credible deterrent

than wholesale nuclear holocaust. But to a Russian, PD 59 is an effort to make nuclear warfare more thinkable—and therefore more likely. Soviet specialists who understand nuclear strategy have little quarrel with PD 59. But the Soviet propaganda machine seized upon the first leaks of its existence in the American press as evidence that the United States was trying to obtain nuclear superiority over the USSR, to tip the balance of power, and to develop a strategy that would enable America to win a nuclear war.

The Russians are also convinced that the United States is the prime force behind the insurrection in Afghanistan. Russians, and even Uzbeks, who are ethnically akin to the Afghans, do not regard the rebels as courageous freedom fighters seeking self-determination, as far as I can tell. Instead, ordinary people, such as a construction worker I met in Tashkent, see the rebels as a U.S.-backed collection of ex-landlords, Muslim fundamentalists, and hill tribesmen trying to turn back the clock, keeping their women behind veils and using their children as unpaid labor.

The reason the United States supports this ragtag collection is clear to the Russians: "The fact is," a bright young man explained to me, "America is sponsoring the Afghan rebels because it needs Afghanistan as a replacement for the military bases it lost in Iran. If Soviet troops had not gone into Afghanistan, we would have had American bases on our southern border."

Another fear is that the United States may yet deploy a neutron bomb in Europe. Russians recoil in horror at this thought. The purpose of the "enhanced-radiation warhead" (its proper name) is to halt a Soviet tank invasion of West Germany by using radiation to kill tank crews without destroying invaded German cities at the same time. To the Russians, as to many Americans, the neutron bomb is the ultimate capitalist weapon, one that kills people but spares property.

As in the case of PD 59, Russian specialists understand the logic of the neutron bomb, but to the man in the street it is a new nightmare, carefully nurtured by the Soviet press. "Who thinks up these fiendish things?" a young mother asked me in dismay as we chatted in a Leningrad park. "Why would you drop such a bomb on us?"

The Russian people are so kept in secrecy that they know little about their own government's military buildup.

The Soviet Union also believes that the decision made in December 1979 by the United States and its allies to upgrade medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe capable of striking Soviet territory is a move of aggression. The use of such weapons is not controlled by any treaty, even Carter's SALT II Treaty. The 572 new missiles are intended to offset what NATO perceives as a Soviet nuclear edge—the Russian deployment of the triple-warhead SS-20 on mobile launching pads in the bogs and forests of western Russia, from which virtually every capital in Europe could be destroyed.

"The NATO decision was pure aggression," a newspaper reporter told me. "It was made three months after Leonid Brezhnev said he would reduce the number of Soviet missiles directed toward Europe, and NATO went ahead with its new program anyway." The catch in Brezhnev's offer, however, was that while Russia would reduce its total number of missiles, many of the older, single-warhead types would be replaced by the three-warhead SS-20. The reduction would thus mean an increase in the number of warheads aimed at Western Europe. I tried to make that point to the reporter, asking him how many warheads were on the old SS-4 and SS-5 and how many on the SS-20.

"That is a military secret," he snapped. "It is not my function to know." End of argument. As we left the office, my Soviet escort, who had listened in silence to my discussion with the reporter, whispered to me, "And how many warheads are on the SS-20?"

"Three," I said, betraying a Soviet military secret to a Russian, whose function also did not entitle him to know. He nodded sagely and stored the information away. But the rest of Russia's 260 million citizens do not know

how many warheads the SS-20 carries or even that there is such a weapon. It is not Soviet policy to cover up its firepower from its citizens. However, the government does not categorize its armaments in the same way that we do.

The very designation SS-20 is not Soviet; it is the number assigned to the missile by NATO military analysts. "SS" means surface to surface and "20" is its place in the sequence of missile development. Rather than disclose the actual names of their own missiles, Russian military specialists have adopted NATO terminology and use it when speaking to those "not entitled to know." Thus, they write out the NATO-named Backfire bomber as "Bekfeier."

Secrecy must be preserved. The ancient Russian addiction to it may be the greatest single danger to détente. It prevents Russians from knowing about themselves, their own military programs, and their defense budgets.

The U.S. response to those programs—the MX mobile missile, the neutron bomb, and the deployment of upgraded missiles in Europe—therefore strikes them as completely unprovoked. To the Russians, the United States appears to be arming itself simply out of malice toward the Soviet Union, not to counterbalance a Soviet threat. As far as they know—and, indeed, as they sincerely believe—there is no Soviet threat. Similarly, given their perspective of their role in Afghanistan, President Carter's grain embargo was either a heartless cruelty to an innocent people or an attempt at blackmail.

In this atmosphere of misunderstanding and mistrust, technology advances. More powerful nuclear warheads, more accurate missile-guidance systems, and more sensitive submarine hunters are being developed every year. The MX missile, which would move randomly among silos in the Utah and Nevada deserts, is an example.

Given the rate and the sophistication of weapons development, it is not inconceivable in both the United States and the Soviet Union that at some point in the near future a general will walk into the White House or the Kremlin with his eyes shining. "We've done it, sir," he will say. "We have a missile that can knock out all of theirs, and they won't be able to strike back at us. But we have to move quickly because they're about to catch up."

Each side will have reasons to deliver the blow. Each president will ponder the risk. Neither the American people nor the Soviet people, nor their elected representatives, will have a say in the decision. It will have to be made quickly.

And the general, either Soviet or American, may be right. His engineers may in fact have a weapon capable of disarming the enemy and ending the threat of "mutually assured destruction," the war gamers' term for nuclear holocaust. Or the general may be wrong. If his president chooses to believe him, to believe that nuclear supremacy has at last been attained when in fact it has not, the first you'll know about it will be a blinding white flash. □

THE NUCLEAR SHADOW 2

Concern over the probability of a nuclear finale continues to underlie many of the discussions on public TV's current affairs programs. Last month *The Dial* asked why the Russians seem more afraid of the bomb than we. This month we ask:

Why Aren't We More Afraid Of The Bomb?

We are very afraid. But we don't show it. There's the rub.

BY ROBERT JAY LIFTON

The atom bomb that struck Hiroshima shortly after 8:00 A.M. on August 6, 1945, was a trifle. Strategic warheads today can create a nuclear explosion over a thousand times more powerful. These devices are infinitely more lethal in the amount of radiation they can spread. We know, nevertheless, what that trifling bomb did to

Hiroshima. We know that people by the thousands were incinerated in the streets, many of them as they hurried to work. A white flash, and they were gone. Ninety percent of the people who were outdoors and within six tenths of a mile from where the bomb hit died instantly. All the buildings within two miles crumbled. The blast melted stone.

Surviving the explosion was no guarantee of remaining alive. Within days, radiation began its work. People became weak, ran high fevers, developed diarrhea, bled from all their orifices, lost their hair, and died. Death by radiation is in many ways worse than the explosion itself. Radiation is invisible. It was the survivors' second encounter with death after the bomb dropped.

Years later, they had their third encounter. Because of radiation, cases of leukemia, most of them fatal, increased. This was only one kind of cancer that the bomb produced; the incidence of cancer of the thyroid, the lungs, the ovaries, and the cervix also rose. But psychologically, leukemia, particularly in children, was the ultimate horror, the eventual outcome of the first moments after the bomb struck. The fears have not ended. The rate of cancer among survivors continues to increase. They wonder what genetic scars will appear in their children or their children's children.

We can be reminded of the Hiroshima bomb, and we know that many more powerful bombs are aimed right now at cities around the world. So why aren't we frightened by the knowledge that if a one-megaton bomb (the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was only thirteen kilotons) struck a city as densely populated as New York, over two million people would probably die instantly? Cockroaches would survive well. They would be blinded by the flash but still able to resist radiation far better than humans.

I think we are afraid, but we hide our fear. We have done precious little talking about the consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Yet, my study of Hiroshima survivors and my observations in this country today lead me to believe that those events *have* had an important psychological impact on us. The Hiroshima explosion cannot really represent what would occur today if nuclear weapons were used. Still, Hiroshima has things to tell us, particularly if we look at it not as an obscure event in the past but as a truth dominating our existence today. Ironically, we ourselves experience in muted form much of what happened psychologically to the survivors even though we have never experienced such a holocaust.

Right after the bomb exploded, the survivors ceased to feel, though they were surrounded by destruction and mutilation—people whose flesh fell from their bodies, charred corpses in fantastic positions, screams and moans. "Somehow, I became a pitiless person," one survivor told me, "because if I had had pity, I would not have been able to walk through the city, to walk over those dead bodies, badly injured bodies that had turned black, their eyes looking for someone to come and help them."

The survivors were psychically numb. It was a defense mechanism to close themselves off from death. Their unconscious message: If I feel nothing, then death is not taking place. But such cessation of feeling is itself a symbolic form of death.

There was also another emotion: The survivors felt the need to justify their own survival when so many others had died. An impossible task. The alternative was to feel guilty for being alive, and this turned to shame. Survivors spoke of "the shame of living." They could never simply conclude that by happy chance they had survived. Now, thirty-five years later, some have remained so identified with those who died that they themselves feel as if dead. In daily life, they have been distrustful and suspicious yet have craved human relationships. These have been difficult to find; just as the survivors felt ashamed for themselves, others in Hiroshima have felt them to be tainted by death. Survival became a stigma, and some of that attitude still lingers.

Hiroshima initiated us into the possibility of global destruction. In the United States, that awareness has a special impact on children, according to unpublished studies conducted several years ago by Michael Carey, a historian trained in psychoanalytic methods. He interviewed people who had been schoolchildren in the early 1950s. It was the time when schools across the country held bomb drills, in which pupils were told to crouch under their desks. The Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs and the fear of a menacing Russia inspired those quaint exercises. Nightmares and fantasies of death and destruction resulted.

The repercussions went far beyond bad dreams. A child must struggle to understand death and come to terms with its inevitability and finality. We all have difficulty doing this, but under ordinary circumstances, we come to accept death as part of life's rhythm. Bomb drills, bomb scares, and images of grotesque, massive death interfere with the capacity of children to think of death as natural. They equate it with annihilation.

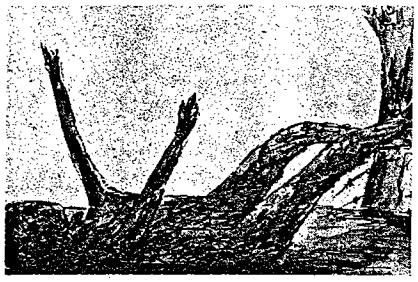
The world is insane. This attitude also emerged from Carey's interviews—the bomb is irrational, governments are irrational, and those in authority have no real authority. In such a world, nothing can endure. Awareness of the bomb's potential has thus created an ephemerality; we remain alive at the whim of a craziness that can make us disappear in an instant.

We deal with this by leading double lives. All those whom Carey interviewed spoke of both the possibility of destruction as well as the need to go about their lives as if nothing would happen. Most of us probably lead the same double lives and, in fact, share the themes that appear in Carey's work. We cannot afford to incorporate our knowledge of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons into our emotions. If we allow ourselves to feel what we know, we probably could not go on; hence the extraordinary gap we experience between knowledge and feeling.

Becoming numb to the threat of nuclear destruction is perhaps one way to get through daily life, but it is not a solution. Indeed, it may lead us right into extinction. The existence of nuclear weapons and the threat of their use interfere with the human desire for continuity. We need to feel connected, I believe, to those who have existed before and will exist beyond our brief individual life spans. We normally experience this sense of immortality in the idea of living on in our children, our creations, our influences on others, and in something all cultures describe as an individual's relationship to the natural world. We also feel this larger continuity in spiritual, or religious, terms and, finally, in psychic states that we view as transcendent, states so intense that time

These paintings were done in 1975 by survivors of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for an exhibit sponsored by the Japan Broadcasting Corporation. Portions of the artists' comments about their paintings follow:

"It was a hell. Both the living and the dead looked like rags."



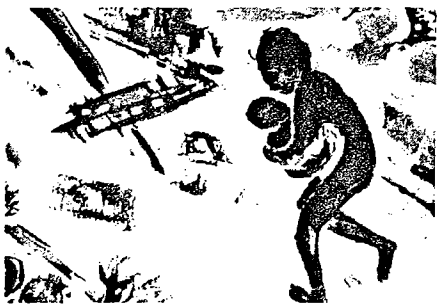
"On the embankment of a military training field, a four- or five-year-old boy was burned black, lying on his back, with his arms pointing toward heaven."

"Badly burned people staggered toward water, then died."

and death disappear—religious ecstasy, song and dance, sex, or merely the contemplation of beauty.

But in the face of extermination by a nuclear holocaust, who can believe in living on in one's children and their children or by means of spiritual or creative achievement or even in nature, which we now know to be vulnerable to our destructive weapons? Though we may be numb to the danger of destruction, we are aware of the bomb's presence, its weight on us. This, I believe, is why we are hungrier than ever for states of transcendence. We seek highs from drugs, meditation, jogging, and skydiving, and we join extremist religious cults that offer a kind of cosmology that sometimes includes or even welcomes a nuclear event.

"There were no hospitals left. Makeshift clinics handled as many people as possible."



"There was a charred body of a woman standing frozen in a running posture with one leg lifted and her baby tightly clutched in her arms. Who on earth could she be?"

Much worse, a religion based solely upon the nuclear threat exists today. It is industrial society's ultimate disease, a condition I call nuclearism. Worshipers passionately embrace nuclear weapons both as a solution to anxiety over possible nuclear holocaust and as a way of restoring a lost sense of immortality. They seek grace and even salvation—the mastery of death and evil—through the power of the new technological deity.

Adherents see the deity as capable not only of apocalyptic destruction but also of unlimited creation. The bomb, they think, can solve diplomatic impasses, force a way to peace, and atomic energy's potential can create a world of milk and honey. Believers come to depend on weapons to keep the world going. Edward Teller, a leader in the development of the hydrogen bomb, has associated unlimited bomb making with the adventurous intellectual experience of Western civilization, derided what he calls "the fallout scare," assured us that we can survive a nuclear attack, and insists above all that we cannot and must not try to limit the use of nuclear weapons.

A dangerous expression of nuclearism in our present weapons policy is the advocacy of "limited nuclear war." Proponents continue to seek from weapons magical solutions to political and military dilemmas while closing their eyes to the unlimited destruction that would result.

We must be able to imagine the consequences of nuclear weapons if we are to stop their use. Coming to terms with massive death, collective death, is asking a great deal of the human imagination. Yet, I do not see how we can ask for less.

That is why we need to remember Hiroshima. Its images give substance to our own intellectual sense of horror. However inadequately that city represents what would happen now if thermonuclear weapons were dropped on a population center, it helps us imagine. Keeping alive Hiroshima's death may help us keep alive.

The proximity of a nuclear holocaust is beginning to break through our numbness, at least for many of us. The accident at Three Mile Island, the near explosion of a Titan II warhead in Damascus, Arkansas, bring the ease of massive death in the nuclear age to the surface of our consciousness. The Iraq-Iran conflict deepens the shadow of possible global destruction. We are beginning to see through the sterility of the nuclear language—"exchanges," "scenarios," "stockpiles"—used by our political and military planners. As we sense the danger increasing, our defenses weaken and our fears increase. This is the beginning of awareness. We now need to go further and place nuclear dangers in the contexts of our lives, our values, and our personal and political advocacies. Unless each one of us knows where he or she stands ethically and politically—what one feels about the future of nations and mankind—a stand on nuclear holocaust may be impossible.

But to gain that perception, one must open oneself to discomfort and anxiety. That poses a formidable historical, even evolutionary, problem. Ordinarily, we are selective in what we experience, feeling just enough and closing ourselves off just enough to function and survive. Technology has upset that equation. What is now required is an unprecedented level of tension and psychic balancing, one that permits us to imagine a nuclear holocaust but does not paralyze us with fear.

Can we speak of a shift in consciousness taking place? We may do better to speak of a struggle against numbing. As reluctant as a turn toward awareness may be, it is an important step along a path to a human future. □

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Detente and Distrust of the People

Viewpoint
by Hodding Carter III

The Inaugural festivities have ended and the reality of governing has arrived for Ronald Reagan. Central to that reality insofar as foreign policy is concerned is the relationship between Washington and Moscow. Central to that relationship is the strategic arms race, the debate over which has done as much to define the policies of right and left in the public's mind as any issue on the national agenda.

As it turns out, however, many arms controllers and arms supremacists share an assumption about the American people, usually implicit but occasionally explicit, which makes them far closer than either side is willing to admit.

To put the matter baldly, significant figures on both sides profoundly mistrust the people's common sense. That is not the way they speak publicly, except in rare bursts of candor. But to read their propaganda and to listen to their private musings is to understand how basically contemptuous they are of the people.

The way that contempt is translated differs according to the particular position being advocated. Among those who most ardently oppose the SALT II treaty, there is a consistent theme. Whatever the merits or demerits of the treaty itself—and they have never made a convincing case about its alleged defects—a new accord with the Soviet Union would be flawed because it would lull the nation to sleep. Having watched while detente was oversold and overbought between 1972 and 1974, and having noted how it coincided with diminished military spending, they are convinced that arms agreements lead to American torpor which inevitably leads to Soviet supremacy.

Thus, they reason, there is no alternative but to keep the people in a state of constant agitation. Their strategy calls for the loud ringing of fire bells, a resolute refusal to acknowledge Soviet setbacks and weaknesses and an unceasing demand for national security based on a military superiority which is simply a will-o'-the-wisp in the day of long-range ballistic missiles.

The garrison state advocates have hold of a basic truth, which is that we are engaged in a long-term, unavoidable contest with the Soviet Union. Essentially pessimists, they take that truth and wring from it a number of untruths, all based on the premise that the American people must be kept in a state of spastic excitement and fear. Otherwise, this line of reasoning goes, the nation will abdicate its responsibility as a world power.

There is the other side of the mirror, however, and from it stare those who believe passionately, as do I, that the control of nuclear weaponry is the inescapable necessity of our time. For some of them, the public is a beast, to be kept quietly in its cage at all costs.

Each side has chosen to make its case by appealing too often to our lowest instincts and fears, by overstatement on the one hand and selective use of the facts on the other.

This manifests itself in their all-consuming campaign to deny the existence of anything which might be called a "new Cold War." They seemingly believe that to stand vigorously against Soviet adventurism in one arena is to doom irretrievably efforts to restrain and reduce competition in strategic nuclear weapons.

It follows logically for them that American efforts to retaliate or exact some cost from the Russians for their invasion of Afghanistan is to feed popular passions to no good end and to the probable detriment of larger, more basic interests. They, like their erstwhile opponents in the arms control debate, are positive that the United States cannot chew gum and walk downstairs at the same time. They are certain that the public is incapable of following a middle course and must either be kept quiescent or turned loose as a ravening anti-Communist wolf, devouring all hopes for arms control in the process.

There is evidence to buttress the fears of both sides, but it is evidence which leads to a different conclusion. The problem is not that the people have periodically been put to sleep by the sweet incense of detente or have mindlessly jumped aboard the jingo jitney, but that they have so rarely been treated like the concerned citizens they usually are and always can be. Each side has chosen to make its case by appealing too often to our lowest instincts and fears, by overstatement on the one hand and selective use of facts on the other. The debate has too often been presented in cardboard cutouts, as a caricature of reality, and the people have responded in kind.

It is appalling that the thread of distrust of the people runs so deep among those who share few other beliefs. It poisons the well of reasoned debate and public dialogue. It virtually guarantees that the national response to the twin challenges of Soviet imperialism and potential Armageddon will oscillate between extremes which make for bad politics and bad policy. Harry Truman spoke of the need to talk sense to the American people. It's time that more of those who presume to be the guardians of the nation's future demonstrate that they respect the nation's citizens enough to do just that. The best person to begin the process is the new President of the United States.