

Sleepwalking to Armageddon – the impending threat of nuclear war [1]

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Physicians are very important because they know how to prevent or heal diseases or even save lives. In my view the greatest threat to human health today is the risk of nuclear war, but many people do not understand that, especially young people. My experience as a young pediatrician was enhanced by working for a Physicians Organisation called PSR for “Physicians for Social Responsibility”. Based in the United States during the peak period of the cold war we actively informed the public on the enormous risks of a global nuclear war.

Many believe, that when you normally talk as a doctor, you should avoid showing any emotion. However, I think that is male thinking; men don't like to show emotions, even though they are not fearless, but they reason, that doctors must be careful and only communicate with facts and figures. Living in California at the time, one evening I was talking to a number of film stars about nuclear weapons and I said to them “I want you to go out tonight and look at the stars and realize that we are possibly the only life in the universe and what does that mean? There are 5 trillion galaxies and in each and every galaxy there are 3 trillion stars. Can you imagine that? You look up into space or you look at the trees and the animals and wonder how did this wonderful evolution happen on this, our little lump of a rock? I care about the creation, about snails, sunflowers and roses. How often do we, do You think about these things?” I continued and told them that unfortunately we live in crazy times. We have 15.000 nuclear weapons and Russia and America own 94% of them and have the power to put this entire creation and the world population at risk. Afterwards at that meeting a tall girl came up to me with long black hair and said: “I am Patti Davis, the daughter of Ronald Reagan and his second wife Nancy. I think you're the only person on Earth who could change my father's mind about nuclear weapons. Will you see him?” I said “Yes, I'll see him but I want to meet him alone, without his advisors or any others in the room” So I went to see Ronald Reagan in the White House, who was of the opinion that nuclear war would be a good idea.

Patti Davis rang me up the next day and we met at the White house. As we waited in the downstairs library suddenly in walked the president. He seemed a bit nervous, so I took his hand and said: ‘How do you do, Mr. President? You probably don't know who I am’. He replied: ‘Yes, you are an Australian, who read ‘On the Beach’ when you were a young girl and you are scared of nuclear war’. I said ‘Yes, that's right’. He replied: ‘Well, I too am scared of nuclear war, but I believe in building more bombs!’ So, we were off to a flying start. I spent an hour and a quarter with him and every single thing he said was wrong. I had just written a book called “Missile Envy” (3) à la the Freudian ‘penis envy’ supposedly many women harboured. The military people love their missiles, so I called the book ‘Missile Envy’ which is full of facts and figures and when Reagan would make a statement, I would stop and correct him. He got very

anxious and his cheeks flushed, so I ended up half the time holding his hand like a doctor holding the hand of a patient to reassure him and make him relax.

When I left, I thought that I hadn't convinced him but you know, soon after that he started saying 'nuclear war must never be fought and can never be won' and he started working with Gorbachev, a wonderful man who brought an end to the Cold War. Ronald Reagan and Mikail Gorbachev almost agreed to abolish nuclear weapons in a meeting held in Reykjavik in 1986. However, they got stuck on 'Star Wars' as Reagan thought that 'Star Wars' meant that the whole of America was covered with a big yellow plastic shield and Russian missiles would come and never hit America. He was totally wrong but also was obstinate and so was Gorbachev and so we lost the opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons.

Let me tell you how it continued. We thought when the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989 the cold war had ended and we would have another chance to abolish nuclear weapons. However, you may or may not know the mechanisms of the so-called military-industrial complex, the companies Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Boeing and Airbus amongst others. These companies flourish by selling various goods, but many of them are in the business of producing nuclear weapons and for this reason they obviously are very reluctant to give up their business practices. They are also successful in influencing political decision makers under the pretext of "national security".

When you go to Europe, there's a glorified man on a horse on every square in Europe, and many were killers. Why do we glorify war? So, where are the women? Fifty-two percent of us are women. We have the babies and the nurturing instincts. Many of us are actually smarter than most men because the corpus callosum connecting the left and right brain is larger in women than in men. Yet so far, we mostly let the men rule. I am really angry because I think that this could lead to a nuclear war. So, let us talk about the current situation. We've got a man in the White House who probably has never read a book, but he tweets. Mark Zuckerberg, the president and founder of Facebook said that tweeting leads to a very short attention span and that is exactly what this President has. He knows nothing, doesn't understand geography, history or anything else. He is also volatile and a narcissist and has a bad temper. As Russia and America own 94% of today's nuclear weapons, they are in fact the only countries that can destroy life on Earth. So, in my opinion the real terrorists are in Russia and the US, yet our politicians say: 'look at this man coming in from Iraq to drive a bus into crowds of people or to shoot people down. He surely is a terrorist'. Well, maybe this man saw his family being blown up in pieces by American drones and bombs and no wonder he's angry. And he goes to London or to France and kills people. I believe that it is us and our policies contributing to the global growth of terrorism.

How would a nuclear war start? There is a man who walks behind the President, an officer with a big case; it is called the 'football'. In the case are the codes to start a nuclear war. And officially, the only person in America who can start a nuclear war is the President. But with the current President you never know what he is going to do next. And in spite of this uncertainty the Republican majority in Congress is still mostly supportive of their president. America prides itself to be the most powerful, the most important country in the world! In my opinion the US is the most dangerous country in the world, because many Americans are pretty ignorant about geography, politics and world affairs.

Anyway, there are over 1,000 missile silos in South and North Dakota, Colorado and in other states. In those silos are missiles called 'Minute Men', which means they can be launched in three minutes. In each of the missile silos are two men, in charge of controlling and launching the missile. In the missile is a huge hydrogen bomb. These two men usually are in their early twenties and of the "yes sir, no sir, press the button sir" type - conditioned like Pavlovian dogs. They operate with floppy disks and with telephones that often don't work. The Air Force has dismissed about 80 of them recently because many of them were taking drugs on the job. Each one of the two is armed with a pistol to shoot the other if one shows signs of deviant behaviour. What if the deviant one shoots the other one and launches the missile? In the silos, they have locks 6 feet apart, so one man can't turn both locks to launch the missile but supposedly they have worked out, that if they tie a string to one key, one man can turn both locks and launch the missile.

Then, there are planes armed with hydrogen bombs ready to take off in America at any moment. A hydrogen bomb is an atomic bomb, with a tritium fusion mechanism at the bottom of the uranium capsule and the external container is made of uranium. It would produce a fission reaction from the atomic bomb, then a fusion reaction from the tritium parcel then the uranium container fissions, leading to an explosion of up to 25 mega tons - 25 million tons of TNT in one bomb. This is more explosive energy than the energy contained in all conventional bombs ever used in all the wars in the world. And this energy in one bomb! In fact, they used to have planes cruising continuously armed with hydrogen bombs. The pilots would wear a patch over one eye; so, when they flew to Russia and dropped the bomb, the flash would blind them but when they took their patch off, they had vision in one eye and could fly back to America, except that there would be no airports to land on. Because in America, Europe, China, England, Australia and Canada and other countries, even every city is targeted with at least one hydrogen bomb. Every town with a population of 50,000 or more is targeted. Think of Switzerland - you are also targeted. All industrial facilities, universities and, of course, all military facilities are a target. There is such an abundance of nuclear weapons! I think New York has got about 12 hydrogen bombs targeted on it.

I also have to talk about the hot spots in the world. We've got North Korea and Kim Jong-un. In the 1950s, at the end of the War between North and South Korea, Americans just signed an armistice treaty with North Korea but never a peace treaty. The North Koreans wanted the Americans to sign a peace treaty, wanting a non-aggression pact and wanting trade. In fact, President Jimmy Carter prepared such a treaty but then George Bush abolished it. The North Koreans need imports. The US was going to give them two light water reactors and a lot of oil. Surprisingly, they are the only country with nuclear weapons that agreed at the United Nations to abolish nuclear weapons. Yet, up to now, America conducts war games south of the 38th parallel just south of the border of North Korea with Japanese and South Korean troops twice a year. And they have decapitation games where they are going to take out Pyongyang and kill Kim Jong-Un. Now, he saw what happened to Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein in Irak. Kim Jong-un could blow up Seoul or New York, which would kill millions of innocent people. I don't know if he has got a hydrogen bomb. So let's imagine that we're going to be targeted. Say Kim Jong-un sends a bomb to Guam, a big American base, he blows it up and kills a lot of people; Trump gets really annoyed and starts a nuclear war. Then you too are targeted here in Basel because you have a university. We will not know what's happening because we don't have the

radio on, which would warn us of an attack, but the bomb will land in 20 or 30 minutes after being launched from the missile silo in Russia; that's how long missiles take. They go up into space, transit through space, the missile drops off in space, and the bomb continues and lands accurately on target, right in this lecture theatre. A 20-megaton bomb (20 million tons of TNT) will excavate a hole $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide and 800 feet deep. That's nearly the whole center of the city, converting us, and all the buildings into radioactive fallout that shoots up in the mushroom cloud. Everyone is vaporized within six miles in all directions.

In 1945, there was a little boy in Hiroshima reaching up to catch a dragonfly with his hand against the blue sky, then there was a blinding flash and he disappeared. He turned into gas and left his shadow on the pavement, which is now in the Hiroshima Museum. There was a woman running holding her baby and both she and her baby were turned into a charcoal statue as were people in a radius of 6 miles out. And then within a 20mile radius there were huge fires, everyone severely burned, lethally injured people, winds up to 500 mph sucking people out of buildings turning them into missiles travelling at 100 mph. Windows and shards of glass travelling at a 100 mph decapitated people. The whole area was totally destroyed and then a firestorm ensued of 3,000 square miles and burned everything, even in the middle of winter. A huge amount of smoke rose up into the stratosphere. If not even half of the bombs are used between Russia and America, the Earth will be covered with a cloud so thick in the stratosphere that it will block out the sun for 10 years, causing a short Ice Age and the end of almost all life on Earth. We, the animals and the plants will freeze to death in the dark.

This could happen tonight by accident, by people hacking into Pentagon computers, or a 16-year-old thinking it might be quite fun to actually blow up the Earth. Each day, there are 1,000 hackers attempting to get into the computer systems of the Pentagon. It hasn't yet happened but it easily could. Or Trump could decide with his so-called wisdom to start a nuclear war and blow up the world. I am not exaggerating. I said to my kids when I left 'I will be back if there isn't a nuclear war'. I think it is closer now than it has ever been. Were you aware of all those facts I just mentioned? People have designed these bombs, and set the whole thing up, and wired the world up like a ticking time bomb. These scientists, politicians and military people will all be dead soon but they can't stop themselves; it's like Artificial Intelligence. You know they are writing that Artificial Intelligence in 10 years will be so autonomous that it could start a nuclear war by itself and yet, these men who understand the technology can't stop themselves. It's like the scientists in the Manhattan Project, who made these bombs, - they couldn't stop themselves and it's very male.

There is a huge movement now at the U.N. Overall 122 countries have voted for a treaty to prohibit Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), but obviously America and all other Nuclear Powers including all of the NATO states have not signed the treaty and the US never will. And if America doesn't, Russia won't. Therefore, I don't know what good the TPNW ultimately is although it will surely set a new standard and will be signed by many countries. But if America doesn't change its attitude, we are doomed. You've got to understand where America stands and you've got to understand the power these corporations that run the Pentagon have.

I spent my life trying to save children with cystic fibrosis, leukemia and cancer and when they die, part of you dies. Life is so precious. How dare we go to other countries and kill people?

Now what else happened? When America agreed with Gorbachev to take the wall down, America promised they would not enlarge NATO. The little countries that were formally in the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and others would remain independent. But Norman Augustine, CEO from Lockheed Martin, realised that peace is bad for Lockheed Martin - because when the Cold War stopped, they didn't have to make weapons anymore and they'd lose their profits and stop stealing a trillion dollars from the America people every year to make weapons to kill. America has no free health care system, no free education system. It has a killing system and that is where their tax dollars go. So, Norman Augustine visited these little countries with their newly found freedom and said 'Do you want to become a democracy? - Join NATO.' But then, they had to invest in weapons for about 3 billion dollars. So, they moved NATO right up to the border of Russia. How provocative is that? Imagine if Russia and the Warsaw Pact moved into Canada right up to the America boarder. America would blow up the world without a doubt. They nearly did it during the Cuban Missile Crisis. McNamara, who was Secretary of Defence with John Kennedy, said to me: "Helen, you don't know how close we came to blowing up the world: three minutes or less! I honestly don't know why we are still here and I am not exaggerating".

So, the US enlarged NATO and in 2014 the State Department of America orchestrated a coup in the Ukraine and got rid of the democratically elected President of the Ukraine, Yanukovich. They tried to kill him but he fled; they put in a man called Poroshenko, a US puppet. That coup was orchestrated by the State Department. How dare America do that? Now we've got the Ukraine as a hot spot, we've got the NATO countries right up to the Russian border. At least since the beginning of this millennium, Russia hasn't invaded any country. America has got 80 bases in 100 countries, military bases all over Africa. America has invaded the world and is like a parasite. And I know America really well and how those politicians operate. You have got to have the guts to stand up and demand that your country does the right thing. And I sincerely believe, that if America doesn't change we're all doomed.

References:

1. Sleepwalking to Armageddon - The Threat of Nuclear Annihilation by Helen Caldicott. The New Press. To order a copy go to bookshop.theguardian.com or call 0330 333 6846. Free UK p&p over £10, online orders only.
2. "An informed democracy will behave in a responsible fashion" Quote by late US President Thomas Jefferson.
3. <https://www.amazon.com/Missile-Envy-Helen-Caldicott/.../05532..>