

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA BLACKOUT ON RISING DANGER OF NUCLEAR WAR

Written by John Hallam
Saturday, 05 November 2016 13:57 -

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HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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A disturbing experience will be had by anyone who dares to google 'nuclear war' amongst news-items, especially if you did it either yesterday or last week.

Normally if you did that you'd turn up one or two items about events that took place 30 years ago.

The disturbing thing is that, increasingly, if you make that particular Google search,

--You will turn up more and more items that are mere hours or minutes old, and that relate directly to NOW.

--More and more of those items have titles such as 'Is nuclear war with Russia possible?', or 'Are we on the brink of nuclear war?'. Another increasingly popular title is 'How nuclear war with Russia can happen'.

Also growing in popularity are items on luxury doomsday bunkers, and ultra-long holidays in New Zealand's South Island.

Amongst the more conservative media there is an increasing demonisation of Putin and of Russia as actively plotting WW-III, while Russian media ascribes that role to NATO.

Russians have recently been asked to participate in civil defence nuclear war exercises (evacuation to fallout shelters, emergency procedures). The UK is not only sending troops to the Baltic States (themselves seemingly prepared for war), but is also preparing to re-institute the '4 minute warning' (that is, 4 minutes before you are vaporised) of the 80's, though not in the form of warning sirens but as an SMS. As if daring Russia to nuke the UK, Britains defence minister has stated that 'Britain will be ready in 2 years' for war with Russia.

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Not for the faint-hearted, or for anyone who actually lived through the 1960s, 70s, and worst of all the 80's, which were completely terrifying.

As if on another planet, within the UN, there are moves (now well advanced) to set up a negotiating process that will write a 'legally binding instrument' that will make nuclear weapons illegal.

In view of the increasingly apocalyptic vibe of the world outside the UN, these moves are of course more essential than ever.

The actual use of nuclear weapons, just as in the 1980s and the 60's, represents the single greatest immediate-term threat to civilisation and to humans as a species.

Absent from this equation is:

--Any sense of the massive public awareness and protest we had in the 1980s, when nuclear disarmament rallies attracted hundreds of thousands of people in Australia, and millions worldwide.

--Large sections of the media. Some attention (not enough) is paid by sections of the specialist media. Some attention is paid by some sections of the 'progressive' media (such as the Huffington Post, Centre for Research on Globalisation). And parts of the conservative media, particularly the Murdoch empire seem to want to portray Putin and Russia as a deranged enemy prepared to destroy the world, hyping the (very real) threat of Russian nuclear weapons for all they are worth, while downplaying the equally real threats posed by NATO to Russia. The spiralling dynamic of threat and counter-threat is not explored.

The Australian media have largely ignored the issue with the exception of two isolated items on ABC. Australian media's lack of attention to the issue will seem to anyone who follows it closely in other media, like a blackout. To spend 8 hours or so reading doomsday articles from quite mainstream, often conservative, media from the UK, Russia and the US and to discover that ones favourite Australian media seem to think the issue just does not exist is positively spooky.

--There have been a couple of excellent appeals for rationality and calm, notably from former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev, and from the European Parliament. Their voices deserve

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much more attention.

The world risks proceeding, via a creeping escalatory process reminiscent of the way WW-I started, to a WW-III that could end civilisation and a great deal more. We are not paying attention.

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