

I certainly do not suggest that we become a nation of Pollyannas, or keep whistling in the dark. But there is no harm in turning on the light.

What are some of the international facts we will find?

By far the most important of them - so much the most important that nothing else is comparable - is the release of the power of the atom, and the direction, up to the present, of that release primarily into destructive channels.

It is not easy to adjust our thinking to the implications of this new power that men have learned to set off, but not subdue. Indeed, it is even difficult to understand its extent. The mind can hardly take it in, and when it does the senses tend to reject what the mind has grasped.

Until ten years ago, the most powerful weapons were, I suppose, the ten-ton TNT bombs, or so-called block-busters. The atomic fission bomb dropped at Hiroshima, which revolutionized warfare, had the power of 20,000 tons of TNT; was a thousand times more powerful. But the power of hydrogen weapons, which today exist in significant and growing numbers, is measured in the so-called megaton, or the equivalent of a million tons of TNT. They are as many times more powerful than the Hiroshima weapon as that one was compared to the big bomb of the last war.

If one of these thermonuclear weapons burst near the surface of Ottawa, it would, by its blast and heat, not only obliterate this city, but through the fall-out effect of radioactive material, it would probably gravely endanger the lives of all people exposed in Montreal and its vicinity as well; also contaminate that city that it would have to be evacuated. If the winds, including those up to 80,000 feet above the earth, were going faster than usual, the area of lethal contamination might be much larger.

There is no reason to think that this fearsome process cannot be pushed further yet, if men wish. Indeed, it will be much easier to continue along this dread line, to which I see no theoretical limits, than it will be to change direction by finding a method of controlling this new power. But only in such a change of direction, I suggest, can there be any ground for satisfaction at this stupendous human achievement in the physical sciences.

We have now reached the position where man has to sit on such a bomb or have it drop on him. Neither prospect is comfortable or comforting, but we have no other choice.

Because the bomb is such an uncomfortable seat, there are even a few who imagine that anything would be preferable to this position,