

As Sir Winston Churchill put it in that very moving and memorable speech he made last week in London:

"To this form of attack continents are vulnerable as well as islands. Hitherto crowded countries like the United Kingdom and Western Europe, have had this outstanding vulnerability to carry. But the hydrogen bomb, with its vast range of destruction and the even wider area of contamination, would be effective also against nations whose population hitherto has been so widely dispersed over large land areas as to make them feel that they were not in any danger at all."

If my assessment of the situation is correct, either side can now reduce its enemy to the point where it would be incapable of pursuing total war as a modern industrial state. But in so doing it would itself be reduced to the same condition.

Therefore, assuming that the opponents were roughly equal to start with, they would be roughly equal after they had irradiated each other. True, perhaps one side may have a larger stockpile of superior bows and arrows than the other, or even a numerically superior army somewhere out of reach of the first atomic onslaught. But is there a madman with a sufficient number of other madmen behind him to start such a nightmare on the theory that the devastation of his country might be slightly less than that of his enemy? It is hard to believe that any leader of any nation has reached that stage.

It has been said that the present situation is like that of two men with loaded revolvers pointed at each other's head. But there is this important difference; the possibility of escaping retaliation by pulling the trigger first does not exist. In this particular horror comic, which is not at all funny, the revolvers are pointed at equally vital, but not instantly mortal parts. The death of the enemy may or may not be brought about by such an attempt, but it would not be instantaneous and it would not prevent him from administering equally grievous wounds. In this context preventive war is not only a moral impossibility - at least for our side - but impossible in practice by either side. This leads to the question: might not the time be approaching when the same may be said of any sort of war?

This is what Sir Winston Churchill meant when he used these striking words:

"It may well be that we shall - by a process of sublime irony - have reached a stage where safety will be the sturdy child of terror and survival the twin brother of annihilation."

I would not, however, leap too quickly to this conclusion and the comfort I get from it is qualified. We have had a number of bloody but