

If Soviet Bombers Come, Will America Be Ready?

Many Citizens and Officials Lack Interest in Civil Defense, Despite the Russians' Growing Atomic Power

VAL PETERSON, former governor of Nebraska, holds one of the hardest jobs in our nation's capital. As Civil Defense Administrator, he directs the federal government's part in the program that is supposed to prepare America for survival under atomic or hydrogen attack. But he works against tremendous difficulties.

Helping U. S. cities to get ready for air raid disasters would be hard enough even with the wholehearted cooperation of all our people. But to make matters worse, Mr. Peterson encounters apathy and lack of interest not only among average citizens but also within various parts of the government.

Peterson is trying to awaken our people to the need for a realistic civil defense program. You can render no greater service as a good citizen than to support him and all other leaders who are active in this endeavor. Here, in a statement especially prepared for publication in the WEEKLY NEWS REVIEW, the civil defense chief tells how *you* can help ensure your own and your country's survival:



CHARTING PLANE MOVEMENTS on the big desk map is part of the job of voluntary defense workers, who help to guard our coasts against attack. Observers phone in reports of planes to central offices such as this one.

I urge the high school students of America to give the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb the extraordinary consideration and action demanded by the knowledge that these fearsome weapons are in the hands of our potential enemies.

Your new generation must face an unknown future realistically. You are aware of the atomic facts of life. You know that even the "Model T" Hiroshima bomb destroyed some 70,000 lives, that the Russians have at least 400 long-range bombers that can reach any home in the United States, that at

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least 70 per cent of these bombers would get through to their targets, and that the attackers would probably try for another sneak surprise like Pearl Harbor.

America has always depended on its youth. The Atomic Age of nuclear weapons has not changed this—it has intensified it.

For the sake of your own and your Nation's survival, join the ranks of Civil Defense now. Take a first aid course. Join the Ground Observer Corps. Urge your parents, your friends, your local, state, and national leaders to build a Civil Defense that will keep America the land of the free.

Let us turn now to a more detailed examination of the danger that our country faces. We don't know how many atom bombs the Russians possess, but top U. S. officials estimate that the number is somewhere around 300. These, it is believed, are at least 2½ times as powerful as the ones we dropped on Japan in 1945. A hundred Soviet planes, loaded with present-day atomic bombs, could conceivably cause as much destruction as was done by all the bombing fleets of America and Britain during the entire length of World War II.

But suppose an armada of Moscow's planes *were* to attempt a raid on us. Couldn't we detect these invading aircraft and shoot them down before they reached our cities?

Probably we would destroy a few. The United States now operates a number of radar stations and ground observer posts to give warning of approaching enemy craft, and we have fighter planes that stand ready to challenge invaders at a moment's notice. But most experts think these present defenses are pitifully inadequate and are not being rapidly enough improved.

Dr. Ralph Lapp, a scientist who has spent much time studying the problems of atomic warfare, says: "Our present air defenses could stop only one bomber out of six under the best conditions. At night, or in bad weather, or in a sneak attack at low altitude, our batting-down average would be far less."

Scientists familiar with our present means of warding off enemy bombers declare that vast improvements could be made. Some think we can set up a defense network good enough to destroy at least 70 per cent of all the bombers in an attacking enemy fleet.

This would involve putting great quantities of radar and communications equipment in areas far beyond our boundaries—especially in the Arctic regions that constitute Russia's most likely air invasion route to the United States. It would in-

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volve stationing jet fighters at many distant outposts, so that they could attack any approaching bomber long before it reached our borders. It would include the use of advanced-type rockets and guided missiles.

What is holding us back from a full-fledged effort along these lines? In the first place, many federal officials doubt that the proposed system would be as effective as its promoters claim. Second, a large number of our congressmen and administrative leaders don't want to spend the 16 billion dollars or more that such a project would cost.

Recent efforts in Washington have been aimed at cutting government expenses and eventually reducing taxes. U. S. officials may fear that huge outlays for protection against enemy bombers would anger the taxpayers. On the other hand, many observers believe that our people would actually *demand* these expenditures if it were clearly realized how badly we need to improve our air raid defenses.

Whatever steps may be taken in the future, our present situation is this: (1) Russia can send large numbers of planes, carrying atom bombs, to raid our industrial centers. (2) Most of those planes, probably five-sixths or more, would penetrate our defenses and reach their targets.

So we should be getting ready to withstand, as well as possible, the large-scale bombing of American cities. If such bombing occurs, we must be able to avoid panic, put out fires, rescue people from wrecked buildings, and keep our war effort going despite the damage. We must be ready with medical supplies and aid centers—located near but not in the most likely target areas—to care for the wounded and homeless. However, we lag further behind in our preparations for these *civil defense* measures than in any other part of our national defense effort.

We can't correctly say that nothing at all is being done on civil defense. Federal, state, and local agencies have worked hard on this problem, even though they seem to have accomplished little in comparison with what is needed.

Primary responsibility in the matter is being left to state and local authorities. This is because most civil defense activities are organized around regular local public services.

For instance, any city that suffers an atomic attack will need large numbers of trained volunteer fire fighters, working in cooperation with the local fire department. Volunteers serving as extra traffic police in time of emergency will assist the city police department or state highway patrol. Emergency first-

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aid and sanitation workers will help regular local health authorities.

A few states and cities have made good progress in organizing their civil defense and in conducting practice drills. Others have done very little.

The federal government's civil defense role is mainly to assist state and local agencies. Our Federal Civil Defense Administration runs regular training courses in civil defense work, attended by leaders in this field from all parts of the nation. It helps state and local governments to pay for extra fire-fighting equipment, medical supplies, and other materials that are being obtained for use in case of atomic attack.

Uncle Sam wants to help the states and cities stockpile about 148 million dollars' worth of emergency equipment. Roughly a fourth of these supplies had been purchased or ordered by the end of last June. The federal government itself plans to obtain over half a billion dollars' worth of medical goods, emergency engineering equipment, and other items, and store them in convenient locations just outside the areas that are most likely to be bombed. However, only 17 per cent of these supplies had been received or even ordered by the end of June.

We would, in case of atomic attack, need an estimated 18 or 19 million well-trained civil defense workers—rescue teams, air raid wardens, first-aid workers, fire-fighters, extra traffic police, messengers, and so on. At present, only about 4½ million Americans are enrolled for civil defense duties, and some of these have not yet received much training.

Sirens Not Ready

Cities regarded as likely targets for air raids are setting up sirens and other warning devices. In the nation as a whole, these alarm systems are about half completed.

Various cities have gone to considerable trouble in picking out certain structures as air raid shelters. At some distance from the center of a blast, subways and sturdy buildings can give a great deal of protection—if people get advance warning so that they can reach these places.

But many observers say this: "Although the shelters now available would afford some protection, they are still inadequate. Instead of counting on these makeshifts, we should plan to hustle the people *out* of each endangered city when enemy planes approach. Inhabitants of each city should *now* be told exactly what routes to follow, and where to go, in case they get word of a threatened bombing raid."

Civil defense officials haven't ap-

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proved this idea, because they fear that our nation's present air raid warning system wouldn't give notice long enough in advance for an orderly evacuation. They say that most of our cities could now count on *about 15 minutes' advance notice* before a bombing raid.

If we eventually set up a fool-proof radar network that will assure two or more hours' warning, these officials continue, then we can quickly move large numbers of people to places of relative safety when an attack is on the way. But we do not have such a warning system at the present time, and a great deal of money would have to be spent on establishing one. It is up to the American people to decide whether this type of "life insurance" would be worth its cost.



VAL PETERSON, Civil Defense Chief

Another subject of considerable discussion is this: The government isn't seeking to distribute its vital defense production among factories in widely scattered areas—so that if some were destroyed, others could keep turning out war goods. On the contrary, defense officials recently have been concentrating America's arms production in fewer and fewer plants in order to save money.

Many people argue that this policy should be reversed. They recall a recent Michigan fire which destroyed the only factory that was equipped to produce a certain kind of automobile transmission. The destruction of this plant has seriously handicapped one of our largest auto companies. We shouldn't run the risk, it is argued, of letting a single bomb similarly hamper any phase of our military output.

These are some of the defense problems that become more and more urgent as Moscow's stockpile of atomic weapons grows, and as Russia begins to produce the hydrogen bomb. But many people—public officials as well as private citi-

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zens—are practically ignoring the dangers we face.

Would our citizens be stirred to take added interest in civil defense matters if the government started releasing more information about atomic and hydrogen weapons? Some observers say “Yes,” and they argue as follows:

“How can we expect people to do anything constructive about preparing for an atomic or hydrogen bombing attack when they are told so little? All sorts of confusing rumors have been circulated, and our government has done almost nothing to keep the facts clear. Not long ago a prominent lawmaker stated, *incorrectly*, that a hydrogen bomb exploding in Chicago would also destroy Milwaukee—90 miles away.

“Anyone who believes such a statement is likely to conclude that the task of civil defense is completely hopeless. Yet, top government leaders have made little effort to set the record straight.

“We could release a considerable amount of now-secret atomic information without helping Russia. Since the Soviet Union is able to produce atomic weapons, she obviously knows much of the information that our government still keeps from its own people.”

Americans who take an opposing view say: “We can’t be certain as to what Russia knows. Most experts think she is still considerably behind us in the atomic and hydrogen race. If we start releasing much atomic information, we might give her some clues to short cuts that would help her catch up.

“Actually, the American public has been given large amounts of information about the effect of atomic explosions. But our people haven’t made use of the facts that are available. Civil defense agencies have described inexpensive basement bomb shelters that can be constructed in the home. Hardly any families have bothered to build such shelters. People have been urged to volunteer for civil defense work, and relatively few have done so. Americans don’t necessarily need more information; they just need to wake up!”

Though the general public is often condemned for lack of interest in civil defense needs, certain observers contend that our national leaders haven’t emphasized these needs as strongly as they might. It is pointed out that former President Truman never made a major appeal for public action on civil defense, and that up to this time Eisenhower hasn’t done so either.

Truman and Eisenhower, it is also said, have both been very moderate in their requests to Congress

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for civil defense funds, yet Congress has granted *much less than the Presidents have asked*.

No matter what our government does or fails to do, however, you as an individual citizen should not remain inactive. The best way to make sure that we get adequate protection against enemy attack is for the people to *demand* such protection. Write to your congressman and let him know that you are deeply concerned over our nation's survival. Ask whether he thinks we are sufficiently prepared to ward off enemy air attacks, and to cope with the problems that atomic or hydrogen bombing would bring.

Meanwhile, check with your nearest local civil defense headquarters to see how you can help in your own community. There are measures that can be taken in every home and every school. There are civil defense jobs for everyone.

