

April 22, 2018 San Francisco Interview of Dan Ellsberg by Bill Roller

I'm delighted to be interviewing Daniel Ellsberg today about his new book, "The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner." Dr. Ellsberg is the person who at great risk, exposed the lies and deceptions of the U.S. government concerning our military engagement with Viet Nam from 1945 to 1968. Those documents came to be known as the Pentagon Papers.

Our talk today will focus on his participation as a nuclear war planner beginning with his discovery in 1961 that the Joint

Chiefs of Staff were expecting a death toll of 600 million people as a result of a U.S. First Strike on the Soviet Union and China.

We will not have time today for questions following our interview because Dr. Ellsberg has a demanding schedule and must leave immediately following our talk.

So welcome, Dan.

- 1. The journalist, Mark Danner calls the seven wars the US is currently engaged in the Middle East and Africa "The Forever War". They began with the US invasion of Afghanistan nearly seventeen years ago. The question he poses is: "Who profits from the continuation of these wars?" In like fashion, in The Doomsday Machine you record how the thermonuclear war strategy of the United States has changed very little since 1945, specifically focusing on 1st Strike capability, civilian targets, and acceptable levels of civilian deaths approaching billions of human beings. Who profits from the continuation of this strategy?***

Response to Question 1

There are people who – I'll take the last part of your question first – who really do profit for continuing what I call The Doomsday Machine--- that is a system that really is capable and designed for killing thousands of targets with the foreseeable, inevitable, although not desired, effect of killing nearly everyone on earth---if that machine is ever set in motion. And there have been a number of false alarms---that have been brought us very close to being launched. There have been crises like the Cuban missile crisis where there were false alarms as well as the crisis itself. And there were others where the false alarms were very similar to what you read in the newspaper every day where someone is shot because they are thought to be reaching for a weapon---usually almost always a black person. The officer is afraid the other person is armed when, in fact, he is not reaching for a weapon, but he gets killed. We've had a number of mistakes which involve nuclear weapons like the one in Hawaii, recently, where they were told that a missile strike was in progress but it wasn't. But that is in Hawaii. We've had false alarms like that at the national level in the continental U.S. and Russia. So we've had our very best

scientists, our physicists and engineers, working for a half a century now creating a doomsday system that could go off by mistake or not by mistake. What could it be other than a mistake to kill nearly everyone? We have no language for that. Criminal, murderous, even evil is not quite up to this level of disaster. So how do you categorize destroying most life on earth? There are powerful interests--- including governments but also corporate interests---that do actually benefit by creating a doomsday machine, threatening it and reproducing it. We are about to spend \$1.7 trillion dollars re- building the doomsday machine. Now how much would it be worth dismantling the doomsday machine? Even if it cost a trillion dollars, that would be well worth and well spent to increase the safety of the world. But to reproduce this hair trigger apparatus on both sides--- the Russians are also spending a comparable amount. But we are not spending it to the Russians and the Russians are not spending it to us. The money goes to our corporations---Boeing, Raytheon, and Drummond. I just read that in the next budget that Trump has put out--- not that different from Obama's budget, by the way. Boeing, which is vying to build the new ICBM--- which shouldn't exist---is getting 25 billion dollars in one year which is just a little less than the State Department's budget. And I think that Lockheed is competing, also. So if you ask who profits? Well, it is not only profits in our political system, it's jobs, votes, campaign donations, it's communities that depend on bases like Grand Forks, North Dakota. There's a missile base in North Dakota where we have a ICBM base that shouldn't exist. It's dangerous to us. It's a lightning rod for attack. Or for launch on warning. It should be dismantled. But, as I was just told in Washington, D.C. last week, that would mean this community which depends on this base would suffer. This means the two senators from North Dakota are for the doomsday machine. They don't profit directly from it, but their communities, their votes and jobs and undoubtedly their campaign contributions depend on it. There is what is called an ICBM caucus in the Senate of ten senators---two from North Dakota, two from Montana, two from Wyoming. Those are the three states that have ICBM bases. Those bases are reproducing this thing. Who profits? Well, quite a few people. But a tiny minority of the country. What is at risk is everyone on earth.

2. One fact that many citizens do not understand is the difference between nuclear war and thermonuclear war. Can you please tell us the difference?

Response to Question 2

Truthfully for a reason that I'll go into later in our discussion, there isn't as much difference as I used to think, as we thought we knew before 1983. But I have found with most people of all ages in this country, by far the majority, don't know the difference between an A bomb and an H bomb. I can't see too well here but how many people here know the difference between an A bomb and an H bomb? I see about fifteen hands. How many do not? Honestly? Somewhat more. Some of you are not sure whether you know or don't know. The easiest way to put it is this: an atomic bomb or fission bomb is the kind that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Such

a bomb is needed as a trigger for every H bomb, every thermonuclear weapon or fusion weapon. It needs a Nagasaki type bomb which killed over 60,000 people immediately and about 100,000 more over the next six months from radioactivity. That's the percussion cap for an H bomb. A thermonuclear weapon depends on the atomic fusion of two isotopes of hydrogen by igniting a fission weapon. The first H bomb that was dropped--- no not dropped, it wasn't dropped---but droppable was tested in 1954. It was a thousand times more powerful than the Nagasaki bomb that triggered it. And it was a thousand times more powerful than the largest blockbuster of World War II. Trump, by the way, "to make America great again", just dropped what they called the mother of all bombs, the largest bomb in our inventory, about 20 tons of TNT, which by the way was fairly standard for the British in World War II. It was dropped in Iraq or Afghanistan, I can't remember now. That's one million times less than a thermonuclear weapon. In our arsenal, we had a lot of 20 megaton bombs, that is 20 million tons of TNT. That would be more explosive power in one warhead than in all the world's wars of human history. A Titan warhead once flew off by accident in South Arkansas which had a 9 megaton warhead. Had it exploded when it flew off by mistake---a monkey wrench actually had pierced the shield-- the fuel started coming out, and the fuel finally exploded and dumped the war head hundreds of yards away. It took them a while to see it. It didn't explode but it might have and that would have been more than all the explosive power of all the wars in human history. I can go right from that to say our ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles)--- as targets for Russian ICBMs and as possibly being launched or by accident--- are the most dangerous weapons in the world today, the most dangerous to us. As dangerous as any Russian weapons. If we were to get rid of them, we would be safer and the world would be safer.

3. *When you reveal in your book the history of US thermo-nuclear war planning, including the willingness of war planners in 1961 to contemplate the deaths of 600 million people in an attack on Russia and China, did you hope that present day thermonuclear war planners would come forward and corroborate your claims by saying that something similar was still in place and on hair trigger alert?*

Response to Question 3

There's a lot more declassified material on this subject now by far than was true in my day forty years ago. At that time there were very few people who understood the war plans and almost no civilians. That hasn't been true for the last thirty years or so. More and more civilians have gotten into the process and there are lots of people who know about it. I thought some people would respond to my book---and I've had a lot of reviews---and I expected some reviewers would say, "Well, this is history. It's all changed." But there are no reviews like that to date, not a hint of that from anybody. On the contrary, people who do know have corroborated it hasn't basically changed. That being the case, including the possibility of accidental war ---or even an intended war--- imagine a war where the president or a Russian has decided, after

great reflection or perhaps during a crisis, to launch these weapons against each other. Well, that will destroy most life on earth by nuclear winter, a fact we haven't discussed yet. But even without nuclear winter, just by blast and nuclear radioactivity and heat it would kill probably several billion people. Suppose they did that intentionally. Everyone knows that would be insane. To trigger these weapons under any circumstances whatever against another super power--- against Russia, against us---would be madness, criminal madness. And what I did hope, and it hasn't happened yet, what I did hope with this book was that some other people would say, "Me, too," in the sense that "I know those plans and agree with Daniel Ellsberg that it has always been insane.

4. *Do you think there is a "Pentagon Papers" of thermonuclear war planning that waits to be uncovered? And do you think there is a Dan Ellsberg --or a Chelsea Manning or Edward Snowden--who might come forth to deliver it to the US public and the world?*

Response to Question 4

Well, we exist and the plans exist and they look as crazy now as they ever did. My hope was that Gorbachev would stay in power long enough to do what I am sure he could have done if it had been suggested to him. To open his safe and say, "Here's the plan I inherited. It's insane." By the way, any one of the nuclear weapon states could say that but Russia above all, and the U.S. So I hoped that Gorbachev, very specifically, would have been the man to say "This is clearly insane. I am changing it. We invite the United States to make its plans public." You know, challenge us. And the plans would have looked pretty much the same, just different names for different targets. He didn't stay in office long enough to do that. No other national leader in the nuclear era has made it as high a priority as I believe he did. To dismantle the Doomsday Machine. There were others, actually Reagan at the Reykjavik Summit, felt very strongly---surprisingly, we didn't know that at the time---but it turns out that he, too, wanted to eliminate nuclear weapons. But he gave a higher priority to building what he believed would be this Star Wars strategic defense initiative, the bubble over the United States that he thought would protect us from some rogue nation. Gorbachev actually said to him, "If we eliminate our weapons," which they actually discussed, the only time two nuclear states have ever mentioned such words as a possibility, the only time. And Gorbachev said, "Well, if we get rid of the weapons" which Reagan seemed ready to do, not his subordinates, but Reagan himself. "Then why do we need Star Wars, this bubble?" And Reagan said, "Against rogue nations, against some other nation that might do it." Reagan said, "I always assumed that if we make this technology then---" First of all, as Gorbachev knew, and virtually everyone but Reagan knew, who had been lied to by Edward Teller, father of the H bomb, who had presented this mythical, lying, classified scheme of nuclear pumped x-ray laser stations that would destroy all incoming missiles. Impossible, infeasible, they haven't been trying that for a long time. But Reagan was so taken by this idea that he couldn't give up the idea of jettisoning the one major arms control

treaty we had, the antiballistic treaty, and permitting space based tests. Gorbachev didn't want to do that because he knew that if the U.S. did that, his generals would insist on doing what the U. S. was doing. And you could spend any amount of money on that futilely. By the way, Trump will be unveiling his anti-ballistic missile proposals within weeks. We don't know how expensive they will be but we've spent many billions on it already. You could spend any amount of money on that to no effect whatever. Who profits from that? The people who get the money. That's all that it's for. It's a jobs program and it's a profits program. So to complete my thought, Reagan said, "When we get the technology, I'll share it with you." And Gorbachev said---I was just reading this dialogue the other day from a transcript—"Pardon me, but I just don't believe that. You don't share anything with us in the way of technology. You're not going to give us your highest grade technology." And so they didn't get an agreement. What I am saying is that even Reagan, who I believe was strong on this, had a higher priority, to have this crazy Star Wars scheme which prevented him from going for elimination. No other president has come close to that. I believe Carter wanted greatly to reduce this system but ended up producing MX cruise missiles, a big buildup which Reagan built on. Obama wanted no first use ---sole use would be replying to nuclear attack which is not the main use for a nuclear weapon. He wanted to get rid of the ICBM's and made the proposal in his administration as early as 2010, and again In 2013, and in his last year he proposed it again as his legacy. He couldn't do it. He could have spent all his political capital on it. If Barack Obama had cared as much about dismantling the Doomsday Machine--- for which he got a Nobel Prize after his first year---If he would have put as much priority on dismantling as his health system, the results might have been different. I'm not saying he should have. That was a different priority which he wanted and talked about. I don't say that he could have done it, but he could have done a lot more than he did do. So he didn't get it, Carter didn't get it. But not only U. S. leaders, no other leader has ever cared as much to do this. And so we go on risking this from day to day.

5. In a recent film, Phil Zimbardo cites you as a quintessential example of the New Heroism—the person who acts in the public interest—even at risk to him or herself. Why are you the lone voice testifying to the dangers of our present thermonuclear war policy—as you once were when you exposed the lies and deceptions of the US government with the revelations of the Pentagon Papers? What allows you to be the harbinger of these awful truths?

Response to Question 5

What allowed me to do it, I can't really say. Although I did benefit from something that probably none of these people had the privilege of doing and that is I met people who were on their way to prison for non-violent resistance to the Vietnam War. I realized they were very like me, a lot younger, but me at their age. They felt about the war the same way I did. And the best thing they thought they could do was not to go to Sweden, or to Vietnam, or to Canada, or

the National Guard, but to go to prison. To refuse to cooperate with the system,---to send out a message: "This is wrong, I will not participate in any way." They did go to prison – 5,000 Americans went to prison. As far as I know, I am the only person of nearly my position in the State Department or the Defense Department who ever met a draft resister. When I first met them it was almost by accident. Then I sought them out. When I saw these people actually on their way to prison I realized I could do that. So how can I help end this war now that I am ready to go to prison? And there was no easy way to do that, no clear way to do it. I ended up doing what I could---I put out these classified documents. Now the thermonuclear war plans we are talking about are all highly classified. Every person has promised as I did, not to reveal secrets. Your identity as a president's man, working for the president, keeping his secrets ---her secrets someday---your career depends on it. But more than that, your identity depends on it. They have faith in you, they trusted you to do this. How could you betray that? And almost none of them reflect—I know two people who did---Chelsea Manning and Ed Snowden. Both raised the point that they had taken an oath, as all of us had taken an oath, not just a contractual agreement like a secrecy promise. An oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Now in Vietnam there was no question about it. Everybody associated with that war were breaking their oath---they were all men in those days---therefore his oath---to support and defend the Constitution. Many of us knew, I mean a thousand or more knew, that the Congress was being lied to---that there had been an attack on the Tonkin Gulf, an unprovoked attack which had not occurred. That was a false alarm. Had it been nuclear---I've never made that connection in my mind---I often talk about Tonkin Gulf but it hasn't occurred to me that it is an example of a false alarm that we've talked about here in the context of nuclear war. It was a belief, which I believe was a sincere belief, by the president and the secretary of defense as well as me on August 4, 1964 which happens, by coincidence, to be my first day and then night in the Pentagon. I spent the night there watching the raids which were taking place at daylight against North Vietnam, the first raids against North Vietnam to avenge an attack on the night before which supposedly had been unprovoked in international waters against an ordinary patrol. All those were conscious lies. But they did think there was an attack. There hadn't been an attack. It was a false alarm. And if we'd been using nuclear weapons, well, that might not have ended the world because it would have been against North Vietnam which didn't have nuclear weapons. Nixon later made nuclear threats against North Vietnam which didn't have nuclear weapons. The threats weren't against Russia. So that war almost surely---in my opinion---the Russians would not have entered the war despite the alliance. They knew better than to do that. But in the Cuban Missile Crisis, of course, we were making threats against Russia, not just any nuclear state. We are now making in the last few months---we, the president has been making threats of armed conflict against a nuclear weapon state – North Korea. Now it's not Russia. If it comes to nuclear war, it will probably not end life on earth. A thousand times less, millions dead instead of billions which would be the case potentially with Syria, or Ukraine, or Georgia, or the Baltics against Russia. But only millions dead, more in one day, in one week than the world has ever seen in that period of time. That's what we're threatening, a crazy action. What else to call it

besides crazy. Evil? Criminal? Murderous? We're talking about millions of people here. Is murderous an adequate word? So, this is the first time, in other words, that a president, since the Cuban missile crisis, has been making threats that could result in a two-sided nuclear war, even though limited. It's a dangerous situation. So now we are hearing from Kim and from Trump that we may have a summit that will avert that. Very good. I think there may be people who are very uneasy about the idea of peace with North Korea. I tell you I'm not, compared to war.

6. *It seems that we all have been "socialized"—as Robert J. Lifton would say—to the belief that civilians, including women and children, are okay targets in war. In your book you say that in modern times this began as an acceptable strategy after WWI—although it was always a strategy in US wars against indigenous people. It now takes the form of drone strikes on citizens by anonymous operators killing at a great distance. Does this account for why the idea of civilian deaths in the billions is not only conceivable but also planned for?*

Response to Question 6

It is obvious that you read my book carefully. I spent quite a bit of time writing several chapters in there about our World War II bombing. Normally, it very rarely makes it into a book about nuclear war. I have never thought, since I have been into this since about 1958, that you could understand our actual planning, deployment, and threats without knowing our actual history of World War II. It was lied about at the time and known to almost no Americans now. I was just thinking today, this morning---another connection---but I was thinking "I wonder how many Americans could tell me what was the largest act, single day act of killing against civilians in world history." Or I could say World War II because it was in World War II and it was the largest in human history. And I imagine a lot of people would say Hiroshima or Nagasaki. They'd be wrong. Those are the number 2 and 3 cases. The first was March 9th and 10th, 1945, five months earlier in a fire bombing raid on Tokyo which killed between 80 and 120,000 civilians, burning them to death in one night by fire, by deliberate means. It was planned for. It created a firestorm. A firestorm is an unusual kind of fire which creates a very strong updraft and brings in surrounding winds and creates its own weather. It intensifies the heat to 1500 degrees Fahrenheit on the surface. So everybody dies in that zone---everyone, one way or another. And that's been what people focused on, if they ever focus at all on firestorms. The point raised by your question is a little different. That was not regarded as a crime or murder by the American people. And they did know about it, actually. I've looked back at Time magazine that week and it said "Last week General Curtis LeMay demonstrated that his pilots were capable of burning Japanese cities like burning leaves." It was not unrelated to the fact that in the same issue they talked about Marines using flame throwers on Japanese military. The headline for that was "Rat Exterminators." Rodent exterminators, not human killing. We burned civilians

alive, over 100,000. Later in May there was a second raid on Tokyo which didn't kill as many people. Tokyo hadn't been burned over, but the headline was wrong. The headline was "A Million Killed in Tokyo." Now, there weren't a million killed. A million in one day has never been killed in human history. In fact, it was less than the first raid, about 100,000. But it's quite striking that it was in the last part of the article, after the headline. And there was no great outcry by the U.S. There was a handful of people who object to this sort of thing. I happened to have seen that just as I was writing this part of the book and I quoted it in there. I was struck by that. How could you have a headline "A Million Killed" in one night? They asked for it at Pearl Harbor? We tried to make a firestorm in every fire raid, 64 cities after Tokyo. We never got it again, the weather has got to be just right. It took 300 bombers. But we had 300 bombers, in fact we had a lot more than that. We could do a 300 bomber raid every night ---which we tried to do---to kill as many people as we could. There was a 1,000 pilot raid, bomber crew raid on Cologne, Germany in 1943. The last 1,000 plane raid in the war was on August 14, 1945. The word of Japanese surrender came as the pilots were returning to base from that raid. That was the last raid of the war. We had that many planes. But we could only do one city at a time. An atom bomb gives you a firestorm every time. The key effect of fission weapons---I'll just reflect since I wrote this just this morning ---the key effect of fission or thermonuclear weapons is what no one paid any attention to for the first forty years of the nuclear era. In 1983---that's 38 years after Hiroshima---Carl Sagan, Brian Toon, a number of physicists published a paper that said, "The effect of burning the cities--- even if they had been evacuated, with no people---burning the cities has an effect on the smoke. It lofts the smoke into the stratosphere. That's the effect. Nobody had looked at smoke as an effect of nuclear weapons. In the atmosphere it would rain out pretty quickly. It wouldn't add to the casualties. But a firestorm lifts the smoke into the stratosphere where it goes around the globe within days and blocks 70% of the sunlight. That's from a kind of attack between U.S. and Russia. It would freeze lakes and rivers even in the summer. Or if it didn't, it would cause freezing temperatures virtually every night all over the globe and kill all harvests. No food left. Maybe 60 days of global food in our supplies. Some would have more than others. We would last longer than other nations. We would stop exporting. But, in any case, nearly everyone would starve. And it wouldn't be just 600 million or a billion. In 1961 when I was doing thermonuclear war planning---it would have been 3 billion dead. Now, with the increase in population, it would be over 7 billion dead, by starving within a year. So it occurred to me that when I was working on the plans, that if you asked anybody, and I'm not a physicist, "What are the effects of nuclear weapons?" Well, a blast, radioactivity, radioactive fallout, heat, immediate fires and so forth. No one for 20 years would have mentioned smoke. Smoke in the stratosphere. We've known that though for 35 years and it hasn't changed the thermonuclear war plans at all. That is something that I looked into recently when I was in Washington, D.C. One day I asked people who knew the plans earlier and I managed to get it. They said "No", they have never taken into account nuclear winter in all of the plans. The targets are the same. They've just ignored it all this time. As if, you'd ignore the effect of the blast, they ignore the smoke. So what we are talking about then, is the ICBMs are triggers to the Doomsday Machine on both sides. Now

India and Pakistan can't do that. They have only fission bombs but they only have about 100 or so. With 100 between them, 50 each, they would reduce sunlight enough by 7%, not 70%. It would shorten the harvest, reduce the amount of food in the world, and starve the 2 billion least nourished people on earth. About 900 million are on the edge of starvation already. You can add another billion to that, with just India and Pakistan. That means that everyone on earth has a stake in there not being a U.S. - Russian war and to a slightly lesser extent, that there not be an India – Pakistan war. It actually occurred to me---this is new---that's four out of the nine nuclear weapons states. U.S., Russia, India, Pakistan threaten billions by their weapons. So I say again, every nation, every person has a stake in this not happening. And not one national leader has ever acted with high priority effectively to change it.

7. If we Americans are in denial of the supreme war crime—as determined by the Nuremberg Trials in 1945 as “the war against the peace”—that we committed in both Vietnam, killing more than 2 million people, and most recently in our invasion of Iraq, killing a quarter million people, should we be surprised that we can also deny being in the crosshairs of thermonuclear annihilation? What signs do you see that we can awaken from such a legacy of denial?

Response to Question 7

I don't know how to do it, but it has been what I've devoted my life to for a long time. There hasn't been a lot of interest in this subject. About a third of this book was submitted as soon as the Vietnam War ended. My publisher said, “We won't publish this because there will be 1400 copies sold.” Well, I said, “That's enough for every member in Congress and a lot of people in the executive branch. I like the idea of having the book out.” He said, “No, that means we won't publish it.” Well, that went on for forty years. I tried in various ways and got arrested many times, in part, to try to attract attention to the issue. And 17 publishers turned down this book before Bloomsbury took it. Actually, I had never heard of Bloomsbury before they accepted it. My son, who's the editor of Orbis Books at Mary Knoll Seminary said, “They're very good.” I said, “Really? I've never heard of them.” And he said, “They publish *Harry Potter*.” (laughter) Well, that gives me my title, “*Harry Potter and the Doomsday Machine*” (laughter) by J.K. Rowling. I don't even need my name on the cover. (laughter) They turned that down. To get attention to this subject is not easy. Trump has done this of course more than anyone else in recent times. He scared people by what seems like scary talk – fire and fury. The threats he is making. So the focus is on people. But, it didn't start with Trump and it won't end with Trump. It's essential that Trump end---that he be out of the White House. But that's not going to solve the problem, by itself. I would say it's essential for there to be a Democratic Congress, in part, **because we have a party that is in denial of climate change---which by the way, these predictions are based on the same models as the nuclear winter models.** So I can't expect Republican Congressmen, who don't believe in climate change, to accept the prediction of

nuclear winter. It has to be Democrats, but it would have to be Democrats with a different focus than we've ever had. Because we've had Democrats and they didn't do it. Having a Democratic president didn't do it with a Republican Congress. But having a Democratic Congress has never done it. **So when you say denial, it's very clear to me that denial is as available to Democrats and to the left and to liberals as it is to anybody else.** And that's where we are. I would like to see that changed.

8. What can you say about the role of the University of California in thermonuclear war planning since the University is in charge of both Lawrence Livermore Lab and Los Alamos? Or the role of the Atomic Energy Commission in nuclear war planning?

Response to Question 8

The Atomic Energy Commission or the Department of Energy doesn't get into war planning. They provide the weapons and the labs. The two main nuclear weapons labs, Sandia and Los Alamos labs in New Mexico and Livermore in California are each campuses of the University of California, Berkeley. Meaning that every nuclear weapon we've ever had, most of which have been dismantled and discarded for better ones, from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the neutron bomb, to the newest warheads, the B61 – mark 12 they're writing about in Congress---they have all been designed at one American university, the University of California. So I've mentioned that to the regents as a representative of what used to be called *The UC Weapons Lab's Nuclear Conversion Project*. Should the University of California, Berkeley be doing this? There's always a couple of regents ---Governor Jerry Brown, actually, is very critical of that. He's an *ex officio* member of the Board of Regents. He's very good on this subject. Jerry Brown said he wanted to make that an issue like climate as a governor of California. He's getting out before long and I haven't seen him do too much on that in public but he really has been interested. I've talked to him about it. He wrote a very good review of William Perry's book, *My Journey at the Nuclear Brink*, in the [New York Review of Books](#). Very good. Perry is a former Secretary of Defense, a physicist, under Bill Clinton, who has called for dismantling the ICBM's that I've been talking about. And he opposes First Use of nuclear weapons. And he rejects the idea of a very new, expensive project for continuing the production of Air Launched Cruise Missiles which is being considered in Trump's budget---something Obama considered. And the interesting point there is that Perry had initiated the program as Deputy Secretary of Defense in the 1990's. And now he's saying, "We don't need them. Get rid of them. They're dangerous, actually dangerous, not just unnecessary." If Perry can't get the attention of Congress, how can I? That's a question I ask myself, "If his book can't do it, how can mine? Well, it's very unlikely."

You started with the question, "Who profits?"---which is by the way --I haven't heard any of these questions and I want to congratulate you. These are all new questions.

Bill: I read your book. (laughter)

Dan: On the profit, there are people who profit by producing these things. And others, diplomats, our alliances, people in other countries who want them continued. We need to overpower those interests. That turns out to be not easy. People don't care enough. Even the ones who care--plenty of people in the public care enough---as much or more than I do or you do and are very active about it. But in the government---there were people in the government who always wanted to move in this direction but they've always been overwhelmed by opposition, basically when it comes down to it, by the corporations who profit.

Bill: Well, the lease is coming up this year for both Los Alamos and Livermore labs. And so this would be the time to act.

Dan: I don't think it makes a whole lot of difference---I had to admit at the time---who ran it. The only reason that the Department of Energy---which morphed out of the Atomic Energy Commission and other energy related agencies---the only reason that the Department of Energy wanted the University of California to do this was it put a cap and gown over these warheads. It actually gave them an extra mantle of academic freedom, in addition to classification, from inquiry by Congress, amazingly enough. "Don't tell us----" the people of the University of California had no idea what they were doing at Livermore and Los Alamos. No clearances, no ability to get inside at all. They just provided that academic cover which made it easier to recruit people for this work of devising systems for Doomsday. And it was in a scientific, academic setting. And if you asked them, "Really, why are you doing this?" It turned out that they were afraid that if they didn't do it for the Department of Energy, they would lose other contracts for research for the Department of Defense and the DOE which they did depend on. And they got a little tip for it -- a few million dollars for doing this. That was also in their minds, not wanting to give that up. These are reasons, but they're not good reasons for doing this or for failing to resist it.

9. Feeling hopeless and powerless is a dead end for citizens who want to defend ourselves and our civilization. At the close of your book, you state specific ideas of how we can act: They include pressing for Congressional hearings on the consequences of Nuclear Winter, a Congressional debate on the devastating consequences of pursuing a First Strike policy in the belief that damage could thereby be limited, and the elimination of land based missiles. Can you elaborate on these and other ways we can forestall thermonuclear disaster?

Response to Question 9

Well, pressing for hearings---by the way---there was interest in D. C. this last week when I talked to people about this. There have never been hearings in Congress on nuclear war plans or what the effects would be of a nuclear war. Never. I think specifically since 1983 when

nuclear winter was first discovered or recognized, there have been no hearings on these effects. That could be done by any nation state. I would be happy to see China bring environmental scientists together to say, "What is the effect of nuclear war on the world population?" I say China because of the nine nuclear states they're the one that is the closest to a sane nuclear policy, if you are going to have nuclear weapons at all. They first exploded a weapon in 1964. I was in the Pentagon. I was in meetings about that. And for about 15 or 20 years they seemed to have only a half a dozen or a dozen weapons capable of reaching the U.S. North Korea has none right now, no ICBMs. Well, in the 1960s, China had a few dozen ICBMs. Now they have just a few more dozen. Now at first, people said, "Well, they can't afford it, they're too poor." That has not been true for 30 or 40 years. They have chosen not to pretend to have the ability to disarm the U.S. or Russia or anybody else. They just have the capability of responding with nuclear weapons to a nuclear attack. And if we had a posture of a nuclear arsenal like the Chinese, which would be about 5 or 10% of what we have, the world would be safer. If the Russians did likewise, the world would be safer still. And even if people retained deterrence to some extent, but no nation had more than North Korea now has, it would be better. A feasible objective right now, by the way, is getting North Korea to stay where it is, not to have an H bomb, not to have ICBMs. They have enough material right now to perhaps make 60 weapons. But they have 10 or 20 operational weapons. If nobody had more than that, the world would be a lot safer. By the way, nuclear winter would be virtually impossible and even killing billions of people by starvation would be impossible. Is that unthinkable? Typically North Korea doesn't strike people as the model to focus on except for the fact that they don't have many weapons yet. They're the one nation of the nine that cannot kill billions of people. They don't have enough cities for us to attack and burn and cause nuclear winter. And they don't have enough weapons to cause nuclear winter or even like India or Pakistan to kill a billion or two billion people. **Why should any nation have that capability? How do they explain it? How can they justify it? And the answer is that hardly anybody knows almost anything of what I've said here.** Maybe you all knew it. But not many people do. So this is all pursued under cover of denial and secrecy. I do think that even in a transition period where people have some weapons for deterrence there would remain no excuse for having the hundreds and thousands of nuclear weapons that we do have. No excuse for it except jobs and profits. By the way, remember that Russia now has profits as a motive. They've always had the bureaucratic parity---"Let's have what the Americans have"---motives. And now they build them for profit, just like us. With a lot of secrecy. And the Russians, just like the Americans would say, "We don't want less than those other guys." That's the situation that has to change.

Some say it's hopeless. I'm not hopeless. I think that people who are hopeless are not foolish in my eyes given the situation. But I don't agree with them. How many things have happened in my lifetime, the last part of my lifetime, that were regarded as impossible---like dismantling the Doomsday Machine or limiting nuclear weapons? Well, I don't think there was a person in the world who foresaw in 1983 that the Berlin wall would be down in 1989 and the USSR would have dissolved in 1991. Impossible. And if they had thought of it, impossible. But it did

happen. Nelson Mandela becoming president of South Africa without a violent revolution. Impossible. So these things did happen. As a matter of fact---I won't go into it because it's too late in the game to do that---but if you had asked me in 1973, after Nixon's landslide election in 1972---which was after the Woodward and Bernstein revelations of Watergate---if you had asked me early in 1973---he's president now until 1977---"What's the chance that the Vietnam War would be over by 1975?" I would have said, "Impossible. That requires Nixon to be out of office. He's going to resume the bombing, which he had every plan of doing. And that's going to keep it going 'til at least he is out of office. Who would imagine that Nixon would be out of office by 1974? The war ended in 1975 because Nixon was out of office. It's also the case that I didn't go to prison. I was facing 115 years in prison. Nixon was out of office in large part because of the crimes he had committed against me. The Watergate break-in, the enemies' list, the campaign contributions which people associate with Watergate, were not proved to Nixon. But what could have been proven to originate in the Oval Office were the attempts to go into my doctor's office, my psychoanalyst's office, burglarize it with CIA assets. Also, my warrantless wiretaps, some of which I was alerted, and an attempt by a dozen CIA assets from the Bay of Pigs to incapacitate Daniel Ellsberg totally on May 3, 1972 before the election. And my trial went on because they didn't incapacitate me. Why not? Well, they thought they were being set up to be caught. But when I asked "What does that mean? To kill me?" The prosecutor said, "The words were to incapacitate you totally. But you have to understand these guys never use the word *kill*." Neutralize, terminate with extreme prejudice, get rid of, they don't say kill or murder. And he thought that was the attempt. Well, the reason was that Nixon believed with reason, not paranoia, that I had documents that would show his nuclear threats. Those are not in the Pentagon Papers which was a historical record that ended in 1968. Nixon comes in as president in 1969. So he thought that I knew of his threats---which I did orally---but that I had documents for it. I didn't. But it was reasonable. He wanted to shut me up and get information from the psychoanalyst that would blackmail me into silence. Or when he didn't find that to incapacitate me and shut me up. And when those crimes were revealed by John Dean and others. When it came out, he had to resign, facing impeachment. And that made the war endable in an unforeseeable way. But it wouldn't have ended, that wouldn't have happened, without his concern that I had these documents. And without a whole lot of other people doing something very unusual at the risk of their careers. Alex Butterfield, Republican, who was in every meeting in the White House, reveals the taping, known only to less than a handful of people, actually at that point. And he reveals that. Without that, Dean's testimony would not have been believed against the president. So Nixon would have stayed in office. The tapes are revealed now, but Nixon has control of them. Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor, wants to subpoena them and does subpoena them. And the president wants him fired. He tells Attorney General Elliot Richardson to fire Cox and he refuses and resigns. It's like the situation with Jeff Sessions now. William Ruckelshaus succeeds Richardson but he also refuses. When Robert Bork accepts the job and fires Cox, the public realizes that three people have been dismissed in a case involving evidence about the president in one night, October 20, 1973. That got their attention and that was the so called Saturday

Night Massacre. There was so much resistance in terms of telegrams and phone calls, they had to hire another special prosecutor. This is the news today. Rod Rosenstein, the Deputy Attorney General, is doing everything he can to avoid being fired, because clearly he does not want to fire the special prosecutor, Robert Mueller. So we're on the same edge today. Each one of those people, risked their careers to do something that was not ordinarily done, that no one expected them to do, each one in a row. It was very unlikely. Each one of them was required to end that war, to get Nixon out of office, in a way that was unimaginable. But it did happen. What I am saying is it will take a miracle to get through another 70 years without a nuclear war. A miracle. But miracles are possible and they are possible by ordinary people taking a chance.

10. After a lifetime of public service, for which many of us are grateful, how do you want to be remembered?

Response to Question 10

(Big sigh) Why am I remembered at all after these many years? And I think it's because 39 years went by and nobody else did that. I would have hoped---as you asked earlier---that there would be a hundred other people---How often should a Pentagon Papers be exposed? Oh, once a year, twice a year. (laughter) To expose massive lying by the government and criminality. And in the world at large, much more than that. So I would be at most a tiny footnote in a very exhausting history. That's not the case, we don't have that. But after 39 years, Chelsea Manning came out doing what I've been calling for all this time. A large mass of information, enough to prove the case for a number of things, assassinations, torture, and many things that require really a lot of information to make plausibly true. Three years later Ed Snowden. So the reason my name is mentioned so favorably in the last few years is that no one can claim that any harm came of what I did. So I was used as a foil against people who are my heroes-Ed Snowden and Chelsea Manning. I'm the good whistle blower and they're the bad whistle blowers. They did it differently. Well, I identify more with them than any other people on earth. So I don't have to say---which I refrained from doing for a long time for obvious reasons, "Do what I did." If there was a Chelsea Manning or an Ed Snowden in the government now revealing---and Secretary of Defense James Mattis or one of his aids could do this---the disastrous effects of a war in North Korea, I don't think we could have a war in North Korea. If there had been a Manning or a Snowden at high levels, willing to risk their lives---Manning spent 7 ½ years in prison, 10 ½ months in isolation. Snowden, permanent exile, lifetime exile, lifetime fear, risk I should say, he's not very fearful but risk of being killed. **If they'd been in the government before the Iraq war, there'd been no Iraq war. If Powell had been willing to do what they did, no Iraq war. Or somebody working for Powell. What I say to people who have access. "Don't do what I did. Don't wait until the bombs are falling.** Don't wait until millions have died or thousands have died. If you know that the government is lying to Congress and

the public to get us into a wrongful war, or an unnecessary war, or a hopeless war, a criminal war, a dangerous one, then consider doing what I wish I had done in 1964: Give the documentary evidence to the press and to the public and to Congress, not just to Congress. And to do that, a war's worth of lives could be saved. But to directly answer your question, I've always thought if I had a tombstone---I don't know if I'll go that route---but if I had a tombstone I would want it to read, "He was a member of the movements against the Vietnam War and nuclear weapons.

Bill: Dan Ellsberg, thank you.