

ISR 12/3 A.C. Clarke *Star War and Star Peace* Title 356

In November 1986, Arthur C. Clarke gave the 19th Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture in New Delhi in which he named as his text his prophesy of 1946: 'The only defence against the weapons of the future is to prevent them ever being used. The problem is political and not military. A country's armed services can no longer defend it; the most they can promise is to destroy the attacker'. As a personal friend, I was privileged to publish this detailed analysis, delivered during the period of the Cold War.

By 1987 the number of nuclear warheads in the world was 50000, leading to the concept of 'Mutual Assured Destruction'—so aptly abbreviated as MAD. Trying to convey how this preposterous, obscene situation arose, would be "an expense of spirit in a waste of shame". Instead Clarke tried to picture the result of using this mega-tonnage of atomic destruction by comparing it with the total destructive forces of World War II, employed once a second during a "lazy afternoon". A Nuclear Winter would follow atomic war, when the few survivors could no longer grow any food on the deserts of fused glass.

The interception of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, ICBMs, is ruled out as only during the initial ascent of the rocket could another missile, travelling at the speed of light, destroy it. Any later destruction, during its flight to the target, would be too difficult. As an alternative, 'orbiting fortresses' equipped with super lasers, which might fuse the attacking ICBMs, were proposed in the Star War scenario unleashed by President Reagan in his March 1983 speech and later elaborated as the Strategic Defence Initiative, SDI. This concept was again under discussion from 2000 at a political level in the USA. [See Title 356A]

As the Soviet Union ceased to exist after 25 December 1991, Clarke's further technical descriptions of Star War weaponry have become only of historical interest. Still to come, however, are Clarke's 'Peacesats', satellites watching the whole Earth from space on behalf of an International Monitoring Agency, as President Giscard d'Estaing of France first suggested in 1978. Their photographic reconnaissance could verify arms control agreements, check border violations, and defuse crisis situations, in fact act as watchdogs for the whole world.

To conclude his Nehru Memorial Address, Clarke recalled some words from his 1984 speech at the Pontifical Academy when he mentioned the dinosaurs who tried to protect themselves with ever more cumbersome armour until they were walking fortresses. They never noticed the little creatures that skipped out of their way, the first mammals—our ancestors. "Intelligence, not armour, was to inherit the Earth. May it do so once again."