

***“We begin with the idea  
that change is possible, not  
only, for individuals but for  
whole societies.”  
John E. Mack, M.D.***

# Nuclear Psychology Program

**Studies of Psychological Issues  
in the Nuclear Age**

Department of Psychiatry  
The Cambridge Hospital  
Harvard Medical School

The *Nuclear Psychology Program* conducts in-depth research into the psychology that maintains and perpetuates nuclear weapons as instruments of policy. We are dedicated to rigorous interdisciplinary studies and to public education. Our goal is to understand the psychological dimensions of cultural and political conflict. We are re-examining our thinking about national security, and nuclear weapons and the resolution of conflict between enemies.

**H**uman beings have always tended to divide their environment into good and evil, right and wrong, friend and enemy. Nationally this translates into “our country is trustworthy, peace-loving and reasonable. The other side is untrustworthy and treacherous.”

**I**n recent years the United States and the Soviet Union have deployed thousands of thermonuclear weapons with unprecedented destructive power. The existence of these weapons is creating significant changes in the way we must learn to think about ourselves, our neighbors, our enemies, and our shared fate on earth. We are beginning to realize that we are a world people and that we cannot destroy our enemies without destroying ourselves and the entire planet. The future of humankind demands that we understand the making of “enemies” and the requirements of a peaceful coexistence.

Our relationship to the future is expressed in our deep sense of human continuity—the hope that our work will influence future generations—and that our children will survive us.

Human survival is threatened today. Young people have questions about the future: Will the world survive? What is worth doing in life? One reason for their doubts is the existence of nuclear weapons and the fear of nuclear war. In a recent survey, 900 American children were asked whether they thought a nuclear war between the US and USSR would happen during their lifetime. The majority said yes. When asked if they thought they and their families would survive a nuclear war, the great majority said no.

Nothing lends itself more to illusion than our perceptions of nuclear weapons. This is so because of the quality of fear they inspire, their special mystery, their relationship to the infinite and our sense of profound helplessness before them."

Robert Jay Lifton, M.D.



**W**hen I watch films or  
listen to the radio, I can  
imagine immediately how  
bombs will fall on my village.  
And sometimes at night, I  
cover myself with the blankets  
because I'm afraid.”  
Sveta, age 11



## RESEARCH

The *Nuclear Psychology Program* is a research center. Dr. John E. Mack is the Director of the Program.

Dr. Robert Jay Lifton is Senior Researcher. Both have written and lectured extensively on the psychosocial dimensions of the nuclear threat. The program studies the effect of the nuclear arms on children, adolescents, adults, educators and policy makers, and provides knowledge and methods for creating change. We have identified four crucial areas of inquiry:

*The psychological impact of nuclear weapons on the lives of children, adolescents and adults;*

*Illusory assumptions and confused attitudes about nuclear weapons;*

*Entrenched patterns of US-Soviet interactions;*

*Strategies for change and overcoming resistance to change*

## EDUCATION

The *Nuclear Psychology Program* is a center for developing educational programs. Roberta Snow, M.Ed. and her colleagues study the ways in which young people perceive and respond to the nuclear threat. Through our educational program parents, teachers and mental health professionals may give children a sense of hope and social responsibility. The popular "Decision Making in a Nuclear Age" curriculum for high school students is being offered to schools and communities across the country.

## COMMUNICATION

The *Nuclear Psychology Program* is a center for transforming research findings into public policy and informed opinion. Interviews with American and Soviet children about nuclear war conducted by Drs. Eric Chivian and John Mack have been videotaped and shown to millions of television viewers. The tapes will be combined and shown to people here, in the Soviet Union, and in other countries. The program is developing additional ideas for television projects. Researchers associated with the program publish books and articles in scholarly journals and mass media publications which present new and necessary knowledge. Conferences are held which bring together psychologists with policy makers, military strategists, educators, religious leaders, media people and others in positions of leadership to explore new ways of thinking about nuclear weapons and political decision-making.

## CHANGING MINDS ABOUT MAKING WAR

In today's technological world of nuclear weaponry, old views of fighting and winning wars are obsolete, even genocidal. Millions of people from every country in the world are changing their minds about making war with nuclear weapons. More than 85% of the American people support a nuclear freeze. Over one million Europeans marched in the fall of 1983 to oppose the deployment of missiles by NATO. Religious leaders from all denominations have come forward. The Catholic Bishop's Pastoral Letter declared the use of nuclear weapons immoral with a consensus vote of 239-9.

This awakening of the world's peoples is a sign of our urgent striving for the preservation of the earth and the hope that our children and our children's children will live.

Please support the vital work of the *Nuclear Psychology Program*. We need your help to gain the knowledge necessary for the preservation of our species, and to communicate that knowledge to those who hold our destiny in their hands.

The *Nuclear Psychology Program* is located in the Department of Psychiatry, The Cambridge Hospital, Harvard Medical School. For more information about research projects, educational curriculum kits, or other program, write to: Dorothy A. Austin, Th.D., Executive Director, Nuclear Psychology Program, The Cambridge Hospital, 1493 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02139, (617) 491-3172.

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*If all humanity gathers together, we can stop the nuclear war. And that's why I don't think it will happen, not in our lifetime or after our lifetime."*

Oleg, Age 15, Ukraine



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