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# W A R G A M E

**T**HE MINISTER of Peace asked the United States President if he had heard from the Secretary of State. "Yes," the President said. "I heard from Mr. Thompson only a few minutes ago."

"How's their final conference coming, Mr. President?"

"Inevitably. Operation Push Button within the hour."

The Minister of Peace blinked out the window at Washington, D.C. "So they're going to blow up the world?"

"Inevitably."

"Shall we watch it?" asked the Minister of Peace.

The President nodded, spoke to master control through the intercom box on his desk, and switched on the TV screen. They had a special pipe-line into the United Nations Cellar. They sat back, had martinis, and watched the interior of the Cellar come to life on the screen.

Three thousand miles from New Washington, under a natural camouflage of tundra and wintry hills, the U.N. Cellar was thought by its occupants to be thoroughly resistant to any offensive weapons. It was three miles underground, protected by lead, concrete and steel. Its location was known only to the UN Security Division



*The playing of war games should not be forbidden;  
but rather viewed as a natural outlet for emotion-  
al tensions.*—DR. L. M. STOLTZ, STANFORD UNIVERSITY.

*Illustrated by Ed Emsch*

that was supposed to be strictly neutral in international affairs, or so the Cellar occupants assumed. The engineers and workmen who had planned and constructed the Cellar were supposed to have been brainwashed and therefore had no memory of the great project. An occasional caribou drifted over the Cellar with the North Wind, and wolves that always follow the caribou.

In his suite, Chandler Thompson, Secretary of State, prepared himself for the global diplomacy game's final hand in which it is never so important what hand you play, as the way you play it. After years of negotiation, full agreement on Operation Push Button had been attained, and Thompson took some pride in having played a leading role in the ingenious idea.

Morten, his valet, finished shaving Thompson's pale face, helped him dress in striped trousers, cut-away, and white gardenia.

"Thank you, Morten," said the Secretary of State.

"You seem calm enough, sir. Frankly, I'm ill at ease."

"You may leave the Cellar if you wish," Thompson said, skimming through his notes. "You've served graciously. I appreciate it. But it is your privilege to return to your family outside now. I might remind you that your chance of survival if you remain here is practically 100 percent."

"It isn't that, sir. It just seems incredible that so many must die." He felt of his wallet, the pictures of his family in it.

"It's hardly a matter of princi-

ple," Thompson said. "Nor a question of ideology. It's simply a question of firmness and realistic practicality, and getting the job done once and for all. That has been my stand from the beginning and naturally it cannot be changed."

"But billions of people dying—"

"Death before dishonor, Morten."

"Yes, sir." Morten knew that in every suite in the Cellar every diplomat was saying practically the same thing. Thompson looked up from his neat notes. "People, Morten, have been properly prepared for violent death. Indeed there has been a feeling of security in numbers. The Ministry of Education working with the War Department has done such a splendid job. Now every child has grown up fully prepared to die in the holocaust. And every individual still a child regards violent death as casually as a game of marbles. The required attitude has been thoroughly conditioned in the populace. The idea was to make violence, savagery, and sudden death, an every day affair. And we have done it. Sad, but a necessary task."

Morten said nothing. Thompson looked at the neon map coruscating on the wall. "Our country is not unique in this, Morten. Annihilation will come as a shock only to the misinformed anywhere in the world."

Morten sat down. He remembered how his kids used to come home from school laughingly playing war games, manipulating toy atomic cannons and the like. They received additional marks in school

for being good and cooperative during atomic bomb drills and preparations for thermonuclear disasters. They had been so proud of their dogtags that came with boxes of cereal. In the evenings out back they used to have bury-the-dead games.

Thompson was saying, "Remember juvenile delinquency? It was necessary. Millions had to be conditioned psychologically for Operation Killer. An insensitive, fatalistic attitude had to be engendered. For their own good."

Morten flicked a speck of lint from Thompson's stooped shoulder.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Maybe it will be humane, in the long run."

"One must face the hard, materialistic facts," Thompson said. "Oh, that reminds me." He went to his private switchboard and got a secret outside line to the Office of Civilian Defense. "Hello, Donnelson. Yes, I'm fine. I haven't talked with you for some time now, and I was wondering about that suggestion of mine. Yes, the household pets thing. That's right, particularly dogs. They're big morale factors in the lives of children and there may be some survivors. Well, then, issue another bulletin on that immediately. Things are reaching a head here in the Cellar. Yes, dogs should be lashed firmly to heavy pieces of furniture, away from windows. Put water where they can reach it. Hysteria under the bombing attacks can be avoided by giving sodium bromide tablets to the dogs. That's right. Survivors will need pets. Morale . . ."

After Thompson was through

talking to Donnelson, Morten said. "You know, sir, the end will be a relief to some people. They've been blitzed by a non-stop barrage of fear bombs so long, I think they'll be glad to get it over with."

"Very perceptive, Morten. That has been one of Psychological Warfare's primary aims in preparation." Thompson got another outside line. Dawson, Civilian Defense. As he waited for Dawson to come in, he said to Morten. "Get the dueling pistols out of the cabinet, please." Morten nodded.

"Hello, Dawson. Fine, fine, things coming to a head here. How much distribution did you manage on the shrouds? Eighty percent? Excellent. I haven't heard from Harry on the details for quite a while. Wanted to check personally. As you say, I've never really lost my touch with the grass-roots. My feeling from the start was that millions of wooden coffins would be out of the question. The olive drab plastic sheets seemed to be the only practical recourse from the start. The psychological importance of getting bodies out of sight as rapidly as possible cannot be overemphasized. Oh, Dawson, one moment . . . yes, I know about the public parks, playgrounds and vacant tracts in the suburbs. But what about New York City? The only way is to send the bodies up the Hudson River using piers as morgues. The problem of where to put so many bodies, particularly when they will all appear for disposal at the same time, is a considerable one. Allowing for three-by-six grave-sites, with three feet for

aisles, the whole problem of adequate disposal acreage is primary." Thompson switched off the connection.

Thompson moved his fingers over the .38 caliber dueling pistols in the velvet-lined case. His eyes mellowed with nostalgia. "Gift from the old Secretary of War. My boy, Don, learned to shoot with this one when he was only six years old. If he had lived to be an adult, he would have been a tough fighter. But he was killed by a rival delinquent gang when he was twelve. He only got there a little sooner. He had just finished reading Niebuhr, so he knew the tragic irony of history."

Thompson balanced one of the pistols in his hand. He looked at his watch. "It's time," he said religiously.

As Thompson entered the Hall of Ministers, the representatives of five balance of power nations arose at once in deference to the sixth. Morten sat unobtrusively in a far corner, holding the case of dueling pistols on his knees.

Thompson sat down. The minutes of the last conference were read by a mechanical secretary. A summation of their final agreement on Operation Push Button was briefly reviewed by the automatic translating secretary. No changes were suggested.

The surface of the huge conference table was somewhat like a gigantic topographical map of the world. It covered perhaps a thousand square feet and had been constructed by brain-washed artisans and engineers and scientists in per-

fect electronic detail. It was so realistic that it radiated a sort of sentience, seeming almost to breathe in astonishing precision with the respiration of important strategically located cities, ports, communication and manufacturing centers. Before each Minister was a console containing several buttons.

Each Minister arose, made a speech concerning the sovereign rights of the particular nation or bloc of nations he represented. In each case, the speeches seemed the same to Morten. He knew that if merely the name of the country or bloc in each speech was changed, the rest would be the same, and sound something like:

"Gentlemen, a free such-and-such people can no longer tolerate a militant rearming so-and-so. Every other possibility has been discussed and rejected. I must say now that at this moment a state of war must of necessity exist between such-and-such and so-and-so."

Morten had been hearing variations of it for years. He knew it all by heart. As each Minister made this implacable statement, he sat down, and without further ceremony, pushed a button or buttons on his private console. On the topographical map, as a button was pushed, some important section of the map, an area, a city, a port, some significant transportation, communication, or manufacturing industrial center, would shoot out realistic sparks, smoke, and then crumble into lifeless debris.

Morten tried to control the flinching and twitching of his muscles. An intricate network of elec-

tronic relays connected with thermonuclear bombs went out all over the world, and were hooked in to the map on the conference table. Millions of people were just blown up somewhere, Morten thought.

Another Minister finished his speech, sat down, pressed buttons. More smoke and flashes shot up. Millions of others out there somewhere have just been annihilated, Morten thought. It doesn't seem possible, he thought then. It's not possible. It's some kind of final madness. But it's happening.

It had been decided that this was the simple direct way, avoiding long, time-wasting programs of mobilization and warfare. If the conclusion was foregone, had been the question, then why not go directly to it by the shortest and most efficient route? And the answer was as inevitable as the question.

More Ministers stood up, made their final declarations, and pushed buttons. Little puffballs and clouds of smoke drifted over the conference table, obscuring distinctive facial outlines and turning the ministers into shadow shapes as Morten watched.

Only two of the Ministers had not yet pressed their buttons. Only two sectors of the world remain alive, Morten thought. He coughed as acrid smoke swirled about the room. He felt a kind of blessed numbed paralysis. He could almost feel the whole world turning into a radioactive hell all around him, mushrooms of gigantic size sprouting fast and furiously in the last big aftermath of rain. Yet he could scarcely imagine how it really was

now, outside the Cellar. He thought vaguely about the dogs, wondering how many of them had avoided hysteria by having been tied to heavy pieces of furniture and given sodium bromide tablets. The kids who survived would need pets.

Morten sat there, trying to see through the thickening smoke. He tried to feel grateful for having been in the Cellar. But in a few more seconds America might also be destroyed. What then? And what if only America remained—would that be any better?

He had resisted such speculation, but how could he resist it any longer? The Ministers had their wives, families, lovers in the Cellar, and supplies enough to last indefinitely. But Morten's family was outside. In a few seconds they might be dead. After that nothing. Nothing at all.

He heard Thompson say in a calm voice. "Morten, the pistols."

He also heard the other Minister say in Russian that he wanted his pistol. Morten had to respect the secret agreement that Thompson and the Russian Minister had made yesterday. After the other Ministers pushed their buttons, Thompson and the Russian would fight a duel then the survivor of the duel would push his button.

"Someone should win," Thompson and the Russian had agreed. "This way, one will be the absolute victor."

If the other Ministers knew what this secret agreement was they either did not care, or did not care enough now. They got up from the

*(Continued on page 114)*

# WAR GAME

(Continued from page 81)

conference table and drifted out of the big spheroid room to their families, wives—wherever they wanted to go.

Now only Thompson and the Russian remained in the room. They walked ten paces away from one another in the classic tradition of honorable dueling, turned, and fired. They fell almost at the same time. Morten rushed over to Thompson and was already dead, having died instantly with a bullet in his heart. Morten saw that the Russian had a bullet hole just above his left eye.

Thompson, foreseeing this possible situation, had gotten a promise from Morten that he would press the button that would annihilate Russia, in case Thompson was dead or incapacitated. That would leave the United States the sole victor in the last great global struggle to establish once and for all, world wide, the true faith.

Morten fought a brief struggle with his conscience, then ran out of the room, leaving the console untouched. The United States and Russia still survived. Morten's family was still safe. He ran toward the bank of elevators to get out of the Cellar. He hadn't been out of the Cellar for a long, long time.

The President of the United States switched off the T.V., and poured another martini. "You want another?" he asked the Minister of Peace. "No, sir, Mr. President."

For a while they said nothing as they looked out the window at the peaceful sunshine, and watched birds settle in the trees.

"They ran their own course," the Minister of Peace said. "Just the same, it was an unpleasant thing to see."

"Inevitable," said the President. "There wasn't any other possible way to handle them."

Psychiatry would never have altered their rigid mold, he knew. It was a strangely funny thing, that spontaneous rebellion all over the world. The people putting a stop to the whole damn vicious historical show. But they had done it. The lie had been given to all the historical pessimists like Spencer and Toynbee and Marx and all the others who had said the same things, whether they really had admitted it or not. The people, acting out of intuitive realization that they faced annihilation, had reacted *en masse* and taken things over for themselves. Now you couldn't find even a water pistol anywhere in the world.

The U.N. Cellar had been walled off, turned into a kind of sanitarium. Its occupants had never known the truth about the outside. Thompson and that absurd Russian were dead. But what about the others in the Cellar, living there still and believing they were the only few survivors left in the world?

Poor bastards, the President thought. And then he thought of that statement by Sartre. The one about hell being a restaurant where you served yourself ● ● ●