

Director's Notes for IN SEARCH OF RESOLUTION

By Robert E. Frye

When asked to write a "director's note" on the making of the documentary [IN SEARCH OF RESOLUTION](#) – the third film of the [Nuclear World Project](#) trilogy I asked myself three main questions: What drives me to tell this story? Why do I find it necessary to tell this story? Why have I spent over fifteen years working on this project?

What drives me to tell this story?

I worked on nuclear weapons planning as an enlisted man in the US Army based in Germany in 1960. To this day I will not provide any details of what I was doing as part of a six-person unit at Seventh Corps Headquarters in a small town outside Stuttgart, but to say that the experience imbued me with a very strong sense of the continuing threat posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. As I write this note, Vladimir Putin has moved part of his nuclear arsenal to Belarus as a counterforce to the continuing conflict taking place in Ukraine underscoring the relevance still today of understanding these threats.

Why do I find it necessary to tell this story?

At another moment in my life, when I was executive producer of ABC News World News Tonight in the mid-1980s at the height of the Cold War, I commissioned a ten-part series entitled "US-USSR: A Balance of Powers." It was a time when the US and Soviet Union, as the primary possessors of nuclear weapons, found a way to maintain a balance coming twenty years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, when a nuclear conflict was narrowly averted. In the series, a British naval officer James Eberle said "If they [the US] took out every Minuteman silo, every Titan silo, every US Airborne missile and discarded them, there still would be at sea, enough weapons to fire one warhead roughly every thirty seconds for twenty-four hours." The ABC News correspondent John McWethy went on to say "and the Soviets in all probability could do the same."

Since that time, the actual number of nuclear weapons has decreased dramatically, while at the same time, the effectiveness of the weapons produced is even more destructive. In February 2008, while filming for IN MY LIFETIME with author Richard Rhodes, we stood in the small room at Hofdi House in Reykjavik, Iceland where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev met in October 1986 and came close to making the decision to rid the world of all nuclear weapons. Since that fateful day, and despite all the attempts and conferences held to find a way to move away from the possession of nuclear weapons, it still has not happened.

Why have I spent over fifteen years working on this project?

The journey of the Nuclear World Project began in the fall of 2007. The titles of the three films tell their own story. The first, IN MY LIFETIME, wove together the history of the beginning of the Nuclear Age. At 5:29 am on July 16, 1945, at the Trinity site in the desert of southern New Mexico, the test explosion of the atomic bomb on a tower lit up the early morning sky prompting Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific director of the work known as The Manhattan Project to observe, "The world will never be the same." Three weeks later the only two nuclear weapons ever used in war were detonated. The first in southern Japan over the city of Hiroshima. The atomic bomb named "Little Boy" dropped on the morning of August 6th killing over 140,000 human beings. Three days later, on the morning of August 9th, the second atomic bomb named "Fat Man" fell through an opening in the clouds exploding above the Christian community of Nagasaki where 80,000 human beings lost their lives.

In that fateful summer of 1945, I was a young boy. It is hard to remember aside from the vague idea that it was the end of World War II. Many attribute the dropping of those two bombs on those Japanese cities as bringing the war to an end. Photographic evidence of the death and destruction caused by the two devastating explosions remains, along with the story told through the memories of those who survived, known as the Hibakusha. The Hibakusha are dwindling in number, and bear critical witness and warning to the devastating consequences of the continuing presence of the most destructive weapon ever invented.

Although only nine nations possess them (United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea), nuclear weapons threaten the existence of all living beings on Earth. Five of the nuclear-armed nations, the founding members of The UN Security Council in 1945 known as the P-5 (United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, China), issued a formal statement on January 3, 2022: "We consider the avoidance of war between nuclear weapon states and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities" Just seven weeks later on February 24th Russia invaded a former nuclear weapon state Ukraine. As part of the invasion, Vladimir Putin threatened the use of nuclear weapons, serving as a worldwide reminder of the continuing existence of nuclear weapons.

Each of these nations has its own rationale and story of why they created and built their nuclear weapons. The two Cold War adversaries the US and Russia (then the Soviet Union) possess over ninety-two percent of the known nuclear weapons in their arsenals, with China now following closely behind. There are many complexities in telling this story, those nations who are part of the nuclear umbrella, those who provide "space" for the weapons, and then those who do not possess the weapons and are declared against the weapons through the NPT, (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty). The latter is the majority, 189 of the world's nations are signatories of the NPT. These stories are told in the documentary

After IN MY LIFETIME was released in 2012, my journey continued in telling this story with composer Alain Kremski. Through THE NUCLEAR REQUIEM, composed by Alain as the musical underscore, we told the story of the continuing challenges the world faced during the years of 2015 to 2017, including the election of Donald Trump and the continuing escalation of North Korea's buildup of their nuclear arsenal and capabilities.

The third film of the trilogy, IN SEARCH OF RESOLUTION, was filmed in 2022. The story begins with the P5 announcement and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the continuing war. As a result of the filming throughout 2022, these events create a timely backdrop for the documentary. The voices heard in the film reflect the times and concerns for the future, as well as the present-day realities.

With IN SEARCH OF RESOLUTION, my goal is to pass on the story to younger generations. Their task is a heavy one as they are going to have to learn the story and try to search for a way forward, as the title suggests. The weapons and the attitudes today create a more challenging environment than ever before, and the generations of today simply do not have the memory or experiences of "duck and cover" or air raid drills. I can recall being a teenager hiking up a hill outside of a village in upstate New York with binoculars to sit in a small tower with just a telephone to look north for Soviet bombers coming over the horizon, ready to report to civil defense headquarters, to warn of the Soviets sending their bombers to bomb the United States. Of course, it was impractical, but there was a feeling of participating. The atmosphere at that time in the mid-1950s was filled with the residue of fallout from nuclear test explosions in the Nevada desert, huge bombs being tested in the South Pacific and in the deserts of the USSR. My generation experienced those times and the memories and nightmares, something the newer generations do not hold fresh in their memories. As the director of this documentary, I have had the experience of dealing with the existence of nuclear weapons from their beginning in one way or another, and I feel it is my responsibility to pass on the knowledge to future generations. There is no excuse for all living not to at least be aware.

Albert Einstein said the following on the subject of nuclear weapons: "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it."

We live in unpredictable times. To deal with the realities of what can be done with nuclear weapons takes a willingness to see new ways to approach the underlying causes and not to be stuck in this challenge which seems unresolvable. The voices of the past remind us of how much the past continues to be a challenge to those living in the present, as well as point to the responsibilities of the younger generations to join the search for resolution.