

There's no room in the world (see next page)



Feasibility of Biological Recovery from Nuclear Attack

WE ALL KNOW what has already been made perfectly clear: A major nuclear war would be a horrible catastrophe. But we have also heard that civil defense might save many lives and minimize destruction. Secretary McNamara has reduced the problem to a simple matter of cost accounting: At a price of \$5 billion we could build a shelter system, he claims, that would save 29 million lives.

Unfortunately, the problem is not so simple. It is not enough to know how many people would survive the first day of the war; we also need to know whether there would be buildings to house them, food to feed them, and fuel to warm them when they emerged from the shelters. We need to know how long the survivors would survive, whether they could—or would want to—bear children and care for them, do useful work, and re-create the fabric of our society. If we are to determine what value there is in civil defense we must look beyond even the frightful

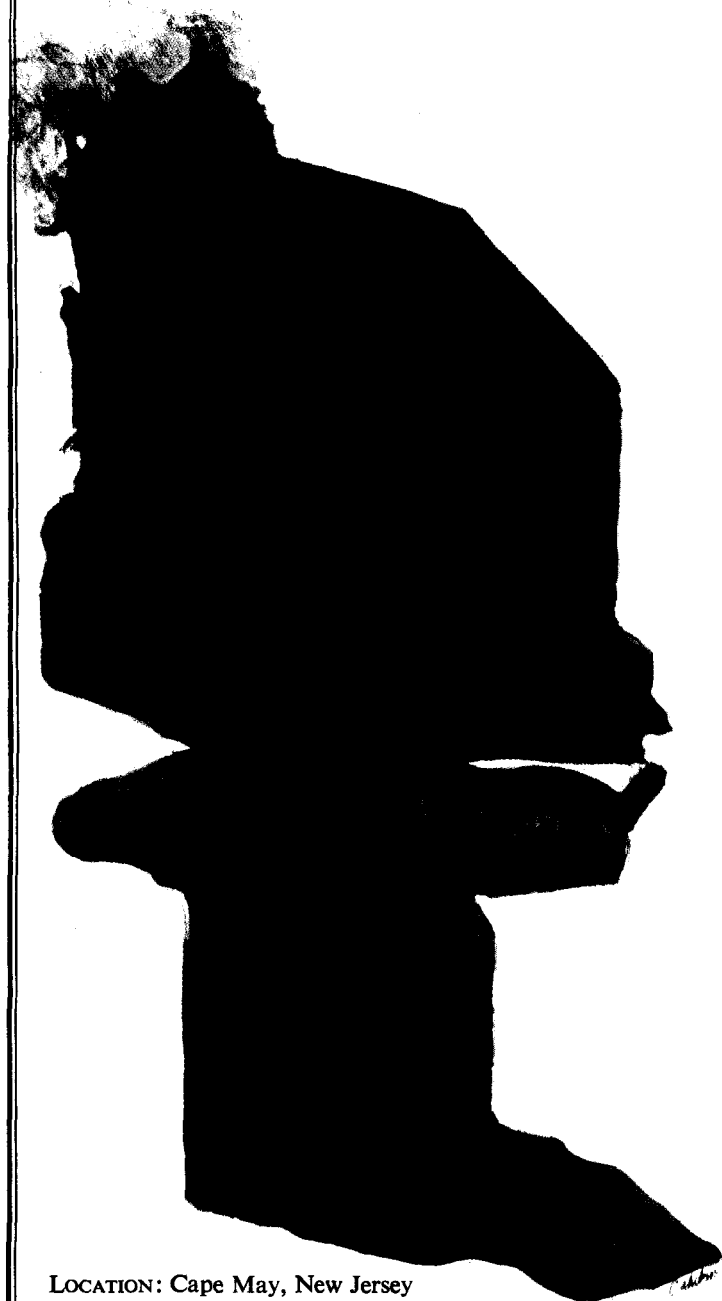
instantaneous catastrophe and learn, if we can, the subsequent fate of the nation.

One possibility is that the nation would recover. A military man might argue, after all, that any war has its casualties and that our basic problem is to learn how recovery from the immediate catastrophe of the war might be hastened. If civil defense could help restore our society to its original strength and value, it might be a useful national policy.

But another alternative is that the nation would *never* recover from the immediate devastation of a nuclear war, and that no scheme short of hiding most of our civilization deep in the ground—which would of itself degrade most of our social values—could prevent its further decay and ultimate dissolution. In this case, civil defense would be a monstrous illusion and therefore exceedingly dangerous as a national policy.

Any discussion must be related to the destructive con-

by Barry Commoner



LOCATION: Cape May, New Jersey

SEASON: Autumn

TYPE AND CONSEQUENCES OF ASSUMED ATTACK: Heavy "surgical" mostly counterforce attack (late 60's) directed against SAC bases, missile sites, air defense installations, command and control, major civilian airports, etc. Transportation and communication targets are also attacked in an effort to cause confusion and chaos. Targets in the New York-New Jersey area (mostly attacked with 1 megaton airbursts or 20-50 kiloton weapons groundburst for maximum local destructiveness) include Newark Airport, the Hoboken railroad yards, Brooklyn Naval Yard, South Amboy, McGuire AFB, Idlewild, LaGuardia, and Newburgh. The only surviving north-south routes are the New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway and U.S. 202 (a second-class road).

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: An offshore high pressure area (at the time of the attack) with its associated clockwise airflow causes the local fallout patterns to lie mostly north and northeast of the targets. Southern New Jersey, south of a line between Camden and Asbury Park, is virtually free of fallout. The only other nearby uncontaminated areas are the central Adirondacks and Green Mountains. The populace is informed of these details by radio.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS: Large numbers of refugees enter the fallout-free area (following the radio reports) coming from northern and central New Jersey and from the Wilmington area, mostly by car. The turnpike and Garden State Parkway provide convenient arteries into this refuge. Disorganized and poorly conceived attempts by State Police to halt or redirect the flow merely produce severe traffic jams. A few individuals attempting to avoid the bottleneck cross the center mall to the empty northbound lanes and within a short space of time all lanes are choked by southbound vehicles. Because of the traffic jam many cars run out of gas and water.

Within 12 hours several hundred thousand people are temporarily stranded on foot along the length of the two major roadways. Later influxes from Philadelphia and New York bring in additional numbers. Over four million newcomers ultimately seek refuge in the southern half of the state where not more than half a million people lived before the attack. Almost 300,000 refugees cram themselves onto the southern tip of the state, in and around Cape May. At first people are housed in the empty resort hotels along the beach front of Cape May and Wildwood. As more and more refugees congregate, the sympathetic attitude of the local authorities hardens and stockades are built, the roads and stockades are closely patrolled by the police and National Guard and other harsh measures are taken. It is assumed that all refugees will return to their homes within a few weeks at most, so no attempt is made to construct weatherproof accommodations. This hope is not realized, for when communications are restored it is learned that many former residential areas have been destroyed by the attack, burned or looted subsequently, or have been invaded by squatters who refuse to be dislodged.

Some suburban communities which have suffered damage attempt to discourage the return of indigent or homeless persons, especially those belonging to minority groups. Many refugees have no immediate place to return to, and no liquid assets; those who abandoned cars often have no means of transportation either, since derelict or stalled vehicles have been hauled off the highways wholesale, and subsequently looted and picked to pieces by scavengers in search of spare parts or portable wealth. Many of these people are thus forced to spend the winter, of necessity, in compounds housed in tents, without adequate heat, food, sanitation or medicine.

By the following March some 50,000 hard-core refugees still remain in the Cape May area, mostly in conditions of real squalor. Without bathing facilities, soap, doctors or insecticides many are infested with lice. Typhus fever strikes the camps and spreads to the town and the overcrowded boardwalk hotels: 20,000 cases develop in the Cape May area above (30 per cent of the population) and 7,000 deaths result.