

Fall, 1994

History and Origins of Interhelp

Interhelp, Whence and Whither?

DESIGN FOR A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By Virginia L. Senders

The setting:

The United States in the late 1970's. Jimmy Carter is president; the cold war is in a state of total mobilization. Among the people, especially school children and newspaper readers who know how to read between the lines, there is fear. The fear is of THE BOMB. Missiles, bombs, delivery systems, tonnage, multiple warheads, targeting — these words are on the lips of the Secretary of Defense and of the check-out girl at the supermarket. Armageddon seems probable if not actually imminent. Fourth-graders wake up with nightmares — and so do their parents.

I hear Helen Caldicott and then, a few nights later, wake up during a thunderstorm screaming because I think *it* is happening. Though pupils no longer practice diving under their desks, which everyone finally agrees is absurd, FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) advises us that in case we are told to evacuate, it's a good idea to keep our gas tanks half

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