Checkup for Nuclear Phobia Makes Psychiatrist a Bogey

ONE OF THE things that Gen. Curtis LeMay said at his press conference last week was that Americans seem to have a phobia about nuclear weapons. This struck home because I have to admit I've had such a phobia for some time. But only after Gen. LeMay brought it up did I decide to do something about it. I went to see Dr. Adolph Strainedluffy, a psychiatrist who specializes in nuclear weapon phobias.

"On the couch," he said. "Frat seems to be the trouble?"

"Doctor," I said staring at the ceiling, "I have this fear of nuclear weapons. I know it's silly, but to me it's very real."

"Aha, very hinting, very. What did you first become aware of such a phobia?"

"I think it was around the time of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. I'm not sure which. I saw these photos of all these people killed and miles and miles of rubble and suddenly I got this thing about atomic weapons."

Dr. Strainedluffy tapped a pencil against his knee. "So tell me, how does this phobia manifest itself?"

"In peculiar ways, doctor. I get the feeling if I ever see a mushroom cloud, I'm going to die."

"Very hinting, very hinting. You know it's all in the mind, don't you?"

"Of course. That's why I came to you. I don't want to do anything stupid."

Dr. STRAINEDLUFF said, "You are a very sick man. You think that just because an atomic bomb killed a few thousand people 23 years ago, you are threatened. You are manifesting infantile repressed hostility toward the weapons of war. In psychiatry we call this a military-industrial inferiority complex."

"I know I'm sick. You've got to help me," I begged.

"All right. First you have to get over this absurd fear of nuclear bombs. You must think of them as just another weapon in our vast defensive arsenal. We have H-bombs and H-bombs; and in war, one is just as good as another. You're not afraid of a knife, are you?"

"Well, I don't think about it a lot."

"So why should you be afraid of an H-bomb? It's another form of a knife."

"I never thought of it like that."

"Okay, so now let's look at some facts straight in the eye. In Bikini we blew up twenty bombs in an experiment. So we thought everything would be destroyed; that's how stupid we were. Do you know that now after all the boom boom, the place is flourishing and the rats are fatter than they ever was before?"

"It's good to hear."

"The coconuts are hanging from the trees, the fish are swimming in the lagoon and the voice of the turtle can be heard in the land. The only things that don't seem to be doing so good are the land crabs."

"I DON'T LIKE land crabs," I said.

"So, then you don't have anything to worry about."

Dr. Strainedluffy started playing with the hand grenade which was attached to his watch job. "If you're going to be a happy, normal human being," he shouted, "you're going to have to stop with all these guilty peace feelings."

He was stomping around the room. "So get out of here with your lousy phobias and all this stuff about being afraid to die. If you're not willing to take a little fallout for the good of the country, then go back where you came from!"

In spite of Dr. Strainedluffy's final outburst, he did cure me of my phobia. I'm no longer afraid of nuclear weapons. Now I'm afraid of him.