

Daniel Ellsberg's Not Yet Goodbye

Monday 6 March 2023, by [ELLSBERG Daniel](#) (Date first published: 2 March 2023).

Daniel Ellsberg, a giant of American history for leaking the Pentagon Papers, wrote the following email to friends on Wednesday, including *Consortium News*, and has today decided to make it public.



Daniel Ellsberg. (Free Getty embed, Paul J. Richards)

Dear friends and supporters,

I have difficult news to impart. On Feb. 17, without much warning, I was diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer on the basis of a CT scan and an MRI. (As is usual with pancreatic cancer—which has no early symptoms – it was found while looking for something else, relatively minor). I'm sorry to report to you that my doctors have given me three to six months to live. Of course, they emphasize that everyone's case is individual; it might be more, or less.

I have chosen not to do chemotherapy (which offers no promise) and I have assurance of great hospice care when needed. Please know: right now, I am not in any physical pain, and in fact, after my hip replacement surgery in late 2021, I feel better physically than I have in years!

Moreover, my cardiologist has given me license to abandon my salt-free diet of the last six years. This has improved my quality of life dramatically: the pleasure of eating my former favorite foods! And my energy level is high.

Since my diagnosis, I've done several interviews and webinars on Ukraine, nuclear weapons, and first amendment issues, and I have more scheduled.

As I just told my son Robert: he's long known (as my editor) that I work better under a deadline. It turns out that I **live** better under a deadline!

I feel lucky and grateful that I've had a wonderful life far beyond the proverbial three-score years and ten. (I'll be ninety-two on April 7th.) I feel the very same way about having a few months more to enjoy life with my wife and family, and in which to continue to pursue the urgent goal of working with others to avert nuclear war in Ukraine or Taiwan (or anywhere else).

When I copied the Pentagon Papers in 1969, I had every reason to think I would be spending the rest of my life behind bars. It was a fate I would gladly have accepted if it meant hastening the end of the

Vietnam War, unlikely as that seemed (and was).

Yet in the end, that action—in ways I could not have foreseen, due to Nixon's illegal responses—did have an impact on shortening the war. In addition, thanks to Nixon's crimes, I was spared the imprisonment I expected, and I was able to spend the last fifty years with Patricia and my family, and with you, my friends.

What's more, I was able to devote those years to doing everything I could think of to alert the world to the perils of nuclear war and wrongful interventions: lobbying, lecturing, writing and joining with others in acts of protest and non-violent resistance.

I wish I could report greater success for our efforts. As I write, "modernization" of nuclear weapons is ongoing in all nine states that possess them (the U.S. most of all). Russia is making monstrous threats to initiate nuclear war to maintain its control over Crimea and the Donbas-like the dozens of equally illegitimate first-use threats that the U.S. government has made in the past to maintain its military presence in South Korea, Taiwan, South Vietnam, and (with the complicity of every member state then in NATO) West Berlin. The current risk of nuclear war, over Ukraine, is as great as the world has ever seen.

China and India are alone in declaring no-first-use policies. Leadership in the U.S., Russia, other nuclear weapons states, NATO, and other U.S. allies have yet to recognize that such threats of initiating nuclear war—let alone the plans, deployments, and exercises meant to make them credible and more ready to be carried out—are and always have been *immoral* and *insane*: under any circumstances, for any "reasons," by anyone or anywhere.

It is long past time — but not too late! — for the world's publics at last to challenge and resist the willed moral blindness of their past and current leaders. I will continue, as long as I'm able, to help these efforts. There's tons more to say about Ukraine and nuclear policy, of course, and you'll be hearing from me as long as I'm here.

As I look back on the last sixty years of my life, I think there is no greater cause to which I could have dedicated my efforts. For the last forty years we have known that nuclear war between the U.S. and Russia would mean nuclear winter: more than a hundred million tons of smoke and soot from firestorms in cities set ablaze by either side, striking either first or second, would be lofted into the stratosphere where it would not rain out and would envelope the globe within days.

That pall would block up to 70 percent of sunlight for years, destroying all harvests worldwide and causing death by starvation for most of the humans and other vertebrates on earth.

So far as I can find out, this scientific near-consensus has had virtually no effect on the Pentagon's nuclear war plans or U.S./NATO (or Russian) nuclear threats. (In a like case of disastrous willful denial by many officials, corporations, and other Americans, scientists have known for over three decades that the catastrophic climate change now underway—mainly but not only from burning fossil fuels—is fully comparable to U.S.-Russian nuclear war as another existential risk.)

I'm happy to know that millions of people—including all those friends and comrades to whom I address this message—have the wisdom, dedication, and moral courage to carry on with these causes, and to work unceasingly for the survival of our planet and its creatures.

I'm enormously grateful to have had the privilege of knowing and working with such people, past and present. That's among the most treasured aspects of my very privileged and very lucky life. I want to thank you all for the love and support you have given me in so many ways. Your dedication, courage, and determination to act have inspired and sustained my own efforts.

My wish for you is that at the end of your days you will feel as much joy and gratitude as I do now.

Love,

Dan

March 2, 2023

P.S.

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