

ITIC M ARGOLIS



Nuke-free world an impossibility

Let's suppose that by a miracle Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev answered the most fevered dreams of the "peace" movement by somehow agreeing at Iceland to get rid of all nuclear weapons. Would the millennium be at hand? Well, no.

Once out of the bag, the cat is not about to be put back in. Even if the U.S. and USSR were to immediately dismantle all of their nuclear weapons, at least a thousand more would remain on earth. Getting rid of such junior, but still quite deadly, nuclear weapons could prove harder than disposing of the U.S.-USSR arsenal.

Britain and France have a generous assortment. Threardhare Britain might be delighted to ditch its expensive nuclear weapons but the French, ah, *ca c'est different!* The always bloody-minded French would most likely refuse to scrap their *Force de Frappe*. After all, as they would insist with sharp Gallic logic, nuclear arms represent *la gloire* of France.

France, remember, still shoots off H-bombs in the South Pacific and tells enraged nations in the area to go take a flying jump into *la mer*.

Next comes China. If Toronto's police can't stop Chinese shops here from selling liquor on Sundays, how is the West going to police China's acceptance of a nuclear ban? Maybe the Chinese, who don't trust anybody, will refuse to disarm lest the Taiwanese, Vietnamese or Russians still have some secret weapons hidden away.

Then there is Israel. The *Times* of London recently ran a believable-sounding story in which a former Israeli technician claimed his country had 100 nuclear weapons. We know Israel has lots of nuclear missiles, bombs and artillery shells.

Now, Israel and Egypt have been arguing for three years over a resort hotel on their disputed border. If Israel won't give up a hotel for security reasons, will it give up its nuclear arsenal — and will the Arabs believe Israeli assurances?

What about those old chums, India and Pakistan? Officially, they don't have nuclear weapons. But they do, or just about. Can we imagine the Pakistanis saying, "Of course we fully trust our dear, kind Indian neighbors to get rid of their secret atomic weapons?"

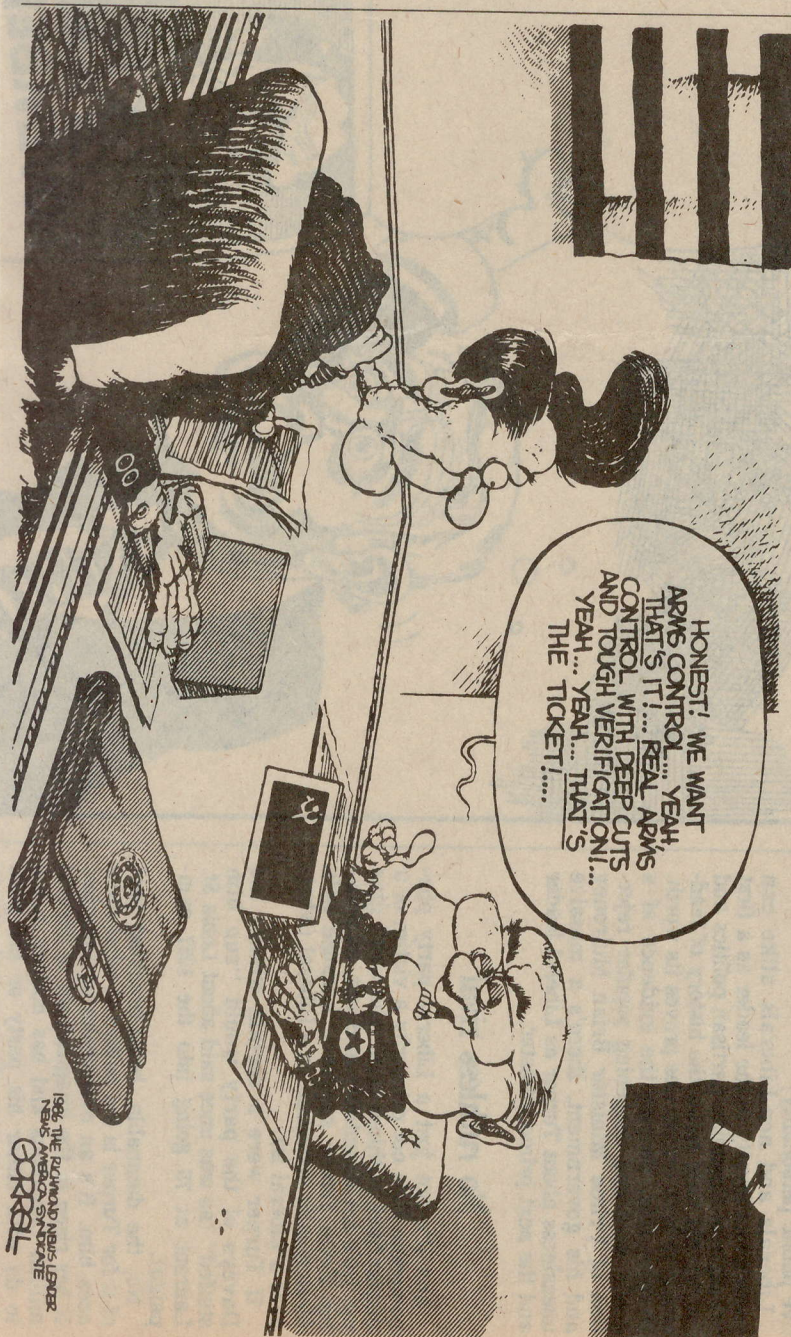
Those other good pals, North and South Korea, are not any more likely to come clean about their secret nuclear programs. And what about the capability of nations like Argentina, Switzerland and Sweden to produce nuclear arms? Remember, in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. After a general nuclear disarmament, whoever is left with a few small, easily hidden weapons could become the world's big banana.

For those not sufficiently depressed by these daunting problems, there is also the question, alluded to above, of verification. A nuclear weapon powerful enough to shatter New York can fit into a steamer trunk. Any determined nation can hide away nuclear weapons, shielded with lead so they cannot be detected. Since the Russians routinely cheat on arms control agreements, why should they do any differently under a future accord that is truly a matter of life and death?

Dr. No would have loved worldwide nuclear disarmament. Generals and admirals would love it, too. They could resume jolly good wars with big armies and fleets slugging it out in real battles. No more of this "low intensity conflict" nonsense. Back to the fun days of World War II when soldiers were real fighting men, not electronic technicians.

All the money saved on nuclear hardware could then be devoted to more useful items, like aircraft carriers, tanks and heavy guns. Irritating smaller nations could be bombed back to the stone age without fear of blowing up the whole world. The conventional armed forces of all the major powers would have to be expanded to fill the gap left by nuclear weaponry.

For happy Canadians this could mean 25% higher taxes and bringing back the military draft. Why, after a decade of nuclear disarmament, a world grown weary of big conventional wars might look back on our nuclear era as a golden age of peace. A time when the Kremlin did not lose sleep over a secret Polish A-bomb, or Washington over a Libyan big bang. Or both of them about waking up one morning and finding that the world's newest superpower was a cranky, irritable nuclear-armed Albania.



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