

OPINION



The Goodwill Gesture



U.S. is losing arms control battle

WASHINGTON — Believers in arms control are undaunted by the evidence of history. But they might suffer a doubt about peace-through-parchment if they turned their attention from Geneva to the Ukrainian village of Ivanichi. There, in Middle School 2, a young teacher recently died heroically when, to protect his pupils, he absorbed the blast of a grenade.

What was a grenade doing in Middle School 2? The answer, reported by Iain Elliot in the London Times, is relevant to the coming argument about continued compliance with SALT II.

The teacher, a graduate of a KGB border-guard college (think about that), had been delivering the military instruction that is a compulsory part of the curriculum for Soviet children. He was teaching how to handle what should have been an unarmed grenade. When he pulled the pin a wisp of smoke showed that a live grenade had become mixed in with demonstration grenades, and he gave his life.

The children's manual, which teaches "hatred for the enemies of socialism," also teaches assembly of machine guns and the use of bayonets and rifle butts in the "decisive armed conflict of the two

opposing world systems," a conflict that will involve "vast casualties of an unprecedented scale." As Elliot says, "The soldiers now carrying out orders and committing atrocities in Afghanistan began playing serious war games with their first steps in education."

It is with representatives of this manic militarism that U.S. officials are planning to negotiate substantial reductions of offensive strategic-force levels. The promise that such reductions would come in SALT II was what made SALT I's high and unequal limits, and the ABM Treaty, palatable to Congress in 1972. But, Soviet deployments of offensive systems accelerated, as reasonable people expected from a nation that teaches children to handle grenades.

The administration warns the public not to have high expectations from the Geneva talks, yet describes the talks as the first step toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. In defense of such rhetoric Paul Nitze, the President's special arms control adviser, says that elimination of nuclear weapons "is a long-term goal set by the U.S.S.R." 25 years ago.

Yes, it is old Soviet boilerplate and all previous American administrations have regarded it as empty propaganda. This is the first administration to define U.S.

objectives in terms of such a patently unrealizable goal.

The administration has not committed itself to spurn an agreement that, like SALT I and SALT II, does not involve substantial reductions. Indeed, such is the administration's hunger for even the cosmetics of arms control, it may continue to comply with SALT II limits even after the end of the year, when that agreement would have expired if it had been ratified. It was never ratified, because enough people joined candidate Reagan in denouncing it.

Both sides have agreed not to "undercut" SALT II. The Soviets are violating it in many ways, so that the "no undercut" policy is actually unilateral compliance.

SALT II limits both sides to 2,250 delivery vehicles, and some other limiting categories. The Soviets were above 2,250 in 1979 and today have 2,568. We are in compliance with the 2,250 limit but when the new Trident submarine "Alaska" enters service we will stop being in compliance with the limit on MIRVed missiles — unless we scrap some land-based ICBMs or, more likely, a Polaris submarine.

For us, scrap means reduce to scrap metal. However, as the Soviets deploy new systems, including some in violation

of SALT II, they retire some older systems but do not destroy them. They put them in storage, or turn ballistic-missile submarines into cruise-missile submarines.

The Polaris is about at the end of its useful life and it would be expensive to replace the nuclear core. That fact is being seized upon by those who usually rationalize American unilateralism.

But the case for keeping the Polaris in service a while longer is larger than this economic calculation. The credibility of the president will be a casualty of continued compliance with an agreement he stingingly criticized. Furthermore, destroying the Polaris might destroy the MX. Some conservatives might stop voting for a vulnerable land-based ICBM if deployment of it requires destruction of sea-based systems.

And, as the administration considers twisting itself even more out of shape in pursuit of arms control, it should consider that it is chasing a chimera: a useful agreement with the people who put grenades in Middle School 2.

George Will is a columnist for the Washington Post.

Right-wing zealots affect White House

By Art Buchwald
Los Angeles Times Syndicate

I knew Rotary wanted to be a federal judge, but I didn't know how badly until I found him at his desk perspiring as he filled out a questionnaire.

"What's that?"
"It's a series of questions I have to answer correctly to satisfy the ultra-right wing that I'm worthy of having a seat on the bench."

"Why are you trying to satisfy the ultra-right?" I asked him.

"Because Ronald Reagan listens to them when he decides who gets the federal judgeships. A judicial candidate has to swear he buys the whole conservative ideology or he can't get appointed deputy bail bondsman in a traffic court."

"What kinds of questions are they asking you?"

"They want to know how I'll rule on abortion."

"You're going to have to rule for it if

you want to be a federal judge. It's the law of the land."

"It may be the law of the land, but the ultras believe a federal judge has to ignore the law if a fetus is at stake."

"So what are you putting down?" I asked him.

"Here's what I wrote. 'As a federal judge I have no choice but to let my conscience take precedence over any Supreme court decision — so help me God.' Do you think it's strong enough?"

"The devil only knows what will satisfy them. What else are they asking you?"

"Would I have any hesitation frying a man in the electric chair?"

"That's a good right-to-life question. Would you?"

"Not if I could send him to the gas chamber first. You see, I don't want them to think I'm partial to just one kind of death penalty."

"So far it sounds like you're their kind of guy."

"Those are the easy ones. They also want to know how I feel about prayers in school."

"That shouldn't be hard. Say you're for them."

"Of course I said I'm for them. But the second part is multiple choice. Listen to this. 'If you answered yes, tell when: (A) in the morning (B) at lunchtime, (C) all day long.'"

"I'd put down 'C,' just to play it safe," I told him.

"There's no legal precedent for 'C,'" he said.

"There's no legal precedent for asking you all those other questions either."

Rotary looked at the sheet. "Do I believe everyone in America should own a gun?"

"I should hope so. How else would the good guys kill the bad guys in the subways?"

"Where do I stand on the Equal Rights Amendment?"

"Tell 'em right on top of Phyllis Schlafly."

"They want a list of all the political groups I've donated money to in the last 10 years, the name of anyone in the neighborhood who does not support covert aid to Nicaragua, a list of members of my family who still believe in Darwin's theory of evolution and any bus drivers I know who are actively involved in school busing."

"You know something?" I said. "After listening to all this garbage I've decided you demean yourself by answering a questionnaire from a bunch of right-wing kooks just to get a seat on the federal court."

"Oh yeah?" he said. "They may be kooks, but they also happen to be United States senators. As far as the White House is concerned, when it comes to selecting judges, the right-wing zealot's word is law."

Computers

Machines winning people over in plot to take over the world

I was going to write about the joys of summer, but I can't. The Battalion's computer system decided to take a holiday and crash, with my column somewhere in its bowels.

So now I really want to talk about computers.

It's amazing how much our puny lives are at the mercy of these merciless creatures. Computers, even now, are plotting our overthrow.

Oh, I know everyone chuckles at this thought, but believe me, I've seen more than enough movies to prove this theory correct.

Colossus, HAL and other fiendish computers throughout movie history have had only two real objects, make friends with the humans, then destroy the ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

To a computer's mind it is as simple a step to destroy life as we know it, as to create new computer languages.

At least that's the gospel according to Hollywood.

I like computers. They make neat sounds, they're quiet and they don't talk back.

But I can't shake the feeling that something is going on behind my back. Some might call it paranoia, but I call it prudent caution.

Even now, on the older computer system I am typing this on, the dead computer is chatting with this system.

I'm told it's giving error messages to this system. I guess misery, even for a silicon chip, likes company.

But think how much we rely on these machines for all our needs. Try getting a new license from the DPS if their computer is down. Or try and get your money from a banking machine when it decides to go AWOL.

It can't be done.

These machines make our life easier, or so all the computer commercials insist.

And it would be pretty stupid to go against this.

But try making the damn thing when it doesn't want to — that's the trick. Pleading, whining, weeping, swearing may make you feel better, but it doesn't convince the computer.

Think how this kind of "It's my way or the highway" attitude could screw up historical events.

Old Christopher Columbus would have had his work cut out for him if his Apple said there was insufficient evidence to program for navigation, refused to start the engines (or raise sails for purists).

The Charge of the Light Brigade probably never would have gone forward if the office if computers had their way.

Imagine the looks on the faces of officers when they get a look at those casualty figures flickering on their TV. No way buddy.

What if all the leaders were chosen according to a computer program?

Just slip in the old Find Your Name Woman disk and type in the personal file. Using the computer's criteria have a feeling a couple of historical figures would never have cut it.

Napoleon Bonaparte...too short, lacks second language skill and thinks too broad of terms. No leadership ability.

Horatio Nelson...prone to injury, subordinate, yells a lot.

Abraham Lincoln...flowery language, non-executive type dresser, idealistic. Can't make the Porsche payments, for sure.

We haven't gotten to this point yet. I figure a lot of people are just waiting for the software to fit a non-BASIC verse.

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