

# Opinion

## Dance of death

While the members of the National Rifle Association are dancing a jig around Capitol Hill over weakened gun control laws, advances in the firearms industry are making it easier for people — especially terrorists — to kill people.

Plastic weapons are the latest rage for gun manufacturers. An Austrian pistol, the Glock 17, is made partly of plastic, making it difficult to detect on airport X-ray machines and magnetometers.

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi is said to be negotiating to buy 100 to 300 of these weapons on the black market.

Naturally the NRA, which claims to support responsible use of handguns, opposed any import restrictions on the Glocks.

But the Austrian handguns are not the only boon to the terrorists and bane to travelers. A Florida gun developer, David Byron, is working on an all-plastic .22-caliber pistol. Byron claims his intentions are to sell the guns to the U.S. military. His gun is light, non-corrosive and needs no maintenance or oiling. He also claims his weapon is detectable and even has proposed implanting a device in the plastic to make his gun more detectable than conventional weapons.

While Byron's intentions sound honorable, the technologies he is developing could be adopted by less scrupulous manufacturers. Terrorist dream-guns could be sold to or even stolen by criminals and hijackers.

The guns have slipped past airport security in a number of tests conducted by Pentagon officials, congressmen, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the West German government.

Plastic handguns are the first step, and other undetectable weapons certainly will follow. Regulation will be extremely difficult — it's hard to restrict what can't be detected. Trying to convince gunmakers to put common sense and humanitarian concern ahead of profits will be even more difficult.

Security systems are being developed to combat the new advances in gun-making, but few have been effective so far.

In the meantime, terrorists have been given a valuable new tool of the trade and the security of the civilized world has been dealt another losing hand.

Keep dancing, NRA lobbyists, they're playing your song.

The Battalion Editorial Board

## The White House leaks

Two of the most important positions in the administration are the president's "Keeper of the Secrets" and the "Chief Leaker of Information." Although their offices are next to each other, they always seem to be working opposite sides of the street.



Art Buchwald

Sshhh, as the "Keeper of Secrets" is called, becomes livid when a government secret appears in print and wants to send everyone to jail. Psst, on the other hand, works diligently to plant secret stories with the media that will further the cause of the administration.

I ran into Sshhh at a fancy restaurant the other day. "How can we run an anti-terrorist intelligence operation when you people print that we broke Libya's code?" he asked.

"We didn't break the news. President Reagan revealed it himself on TV."

Sshhh was burning. "Did it ever occur to you that the Libyans don't watch American TV, but they do read *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*?"

I said, "Ninety percent of all the confidential news concerning the government is leaked by this administration, and the other 10 percent by the opposi-

tion. Why don't you go after the leakers instead of those of us who are no more than relay stations for the information?"

"I deny the administration is now or has ever been the source of leaks," Sshhh said.

I confronted him. "Have you ever heard of a White House employee named Psst?"

Sshhh went red. "The name doesn't ring a bell."

"Would it surprise you to know that Psst has been leaking an average of 10 stories a day, with the approval of the president's team?"

"You're making it up."

"For heaven's sake, man, who do you think has been putting out all the stuff about Deaver?"

"We wouldn't leak about Deaver. He's one of us."

"Correction — he was one of you. Except for the president and Nancy, everyone in the White House seems to want Mike to twist slowly in the wind."

Sshhh said, "I can understand our doing that to Stockman, but not to Deaver."

"Nevertheless, you want to send us all to jail for stuff that Psst leaked to make the Reagan administration look good. If you keep putting on pressure, we won't accept any leaks from your side."

Sshhh turned his back on me and I walked over to the cloakroom. I saw Psst standing by the door handing out secrets. I said, "I've just been talking to Sshhh, and he told me he wants to put all of us in jail for using your leaks."

Psst guffawed. "He's just saying that to scare you. The only time the Justice Department will prosecute is when you print a leak that wasn't leaked by us. I have just as much authority around the White House as Sshhh — some days even more."

"In describing your work, is it OK to say your major tasks are to hand out classified material, deal in disinformation and send up trial balloons?"

"There's a bit of that involved," Psst said. "Though sometimes I'll leak a story to hurt someone politically as well."

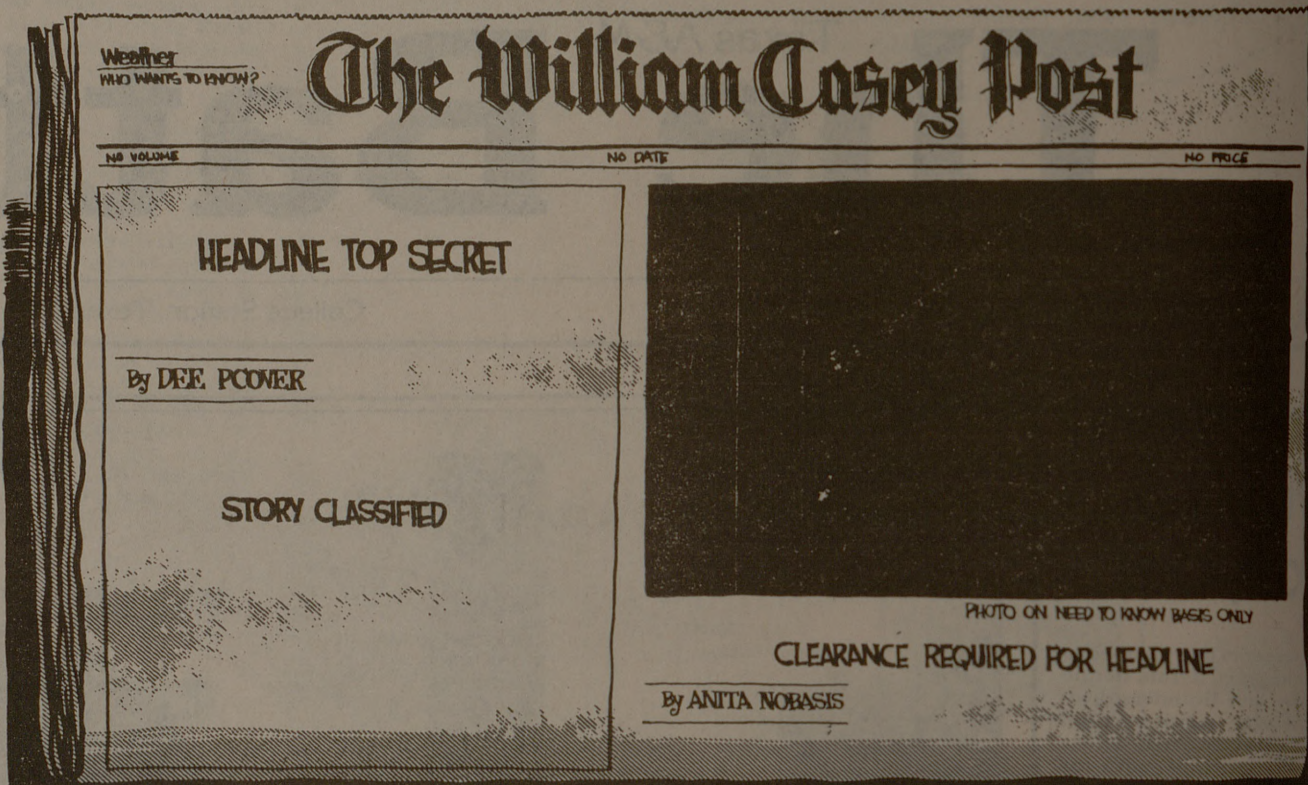
"Will you be walking the streets if the administration puts the lid on all secrets?"

More guffaws. "Whoever heard of a government without leakers?"

While we were talking Sshhh went by and angrily put his finger over his lips. Psst laughed, and as a joke handed him George Bush's schedule for the following day.

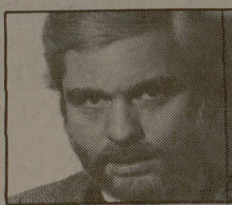
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## U.S. adopts Khrushchevian attitude toward Soviet Union

MOSCOW — In a statement that shocked even many Russians, Nikita Khrushchev once said of the United States, "We will bury you." Much has changed since then. The Russians no longer talk that way. Now Americans do.



Richard Cohen

Politicians and commentators alike describe the Soviet Union as being a Third World country straining to support a First World military establishment. They say that it simply cannot compete with the United States, that it has hoisted itself on its own petard — an inefficient economy in which doctrine, and not performance, is paramount. Prodded by the United States, Russia, we are told, will collapse into history's ash heap. In short, we will bury it.

American Khrushchevians have seized upon the accident at Chernobyl to prove their point. It was supposed to be a typical Soviet performance — cads playing with nuclear energy like kids with matches. Here was supposed to be proof that the new information policy proclaimed by Mikhail Gorbachev was just another meaningless slogan.

Not quite. The Soviets were tardy in reporting the accident and characteristically hard of hearing when queried by nearby European countries. But it seems that the information eventually released was correct — two deaths at the outset, not 2,000, and no second meltdown. As for candor, no American would be satisfied, but correspondents were kept busy running from one government press conference to another.

By American standards, none of this is exceptional — and certainly it remains impossible for a reporter to simply lift the phone and ask a Soviet government official a question. By Soviet standards, though, the floodgates of information have been opened — press conferences, inspections of Chernobyl by non-Soviets, even film of the site and, ultimately, a speech on the subject by Gorbachev himself. In the old days, no Soviet leader would think himself accountable to either Soviet or world public opinion.

It is not surprising then that the Soviets are both stunned and angered at the refusal in the West to take them at their word. They seem especially stung by the American reaction. They see themselves as criticized and belittled. This, they say, is typical of the Reagan administration. They are being treated as if they don't matter, as if the Cold War will end not with a win or truce, but by the air simply going out of the Soviet tire. We will leave them by the side of the road.

"Arrogance" is what one Russian foreign-policy specialist called the new American attitude. He cited some specifics — the bombing of pro-Soviet Libya, the invasion of Grenada, aid to the Nicaraguan Contras and to anti-communist forces in Angola and Afghanistan. The United States, he said, was twitting the Soviet Union — even running destroyers into the Black Sea. The Soviet Union was not being accorded the respect due a superpower: "We are not Guatemala, you know." Reagan's "arrogance," he said, could lead to a "b-lunder" in which the Soviet Union finally would be forced to assert itself.

So far that has not happened. It may be because the Soviets are overextended in Afghanistan and, for the moment, distracted by Chernobyl. So far the

United States and the Soviet Union have been careful to spar only through proxies — our Contras, their Sandinista guerrillas in Angola, our pro-Soviet regime. But the spirit of the so-called Reagan doctrine (called "balism" by the Soviets) might not be easy to contain. At its core is the belief that, like a winning football team, we have momentum in both the free-enterprise system and vice versa. For the other side, defeat is only a matter of time.

Certainly a visitor here finds a disjunction between what he sees on ground — poor housing, shabby clothing, relatively few cars — and the terrific and technological triumphs reported from space. Of course, the military apparatus is not seen at all the measure of the Soviet Union should not be taken only by goods produced the clanky sound of the plumbing also by patriotism and national pride. These are resources, too. These the Soviet Union has in abundance. Its history proclaims and overriding desire to consolidate its empire and spare nothing toward those ends.

Americans who dismiss the Soviet Union as nothing more than a paper tiger puffed up with Marxist-Leninist air, shackled by a fearsomely inefficient economy and doomed to sink into a mass of five-year plans, are as dreamers their own way as those people who came here and pronounced Russia utopia. This place is not the future; it doesn't quite work. But it is not past, either. American Khrushchev notwithstanding, Russia is a long way from the grave.

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