

**OCTOBER 8**

# Welcome to the nuclear club

**M**oments after hearing about North Korea's nuclear test, I thought of Albert Einstein's statement that "there is no secret and there is no defense; there is no possibility of control except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world."

During the six decades since Einstein spoke, experience has shown that such understanding and insistence cannot be filtered through the grid of hypocrisy. Nuclear weapons can't be controlled by saying, in effect, "Do as we say, not as we do." By developing their own nuclear weaponry, one nation after another has replied to the nuclear-armed states: Whatever you say, we'll do as you've done.

In early summer, with some fanfare, officials in Washington announced the dismantling of the last W56 nuclear warhead – a 1.2 megaton model from the 1960s. Self-congratulation was in the air, as a statement hailed "our firm commitment to reducing the size of the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile to the lowest levels necessary for national security needs." That's the kind of soothing PR that we've been getting ever since the nuclear age began.

Right now, the U.S. government has upwards of 10,000 nuclear bombs and warheads in its arsenal. And – as the Washington Post uncritically reported the same week as the announcement about the end of the W56 warhead – Congress and the White House are resolutely moving ahead with plans for "a new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons" under the rubric of the Reliable Replacement Warhead program: "The nation's two nuclear weapons design centers, the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore national laboratories, are competing to design the first RRW.... A second RRW design competition may provide an opportunity to the losing lab."

For more than 50 years, Washington has preached the global virtues of "peaceful" nuclear power reactors – while denying their huge inherent dangers and their crucial role in proliferating nuclear weaponry. The denial meant that people and the environment would suffer all along the nuclear fuel cycle, from uranium mining to nuclear waste; and that the 1979 disaster at Three Mile Island would be followed by the con-

tinuing horrors of Chernobyl.

In recent decades, the denial has also spread nuclear weapons across the planet. Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea can thank the apostles of the nuclear-power gospel – and the companion profiteers of nuclear exports – for the technological pipeline that has funneled the capacity to develop nuclear weapons.

President Dwight Eisenhower's delusional and deluding speech to the U.N. General Assembly on Dec. 8, 1953, now has a macabre echo: "The United States pledges before you – and therefore before the world – its determination to help solve the fearful atomic dilemma – to devote its entire heart and mind to find the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life."

Running parallel to the mendacious career of the "peaceful atom," U.S. foreign policy has hit new lows during the last several years. The invasion of Iraq, on the pretext of non-existent WMDs, sent a powerful message. If the U.S. government was inclined to launch an attack before a country had the capability to generate a mushroom cloud, then the country would be protected from such attack by developing nuclear weapons as soon as possible.

Coupled with the contempt for genuine diplomacy that the Bush administration has repeatedly shown, Washington's eagerness to use military might has fueled the dangers of a nuclear-weapons standoff with North Korea. Two of the sacred axioms of the Bush regime – secrecy and violence – cannot solve this problem and in fact can only make it worse. Einstein was correct; with nuclear weapons, "there is no secret and there is no defense."

As for "the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world" – that will need to come from us. Starting now.

Rest assured that while President Bush was at a podium in the White House on Monday denouncing the North Korean nuclear test as a "provocative act," Karl Rove was hard at work to fine-tune plans for a rhetorical onslaught linking this crisis to the "war on terror." Bush was already laying the groundwork for such an effort as he spoke – warning of "a grave threat to the United States" if North Korea gives nuclear-related technology to "any state or non-state actor."

For the next four weeks, the Bush administration will do its best to exploit the North Korean nuclear test to stave off a loss of the Republican majority in Congress. We should not allow those efforts to obscure how Bush's reckless record has heightened the nuclear dangers for everyone.