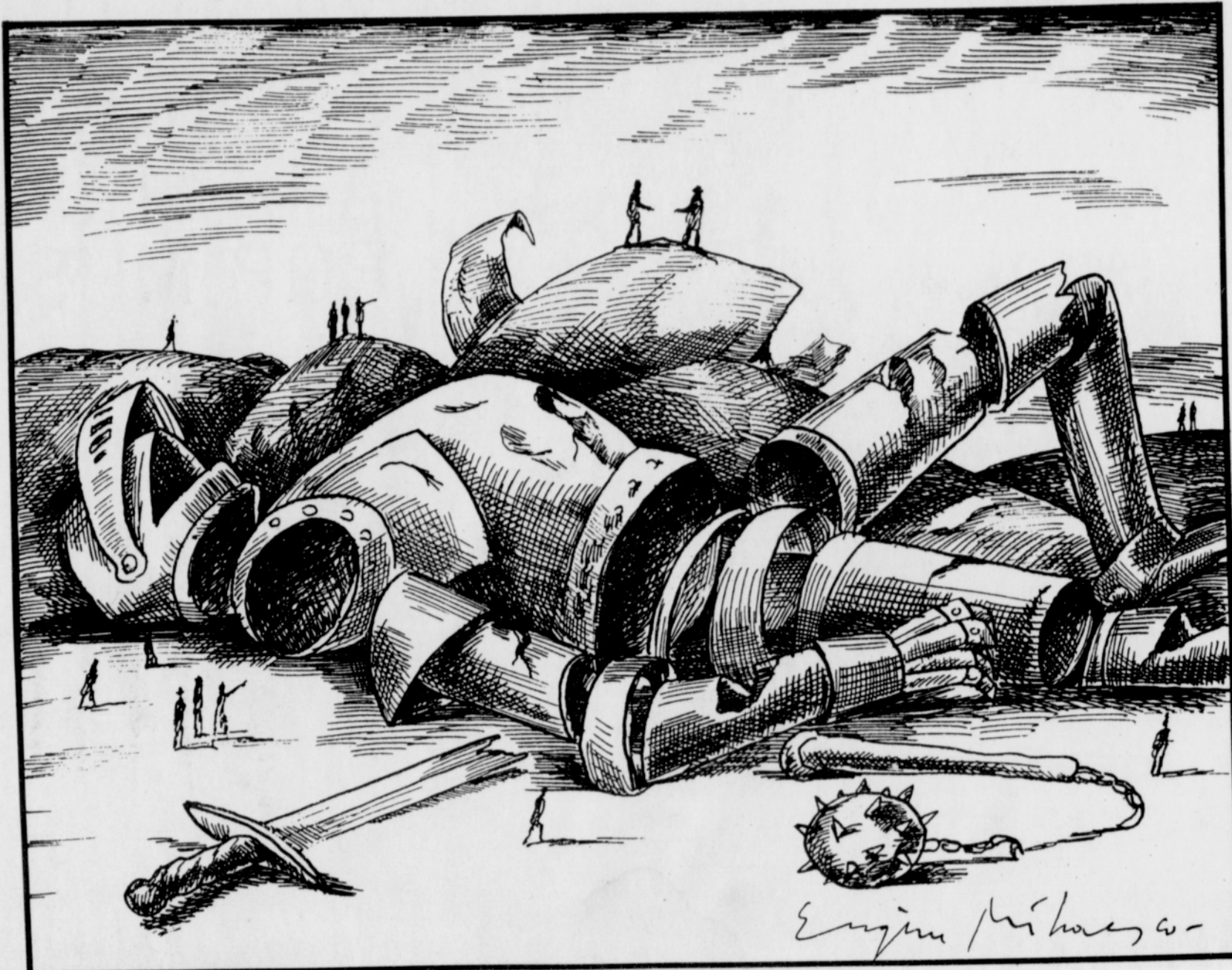




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In a dark time the eye begins to see.
- Theodore Roethke

SEPT & OCT
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EUGENE MIHAESCO

THE MISSILES OF SEPTEMBER

"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty or safety."
- Benjamin Franklin

Late summer 1989 marks the beginnings of three 20th century wars that eventually involved the United States. Seventy-five years ago, in August 1914, the armies of Europe clashed in an explosion that stalemated into a four-year butchery known now as World War I, but was then thought to be the war to end all wars. Fifty years ago, on September 1, 1939, the army and air force of Nazi Germany attacked Poland, beginning World War II and Germany's second attempt in twenty-five years to assume dominance over Europe - Europe's second Thirty Years War, in which millions died and great cities were bombed to rubble. Perhaps less world-shaking but more catastrophic to American society, a few questionable attacks on U.S. destroyers twenty-five years ago by patrol boats led to the Tonkin Resolution of August 7, 1964, a fabrication blown up to Pearl Harbor proportions by the U.S. government to legitimize its escalating military role in Viet Nam.

These wars (and a few others) have torn apart civilization and aftershock schisms wrack its repair in the final years of the century. The great conflict at the middle of the century produced the means to obliterate civilization entirely. Then, at the beginning of the nuclear age, might have been the opportunity, if there has been one, to provide controls to nuclear growth. Instead a rivalry between the victors of World War II created an arms race that is most likely to end in mutual use if they do not end their quarrels and agree to not cheat while dismantling their preposterously overlarge arsenals.

A recent poll by the Associated Press and Media General indicates that half of all Americans expect World War III eventually, even in this period of thawing relations between the superpowers, and most who were polled think the next war will end in nuclear devastation. The poll found that one in ten expect war within the next few decades, and 54% fear that if war occurred it would quickly escalate into all-out

nuclear war. (Most respondents also thought something like the Holocaust of WWII could recur - millions gassed, starved or shot in concentration camps.

The obsessive secrecy of the nuclear powers has not prevented the international proliferation of nuclear technology. The effect instead has been to remove the public from the issue and make it a process of a very few who profit enormously from nuclear arms competition.



Patriotism and claims of national defense and security have obscured the fact that untaxed private fortunes are made from war economies fueled and made self-perpetuating by public funds. Only now and then is an expensive corruption revealed, but the process itself is rarely examined nor is its devastating impoverishment of the social fabric seriously discussed.

The mutual distrust and political paralysis that characterized the growth of the arms race continues to spoil chances for disarmament. Despite the insistent desire of most of the world's population to de-escalate nuclear terror the arms race has not slowed down, it has simply transferred arenas, from above sea level to below it. The decreases in nuclear weapons negotiated by the United States and the Soviet Union are for landbased missiles only. Each superpower is multiplying and improving its ocean-borne capacity.

Almost a third of all nuclear weapons are based at sea. More than sixteen thousand nuclear weapons are on the ships and submarines of the U.S., Soviet Union, Britain, France and China. Almost 550 nuclear reactors are aboard the vessels of these five navies, more than half of the world's total nuclear power reactors. Naval ships of these nations carry nuclear weapons into ports all over the world. A nuclear accident aboard a ship in harbor could cause thousands of deaths and make the surrounding community uninhabitable.*

The oceans are the most dangerous theater for nuclear weapons, yet while the U.S. and Soviet Union discuss landbased reduction of nuclear arsenals they design and perfect new naval weapons without negotiations. "The nuclear arms race is not going away. It's going out to sea."**

*Statistics and scenarios on naval nuclear forces and possible consequences are provided by Greenpeace.
**Greenpeace.

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