

# STUDENTS AGAINST GLOBAL EXTERMINATION



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## The facts in the nuclear age: a springboard for dialogue

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**There is no defense against nuclear weapons.**

Retaliation is possible, but defense or actual protection are not.

"With the number of nuclear devices presently in existence (about 50,000) there is no way to prevent (at least) 200 bombs from destroying the complete social fabric of either or both continents. Any future developments (such as space-based anti-missile defence systems, effective antisub warfare techniques, increasingly powerful bombers and anti-bomber systems), no matter how brilliant, will never be effective enough to prevent the total devastation of both antagonists that will be caused by the missiles surviving a 'first strike' or the inevitable leaks through the defence systems." Jerome Wiesner, Institute Professor and former President of M.I.T. (1971-1980).

**Civil Defense:** This is the protection of the general public in the event of a nuclear war.

"There is no effective civil defense. The blast, heat and radiation effects would kill even those in shelters and the fallout would reach those who have been evacuated." International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

**Deterrence:** This is the theory that suggests that the build-up of nuclear weapons is a way of preventing either side from using their weapons.

It would take about 150 nuclear bombs to demolish every major and medium-sized city in the USSR — the virtual destruction of the Soviet Union. Another 150 would do the same job on the US. That is the underpinning of deterrence — mutually assured destruction.

This deterrence was reached many years ago — once each side had 150 nuclear warheads. From that point on, superiority became obsolete. Today, the US has around 30,000 nuclear weapons — enough to "overkill" every Soviet citizen 70 times over. The Soviet's 20,000 warheads are enough to kill every American 40 times over. Still, the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries continue to deploy more nuclear weapons. Why?

**We must ask ourselves if deterrence is a valid argument.**

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## How deterrence could fail: the danger of accidental nuclear war

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### Human or computer errors

It is known that in a recent 18-month period there were 151 false alarms at the North American Air Defence Command. It may also be assumed that the Soviets detect at least as many false alarms. The number of reported incidents is only a fraction of the total because the present governments do not tend to report these occurrences unless obvious circumstances force them to do so.

There have been many cases of alcohol and drug abuse, as well as deviant behavior, leading to the removal of personnel from access to nuclear weapons. In 1977, 250 people were removed for abuse of such drugs as heroin and LSD.

### "Use them or lose them" fears

Today an intercontinental missile can deliver its cargo in under 30 minutes, an offshore nuclear submarine in less than 15. Ballistic missiles launched from Soviet submarines can reach the US in 7 minutes. And a Pershing missile in Europe can reach the USSR in 6 minutes.

This means that in the event of a false alarm, there is not enough time to re-check. There is even less time to communicate with the "enemy". Each side is worried that its missiles could be hit while they are still sitting in their silos. The tendency is to move towards automatic "launch-on-warning" systems. That means that when a satellite detects what it believes to be an enemy missile attack — and maybe it is, or maybe it's an accident as is often the case — it relays the warning back to a computer which in turn launches the missiles within 3 minutes. **There is no human verification or intervention.**

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## ... even it deterrence doesn't fail: the immediate effects of the nuclear arms race

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"The arms race, even if nuclear war was never fought, is causing serious problems on a global

scale. No matter what important issue one looks at — environmental pollution, industrial inefficiency, inflation, unemployment, the profligate use of scarce resources, hunger, political oppression, development failure, and of course, armed conflict itself — all the world's major ills can trace an important part of their origins to one thing: the development, stockpiling and trade in arms being carried on on such a vast scale that they are impoverishing the entire world." (Dr. Donald Bates of McGill University.)

**The nuclear arms race is costing the world's economy more than \$100 billion a year.**

The World Health Organization estimates that it would take \$450 million to eliminate malaria world-wide. That amount of money is spent in 1 1/2 days of nuclear arms production. For the amount of money spent in **one minute** of nuclear arms production, 2000 starving children could be fed for a whole year.

### Nuclear waste piles up

The manufacture of nuclear weapons is piling up radioactive waste which remains deadly for hundreds of thousands of years. No one yet knows what to do with it. About 3/4 of all radioactive waste comes from the production of nuclear weapons. So if we keep at the arms race long enough (7 to 10 bombs are manufactured daily) we will achieve widespread radioactive contamination of our environment without the inconvenience of nuclear war.

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## The road to disarmament

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### Mutual nuclear weapons freeze

First developed by Randall Forsberg, the freeze is exactly what it suggests: a US-USSR agreement to stop all production, testing and stationing of new nuclear weapons. This includes the parts that make up these weapons and their delivery systems. This would freeze nuclear arsenals at their present level. A US-USSR freeze is widely considered the first step towards disarmament. It should eventually develop into a nuclear freeze by all nations. The freeze would permit great new social development with the money it would save.

### No first-use policy

If the Soviet Union and the United States pro-



mised never to be the first to use nuclear weapons, there would be a better basis for disarmament. The no first-use policy would be a useful confidence and trust-building measure.

## Verification

There are 14 arms control agreements in place between the USSR and the US. So far, none of them have been broken by either side. Since the two superpowers have profound distrust for each other, how do they make these agreements? How do they know that the "other side" isn't violating the terms of these agreements?

The answer is called "verification". Both sides have very sophisticated satellites to locate, identify and count the "other side's" missiles. Verification is the bedrock of all arms control and disarmament negotiations. If verification is undermined, disarmament becomes impossible, because the US and the USSR won't be able to negotiate or enforce any treaties to limit, reduce or eliminate missile systems.

The tendency for both superpowers to develop smaller missiles, such as the cruise, is a threat to verification. Their small size allows these missiles to be hidden from satellite surveillance.

## Conclusion

Albert Einstein said, "When we released energy from the atom, everything changed except our way of thinking. Because of that we drift towards unparalleled disaster." When we are clearly presented with a life or death choice, we will change our way of thinking. We have reached a stage where we can no longer think of war as a way of settling conflicts. Our technological knowledge has grown rapidly in a short period of time. Our moral values must mature at the same rate or we are doomed. Once we recognize that nuclear deterrence will fail, and that the future of our planet has been diagnosed as suicidal, public opinion will push our leaders to disarm. It was an informed public that brought about the abolitions of slavery and child labour.

## What can young people do?

Discuss the issues with your parents, teachers and each other. Use this sheet as a starting point. Ask questions. Beware of irrelevant directions. Try to stay on subject without offending the other person. This is not a competitive game. It's a dialogue.

Students can ask teachers and administrations what plans have been made for the health and safety of students in the event of a nuclear war. When adults are forced to acknowledge the shortcomings of such plans, they are often moved to take action for the prevention of nuclear war.

**Sign the PLEDGE FOR THE PLANET.** Do so in earnest or not at all. Do so with full determination to keep this commitment for the rest of your life. Mail out the three pledge postcards immediately, and if you can't frame the copy that is yours to keep, at least pin it to your wall.

## Wear the I SIGNED SAGE button.

Although you may not yet be of voting age, many politicians have long-term ambitions to remain in public office. They will be affected by the opinions of the next generation of voters.

**Use all the media.** Write letters to the editors of your local newspapers. Make posters. Call national or local radio and T.V. shows, including kids' shows, and ask for students' panel discussions or interviews on the issue.

**Letter writing and political pressure.** Letter writing is an effective way of generating political pressure. Write your Member of Parliament. Your letter will be answered. Try writing the US and Soviet embassies. Tell them your opinion on disarmament. Write to:

USSR EMBASSY  
285 Charlotte St.  
OTTAWA, Ontario.  
K1N 8L5

US Embassy  
100 Wellington St.  
OTTAWA, Ontario.  
K1P 5T1

Get together with one or two friends and visit your M.P. Find out where she or he

stands. Phone or write your city or town councillor to make sure he or she knows about your new lifetime commitment. Tell your teachers, your parents and your friends about what you have done, and ask them to respect and support your decision.

**Join your school disarmament group.** If there isn't one, start one. Your group should have as its aims: keeping its members up-to-date and trying to reach and inform other students. There is a whole network of school disarmament groups being formed. If you need help, contact SAGE and we'll give you some ideas. We'll also help you get films and resource people. Your group should try to turn it's members into authorities on the nuclear arms race issue. The more you know about disarmament, the better you will be at convincing your friends and peers that disarmament is necessary.

The more you learn about the arms race, the more frightening it becomes. This fear can only be cured by one thing: disarmament. But try some of the above suggestions. You'll find yourself becoming more optimistic through action and involvement. SAGE has hope, and its members continue to plan their futures, because we have trust in a new generation of active and informed young people.

**In the time it has taken you to read this pamphlet (about 6 minutes), \$1 200 000 has been spent in nuclear weapons. In that same 6 minutes, 180 children died from disease and malnutrition.**

## Students Against Global Extermination

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