

# A new era

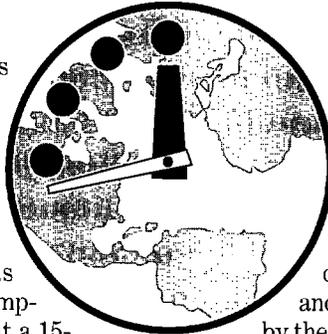
**W**ith this issue, the *Bulletin* resets the *Bulletin* Clock from 10 to 17 minutes until midnight. The clock is in a new region because we feel the world has entered a new era. Never before has the Board of Directors moved the minute hand so far at one time. Conceived at the dawn of the Cold War, the clock was designed with a 15-minute range. John A. Simpson, one of the *Bulletin's* founders, says that a 15-minute scale was all anyone thought would be needed in their lifetimes. The present move was not easily agreed upon. Board members initially expressed divergent views as did some of the sponsors of the *Bulletin*. But on balance a consensus was reached reflecting a conviction that the world was changing in fundamental and positive ways.

Foremost are the developments in East-West relations. The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty was revived and promptly signed. Shortly thereafter hardliners in the Soviet Union mounted a coup that quickly failed and, among other results, significantly reduced what might have been years of negotiations between our two countries. Then, on September 27, President George Bush announced the withdrawal of thousands of tactical weapons. Many strategic missiles were taken off hair-trigger alert, as was the B-52 bomber fleet. On October 5, President Mikhail Gorbachev announced similar initiatives and upped the ante by indicating that the Soviet Union would suspend nuclear testing. We hope the United States will have a positive response.

**T**he Cold War is over. The 40-year-long East-West nuclear arms race has ended. The world has clearly entered a new post-Cold War era. The illusion that tens of thousands of nuclear weapons are a guarantor of national security has been stripped away. In the context of a disintegrating Soviet Union, large nuclear arsenals are even more clearly seen as a liability, a yardstick of insecurity.

But the world is still a dangerous place. The START agreement, which mandates reductions in the number of strategic nuclear weapons, does not initiate a process for retiring the warheads and converting the highly enriched uranium and plutonium into a form not usable in weapons. Indeed it does not require the destruction of warheads, but it does permit modernization of nuclear forces. Agreement by both sides to cease testing would restrict this.

While the failed coup and subsequent extraordinary changes in the "former" Soviet Union are major reasons for optimism, the whole world is properly concerned with the risks of national disintegration and the security of the 27,000



nuclear weapons during this critical period when the republics and the central government strive to create a new and reliable relationship despite great difficulties.

We recognize that nuclear weapons remain; even the modest agreed-upon reductions in their numbers will not be achieved overnight. Other nations have such weapons and more aspire to have them—impelled, in part,

by the failure of the nuclear superpowers to fulfill the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, thereby rendering themselves incapable of invoking the treaty for others.

The *Bulletin* will continue to keep a wary eye on the nuclear weapons situation, but we will also focus on new concepts of security that are of critical importance, and we will more intensely address the militarization of our society and of our national policy and that of other nations. We will be concerned about the sale of weapons and of facilities used in manufacturing them, and with all aspects of manufacture and distribution that make up the world's trillion-dollar investment in arms and armies.

**F**ar deeper reductions in nuclear weapons stockpiles must follow. The *Bulletin* has long reported on the destructiveness of seeking military solutions to the world's ills, and it will continue to do so. It has long reported on the economic distortions and human misery caused when the nations of the world pour vast sums of money and intellectual capital into weaponry—as they still do even though the paralyzing shadow of nuclear apocalypse has faded. We will aggressively examine the opportunities presented by the end of the East-West nuclear arms race.

We are encouraged by East-West agreements to conduct on-site inspections, and by the improvement of technologies for verification. The experience of the Gulf War offers many lessons, one of the most significant being the increasing role for the United Nations in resolving conflict and blocking aggression. The *Bulletin* must and will continue to address these issues as well as the proliferation of weapons, the conditions of nuclear power, and environmental concerns that threaten in the long run the well-being—indeed, the security—of all peoples.

We believe that presidents Bush and Gorbachev have guided their respective nations to a historic intersection of mutual interests. Continuing boldness and imagination are called for. Men and women throughout the world must vigorously challenge the bankrupt paradigms of militarism if we are to achieve a new world order. The setting of the *Bulletin* Clock reflects our optimism that we are entering a new era. ■