

Surviving the Nuclear Spread

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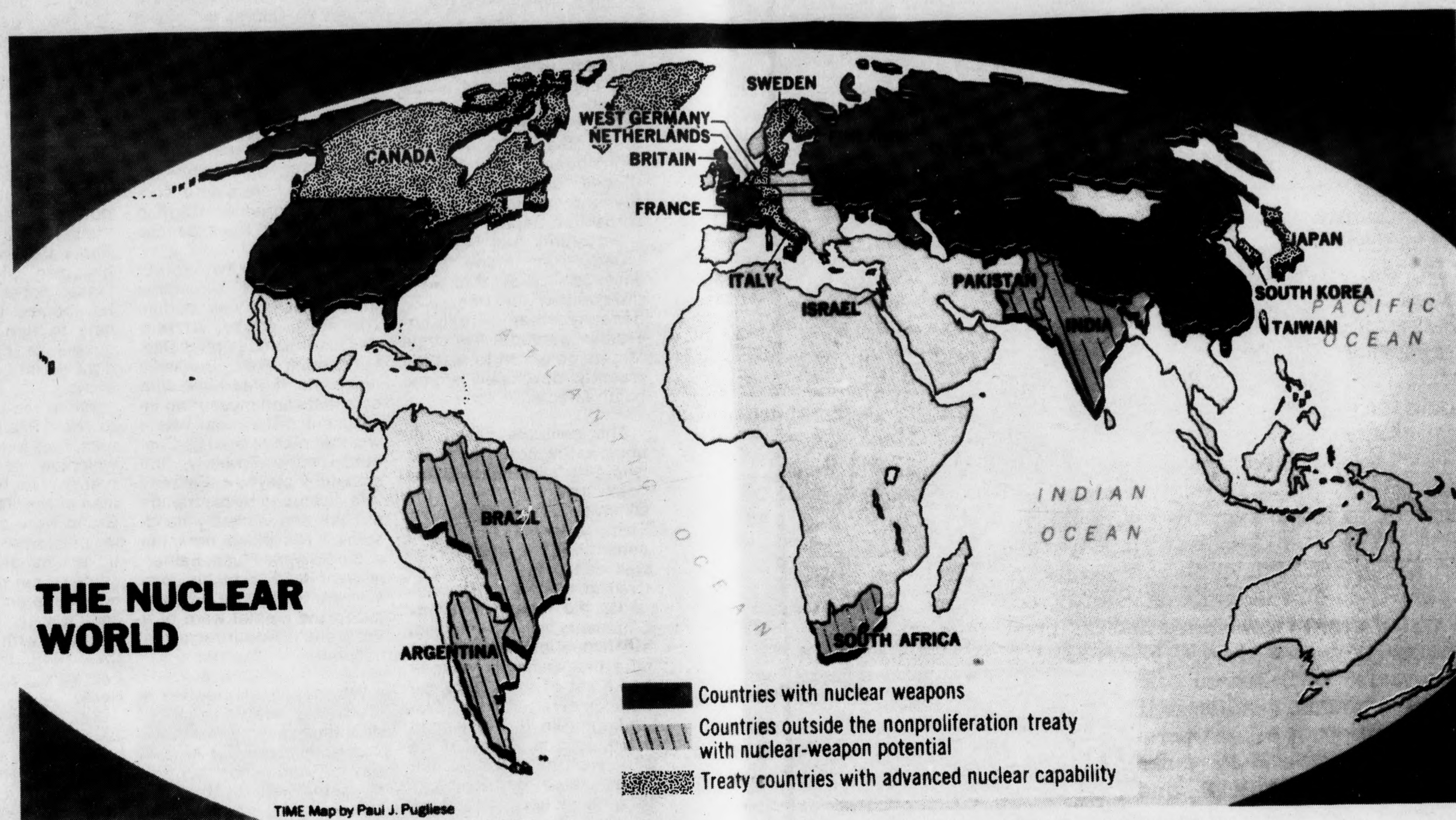
"Proliferation has already happened. The main problem of the late 1980's is not so much preventing the spread of nuclear weapons but making it survivable."

Those are the chilling words of a senior official of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency. Five countries formally possess nuclear weapons (the U.S., the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China) and other countries are ominously close: India's 1974 test explosion shows that it has learned to master the capacity to build them. Pakistan operates a "research center" and has been illegally buying high-tech equipment, all on the way to the Bomb.

It is the age of nuclear proliferation, and the power, knowledge and facilities to make nuclear weapons is coming into more and more unstable hands. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi's here-to-for unsuccessful bid for nuclear power — the stepping-stone to nuclear weaponry — is coming closer to a reality as he helps Pakistan toward their goal.

Nuclear weapons in the collective hands of any state are dangerous. The popular image of nuclear war results from the classic U.S.—U.S.S.R. conflict. The trouble may be, however, in the possibility of two smaller nations having a regional war turn nuclear. The devastation and radiation may cover an area much larger than the two combatants' countries. And, with the tradition of the superpowers to take opposing sides in regional conflicts, what guarantee is there that a small war can mushroom into a third world war? The Soviets and the U.S. are in agreement in this one area, deciding last November to meet twice a year "to come to an agreement before nuclear weapons spread to more and more countries that could involve us in a conflict," as a Soviet specialist said.

Nuclear weapon-making capability also makes terrorism of awesome proportions possible. The U.S. military has, since 1964, deployed the "back pack nuke," a bomb that one man can carry and can destroy dams, bridges and similar installations. It is also possible to make a 400-lb. bomb, capable of fitting into medium-sized car, that could destroy a medium-sized city.



An unstable regime like Gaddafi's, if they could steal or buy enough plutonium, could build a device slightly weaker than the one that leveled Hiroshima for a few thousand dollars. The horror is too close. According to *TIME* Magazine, June 3, 1985:

A new generation of nuclear powers, and would-be powers, is maturing. Known among experts as the "phantom proliferators, the countries are contributing the most significant uncertainties about the future of non-proliferation. The phantoms are India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa and, to a lesser degree, Argentina and Brazil. All of them have mastered, or are well on their way to mastering, the skills to produce atomic explosives.

What to do? The United Nations is approaching a mid-life crisis that seems to be heading it toward a toothless dotage. The general population of Canada, to use one country as an example, has 58.6 percent

of its citizens believing the world is closer to a nuclear war, yet only four percent have taken part in a peace demonstration, and only two percent belong to a peace organization. If we are relying on our legislators to push for peace, we must make sure they have a clear mandate to move in that area.

Canada, to its credit, has advanced nuclear capability but is a signatory of the 1968 United Nations - sponsored Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Canada also demands that any country which purchases any technology or supplies which could lead to a nuclear weapons production to open their facilities to the inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Britain, Australia and Canada were the only countries to agree with the U.S. that inspection of a country's nuclear facilities in fact should be a condition of sale.

The Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD) is the sole global multilateral

negotiating body dedicated to arms control and disarmament issues. Its membership stands at 40 and includes all five nuclear powers from all geo-political blocs: the East, the West and the Neutral/Non-aligned.

The CD has been working since 1980 on an interesting treaty that, if drafted properly, could become a powerful legal model for any kind of nuclear arms ban or treaty. Its subject: chemical weapons.

Whereas nuclear bombs are mankind's most devastating weapons, chemical weapons are close to its most horrible. Nine hundred thousand deaths in the First World War — ghastly, choking, agonizingly slow deaths — attest to its gruesomeness. They represent none of the "morality" of war that we, as civilized humans, like to maintain in our conflicts. The need, then, for a chemical weapons ban has been established, and since evidence shows they were used in the ongoing Iran-Iraq War and possibly in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia, the CD feels an immediate need for a convention.

As Douglas Roche, Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament, explains, the negotiation of a chemical weapons convention is of four-fold importance:

- it would represent a disarmament treaty and not merely an arms-control measure;
- it would be an effective non-proliferation treaty;
- it would be a comprehensive treaty that would ban development, production, stock-piling and the transfer of chemical weapons with the provision for the destruction of stockpiles and production facilities and appropriate verification;
- a chemical weapons convention would be a law-making treaty with far-reaching legal implications.

Its objectives then, are much the same as a nuclear-weapons convention and serves as a great practice attempt for the drafting of a nuclear treaty. It appears as a heartening step toward the day when different would states (a rather abstract and human-made distinction anyway) can agree that some weapons, some forms of aggression, are just to immoral to be allowed existence.