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THE FOLLY OF FREEZE WITHOUT ON-SITE INSPECTION

"But we can't trust the Russians," say the opponents of a nuclear freeze. "We don't have to," answer the freezeniks; "we can monitor Soviet compliance with satellites and other technical means, which can now read a license plate in Moscow."

That answer is simply false. You don't need to be a scientist to see why; all you need is common sense.

Spy satellites in space can take pictures of objects exposed to the lens of the camera. But they cannot take pictures of items under cover of a roof or camouflage or clouds.

Factories have roofs. When secret weapons come out of the factories for field testing, so that cameras can photograph them, it is too late.

Like the wife who is the last to know about her husband cheating on her, U.S. intelligence is nearly always surprised about new Russian weapons. Somehow, we don't find out until the prototype appears.

When a new assembly line starts up, the spy satellite cannot know what is its rate of production, or which version of a certain missile is being produced, until the finished missiles roll out the door.

Sometimes, the Russians even produce their prototypes of new vessels in covered pens. We didn't get our first look at some of them until they put to sea for trial runs.

Spy cameras cannot look into a missile and count how many warheads are present. The Soviets can increase or decrease the number of warheads in a nose cone without our knowing about it and without additional testing.

The Russians consistently code radio signals from their test missiles to be sure that we cannot monitor the precise characteristics of their missiles and warheads.

Satellite cameras cannot monitor the testing of nuclear warheads because that is done underground. We try to monitor underground live testing by seismic devices, but that is very unprecise. The Russians can use dummies in their tests which may be very different

from live warheads, and the quantity of fissionable material in the warheads can be easily disguished or hidden.

There is no way we can know if a new family of warheads tested on one missile has been installed on another. For example, our warhead designed for the M-X (MK-12a) is now being placed in Minuteman III.

The nuclear freezeniks claim that Russian cheating on a freeze or an arms-control treaty would be unlikely because the risk of detection would be considerable, the price of detection would be great, and the benefits of small-scale cheating would be negligible. To the contrary, all those assertions are false.

As we have seen above, the risk of detection is small and the benefits are great. Moreover, the "price" of detection is non-existent. Who would set the price and demand payment?

For ten years, the Russians have consistently cheated on SALT I, and they haven't paid any price at all. In the name of detente, the U.S. State Department has turned a deaf ear to the mountain of evidence of cheating.

Even if our diplomats were of a mind to file complaints, the Standing Consultative Committee is made up of equal numbers of representatives from both sides, so all votes would end in a tie.

On-site inspection is a simple answer to the problems of verification and compliance. But the Russians refused to allow it in SALT I, they never agreed to it in principle, and they never will.

President Reagan has made it clear that we must have bona fide inspection as part of any START agreement. We should never retreat from that position because, witnout it, any arms-control agreement or freeze is a farce.

The Soviets have a closed society and they mean to keep it that way. The Russians remain opposed to on-site inspection because they have something to hide.