PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

FRI 27 NOV 2026

A Nuclear War Cannot be Won and Must Never be Fought

(…..But we are going to vaporise Europe anyway if we don't get what we want.)

Just a week ago ago,(Fri 20th) but a week seems a long time these days…

The reputedly three most powerful people on earth (Xi Jin Ping, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump) – met in Shenzen, China, and along with denouncing the attempts of the ICJ and the ICC to enforce international law, did one hopefully positive thing: They reaffirmed a short piece of wording known as ‘Reagan-Gorbachev’, because it was first promulgated by US President Ronald Reagan, and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1984.

There was ample reason to do so: In 1983, the world had nearly ended not once but twice, with the Sept 26 Serpukhov-15 incident, (in which Soviet surveillance satellites indicated a US launch), and again in November (over a prolonged period of extreme tension), in the NATO Able Archer exercises in which NATO rehearsed for the apocalypse. There was one glitch to this rehearsal: The Soviet Union considered it was not a rehearsal and postured its nuclear forces accordingly.

NATO continues to this day to practice for the apocalypse (Steadfast Noon), and from time to time, Russia has performed mirror-image exercises' also with nuclear-capable weapon systems, at exactly the same time. You threaten me, I threaten you. Some things do not change even with the possibility of the end of the world.

There was thus good reason for Reagan and Gorbachev, when they met in Reykjavik in 1984, to try to take the said apocalypse off the agenda.

What they managed to agree on was modest. Reagan-Gorbachev simply says that **'A Nuclear War Cannot be Won and Must Never be Fought'**
. Yet even this minimalist formula has been hard to get reaffirmed.

This formula implicitly recognises that the incineration of large numbers of cities will loft over 150 million tonnes of very black soot into the upper stratosphere, where it will block out the sun and drop global temperatures to below those of the last ice age, creating famine and darkness for those who didn't get vaporised. In addition, EMP (Electromagnetic Pulse) from high altitude and space explosions will destroy electronic systems on the ground and in space (Goodbye AI). The damage extends from your mobile phone to your car ignition system to the global financial system (which could literally disappear). And for this to take place as few as five nuclear explosions approximately 400Km out in space are enough.

The 'unpacked' meaning of Reagan-Gorbachev includes all of this.

In this context, the possible launch of a nuclear weapon satellite into a long term orbit in space (below) is significant.

When in 2021, Biden and Putin met in Geneva, not so long before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, three disarmament activists – Alyn Ware, Aaron Tovish and myself- had spent a lot of time over the preceding 12 months urging governments and the General Assembly as a whole to reaffirm Reagan-Gorbachev.

It was reaffirmed again by the entire N-5 (US, UK, Russia, China, France) in 2022.

The Shenzen reaffirmation is thus, the third reaffirmation by nuclear states, (and by the three nuclear states that have the largest nuclear arsenals, China having trebled its arsenal from around 200 warheads to over 600 warheads).

Given the record of nuclear threats uttered by, in particular, former Russian President Medvedev, by foreign minister Lavrov, and from time to time by Putin himself, one is tempted to wonder how meaningful all this is.

The latest blood-curdling utterances by Medvedev are merely the latest in a long sequence of threats to incinerate or vaporise Europe, Germany, the UK, France, etc, that is is hard/impossible to know how seriously to take.

The question now is:

--If Putin/the Putin power group/the ‘Siloviki’ – really did intend to incinerate somebody/someplace, would they even sign on to Reagan/Gorbachev?

Its worthy of note that according to one highly influential Russian nuclear weapons expert/advocate, Reagan/Gorbachev is to be dismissed as ‘madness’.

The latest threats would seem to throw Reagan/Gorbachev reaffirmation out of the window almost as soon as it has been uttered.

So too would the possibility of nuclear weapons use in space, embodied in the pending launch of a ‘nuclear satellite’, which would station a nuclear weapon permanently in space in violation of the Outer Space treaty. In order to explode a nuclear weapon in space, one actually does not need to have it pre-positioned there: An ordinary ICBM launch immediately takes a warhead into space, where, if you are crazy enough, you can explode it.

Given the right warhead configuration, the effects of EMP (electromagnetic Pulse) and of lingering radiation would destroy BOTH other satellites (including ones own) AND ground-based electronic systems, on which current civilisation depends.

Which no doubt is the reason that the Outer Space treaty was adopted back in the 60’s in the immediate wake of US and Soviet outer space explosions over Kazakhstan and Johnson Atoll that caused major malfunctions in ground based systems.

This, in the wake of a reaffirmation of Reagan-Gorbachev!

Did Putin mean anything at all when he signed those words?

(Same question can of course be asked of Xi and Donald).