

The summit: an exercise in futility?

GOODMAN from Page 4

platitudes more suitable for mantras than meaningful negotiations: "Peace is the most important goal of the Communist Party and the Soviet state." Oooooommmmm.

If you do enough repetitions of these three exercises, you will be in exactly the shape they want you in by Nov. 19. Depressed. Hopeless.

Well, spare me, but I don't want to sign up for this workshop. I don't think that the average American needs to lower his or her expectations. From what I see, the pressure is already so low that we're nearly comatose.

Americans do not expect their president to come down from the Swiss

mountains with a tablet or timetable for doing away with all or even half the nuclear weapons.

Our wish-list is already pathetically meager. We would like to believe, please sirs, that those with superpower would exercise some real power to stop the arms race. We'd like to believe that there could be a meeting of the minds that focused on the wild proposition of mutual survival.

In short, the only adrenalin that rushes through our bodies when we think of the meetings ahead comes from a wild and crazy desire. We want the future to look better on the way down from the summit than it does on the way up. We don't want them to blow

this chance.

The secret of the body-building politic is that dealing with government is bit like dealing with children. Every time you lower your expectations, they lower their performance. You may protect yourself from disappointment, but you also get nothing.

I don't think we should prep for the summit by pumping iron, even iron curtains. But if we don't raise the public pressure, the whole trip will turn into the most useless kind of exercise, an exercise in futility.

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Goodman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the Boston Globe.

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