

Bully on the block

Superpowers should beware of Iraq

The casting off of nuclear weapons by world superpowers comes as welcome relief to the generations that grew up in the shadow of the Cold War.

For the late-20th-century information generation, the fear of nuclear destruction has been readily apparent, reflected in such mainstream entertainment as "War Games," "The Day After" and even the recent "Hunt for Red October."

But now that the iron curtain has lifted and the United States is developing friendlier relations with the remains of the Soviet Union, the term "global thermonuclear war" may be headed for a footnote reference in a chronicle of the history of film.

That's good news. Smile and rest a little easier tonight.

Meanwhile, the world's not-so-super powers are scrambling to get their hands on the technology being abandoned by the United States and the Soviet Union.

U.N. officials who were sent to inspect nuclear weapons capabilities in Iraq reported last week that Saddam Hussein's technicians were within a year to 18 months of building an

implosion-type nuclear bomb. When the Persian Gulf war started, Iraq already was testing a missile system to propel such a bomb, the officials said.

The news of Iraq's impending nuclear capability did not surprise too many analysts. What was surprising was the magnitude and quality of Iraq's nuclear project.

"It was a well-planned, well-managed program," said U.N. Inspector David Kay. More than 5,000 people were working toward nuclear weapons capabilities in Iraq, he said.

And, the United States is at least partially responsible for putting Iraq on the nuclear map.

NBC news reported last week that the U.S. government invited three Iraqi scientists to attend a Seattle conference on detonation devices for nuclear weapons during the late '80s.

Granted, the conference was held years before Iraq invaded Kuwait. Nevertheless, scientists from Iraq never should have been invited.

Superpowers that provide the means for smaller countries to develop nuclear weapons are the information generation's next nightmare.

One means of regulating the spread of nuclear technology is through the expansion of the international nuclear nonproliferation treaty started in the '70s. The treaty, in essence, says that the agreed nations will not spread the technology they have about nuclear weapons and will not seek out information about nuclear weapons from other countries.

The treaty's power is in its significance. World powers such as the United States have signed it. South Africa was the latest nation to come aboard when it signed the treaty last summer.

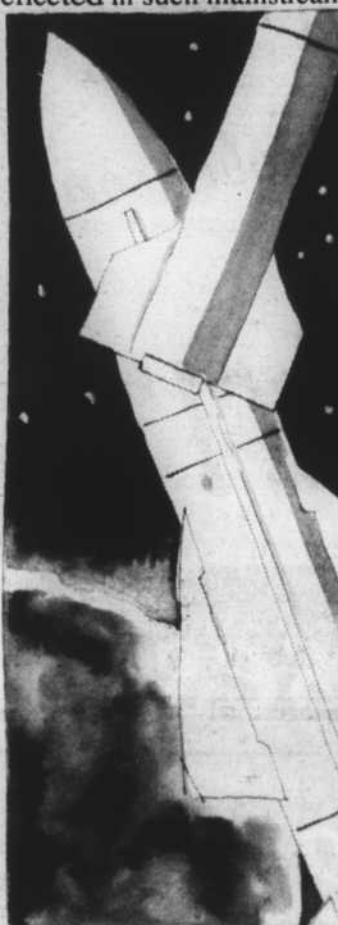
Until now, uneasy peace has been ensured by the knowledge that both the United States and the Soviet Union could destroy each other at the touch of a button.

But one nuclear bomb in the hands of Iraq or another small country makes a bully on the block.

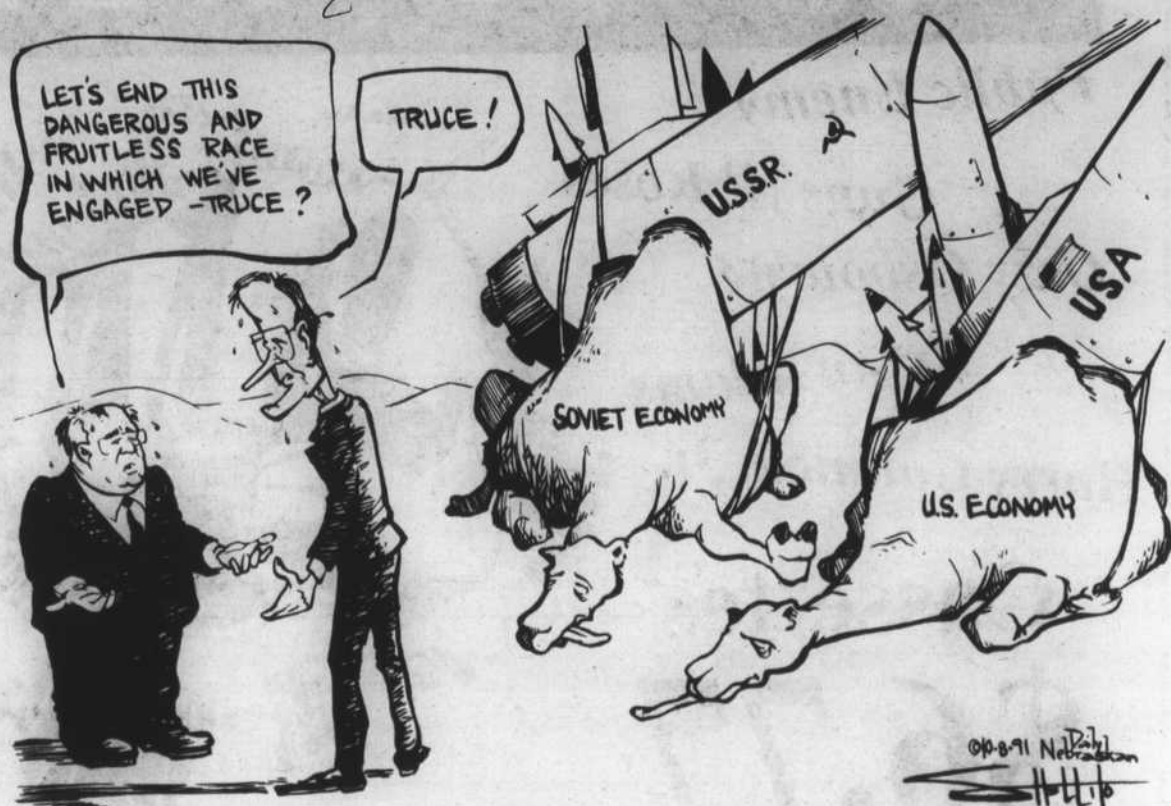
While a nuclear attack against a superpower like the United States remains unlikely, an attack anywhere in the world probably would draw the United States into the conflict — especially if it was U.S. technology that aided the development of the bomb.

So, while President Bush and Soviet President Gorbachev are making concessions to one another, the information generation should get used to resting with one eye open.

The little powers of the world are following fast behind us.



David Badders/DN



WALTER GHOLSON

Time taken to honor pioneer

In our urgency to move rapidly down the academic road, we often forget to honor the pioneers who made our present opportunities possible.

So this weekend, I took a sharp exit off the university freeway to witness a symposium in honor of a living model of literary excellence.

That model, Arthur Paul Davis, has been called "a pioneering illuminator of the works of black writers." He was the first African-American to receive a doctor's degree in English from Columbia University.

Davis was born in Hampton, Va., on Nov. 21, 1904. He received a high-school diploma from Hampton Institute in 1922.

Davis was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and received his undergraduate degree in 1927. From then until 1944 he taught English at several colleges. In 1944 he joined the faculty at Howard University in Washington, where he remained until his retirement.

In 1941, he co-edited the first comprehensive anthology of African-American writers. The next year he received his degree from Columbia.

In 1943, Davis published "The Life and Work of Issac Watts," the story of an 18th century religious writer best known for his Christmas hymn "Joy to the World."

From 1933 until 1950, he also wrote a weekly column, "With A Grain of Salt," for the Norfolk Journal and Guide, a weekly black newspaper in Virginia.

In the 800 columns Davis wrote, he discussed everything from his fear that his son was addicted to comic books to the impact that Franklin D. Roosevelt's death had on Americans of every race and creed.

Since his first publication, Davis has written 27 scholarly articles, five introductions to books, 914 journalistic articles, three published speeches, two pieces of short fiction, 12 biographical articles, 28 book reviews and two scholarly books; and he has co-edited four major anthologies of African-American literature.

While he is noted for his writing, it is probably Davis the professor who most often takes center stage. In 1964, he introduced Howard's first graduate-level black literature course in the English department.



While Davis rejects the notion of special formulas for good teaching, he stresses that effective teaching must instill in the students the belief that the teacher is really interested in them. He said he tried to give his students a feeling that honesty in scholarship was as important as honesty in life.

Davis said that when he visited Howard back in 1943, a member of the department asked him why he was wasting his time with black literature when he could be writing about the "real" literature.

He said that was the general attitude of the times, although Howard was more advanced than most universities because of the presence of pioneers such as Dorothy Porter Wesley, Benjamin Brawley, Alain Locke and Sterling Brown. Despite this criticism, Davis became absorbed in his work.

"I felt here was a genuine field, a relatively new field and there were only a few people working in it," he said in 1988 in an article in the Howard magazine, New Directions.

Davis said he somehow sensed that this work was an important segment of American literature.

"When I started teaching," he said, "the standard literature anthologies had no black authors."

During those days, blacks felt differently about themselves and many scholars had generally negative attitudes concerning the legitimacy of black literature.

Davis' "Literature of the American Negro" course proved to be right on time, however, because of the black consciousness movement, and it quickly gained a popular reputation.

But it was more than just a fad course; it was one of the finest educational productions composed by Davis the teacher. His school of thought imparted wisdom laced with the wit and humor of a self-described "po' country boy from Virginia."

Many former students in the course have gone on to become brilliant scholars. These students, from all races and nationalities, are now teaching and conducting research in the field of African-American literature.

In addition, Davis has taught students from Japan and Germany who have returned home to translate African-American literary classics.

While Davis rejects the notion of special formulas for good teaching, he stresses that effective teaching must instill in the students the belief that the teacher is really interested in them.

He said he tried to give his students a feeling that honesty in scholarship was as important as honesty in life.

It is because of the work of scholars like him that today I know something about my heritage and its rich literary tradition.

There's an old saying about giving people their roses while they're still living. On Friday, during the opening of the seminar to honor Davis, he got his roses and I got a copy of his latest contribution, "The New Cavalcade: African American Writing from 1760 to the Present."

But more than anything else, I came back onto the freeway with a recharged motivation to follow his example, which is a tradition of excellence.

Gholson is a senior news-editorial journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Anonymous submissions will not

be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and

group affiliation, if any. Requests to

withhold names will not be granted.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.