

LETTERS

Gun shortage?

Michael Klare's article on small arms (*ITT*, July 11) is quite a bizarre piece of work. He ignores the political, economic and social factors behind war and places the blame on the availability of rifles and grenades. He deliberately ignores areas where the *lack* of small arms in the hands of democratic forces is a problem. In Guatemala and El Salvador, for example, the army and death squads dominate an under-armed guerrilla movement. In Haiti a few thousand fascists dominate the entire, *unarmed*, population.

Klare is misinformed about events in Rwanda. The RPF fighters pictured on the cover, armed with Romanian AKs, are members of a multi-ethnic, one-third Hutu, force fighting to end

the ethnic violence. The hundreds of thousands murdered in Rwanda were, according to eyewitness accounts in the *Los Angeles Times*, hacked to death with pangas, machetes and hatchets by gangs of Hutu thugs who were paid by the army. Modern small arms played only a minor role in the mass killings. And in Kashmir it is not "soldiers" who are dying. It is the occupying Indian Army that has tortured and killed thousands of unarmed Muslims who are defended by a small, poorly armed guerrilla group.

Modern assault rifles are no more lethal than the 9mm Sten guns, manufactured illegally by Haganah, used in the massacre at Deir Yassin. Dr. Baruch Goldman of Hebron was a uniformed reservist in the Israeli army and was *officially* issued a weapon.

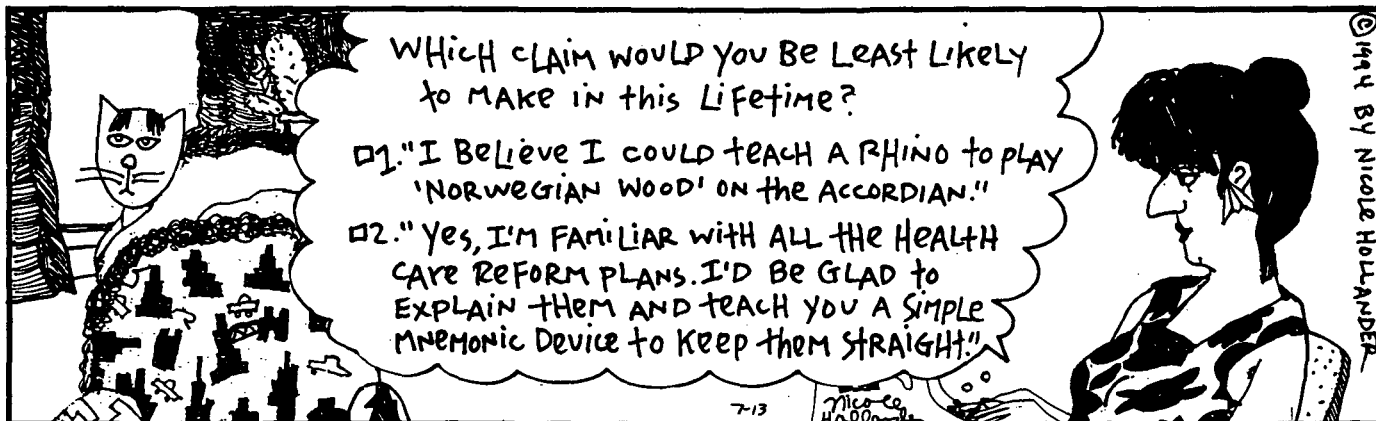
The submachine gun and automatic rifle have existed since the end of World War I. The World War II StG 43-44s are usually considered the first assault rifles, and the AK-47 has been around almost 50 years. The U.S. M-2 carbine cycled at 750 rounds per minute, weighed 5.5 pounds and had a 30-round detachable magazine—just like the Galil. The M-2 was issued in 1944! Some of the new weapons are lighter and shorter, but most are just as heavy as many World War II weapons. Klare is either indulging in hysteria-mongering or has not done his research.

The rifles in the photo from Yugoslavia are 7.92mm Mausers designed in 1898 and manufactured in Yugoslavia. The international arms trade has *nothing* to do with the violence there. The arms and munitions used in the fighting were domestically produced. The vast majority of casualties in Sarajevo and Goradze were caused by shells from heavy mortars and tank cannons—the Bosnians are handicapped as they have only small arms. Large mortars of 81-82mm and 120mm require trained personnel and are not guerrilla weapons. The Chetnik and Ustashi fascist forces are armed and trained by ex-members of the Yugoslavian Army—thus they have tanks and artillery.

The tiny number of M16s supplied to Somalia—4,800 in total—has very little to do with the violence. They were supplied after the Ethiopians, our

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



old ally, dumped us for the Soviets in 1975. Prior to that, Siad Barre's army received its arms from the Soviets. The U.S. mission failed because the United States did not coordinate with the U.N. or respect Somali politics.

G. Embree
Los Angeles

Michael Klare responds: While G. Embree makes some interesting points, nothing he says dilutes my main findings: (1) an ever-growing abundance of light weapons is fueling ethnic and regional wars, making them deadlier and harder to stop; (2) the light weapons available on international markets are increasingly lethal in their effects; (3) the world community has done almost nothing to stem the global trade in light weapons. With respect to Rwanda, while it is certainly true that many killings have been performed with machetes and other primitive weapons, much of the slaughter is the work of Hutu militias armed with government-supplied assault guns.

No threat?

Having just read Robert Parry's hysterical article "Oliver's army" (ITT, June 27), I must say I think he is resorting to the role of a demagogue himself by exaggerating the danger of Oliver North being elected to the U.S. Senate seat for Virginia.

The fact is that even prominent Republicans like Sen. John Warner have repudiated North, and ex-President Ronald Reagan has gone so far as to brand North as the liar he is. I have never been a fan of Warner or Reagan, but their influence in this race has been healthy to the extent that it has helped establish an environment in which North cannot win. The bigger problem is that the Democrats here in Virginia have become so corrupt with power that they can offer the voters no better alternative than a gutless ward-

heeler like Sen. Chuck Robb for re-election. That is the real reason why so many Virginians are turning in disgust to independent candidates such as Marshall Coleman and L. Douglas Wilder, or is that stark reality too inconvenient for Parry?

Paul Hickey
Fairfax, Va.

Self-imposed impasse

A brief look at history goes a long way toward explaining the present implosion of the Clinton health care proposal. National health care has been on the agenda since the days of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Medicare and Medicaid date from Lyndon Johnson, and every recent congressional session has seen proposals for extended coverage.

No serious effort to extend such coverage has been made in the interim because the period since the '40s found U.S. companies without effective competition in the world markets. Many such companies gave union workers health benefits in lieu of wage increases. As a result, there were no major sources of pressure on Congress. That is, until the '70s and '80s.

As foreign competition grew, leading businessmen such as Lee Iacocca found that the health benefits obtained through union bargaining were developing into a major burden on production costs, with adverse effects on competitiveness.

From the beginning, government has been a favorite resort for shifting burdens from the backs of business. From roads, canals and land grants to

the outright extension of monies to ailing firms, business has always looked to government for support. So it is now with health care.

The Clintons, however, have fumbled the opportunity. Aside from flawed cost analysis, they propose placing a mandated burden on business. No wonder major business groups object. Single-payer would avoid this problem by spreading the costs over the entire population. Despite partisan cries of socialism, it is more than likely that businesses, both large and small, would once again be happy to accept this transfer of burden from their backs—after all, their major competitors have not found this solution unacceptable. Or is this too rational for Congress?

Carl Schiffer
Rye, N.Y.

Correction

In Miles Harvey's "Bummer Vacations" (ITT, June 27) writer Joy Williams should have been quoted as describing the Everglades as a "once astounding ecosystem." An ellipsis should have followed the phrase.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan

