

<https://www.acdn.net/spip/spip.php?article114>



A French Debate

Phasing Out Military AND Civilian Nuclearism

- Homepage - News - Letters from ACDN -

Publication date: Wednesday 16 November 2005

Copyright © www.acdn.net - All rights reserved

The Mouvement de la Paix held its congress at St-Ouen near Paris on 11-13 November 2005.

To its co-presidents, ACDN sent good wishes for a successful congress, and also the following contribution to discussions:

As its name indicates, Action of Citizens for the total Dismantling of Nukes (ACDN), a registered association founded in 1996, has the main statutory aim of acting for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

We think that nuclear weapons today represent the greatest danger for humanity. If some of them, much more powerful than those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, were to be used, they would not only kill millions of civilians but they would risk making the planet uninhabitable for the survivors, because of the radioactive fallout which would continue for decades. Besides, such a catastrophe would provoke such chaos that none of our many other problems - the social, health and ecological problems which we must join forces to confront internationally - could be solved.

Right now, the huge financial, economic, scientific and human resources devoted to researching, developing, maintaining and deploying these weapons, along with the "military thing" in general, are done at the expense of basic civilian needs which those resources could satisfy. Furthermore, the mere existence of these arms maintains a climate of distrust and fear that is unfavourable to cooperation between peoples and states.

There are other reasons to justify their abolition: the criminal nature of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, duly recognised by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on 8 July 1996; the legal obligation, for the nuclear-armed states parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to negotiate in good faith and to eliminate their nuclear arsenals in accordance with article VI of that treaty; the antidemocratic and even totalitarian nature of nuclear weapons which give to one man - one in each nuclear weapon state - the power to slay millions of his kin at one stroke.

For these reasons, along with the "Abolition 2000" network which gathers over 2000 NGOs or cities across the world, and with the "Mayors for Peace" who include now over 1000 cities, we think that civil societies must force all the nuclear-armed governments to renounce nuclear weapons and negotiate without delay to eliminate them, if possible before 2020, under strict and effective international control. This demand applies of course to France, whose responsibilities as one of the only European states with nuclear arms and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council are very great with regard to nuclear disarmament and proliferation.

There are two ways in particular which might impose this demand on our political leaders. To inform and mobilise public opinion - directly and via elected representatives - is the first; it has been used by a certain number of French associations such as ours, notably during a national campaign with the Mouvement de la Paix agreed to coordinate; we must pursue this path and intensify the actions. The second way may be to use legalities: since the possession of nuclear weapons and the non-respect for article VI of the NPT are violations of international law, why not have recourse to the tribunals that have powers to make it respected? We are proposing this and we would be ready, if the proposal is accepted, to open proceedings as a civil party with other associations.

Actions for nuclear disarmament are not, of course, limited to the above. They must be coordinated on the national,

Phasing Out Military AND Civilian Nuclearism

European and international levels. This already happens and must be strengthened. One desirable objective could be to transform Europe into a Nuclear-Free Zone, which would join other such zones already in place and would have an exemplary value, notably for Asia and the Middle East.

On all these points, we think that the abolitionist NGOs of France and Europe, who are continually tightening their linkages, are in a position to agree. We are convinced that the 2005 Congress of the Mouvement de la Paix will make a very useful contribution.

We would be remiss if we did not conclude by mentioning a point on which the Mouvement de la Paix and ACDN have diverged until now. We draw the congress's attention to this.

It seems to us that the denuclearisation of the planet cannot be done only in the military sphere. Non-military nuclearism also is full of threats for the survival of present and future generations. It has intrinsic dangers, linked to the radioactive nature of the fissile materials used as fuel (enriched uranium) in the nuclear power plants or resulting from their activity (plutonium and other radionuclides). Although the scientists have promised for decades that there would be a safe solution for eliminating radioactive waste, they have still not found it despite huge sums spent on research. Nothing permits us to hope that they will succeed, except wishful thinking. Nor does anything guarantee that other Chernobyls, perhaps worse ones, will not occur, for example in France which has 58 power reactors in service.

Nuclear technology is so complex and dangerous that with it one must not take the risks one takes with other industrial technologies, whose risks are regularly seen (Bhopal, Seveso, AZF etc). In nuclear matters the spatial and temporal scale is different, to a degree beyond comprehension. Thus, the Rasmussen Report said that a "nuclear accident" causing "10 rapid deaths" would not happen, on a complex of 100 reactors, more than once in 30,000 years. To disprove those figures took only about ten years and a small complex of reactors at Chernobyl. Are the French experts more reassuring? No, since the authorities are now preparing for the "managing" of a disaster caused by what they call an "excursion"; they know that on 27 December 1999 the plant at Blaye near Bordeaux came close to a "major accident" on account of strong winds and unexpected flooding. Every year there are dozens of more or less serious incidents in the Base Nuclear Installations, and these events will coincide at increasing probability as the installations age ... and as the EDF is privatised.

In addition to these specific dangers, there are those linked to terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Just as one cannot exclude a bombing or hijacking due to terrorists, one cannot pretend it is possible to maintain a solid wall between military and non-military nuclear technology, for example by making the non-nuclear states sign an "additional protocol" to the NPT, and by putting into export contracts more and more restrictive clauses which the IAEA will thereafter have to monitor. The whole history of nuclear proliferation shows the opposite, from 1945 until the latest episodes - Iraq, North Korea, Iran... If the NPT has failed at least partially to prevent nuclear proliferation, that is because it helped to disperse non-military technology, whose "dual" character has been emphasised by Mohammed ElBaradei himself.

The Charter of Abolition 2000 proclaims this: *"the inextricable link between the "peaceful" and warlike uses of nuclear technologies and the threat to future generations inherent in creation and use of long-lived radioactive materials must be recognized"*. **ACDN has adopted this view. It is our wish that the Mouvement de la Paix should do the same. We wish you good discussions.**