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September 2022, the month that could open to path to peace

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Nearly twenty years have passed since Vladimir Putin, all smiles, gallantly helped Elizabeth II to step out of her coach at Buckingham Palace, on 24 June 2003. We learn now that he will not go to her funeral. Nevertheless, will he change his views so as to grasp this unique chance to rejoin "the concert of nations", to exit without losing face from the quagmire into which he has thrown his country, and to restore peaceful links between Russia and the rest of humankind - with Ukraine of course and more generally with the West? Alas, that is very unlikely.

But the passing of the British sovereign could open other paths for return to peace. Let us see which.

On 8 September 2022, Elizabeth II died at Balmoral Castle - 150km to the north-east of the Faslane Base, the home port of the four British nuclear submarines equipped to launch Trident missiles (made in the US) with multiple nuclear warheads (made in the UK). That is the totality of the kingdom's current nuclear forces. The Queen, after 70 years reigning of Britains' empire, now passes the throne to her son Charles, an ecologist in his soul - and one may hope that as Charles III he will somehow encourage the closure of the base in question (HMNB Clyde), in view of his convictions.

Meanwhile the UK government has recently decided to resume the nuclear arms race by increasing by 50 % the number of atomic weapons. The British sovereign, whoever it is, has no right to intervene in the country's politics. Therefore greater hope might be placed elsewhere, in a new referendum, which would either move the UK to change its nuclear policies, or enable Scotland to exit the UK and get rid of a naval base (an irreplaceable one) which makes the Clyde and Glasgow, the biggest city in Scotland, undoubted targets in the case of a nuclear war.

Also on 8 September, President Emmanuel Macron opened at the Centre National de Rugby (CNR) in Marcoussis his Conseil National de la Refondation (CNR) - an annoying choice of acronym used already for the Conseil National de la Résistance. Speaking there, France's President declared « I want to place our compatriots again at the heart of the nation's great choices". OK, let's take him at his word. Since France's nuclear arms policies are, as their makers and supporters say, among "the nation's great choices", one may logically conclude that they will be submitted to the approval of our compatriots (who are forced to pay for them) and that logically the President should approve ACDN's Parliamentary Bill aimed at organizing a referendum on France's participation in the abolition of nuclear and radioactive weapons.

At a time when war rages in Ukraine and signs the bankruptcy of so-called "nuclear deterrence", that is excellent news, because (according to a poll by IFOP-ACDN in May 2018), 85% of French citizens wish France to take part in abolishing nuclear and radioactive arms - i.e. to open negotiations with the other nuclear states with a view to eliminating them completely, in an incremental and strictly controlled way.

So, the fate of the planet may depend on two referendums, one in the UK, the other in France, which would enable our two peoples, or at least one of them, to nullify the Lancaster House Treaty called « Teutatès », whereby on 2 November 2010 the PM Cameron and President Sarkozy committed Britain and France to cooperate closely on maintaining their nuclear forces for 50 years! That act amounted to trampling underfoot Article VI of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) which both countries had signed and by which they undertook (in 1970 and 1992 respectively) to negotiate without undue delay the total elimination of their nuclear weapons.

More than ever, the global situation requires the world's peoples to take their destiny into their own hands. As called for by the UN, ACDN is inviting numerous other organizations and all French people (and others) to celebrate The International Day of Peace on 21 September and the International Day for the Elimination of all Nuclear Weapons on

September 26.

Between those two dates, on Saturday 24 September at 4pm, ACDN invites everyone possible to take part in a public debate preceded by a two-person lecture, which will take place in SAINTES salle Saintonge, 11 rue Fernand-Chapsal, on this question : « Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Chernobyl, Fukushima, Zaporizhzhia... How can we neutralise the dangers of nuclear weapons and nuclear power-plants? »

But to get concrete decisions and results it is not enough to march in the streets, or to meet and debate.

That is why we invite all French voters to contact their MPs and senators urging them to sign the Referendum Bill mentioned above and promote it. 20% of parliamentarians signing (185 out of 925) would be enough to trigger the process leading to "shared-initiative referendum". We cannot count on M. Macron to renounce his nuclear policies or to take the initiative that would lead in that direction. In 2017, 126 parliamentarians had signed. Why not 185 today, with a renewed parliament that has much more freedom?

Small streams making big rivers, the mobilizing of every citizen, every tax-payer, every voter, can contribute to preserving or restoring peace. Let us not underrate our civic powers. Let us act for peace.

Jean-Marie Matagne

"It is no longer a prayer, it is an order that must rise from the peoples to their governments, to choose definitively between hell and reason."

Albert Camus, *Combat*, 8 août 1945