

Towards the 2010 NPT Review Conference

Responses to CND's Questions from Rob Green, Disarmament & Security Centre, Christchurch, NZ: 19 September 2008

- * *Do you/your organisation think the current global political context is favourable or unfavourable to nuclear disarmament?*

A bit of both! The "Hoover Plan" has stimulated mainstream debate about the need for a vision of a nuclear weapon-free world, and how to get there. On the other hand, there is currently little if any political will among the P5 to make any substantive moves. George Perkovich's paper *Taking Nuclear Disarmament Seriously* for the February Oslo conference is illustrative, and no doubt is indicative of what's in Adelphi Paper 396 *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* which he co-authored with James Acton, launched by the IISS last Tuesday.

U At least Perkovich debunks the "nukes cannot be disinvented" copout; but then he comes close to accepting the irreplaceability of nuclear deterrence. He rightly highlights the incompatibility between abolition and the revival of nuclear energy. Here he asks the right questions, some of which I hadn't seen confronted like this anywhere else; but he takes care not to state a preference.

✓ His disempowering ramifications of the difficulties of verification miss a fundamental point. By then the pace-setters in the Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) negotiation process will be working from the basis that nukes are a security liability, and irrelevant in terms of use to deal with any cheating; so this means that, for example, fissile material will be treated as high-level waste.

What is needed now is acceptance by some other influential opinion-makers of these realities, and a clear explanation of the implications. For example, the US would announce that because of these it had decided to go ahead and get rid of its nukes. One problem would be that other weaker states would retort that only the US was strong enough in conventional military terms to have this luxury. This is why the UK has such a pivotal role to play in trumping that – especially when we now know that the real driver for the retention of British nukes has little to do with security: it's that the UK cannot allow France to be the only European nuclear power! Exposing and challenging the infantile thinking here is a high priority for the British anti-nuclear movement.

As for his list of "disagreements" over breakout, the experience of how Iraq was dealt with and the current straining at the leash by both the US and Israel vis-a-vis Iran's nuclear developments – with neither Iraq nor Iran getting near building nukes – tell rather different stories.

U Implicit acceptance by Perkovich of the line that nuclear abolition would make conventional war more likely is particularly frustrating. As the author of *India's*

Anglo - French limits down

Nuclear Bomb, he knows how the consequent mutual adventurism it engendered with Pakistan led to two massive mobilisations which were only defused by US intervention.

His suggestion that consideration of the abolition process should start with India, Pakistan and Israel is defeatist and perverse. Regarding India and Pakistan, he ignores how the hypocritical example of the UK as the former colonial power has been a key driver. This was one of the points I made at the CND Global Summit workshop, and particularly the influence the UK could wield if it decided to get rid of its nuclear arsenal. Similarly, the impact on Israel of a decision by the US to go for a NWC would be huge.

- * *What are realisable goals for the peace movement internationally to work for at the 2010 Review Conference? And beyond?*

First, to use the current US-Russia crisis to press harder for de-alerting measures. Second, to use the US-India deal to warn that serious moves towards starting a NWC negotiating process are now needed in case the NPT collapses.

- * *What demands do you think you/we should put on your government in advance of the 2010 Review Conference? Should you/we demand more than you think can be achieved?*

New Zealand goes to the polls on 8 November: at the moment it looks like, after nine years in power, Labour and Helen Clark will be replaced by a National (Conservative) administration led by John Key (Kiwi variant of Cameron). With NZ leadership in nuclear disarmament under Labour confined to sponsoring the UN resolution on lowering the operational status of nuclear weapons, don't expect any other initiatives.

- * *How much effort will you put in to lobbying other national governments or international groupings?*

Alyn Ware will be coordinating the NZ effort, through PNND and MPI.

- * *What is it possible to achieve through non-violent direct action at bases and other facilities?*
- * *What is it possible to achieve through Parliaments?*
- * *What is it possible to achieve through local and street campaigning and by building stronger alliances with other civil society organisations such as trade unions and faith groups?*
- * *Can we tie these different elements together in a coherent strategy and what is the most effective mechanism for us to coordinate our work?*

CND, Trident Ploughshares, ORG, BASIC and WCPUK need no advice from us on how best to focus their skills, energies and resources.