

UKRAINE AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT by Prof. S.Komissarenko

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SUMMARY

of the presentation at Rhodes House Seminar, Oxford, 16th April 1994

Ukraine believes in the possibility of a non-nuclear world and strives for its realisation. It supports all proposals, which lead in this direction. Ukraine became an independent state less than three years ago and immediately announced that it wishes to be a non nuclear state. But for Ukraine it is not so easy because my country is a unique example a pseudo-or quasi-nuclear state in the world.

After the disintegration of the USSR Ukraine became a quasi-nuclear power. As one of the successor states it inherited nuclear weapons and declared itself an owner of all the property on its soil. It included the physical parts of the nuclear weaponry. In the former Soviet Union Ukraine was not a simple launching site for intercontinental ballistic missiles standing in silos. Ukraine contributed considerably to their production - in the form of know-how, electronic equipment, enriched uranium, missiles themselves (especially SS-24) etc. But it was not and is not a nuclear power in an accepted meaning of this term.

Why? Because Ukraine does not produce nuclear weapons, it did not receive them from another nuclear state, it does not test them. Moreover, though Ukraine has the physical control over the "nuclear hardware", it cannot target and launch the missiles.

Having declared its intention to become a non-nuclear state, Ukraine from the very beginning encountered the difficulties concerning implementation of this intention. That implementation would have resulted from Ukraine's accession to START-1 and to Non-Proliferation Treaty.

It meant that Ukraine had to go through "conversion" of the nuclear weapons on its territory including:

- (i) to dispose of the nuclear warheads (from 130 SS-19 missiles and 46 SS-24 missiles);
- (ii) to dispose of the rockets and its poisonous liquid fuel (in SS-19);
- (iii) to dispose of the silos and the infrastructure of the rocket positions;
- (iv) to accommodate the military personnel relieved of its duties.

Enormous sums of money were and are still required for all these operations. Billions of US dollars! The economy of Ukraine cannot sustain these expenses, especially in view of its economy transition, energy crisis and consequences of Chernobyl fallout.

After long delays and difficult negotiations a way was found, Tripartite statement by Ukraine, Russia and USA was made on 14 January 1994. It permitted Verkhovna Rada to ratify unconditionally START-1 and to consider the accession to the NPT. Only lack of quorum did not permit to adopt a resolution on joining the NPT. This resolution will be submitted for consideration of a new Verkhovna Rada, elected on 27 March and 10 April.

Here is the essence of the Tripartite statement: In seven years period all nuclear weapons in Ukraine will cease to exist. The warheads will be shipped to Russia which will return uranium as a fuel needed for Ukrainian nuclear plants. Incidentally, only Russia can deal with warheads, as Russia possesses know-how for warheads and facilities. Ukraine does not have them.

United States will give Ukraine more than 300 mln. US dollars in assistance. Out of this sum 100 mln. dollars will be given in 1994 to assist:

- (i) conversion of defence industry;
- (ii) elimination of strategic nuclear weapons;
- (iii) creation of a system of export controls against proliferation of nuclear weapons;
- (iv) development of state system of control and safe-keeping of nuclear materials.

United Kingdom plans to provide 400-500 thousand pounds for the re-qualification and social adaptation of servicemen, including those from strategic missile units.

Further assistance is needed. I wish that you support the Ukrainian proposal tabled by President L.Kravchuk to create an International Fund for Promoting Nuclear Disarmament in Ukraine under the UN auspices to enable other states, organisations, citizens to contribute to the process which is so important for all. The Fund may be later needed for nuclear disarmament of other powers.

The Tripartite Statement is being implemented now. Several trainloads with warheads have crossed the Ukrainian boundary for Russia. With certain delay a first shipment of nuclear fuel from Russia was recently received at Zaporozhie Nuclear Plant in compensation for enriched uranium in the warheads dispatched to Russia.

On its own initiative Ukraine takes the warheads out of the missiles and stores them at nearby safe places before they will be shipped to Russia according to agreed schedule.

Apart of these financial and technological aspects of the nuclear conversion in Ukraine, the problem of security guarantees or assurances for non-nuclear Ukraine from nuclear powers has arisen in view of the volatile situation in the neighbouring states, rise of radical chauvinists in

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Russia and continuing claims on Ukrainian territory.

It has been agreed now that after START-1 comes into force and Ukraine joins NPT these assurances will be given by nuclear powers. The text of these multilateral assurances are being negotiated at present.

Conversion in Ukraine concerns not only nuclear weapons. Ukraine was one of the most important military arsenals of the former USSR. So Ukraine has to convert approximately 50-70% of its industrial capacity, some enterprises has to be converted fully since their production was exclusively for the military. Ukraine seeks assistance also in this field since no experience exists in our country for such a conversion.

Ukraine, by going non-nuclear, thinks that it sets an example for other nuclear powers to follow until complete and universal nuclear disarmament is achieved. That is why we have supported the idea of a UN convention to ban nuclear weapons, to declare them illegal, the proposals and actions for non-proliferation of all mass destruction weapons, for ban of all nuclear tests and for the Non-First-Use pledge by all nuclear nations.