

NUCLEAR WINTER AND PEACE

More than 20,000 nuclear weapons are in the hands of eight countries —the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, China, Israel, India and Pakistan—, some of which have significant economic, political and religious differences.

The new START treaty, signed in Prague in April 2010 by the biggest nuclear powers, only represents an illusion with regards to the situation threatening humanity.

The nuclear winter theory, developed and brought to its current stage by the eminent researcher and professor from Rutgers University, New Jersey, Dr. Alan Robock (a modest scientist who prefers to recognize the merits of his colleagues rather than his own), has proven its veracity.

The theory postulates that the only way to prevent the use of nuclear weapons is by eliminating them. Living in a privileged place on the planet, which allows them to enjoy the highest standards of living and the world's riches despite the their incredible waste of non-renewable resources, the American people should be the ones most interested in the information provided by the scientists. But how much time does the mass media devote to this task?

According to Robock, "If such weapons did not exist, they could not be used. And at present, there is no rational argument to use them at all. If they cannot be used, they must be destroyed and in this way we would protect ourselves from accidents, mistaken calculations or any bouts of insanity."

"Computers that used ultramodern models became the only available laboratory, while historical events, including cities ravaged by fires caused by earthquakes and war time bombardments, smoke columns produced by forest fires, and clouds from volcanic eruptions, became the yardstick for scientific evaluations."

The proliferation of nuclear weapons at a time when Israel, India and Pakistan have joined the nuclear club, and other countries aspire for membership, have forced Robock and his colleagues to review their initial research projects. The results of these revisions, published in recent articles, are astonishing.

While the United States and Russia each committed to reducing their operative nuclear arsenals down to some 2,000 weapons in April 2010 in Prague, the only way to prevent a global climate catastrophe from taking place would be by eliminating nuclear weapons.

"...any country that at present may be considering the nuclear option must acknowledge that by adopting such a decision, it would be endangering not only its own population but the entire world. It is time for the world to once again reflect upon the dangers of nuclear weapons, and this time follow the path to peace and eliminate the possibility of a global climate catastrophe induced by nuclear energy, for the first time since mid-last century."

"... the use of nuclear weapons in the event of a total attack against an enemy would be a suicidal action due to anomalous cold and darkness caused by the smoke from the fires generated by the bomb. In fact, it has been evidenced that the more nuclear weapons a country possesses, the less secure it is."

Albert Einstein said: "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." Carl Sagan has said that our nuclear arms policy was "a path where no man thought."

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At the end of the lecture I asked Professor Alan Robock, "How many people in the world are familiar with this information?" He replied, "Very few." I went on, "In your country, how many?" "The same," he answered, "it is not known."

I had no doubt that this was the sad reality, and added: "It makes no difference if we know about this, the world needs to know. Perhaps psychologists need to be brought in to explain why the masses do not understand."

"I have an answer —said the scientist— it's called denial. It is so horrible, that people do not want to think about it. It's easier to pretend it does not exist."

During his nearly one-hour lecture, aided by charts, figures and photos projected on a screen, Robock's words were clear, precise and eloquent. And I said: "What does it mean to raise awareness, which we talk so much about? What does it mean to create culture? And how discouraging it must be for you scientists that people don't even know what you are doing; so many hours invested."

I told him that back then, when there was no radio, television or Internet, it was impossible to broadcast a lecture like this one taking place in Cuba or in the world. Much less when many people did not know how to read or write.

We promised the professor that we would spread the information he had provided us about the nuclear winter theory—a topic we know a little about due to our concern over the possible outbreak of a global nuclear war, a concern that drew us to his lecture—in a language that even eight-year old Cuban children could understand.

No other time in human history comes close to the present. Certainly, if these risks are not understood by those who make decisions in the heights of the immense power that science and technology have placed in their hands, the next world war will be the last one, and it would take, perhaps, tens of millions of years before new intelligent beings would attempt to write their history.

As chance would have it, yesterday, September 20, I received news that the Peace Boat passenger ship was to arrive in the Port of Havana at dawn on September 21 after being delayed several hours by cyclones on its voyage from the Canary Islands. The peace boat is a Non-Governmental Organization with Special Consultative Status to the United Nations. Since 1983, it has been organizing cruises around the world to promote peace, human rights, and the fair and sustainable development of the environment. In 2009 the organization was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for its global campaign to prevent war.

In a letter written to me by Peace Boat director Yoshioka Tatsuya and presented by Nao Inoue, the head of the group of visitors, Tatsuya states: "Our organization has been working for years, recently in cooperation with the ALBA countries [...] which have clearly expressed their commitment to nuclear abolition, the prohibition of foreign military bases and peaceful resolutions for international controversies [...] Japan, as you know, the only country that has endured an atomic bombardment, to this day maintains a pacifist Constitution that, by virtue of Article 9, formally renounces war and prohibits the use of force in international disputes..."

"A focal issue in our activism is the removal of foreign military bases: a situation that affects Japan and several countries around the world. These foreign bases, such as the ones in Guantánamo and Okinawa, cause irreversible environmental damage and encourage war instead of world peace.

Including this voyage, Peace Boat has organized 70 trips around the world beginning in 1983 with the participation of no less than 40,000 people who have visited more than 100 countries. Their slogan is "Learn from Past Wars to Build a Future of Peace."

Over 20 years, the Peace Boat has visited our country 14 times, overcoming obstacles and hurdles

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imposed by the United States. During this time it has promoted campaigns to raise significant amounts of money to donate towards the health and education sectors primarily. It is active in the numerous international forums and solidarity with Cuba gatherings. They are truly proven friends of our country. In May 2009, responding to a proposal by the Cuban Friendship with the Peoples Institute (ICAP), the organization was decorated with the Order of Solidarity granted by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba.

It was a great honor for me to receive an invitation to meet with a group of the visitors which I proposed holding at the Havana Convention Center. Mr. Nao Inoue and Ms. Junko Watanabe both addressed participants. Junko Watanabe is a survivor who was just two-years-old when the first atomic bomb was launched on the city of Hiroshima. She was with her little brother in the yard of a house located 18 kilometers from the place where the bomb was dropped; an event that made the majority of the city vanish, instantly killing more than 100,000 people and seriously injuring the rest of the inhabitants.

Junko Watanabe shared her dramatic memories, when years after the attack, she saw the images and learned about the details of the bombing that caused so much suffering in so many innocent people who had nothing to do with that brutal event.

It was a deliberate act to terrorize the world with the unnecessary use of a weapon of mass extermination at a time when the Japanese empire was already defeated. The bomb was dropped, not on a military installation but rather a defenseless civilian objective. The images that documented that horrifying crime do not express what the voice of Junko Watanabe narrated about the events. The meeting was an opportune time to exchange our points of view and tell our friendly Japanese visitors—ardent combatants in the struggle to abolish nuclear arms, military bases and war—about the efforts carried out by our country to stop a nuclear conflict that could bring about an end to the existence of our species.

Fidel Castro Ruz
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