

THE WAY IS NOW OPEN FOR A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONE IN NORTHERN EUROPE

by *John Avery*,
University of Copenhagen

At the 50th Pugwash Conference in 2000, John Holdren said: “In a rapidly-changing world, which we are certainly living in, the establishment consensus on the necessity of nuclear weapons could crumble quickly.” Today John's prediction seems to be coming true. There are indeed indications that the establishment is moving towards the point of view that the peace movement has always held:

- that nuclear weapons are essentially genocidal, illegal and unworthy of civilization; and that they must be completely abolished as quickly as possible. There is a rapidly-growing global consensus that a nuclear-weapon-free world can and must be achieved in the very near future.



One of the first indications of the change was the famous Wall Street Journal article by Schultz, Perry, Kissinger and Nunn advocating complete abolition of nuclear arms [1]. This was followed quickly by Mikhail Gorbachev's supporting article, published in the same journal [2], and a statement by distinguished Italian statesmen [3]. Meanwhile, in October 2007, the Hoover Institution had arranged a symposium entitled “Reykjavik Revisited; Steps Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons” [4].

In Britain, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Lord Hurd and Lord Owen (all former Foreign Secretaries) joined the former NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson as authors of an article in The Times advocating complete abolition of nuclear weapons [5]. The UK's Secretary of State for Defense, Des Brown, speaking at a disarmament conference in Geneva, proposed that the UK "host a technical conference of P5 nuclear laboratories on the verification of nuclear disarmament before the next NPT Review Conference in 2010" to enable the nuclear weapon states to work together on technical issues.

In February, 2008, the Government of Norway hosted an international conference on “Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons” [7]. A week later, Norway's Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, reported the results of the conference to a disarmament meeting in Geneva [8]. On July 11, 2008, speaking at a Pugwash Conference in Canada, Norway's Defence Minister, Anne-Grete Stroem-Erichsen, reiterated her country's strong support for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons [9].

Other highly-placed statesmen added their voices to the growing consensus: Australia's Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, visited the Peace Museum at Hiroshima, where he made a strong speech advocating nuclear abolition. He later set up an International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament co-chaired by New Zealand and Japan [10].

On January 9, 2009, four distinguished German statesmen (Helmut Schmidt, Richard von Weizsäcker, Egon Bahr and Hans-Dietrich Genscher) published an article entitled “Towards a Nuclear-Free World: a German View” in the International Herald Tribune [11]. Among the immediate steps re-

commended in the article are the following:

- “The vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world... must be rekindled.”
- “Negotiations aimed at drastically reducing the number of nuclear weapons must begin...”
- “The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must be greatly reinforced.”
- “America should ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.”
- “All short-range nuclear weapons must be destroyed.”
- “The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty must be restored. Outer space may only be used for peaceful purposes.”

From the standpoint of an NFZ in Northern Europe, the recommendation that all short-range nuclear weapons be destroyed is particularly interesting. The US nuclear weapons currently stationed in Holland, Belgium and Germany prevent these countries from being (at present) part of a de-facto Northern European NFZ; but with an Obama Administration in the United States, and with John Holdren advising President Obama, this situation might be quickly altered. Both public opinion and official declarations support the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe [12]. Indeed the only argument for their retention comes from NATO, which stubbornly maintains that although the weapons have no plausible function, they nevertheless serve as a “nuclear glue”, cementing the alliance.

The strongest argument for the removal of US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe is the threatened collapse of the NPT. The 2005 NPT Review Conference was a disaster, and there is a danger that at the 2010 Review Conference, the NPT will collapse entirely because of the discriminatory position of the nuclear weapon states (NWS) and their failure to honor their commitments under Article VI. NATO's present nuclear weapon policy also violates the NPT, and correcting this violation would help to save the 2010 Review Conference from failure.

At present, the air forces of the European countries in which the US nuclear weapons are stationed perform regular training exercises in which they learn how to deliver the weapons. This violates the spirit, and probably also the letter, of Article IV, which prohibits the transfer of nuclear weapons from an NWS to a non-NWS. The “nuclear sharing” proponents maintain that such transfers would only happen in an emergency; but there is nothing in the NPT saying that the treaty would not hold under all circumstances. Furthermore, NATO would be improved, rather than damaged, by giving up “nuclear sharing”.

If President Obama wishes to fulfill his campaign promises [13] - if he wishes to save the NPT - a logical first step would be to remove US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. The way would then be open for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northern Europe, comprising the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Our final goal is, and must remain, the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. But NFZ's are steps along the road.

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