

**Canadian Pugwash Group and Science for Peace**

**Joint Seminar on "Canada, NATO and Nuclear Weapons"**

**March 17, 2001, Toronto**

March 23, 2001

The Hon. John Manley, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade  
Room 418-North, Centre Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa

and

The Hon. Art Eggleton, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of National Defence  
Room 365-West Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa

Dear Ministers Manley and Eggleton,

The Canadian Pugwash Group joined with Science for Peace at a special Seminar, "**Canada, NATO and Nuclear Weapons**," in Toronto on March 17, 2001. The purpose of the Seminar was to examine the results of the NATO Paragraph 32 process of the 1999 Washington Communiqué in the context of the consensus Final Document of the Sixth Review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2000.

The 30 participants included scientists, engineers, lawyers, economists, medical doctors, bio-ethicists, former military officers, political scientists and others highly knowledgeable in nuclear weapons issues.

Dr. Walter Dorn (Secretary of the Canadian Pugwash Group) acted as rapporteur and prepared this report, which was reviewed by the seminar co-chairs, Senator Douglas Roche, O.C., Chairman of Canadian Pugwash Group and Dr. Helmut Burkhardt, President of Science for Peace.

Speakers included:

- Ted Whiteside, Head, Centre for Weapons of Mass Destruction, NATO Headquarters, Bruxelles (the Centre examines issues of WMD around the world, not just in the NATO area).
- Nick Etheridge, Director, North American and Euro-Atlantic Security and Defense Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa.
- Sergei Plekhanov, Professor of Political Science, York University and Coordinator, Post-Communist Studies Program, Toronto.

A paper prepared by Senator Roche and Ernie Regehr, Executive Director of Project Ploughshares, was the basis of the Seminar. The paper (attached to this report) compares the stand taken by NATO – that nuclear weapons are "essential" – with the "unequivocal undertaking to the total elimination of nuclear weapons" made by the same NATO States in the NPT context.

The paper, noting NATO's willingness to engage in dialogue with interested non-governmental organizations, makes the point that Canada, which was instrumental in getting NATO to start the Para 32 process, has a special responsibility to see the process through.

Since the Government of Canada recognizes the present internal contradiction in NATO's dual position that nuclear weapons are essential and that they must be eliminated, the core of NATO's Strategic Concept must now be addressed. "Canada would be betraying its own principles if it were to pull back from energetically pressing its views on nuclear disarmament on both the U.S. and NATO." Canada has an obligation to vigorously pursue and implement its nuclear disarmament commitments within the context of NATO.

The paper further suggests that both civil society, leaders and the Government of Canada explore the formation of a new coalition of like-minded governments and civil society leaders to encourage the Nuclear Weapons States to take active steps to implement their "unequivocal undertaking... to total elimination of their nuclear arsenals."

Speakers made the following points:

**Ted Whiteside, Head, Centre for Weapons of Mass Destruction, NATO Headquarters, Bruxelles.**

He said the proliferation of nuclear weapons could be seen in the context of the historian Barbara Tuchman's book, *"The March of Folly,"* which shows how governments persist in pursuing policies counter to their own interests. Although the process of nuclear disarmament necessarily involves a number of legalisms, he saw a real effort within NATO to come to grips with the contradictions. This itself was a promising development. At a later point, Mr. Whiteside indicated that there may well be continuing debate concerning issues such as the withdrawal of sub-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe, bearing in mind that it is the Alliance's view that NATO's nuclear policies do not fuel proliferants' interests in obtaining nuclear weapons. NATO's residual sub-strategic nuclear arsenal is not responsible for nuclear proliferation.

The commitment to total nuclear disarmament in the NPT context has been perceived by some NGOs as contradictory to NATO's policies. However, officials at the headquarters defend the NATO stance, saying that as nuclear disarmament measures are gradually being developed, NATO can and should maintain its nuclear deterrent.

A relevant non-proliferation issue related to the CTBT was that of the contrasting positions between India and the US. The former was a strong advocate for decades for the conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a disarmament measure while the US was opposed because it wanted to retain the right to improve its nuclear arsenal and verify the safety of its weapons. When the paradigm for the Treaty, once negotiated, was shifted to non-proliferation, India resisted the treaty and the US signed (though not yet ratified).

It is unrealistic to expect the NWS to move to nuclear disarmament in a time-bound manner when proliferation is taking place.

Promising measures are coming from Russia, which has provided information and intelligence on the activities of states where there are proliferation concerns. Russia is making proposals for missile defence systems in Europe to deal with specific localized threats, and Russia is increasingly aware that some of its activities, like arms sales, may lead to future threats to mutual security.

Finally, he said, NATO is reaching out to other organizations, including civil-society, to engage in a wider exchange of expertise and views. Groups such as those sponsoring this Seminar should keep pushing.

**Nick Etheridge, Director, North American and Euro-Atlantic Security and Defense Relations, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa .**

He said Canada faced a great deal of conservatism at the Washington Summit. In the disarmament effort leading to the Paragraph 32 process, many non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) were hesitant to have a debate on the controversial questions of the future of nuclear weapons. Paragraph 32, however, is a start of a continuing process, a modest but hopeful result of a vigorous 18-month campaign initiated by Canada.

Through the public document Canada sought and got an updated statement of the Alliance's NACD policies, in which we were able to NATO-ize NPT Review language including the 13 Practical Steps contained therein. The Public Document also promotes transparency and outreach; indeed the Document itself represents both. The Document also identifies four worthwhile CSBMs to be pursued with Russia.

There are a number of defence review processes that have been launched by the new US Administration that can be expected to have implications for US views on NACD and maybe on NACD in a NATO context. Meanwhile, the Bush administration is placing more emphasis on the NATO alliance, which has the positive effect of allowing for active engagement on the range of related questions and initiatives, from missile defence to nuclear disarmament to confidence- and security-building measures.

**Sergei Plekhanov, Professor of Political Science and Coordinator of the Post-Communist Studies Program at York University, Toronto.**

He focussed on the new stage in US-Russian relations and its implications for the prospects for disarmament. He pointed out that one important reason why the existing mechanisms of nuclear arms control - above all, the ABM Treaty - are under increasing strain is that the rough equivalence of power between the US and Russia, which defined the conceptual basis of arms control since the 1960s, has given way to a wide disparity in favour of the US.

While post-communist Russia has developed an "insecurity complex" since the collapse of the USSR, the US is suffering from what Senator Fulbright once called "the arrogance of power". In Washington, a dismissive attitude to Russia dominates. Influential conservative Republicans consider Russia a basket case, a bankrupt country which can be ordered about and which cannot offer resistance to American actions.

Meanwhile, there is widespread disappointment in Russia with the pro-Western policies its leaders have pursued in the past decade, and a resentment against what many Russians see as American drive to take advantage of Russia's troubles and turn Russia into a second-class power, with limited international influence and dependent on the West.

In both countries, presidential elections were held in 2000, and both new presidents – Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush - are political conservatives of a nationalist type. Both are less committed to US-Russian cooperation than their predecessors – and more interested in building up their countries' military power.

Plekhanov sees a danger that we are entering a period of renewed international tensions, conflicts, and arms races. The cause of disarmament may suffer serious setbacks – but there is hope that the new dangers will invigorate global struggles for peace and disarmament.

There is an urgent need to mount effective international political pressures on both the US and Russian governments to induce them to take steps to prevent a demise of the existing arms control mechanisms – and, indeed, to create new mechanisms reflecting the changed historical realities.

Canada can play an important role in such international efforts, serving, if necessary, in the role of an honest broker between its Northern and Southern neighbours on behalf of the non-nuclear nations committed to nuclear disarmament.

Plekhanov thinks that even though the new situation in US-Russian relations is not helpful to the cause of disarmament, some progress can still be made. On both sides, for instance, there seems to be an interest in deep cuts in strategic offensive arms – but such cuts are only possible if the US and Russia can agree on modifications of the ABM Treaty.

The recent Russian proposal for the development of a European non-strategic ABM system (in which the US would take part) should not be dismissed as a propaganda ploy: instead, NATO should enter into serious discussions with Russia about practical possibilities of creating such a system.

If the Russians, indeed, have a serious intention to enter into such a far-reaching security arrangement with the West, it is certainly in the West's interest not to turn such ideas down. The risk in cold-shouldering Russia in these matters is to see Russia turn away from security cooperation with the West and seek possibilities of building an anti-Western coalition of states - with all the obvious dangers to international peace and stability such a turn would imply.

Preserving and developing security cooperation between Russia and NATO is crucial for the cause of disarmament – but this would require NATO as the stronger party in the relationship to be much more active and forthright in reassuring Russia and offering it new forms of cooperation and partnership – including, perhaps, an expressed willingness to see Russia as a member of NATO.

To guide the discussion, the chair put forward four questions. This helped channel the debate. The major points made by participants are collated below.

### **How should the contradiction between NATO nuclear policies and disarmament commitments be addressed?**

At the outset, one participant questioned whether so much emphasis should be placed on NATO. Perhaps the OSCE was a better place to concentrate efforts and resources. The OSCE is a more progressive forum and was more likely to be concerned about international law, and indeed abide by it, than NATO. Since Russia is a member of the OSCE and not NATO,

the OSCE is a better venue for a closer and fuller dialogue. NATO, being primarily a military alliance, was an unlikely forum for challenging the status quo.

NATO nuclear policies have not changed with the times. During the Cold War, NATO justified nuclear weapons as a cheap and effective response to the supposed conventional superiority of the Warsaw Pact. Now there is no justification for such weapons though NATO does not recognize this fact and does not have the courage to face it. Far from being useful in practice or politically, nuclear weapons are a central part of a truly mad MAD (mutually assured destruction) power system. They provide no real security, promote instability and do tremendous damage to the natural environment. Even without being used, they have caused irreparable damage to the earth and the risk of catastrophe through accident or miscalculation continues, as does the risk of diversion of nuclear materials by hostile groups. The nuclear age has left us with a deadly legacy of workers exposed to radioactivity and a world unable to find safe means for the disposal of nuclear fuels over the tremendous time spans needed for their decay.

NATO is too much of a projection of US power, allowing the lone superpower to interfere in areas where it does not belong. Some even felt that NATO should be abolished sooner rather than later. Several participants stressed the importance of compliance with international law, especially those laws relating to nuclear disarmament obligations. They criticized NATO for its violations of international law. One suggested that an international court should look at the contradictions between NATO nuclear weapons policies and international law.

The goal is not to balance our commitments to NATO with that to international law, since the latter should be supreme, but how to make NATO a law-abiding organization. You don't balance your commitments to the rule of law with other obligations you might have.

Some questioned whether the NATO policies were, in fact, illegal, though there was general support for the notion that there was "cognitive dissonance" in NATO policies, which maintain a large gap between promises and deeds. One speaker said the US was acting in good faith with the NPT obligation because of its disarmament reduction initiatives and treaties. Another positive development that the US is considering is the withdrawal of sub-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe.

### **What should Canada do to work with like-minded nations in pressing NATO to review its strategic concept in the light of the NPT and the ICJ?**

Some participants proposed that Canada should formally join the New Agenda countries. Others thought it was more important for Canada to work with these countries on the N.A. resolutions in the General Assembly and its other initiatives. While joining N.A. was not being considered by the Canadian government, cooperation is being fostered.

Some participants felt that Canada should be more vigorous in promoting nuclear disarmament. By trying to balance commitments to NATO with commitments to international law, it was misguided. The rule of law should take precedence over the rule of military solidarity. Canada should be more insistent and strident in calling for nuclear disarmament in NATO. Not as a "nag" but as a promoter of peace and the rule of law, it could most effectively move the agenda forward. In short, Canada should urge NATO to justify the proposition underlying the Strategic Concept.

Another participant thought that rather than seeking out like-minded nations, Canada should raise the status of international professional organizations in the process of global

governance. As new power structures become prevalent (as they have in the European Union), then new avenues can be found to bring about nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, there should be a new legal model and institutions in which not only nations but multinational corporations could be brought before an international court.

### **What is the impact of a new era of missile defences on the architecture of nuclear disarmament and arms control, notably the ABM?**

Several invited speakers wanted to explore the means to update and amend the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Some participants expressed opposition to this initiative, saying that the ABM Treaty was a pillar of arms control and stability and any modification would be detrimental, given the pressures from Washington to use the amendment process for its own purposes. Changing the ABM would undermine the present nuclear arms control regime instead of strengthening it. As a practical matter, one participant said it would be useful to return to the distinction between BMD and NMD by building on the ignored Demarcation Agreement of 1997, which gives limits on theatre BMD systems.

Since the US might, in the near future, renounce the ABM treaty or Russia may agree to an amendment which is not in the interest of the rest of the world, Canada needs to press both nations not to take unilateral actions that would undermine global strategic stability.

One measure of the commitment to global nuclear disarmament is the extent to which nations are willing to oppose plans for national missile defence (NMD).

One speaker said that the ABM Treaty was designed by its negotiators to protect the balance of terror. Others felt it was primarily a means to prevent a costly race in missile defences. Still others pointed out that the distinction between offence and defense is minimal, especially since the control of space, and weapons in space, will greatly improve the capacity to attack targets in and above any country on the earth. Some saw NMD as a means for the US to put weapons into outer space. While no one knows whether it is going to work, everyone knows it's going to be expensive.

An alternative is to use space solely for peaceful purposes. Another alternative is an international satellite system to be used for early warning of missile launches to identify aggressors. This would be a global security system which would make all nations feel safer. Canada should promote and help develop such a system. This could be done through a multilateral ABM treaty which allows for only the one global system to protect all nations.

### **How can the informed elements of civil society make their concerns heard within (a) the Canadian government and (b) NATO?**

Civil society with expertise in these questions should be active in informing the Canadian public. They can contribute to public dialogue in the conventional media but must also find other routes, such as the Internet. These disarmament issues are not given adequate importance in the mainstream media, which are generally controlled by those with a conservative agenda. There is a need for paid ads, and a media campaign on this issue, one which the media has ignored after the end of the Cold War.

Civil society can promote international meetings and get citizens groups involved in them. They can increase the importance of professional organizations devoted to these causes. They can establish or re-establish links, lost at the end of the Cold War, with peace groups in other countries, especially Russia.

There is a need to educate not only the general public but also Members of Parliament, especially if they are in the Cabinet. Too often they are unknowledgeable and out of touch with these issues. The point was made that many of those in senior political positions exhibit little understanding of nuclear weapons issues. Since the military sector exerts a large influence on them, there is a need for pressure from the concerned citizenry. The campaigns of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (CNANW) should be taken seriously by the political and governmental structures. Strong Canadian links to the New York-based NGO Committee on Disarmament and its Geneva equivalent were urged.

This, Ministers, is the Seminar Report which we transmit to you and your Cabinet colleagues. In recalling the Government's serious work on nuclear disarmament and the important recommendations in the Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we reiterate the support of the Canadian Pugwash Group and Science for Peace for continuing efforts to implement Canada's legal obligations to pursue the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

With best wishes, we remain,

Sincerely,

Douglas Roche, O.C. Professor Helmut Burkhardt  
Senator President  
Chairman, Canadian Pugwash Group Science for Peace

Enclosure  
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