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The Crazy ones !

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Description:

On November 14, 2003, the French weekly "Haute Saintonge" (readership : 40 000) gave column-space to ACDN and published the following article: "THE CRAZY ONES!"

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France "is preparing to revise her deterrence strategy, so as to be able to strike at rogue states, even pre-emptively"; President Chirac "is going to announce this new doctrine" (Libération 27.10.03). In this way the "deterrence by the weak against the strong" will make way for the "deterrence by the strong against the crazy" - or else be added to it (to be on the safe side, we recall the Chinese threat "a remote scenario" or a possible return of the Russian threat).

What has led to this new "doctrine"? - the President's office denied only that it is new, according to a release by Agence France-Presse. Apparently the changing international context.

In reality, the motive is different: what "justifies" the existence of the French nuclear strike force is its existence. Nothing else. Because it is there, a plausible use must be found for it. Since the presumed threat of "strong" enemies has become remote with the end of the Cold War and the demise of the USSR, we absolutely require another enemy to deter, worthy of being deterred by nuclear arms. Since this enemy's weakness makes it a priori unworthy - perhaps it doesn't even have nuclear weapons, is only trying to obtain them, or to get biological or chemical weapons - we must find another major blemish. Doubtless it is a State (terrorists working for themselves have an annoying habit of not being intimidated) but it is a « rogue State ». Or better still a crazy State. With this proviso in place, the "South" can replace the "East". It is an easy proviso, since the President of France, who is so exceedingly wise and perceptive, will make the diagnosis himself. And "our" nuclear strike force will be able to give size and beauty to our atom merchants, notably the joyful people of CEA and AREVA.

This « doctrine » has other advantages. By the magic of words, the supposedly deterrent power of France changes status: formerly declared weak, it is now strong. But is this nuclear arsenal strong or weak? Everything is relative, obviously, but with 348 warheads and 57 megatons of equivalent TNT, France could theoretically cause (calculating by Hiroshima equivalents) a billion deaths. It is therefore "strong" in lethal capacity. But alas, from the military standpoint it is worthless, since it is politically unuseable.

This is already recognised in the entourage of the Defense Ministry : "to say that in the event of a crisis with a country we would vitrify 30 million people, is problematic". President Mitterrand had said something similar in calling them "barbaric weapons" and giving the assurance shortly before the 1991 Gulf War that France (i.e.himself) would not use them. This was said also in 1996, once he retired, by General Lee Butler, former head of the Strategic Air Command, responsible for the operatons of the US strategic arsenal: « Nuclear weapons are fundamentally dangerous, extraordinarily expensive, militarily ineffective and morally indefensible."

Aside from all moral considerations, their use by France was impossible in the Cold War period, if it had become hot: the "designated enemy" had retaliation powers ("second-strike powers) that were more terrifying than ours. We couldn't even have delivered, by targeted nuclear strikes, the "final warning" that was supposed to prevent invasion.

President Giscard d'Estaing recognised this in his Memoirs: he had secretly accepted that he would not use nuclear weapons first, willing to undergo an invasion and occupation of the kind that "French culture" had already survived. For him, there was only one possible use: vengeance, if the enemy had "begun the destruction of France" (by nuclear strikes). This scenario would have turned partial destruction into annihilation.

Here we see the major interest of the new « doctrine » : with it, nuclear weapons will finally acquire a raison d'être. We could really use them, since the "weak and crazy" would not be able to retaliate. There is a "moral" proviso: they must be « miniaturised » so as to hit limited targets and reduce civilian casualties. This will complete the panoply and give work for our researchers, our diplomatic and secret services, and our destructive-goods industries. These groups will all move closer to their US counterparts, because this realignment is based purely and simply on the Bush administration's "nuclear posture review".

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But where are these "crazy ones"? Surely not where we are told they are. Logically, if we believe them capable of being deterred, then they are not crazy! And if they are carefullly not named, that's because we have diplomatic and commercial relations with them - but not always reasonable ones, since we sell them what they need to make weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological. As Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac did that in 1975 when he sold "Osirak", a so-called "nuclear research laboratory", to Saddam Hussein. The Israelis neutralised it later with a purely conventional bombing raid. But this inspired in Saddam Hussein the ambitions which led to the Gulf War.

The crazy ones are elsewhere. There are, certainly, fanatical terrorists capable of attacks, even nuclear, biological or chemical attacks. Against them the Bomb, even miniaturised, is useless. The means to reduce this threat lie in a totally different direction: in a change in the nature of international relations, in cooperation between States - including police cooperation - cooperation of a kind that can be made possible only by a controlled process for the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction. The crazy ones, in fact, are the leaders of the nuclear-armed states who undertook, in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to eliminate all their nuclear arsenals and yet have not taken to smallest stop in this direction. This attitude is what led to nuclear proliferation and will, if it continues, make more proliferation inevitable. This will end in a general catastrophe.

To prevent this military-nuclear craziness, there is one remedy: to mobilise civil society. The international network « Abolition 2000 » (1800 NGOs and 250 cities) invites us to do this. The French network « Sortir du nucléaire » (650 groups) invites us to do this. The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki invites us to do this. They have just decided, with other "mayors for peace" to have a grand international campaign to mobilise millions of citizens across the world before the next « Preparatory Committee » meeting (New York, April 2004) preceding the Non-Proliferation Treaty revision conference of 2005. We hope that a large number of French mayors will associate themselves with this initiative, starting with the current mayor of Paris.

Jean-Marie Matagne, President of Action of Citizens for Nuclear Disarmament.

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