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Will Citizens' Action lay down its arms?

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THE NUCLEAR QUESTION. For a quarter of century, Jean-Marie Matagne has been campaigning for international disarmament. But his pleas have not won a wide audience.

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Jean-Marie Matagne : « The situation is extremely grave at the international level, and disarmament needs to be jump-started by civil society ». PHOTO DOMINIQUE PARIES

For many years he taught philosophy to secondary students in La Rochelle and in Saintes. He also created the experimental maritime teaching high-school in Oléron, which became the CEPMO.**(1)** But in Saintes, Jean-Marie Matagne is best known for his commitment to nuclear disarmament. He has championed this cause for nearly 25 years, and in May 1996 he became head of a new NGO called Action des citoyens pour le désarmement nucléaire (ACDN).

Fourteen years later, ACDN has some 100 members in some thirty different départements. Two days before its statutory AGM, in Saintes, Jean-Marie Matagne wonders how much the general public has heard of it, and how effective the association and his own campaigning has been. In fact, French citizens are not much mobilised about nuclear disarmament, whereas this philosophy teacher (now retired) considers this question to be paramount.

As Jean-Marie Matagne sees it, nuclear disarmament, the environment, social justice, and employment are all struggles best waged on a broad front, in a collective, grouped manner. Concerned about being effective, the president of ACDN says he avoids petty in-fighting and wishes to *"take a wider view of the interrelated problems".*

Will he be followed, or will ACDN run out of puff and end up collapsing? The AGM will debate this on Saturday.

Meetings in New York

Nevertheless, Jean-Marie Matagne is still very mobilised about his longterm struggle. In May, he went to New York for a week to attend the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty at the UN headquarters. He took part in the sessions open to NGO representatives, and was one of some 200 French delegates, many of whom were from the Mouvement de la paix.

A Petition

In New York, Jean-Marie Matagne met and spoke with many people, in order to gain signatures for a petition which he submitted, on his return, to the President of the French Republic.

The international signatories **(2)**, currently numbering a hundred, call on Nicolas Sarkozy *"to commit France resolutely and without delay to a process for eliminating all nuclear weapons, with strict and effective verification, in the context of a genuine system of international security."*

The petitioners also invite the Head of State to consult the people by referendum on the question of France

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renouncing her nuclear deterrence strategy and dismantling her strike force.

Vertical Proliferation

According to Jean-Marie Matagne, France has not yet committed to this path, whereas the USA and Russia have made an agreement to reduce their nuclear arsenals.
"France's nuclear strike force amounts to 1.5 % of the world's total nuclear weapons. Yet it could eliminate from 500 million to a billion people on the planet. By now adding a fourth nuclear submarine, France is proliferating vertically and not reducing its arsenal" he says.

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(1) Cepmo : Centre expérimental polyvalent et maritime en Oléron.

(2) Signatories include Colin Archer and Tomas Magnusson, general secretary and president of the International Peace Bureau, and Rosalie Bertell, an 81-year-old American nun deeply involved in protecting the environment and human health.

A wonderful convergence

ACDN is delighted by the convergence of the World Environment Day and the World Day for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, both celebrated this year on June 5.

"It is impossible to preserve the natural and human environment while threatening the whole planet constantly with destruction by weapons powerful enough to wipe out the 6 billion human beings five to ten times over, or while subjecting the environment to the permanent insidious effects of radioactive emissions of military and non-military origin," says Jean-Marie Matagne.
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Katell Pierre in Adélie Land

To make the link between nature protection, disarmament, alternatives to nuclear power, and the path towards a more just, peaceful and human world, ACDN is organising a lecture-discussion on the theme of **"The Earth our Heritage"** on Saturday 12 June, at 15h30 in the salle Saintonge in Saintes.

In this occasion Katell Pierre will speak about **"Antarctica, continent of extremes and witness of the planet".** This Breton woman has since 2005 been in charge of logistics for the summer Antractic campaign of the Institut Polaire Paul-Emile Victor in Adélie Land. She will show images of the Antarctic fauna and of Concordia, the base which she has to keep supplied.

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