

“The Impact of Military Conflicts on Terrorism and Human Health”

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In this hall are gathered those who have chosen the highest priority in their lives: struggle for the human health and life. We are well aware of the price of life, for which we live and work.

Anatole France, a remarkable French writer in his greeting message to the Congress of French physicians aptly expressed our life credo: “...of the greatest value on Earth is a human being”.

Faithfulness to the oath of Hippocrates which 26 years ago united the physicians from 69 countries of the world regardless of their political and religious persuasions compelled them to address the dangers that are posed by nuclear weapons, the most dreadful means of destruction developed by humankind, to the very existence of life on Earth.

We have launched unprecedented activities against the nuclear arms race, for the elimination of the nuclear weapons at the height of the “cold war”, unleashed as a result of confrontation between two power blocks – NATO and Warsaw pact.

Our objective was to arouse the indifferent and turn them into active opponents of nuclear weapons. The role of indifferent was figuratively described by a well-known Russian writer: “They do not kill themselves, but with their silent consent the murders on our planet take place.”

But how to arouse the indifferent? How to involve millions of our fellow-citizens in the struggle against nuclear arms race? We have agreed that there is only one way: to influence the instinct of self-preservation, characteristic of human nature.

Three million doctors were the first who have realized it: they became the basic force struggling for the abolition of all nuclear weaponry. It is hard to believe that a citizen living in a city with one million of population, knowing that he or she is targeted by a missile with a nuclear warhead, will remain quiet having learned from us, physicians, that its explosion would immediately exterminate three hundred thousand people and another four hundred thousand would slowly die.

Numerous antinuclear actions which have involved many millions of Europeans were due to not only active position of the public but to the understanding of our data that use of even one tenth of the existing nuclear weapons may lead to the death of one hundred seventy million of people in Europe in the first days of nuclear conflict and slow dying of another one hundred fifty million.

Our activities which have disclosed the very essence of nuclear weapons, the instruments of genocide, became the spark that has kindled the bonfire of the antinuclear movement in the world.

Our work was acknowledged by the decision of the Nobel committee to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the movement of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Our work made a considerable contribution to signing by the Soviet Union and United States, leading nuclear superpowers of a number of treaties aimed at halting nuclear arms race, reduction of nuclear arsenals. Mikhail Gorbachev, one of the signatories has admitted this by writing on the text of Dr. Lown's speech at a conference in Moscow the following words: Without your movement the signing of the Treaty on Nuclear arms reduction could not take place."

The world became more quiet and clean in the direct sense. The tests of nuclear weapons conducted in the past have contaminated the globe. In 1963 the average annual dose of radiation contamination reached its peak and amounted 0,15mSv. In the year 2000 environmental contamination decreased thirty times and amounted only 0,005 mSV.

Much is done by doctors to preserve peace and health of the people. However, should we be concerned today about the fate of thousands or maybe millions of fellow citizens? Can we rest on the laurels of the Nobel Prize? On no account!

At the end of the 80's, in the period of détente and active antinuclear movement and signing various treaties on nuclear weapons, the goal to enter the twenty first century without the Damocles sword of nuclear threat hanging over our heads seemed so realistic. I am frequently asked: Why it did not happen so? Mover over why nuclear arms are proliferated on our planet, why some countries (like North Korea and Iran) are actively working in this field as it is done by India and Pakistan? Why it is still discussed in the American magazine like at the 70's, which country has more power in nuclear confrontation: United States or Russia?

One of the answers is that we, physicians, underestimated human psychology, which as been formed in the course of five thousand years of the human history under conditions which ancient Romans formulated: "Si vis pacem, para bellum." Such a view of human affairs is being exploited by not only some political and financial circles, which are striving for a redivision of the world financial and economic interests, but also by those circles, which in order to achieve their power ambitions, exploit great-power chauvinism, nationalism and religious intolerance.

Yes, we inhabitants of this planet Earth first of all need trust and goodwill to destroy fear and hatred which still exist among nations. The problems of peace and human well-being cannot be solved by wars and rattling the saber. Such a policy will only aggravate the armaments race, including nuclear arms, as the motto of the ancients: "Vae vicitis" has its reverse side when the defeated nations are uniting in an attempt to take revenge. And what is more important they aspire to possess nuclear weapons in illusive hope that these weapons will protect them from potential military intervention. Quite easy to imagine what threat endangers the world, if twenty countries at least, capable of producing nuclear weapons, will possess them.

This is why the paramount task, which we face today is to revive the antinuclear movement of the millions of our fellow citizens, which in the 80s successfully contributed to the solution of a wide range of issues of nuclear safety. Today we

must appeal to the statesmen, parliaments, religious figures, the leaders of national movements with the words of Seneca, Roman philosopher, addressing Romans striving to conquer new territories: "...not to shed blood, to provide peace to the world: that is the superior valour". These words are especially relevant today: when a new threat is menacing the world terrorism. Regrettably, we, physicians, as most of the public at large did not yet fully realize its danger in any form: state, religious or nationalistic.

It should also be mentioned that after the end of the "cold war", when the world became more quiet, many of us thought that new era started in the life of mankind. We have calmed down, lost interest to the possible threats which in danger human life, including terrorism.

What if terrorists possess atomic bomb? Today it isn't a question of so-called "dirty bomb", the matter concerns atomic bomb similar to the American "Little Boy" bomb with the power of 15 kilotons in TNT equivalent dropped on Hiroshima, which contained sixty kilograms of highly refined uranium with simple detonator. "Dirty bomb" or device for dispersion of radioactive materials is a bomb which contains combination of conventional explosives, such as dynamite, and radiation-emitting materials in the form of powder or pellets. During the explosion, dispersion of these materials result in environmental contamination. The goal of terrorist in this case is to kill or sicken a large number of people, to create chaos and fear, taking into account that the existing deactivation and control methods allow fast liquidation of the blast consequences and preserve the life of people in the contaminated area. Certainly, the impact of the "dirty bomb" cannot be compared with the impact of nuclear bomb explosion.

However is there any theoretical chance for the terrorists to develop such a bomb? First of all, for this purpose highly refined uranium with over twenty per cent of uranium 235 content is required. The experts of the International Atomic Energy Agency estimated that minimal amount of highly refined uranium required for the production of the atomic bomb is 25 kilograms of uranium.

In the course of the "cold war" United States and the USSR produced one thousand eight hundred tons of such uranium which was used by civil and military structures. Over fifty tons of refined uranium was used in one hundred forty atomic reactors for research purposes and for the production of various isotopes. The level of their safety was not always appropriate.

Besides, the policy "Atom for peaceful purposes" carried out by the United States and Soviet Union in the 50's and 60's resulted in partial cancellation of refined uranium export supply limitation. As a result, about ten tons of such uranium, sufficient for 150-200 bombs appeared in the countries of the Third World.

Today, United States, Russian Federation and International Atomic Energy Agency take steps to provide safety of atomic reactors, to transfer to reduced enrichment uranium and to try to bring back highly-refined uranium from the countries where it had been supplied earlier.

However, the potential, theoretical possibility of developing atomic bomb by terrorists still remains, therefore the mankind should remain alert. Nothing will prevent terrorists from using the bomb, if it's in their hands. We must inform our nations of the danger of nuclear weapons proliferation, stockpiling of radioactive

materials such as three million kilograms of weapons plutonium and uranium inherited by us in the result of nuclear arms race, and of new danger – nuclear terrorism.

The world military spending which exceeded eight hundred billion dollars in just one year, could save many thousands of human lives out of fifty eight million died in the year 2005. Evidence, which we used many times, proving that nuclear arms are weapons of genocide, should around indifferent, compel not only governments and parliaments but also the representatives of the radical religious and nationalistic organizations to realize that the most invaluable on our planet is human life.