



Nuclear Disarmament

Eduard A. Shevardnadze*

I think, probably, there is no need for me to say how aware I am of my surroundings here. What is a great honor it is for me to be associated with Harvard University, the oldest and the most famous temple of knowledge and of scholarship, at a time when the birthday of Andrei Dmitri Sakharov is being marked.

I would like to go back to those subjects which have always been of major interest to people with great minds and stern morality. I should like to go back to those discussions which were held 45 years ago by a graduate of Harvard University, Robert Oppenheimer, the head of the Manhattan Project, and his colleagues, who were working on creating the first atom bomb.

I would like to go back to the report prepared at the request of the U.S. Secretary of Defense [sic] by such eminent scientists as Glen Seaborg and Leo Szilard. They made their recommendations in June of 1945. And the first atom bomb was tested a month later.

We can assume that it was then, during those summer days, that the American scientists argued about the future of the world, about what it would be like after the beginning of the atomic century.

Now we know what it was like and what it has become. There is hardly any cause for surprise at the fact that the intellect of Seaborg and Szilard very

accurately predicted what was most likely to happen. Their account was called "Second Thoughts About Atomic Power."

There they said that there is no means by which the United States could retain its monopoly on nuclear weapons, that the very first use of the atom bomb would give rise to a nuclear weapons arms race and the appearance of similar weapons in several countries, above all in the Soviet Union. Seaborg and Szilard also proposed what they saw as the most reasonable solution, to place nuclear weapons under international control, that is, to entrust them to the United Nations.

"Only lack of mutual trust," said the scientists, "and not lack of desire for agreement can stand in the path of an efficient agreement for the prevention of nuclear warfare. The achievement of such an agreement will thus essentially depend on the integrity of intentions and readiness to sacrifice the necessary fraction of one's own sovereignty by all the parties to the agreement." And those words were uttered at a time when the cold war had already, in fact, begun. And testing on the first use of atom bombs gave it a still greater impetus and made it irreversible.

It is true that subsequent international steps to prevent nuclear war were made in the United Nations. But they were, in fact, thwarted by the joint statement made on the 15th of November, 1945, by the leaders of several countries. There, they asserted that "no system of safeguards that can be devised will, of itself, provide an effective guarantee against production of atomic weapons by a nation bent on aggression."

After such a statement, there also had to be a

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* EAS is the former Foreign Minister (1985-1990) of the Soviet Union. EAS delivered this address to the Annual Meeting of Harvard Alumni at the Harvard University commencement exercises when he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on June 6, 1991.

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change in the way the Soviet Union and other states perceived the well-known Baruch Plan. The draft of that plan was drawn up by Robert Oppenheimer and by another Harvard man, David Lilienthal. In naming them, I wish to emphasize the role played by graduates of your university in establishing control over nuclear weapons and nuclear technology.

Looking back from today, the majority of proposals made at that time and the majority of those plans seem to me very, very reasonable. Doubtless, they would have had a significantly greater chance of being adopted by my country if they had provided for the destruction of the entire infrastructure involved in the production of atom bombs and of the bombs themselves.

But nevertheless, Seaborg and Szilard correctly indicated the major obstacle—a lack of trust. Class and ideological orientations pointed to preparations for war and not to strengthening trust. Thus, in the last analysis, what happened was that which was bound to happen in that confrontational system of coordinates in which our relations existed.

But now, the situation has changed radically. The cold war has ended. Trust has emerged. Trust, built not on blind faith and good intentions, but on conceding part of one's own sovereignty, allowing for the conducting of mutual on-site inspections and for carrying out verification of the implementation of the obligations undertaken. Perhaps the time has come for the preparations, but now on a multilateral basis, of a new report. But this time, let's call it "Third Thoughts About Nuclear Power."

Our achievements are considerable in the limitation of nuclear weapons tests. And in reducing nuclear weapons, and in the elimination of two types of nuclear missiles, and in the nonproliferation of nuclear technology. Nevertheless, we know and we feel that the situation in which we are living is a very insecure one. The crisis in the Persian Gulf opened our eyes, forced us to understand that we are continuing to stand only one small step from disaster.

Today, in the world, there are a dozen or even more states which can, using their own resources, create nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles. Some of them have still not adhered to the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. A very important step was made by France and other states which have followed their example. Others may

withdraw from this treaty because of various circumstances.

The spread of nuclear weapons throughout the world will bring to naught all efforts to reduce this type of weapon, will drive us into a new arms race over the creation of means of defense from nuclear attack, and will destabilize the military-political situation in the world. To erect barriers to the spread of nuclear weapons is very complicated. But first and foremost, we must successfully complete that which we failed to finish in 1963, when we left open the possibility for conducting underground nuclear tests.

Here, I would like to turn to the scientists to ask them to express their views concerning two possibilities: will man be better off if we close this last legal possibility for nuclear weapons tests, or is it better to leave it because the need to improve nuclear weapons outweighs the danger of their proliferation?

Tests of nuclear devices are a key and indispensable element in the creation of weapons. If tests in all environments are banned, then it will be extremely difficult to create a few, untried nuclear devices, and completely impossible to create a significant nuclear arsenal. To halt the testing is also the way to stifle existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons. They age. They lose their reliability, and that alone will force nuclear states to be more willing to make reductions in their arsenals.

We can cite considerable evidence in favor of a cessation of tests and for the elimination of already existing nuclear warheads. But the genuine difficulty here does not arise in connection with this type of evidence. We can follow such a course if we are confident that all states, without exception, will sign the relevant treaties on nuclear test ban and on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons. Right now there are quite a few countries which are not yet ready to sacrifice part of their own sovereignty for the sake of the common good and their own good.

How can we resolve this problem? In my view, the ways to do this exist. Moreover, we have often used them in other conditions. Let us recall how the international community worked to achieve compliance, everywhere, with universal human rights: trade, technology transfer, the level of political contacts, access.

And I must say, that here, the United States of America have had their say. In extreme cases, the

country was deprived of most favored nation status in trade relations, and political and economic sanctions were imposed on it.

The experience gained in the battle against international terrorism deserves our attention. In the last analysis, an atmosphere developed in the world when, for various foreign states, it became disadvantageous and even unprofitable to harbor terrorists and to protect them.

These methods have proved themselves effective. Now, there is an opportunity to make use of the potential enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. If we go back to the original idea of its founders, and we must do that, we will find new powers through which the United Nations can impact on the policies and decisions of its individual members.

We need to strengthen the rule: as long as a state remains in the family of the United Nations, it must abide by the provisions of the charter and the decisions of its component bodies. And, if they do not comply, then we need to think about appropriate sanctions. I think that, in this context, there is a need to take a fresh look at the potential of the international court. Its advisory opinions can have great significance for the resolution of various disputes, including disputes between the United Nations and its individual members.

In the case of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, we have already seen that the Security Council can act within the framework of its powers and can act boldly and decisively, interpreting, in a modern manner, situations which arise and giving an adequate response to emerging challenges.

To feel ourselves confident in a world in which the role of nuclear weapons will be diminished, we need to know how we can protect ourselves from nuclear terrorism. As I see it, here we also will increasingly have to rely on the rights and powers of the United Nations, its Security Council, using the recommendations of the military staff committee, and the potential of that committee should immediately be put into effect.

For example, I would not exclude the possibility of the establishment, at some point under the Security Council, of antiterrorist forces, including those which could counteract nuclear and other kinds of dangerous blackmail of the entire community or of any one of its members.

At the present time, there are highly accurate nonnuclear weapons which are capable, through surgical strikes, of thwarting the plans of possible terrorists. Naturally, this problem merits the most serious consideration, both among nuclear powers, the permanent members of the Security Council, and in the United Nations as a whole.

We must not forget still another positive factor: our ability to know quite accurately what is taking place in the world from the point of view of military activity. This transparency of the world will only continue to grow, along with our enhanced confidence that there will be less and less unexpected factors and that we will know more and more about what is taking place in the most remote corners of the globe.

It would be wrong to view the issue as though all dangers derive from nuclear, chemical, or bacteriological weapons. But we simply must try to wipe out this category of dangers. Otherwise, they may make mankind pay a very high price, all of mankind and all of civilization.

Frankly speaking, I am very concerned about the fact that we have become more tolerant of threats such as nuclear catastrophe. Yes, it is true that the world has changed. Today, it is no longer characterized by that drastic military confrontation which imposed a drastic stress, literally, on each and every individual.

Today the situation is different, politically and psychologically. But despite all this, dozens of thousands of nuclear warheads remain in the arsenals of the nuclear powers. Unfortunately, the rate of disarmament processes has slowed after the initial striking successes, I repeat, striking and agonizing successes. Now, negotiations on strategic nuclear weapons are marking time, although, in fact, the treaty has been prepared, aside from several details, as well as the ban on chemical weapons. There has been an unwarranted delay on the ratification of the treaty on conventional forces in Europe, and, thus, we have lost almost six or seven months hearing fruitless disputes and arguments.

The destruction of all intermediate and shorter range missiles has been completed, both missiles covered by the Soviet-American treaty. But a gap has now appeared in the work of the assembly line that destroys missiles, for military plants are continuing to operate, even though not at their former capacity.

We cannot leave unfinished that edifice of a new world which we have jointly undertaken to create. And if we do not, every single day, add something to that structure, the building will start to collapse and will begin to deteriorate.

That cannot be allowed. Our children and young people, who today have come out onto the great stage of life, who were graduated from your great university, they will not forgive that. Not only will they not forgive us, but they will condemn us, and we must not allow that to happen.

We are still at the very beginning of our search for how to organize trade in conventional weapons, how to establish regional security structures, to set up machinery to prevent the outbreak of crisis situations.

Why am I saying all this here at Harvard University? For one simple reason: rapid and serious changes have taken place in the world and all of us are living in a different political environment. We all must adapt to new realities, to the new face of the world. For today, it is radically and unrecognizably different from what it was only a few years ago. We have left behind not only the cold war, [but] protracted armed conflicts in various regions of the world.

Today, we're talking of the partnership relations between the United States of America and the Soviet Union, of building a new Europe, a single, united Germany, as elementary facts of our life. But would all of this have been possible even two years ago? It would have been impossible to imagine something like that. Confrontation and resistance were overcome by the joint efforts of many states, large and small, but, above all, by the Soviet Union and the United States.

The world is becoming one in its actions and its desire to rid itself of the burdensome legacy of the past. And that legacy includes nuclear tests and nuclear arsenals. In a new situation, at a new level of awareness of mankind's sense of community, it is time to, there is a need to, and we must get rid of them. Scholars in all countries must help people to become aware of what has happened, to understand the thrust of the changes, and to indicate what road we need to choose so as not to lose our way in the forest of life and politics and to show people what road leads to the temple.

The scholars at Harvard and other universities and institutions in your state are in possession of the highest kind of intellectual potential, authority, and humanist traditions.

We all need a prognosis for the future. For that, we need to unite those forces which are championing peace, freedom, and democracy.

I am grateful to Harvard University for the opportunity to raise, here, several questions which require scholarly study and specific recommendations for people and politicians. In the most human way, I am deeply touched by the attention I have received here. I am very grateful to you for having bestowed on me this highest honor; I have been made an honorary doctorate of Harvard University. I understand what that means and the kind of obligations I will have to undertake from that day on. I should like to ask you to consider that in Moscow you have an ambassador plenipotentiary and extraordinary of Harvard University and you can entrust me with anything you wish. ♣

EDITOR'S NOTE

As of November 19, 1991, Mr. Shevardnadze returned to office as Soviet Foreign Minister.