

Saving Humanity From Nuclear Holocaust

The Group of Six struggles to guarantee that there will never be another Hiroshima.

Ixtapa, Mexico. August 7, 1986. "We strongly urge people, parliaments and governments around the world to actively support our call. Everyone has a right to peace and the obligation to make the effort to achieve it. Neither together nor alone can the people of the world erase the human memory of the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but together we can and must erase this threatening horror from our future."

Those are the closing words of the "Mexico Declaration" issued by the Group of Six, whose members are Argentina, Tanzania, India, Sweden, Greece and Mexico. Their position reaffirms their commitment to protect the right to peace in order to assure the survival of the human race.

Prior to the two-day peace summit (August 5-7), meetings were held with prominent public figures and nuclear experts. They presented papers that were then studied by Presidents Miguel de la Madrid (Mexico), Raúl Alfonsín (Argentina), Andreas Papandreu (Greece), Ingvar Carlsson (Sweden), Rajiv Gandhi (India) and Julius Nyerere (Tanzania).

A specific proposal for verifying the suspension of underground nuclear testing was the most concrete result of the meeting. In fact, since August 4, 1984 when the Group issued its first call to the leaders of the world's great powers, it has produced at least four other statements and held a major conference (in New Delhi). The fact that it was able to develop a concrete proposal this time is an important sign of progress in the Group of Six' activities, since before they were limited to sending written messages to Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachov.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE ARMS RACE?

Some 800 billion dollars are spent each year on defense. The implications of this fact are tremendous. In the first place, arms spending in the United States is one of the main causes of the huge federal deficit, now the largest of any country in the world, and it has been tied to budget cut-backs for social programs that aided the least protected sectors of U.S. society. In addition those billions of dollars could be used to liquidate the debts of developing countries with their creditors once and for all. Freeing those funds would allow our countries to end the transfer out of economic resources in the form of high interest payments on the foreign debt or as foreign exchange, channeled to the U.S. by multi-national corporations operating in our countries because of the cheap labor.

Paradoxically the resources invested in this industry of death could be used alternatively to promote economic development, for health care, food and culture, as well as to erase the stigma of domination from the relationship between strong and weak countries.

The nuclear arms race has already gone far beyond the rational: together the Soviet Union and the United States have some 60,000 nuclear weapons in their arsenals, including 20,000 strategic weapons. This is enough firepower to destroy all of humanity and the planet we inhabit fifty times over. This is the present state of affairs, without taking into account the "Star Wars"

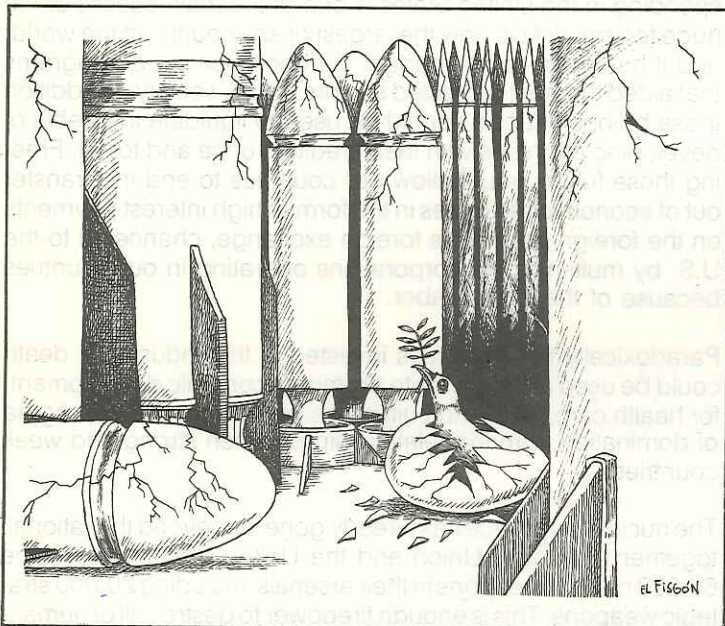


The meeting at Ixtapa: seated from left to right, presidents Nyerere, Ghandi, Alfonsín, De la Madrid Papandreu and Carlsson.

Photo by Rogelio Cuellar

proposal to develop a laser based system to intercept projectiles in flight.

The measure proposed by the Group of Six is the first time since the nuclear arms race began in 1945 that a group of Third World countries has taken the initiative to remind the world powers that they are not the only countries on this earth and thus do not have sole rights to determine the destiny of all humanity. In addition to proposing mechanisms that could be a first step toward ending nuclear testing and help increase mutual trust between the Soviet Union and the United States, the peace and disarmament summit in Ixtapa reiterated its position prohibiting the militarization of outer space. The Group of Six holds that such programs, rather than increasing the security of the two power



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blocks, will actually increase the risks of destroying the planet, either through error or deliberately.

The importance of the meeting lies not only in the very fact that it was held, but also in its potential to spark a current of world opinion, a kind of international awareness that will move countries to become a positive force in the effort to protect the international rights of weaker nations.

According to Jamal Shemirani, director of the U.N. Information Center, "In addition to the support given the Group of Six by the 40th U.N. General Assembly, in the next session their positive and brave posture regarding the arms race will be taken into account. But at any rate, this topic should not only be of concern to these two organizations; rather it should be taken up by all socially-oriented organizations around the world."

A PROPOSAL, IF YOU PLEASE

The specific proposal for verifying the suspension of underground nuclear testing is an important example of technological advances being made by Mexico, Argentina, Greece, Tanzania, India and Sweden. Their seventeen point proposal was sent along with the "Mexico Declaration" to President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov. Among its most important elements is its emphasis on bilateral cooperation in guaranteeing the moratorium. This includes enforcing the moratorium at testing sites, inspecting large chemical explosions without confusing them with nuclear detonations and permitting independent inspections and technological developments by the Group of Six.

The document calls for an initial meeting of U.S. and Soviet experts with the people who formulated the proposal. Together they would examine the details of setting up a network of some 20 or 30 seismic stations for the international monitoring of both countries' national territories, as well as test sites and the possibilities for on site verification.

The six leaders, as well as the other noted individuals who participated in the pre-meeting on disarmament, believe that political will is the only ingredient still missing to bring the proposal to life. They refuted the idea that stopping the nuclear arms race presents an endless number of technical problems and characterized that as an inhumane and petty argument created by those who are not really interested in peaceful coexistence. According to participants, the best proof of this is the Soviet's temporary test ban and their decision to extend it for another year after the Group of Six' New Delhi statement. They viewed the Soviet move as an effort to make a show of good will towards reaching an understanding and achieving an arms accord between the two powers.

THE URGENT NEED FOR PEACE

There are numerous treaties on nuclear arms, including the Antarctic Treaty, the Outer Space Test Ban, The Tlatelolco Treaty, the partial test ban signed in 1963, the 1974 Threshold Test Ban and many others signed by both the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet after 40 years of the arms race, none of these accords has been able to bring it to a halt. To make matters even worse, world powers have often ignored international law to the detriment of weak countries and in the process have heightened international tensions, especially regarding bilateral East-West relations.

The accumulation of nuclear weapons that can destroy the world many times over has not produced the desired security of nations. Only the accumulation of peace and peaceful coexistence can really assure the security of the strongest countries and of the world in general. The potential for economic, political and social development is integrally related to the insanity of the arms race that robs people of their possibilities for creating a better life for their children.

The sentence was handed down by the prominent figures who participated in the disarmament meeting: "Amidst humanity's final chaos and the eternal nights, the only vestige of what had been life on earth will be the cockroaches." ★

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