

An Opinion for a Debate

[The following opinion has been sent by Prof. Binayak Dutta-Roy, an eminent Physicist and a legendary teacher. The readers are requested to send their views regarding this issue of cardinal importance]

The first detonation of a nuclear weapon took place in a test site in New Mexico, USA, on July 16, 1945. On August 6, 1945 the USA dropped 'Little Boy' on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and three days later the USA again dropped 'Fat Man' on Nagasaki. At least 100,000 civilians were killed outright by these two events. Immediately after the USA nuclear attack on Nagasaki, Bertrand Russel published the first known recorded comment against nuclear weapons: " The prospect for the human race is sombre beyond all precedent. Mankind is faced with a clear-cut alternative: either we shall all perish, or we shall have to acquire some slight degree of common sense". The decade following the use of weapons of mass destruction by USA and these crimes against humanity, people from all over the world and scientists, philosophers, writers, artists, students, teachers and workers, also fearful of the growing nuclear arms race involving USA and the erstwhile Soviet Union began to organise demonstrations which lead to the Russell-Einstein Manifesto issued in London on July 9, 1955 highlighting the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and called for world leaders to seek peaceful resolution of all international conflicts. The signatories included 11 pre-eminent intellectuals and scientists, notably Albert Einstein (just days before his death) and among them were Max Born, Leopold Infeld, Frederic Joliot-Curie, Linus Pauling, Bertrand Russel, Hideki Yukawa etc. It may be noted that the manifesto called for an international conference calling, in the words of Bertrand Russell, all governments to "allow their citizens to survive", and again in the phrase used by Nobel Laureate Robert Rotblat, "Remember your humanity and forget the rest". It is interesting to note that Jawaharlal Nehru called for the proposed international conference to be held in India. This was delayed due to the Suez Crisis but was ultimately held in the town of Pugwash, Nova Scotia in Canada and the Russell-Einstein Manifesto became the founding charter of the Pugwash Conference, which over the years constituted a beacon of sanity in a world beset by the fear of Nuclear Terror.

Proliferation or spread of nuclear weapons has been opposed by many nations with or without nuclear weapons. Efforts to conclude an international agreement took shape and was concretized only in June 1968 when the U.N. General Assembly endorsed the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (also known as Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty or NPT) and was opened for signature in July 1968. The NPT entered into force in March 1970. Till the mid sixties only five nations (United States, the then Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France and China) were nuclear weapon states. At present 189 countries are States Parties to the NPT. Notable non-signatories are India, Israel and Pakistan. India conducted a nuclear explosion in 1974, which was most cynically described by the Indian Government as "Smiling Buddha". Following that in 1998 India and Pakistan conducted back-to-back nuclear tests. North Korea acceded to NPT in 1985 but withdrew in 2003 and tested a nuclear device in 2006.

Advocates of peace campaigned for the adoption of a treaty banning all nuclear explosions since the early 1950's. Indeed ironically the then Prime Minister Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru of India (now a country "proud of its RIGHT(!?) to conduct tests of nuclear weapons") voiced in 1954 the elimination of all such nuclear tests. As a result of world-wide popular demand the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) seeking to ban all nuclear explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purposes, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th September 1996 and opened for signature on September 24th 1996, when it was signed by 71 states. The CTBT has been now signed by 177 states and ratified by 138. All the states of Europe have signed and ratified the CTBT. The USA practising a double-faced approach have signed the CTBT but have refused to ratify it. India and Pakistan have not signed, nor has the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Against this rather dismal background of a cynical race for nuclear weapons 'capability' a hopeful example is furnished by the Republic of South Africa which in 1991 acceded to NPT and concluded a comprehensive safe-guard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This agreement assured it access to nuclear material and technology for peaceful purposes such as power generation etc. Furthermore South Africa is in the forefront of the struggle for a nuclear weapons-free world and for the time being an internationally guaranteed security for non nuclear-weapon states against threat and use of nuclear weapons against them. South Africa had a secret nuclear weapons programme started in the seventies under the apartheid regime during the period of its international isolation. After the fall of the apartheid regime in the late 1980's South Africa announced that it "shares the international community's concern about the spread of nuclear weapons and advocates the concept of a nuclear weapon-free world". South Africa, under the international supervision of IAEA, dismantled their nuclear weapons and thus that country has the distinction of being the only state to have indigenously produced and then verifiably dismantling their nuclear weapons.

It is against this background that the present approach paper asks for the rejection of the so-called "bilateral 123" agreement on Nuclear Cooperation between USA and India announced just three days before the 62nd anniversary of the dropping of the nuclear bomb by USA on Hiroshima. It is bilateral only in name, as the very name 123 owes its origin to Section 123 of the US Atomic Act of 1954 (Cooperation with other Nations) in the passing of which I am sure Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru had no part! That apart the riders to this "Agreement" pertaining to the Hyde Act may be extended in meaning to areas outside "nuclear cooperation" and make India a pawn in the strategy of Super-Power hegemony which is part of the New World Order which the USA is trying to impose on all the nations. It seems that US is more worried about the interests of its corporates rather than disarmament. India in signing such "agreements" is edging towards becoming a strategic partner of the United States. Such "agreements" will only encourage and abet a weapons race in the region to the detriment of the economic interest of our countries and our people. Already we see ominous signs: the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier "Nimitz" has been allowed in an Indian port in violation of our stated policy of not allowing transit of foreign nuclear weapons through our territorial waters. The government and the press has been busy creating a smoke screen. They are claiming that this "Agreement" is essential for access to nuclear material and technology for civil use and that this is the only way to ensure fuel supply. If India, like South Africa, signs the CTBT and the NPT which

country of the Nuclear Supply Group would deny India access to these? At the same time India could prevail upon Pakistan and Israel to do the same and to come to an agreement with China to destroy all nuclear weapons. What is being advocated in this approach paper is that India goes in for International Agreements and Guarantees and becomes a leader in the World Peace Movement and forces USA under international pressure to ratify the CTBT and to accede to Total Disarmament, rather than sign these so called bilateral "agreements" (and that too with the only country in the world that has used nuclear weapons to kill innocent civilians) sacrificing its sovereign rights and its independent international policy.

~Binayak Dutta Roy