

IN MY LIFETIME

Reflections on nuclear weapons and power by Natalia Mironova, leader of the Movement for Nuclear Safety in Chelyabinsk, Russia, and delivered with additional commentary [not written] on August 5, 2012 in Livermore, CA at “Foreclose on the Bomb, Not the People.”

I am 66. My mother was pregnant with me, 67 years ago, when 250,000 residents of two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, children, women, and elderly, were turned into radioactive ashes by the U.S. President Truman’s political decision. Another 200,000 died from illnesses caused by radiation exposure. In 1945, my parents served in the Russian military. They were well informed about the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I absorbed my mother’s fear in her womb. Thus, the nuclear arms race started.

When we take a look through our own lifetime, we may discover how the nuclear industry has turned into a political monster that sacrificed nations, not only Japan, but also America and Russia, and even more. The U.S. and Russia/USSR became the main “nuclear bluffers.” Both of our governments built and spread widely the culture and institutions of nuclear bluffing [nuclear lying]; they classified the number of accidents, contamination, and public health damage.

On this day when we remember the victims of the unprecedented cruelty of nuclear bombing, we will connect with our hearts to the hearts of Japanese people. The feeling of suffering has been enhanced by the tragedy of Fukushima. On this day, we believe in the mission of the Japanese people to become the leader of end of the nuclear era. Huge 170,000-person demonstrations at the Parliament in Tokyo, demanding the complete abandonment of nuclear energy, support our hope.

The 21st Century united the social world, interconnecting it with information and communications, with humanist values: the values of life, health, safe environment, friendship, openness, and mutual support. In this new social environment, the consequences of Fukushima will trigger the rejection of nuclear expansion, in my lifetime. I am working to argue against nuclear lies and misinformation, to help people to

read and understand complex scientific and technical information, protect themselves, and become literate citizens.

All my life I was connected with nuclear technology, even if I did not want it. Under age 7, I, with my parents, lived near the Bismuth production site in Germany. After age 7, I lived with my grandma near a Kazakh uranium mine. After 11, I moved with my parents to a plutonium production region. I was pregnant with my daughter in 1986 when the Chernobyl accident happened. Doesn't it sound unreal? Or, could it be that we can't take a step without crossing the nuclear footprint in our lifetime?

In Russia, in my Chelyabinsk region, the country still produces plutonium and tritium for nuclear weapons, and does reprocessing of spent fuel for nuclear power plants -- and the victims of nuclear weapons production number almost half of a million people. Plutonium contamination was spread on an area equal to Los Angeles - 1300 square kilometers (320, 000 acres). More than 400 square kilometers (100, 000 acres) will never be able to be used safely for human needs.

Four generations of people living in the contaminated territories of the Chelyabinsk region, show an increasing number of cancers. This figure has doubled over the past twenty years and has reached 405 cases per 100 thousand people. Compare this with 355 in Russia and 290 in Europe. The number of congenital anomalies in children has reached 52.3 per 1,000 births in 2010. Compare this with 33.8 for the whole of Russia.

Plutonium contamination is dangerous for 240,000 years, going through a complicated chain of decay and transformation through such isotopes as americium, neptunium, polonium, and more than 10 other isotopes, until it becomes a stable lead and bismuth. But the lead-bismuth pollution of the environment will remain hazardous to humans.

We have a plutonium excess today in Russia, and in the USA. Governments twice spent our taxes. At first, to produce the plutonium. The second time to get rid of it. Now the new nightmare with breeder reactors and MOX (mixed oxide fuel) is coming. The spent MOX-fuel management is both our governments' chance to take our taxes for the third time.

Possession of plutonium is the path to creation of nuclear weapons. Moreover, possession of plutonium by groups of rogue powers opens the way to the “gray market,” blackmail and political adventurism. And here we, the representatives of civil society, are faced with the irresponsibility of power. We see an irresponsible government in Japan. And I see it very clearly in Russia.

The USA and Russia possess nuclear weapons ready to launch. The USA – 2010 (SIPRI, 2012) has 1,379 launchers with 2,468 – 2,150 warheads. Among them are 488 missiles capable of carrying multiple warheads.

Russia – 2012 has 1,286 launchers with 2,430 warheads. Among them are 363 missiles with multiple warheads.

China 2011 has 138 launchers with 178 warheads. Among them are ~15 missiles with multiple warheads.

The risk of an accidental launch of nuclear missiles is growing with fragility and chaos in the power elites and growing cognitive dissonance in society.

A launcher with multiple warheads is a blind nuclear weapon. Try to ask your imagination: what will happen after from 3 to 10 warheads sprinkle in different directions. How many more innocent victims will governments add to the nuclear martyrologies?

The Kremlin uses “cold war” rhetoric and policy to defend the KGB staff position in Power. They combine defensive mythology with offensive policy. On one hand: “Russia is under a threat”; “the enemy is on our doorstep”; “the U.S. wants to destroy Russia”, Moreover, the opposition [to the government], human rights, environmental advocates, anticorruption and other public self-organizing activists also have been accused of “destroying Russia.”

On the other hand, \$700bn for “modernization” of offensive military forces (4 French Mistral, 70 Israeli Strike Drones, strategic bombers, tanks, amphibious cars, military

bases or/and military presence); \$350bn for nuclear commercial and military development and production.

The Kremlin is promising to increase the weaponry market as its main business strategy. They plan to invest \$100bn into 8000 jobs during the production two S-400. One remark of President D. Medvedev, Feb. 3, 2012: "Our production (S-400, Triumph) will be sold not only on domestic, but also foreign markets".

The Kremlin would be very happy to sing "cold war" a cappella with the US President.

Partly it is happening. The 123 agreement between the governments of Russia and the United States to maintain the nuclear nonproliferation regime obliged Russia to accept spent nuclear fuel from Soviet-made design research reactors in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

But this is another page of "My Life Story" [for another day]. Thank you!