

EMBASSY EDITORIAL

SAVING OUR NUCLEAR ALLIES DESPITE OF THEMSELVES

If you are old enough to remember where you were in October, 1962, you may have a disturbing sense of déjà vu as you follow this week's exchange between the White House and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In those North American cities that were on the receiving end of the Soviet Union's nuclear target trajectory 45 years ago, there was the uneasy sense in informed circles that, behind the scenes, nothing short of Armageddon was brewing.

The Soviets, it was learned, had already burnt their files in the headquarters of their UN mission in New York—a diplomatic mission's first preparation for war. In the White House, president John Kennedy was trying to decide how to respond to the placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba. Had he listened to his military advisor, Air Force chief of staff General Curtis LeMay, a nuclear holocaust would likely have been unleashed. Many of us who lived in the targeted North American cities probably would not be around today to talk about it. The same goes for Russian citizens and anyone else unlucky enough to get caught in the crossfire, or find themselves beneath a faulty nuke.

But as it turned out, president Kennedy chose to take advice not from his experienced World War II general, but from his ambassador to Moscow and his younger brother, attorney general Robert F. Kennedy. The president picked up the phone and called Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev. Both sides stood down, the missiles were withdrawn from Cuba—and many of us remain to tell the story.

The Cuban Missile Crisis taught a generation that—despite anything we have learned since that time—profound terror is still more likely to come from governments than from rag-tag bands of freelance terrorists.

In the decades since that chilling event, the nuclear powers made some encouraging headway toward the abolition of weapons that have no possible use except to terrorize civilian populations and destroy the health of the planet for generations to come. But that progress is grinding to a halt. The risk of a nuclear incident is again increasing, thanks in part to the Bush administration's protective view of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, its missile defence program and a disdain for multinational disarmament treaties.

The U.S. has for the past several years given a bad example to other nuclear weapons powers and a worse example to states like Iran that believe only nukes will protect them from their enemies.

This is all the more reason for Canada, America's closest non-nuclear ally, to get involved. Few people would expect the Bush administration to breathe life into existing non-proliferation and disarmament treaties, but Canada can at least begin speaking to America's next administration.

Senator Roméo Dallaire wants to remove Canada from NATO until it drops its dangerous nuclear weapons first-strike strategy. Former senator Doug Roche, who is the chair of the Middle Powers Initiative, remains one of Canada's most tireless advocates for nuclear disarmament. If anyone believes they are voices of the past when they speak out against nuclear weapons, they better think again.

Their message is so old that it sounds like new. And Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush are reminding us that it is again as timely as tomorrow's news.

Don't Mention the Warming

Gwynne
DYER

"I cannot negotiate on the two degrees," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel, currently president both of the European Union and of the G8 summit of the major industrialized nations that started today in Heiligendamm. Her goal was to get the world's biggest producers of greenhouse gases to agree to emission cuts deep enough to limit global heating to two degrees Celsius by the end of this century, but that isn't going to happen this year.

In order to meet that target, Chancellor Merkel wanted countries to commit to a 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared to the baseline figure for 1990, but U.S. diplomats have already deleted both the two-degree limit and the 50 per cent cut from the draft summit declaration sent to them by Merkel. "There is only so far we can go," they explained.

As for China, which may overtake the United States as the world's biggest polluter this year, a draft copy of a national global warming assessment leaked in mid-April stated that "before general accomplishment of modernization by the middle of the 21st century, China should not undertake absolute and compulsory emission reduction obligations." Like the U.S. government, the Chinese regime is starting to admit that climate change is serious, but is against any preventive measures that might impair economic growth.

China is not a member of the G8, but it already has the fourth-biggest economy in the world, and by the 2020s it will probably have the second biggest. Like the Bush administration in the United States, the Chinese regime prefers to talk about cuts in "carbon intensity": the amount of carbon dioxide emitted per unit of national income. This is simply an elegant way of dodging the issue.

Thus, China proposes to cut "carbon intensity" by 40 per cent by 2020. If Chinese economic growth continues to be around 10 per cent a year, that means that actual carbon emissions in China will more than double by then. And the Bush administration's promise to reduce "carbon intensity" by 18 per cent by 2012, assuming three and a half per cent annual growth in the U.S. economy, means no net cut in total U.S. emissions.

It's not surprising that rapidly industrializing countries like China, India, Brazil and Mexico are reluctant to accept formal limits on their emissions. After generations of poverty they can at last see prosperity on the horizon, and they are terrified of doing anything that might damage

their current high growth rates. But the stance of some rich countries on climate change is harder to explain.

The United States and Australia have long been the principal delinquents, but Japan, a Kyoto signatory whose own emissions are under control, is now the Bush administration's main instrument for sabotaging the Kyoto accord. While most other members want to agree by next year on a new treaty to replace the current accord when it expires in 2012, Japan is insisting that nothing more must be done until big polluters like the U.S., China and India are brought into the system.

If we had world enough and time, it would make sense to wait for everybody to climb on board, but time is not on our side. Merkel's target of no more than two degrees hotter is already dangerously high, since that would mean falls of 12-25 per cent in food production in most of the main food-producing areas of the world. There is not enough reserve food production available in the world to cover that shortfall: millions of people would starve.

Stopping at two degrees hotter means stopping at between 450 and 550 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, depending on whose figures you believe. We are already at 385 ppm, and we are now going up at four ppm per year, so deep cuts in current emissions are needed very soon.

Assume that the next U.S. administration will join the Europeans in adopting serious emissions reduction targets (as a number of U.S. states are already doing). Is there any point in a post-Kyoto accord, if the newly industrializing countries are still not part of it?

The emerging economies must eventually be part of a global emissions reduction system, but it will not happen until the rich countries have already accepted deep cuts. The developing countries are keenly aware that almost all of the current problem is the fault of the old rich countries, which have been emitting large and growing amounts of greenhouse gases for 200 years. So they are the countries that have to make the really deep cuts now.

A prediction. In the end, we are going to have the same per capita emissions quota no matter where we live: Americans who currently put 20 tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere each year, Germans who now emit 10 tonnes per capita, and Indians who only produce one tonne at present.

The compromise figure will be around two or three tonnes per capita for every country, and the rich countries will have to struggle very hard to get their emissions down while the developing countries will still have some room to grow. No other global deal is conceivable. So the rich countries might as well sign a new Kyoto and get on with cutting their emissions; they have a long way to go.

editor@embassymag.ca

Quote of the Week: The Most Significant Intelligence Error of the Bush Administration

"...contrary to established American policy and common sense, to treat terrorism not as a crime, to be solved by intelligence and law enforcement agencies, but as an existential military threat, to be confronted with tanks and Marines." — from James Bamford's article, "Undoing Bush: How to Repair Eight Years of Sabotage, Bungling and Neglect" in *Harper's* magazine, June 2007

www.embassymag.ca

Publisher

Anne Marie Creskey
anne@embassymag.ca

Editorial

Senior Editors
Jim Creskey
jrcreskey@embassymag.ca
Ross Dickson

News Editor

Lee Berthiaume
lee@embassymag.ca

Associate Editor

Christina Leadlay
christina@embassymag.ca

Staff Writer

Brian Adebaba
brian@embassymag.ca

Contributing Writers

Magdalene Creskey
Rosaleen Dickson
Sean Durkan
Christopher Guly
Angelo Persichilli

EMBASSY

CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY NEWSWEEKLY

69 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5A5, (613) 232-2922 • Fax: (613) 232-9055

Columnists

Gwynne Dyer
Richard Gwyn
Luke Eric Peterson
Vladimir Torres
Photographer
Sam Garcia

Sales

Director of Advertising
Don Turner
dturner@embassymag.ca

Corporate Account Executives

Craig Caldbick
ccaldbick@embassymag.ca

Corporate Account Executives

Scott Pottie
spottie@embassymag.ca

Marie-Luce Bélisle
mbelisle@embassymag.ca

Corporate Account Executives

Craig Caldbick
ccaldbick@embassymag.ca

Retail & Classified

Retail & Classified Sales
Manager
Greg McDonald

Retail Account Executives
Gareth Dare

Published Every Week Since April 28, 2004

AUDITED CIRCULATION

Classified Sales Representatives

Eleanor Adair
Chris Eldridge

Administration

Chief Financial Officer,
General Manager
Andrew Morrow

Reception

Allia Kellock Heward
Finance
Ilein Löfvendahl

Art & Production

Production Manager
Brian McCambridge
Design and Layout
Benoit Deneault
Internet Services Manager
David Little

Circulation

Circulation Manager
Sabrina Pomeroy
spomeroy@embassymag.ca

EMBASSY: CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY NEWSWEEKLY
Issue number 157, is published every Wednesday by

HILLTIMES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR are welcomed by eMail at news@embassymag.ca, by fax at 613-232-9055, and by post to 69 Sparks Street, Ottawa, Canada, K1P 5A5. All letters will be edited for length and content

Canadian Publications Mail agreement No. 40068026. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Circulation Dept., 69 Sparks Street, Ottawa, ON K1P 5A5. EMail: circulation@embassymag.ca