

## Does nuclear Ukraine have a future?

The June 26 presidential elections in Ukraine and the aggravation of the situation in Crimea necessitate looking once again at the destiny of the 1,620 nuclear warheads belonging to Russia and deployed on Ukrainian missiles.

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**MN file**

Does the abundance of "highest priority" and "most urgent" documents provide a guarantee of Ukraine's non-nuclear status in the foreseeable future? Hardly so. On January 14, the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and the USA signed a Tripartite Statement envisaging the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from Ukraine's territory over the course of the next seven years. Also at that time, in Moscow, President Kravchuk promised to cut this period to three years. On February 4, in Kiev, the going Ukrainian parliament ratified the START I Treaty and withdrew its objections to the Lisbon Protocol. On May 16, again in Moscow, the heads of government of Ukraine and Russia concluded an Agreement which in fact reduced the deadline for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine's territory to three years.

What we have before us is a series of precedents. In May 1992, in Lisbon, Leonid Kravchuk promised that his country would join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons "in the most immediate future." However, this has still not happened. In September 1993, bilateral Russian-Ukrainian protocols on nuclear matters were signed in Massandra, but were instantaneously severed by Ukraine.

Ukraine entered the "hot summer" of 1994, with the world's third largest nuclear arsenal on its territory. And at the same time the scientists and the military in Kharkov, it seems, tried to break the secret codes on Russian missiles to place them under Ukraine's effective control.

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About 90 SS-19 Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with roughly 540 warheads are deployed in the environs of Khmel'nitsky and Pervomajsk. According to

available information, roughly a third of the missiles have had their warheads removed. Warheads have been removed from nearly all the SS-24 missiles and are stored in depots presumably not far from the Pervomajsk base. In accordance with the Tripartite Statement all warheads must be removed from this type of missile by mid-November of this year. All in all, 240 warheads had been removed by May from SS-19 missiles and 420 warheads from SS-24 missiles; 180 warheads have already been sent to Russia and this process is continuing uninterrupted so far. The 564 long-range cruise missiles, located on bomber aircraft, are equipped with 564 warheads. It is presumed that 19 bombers (carrying up to 12 such missiles each) are located at the Priluki base (this is six bombers more than has been prescribed under the START I Treaty). Twenty-one bombers (capable of carrying up to 16 missiles each) are located in the Uzin base in the Kiev Region. Most likely, all missiles are stored at or near air bases.

How dependable is the legal basis for carrying the process of eliminating nuclear weapons in Ukraine to the end? In effect, it is very undependable. Most of Ukraine's commitments are based on President Kravchuk's promises and on documents certified with his signature or the signature of Acting Premier Yefim Zvyagilsky. The new Supreme Rada can renege at any moment. The number of people dissatisfied with the rapid withdrawal of nuclear weapons keeps growing among Ukrainian senior officers, part of whom are grouped around General Morozov, former Defense Minister, well known for his extreme nationalist views.

The victory of any candidate in the presidential elections except Leonid Kravchuk may aggravate tensions in Ukraine over regionalization, and cause an immediate conflict among the regions. There is evidence that one West European state has already agreed to allot funds to an East European state for the construction of refugee camps in the eventuality of a conflict between Eastern and Western Ukraine. The scenarios of "civil war" or "low intensity conflict" with the subsequent disintegration of present-day Ukraine, are being examined in real earnest at major Western strategic and political centers.

It is clear that Moscow cannot be indifferent to this turn of events. Russian diplomats and, to a certain extent, military leaders increasingly gravitate to the position that Russia has a stake in a single and stable Ukraine, in a predictable neighbor not torn with internal conflicts. This conviction, however, does not hinder Russia from taking preventive and precautionary measures in

case the situation in the area of the above-mentioned nuclear bases becomes uncontrollable.

Thus regardless of the scenario, Russia does not want nuclear weapons being kept in Ukraine. It is exactly for this reason that the Main Provisions of Russia's Military Doctrine do not rule out the possibility (even if theoretically) of a nuclear strike by Russia against Ukraine.

The "presence of a third party" in the Russian-Ukrainian dialogue has become one of the sorest points for Russia. At first Moscow tried to do without Americans in this "quarrel between neighbors," but with time it resigned itself and accepted the new rules of the game. The United States, which had until May 1993 brought powerful pressure to bear on Ukraine to make it ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, later shifted its accent. In February 1994, President Clinton, meeting with his foreign policy advisers, bluntly spoke about the need to support Ukraine's leadership in earnest. Clinton's main step was to give consent to massive financial injections into the Ukrainian economy.

The change of tone, however, has not yet become a formal policy. "Lively yet informal discussions are under way." With these words an American diplomat characterized the elaboration of the Clinton Administration's conduct in relation to Ukraine. The inconsistency of the USA on a number of questions looks very much like the recent inconsistency of Russia. Of minimal importance under conditions of relative stability, these waverings and contradictions may become fatal if uncontrollable processes keep mounting in Ukraine.

Kiev, for its part, is asking and not without reason: who now makes key decisions in Moscow? Has consensus been reached in relation to Russia's "Ukrainian strategy" or are the current steps by the Kremlin and Smolenskaya Square part of an improvisation?

The "tripartite" agreements which have already been reached necessitate keeping the compromise-based partnership alive. Moreover, there are political scenarios which suggest that, given a definite effort by the diplomats of the three countries, it is possible in the next few months to reach a definitive solution to all disputed issues and to write "finis" to the protracted "nuclear crisis" surrounding Ukraine.

What questions then remain unsolved and may trigger a new exacerbation of the crisis?

First. No full stop has been put to Ukraine's demands for special "guarantees of security" from the USA and Russia. Ukraine considers its position as a "non-nuclear power with nuclear weapons on its terri-

tory" to be unique. Mistrust for Russia has likewise been preserved: the state border between the two countries has still not been demarcated. Russia is ready to confirm that it will recognize the inviolability of its borders with Ukraine, and its neighbor's territorial integrity, immediately after Ukraine's ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the capacity of a non-nuclear state. At the same time Russia will also give a guarantee "not to use and not to threaten the use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine." The USA is also ready to confirm similar guarantees. But other, "special" guarantees of security for Ukraine have been ruled out. Such is the unambiguous position of both Russia and the USA. The point is that "special guarantees" have in general been expunged from the lexicon of official nuclear powers. If someone's "uniqueness" is recognized, new candidates will immediately step forward to "bargain" for more concessions for themselves.

Second. It is still unclear when the Supreme Rada of Ukraine will ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. According to a Ukrainian diplomat dealing with disarmament problems, "parliament is getting ready, and it won't be long now." Indeed, US economic injections into Ukraine's economy, running into the billions, may become a decisive argument for the majority of parliamentarians. Moreover, Ukraine intends to have an active part to play at the Conference for prolonging the term of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and for this there is first a need to sign the Treaty. Ukraine also counts on considerable assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the field of nuclear engineering safety. Possibly, as a concession to Ukraine, it would even be advisable, eventually, to examine the question of permanent membership for Ukraine's representative on the IAEA Board of Directors.

Nevertheless, eight months remain until the Conference of prolongation. During this period MPs will surely be in the mood to continue bargaining. "While discussing the need for special guarantees, they will no doubt bear in mind the new and considerable volume of our financial aid," an American diplomat has said.

However, until Ukraine has ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Russian parliament will refuse even to pose the key Russian-American START II Treaty for consideration.

US Vice-President Al Gore once said that whereas 1993 was Russia Year for the USA, 1994 would become Ukraine Year. It looks very much as if this forecast is coming true not only in relation to the USA, but to Russia as well.

Kiev-Moscow

## A triangle of interests

MN's questions are answered by experts and diplomats from the USA, Ukraine and Russia.

### Q.: Will Ukraine ratify the Non-Proliferation Treaty in the near future?

Alexander PIKAYEV (Institute of World Economics and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences): Kiev has no real reason whatsoever to join the Treaty. In the past two years, the more Ukraine moved in the direction of establishing control over nuclear weapons, the more unilateral concessions it received both from Russia and from the USA. Thus, the Supreme Rada's refusal to sign the Treaty in November 1993 was followed by the Tripartite Statement where Washington promised 175 million dollars in American aid. The Rada's further refusal to sign the Treaty in February 1994 was followed by promises of additional American financial investments. In other words, the more nuclear Ukraine becomes, the more money it gets from Washington. From this point of view, the key to the problem is not in Kiev, but in Moscow and Washington. Instead of pursuing a policy which is sometimes hard to appraise as anything other than encouraging Ukraine's nuclear ambitions, the two powers ought to take off their white gloves more often and be more rigid in tying question of aid to the renunciation of nuclear status.

Igor TIMOFEYEV (Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs): As things stand today, I believe that there are no serious reasons for negatively appraising the possibility of Ukraine's participation in the Treaty. One more confirmation of this is Ukraine's participation (so far in the capacity of an observer, naturally) in the work of the Committee preparing the 1995 conference to prolong the term of the Treaty's validity.

### Q.: How will the question of a guarantee of Ukraine's security be decided?

Roman LABA (Supreme Naval Command Academy, USA): I am afraid that in the next few years, Russia will make a big mistake by underestimating Ukraine. Today Russia does not seem to have a well-thought out policy toward that country. For Kozlyev, Ukraine is a "myth." For Stankevich, it is a "temporary phenomenon." For Sobchak, the independent Ukraine is the result of a collusion among local nomenklatura.

Igor TIMOFEYEV: The question of a guarantee of national security for Ukraine is by no means an academic one, inasmuch as territorial claims have already been made on Ukraine, and the immutability of its borders has been questioned. Besides, the situation in Ukraine is different from that in any other state. The question is not about ruling out the possibility of nuclear weapons being developed by the state, but about Ukraine's voluntary renunciation of the right to possess the weapons deployed on its territory. It would be logical to adopt not one but several bi- or multilateral international legal documents to address this question.

Alexander PIKAYEV: Kiev has been looking for security guarantees where they cannot be given. The main threat to Ukraine's security stems not from without but from within, from its internal instability.

Moreover, Ukraine's economic stability may become a guarantee of security which will be acceptable to all sides. And here, I believe, Ukraine has a right to count on the understanding of its partners.

