

## JOHN HALLAM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES TO PND

Written by John Hallam

Wednesday, 26 September 2012 19:55 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 February 2015 21:53

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The single activity that has dominated everything has been the highly successful visit of Colonel Valery Yarynich to Australia. However this hasn't been by any means the only important thing to take place, and we need to go back to May 2012, when for the first two weeks of that month, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee (NPT Prepcom) met in Vienna, Austria, and I was there and presented a panel with Ambassador Alfredo Labbe of Chile, and Colonel Valery Yarynich.

That panel, in spite of being the very last item on the NPT Prepcom agenda, and in spite of taking place one full hour after the prepcom had officially finished, still managed to gather a respectable audience, to whom Colonel Valery and I canvassed the arguments against the 'anti-de-alerting' side (if you can wade thru the double negatives there), showing, I believe convincingly, to an audience of diplomats, NGOs, and think – tank people that talk of 're-alerting races' is no reason not to lower the alert status of the over 1000 missiles that the US and Russia keep on high alert.

Later on at a farewell beer in a nondescript cafe at the Praterstern railway station, Colonel Valery mentioned that he was interested in working toward quantifying the risk posed by on – alert weapons to human survival. We both agreed strenuously that human survival was and is what we are on about. This is important as its a priority that fits perfectly with the Human Survival Project, on which professor Peter King and I are working.

On my return from Vienna and the NPT prepcom, (where also human survival, covered under 'catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons use', was front and centre), I have worked with Prof. Peter King, on the 'Human Survival Project', with the aim of producing a paper that will do just as Colonel Valery suggested over that beer in Praterstern Railway Station cafe – try to 'ask what needs to be asked' in order to try to put numbers of some kind on the risk that on – alert nuclear weapons pose to human survival. It may ultimately prove to be unquantifiable, but at least we can try to find out above all, what in details needs to be known at approach the question. In doing so, we will need assistance from some luminaries much more distinguished than I am – and Peter and I are very much hoping to enlist, obviously, Colonel Valery, Steven Starr, Prof. Hellman, and others including possibly Toon and Robock.

So it was against this buildup that Colonel Valery came to Sydney in August, nominally sponsored by the Hiroshima Day Committee, but in

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reality with the work (and the funding) coming from one or two key people.

There were difficulties that at times seemed likely to sink the project, notably over funding and over the matter of a visa. This last required nothing less than intervention from a former foreign minister to whom full thanks are due, in order for whatever obstacle it had been to be unblocked. I need say only that this kind of organising is not for the faint – hearted. My thanks to Anne Noonan, Yolanda Lucire, Angela Drury, Frank Vavasour, Sue Wareham, and Gareth Evans without whom it could not have happened.

Once visa and financial problems were settled, Colonel Valery turned out to have a schedule that was nothing if not full. He gave speeches to:

- The Hiroshima Day Rally (featured on p2 of the Sydney Morning Herald).
- The Hiroshima Day forum
- The Humanist Society
- The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (including a launch of the Human Survival Project)
- The Lowy Institute
- The Centre for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (CNND) in Canberra
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including a special one on one interview with Australia's top anti-terrorism mandarin.
- Lunch with Gareth Evans and the head of CNND, Ramesh Thakur.
- Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), at Glover cottages.

In addition, Colonel Valery did a lot of media, of which the Herald, Late Night Live, and ABC-News24 are the most important.

Since then I've been working to:

--Prepare for UN First Committee in NY, for which I am leaving this coming Saturday.

This includes writing to all those governments who either abstained or who were marked as 'absent' during the 152-3 vote in favour of the de-alerting resolution in 2010. That resolution, slightly tweaked, is once more being presented by its sponsors, the Swiss, New-Zealanders, Chileans, Malaysians and Nigerians, and it is important to try to get an even better result than the already overwhelming majority of governments who simply don't want to be toast. We are above all saying that even a government that is sinking into the Pacific or wracked by civil war might not be making the most wise calculation by undertaking a diplomatic toilet trip next time that vote goes through a bit over a month from now. That of course, means I've had to fax some 40 governments which shows up on PND's phone bill.

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In addition to the Operational Readiness resolution going through the UN General Assembly once more, I note that the Swiss and others are holding a workshop on catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons use. Steven Starr and I hammered away for six years on this subject, showing roomful after roomful of stunned-mullet diplomats Steve's animated graphics of the planet turning black after someone in STRATCOM or Kosvinsky Mountain has had the ultimate bad-hair day. Our efforts have clearly borne fruit, and Switzerland in particular is running with a message that we could have written.

--Consolidate the Human Survival Project. Peter and I have been talking about funding. The HSP, now officially 'exists', but needs to start doing things.

--Write an article on high alert nuclear weapons for the Pacific Ecologist, now complete.

Finally, I must mention the simple activity that takes so much of my time, and that is doing, every single day, a roundup of the worlds press on nuclear weapons. That takes a good half of my time, and I could easily spend all my time doing it. It's five or six emails, each containing up to ten newsitems per day, on a thematic basis, from media and blogs worldwide, and going out to an audience of senior NGO people (and the odd retired diplomat), worldwide, and it is the nuclear abolition movements primary source of information.

Ahead of me in the immediate future lies First Committee with the Swiss, NZ, Chilean, Malaysian and Nigerian governments with whom I regularly consult, and a variety of possibilities.

I'll also be attending the Abolition2000 strategic planning meeting on a nuclear weapons convention on 11October.

Further ahead in May2013 there is another NPT Prepcom this time in Geneva. I already think of getting the Colonel and Pavel Podvig to present there. In addition, I am planning a separate panel on 'Nuclear Weapons and Human Survival', to be under the name of the 'Human Survival project', as a joint PND-CPACS effort. I also have an invitation to Moscow from the Colonel, hopefully to 'meet some generals'.

My fingers are firmly crossed.

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