

Who is threatened by the neutron bomb?

The following article was released to New Solidarity International Press Service by the Soviet foreign news agency Novosti.

"There exist no foreign policy considerations which could justify the American government's decision to manufacture the major components of the neutron bomb," stated Maj.-Gen. Prof. Rayr Simonyan, a Soviet expert on military policy problems, in an interview with Novosti commentator Vladimir Ostrovski.

The Soviet scientist said that this step undertaken by Washington is a direct consequence of the Pentagon's illusory conception that it is possible to conduct a limited nuclear war. But even when one admits the theoretical possibility of such a war, NATO's defense forces have no appreciable need for neutron warheads. According to Western estimates the total destructive power of the American tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Europe is comparable to 460 million tons of TNT; that makes two tons for each resident of the bloc's European member states. In addition, for every tank of the Warsaw Pact countries there are at least ten large units of NATO antitank weapons—not to mention the "small" antitank arms with which all Western troops are equipped.

Prof. Rayr Simonyan reminded us that the numerical strength of the West's armed forces, as General Alexander Haig has himself admitted, surpasses the Warsaw Pact's troop strength by 50 percent. "It is clear even from a rough calculation," the expert said, "that NATO's military potential in Europe is not less than that of the East, but even surpasses the latter in a number of significant categories. It must also be considered that NATO's long-range program to increase its armaments, which was adopted at their council meeting in Washington, has predetermined a further qualitative escalation of fire-power over the next 15 years."

What is the neutron bomb needed for? In the opinion of the Soviet expert, the Americans intend to equip NATO with this weapon of mass destruction for the purpose of assault operations in the European theater. In the USA's Field Service Regulations FM-100-5 it says outright in Chapter 10—which deals with the conduct of battle under conditions of nuclear deployments—that nuclear weapons can be utilized in order to achieve tactical superiority as a means of neutralizing the major force and the units of the enemy's secondary echelons, in order to provide fire support and to destroy his rear flank. This regulation contains the basic thesis that in all probability the United States will be the first to use tactical nuclear weapons.

According to Western estimates, the Americans want to station 5000 neutron warheads in Europe. No one can say at present when, under what conditions, with what level of intensity, in what manner and in tandem with what other weapons—possibly including nuclear weapons—these neutron warheads are to be deployed. It is therefore impossible to even roughly estimate the possible losses which would be suffered by Europe's civilian population in the event of a conflict, as well as the damage to the populations of other continents because of the transfer of neutron weapons to those regions.

The proponents of the neutron weapon remain silent about the fact that its massed use would create a radioactive cloud which could bring destruction to the populations of neighboring countries.

Professor Simonyan stressed that the American doctrine of "realistic containment" puts the accent on a limited nuclear war, in order to prevent the USA from committing suicide. Hence, the neutron weapon is expressly designed to hit European cities and towns. Since the United States wants to expose Amsterdam, Hamburg, Stockholm or Milan to a nuclear strike instead of Chicago, Detroit, or Los Angeles, they intend to station the neutron warheads in Europe.

Rayr Simonyan stated that the idea of limited nuclear warfare is provoking those responsible for shaping the USA's foreign policy into acting carelessly. The illusory character of the scenario of such a war is clear even to people with no professional military experience. Even the very idea of such a war contains within it, right from the start, the risk of a further escalation of a nuclear conflict. The mortal danger it emanates must be understood not only by nuclear powers, but also by those countries who hope to remain on the sidelines. In the event of a conflict between the nuclear powers, no country's neutrality will provide it any protection against the neutron weapon, since the USA will not guarantee these countries' security.

The step Washington has made is also dangerous because it will lead to the development of many different kinds of neutron charges not even foreseen at present. Further along it will be possible to put them on top of any kind of wheels and to hang them under any kind of carrying surface. In the future it will be impossible to contain this chain reaction within prescribed limits.

The components of the neutron bomb, which are already being manufactured on assembly lines, are not only psychologically conditioning people to the possibility of a nuclear war; they are also making it more probable.