

Editorial

Proliferate Peace

Daily, or so it seems, US Air Force B52 strategic bombers depart their base at Fairford in southern England, usually in pairs, to fly missions across Europe, over the Middle East and, occasionally, the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa. These ancient warhorses pollute the atmosphere, burning vast quantities of fuel, to show the flag and test the enemy. Some of them are nuclear capable, some not: a physical modification signals which. We are regularly told that no nuclear weapons are carried on such missions.

Recently, a nuclear capable B52 flew close to the Russian border with Estonia. Indeed, the B52s now spend much time in the skies over the Baltics and Scandinavia, as Finland and Sweden integrate more fully with the nuclear-armed North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Conspicuous nuclear provocation, initially reduced when President Biden succeeded Donald Trump, is back with us following President Putin's criminal invasion of Ukraine accompanied by his threats of 'swift, lightning fast' responses to 'unacceptable strategic threats' (see *Spokesman 151*). One threat begets another. And, as war rages in eastern Ukraine, Russian bloggers call for 'pre-emptive nuclear strikes'.

In this unpropitious context in August 2022, the long delayed tenth review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty met at the United Nations in New York. We print UN Secretary-General António Guterres' opening remarks about the urgency of reducing the 'nuclear danger', which he emphasised days later by travelling from New York to Hiroshima to commemorate the atomic bombing of that city 77 years ago. The Secretary-General then remained hopeful that the NPT review conference would agree a way forward on reducing the nuclear threat. He cautioned delegates that 'humanity is in danger of forgetting the lessons forged in the terrifying fires of Hiroshima and Nagasaki'. But President Putin and others turned a deaf ear to the Secretary-General and no

consensual way forward could be agreed.

Whilst in Hiroshima on 6 August, the Secretary-General told his audience that ‘members of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons met for the first time to develop a roadmap towards a world free of these doomsday weapons’. We print the political declaration and roadmap of this pioneering inaugural conference, which met in Vienna in June. The nuclear-armed states had previously united in their opposition to the TPNW, and some NATO members attended as observers in Vienna. Recognition of internationally agreed nuclear-weapons-free zones, and guarantees against nuclear threats against such zones on the part of nuclear-armed states, form central signposts on the roadmap.

As the Secretary-General said in Japan, ‘it’s time to proliferate peace’.

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Bruce Kent was an avid reader of *The Spokesman* journal, judging by the feedback we regularly received from him. On 18 May 2022 in London, he joined us in raising a glass to Bertrand Russell, whose 150th birthday we were celebrating at Conway Hall. So it came as a great shock, a few weeks later, to hear of Bruce’s death. In his own inimitable style, Bruce contributed book reviews to *The Spokesman* over the decades, which afford some sense of the man himself. He is greatly missed.

As this year sees Kurt Vonnegut’s centenary, we also revisit his timeless address, *Fates Worse than Death*, which he sent to Ken Coates of the Russell Foundation in lieu of travelling to Brussels for the first European Nuclear Disarmament Convention in Brussels in 1982.

Bruce and Kurt were surely kindred spirits in speaking out for peace.

Tony Simpson