

NINE POINTS ABOUT THE NEUTRON BOMB

By Johan Galtung 16/12/78

1- The neutron bomb is the clearest expression of the utter contempt for people which our military and, to some extent, also civilian leaders seem to have after the nazi terrors. We must ask: What is the whole purpose of defense, if it is not to protect human lives first of all? In pushing the issue of the neutron bomb, these people reveal their true values -- and ultimately that will lead to their downfall. Inhumanity to this level, including the agonizing deaths, does not pass unpunished. POLITICIANS WHO FAVOR IT: SCRAP IT, WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME.

2- It is wrong, however, to brand the neutron bombs as capitalist: that is a misreading of capitalism. The neutron bomb is fascist, not capitalist. Capitalism prefers destruction of things so that there will be new demand, and it might like to preserve enough people provided they are able to demand something. Our economic system thrives on periods of destruction to get the wheels turning around when the market is slack; the neutron bomb does not produce that result. Precisely because it does not, its fascist, anti-human character stands out even more clearly.

3- In addition to this the arguments put forward by its proponents of a more strategic, military nature are plainly stupid. Even if the US started, of course, the USSR can and will catch up. Any possible edge will be evened out, symmetry will be obtained again at a higher level of armament - in other words, escalation. The neutron bomb, if used, will be used not only against the enemies of NATO, but against NATO itself -- like chemical and bacteriological weapons. Any military gain will be short-lived.

4- Who are the targets of these bombs? I assume not the superpowers. They value their material things and population too highly, in addition they are not interested in nuclear war on their territory. Without being able to prove it, I am convinced that the SALT talks among other things are not about weapons but about targets, and that they would both prefer to use their satellites as targets. The two Germanies, for instance -- in general countries with high population density. In these countries there is not space enough for the warfare so far planned. The neutron bomb, hard on people, soft on things, should therefore also be seen as a weapon fit for using the satellites as targets. The Netherlands is one such possible target. The act of the Dutch people of struggle against the bomb, hence, is also an act of self-defense.

5- Why does our civilization produce such monstrous things? Because of some terrible seeds in our civilization of an anti-human character, among them a very strong dualism between those seen as right and those seen as wrong. Inquisition, Auschwitz, the

neutron bomb, belong to the same group of phenomena. But aren't there other trends in our civilization? The HUMAN and the HUMANE, this is an occasion to step forward. For that reason it is so good that this movement not only mobilizes the experts, but also the religious, the church people, the specialists on ethics. History may show this to be a crucial point in our self-reflection, or capacity to reflect on ourselves -- which is never easy.

6- Our real enemy, hence, is within. It is not in the East-West conflict, particularly not in a period with both detente and more than sufficient overkill capacity already. What we would need now are more steps towards disarmament. But the enemy within, our military-bureaucratic-industrial-research complex, is pressing as usually, regardless of circumstances. They will always find some type of argument for their devilish weapons. They are again talking of Soviet superiority in this and that; the Soviets are talking about the same. Those who want to expand will always try to do so.

7- So, what is the alternative? It is the same as it has been for a long time now -- divided into three parts:

i- Refusal to participate in the superpower system, withdrawal from it, like the non-aligned movement has been doing. Those Third World countries are far superior to us in wisdom and political ability; we are still clinging to this type of suicidal protection. I know perfectly well that this is difficult. But one day it will happen: some NATO and WTO countries will leave the system at the same time, telling the superpowers: have your fights yourselves!

ii- The struggle within:

Refusal to serve in armies relying on such arms;  
 refusal to serve in ministries etc. relying on such arms;  
 refusal to work for firms producing such things;  
 refusal to do research or work in institutes researching such weapons of mass destruction.  
 We have our enemies within; let us know who they are, they deserve to be stigmatized. An example is the NATO Secretary General, Mr. Luns, who argues against neutron bomb opponents because the USSR is also against neutron bombs. This shows such an extreme distortion of moral and intellectual judgment that it reflects very badly on an organization like NATO that they can use a man of that caliber.

iii- The alternative defense -- combinations of nonmilitary defense and guerrilla methods. The Dutch moves in that direction under the former government, calling expert meetings on nonmilitary defense I had the honor to attend, are positive indeed.

8- We are grateful to the Dutch for all these initiatives. The

Amsterdam Appeal is a historical document - a source of inspiration for others. But much more is needed.

9- This has to become a top political issue; among the type of issues that makes governments fall. Does this government dare put it to a referendum whether the Dutch people want to be defended in this way? I am in no doubt about the answer. Maybe that may be the only good thing about the neutron bomb, that as a political bomb it might serve to kill the right people - "right" in both senses of that word - without harming the environment!