



There is also a political side of the issue. Recognizing the dangerous dynamics of the present political processes in a close proximity to its borders, Ukraine would like to receive security guarantees. Taking into account that Ukraine has declined a nuclear state status, such guarantees should be provided by the nuclear states.

When insisting on security guarantees, Ukraine must bear in mind that its large nuclear neighbour, Russia, conducts a two-track policy with respect to Ukraine. In 1990, an agreement was signed between Ukraine and Russia which provided for a mutual recognition of state sovereignty and of territorial integrity. Nevertheless, both the Russian Parliament and prominent state and government leaders have repeatedly expressed unwarranted pretensions to take over Ukrainian cities, regions and even whole provinces. Both private persons and also official Russian mass media are systematically spreading among the general population a gospel of territorial expansion. That is why we are looking for clear and unequivocal assurances of Ukraine's security in the form of a document to be issued at the highest state level and containing recognition of Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, inviolability of our borders, a commitment to refrain from the use of force or the threat of force, to avoid political or economic pressure in bilateral relations. Generally speaking, none of these demands exceed the limits of the existing agreements and treaties or of the provisions of international law. Such a document could serve as a precedent for security guarantees of other countries that face a dilemma regarding the acquisition of their own nuclear weapons, as well as for those nuclear states which, following Ukraine's example, may decide to dispose of such weapons.

In case you are getting an impression that Ukraine is too particular at the time when global security problems are at a stake, let me point out that our attitude is based on a negative experience. Exactly a year ago, even before the signing of the Lisbon Protocol, on attempting to meet the wishes of the world community of nations Ukraine decided, as a gesture of goodwill, to remove from its territory to Russia all tactical nuclear weapons, that were its property. Ukraine, of course, expected to receive appropriate material compensation for the

warheads. In addition, as provided for in the agreement, Ukraine expected the Russian side to provide a tangible proof that these weapons have been deactivated and dismantled. No such evidence has been provided by Russia. Ukraine has not received a single cent in compensation, although the nuclear materials, assuming of course, that the weapons were indeed dismantled, are either being used on Russian nuclear power reactors or are being sold as a reactor fuel on the world market. As well, Ukrainian nuclear experts were denied access in order to verify the dismantling of the weapons. This alone, in my judgement, constitutes sufficient reason for a more demanding attitude with respect to strategic nuclear weapons.

Ukrainian authorities understand how high on today's agenda is the removal of nuclear arms from Ukraine, without which neither the implementation of the fundamental START-1 treaty nor further nuclear disarmament are possible. However, the citizens of Ukraine no longer are anxious to listen to the calls from the West or the East. Initially, their response was rather magnanimous. But, hurt because of its willingness to trust and disturbed by the aggressiveness of its neighbour, it now demands unequivocal guarantees for the future. Moreover, with each new demand to immediately hand over nuclear arms to Russia, the number of parliamentary deputies favouring retention of nuclear arms as the only guarantor of independence and security tends to increase. And this process is both justifiable and predictable.

In order to substantiate this thesis, let me quote a few lines from an article in the April 6th edition of the "New York Times" entitled "Clinton Pressing Ukraine on A-arms":

"In an effort to put pressure on Ukraine to give up the nuclear weapons left on its soil by the Soviet Union, the Clinton Administration has rebuffed Ukraine's request for a meeting between the Prime Minister and President Clinton or Vice President Al Gore.

But some specialists fear the move may send a signal that the Kyiv government is important to

Washington only to the extent that it is a nuclear power."

I will interrupt the quotation in order to note: it is a clear signal indeed, but not the first one of that kind given to Ukraine. I shall continue:

"Some experts said the rebuff was a mistake and would strengthen the stand of those Ukrainians who argue that Kyiv should hold on to the nuclear weapons. If they want to send a signal to the Ukrainians that they are isolated and nobody likes them and therefore they might want to think about how to defend themselves, this is a good way to do it."

In this connection I would like to share with you one of the latest news items from Kyiv, which cannot fail to raise attention:

A convention of the Union of Officers of Ukraine recently held its deliberations in Kyiv. This civic organization is very influential within the Armed Forces and carries a strong voice in the society as a whole. The convention voted almost unanimously to approve a resolution in favour of a nuclear status for Ukraine.

Let us now summarize the position of Ukraine at this stage. Ukraine is not a nuclear state since it does not have, and does not wish to possess operational control over the nuclear weapons that became its property following the collapse of the USSR. It would like to dispose of these nuclear weapons, in exchange for appropriate compensation of the dismantling costs, technical assistance and security guarantees from all nuclear states. Furthermore, as a signatory of the Lisbon Protocol and of the START Treaty, Ukraine is committed to take part in the control process of the destruction of nuclear weapons on its territory. And it intends to fulfil this obligation.