

**Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs  
and the British Pugwash Group**

**ROTBLAT CENTENARY CELEBRATION**

**The Royal Society, Wednesday 10 December 2008**

**Progressing the nuclear disarmament agenda  
Policy, diplomacy and science**

**Keynote talk**

**Baroness Williams of Crosby**

*Advisor on Nuclear Proliferation to Prime Minister Gordon Brown*

In a June letter in the *Times*, echoing the earlier letter to the Wall Street Journal by the "four horsemen" Kissinger, Nunn, Perry and Schultz, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Lord Hurd of Westwell, Lord Owen of Plymouth, and Lord Robertson of Port Ellen argued that substantial progress on nuclear disarmament is possible, and given political will and improvements in monitoring, the long-term goal of a nuclear weapons free world is achievable. The President-Elect of the United States, Mr Barack Obama, has indicated his own commitment to that goal. Yet little progress has been made. What can be done?"

Baroness Williams began her talk by stressing that we badly needed to hear voices that cannot be easily challenged – and those voices are the voices of scientists. The lack of scientific input has seriously damaged the process of political dialogue. A central question at present is the nature of the so-called War on Terror. This name oversimplifies the nature of the international security dialogue.

She went on to discuss a number of issues that related to both the need for us to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons and problems that needed to be addressed in order to make progress towards this goal.

1. First, she noted four recent events that could have had serious international consequences.

The first of these was the hoax telephone call that was made after the recent Mumbai attack to the President of Pakistan and was purported to have come from the Foreign Secretary of India. This has been little publicised, but we were within hours of a conflict between India and Pakistan. Before taking precipitate action, Zadari contacted Condoleezza Rice who herself contacted the Indian Foreign Secretary who confirmed he had indeed not made such a call. The outcome could easily have been very different.

Secondly, she mentioned a recent study by Matt Bunn on the smuggling of nuclear materials from Russian nuclear cities.

Thirdly, she pointed out that there had been an attempt to export highly enriched Uranium from Slovakia.

Fourthly, there was the recent case of six nuclear-weapon-loaded missiles being transported across the US.

These were all worrying actions that could easily have led to very serious consequences. Nuclear weapons could not have stopped them happening, and the present nuclear weapons situation made their potential consequences very serious indeed.

2. There is the likelihood of a massive increase in the development of civil nuclear power worldwide. Much of this expansion will be in countries without a previous history of or technical capability in nuclear matters. There are consequently obvious dangers to be aware of and to try to minimise.

3. There has been a potentially catastrophic loss of trust between Russia and the US. Yet any initial steps towards reducing nuclear arsenals have to be made by these two powers, which are also central to progress on a fissile materials cut-off treaty. Moves to expand NATO have contributed to this loss of trust, not surprisingly when the Russian fear of being encircled is recognised.

On the positive side in the context of Russian relations, she reported on a comment made by a senior Russian politician at a meeting the previous day at the European Parliament in which he had commented that 500 warheads was considered to be sufficient for Russia. He also implied that nuclear deterrence may not any longer be an effective concept.

Baroness Williams also commented here on the lack of trust that the non-nuclear weapons states had in the nuclear weapons states attitude to Article VI of the NPT. There was a lack of belief that the nuclear weapons states were taking Article VI seriously.

These lack of trust issues have to be dealt with in a serious way.

4. Finally, the problem of control of the nuclear fuel cycle has to be solved. Effective structures of control and regulation have to be found.

She argued that there has to be international control of the fuel cycle – and that this has to be the solution to the Iranian situation. Enrichment could be undertaken on international territory. There was an obvious implication here of a need to increase the resources available to the IAEA.

There is a specific need for more scientific and technical input in areas such as:

- verification in respect to weapons reduction and dismantling (and she commented that the Moscow Treaty has no verification requirements);
- the monitoring of the Additional Protocol;
- the education of a new generation of inspectors and experts. There is a possible role here for the UK and France in particular;

- developing and building in warning systems to signal if a country has moved to a point at which its civilian power programme has 'crossed the line' towards being a potential military programme.

[These notes were produced by John Finney. Any inaccuracies are his responsibility.]