

## Opinion &amp; Analysis

## CND still on the march to nowhere

EASTER TIDE MARKED the golden anniversary of the much lionised Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). In February, Canon Patrick Comerford, now president of Irish CND, wrote it a birthday eulogy in this newspaper.

The headline – “50 years later, CND is still on the march in a nuclear world” – aptly and with unintended irony summarises CND’s principal achievement: like the Duracell bunny, it just keeps on marching.

Yet its history remains one of failure, because only two countries have undergone nuclear disarmament. South Africa did so as part of its disavowal of apartheid, and Libya because its president feared the US after Saddam was toppled. CND played no part in either.

The number of nuclear states has increased under CND’s watch from three (the US, Soviet Union and Britain) to nine (France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea), with Iran and Syria desperately trying to join the club.

Contrast this non-performance with a couple of other iconic do-good drives, whose resounding victories made them effectively redundant. The slavery abolitionist movement of the 18th century was so successful that, with the help of a robust royal navy, its job was virtually complete by the end of the 19th century. Similarly, the anti-apartheid movement, which began around the same time as CND, achieved stunning success more than a decade ago when South Africa democratised itself.

In its early days, CND was backed by many contemporary luminaries including JB Priestley, Kingsley Martin, Bertrand Russell, AJP Taylor and assorted churchmen. Every Easter they would lead a protest march from London to Aldermaston, home of Britain’s Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE). Yet decades of such marches had absolutely no effect on the AWE, which is still operating happily.

CND sponsored protests, court cases and debates in Ireland, Britain and other countries throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which likewise had zero effect on anyone’s nuclear policies.

CND likes to point out that the Soviets removed their missiles and nuclear warheads from Cuba



TONY ALLWRIGHT

As CND celebrates its 50th birthday, one thing is certain: it will persist in having no effect

looked pathetic for the television cameras. That CND Duracell bunny marched on for 19 years.

The target of the ladies’ ire was – incredibly – the US and Britain, rather than the baleful Soviet enemy that had swallowed half of Europe and wanted the other half.

But once again, it was all for naught; the missiles stayed. Eventually the Evil Empire began simply to collapse in 1990 under the sheer economic weight and madness of trying to outgun and outnuclearise the US.

CND claims as a success the removal in 1991 of the Pershing and cruise missiles, which Comerford says proves that “the nuclear arms race can be reversed at any stage”. In fact, the Soviet threat had disappeared by then, so the missiles were no longer needed. This shows that wars, in this case the cold war, can be won by the superior side, which fortunately was the US.

That’s the only reason the nuclear arms race ceased. As usual, CND had nothing to do with it, and perhaps even prolonged it, by encouraging the Soviets to think the West was irresolute and would never fight back.

CND should in fact thank the nuclear-armed US. For without US arms, soldiery and backbone, neither the Japanese empire nor Nazi Germany would have been crushed and then democratised. Nor would democracy have been restored across Europe.

Without US troops and nuclear missiles stationed in Europe, the Soviet empire would not have been kept at bay and eventually imploded. This created the space for Europeans to rebuild, to construct the EU and, since the US took care of their defence against the Soviets, left spare cash for social programmes.

Apparently, CND now worries about Pakistan, India, Israel, nuclear materials in the hands of “corrupt regimes and terrorists”, and the (benign) environmental effects of nuclear energy. But you hear little about the existential nuclear threat of the moment: namely Iran’s efforts to acquire a bomb in order to, in president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s words, “wipe Israel off the map”.

CND’s website says it “opposes both the use of force against Iran and any acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities by Iran”, tellingly relegating Iran’s nuclear threat to second place. Moreover, no anti-nuclear rallies seem to be planned for outside the Iranian embassy in Dublin or elsewhere.

But it’s all irrelevant anyway. One thing is sure: the CND Duracell bunny will persist in having no effect on any of these problems. Yet it is “still on the march” (to nowhere), which no doubt makes its members feel righteous and virtuous. Others might say deluded.

Happy 50th birthday, CND. But I wouldn’t bother with a 51st.

Tony Allwright is an engineering consultant and blogger. [www.tallrite.com/blog.htm](http://www.tallrite.com/blog.htm)

**You hear little about the threat of the moment: Iran’s efforts to acquire a bomb**

in 1962. Yet this was not because of CND, but because they were afraid the US would nuke the Kremlin. Similarly, the Americans and Soviets signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and subsequent arms reduction treaties – not due to CND but because of the mutual fear of nuclear attack and annihilation.

The 1980s invigorated CND when, to counter the Soviets’ deployment of nuclear-armed SS-20s in its eastern European vassal states aimed at western Europe, the US deployed Pershing and cruise nuclear missiles in Britain and West Germany. This spawned the CND-endorsed Greenham Common protests, where scruffy-looking women set up camp with their children and