

INTERVIEW: Col. Marc Geneste

'The triumph of the defense is the way to save civilization'



NSIPS/Philip Ulanowsky

Colonel Marc Geneste is a 25-year career officer with the French Army who served in World War II, Indochina, and Algeria. Currently vice-president of the Center for the Study of Total Strategy in Paris, Geneste is known as the father of the French neutron bomb, which he developed while working for the French Atomic Energy Commission. He is a member of La France et son Armée, an association formed in 1983 to build European support for President Reagan's beam weapons program, as part of an overall defense concept for Western Europe.

EIR: In your speeches at recent *EIR* conferences in Bonn, Rome, and Oslo, you presented a sobering picture of the military balance in Europe. What do you see as the main threat to Western Europe from the Warsaw Pact, and what do you propose as the chief means for countering that threat?

Geneste: At the *EIR* conferences you just mentioned, I presented the picture which is commonly acknowledged by all Western Europe, in terms of manpower and active divisions. If you add to this the mobilization potential of the Soviet system, you would have a much more sobering picture, not even taking into account the growing imbalance in tactical nuclear weapons that some experts have recently pointed out.

I insisted on this problem because it is, to me, the specific threat to continental Europe, which, unlike America, can be destroyed by nuclear projectiles and invaded with land forces.

Charity begins at home, and I have noticed for a long time that our American friends have focused their attention on the only threat which is deadly for them: the ICBMs and SLBMs—let's say, strategic forces—and were not interested to the same extent in the so-called "tactical" problem, i.e., defense against air/land assault. The Soviet divisions are not about to land in Massachusetts, while they are rather close to Bonn, Rome, and Paris. The Atlantic is here to stay.

My purpose was to show that if the new technology of beam weapons is welcome to protect Europe and America from the threat of projectiles, we should not forget the modern technology we need to cope with the other tool of offense, that which threatens Europe, the Pact divisions' "tactical

forces," armed divisions, etc. These technologies are complementary to take care of both tools of offense—men and projectiles—and should assure the triumph of defense, whatever the difference in numbers, for the first time in history.

EIR: You have been a leading advocate of "enhanced radiation weapons," known as neutron bombs. Please explain how these weapons function and how they are to be used militarily.

Geneste: I have indeed been convinced for a long time—with a few others, particularly some American scientists—that it should be possible to find a more intelligent solution to assure peace than piling up, year after year, the means to extinguish civilization with offensive weapons. As you know, the situation we have today is one of deterrence built on the balance of terror. I believe that the young generation starts wondering why they should continue to live on a powderkeg where we add megatons week after week. This is probably one of the reasons why pacifist movements flourish in the West. . . .

Although terror was probably the best solution at the beginning of the nuclear age, for lack of fissile material, it was obvious to me that the day would come when the numbers of nuclear weapons would permit the return to traditional defense, and solve the military problems without threatening civilian holocaust.

This is why I became interested in tactical nuclear weapons, because of their terrific efficiency against military forces in the field, their ability to prevent all military operations due to the incredible vulnerability of men to their effects, their potential to kill the offense and assure the triumph of the defense. . . . But the "classical" tactical nuclear weapons, very effective to stop land forces, are also extremely destructive of the environment. They destroy buildings through their blast, set fire to vegetation and everything else through their thermal effect, while they stop tanks because their neutrons kill the crews. They are extremely difficult to use on the battlefield, especially when you have to use them on friendly territory. It's like using a hammer to kill a fly. . . .

Then along comes the neutron bomb, invented in 1958 by my friend Sam Cohen. This is a tactical nuclear weapon, in which the flux of neutrons is enhanced, while the other undesirable effects (blast and fire) are considerably reduced. In other words, you enhance the kill power against tank crews (steel being no protection against neutrons), and you reduce the collateral damage against the environment. This was the ideal tactical weapon for defensive purposes, because the defenders and the civilians can protect themselves rather easily against the neutron flux. Five feet of earth provide total protection. In other words, only the soldiers on the ground surface or in the air are vulnerable to such a weapon. Only offense is threatened, because offense means movement and movement cannot be protected underground, unlike defense. This is why I became very interested in this development and tried to promote it for European defense.

EIR: How could civilians protect themselves? How could soldiers in combat protect themselves from the effects of enhanced radiation weapons?

Geneste: It is very easy to protect populations against the neutron bomb. A cellar (reinforced with a layer of earth) or an underground shelter in your back yard would be enough. Since there is practically no blast effect, shelters are easy to build, unlike those necessary to cope with conventional bombs or classical nuclear bombs. Personally I would prefer to be in such a shelter at ground zero of a neutron bomb than at the point of impact of a World War I-era TNT bomb.

That means that defenders adequately protected against the effects of explosions on the battlefield could detonate n-bombs very close to their shelters, even overhead, and clean up square kilometers of attackers in front of or around their positions, without being threatened themselves. Then the traditional advantage of offense over defense, the capability to saturate any defense with waves of attackers, with the sacrifice of soldiers, no longer exists. It follows that you can reestablish a linear defense along your border—for instance the Iron Curtain—without giving up one inch of your territory.

The neutron bomb creates a kind of wall of neutrons that is impossible with conventional forces. This is the only weapon which provides the opportunity to establish the “forward defense” that the Germans quite understandably desire, and to nullify the current advantage in divisions enjoyed by the Warsaw Pact.

EIR: Who was behind the tremendous campaign against neutron weapons, alleging that they are “antihuman,” would result in mass murder of innocent civilians, and so forth?

Geneste: You can easily understand who was behind this campaign. The Soviets obviously did not like a technical development capable of destroying the political and psychological weight of their massive array of armored divisions in continental Europe. As far back back as 1960, Nikita Khrushchev condemned the n-bomb as a “capitalist” weapon, able to kill people and “save material goods.” But it is no more “capitalist” than the bayonet or the machine gun, the bow

and arrow or the kitchen knife. All weapons throughout history have been built to kill people. This one is no more inhuman or immoral than the others; it is only much more effective . . . especially against the armored blitzkrieg which is the cornerstone of Soviet strategy.

The impact of this campaign in the West, which has succeeded in delaying for 20 years the building of the n-bomb, is probably due to the the fact that it has been christened “neutron bomb” rather than, for instance, “nuclear antitank bomb.” People generally did not know that all nuclear weapons are in fact neutron bombs, since they all emit a great deal of deadly radiation. The term “neutron” has created the impression that this weapon was something entirely new and devilish. Yet it is much less destructive than A-bombs or H-bombs. It is much more discriminating, differentiating between soldiers and civilians, attack and defense, while the H-bomb crushes everything, friend and foe alike.

EIR: What is the history of enhanced radiation weapons, particularly the policy fight in France and Western Europe?

Geneste: The policy fight in France, which is not yet over, is easy to understand. As you know, France opted 20 years ago for countercity terror, or “massive retaliation,” or “MAD,” to establish its own national security. France followed the path of America after Hiroshima, for lack of fissile material. When you have only a few bombs, what else can you do? You can choose terrorism—that is to say deterrence through “punishment”—or deterrence through “denial,” which obviously requires a lot of ammunition to destroy military forces. France could not do otherwise 20 years ago than to threaten retaliation against Moscow or Kiev to deter an attack. The credibility of such a system naturally requires the apparent resolve to blow up everything, including ourselves, by starting the countercity game—general suicide rather than accepting a land battle.

The neutron bomb—as well as other tactical nuclear weapons—is obviously a weapon for defense, not for terror. Its introduction to the arsenal might appear to be a hint that France would not be as “terrorist” as it claimed to be . . . and would hesitate to push the button of general holocaust. In other words, the n-bomb appeared to scuttle the “deterrence through terror” strategy of General de Gaulle, who had no other choice available 20 years ago.

This is why there was, and still is, and will be, a considerable intellectual resistance against all weapons for defense, including beam weapons, among those military and university elites which have been “brainwashed” for one generation about the virtues of terror. Unfortunately, all strategies work in peacetime—even MAD strategies or Maginot lines, which can be credited for the peace we enjoy . . . until war breaks out.

But the dogma of “infallibility of deterrence through terror” is coming more and more into question, and people ask: “This deterrence is fine, but what happens if it fails? If they come anyway, what do we do?” Until we can answer that

question, France will be defenseless, because you can't stop tanks with submarines. Blowing up the Kremlin, the Eiffel Tower, and the Empire State building will not prevent the Soviets from invading France.

This is why the neutron bomb has been welcomed by French public opinion—as the beam weapons will be I am sure—as a kind of insurance against the failure of deterrence through terror, and why the French government, under popular pressure, and in spite of much intellectual resistance, developed the n-bomb a few years ago and currently keeps it ready for fabrication and deployment if need be. It would be, in my opinion, for the reasons explained above, the ideal weapon for a future European land defense.

EIR: We understand that at present neutron weapons have been built and are being stockpiled in the United States. Is this sufficient? In what scale and in what manner should such weapons optimally be deployed?

Geneste: The United States is currently stockpiling enhanced radiation weapons that could be rapidly deployed all over the world, wherever appropriate launchers could be found (for instance 8-inch or 155 howitzers, in Europe or Korea). Now the quantity of these weapons is very important. We should never lack ammunition. Their efficiency is fantastic, but not unlimited. Needless to say, for European defense, France could and should build enough of this defensive ammunition to be used, if need be, on the central front. However, I want to stress very strongly that current NATO doctrine (flexible response, mobile defense, etc.), which is an inheritance of World War II, has to be revised if we want to take advantage of this new type of firepower.

EIR: Do the Soviets have the capability to build such weapons? Do they already possess them?

Geneste: Certainly the Soviets have this capability. But since the n-bomb is mainly a defensive weapon—provided naturally the defenders take the appropriate protective measures against its effects—this weapon does not fit very well in their offensive doctrine. In fact, we don't know the exact nature of the Soviet nuclear stockpiles. We only know that they are huge and that they plan to use them if need be.

EIR: In Bonn, Rome, and Oslo, you stressed the complementarity of beam weapons and n-bombs. Could you expand on this?

Geneste: This is obvious. The two tools of offense (only offense gives a political meaning to war) are men and projectiles. The n-bomb takes care of men—i.e., land forces—but not projectiles (rockets, etc.). It remained to cope with the threat of rockets. Beam weapons offer this opportunity (if they work, which I do believe). This would be the final triumph of the defense. And when the defense wins, war is dead. . . .

Sokolovskii and Co. write that “under the threat of nuclear batteries, military operations are impossible.” In other words, they recognize the power of nuclear weapons to kill

the offense. The only military solution to open the path for their blitzkrieg is to get rid first of these nuclear batteries, using the accuracy of their SS-20s or other tactical means. This is clearly stated in their official military doctrine.

Now if you admit that the “counterbattery first strike” cannot work any longer because beam weapons will destroy rockets in flight or divert their trajectory, then the attacking tanks will be destroyed by the n-bombs from the defenders' nuclear batteries. Then their “nuclear blitzkrieg” collapses immediately. It is as simple as that. Now you can understand why *Izvestia* was so unhappy about those ideas after the *EIR* meeting in Rome. . . .

EIR: In a recent statement at the London Royal Institute for International Affairs, [French opposition leader, head of the Rassemblement pour la République party] Jacques Chirac emphasized the importance of West Germany participating in the development and deployment of beam weapons. What effects do you think this might have for the political and military situation in the Federal Republic?

Geneste: I am very pleased to hear that Jacques Chirac endorsed beam weapons in England. Back in 1974, he seemed to admit that tactical nuclear weapons were of paramount importance, in a speech he gave at Mailly in France. He seems to be on the right track—better late than never. Needless to say, the Federal Republic of Germany, which is prevented from building nuclear weapons, could and should participate in the building of the other part of the shield—beam weapons—necessary to protect Western Europe, to begin with Germany right at its border.

EIR: Recently there have been accelerating tendencies for splits in NATO; Lord Carrington and Hans-Dietrich Genscher are trying to provoke a breakaway from the United States around the issue of beam weapons. In any case, it is clear that the NATO alliance must be placed on a new basis, eliminating flexible response and related nonsensical doctrines. How do you see the future of the alliance, particularly in terms of the relationship between Europe and the United States?

Geneste: I have always been an advocate of some “division of labor” within the Atlantic alliance, in which each pillar of the alliance—the U.S.A. and continental Europe—would take care of threat number one for its own national survival. For the U.S.A., as I have said, it is the nuclear-tipped rockets. For Europe, it is the Red Army. So let the U.S.A. concentrate its main effort on control of the skies and of the seas—i.e., the strategic threat—and let the Europeans take care of land forces—i.e., the “tactical threat.”

Twenty years ago, flexible response destroyed the European defense devised by Eisenhower, when he deployed 7,000 tactical nuclear weapons on the continent with an appropriate doctrine. When Kennedy and McNamara decided that World War III was to begin with bows and arrows—i.e., conventional means—to become nuclear if need be, with a phone call from the White House, it was very clear for Europeans

that Germany was sacrificed to the overwhelming Soviet manpower, to be reconquered through the use of nuclear weapons.

No wonder the Germans did not like this military solution, made in U.S.A., and General de Gaulle left the integrated NATO command (without leaving the alliance). This U.S. decision was due to the combination of the vulnerability of the U.S. mainland after Sputnik and the belief in automatic and immediate escalation from the use of a nuclear shell on the Iron

Only if and when the United States becomes less vulnerable, can such an approach be changed. Only the new defensive beam-weapons technology offers this opportunity to restore in Europe the confidence in the former U.S. nuclear commitment, which has practically disappeared in the last 20 years. The dogma of MAD strategy was the acceptance of vulnerability as the cornerstone of security. What confidence can you have in an ally who can be destroyed in five minutes? Is

EIR: How would you evaluate the capability of the U.S.S.R. to launch a first strike against NATO in the immediate period ahead, and how do you recommend that Europe and the United States respond to this threat?

Geneste: This question is of paramount importance. If Soviets have respected the SALT ceilings in offensive rocketry, ICBMs disarming strike, because they would have to spend all their arsenal of land-based ICBMs to get rid of ours, with luck, assuming a 100 percent success (which is very unlikely). The final result would be zero on both sides.

First strike, or if you prefer counterbattery, is conceivable only if you enjoy a large superiority in numbers (although the MIRVing

In
ries were producing rockets at a fantastic rate. Admittedly they stopped after SALT, which was supposed to “cap the arms race.”

How can you be sure they did? Through satellite observation? There was recently an interesting article in the *Armed Forces Journal*, in which my friends Sam Cohen and Joe Douglas pointed out, quite rightly I believe, that aerial pictures cannot detect the rockets stockpiled under a roof, and that these modern rockets can be fired from their canister without the need of silos, etc. . . .

This means that in 1972 the U.S.A. in effect accepted “arms control” without control (which would have required on-site inspection). Now suppose that the Soviets had stuck to the famous statement of Lenin: “Our aim in disarmament talks is to disarm the bourgeoisie and arm the proletariat.” Aerial inspection would have given them a unique opportunity to appear to stick to the agreements while continuing the building of rockets under undetectable cover.

Unless it is proven that the Soviet factories started building frying pans or other peaceful appliances instead of rock-

ets, it can be feared that today they enjoy an enormous superiority in offensive weaponry. I hope this is not true, but it might be. Or it could become true, in their closed society, when arms control is “self-controlled” in the West by the press and public opinion, and forces the U.S.A. to limit its arsenal. Against such a fantastic threat, there is only one solution: technology which would offset any numerical advantage in rocketry. Clearly only beam weapons can nullify this superiority in numbers of projectiles, because their speed is 40,000 times greater than that of their targets. Curtain

Perhaps this is one of the reasons, if not the main reason, why the Soviets appear now to like the MAD strategy which they did not accept 15 years ago, when they were the outspoken champions of strategic defense, ABMs, etc. . . . This MAD strategy would have allowed them to acquire secretly such a strategic superiority that they would have won without war.

Finally, only modern technology—the n-bomb on earth, beam weapons in the skies—can nullify the advantage of large numbers of offensive means—men or projectiles—that the Soviet generals are probably trying to establish, with 15 percent of the Soviet GNP. normally read

Insofar as the European theater is concerned, the Soviets already have local superiority in theatre projectiles of all kinds, which would allow them to launch a first disarming strike against our land-based retaliatory weapons, and keep enough reserves to continue military operations. By the way, and this is written in their official military doctrine.

EIR: Let us now look into the future. What about a conference in France on such topics? What is the association “La France et son Armée” planning to do next?

Geneste: The recently created association “La France et son Armée” should and will, I am sure, contribute to such an important conference. of rock the late '6

I was pleased to hear that our ministry of defense in the parliament admitted the necessity to learn the lesson our recent national history has taught us: that we should never sleep behind Maginot lines. . . . We cannot count any more on “miracles of the Marne” or “Operation Overlord” to save our skin. Better to contribute to the “triumph of the defense” that appears to be round the corner.

EIR: Many people think that should nuclear weapons be used, this would mean “the end of the world.” Is this true? Or are there effective civil defense measures to protect civilians and soldiers?

Geneste: The worldwide campaign against the weapons of terror should incite people to find the best way to get rid of this threat. The only way is to build the technology able to destroy them—beam weapons. The only way to get rid of war is to improve human nature, or to put offense out of business. Pending improvement of human nature, which does not appear around the corner, let’s kill war. New technology offers this opportunity.