

Misguided Award from an Anti-Nuclear Group

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The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation was formed in 1982 and says it is made up of 50,000 individuals and groups worldwide. It works to build a world “free of nuclear weapons.” This is indeed a worthy goal. So, it’s shocking that the foundation is giving a peace award in October to a man who has repeatedly appeared on the TV shows of a Russian known as Putin’s chief propagandist while Putin wages a murderous war of aggression against Ukraine, a propagandist who has called for Russia to drop nuclear bombs on Ukraine.

The man is economist Jeffrey Sachs and the propagandist is Russian TV talk show host Vladimir Solovyov. Last November (2022) after mentioning nuclear weapons, Solovyov said,

“If we have weapons that secure total victory it would be strange not to use them. Otherwise, why did we even make them? If we think that our lives have no value anyway and that nuclear weapons are not necessary because the wonderful Western world has to remain but Russia can be destroyed.”

On January 25 of this year a Russian Member of Parliament said on Solovyov’s show that using nuclear weapons would be a “dangerous trend.” Countering him “Solovyov replied that ‘not using nuclear weapons is a dangerous trend’ as he said that Russia should make the most of its ‘superiority in tactical nuclear weapons.’” On June 22, he said,

“They’re striking bridges on the border between Crimea and Kherson region. We no longer have any option. We must wipe them from the face of the earth... their decision-making centers. If our tactical nuclear weapons give us an advantage, maybe it’s time? Maybe we simply need to batter them.”

On August 22 he tore away any ambiguity: “Why are we still dancing around? I think we should strike. As soon as they officially deliver [F-16s], we conduct a strike with tactical nuclear weapons,” suggested Solovyov. “They’re convinced we won’t do it. This is why it should be done.” He said nuclear weapons would work “wonderfully in Ukraine.”

Solovyov was awarded the Order of Alexander Nevsky by the Kremlin in 2014 “for objectivity in covering events in Crimea.” He is a fierce supporter of Putin and of the Ukraine War. “He not only calls Ukrainians Nazis but insists they’re now working in league with LGBT activists to destroy Russia.” In March of 2022 he said: “And if you think we’re going to stop with Ukraine, think 300 times, I will remind you that Ukraine is merely an intermediate stage in the provision of the safety of the Russian Federation.” This is the fellow Sachs chats with.

To be clear Sachs was not on Solovyov’s program when the latter called for the nuclear strikes, but

he could hardly not have known about Solovyov's monstrous proposals. In late March of this year a statement by scores of economists via an open letter to him noted that "Vladimir Solovyov (apart from calling to wipe Ukrainian cities off the face of the earth, ... called for nuclear strikes against NATO countries)". Despite this open letter, Sachs appeared on Solovyov's talk shows four more times. Needless to say, he didn't do this to debate Solovyov or denounce his calls for genocide via nuclear weapons.

Sachs came to international prominence in the '90's while as a Harvard professor when he advised a "shock therapy" regimen for a quick leap to free-market capitalism for Russia as it emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union. It didn't work so well. One critic said, "Between 1991 and 1997, Russian GNP - i.e. the value of all goods and services that Russia produces - went down 83%. Agrarian production decreased 63%. Investment decreased 92%." Russia started on a deep dive in population. Sachs defended himself by saying Russia didn't adopt his playbook at all.

In the new century Sachs reinvented himself as a friend of the poor. In 2005 he wrote *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*, how one could reform capitalism and eliminate extreme poverty by 2025 in a "Big Push." The grand idea was to send poor countries lots of targeted development aid. He became advisor to a number of UN Secretaries General on poverty eradication. The U.A.E. gave him \$3 million to study positivity and he issues a "World Happiness Report."

Somewhere along the line Sachs decided he was an expert on diplomacy and geopolitics. The day before Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, as tens of thousands of troops were on Ukraine's border, Sachs, then a professor at Columbia, was on Bloomberg denouncing U.S. policy as provocative because it was supposedly expanding NATO.

By June 2022 he was blaming the Russian invasion completely on the United States. In an article on Tikkun he declared, the war was a "30-year project of the American neoconservative movement." I did my best to tear his piece apart in this article. One does have to admit that Sachs became popular in the media. He appeared on CNN, Bloomberg, the Economist, the *New Yorker*, Fox Business, CNBC, Hungary Today, Democracy Now!, and more. One of his appearances on Democracy Now! garnered three million views on YouTube, which I suspect was a DN! record. Just a year after the invasion (on Feb. 27, 2023), Sachs was addressing the U.N. Security Council, sharing his supposed expertise to talk about the explosions at the Nordstream pipelines. It wasn't as big a deal as it sounds, though. He was there as a guest of the Russian Federation.

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF) started announcing its upcoming award to Sachs over email in mid-August 2023. It intends to honor him as a "Distinguished Peace Leader" on October 18 in Santa Barbara, California. In September, on behalf of the peace, anti-nuclear, and environmental group Promoting Enduring Peace (PEP), I wrote letters of protest to NAPF. There was no answer. So, some Ukraine solidarity activists started an open letter to the NAPF.

The signers of the letter are scientists, economists, professors, and writers who praise the anti-nuclear goals of the foundation, but fiercely criticize Sach's view of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and his appearances on the programs of Russian TV presenter Vladimir Solovyov.

There were 175 initial signers including Anastassia Fedyk, UC Berkeley economist; noted Black feminist author Barbara Smith; Dr. Zaher Sahloul and Mayson Almisri, co-winners of the Gandhi Peace Award; Joseph Cirincione, national security analyst and author; Yuriy Gorodnichenko, professor of economics, UC Berkeley; writer Adam Hochschild; Denys Bondar, Associate Professor of Physics, Tulane University; and Bill Fletcher of the National Writers Union.

The letter notes Sachs' endless claims about U.S. and NATO "provocations" and remarks that he

ignores the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's own "Declaration of Concern" which says that the attack is "a violation of the Budapest Memorandum of 1994" (a document signed by representatives of Russia, the United States, and the U.K.). The letter asks how an organization dedicated to avoiding nuclear war could honor someone who has appeared on a program with a man who has repeatedly advocated for the immediate use of nuclear weapons. It calls on the foundation to withdraw the designation of Sachs as a "Distinguished Peace Leader" and to withdraw the invitation to Sachs to speak at their meeting.

The full letter with hyperlinks and current signers can be found at: <https://bit.ly/44JSACHS>. New signers are welcome. The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation email is info@napf.org. If you write to them and they respond, please let me know.