

The Fight That May Decide Whether There Will Be A World War III

If—and it is still a big if—a nuclear test ban treaty emerges from the Geneva talks, the Senate fight over its confirmation will be the most important this country and the world has seen since the Senate rejected Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations in 1919. Had Wilson won, that might have prevented the rise of Hitler and World War II. The stakes in the coming fight over a nuclear test ban treaty will be as momentous. The need for wide and informed support will be urgent. To help toward public understanding of the issues we are devoting this double-sized special number to coverage of two related events—the four days of hearings on test detection held last week by the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy and the full-dress speech made by Senator Hubert Humphrey in the Senate on the subject last Thursday. Both were poorly covered by the press.

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Our American Mass Mania About Secret Nuclear Tests

When the history of our times comes to be written, the current furore over the possibility of secret nuclear tests underground or in outer space will be recognized for what it is --a form of mass delusion, like those which once set whole countries crazy with the fear of witches. It will take its place with other instances of human credulity and superstition. The word superstition may seem strong when we are dealing with the very latest advances in technology, but our national obsession with nuclear weapons belongs in the realm of ancient magic—the Bomb stirs in our still primitive unconscious the reverence the Canaanites once felt for their Moloch; it too is both God and Fiery Furnace. We regard science with the awe a tribesman accorded his witch doctor—who knows what will be the next miracle of destructiveness to emerge from this mumbo-jumbo of mathematical formulas? We live in fear that some other tribe may outdo our magic, may some dark night work up a more devilish device than ours, may test it when we're not looking.

Operation Self-Destruction

For four days last week I sat in on the hearings held by the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy on the problem of detecting secret nuclear tests, and I watched on Thursday when Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota took the floor before an almost empty Senate and an indifferent press gallery to challenge the enemies of a test ban agreement. I felt as if I were listening in on an Operation Self-Destruction, the marshalling of fear and mistrust to block a first agreement that might move mankind slowly back toward safety. The Joint Committee has degenerated into a tool of the AEC and of the worst elements in the Pentagon, particularly the Air Force. One-time and part-time Democratic liberals on the Committee like Senator Anderson of New Mexico and Congressman Chet Holifield of California have joined up in a coalition with the rightists to undercut the Kennedy Administration's moves toward a nuclear test ban.

The atmosphere of the controversy is one in which the most distant and fantastic possibilities for hiding tests, underground or in outer space, are listened to eagerly. The pro-

AEC Admits The Limitations Of Tests Underground

"The underground testing program has proved quite successful. In some experiments, tests underground have proven to have a distinct technical advantage in containing rather than releasing radioactivity to the atmosphere. It must be recognized, however, that this method of testing is an expensive process even though operational efficiencies have increased with our experience; also certain type tests such as effects tests and many high yield detonations can only be carried out in the atmosphere and in the environment to which they pertain and at their particular design yield."

—Jan. 1963: Annual Report of AEC for '62, p.233.

Read this closely. The only evidence to support the claim of success is that "in some experiments" underground, the radioactivity has been contained. This indicates that in others it was not contained. On the other hand, these tests are "expensive", i.e. even by the AEC's opulent standards. Finally, you cannot tell what "effects" a weapon will have unless you test it above ground; you cannot test large detonations underground and you cannot extrapolate from small to large but must test weapons "at their particular design yield." Why are such striking admissions left buried on p. 233 of a report few will ever read?

ponents of a test ban are expected to dispose of these possibilities by proving negative propositions. You remember when the Russians photographed the other side of the moon? What if some Senator suggests they have already dropped a small expedition on the back side of the moon, and are testing weapons on it? How would one go about disproving this? One could disclose our intelligence capacity for monitoring Soviet space activity, and argue it was most unlikely that the Russians could have dispatched an expedition to the moon without our knowing about it. *But one could not prove it did not happen.* What if the Kennedy Administration hid the news of a moon expedition to save itself from public criticism for not getting there first? What if the Russians

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have a new device to render themselves invisible on their way to the moon? This is the type of question, surmise and supposition that one encounters in trying to demonstrate what every informed scientist admits—that the kind of cheating the Russians might do in far outer space would be too fantastically costly to be worth it, that cheating underground would be of only marginal value, and that the chances of getting caught in either case would be substantial enough to make a violator pause before risking it.

A "Lead Balloon" in Outer Space

The opponents of a test ban are always coming up with ingenious gimmicks which make headlines and create mistrust. When sober scientists rebut them, the rebuttal is waved aside or ignored. An example is the idea put forward by the Rand Corporation that a lead screen could be hoisted into outer space, and hung on a balloon in front of an outer space test and so shut off the tell-tale gamma rays which would otherwise disclose the test to monitors on earth! This is the kind of Buck Rogers business which crops up in the speeches of Senators like Dodd. Fortunately there was an independent minded scientist from Los Alamos, Dr. Herman Hoerlin at the hearings on March 8, whose plain speaking annoyed the military. Dr. Hoerlin said he had been out in the field during the Johnston Island area for four or five months and was well acquainted with the difficulties even for "a straightforward test series" in near space. "Now," he told the Joint Committee, "when it comes to the point to launch a vehicle with a weapon, to launch also instrumentation that brings diagnostic information back, and if one wants to display in addition the equivalent of a lead balloon, one really gets into a very complicated pattern." Dr. Hoerlin said the effort involved in such a test would be "quite tremendous." Dr. Hoerlin testified (see box on page 7) that efforts at secret testing in outer space would be "extremely difficult" and "a waste of scientific manpower." But how few people will ever know of his testimony and how much weight would it have anyway with those whose first premise is that the Russians are super-human and super-diabolic, and want a test ban agreement only to cheat on it? How combat irrational views with rational argument?

The Joint Committee operates like a rubber stamp Parliament with no opposition. At point after point one missed the absence of at least one member with the energy and inde-

On Site Inspection by Congressmen!

"Whereas the security of the US and the strength of free world alliances are directly affected in any consideration of arms control and/or disarmament; and

"Whereas the 18-Nation Committee on Disarmament, meeting in Geneva, is considering steps toward general and complete disarmament;

"Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that the American negotiating positions in arms control disarmament include these safeguards:

"(1) Complete on-the-spot inspection of all areas involved in arms control or disarmament agreements with Members of Congress included as members of the inspection team. . . ."

—Senate Concurrent Resolution 21, by Curtis (for himself), Beall, Bennett, Dominick, Fong, Goldwater, Hruska, Jordan of Idaho, Lausche, McClellan, Mechem, Metcalf, Mundt, Randolph, Robertson, Scott, Simpson, Thurmond, Tower and Young of North Dakota.

pendence to subject witnesses to sharp inquiry from a standpoint friendly to a test ban. No one asked, for example, about the failure of any witness in four days of testimony to discuss the ease with which on February 2, 1962, the AEC immediately detected, identified and located the first (and so far as we know only) Russian underground test at their Central Asian proving grounds in Semipalatinsk. Of the hundred or more stations around the world now cooperating with us, how many detected this shot? How many identified it as nuclear? How many located it in the Central Asian Russian proving grounds? What were the various estimates of its size? Why was none of this information offered or demanded?

No questions were asked and no information offered about the "unannounced" i.e. secret tests in our own testing program. These provided an authoritative way to determine the efficiency of our policing apparatus. The whole series was monitored by a network of Coast and Geodetic seismic stations. How many of the "unannounced" tests were detected by this network, how many identified and located? One may be sure that if the results were poor, the Air Force or other official opponents of a test ban would have leaked them to the press long ago. Secretary of State Rusk admitted at a hearing chaired by Senator Humphrey March 11 that our capacity for detecting violations of a nuclear test ban are "better than can be fully disclosed."

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Holifield Tries to Overawe A Scientist Who Doubts Importance of Small Tests

Rep. Chet HOLIFIELD (D. Cal): You are eliminating, in effect, any concern as to the improvements of weapons which could obtain under a 2 or 3 kiloton test in alluvium.

Dr. Frank PRESS [Pres. Seismological Society of America, Caltech]: That is right. Now, speaking as a private citizen and not an expert I would say that when I think of the possibilities that he has for weapons development under the circumstances, I do not think it is a risk to our security.

Rep. HOLIFIELD: May I ask you, have you been thoroughly briefed in the degree to which advancements can be made with an average of 3 kiloton power of test explosions or less?

Dr. PRESS: I have had discussions with people who know.

Rep. HOLIFIELD: With weapons development people?

Dr. PRESS: With weapons development people. But I would like to add that I am not an expert in this field.

However, I have framed an opinion on the basis of the discussions that I have had.

Chairman PASTORE (D. R.I.): You mean you have based an opinion as to what weapons development might take place?

Dr. PRESS: As to the threat to our security by a weapons development program which has to be undertaken in deep cavities, in large cavities, or in small yields under alluvium coupling.

Rep. HOLIFIELD: And you are aware of the improvements that have been made in the Nevada test series with that level of testing?

Dr. PRESS: Not as a specialist, but as a listener in discussions that have taken place.

Rep. HOLIFIELD: Unclassified discussions, or classified?

Dr. PRESS: Some of these were classified.

—Joint Congr. Atomic Energy Committee, March 7.