

# Basement of an Ivory Tower

*THE ABSOLUTE WEAPON. Edited by Bernard Brodie. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1946. 203 pp. \$2.*

Reviewed by LOUIS N. RIDENOUR

**T**HIS tenth published monograph of the Yale Institute of International Studies is the first in which the researches of several Institute members on a common problem are presented together. The problem is that of the atomic bomb; it is defined in an introduction by Frederick S. Dunn, director of the Institute, and discussed in three parts of the book. The first part, which treats of the weapon in its effects on war and on future military and naval policy, is the work of Bernard Brodie. In the second part, entitled "Political Consequences," Arnold Wolfers discusses the impact of the bomb on American-Soviet relations, and Percy E. Corbett considers its effect on international organization. Part III, dealing with the international control of atomic weapons, was written by William T. R. Fox.

The book is described in the publisher's blurb as one "to clear away the hysteria that has left us with the idea that our only alternatives, in the face of the atomic bomb, are immediate world government or chaos. It points to the road the nations of the world must follow to find freedom from fear of the absolute weapon." This is an overstatement. The book is a thoughtful piece of work which suffers badly by comparison with the State Department's celebrated "Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy," so far as the pointing out of roads to nations is concerned. The best the Yale team offers in the way of security against the atomic bomb is the setting up of all nations in such a position that each can blast any other off the earth at the drop of a critical mass. Fear of retaliation is then relied on to keep the peace. This clears away none of my personal hysteria.

Brodie's section on the military effects of the bomb is generally excellent. For example, he is one of the relatively few who realize the complete pointlessness of the forthcoming "experiment" at Bikini. He says of the tests: "They can provide no answer to the basic question of the utility of sea power in the future. . . . It is still possible for navies to lose all reason for being even if they themselves remain completely immune." While it does not take any great wit to realize this, a lot of people have overlooked it.

The two principal weaknesses of this section are Brodie's bearishness on rockets and on the possibilities of sabotage. He says: "At present the only instrument for bombardment at distances of over two hundred miles is the airplane. The controlled rocket capable of thousands of miles of range is still very much in the future." Everyone is entitled to his opinion, but the first sentence quoted is wrong on the record, and I'll give five to two against the assertion made in the second.

Brodie's depreciation of the possibilities of sabotage is apparently based on a misunderstanding of the way in which the bomb is made and detonated, which is not surprising in view of the excitement about the "secret of the atomic bomb." He does not seem to realize that the only



part of the finished bomb which is outside the capabilities of well-equipped foreign agents is some twenty pounds or so of atomic explosive.

These are not altogether captious criticisms. The basis for the extravagant reliance on immediate retaliation as a deterrent to atomic bomb attack is laid in these chapters. Only a reluctance to believe in the possibility of sabotage and in the efficacy of long-range rockets could lead the authors to assume that the launching sites of retaliatory attacks would not have been destroyed in the first moments of an atomic aggressor's undertaking. It lends a certain air of unreality to the whole argument that the contrary possibility is never mentioned.

Wolfers's chapter on Soviet-American relations concludes that "a well-planned and comprehensive policy of deterrent aimed at preventing the Soviet Union from risking a war with this country offers appreciable chances of success." The careful discussion which precedes this remarkable conclusion offers little ground for optimism.

Corbett's chapter on the effect of the bomb on international organizations points out that nations can no longer achieve security by unilateral

action, and that our future safety can only lie in "the fullest and speediest possible development of all the conciliatory, judicial, economic, and social activities planned for the United Nations . . . with the constant effort to devise . . . a system of control over the use of atomic energy."

Fox's chapter on the international control of atomic weapons has nothing but scorn for what is called "world government right now." It is concluded that, since world government is presently infeasible, it is therefore undesirable. Fox explores and deplores what he regards as an alternative proposed by many: the immediate preventive war against Russia. Policies described as "tell-all" and "do-nothing" are next taken up and discarded.

When he has to make some positive assertions, Fox is in favor, it seems, of treaties calling for automatic retaliation in the event of attack on one of the signatories, and of efforts to make sure that the number of bombs maintained altogether by the independently-armed sovereign nations of the world is a little too small to "reduce the earth to a smoldering ruin." He says, with incontrovertible truth: "A spectacular and complete solution to the vexing and grave problem of the international control of atomic weapons is not now within our grasp."

I confess to a little impatience with this book. I am outraged by arguments which conclude that, since we can't have world government tomorrow, it is clearly a bad idea. I am distressed that a collection of scholarly essays has nothing better to offer in the way of positive suggestion than that we should all get ready to knock the other fellow's block off if he starts anything. I am disappointed when the only motive imputed to the "tell-all" school is that of sweetening the international atmosphere, when every day spent in our present situation of Army-stifled nuclear physics is one day we have wasted in the armaments race now going on.

Those interested in learning what can and should be done to make a start on the problem of living in the same world with fissionable material will do better to buy the Acheson report for thirty-five cents than to read this book. Those who do buy this book will get their money's worth in Brodie's discussion of armaments and war in an atomic era.

Meanwhile, I'd like to know the difference between an international atomic development authority (which the Yale authors all favor) and the first operating agency of a genuine world government.

# What Is the "Natural Lifespan"?

**THE PROLONGATION OF LIFE.** By Dr. Alexander A. Bogomolets. New York: Essential Books, Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 1946. 98 pp. \$1.50.

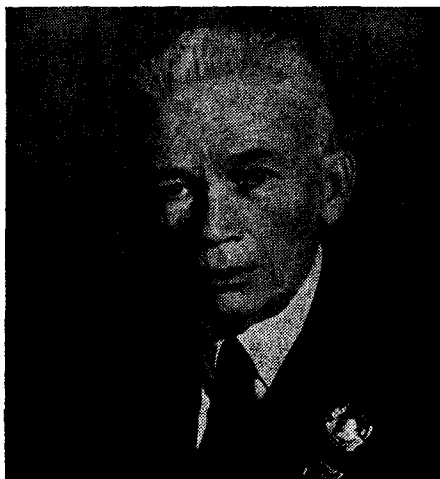
Reviewed by MARTIN GUMPERT, M.D.

**I**T IS ironical that at a time when the value of living has become questionable to so many, the prolongation of life is passing the threshold from Utopia to reality. As soon as it does, it joins the explosive and ambivalent forces of our civilization, it adds to both our hopes and fears, it may increase our happiness or may aggravate our miseries. The pessimist may be appalled by the continuation of suffering and unhappiness throughout a prolonged lifespan, and the optimist foresee greater wisdom and greater maturity for a mankind which is no longer threatened by premature death.

The idea of life prolongation has had a magic influence on human imagination since antiquity. Hundreds of books have been written by philosophers and physicians around this problem, some of them still readable: Luigi Cornaro's "Temperate Life," for instance, Sir William Temple's "Health and Long Life," Lord Bacon's "History of Life and Death," C. W. Hufeland's "Makrobiotik."

Modern science has produced the attempts of Brown-Séquard and Metchnikoff, of Steinach and Voronoff. All of them have been more ridiculed than respected. But there exist facts today which have taken us rather by surprise, and which cannot be ridiculed: the average lifespan has increased from forty-eight years in 1900 to about sixty-six years in 1946. The old-age group of our population is rapidly increasing. This country will in a short time face a population of about 20,000,000 beyond the age of sixty. This world will be either a gigantic old-age asylum, or we shall succeed in securing health and productivity and social usefulness for those in advanced years.

Medicine suddenly is taking old age seriously. A special field of research called "geriatrics" has developed. Two basic facts have been widely acknowledged: (1) Prolongation of life does not mean prolonging life beyond its natural limit, but extending life to its natural limit. We do not know yet man's natural lifespan. Many scientists agree that it may be between 125 and 150 years. (2) Very few people die of "old age." Most people die prematurely from disease. Disease can be prevented and cured. Very little has been done, so far, to



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investigate or treat the specific diseases of later age. Conditions which have been thought to be unavoidable and incurable companions of aging, like arteriosclerosis, are now being recognized as pathological conditions open to treatment.

In the vivid discussion of old-age problems, we hear more and more of Dr. A. A. Bogomolets. His discovery, the antireticular cytotoxic serum (ACS), has been grossly misrepresented to the laity of this country in a number of irresponsible and sensational articles. "The Prolongation of Life," an authentic version of his ideas, is, therefore, a happy and much-needed publishing event. Unfortunately, this small book, of tremendous popularity in Soviet Russia, has its deficiencies which could not be overcome by the able and careful translation.

It undoubtedly will be, in its fragmentary style, often too complicated for the layman and too superficial for the expert, who will have to study the elaborate scientific literature on the subject. Most of the book is devoted to historical notes and to Dr. Bogomolets's doctrine about the process of aging. This part of the book "contains a number of debatable statements," as one of the translators, Dr. Peter V. Karpovich, states in a brief preface. Only a short chapter deals with "the cytotoxic stimulation of bodily functions," Dr. Bogomolets's specific contribution to old-age research.

According to Bogomolets, the much-neglected connective tissue of our organism plays an important part in the process of aging and in the mechanism of chronic degenerative diseases. His serum, prepared by using human connective tissue elements,

opens the way to stimulating degenerated connective tissue and restoring it to a normal state. The so-called ACS serum is being widely used all over Soviet Russia. It has been found successful in a number of acute infectious diseases, in the healing of wounds and fractured bones, in the treatment of acute rheumatic and arthritic conditions, in cases of infection after birth or abortion, in lung abscesses, even in nervous and mental diseases.

Dr. Bogomolets does not claim that ACS cures cancer, but he believes from his experiences that its use can prevent the recurrence of cancer after operation. If the value of ACS in the fight against chronic degenerative diseases, like arteriosclerosis, could be definitely established, then its use would, indeed, prolong life considerably because, as I have said, most people now die prematurely of such diseases.

The Bogomolets serum, or its American equivalent, is now being tried out in this country. No definite conclusions have yet been made. But it can probably be safely stated that the principle of the cytotoxic serum contains one of the most promising methods at our disposal for treating degenerative diseases. We hope that further discussion will be transferred from popular magazines to scientific circles.

We will hear more about Bogomolets in the near future. And we hope that his book stimulates a better understanding of his most important work.

## FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 157

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 157 will be found in the next issue.*

BKAPKAX CFKA TLBR DLPG

OAXMP PGFKOGPZ.

PF HXELXJX LB PGX

GXAFLN TMSXZ GXAFXZ.

HXBWMTLB BLZAMXEL—

NFBLBOZHC

### Answer to Literary Crypt No. 156

A bumper of good liquor will end a contest quicker than justice, judge or vicar.

R. B. SHERIDAN  
Duenna.