

**A PROPOSAL FOR ATOMIC PEACE**

NEW IDEAS are painful and new ideas in politics are among the most painful of all. Yet in new ideas, in a fresh appraisal of beliefs stubbornly held, lies the only hope, small as it may be, of breaking the UN deadlock on atomic-energy control.

President Truman, in his first statement on atomic energy since the announcement of the Soviet bomb, still clings to the so-called Baruch Plan. The interim report of the six permanent members of the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, released last week, indicates how sharply the majority and the Russians are still split. The British, for example, while conceding the need for an armament convention as proposed by the Russians, make this conditional upon the adoption of the control system; the Russians, while appearing to endorse the majority's plan for inspection, are in fact opposed to any inspection system deserving of the name and will have nothing to do with the international ownership of atomic plants.

From first to last, two conflicting approaches have dominated the American proposals: the scientists insist that we must take risks for peace as the only means of preventing war; the military insist that we can take no risks because we must win the war if war comes. Caught between these approaches, our policy has never been entirely clear.

Nor is the most recent Russian proposal—by Deputy Foreign Minister Malik—for a census of atomic as well as conventional weapons, likely to quicken the peace-lover's pulse. It is scarcely that bold forward leap of the imagination needed to hurdle the obstacles in the way of an agreement. Warren Austin's reply to the proposal was no whit better. To characterize the Soviet suggestion as merely "another attempt to fool the public" is feckless, though it may be correct. The toughness of our line is not in doubt and need not be reaffirmed on every occasion. Nor is it incumbent on us to jeer at the Soviets whenever they make a proposal simply because they denounce us whenever we make one. Above all, it is a dangerous practice to strike attitudes while poised on the edge of a cliff.

It is necessary to reexamine the main features of the American control plan. It provides for the establishment of an international authority which would own

and control raw-material sources and the plants for large-scale manufacture of fissionable substances. Resources are to be allocated to individual nations for research and so-called "non-dangerous" operations. An inspection system is to monitor possible violations at mines and in plants; punishment in the event of violations may not be halted by invoking the Security Council veto. Finally, the plan is to be run off in stages, the completion of each stage affording the necessary "confidence" for entering upon the next.

In 1946 when the Lilienthal committee formulated the original plan, America had a bomb-production monopoly which was expected to continue for a few years at least. Both the fact and the expectation had a considerable influence on the shape of the plan. Indeed, it seems unlikely that anything resembling the official plan would have evolved had there been no monopoly, or perhaps even if it had been anticipated that the monopoly would be broken in three and a half years. At any rate the monopoly concept explains the proviso as to stages, the principle of which had been foreshadowed in the Truman-Attlee-King statement of November 15, 1945. The Russians were in a sense to be put on probation. If they permitted a worldwide geological survey, their good conduct would earn them the right to participate in the next stage of the plan; if they adhered to their commitments in the second stage they would be permitted to enter the third—and so on. In other words, a kind of fraternal-lodge initiation involving a series of progressively more secret chambers, the candidate being admitted to each only after he had proved himself in the one preceding.

Several members of the Lilienthal committee agreed to this provision reluctantly, after persuasion by higher authority. The Russians, as might have been expected, rejected it off-hand. There is no need to review the earlier debates, for it is now altogether clear that the staging device has lost any justification it once may have had. In a compact between the US and Russia there can be no question of putting either on probation. Furthermore, since the Soviets know how to make bombs, we have lost the power to reward them with "secrets" as they demonstrate their good faith. Thus,

one condition of the American plan is eliminated because events have demolished the premise on which it was based.

The proposal to abolish the veto may also be regarded as extinct. This was so obviously a blunder that our delegates to the UN are reluctant to be reminded of it. The veto provision was the single contribution to the official plan made by Bernard Baruch and the single most plausible target of Soviet attack. Lilienthal and Chester Barnard, as the latter has disclosed, begged Baruch not to introduce the veto problem in connection with his presentation of the plan, saying that it would give the Russians the opportunity to "dance up and down indefinitely"—which, of course, it has. The preservation of the veto and the preservation of the UN, as anyone with any experience in *Realpolitik* must know, are synonymous. Certain to be outvoted on every major issue, the Russians, if deprived of the veto, could be expected promptly to withdraw. It is clear also that in the sphere of atomic-energy control the veto is irrelevant since the detection of any serious violations of the control agreement would lead to immediate preparations for war. A nation convinced that such violations had been committed would not await the outcome of UN proceedings before taking steps to protect itself.

We come now to the heart of the plan. To what extent is the concept of international ownership of all atomic plants affected by present circumstances?

The proposal has undeniable appeal. At one stroke it eliminates national rivalries in the sphere of atomic weapons and advances the further possibility of internationalizing other armaments. Yet all UNAEC negotiations have foundered on this issue for reasons that are obvious. In the first place it is almost hopeless to reach understanding on the location of the proposed plants. To make a "strategic" distribution on the theory that equality would be preserved since, in the event of war, each nation could seize the plants within its own boundaries, is to convert the control system by a kind of left-handed logic into a blueprint for war mobilization.

The problem of national quotas for fissionable material, a twin to that of plant location, has never even been taken up in any detail by the UNAEC—this is true also of the control stages and their timing—on the ground that these are "political" questions which could not profitably be discussed until agreement had been reached on such matters as inspection and management. That the majority has taken this position on major substantive points, integral to the entire ownership provision, is proof enough of its despair of achieving a settlement in this field.

The Soviet government, it should be added, has insisted also that international ownership would entail an insupportable encroachment on national sovereignty. Whatever may have been true at the time when the official plan was first presented regarding the willingness of America to relinquish its sovereignty in certain important areas, it is doubtful that Congress, in its present temper, would readily permit American plants to be turned over to an international authority, or, for that matter, to accept raw-material and production quotas comparable to those assigned to Russia.

For these reasons the old proposals—the proposals President Truman has said America will stand on "unless or until a better and more effective plan is put forward"—now seem obsolete. We believe the President should create a new commission to search for alternative proposals. Meanwhile it may be that a reformulation of the original plan along the following main lines will provoke further discussion, and it is advanced with this limited objective in view.

1. Immediate cessation of large-scale production of fissionable materials and of the manufacture of atomic bombs.
2. Retention of existing stockpiles of fissionable material with the proviso that these shall be held in escrow by a UN commission, the escrow to terminate if the compact is violated. Each nation, it should be noted, is to keep physical possession of its stockpile, but under UN supervision.
3. Maintenance of nationally owned plants for the production of fissionables in small quantities, of no military significance yet adequate for research and for the development of peacetime uses of atomic energy.
4. A strict inspection system centered primarily on mining operations and designed to maintain established quotas, and a worldwide geological survey to discover major sources of uranium.
5. The compact to run for a limited period at the end of which negotiations are to be resumed for its extension and possible enlargement.

Under a system of this general character, it may be that a somewhat better balance of opposing national interests can be achieved without abandoning altogether the broader aim of international accord. The quarantining of national stockpiles under UN escrow would offer a certain moral as well as practical assurance against possible misuse; the arms race would be decelerated; the problem of infringing sovereignty would be partially circumvented and deferred; research in all phases of atomic energy could go forward.

Strong arguments can be made on behalf of an inspection system limited to the mines. It would provide an effective control of indispensable source materials; it would require a comparatively small staff; and it

would entail the minimum of interference with each nation's economy and defense setup.

One must recognize, to be sure, that a mine-inspection system is not altogether foolproof (nor, for that matter, is any inspection system). Yet there has been an abundance of competent opinion—more disinterested than that offered by the admirals—to the effect that a small number of atomic bombs cannot win a war. Enormous amounts of raw material are needed to make relatively small quantities of fissionables; and the secret diversion of such amounts under any moderately efficient mine-inspection scheme is almost unthinkable.

The thorniest of all questions is what to do about existing stockpiles. The escrow proposal is at best a stopgap. While Russia and the US are now more nearly on an equal footing, our stockpile is undoubtedly much larger than theirs. It is hard to imagine, therefore, that they would accept a proposal which merely freezes the status quo. However, it is equally hard to imagine that America would be prepared at present to destroy its own store of fissionables. At least it can be said that both sides are on notice, that radical compromises are necessary. A man who insists on drinking after he has been warned that drinking will kill him has made his decision.

The objection will be heard that the proposed arrangement is limited in scope, that it provides no final solution but at best only temporary relief. The answer is, "Of course, but what of it?" There are no final solutions in politics. We must rid ourselves of the notion of cold war; of the absurd catchphrases that obsess the mind and inhibit clear thinking; of the jingo jargon and self-righteous twaddle that pass for diplomacy. Though limited, the pact would be flexible; because flexible, it could be expanded; because it could be expanded, it might ultimately become comprehensive.

There remains the question of Russia's proposals for a convention outlawing the use of atomic bombs and perhaps other weapons of mass destruction as well. The American delegation has consistently scorned this suggestion and denounced it as a fraud. This was unwise and the matter deserves reconsideration. What the Soviets propose is a political treaty—the need for which has been curiously overlooked. The truth is that the Lilienthal plan, even with its weaker features removed, is handicapped by being essentially technical rather than political. It is a technical plan intended to achieve a political objective. And this is impossible.

One may think of this in yet another way. The thrust of the American plan is negative. Its principal features are *control, inspection, punishment*. It is designed to establish law and order in the uranium business by a

policing system. But this is a false conception of what needs to be done. The law and order of a community are not created by its penal code, much less by its police department; the key is the peaceable disposition of the community's inhabitants, a disposition that less bespeaks brotherly love than a recognition of common interest. A lawless community cannot be reformed by the police, though undoubtedly in a community that subscribes to law, the police is useful as an instrument to enforce the community will.

And so among nations. An international treaty may require certain auxiliary devices to enforce its provisions and to give warning of secret violations. But the auxiliary devices come second to the basic political treaty, enunciating the objective. A political treaty is needed to outlaw the use of the weapon; a control system is needed to safeguard and enforce the covenants of the treaty. But the moral, political and psychological value of the treaty itself is incalculable.

Assuming the validity of this principle, is there any justification, it will be asked, for believing the Russians would adhere to a treaty after they had signed it? Essentially the question is pointless. In the first place, one may hope the treaty would not stand alone; that it would be complemented by a control system resembling the one outlined above. Second, even brigands can make a viable agreement provided it embodies a common purpose. Self-interest—that is to say, mutual and reciprocal self-interest—motivates all international agreements whether relating to tariffs, trade, postage stamps or defense. It is important to understand that faith in the lexicon of diplomacy means confidence born of reciprocal needs and common aims. There is reason to believe that Russia needs peace now as we need it, and that she will therefore join in the effort to achieve it. Our one present hope for peace is that out of this short-range need, long-range objectives of world peace may evolve. On this assumption, a treaty that tends to promote peace *now* by outlawing the weapon whose very existence most endangers peace, can be expected to endure as long as both nations hold peace as a common aim. No technical control plan would endure any longer.

What is important in this approach is less what is attained than what is sincerely sought. We must make a continuous approach to the goal of peace. Peace is something to be fought for year after year: it cannot be quickly found, cheaply bought, or easily held.

"The best public measures," wrote Franklin, "are seldom adopted from previous wisdom but forced by the occasion." The occasion may still force the world to find a formula for survival.

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