

T H E  
A T O M I C

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When the first atomic bomb was detonated, at Los Alamos on July 16, 1945, the scientists and officials responsible had to take the risk that the radioactive cloud which would be formed by the explosion would disperse before any damage was caused. (Whether it did or not is still a matter of debate.) And the bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were on enemy territory, and the dispersal of the deadly cloud was a matter of no concern, except that the plane which dropped the bomb should escape.

But the coming test at Bikini Atoll is something else again. Even though President Truman will probably not be present—it has been announced that "domestic problems" will prevent him from making his planned trip to the Philippine Islands—still, the safety of the thousands of persons involved in the tests, from admirals and congressmen to mechanics and sailors, is giving the officials in charge of the test some worried thoughts.

While the trade winds at Bikini are from the northeast, and it is expected that the atomic cloud will be blown southwestward after the explosion, no chances are being taken that the soaring pillar may get out of hand due to a shift of wind direction.

From Rongelap Island, 85 miles east of Bikini, the navy has evacuated the nearly a hundred native residents, just as the 167 inhabitants of Bikini were removed before preparations were made for Operation Crossroads. It has also been decided that the natives of Eniwetok and Kwajalein Atolls—about 200 in all—will be permanently evacuated. Eniwetok, although some 218 miles west of Bikini, is in the exact direction the cloud might be expected to drift.

All personnel, except key men, will be evacuated from Eniwetok before and during the atomic bomb test. Only persons permitted to remain will be handlers for the remote-controlled "drone" planes which will make landings there after sampling the radioactivity remaining at Bikini during and after the explosion.

Due to the necessity of choosing a day on which all conditions are right, it is possible that the atomic bomb may be dropped as early as June 25, although the July 1 date will probably be adhered to as nearly as possible. A practice bomb run, using a dummy bomb loaded with a light explosive charge, is scheduled for June 25.

Just what preparations have been made to protect the ships and personnel observing the atomic explosion, in case the drifting 80,000-foot-high pillar of radioactive particles and smoke should move in an unexpected direction, has not been announced.

An example of misleading headlines occurred in the Los Angeles Herald-Express for June 4, 1946. The caption on an International News Service story datelined Ottawa, Canada, read "CANADA NOW SET TO MAKE A-BOMBS". The story following concerned the introduction in the House of Commons by Reconstruction Minister C D Howe of a bill to establish a Canadian atomic energy control board composed entirely of civilians.

Howe, announcing that Canada now has facilities for producing "the final product from which atomic energy can be released," according to the dispatch, said that Canada has no intention of developing atomic energy for use in weapons, as falsely indicated by the headline. #

Dr Louis N Ridenour, Massachusetts Institute of Technology physicist, last week called the Operation Crossroads atomic bomb test "a gigantic boondoggle," and claimed that if purposeful efforts were made to accomplish as little as possible, the results could hardly be better than will be done at Bikini Atoll.

An award for her contribution to intergroup understanding was presented to Dr Lise Meitner, atomic scientist, by the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

The citation was presented by Dr Arthur Holly Compton, on June 6, 1946 at Chicago. #

A taxpayer's suit, naming the United States Army and Navy as defendants, has been filed in the District Court of Washington, D C, by James J Regan Jr, in an effort to prevent the atomic bomb tests at Bikini Atoll. Regan's grounds were that the tests will violate the Constitution because they have not been authorized by Congress. #

General Electric Company will take over the atomic plant at Hanford, Washington, on September 1, 1946, under an expanded research program being sponsored by the War Department.

The \$347,000,000 plant, now under the control of E I Du Pont De Nemours & Company, will allegedly be used for development of non-military applications of atomic power. It has been reported that atomic power plants are already in operation at Hanford. #

The bulkiness of radiation shields required would prevent atomic power from being used to drive automobiles, according to Glenn Seaborg, professor of physics at the University of California at Berkeley, and co-discoverer of Plutonium.

Large, stationary power plants are practical, in Seaborg's view, and he stated that some of the very large airplanes being planned for the future might be powered by atomic energy. #

{Sources consulted for this issue were the following newspapers: Examiner, Daily News, Herald-Express, Times (Los Angeles); Daily World (San Francisco); PM, The Worker (New York); from June 1 to June 7, 1946. Also original material from the files of FUTURESEARCH and contributed by FUTURESEARCH associates.}

The sentencing of London University physicist Dr Alan Nunn May to ten years penal servitude, on the charges of having revealed so-called atomic "secrets," has brought forth protests from scientific groups and individuals both in Europe and America.

After a meeting on May 12, 1946, the Executive Committee of the British Association of Scientific Workers issued a statement on the May case. As reported by THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN WEEKLY for May 17, 1946, the Association statement reads in part:

"Dr May's offence was to pass to a representative of the Soviet Union, sometime in 1945, in Canada, certain information concerning atomic-energy developments. We do not seek to justify Dr May's breach of the Official Secrets Act but we are convinced, from our knowledge of Dr May, that his action was determined only by the principle that fundamental scientific data should have been shared with a country that was not only friendly but a fighting ally.

"We believe...that there is a widespread public opinion, shared by many scientists, that the...decision to undertake the development of atomic energy without the closest cooperation with our Soviet ally...has largely contributed to the present unfortunate condition in international relations.

"The only work in which Dr May was engaged, and on which he could have been in a position to give unauthorized information concerned fundamental scientific data relating to atomic energy. Dr May had no connection whatever with...the construction of the atomic bomb and could not have been able to reveal information on the know-how of atomic-bomb manufacture.

"Today scientific workers...believe in the need to achieve freedom for the fullest discussion and interchange of scientific knowledge, knowing that such freedom is essential both for scientific progress and international cooperation.

"The sentence passed on Dr May is extremely harsh when compared with some...passed on persons guilty of assisting the Germans during the war."

The statement then points out that, under the British Atomic Energy Bill which was introduced into the House of Commons on May 1 (See ATOMIC AGE, June 3, 1946—Issue Number 7), the maximum sentence which might be imposed for any violation would be a prison sentence of five years.

"It is clear that no account was taken of Dr May's positive contribution to the winning of the war by his scientific work, and that the sentence is out of all proportion to the magnitude of the offence committed."

The statement concludes with a note that the Association's efforts to secure a reduction of the penal sentence and to explain the implications of the case should "have the fullest support from members of the public and from all scientists", and expresses confidence that such will be the case.

As an opening gun, Dr M A Phillips, codiscoverer of "M & B 693," anti-pneumonia drug, and seven colleagues wrote letters to the London NEWS CHRONICLE, calling Dr May "the first martyr of the atomic age," and calling on "those who are interested in the international development of science" to bestir themselves in the face of threats and censorship.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE PAST WEEK

FREE WORLD—June, 1946: ATOMS FOR PEACE, by Livingston Murray. Discusses the Acheson Committee Report on the International Control of Atomic Energy. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF AN ATOMIC BOMB, by Milton Rugoff. "If the Atomic Bomb could speak, what would it say?" A fantasy. AMERICAN HISTORY: 1960, by Elizabeth M Stiron. "CLASS ASSIGNMENTS—I. On an outline map of the United States: a. Color red the location of cities destroyed by the atomic bomb... Notice to all students: Please keep chisels sharp!...Cut your stone sharply, and leave a comfortable margin on the left side."

MAGAZINE DIGEST—June, 1946: WILL ATOMIC TESTS DESTROY OUR CITIES, by Dyson Carter. Professor Carter believes that the explosion of atomic bombs, whether in tests or in war, may act as a trigger to set off earthquakes. He has accumulated an impressive file of tremblors and tidal waves since July 16, 1945, and points out that Bikini Atoll is in the Pacific earthquake belt, as is America. Noting that some scientists think that the pressure of light at the center of an atomic explosion is greater than the force necessary to cause earthquakes, Professor Carter warns that "we are yelling at death to come and get us."

NEWS REVIEW (BRITISH)—May 16, 1946: SCIENCE: GRANDAD OF THE ATOM. A lengthy article about Professor Albert Einstein—his background, his theories, and his opinions on atomic energy.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS—June, 1946: PLANNERS OF ATOMIC IMPERIALISM, by Joseph Clark. A critical study of the Acheson-Lilienthal Atomic Energy Report, calling it "a logical continuation of imperialist power politics in economic and diplomatic affairs... It is the politics of imperialism against the politics of the peoples..."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST—June 8, 1946: HOW TO DROP AN ATOM BOMB, by Colonel Paul W Tibbetts, Jr, as told to Wesley Price. The pilot of the plane which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima tells of his experiences in training and actuality.

SCIENCE ILLUSTRATED—JUNE, 1946: SEE NEXT ISSUE.

TIME—June 10, 1946: NATIONAL AFFAIRS: CONGRESS: ATOMIC ACTION. On the passage by the Senate of the McMahon atomic energy bill. NATIONAL AFFAIRS: TARGET: OAK RIDGE. On the unionizing of the atomic bomb plant (See ATOMIC AGE, May 27, 1946—Issue Number 6). INTERNATIONAL: ATOMIC AGE: ABSOLUTE WEAPON? Review of "The Absolute Weapon." RADIO: OPERATION CROSSROADS. On the radio interview program. SCIENCE: HERO OF LOS ALAMOS. Death of Dr Slotin.

WORLD REPORT—June 6, 1946: THE WORLD AND THE ATOM BOMB. Discusses the problems of atomic control and of Russia and the bomb.

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