

## Science and the News

### End of the Test Ban: The White House Response Is Restrained; Educational TV in Court

Last week, after the 338th session of the Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Testing, Sir David Ormsby-Gore, the chief British delegate, told reporters that he was convinced that not only had the Russians no intention of negotiating seriously for a test-ban treaty, but that their loss of interest was so complete that he doubted they would go through with a treaty even if the West were to give in on every point in dispute. Within a few hours the Russians announced they would resume testing in terms which indicated that Ormsby-Gore's intuition was perfectly correct, for the Soviet announcement implied a resumption of testing of high-yield weapons in the atmosphere, and this is, indeed, the kind of test the Russians have carried out. Such tests, of course, are impossible to conceal, and the Russians could not have carried them out while any test-ban agreement was in force, even one which, like the *de facto* ban that has existed for the past 3 years, provided no formal controls at all.

The White House first learned of the Soviet intentions while Kennedy was at a press conference, indeed almost at the moment when, in answer to a question, he was stating that Ambassador Dean would be brought home from Geneva at the end of this week, at which time, barring an unexpected change in the Soviet attitude, the Administration would be expected to make the "appropriate decisions." This was not news, merely a reiteration in response to a question, of the position the President had taken 2 weeks earlier. There was, therefore, considerable surprise at the Soviet action: for although it was generally assumed that the Russians wanted to resume testing, it was also assumed that the Russians would wait for the United States to act first, rather than take the onus of breaking the ban themselves.

The official White House reaction to

the Russian announcement is that "what the Soviet Union is obviously testing is not only nuclear devices but the will and determination of the free world to resist such tactics." This view is widely accepted, and indeed is the only one that has been offered that seems to explain the timing of the Russian move. In this view, the Russians have adopted tactics quite similar to those used by Hitler: to make aggressive demands in piecemeal fashion, so that no single instance involves such a clearly unreasonable concession that the noncommunist countries would be united in the view that a firm stand is necessary, even at the risk of war; simultaneously the aggressor both insists on his desire for peace and brandishes his military power and his willingness to use it, so encouraging the view that it would be better to give in and have peace, rather than to risk war on an issue, such as Berlin, which, by itself, may not seem important enough to fight over. The difficulty, of course, is that to give in not only does not avoid war in the long run; it also encourages the aggressive power to use such tactics even more freely in future crises and at the same time demoralizes the opposition to aggression.

The generally accepted view is that the Russians do not want war, indeed that they cannot rationally want war, but that they want as much as they can get short of war, including whatever can be gotten through threats of war. This is not a pleasant situation for anyone, least of all the President, on whom the brunt of the burden falls. His appearance at recent meetings with the press has reflected the strain he is under, as have his somber replies to questions, particularly at a recent off-the-record appearance before a State Department briefing for reporters and editors from around the country. But there seems to be no alternative but to stand firm on essential issues, such as access rights from West Germany to West Berlin, even while stating a readiness to negotiate issues that are negotiable. In this way, it is hoped, the Rus-

sians can be shown that there is nothing to be gained by threats of war, and a good deal to be lost by actions which both increase the chance of a mutually disastrous war and dissipate the considerable sympathy Russia now has among the uncommitted nations.

### Soviet Strategy

Essentially what seems to have happened, and seems to be confirmed by Khrushchev's comment that, among other things, what Russia wants from the Berlin crisis is recognition of its "grandeur," is that the Russians feel that their achievements in space, their missiles, the general shift of the balance of military power, entitle them to demand concessions from the West in recognition of their new power. The West recognizes a shift in the military balance toward parity between the United States and Russia, and that this inevitably strengthens the Russians' influence in international affairs. The Administration's expanded defense program is designed to see that the balance gets no worse than parity. The immediate problem of the West is to demonstrate to the Russians that their relative increase in military strength still has not given them the power to demand concessions by threat of force, and to try to rally wavering allies and the neutrals to the idea that it is in the interest of all noncommunist countries to support a firm stand against Russian demands for concessions, based on threats of a nuclear holocaust.

Without an assumption that the Russians are consciously using the resumption of testing, with the accompanying boasts about 100 megaton bombs, as a weapon of intimidation, the timing of the Soviet announcement makes little sense. For it had become almost certain that the United States, if the Soviets showed a little more patience, would feel forced to resume testing itself in the face of Soviet refusal to agree to a control system that would provide reasonable assurance that the Russians were not secretly conducting underground tests.

Several things, aside from apparent desire to use the resumption of testing as a tactic in the Berlin crisis, made it easier for the Russians to take the responsibility for ending the ban, and to a large extent they center on the desire of the Russians to develop very large bombs. Khrushchev had made explicit in talks with Westerners in recent months the view that the Russians have a strong interest only in testing very

large weapons, and such tests would be very difficult and expensive to conduct underground. To the extent that the value of a 100-megaton weapon is largely psychological, as an instrument of intimidation, there would, in fact, be a desire to make a show of the explosion.

But the United States had given ample indication that, if it resumed testing, the tests would be conducted underground. This meant that the choice before the Russians was not between taking the blame for resuming testing and waiting awhile for the U.S. to take the blame, but the narrower choice of starting atmospheric testing before or after the U.S. had announced that it would resume underground tests. This option was made narrower still by the modest but noticeable degree of U.S. success in its efforts to convince the world that it was the Russians who were blocking the test-ban treaty; that there could be no assurance, in the absence of a control system, that the Russians were not conducting secret underground tests; and that therefore, as a result of Soviet intransigence, American resumption of underground testing was becoming unavoidable.

#### **"Appropriate Decisions"**

The "appropriate decisions" Kennedy had promised if a break in the Geneva deadlock failed to develop were not expected to include an immediate announcement of testing, underground or otherwise. The immediate announcement on this point was expected to go no further than to state that we would have to resume underground tests fairly soon in the absence of a change in Russian mood. This would be a shade stronger than previous announcements merely restating the fact that we could not accept the unpoliced ban indefinitely but without stressing that a decision was near. As was suggested by Kennedy's reference to "decisions" rather than "a decision," the announcement, however phrased, would not have been limited to talk of resuming testing; indeed it apparently would have included an offer to sign a treaty barring at least atmospheric tests, the tests which are of the most concern because of the fallout hazard and for which a ban can be effectively policed even without a formal control system. And again, the announcement was likely to include an offer to submit the whole question of what would constitute an adequate control system to a commission appointed by the U.N.

No one in the Administration thought that all of this would lead the world to welcome an American resumption of underground testing, but there were indications that the elaborate display of Western patience at Geneva, including several modest, but new, concessions made as late as last week, was winning some sympathy for the Western position. As noted, this made it somewhat less tempting for the Russians to delay taking the decisive move first, in the hope of reaping a propaganda advantage by forcing the U.S. to break the ban. In a sense, the result has been a victory for the Administration and its insistence on following a patient policy rather than rushing into testing as soon as it became clear the Russians did not intend to agree to a meaningful treaty. But it is a victory with such depressing consequences that no one is particularly anxious to celebrate it. The most that can be said is that things would have been just so much worse if the Russians had been able to point to American underground testing as the excuse for atmospheric testing.

Meanwhile, on the question of disarmament and the test ban, the Administration has been sticking to its policy of "walking the extra mile" to keep open the hope for agreement. In this field propaganda and genuine interests are so deeply intertwined that it is rarely possible to separate the two. There is a good deal of both in Kennedy's announcement that the need for a new U.S. Disarmament Agency, now before Congress, is more urgent than ever; in the lack of any hurry for the U.S. to make the inevitable announcement that we, too, must resume testing; and in the continuing plan to press the whole issue at the U.N. But given the current Russian mood, it appears futile to look for results, for the present, anywhere but in the realm of propaganda. —H.M.

#### **Educational Television in Court**

Noncommercial, educational television, which has developed a small, nationwide network unaffected by audience ratings or advertisers' interests, sought a legal remedy last week for Federal Communications Commission policies that give commercial stations priority for the few vacancies left on the very-high-frequency band. The VHF band is the sole access to most of the nation's TV sets.

The occasion for legal action was

FCC decisions favoring commercial operation of new channels sought by Pennsylvania State University and the Rochester (N.Y.) Area Educational Television Association.

In a petition filed with the Court of Appeals in Washington, the Joint Council on Educational Broadcasting, representing a number of major educational organizations, joined with the Rochester group in an attempt to block the FCC's Rochester decision, which was a final one. Simultaneously, Pennsylvania State University petitioned the court to direct the FCC to reconsider a preliminary decision which favors establishment of a new commercial outlet at Johnstown, Pa. In each area, it was pointed out, there are now two VHF commercial stations in operation, and decisions favoring establishment of a third do not conform with the FCC's avowed policy of encouraging the growth of educational TV.

The impetus to seek relief from the court came from a number of factors which have enhanced educational TV's potential outside the classroom and placed its growth over the next few years directly against a substantial barrier. The barrier is founded on the view of a majority of the Commissioners that, although educational TV merits the official blessings with which it has been showered, its growth on VHF must be subordinated to the fostering of competition between commercial stations. Accompanying this view is the assumption that competition between commercial television organizations is more likely to produce quality than is competition between commercial and noncommercial television.

In the long run, there will be plenty of room for commercial as well as noncommercial television, for the only direction for substantial expansion lies on the ultra-high-frequency band (470 to 890 Mc/sec), which provides 70 channels, in contrast to the nearly saturated VHF band (54 to 216 Mc/sec), which contains 12.

Increased availability of channels that can be widely received could lead to programming, such as has developed on FM radio, aimed at segments of the audience uninterested in mass entertainment. But until there is a break in a circle made up of limited UHF broadcasting because of few UHF receivers, and few UHF receivers because of little UHF broadcasting to receive, the question arises of who gets the few remaining outlets that reach the bulk of existing TV