

## Science and the News

### **U.N. Debate on Nuclear Tests: It Is Taking a Good Deal of Time and Leaving Nobody Very Happy**

The United Nations political committee has spent most of the month debating what to do about the collapse of the nuclear testing moratorium, an issue that has produced a great sense of frustration among the neutralist delegates who, in the course of the protracted debate, referred frequently to their feeling of helplessness to move the great powers. There has been an almost equally strong sense of frustration among the American delegation at what appears to the Americans as a willful and irresponsible failure of the neutrals to face up to the difference between Soviet and American actions on the test ban. One result of this has been that the most bitter exchanges of the debate have not occurred between the Americans and the Russians, but rather between the Americans and the neutralist Indian delegates.

The debate opened with two weeks of wrangling over whose resolution should be debated first. The Russians wanted to talk about complete and general disarmament. They argued that a new test ban could now be gotten only as part of a general disarmament agreement which, they said, could be achieved very quickly if the Americans were really interested. The Americans and British wanted to talk about a test-ban treaty with controls, which, they said, could be achieved very quickly if the Russians should decide to renew negotiations with a real intention of coming to an agreement. The Indians, with the backing of nearly all the neutralist delegations, wanted to discuss a new moratorium to stop tests immediately.

Neither the Russians nor the Americans had any expectation that their proposals would get priority. The mood of the neutrals made it certain that the Indians' appeal for a new moratorium

would get first priority, even though both the Russians and, more emphatically, the Americans, made it clear they would reject it. To the neutrals the need was to stop all tests everywhere as soon as possible, and neither the Russian nor the American approach was going to produce this result, since everyone knew that neither the American talk of a quick agreement on a treaty nor the Russian talk of a quick agreement on general disarmament was anything more than talk.

The Russians, with no chance of getting priority for their general disarmament proposal, were quietly satisfied with the likelihood that the Indian-sponsored call for an unpoliced moratorium would get priority. It would apply with equal force to both the Russian tests in the atmosphere and the American tests underground, and it could, after the conclusion of the current Russian tests, be conveniently accepted, if the Russian government chose to do so. The Americans, for the same reasons, were thoroughly unhappy with the Indian proposal, but, with no chance for gaining priority for the Anglo-American proposal for a treaty with controls, they settled for a resolution allowing the Anglo-American proposal to be debated simultaneously with the Indian proposal, but with the Indian proposal for a moratorium to be voted on first. India and a dozen other neutralists joined the Soviet block in opposing even this slight concession to the Anglo-American position, but most of the neutralists abstained, allowing the American-sponsored resolution to go through by a comfortable margin.

To the Americans the issue was very clear: the Russians had broken the moratorium; they had gone back on agreements that had already been reached at Geneva; they had been preparing an elaborate series of tests while the Americans and British had been negotiating in good faith; they had made it clear that they were not pre-

pared to accept a controlled ban on underground tests; they were contaminating the atmosphere with a lengthy series of large explosions. In response to this, the neutralists, led by India, proposed merely to appeal to both sides, as equally guilty of breaking the moratorium, to renew the moratorium, giving no consideration to the relative awkwardness with which the West and the Russians could accept an indefinite uncontrolled moratorium, to the course of the negotiations in the past year, or to the now plainly stated lack of Russian interest in accepting controls except as part of a general disarmament agreement which no one really believes can be reached in the reasonably near future. From the American point of view, then, the mood of the neutralists was impartial in the sense that Anatole France pointed out that "the law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges . . ."

### **Harsh Words**

When V. K. Krishna Menon, speaking for India, delivered a lengthy "plague on both your houses" speech, Ambassador Dean replied for the United States with a lengthy attack on the Indians for, in effect, playing into the Russians' hands by equating the positions of the two governments. The exchanges went on through last week, and are probably still continuing. Menon, in his major speech, quoted from statements in the American press to demonstrate that the Americans did not really want a test ban; that Project Vela (to improve the detection of underground tests) was intended for weapons development; that the holes for underground tests were enormously expensive to construct, with the implication that either the Americans had prepared fully as arduously, while the Geneva negotiations were going on, for the few underground tests that have been conducted as the Russians had for the elaborate series of atmospheric tests, or that the expenses of carrying on a full-scale set of underground tests would be so enormous and time-consuming that the Americans did not have to worry about the Russians' attempting to carry out such testing even with a system of controls. Menon insisted that the Indians were fully in favor of controls anyway, but that they felt testing should not go on while the details of the control procedure were being worked out.

To the Americans a good deal of what Menon had to say was simply outrageous. The Indians would have been equally outraged if an American delegate, for example, had picked out embarrassing or inaccurate or out-of-context quotations from the Indian press to present as items to be given equal weight with the statements of the Indian government regarding its policies; the quotations about the difficulty of preparing for underground tests came from a Congressional hearing concerned with what a nation would have to do to conduct undetectable underground tests *if* a system of controls and inspection were in force; the insistence that India recognized the need for control was less than completely candid in the context of the situation, in which there was no likelihood of the Russians' accepting controls, and in which, therefore, an appeal for a moratorium pending the establishment of controls was tantamount to an appeal for an indefinite moratorium without controls.

#### Neutralist Feelings

The basis for the Indian attitude, which was substantially echoed by many of the neutralist delegates, although in terms less offensive to the Americans, was the general feeling that both great powers were going to do what they felt their national interest demanded, no matter what kind of resolution the U.N. passed; that both powers had argued on both sides on many of the points at issue, depending on what argument happened to suit their purpose best at a particular time; that both sides were devoting themselves too enthusiastically to trying to win momentary propaganda advantages instead of trying to avoid a nuclear holocaust; that it was difficult to know just which side had the more honest arguments without access to the confidential information on which the top officials of both sides were making their policies; that it would not be good to add fuel to the Russian feeling that the U.N. serves the interests of the West by passing a resolution that too clearly makes the Americans happy; that the whole business was, in short, very touchy, very complicated, and that the one thing the U.N. should clearly do is to renew its often stated position that it is against all nuclear tests, anywhere, and any time. Privately, there was a good deal of revulsion at what the Russians were doing, but in public speeches, the consistent line was "we are against all

tests," and there was little support for a resolution that would not apply with equal force to both sides, despite the American criticisms about the unequal nature of the equality involved in such a resolution.

The Russians, though, were generous enough to do what the American delegation never would have been able to do. Khrushchev provided 10 days' warning before exploding his 50 megaton bomb, time, as it turned out, just sufficient to rouse the U.N. to pass a resolution asking him to forgo the test, despite the antipathy among the neutrals toward any resolution that would not apply equally to all the nuclear powers. There was no rush to do this, and a week passed between the Soviet announcement and a decision by the political committee to suspend debate on the general question of the test ban in order to push through an appeal to the Russians. On the vote to suspend the general debate India and a dozen other neutrals joined Cuba and the Soviet bloc in opposition. After the suspension most of these neutralists took the floor to make clear that, although they would vote for the appeal to the Russians, they regarded it as a mistake to make an appeal directed to only one side on only one test, and that they would regard their votes as votes against testing in general. On Wednesday of last week the resolution went through the political committee, with only Cuba and the Soviet bloc opposing, and only Mali, a new African state which usually votes with the Russians, abstaining. An attempt to add to the resolution the Indian appeal for an end of all testing was brushed aside. At the Friday session of the General Assembly, the last before the Soviet explosion, the delegates heard the Russians denounce the move as a piece of NATO propaganda and announce that they would not accept the appeal. Shortly after, at 8 in the evening, the Assembly voted the resolution through with, once again, only Cuba and the Soviet bloc opposed, and only Mali abstaining. But the neutrals quite obviously felt they had gone as far as they cared to go in supporting a test-ban move that could be denounced by the Russians, just as they have denounced the U.N. operations in the Congo, as U.N. support for the Western interests in the Cold War. When the Russians exploded their bomb on Monday, none of the neutralists' representatives joined the Western delegates in condemning the test,

nor was there any sign that the neutrals would support a resolution censuring the Russians for ignoring the U.N. appeal. Indeed, so far as the neutrals were concerned, the first order of business was now to rush through the Indian appeal to both sides to renew the moratorium, a resolution that almost certainly will have gone through by the time this appears. The best the Americans hoped for was that the U.N. would quickly follow the passage of the appeal to both sides for a new moratorium with a parallel appeal for a treaty with controls.

#### Atmospheric Tests

The debate has left everyone unhappy. The Americans and British have been pointing out that they, too, may have to resume atmospheric testing as a result of the Russian actions. This is partly because they feel they may well have to do so, but partly, as well, because there seems to be no other way to force the neutralists to recognize a distinction between Anglo-American and Russian behavior than by reminding them of what the Western powers might easily do in response to the Russian testing and thus, it is hoped, bringing them to face the difference between what the Russians have already done and what the West has already done. But the neutrals do not want to face any such difference; they do not want to be drawn into taking a position on issues between East and West; they do not want to recognize a great difference between underground testing and atmospheric testing because they do not want to be put in the position of seeming to imply that *any* kind of testing is all right which they feel would be the implication of an appeal for a moratorium on atmospheric testing only. This is particularly so when they do not trust either side and therefore are unwilling to take an anti-Russian position solely on the basis of Western arguments, which they do not have the information to evaluate independently, that Western security would really be threatened by an unpoliced moratorium on underground tests.

So the Americans are making an argument which the neutrals do not want to hear, because although it may be logical, indeed just because it is embarrassingly logical, it at once makes it more difficult for them to maintain their position without convincing them that their position is not really the right one to take.—H.M.