News and Comment

Atoms for Peace: Concern Growing That Program Is Spreading Means for More Nations To Build Weapons

Near Leopoldville, in the Congo, there is a small atomic research reactor, designed to help bring the Congolese into the atomic age. It is there as part of the U.S. Atoms for Peace program.

In Indonesia, scientists, engineers, and technicians are learning atomic technology with half a million dollars' worth of U.S. training and research equipment.

At facilities throughout this country, several hundred foreigners are studying the handling of the atom, from its application in medical research to the generation of electric power.

And, at atomic installations in 40 countries around the world, a total of 200,000 kilograms of natural uranium and another 150,000 kilograms of enriched uranium have been delivered for power production, research, and training—again, through the U.S. Atoms for Peace program.

Atoms for Peace, first proposed in 1953 by President Eisenhower, is now clearly in full bloom, but many officials in Washington aren't in a mood of celebration. In fact, very late in the game, they are beginning to wonder whether the U.S. obsession for spreading nuclear technology may not be providing the long-term ingredients for a nightmare.

This concern has always been present in a low-keyed way, since there have never been any illusions about the fact that the peaceful atom is a close kin of the military atom. But now that Communist China has demonstrated that the proliferation problem is a reality rather than a remote concern, administration officials are showing a good deal of unease about this country's vigorous and successful efforts to create nuclear plenty around the world.

The motivations for these efforts were a complicated mix. In part, they grew out of the belief that we could make friends abroad by exporting our latest technology—hence we have even placed reactors in places that lack school houses and sewage systems. But there was also a political and technical realism to this forced growth of atomic technology abroad. The United States was, in effect, telling the nonnuclear nations of the world that we would make it cheaper and easier for them to develop the atom for peaceful purposes —if they would agree to inspection agreements designed to make certain that nuclear materials were not being used for military purposes. And, in fact, everything nuclear that we send abroad is subject to inspection, and there is nothing to suggest that any American-supplied materials have been diverted for making explosives.

But since nuclear technology has spread faster than political arrangements for international control of the atom, a good many officials in Washington are becoming increasingly troubled by the realization that the atom cannot be easily compartmentalized into peaceful and military. For example, India, a recipient of a great deal of U.S. atomic assistance, has developed a large and diversified atomic establishment, and the parts that this country provided are subject to inspection. But if a decision to produce weapons should come out of India's current debate on nuclear policy, the only immediate step that this country could take would be to cut off further atomic assistance—something that would not be very significant for the Indians, since their atomic industry has reached the point where it can take care of most of its own needs.

The concern over the possibility that the U.S.-proliferated peaceful atom may turn military has led to a number of political and technical steps designed to restrict the nuclear club. But in the absence of any broad and effective international agreements, there is no assurance that the nuclear club will not continue to grow. In a belated effort to work against this possibility, the United States has at long last committed itself to an active policy of support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the organization that grew out of Eisenhower's atoms for peace proposal. The original intention was that the IAEA would serve as the international disseminator and inspector of atomic technology. For the purpose of insulating peaceful atomic energy against cold war tensions, it was agreed that the existing nuclear powers would channel their assistance programs through the international agency, and that in the long run it would evolve into the principal organization for bringing atomic technology to the rest of the world. But the IAEA came into existence with a charter that reflected its cold war genesis. None of the existing nuclear powers were required to submit to its inspection, since they were donors and not recipients of IAEA assistance. The French, offended by U.S. refusal to place them on a par with Britain in atomic matters, refused to cooperate with the agency, and when other nations said they wouldn't accept IAEA safeguards unless the major powers did, the United States, in its passion to spread atomic energy, took them on as clients on a bilateral basis. Eventually some 40 nations were receiving U.S. atomic assistance outside the auspices of the IAEA.

Early in the Kennedy administration it was realized that the IAEA couldn't long survive this U.S. policy, and the U.S. therefore took two steps: as a symbolic gesture in behalf of IAEA, it opened four small research reactors, and later one large power reactor, to agency inspectors, and it began to apply pressure to permit the agency to take over the bilateral agreements as they expired. Many of our atomic clients have already come around, and it is expected that ultimately all 40 or so of them will be under IAEA agreements.

When this happens, the agency will possess a good deal of prestige, and the psychological climate for international control will be considerably improved. But, once again, there is no

assurance that the recipients of IAEA assistance will abstain from turning their peaceful capabilities to warlike purposes. The means for guaranteeing this, by force if necessary, are at present beyond the reach of any international consensus. However, as a result of U.S. efforts to promote atomic technology, the capacity to produce weapons is within the reach of several nations, and has been brought years closer for many others. It can be argued that there are no secrets in science and that ultimately any industrialized nation can build a bomb if it wants to pay the price, but as one Defense Department official put it, "There is no question that Indonesia, for instance, can eventually build a bomb, but I think it is in everybody's interest that the eventually is 25 years from now, rather than 5 or 10. It seems," he continued, "that we've been working to make it sooner rather than later."

Consistently running parallel to the U.S. penchant for bringing the peaceful atom to the world has been a policy of preventing the spread of the military atom, but even here the thrust of the peaceful program has been sufficiently powerful to win out in cases where the two uses overlap. The United States has withheld enough atomic assistance from France to infuriate de Gaulle, but in the meantime it has inexplicably provided the French with a number of things, atomic and otherwise, that have unquestionably furthered de Gaulle's nuclear ambitions. The most puzzling involved a decision, early in the Kennedy administration, to fulfill a French request for a fleet of American aerial tanker planes. This decision was justified on the grounds that the French could build tanker planes or get them one way or another if the U.S. turned down the request. In the long run, they probably could have, but the short-term effect was to give the French the capacity to transform their first-generation fleet of atomic bombers from a one-way suicide force into a far more credible striking arm.

Similarly, the United States has provided France with some 740 kilograms of enriched uranium for its peaceful energy program. Since this material is subject to inspection, the U.S. has assurances that it has not been diverted to military purposes. But this in no way changes the fact that one effect of these supplies is to lessen the strain that the French weapons program is placing on that country's efforts to develop economical atomic energy.

Another case also illustrates the inconsistencies of U.S. proliferation policy. De Gaulle, in the face of U.S. opposition, is committed to developing a Polaris-type nuclear force. The U.S. has refused to sell France certain inertial guidance equipment and computers that could be used for the development of rockets and hydrogen warheads. But it has approved the sale of a land-based nuclear submarine training reactor, on the grounds that "a reactor of this type has no appreciable capacity for performance of research and development and can make no appreciable contribution to the development of military reactor technology." Nevertheless, like a great many other things in the effort to promote atomic energy, the reactor isn't putting off the day when nuclear weapons and their delivery systems will be more widespread.

Following Communist China's entry into the nuclear club last October, the administration set up a committee under Roswell L. Gilpatric, former deputy secretary of defense, to study the proliferation problem. The committee, which recently completed its work, is not expected to make its findings public, but what must frankly be described as no more than rumors have been circulating about its recommendations. For what these rumors are worth, they suggest a proposed deceleration of U.S. efforts to promote atomic technology abroad. The study, it is understood, recognized that in many countries the U.S. is too deeply committed to the development of atomic energy for any sudden reversal to be feasible. But it is reported to have recommended that, instead of pushing these developments, as we have been doing, we drag our heels a bit—until some sort of comprehensive political agreements have been devised to make certain, as one official put it, that we are not creating a situation in which "plowshares will be beaten into swords."—D. S. GREENBERG

Academic Degrees: Universities Ask Strict Control on Federal Agencies' Power to Grant Them

Because pluralism reigns in American higher education we have grown accustomed to judging academic degrees not only at face value—associate, bachelor, master, doctor—but also by the institution which awards them. In recent years the problem of putting degrees on a sort of academic gold standard has been complicated by the aspirations of certain federally operated educational and research institutions to award conventional degrees.

Legal authority to grant degrees can only be given to colleges and universities by states and, in certain cases, by the federal government (the Service academies provide the best-known examples). But a network of accrediting agencies has grown up through which an institution gets or does not get from its peer institutions a seal of approval which largely governs recognition, formal and informal, throughout academia.

In recent years this concern in the academic community about degree-granting qualifications in general and the ambitions of federal organizations in particular has motivated two leading national groups in higher education to formulate detailed policy statements on the subject. The National Commission on Accrediting and the American Council on Education, late last year published their statements in tandem in a pamphlet titled "The Integrity of the Academic Degree."

Authority Sought

The ACE statement notes that during the last decade "the academic community has been confronted by a series of proposals from various branches of the armed services that military installations be permitted to award graduate degrees for certain of their education and training programs." The Air Force Academy, for example, would like to add master's degree programs, and the Judge Advocate General's School at Charlottesville, Virginia, and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., have sought authority to begin graduate level programs in their special fields.

In addition, the ACE statement mentions proposals made in Congress in the past decade for establishing a degree-granting Foreign Service Academy or "Freedom Academy" and, more recently, for establishing a Science Academy to be operated along the lines of the existing Service academies.

Legislation for a Science Academy has been introduced again in this session of Congress by Representative Peter W. Rodino, Jr. (D–N.J.). The bill (H.R. 153) calls for setting up of a National Science Academy and also a scientific career service, in which graduates of the academy would be required to serve for a period at least equivalent