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*Mr. Steaks
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File

INITIAL FOREIGN RADIO REACTION TO THE AEC RELEASE ON ATOMIC FALL-OUT

Summary



1. In contrast to the worldwide alarm aroused by the Bikini tests last spring and the fairly extensive discussion of the NATO Council decision on use of atomic weapons, there is only negligible Western reaction to the 15 February AEC release. Scattered comment appears with attention focused primarily on (a) the devastating effects of the hydrogen bomb on human life, (b) the possible impact of the bomb on specific areas, and (c) the warning to the USSR implicit in the AEC release. British comment is more concerned with the White Papers announcing Britain's decision to construct atomic power plants and the H-Bomb.
2. Radio Moscow to date has ignored the release, in line with its consistent avoidance of graphic detail concerning the impact of nuclear weapons. Of the other Bloc radios only East Berlin mentions the report, stressing the destruction a single bomb dropped over Germany could cause. Communist radios give greater attention to Britain's decision to produce H-Bombs: PRAVDA charges British complicity with U.S. atomic war plans, and AMN assails the Churchill Government for flouting world public revulsion against nuclear warfare.

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INITIAL FOREIGN RADIO REACTION TO THE AEC RELEASE ON ATOMIC FALL-OUT

1. Western Reaction

In contrast to the worldwide alarm aroused by the Bikini tests last spring and the calmer although fairly extensive reaction to the NATO Council's decision on use of nuclear weapons, there is only negligible Western comment on the 15 February AEC release. In Western Europe the report was ignored except in West Germany, Austria, France and England. In the Far East only Japanese and Australian papers discuss the release, and in neither case extensively; there is scant reportage and no comment from Latin America or the Near and Middle East with the exception of India.

In India the report was given little prominence in the press. The one editorial comment reported was highly critical of the United States for conducting tests in the face of the effects of fall-out outlined in the report.

In England the report was released on the same day as the British Government announcement that it would construct atomic power plants. The AEC report was given straight news coverage side-by-side coverage of the British plan for peaceful uses. When the British announced, on the 17th, that they would construct the H-Bomb there was no mention of the AEC report. There has been no editorial comment to date.

In France the report was given straight news coverage, but it was over shadowed by the British announcements that they would build atomic power plants and H-Bombs.

In Western Germany the AEC release coincided with statements on atomic problems by German Professors Otto Hahn and Werner Heisenberger, which had spurred a controversy with Chancellor Adenauer on the advisability of airing such material at the present time. The three non-Communist papers reacting directly to the AEC report discuss primarily the devastating effects of the hydrogen bomb on human life:

The radiation engendered by H-bomb explosions "seriously endangers all human life" over a vast area. (FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE, conservative)

These effects clearly show the futility of raising an army in West Germany. The 400,000-man-strong army, financed by billions of marks and equipped with the best material, would be wiped out in a single blow. If one wishes to judge the

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correctness or incorrectness of the Coalition Government's policy, one should bear in mind that...20 bombs...can wipe out 49 million human lives in one single blow. (Munich DIE SÜNDPOST, Pro-SPD)



Strauss' figures pertain to the H-bombs of early 1954, whereas the present weapons are undoubtedly even more deadly. (HANNOVERSCHE PRESSE, Pro-SPD)

Two independent Austrian papers mention briefly the U.S. disclosure that one large H-bomb tested in the Pacific in 1954 "can kill all persons living within an area of about 18,000 square kilometers." The Linz Socialist NEUE ZEIT comments that "this sensational report on the devastating effects of atomic weapons seems to have caused considerable unrest among the American people."

Japanese and Australian papers place similar stress on the impact of the bomb;

The Strauss report not only "provides a fresh warning of the terrors of any atomic war but emphasizes that the utmost caution needs to be observed in carrying out all such experiments." (Tokyo NIPPON TIMES)

Horrible Power of Hydrogen Bomb Told as Bikini Secrets are Bared (Tokyo ASAHI headline)

Certain Death within 7,000-Square-Mile Area (Tokyo MAINICHI headline)

The fall-out alone converts the H-bomb from a weapon of offense into a weapon of national, even race, suicide. (Sydney MORNING HERALD)

Radioactive particles originating from large nuclear bombs exploded on or near the earth create a serious hazard to civilian populations in large areas outside the target zone. (Adelaide ADVERTISER)

Speculation on the effects of the bomb and of atomic fall-out in individual countries occurs in German and Austrian comment:

Our entire land [Oldenburg, Lower Saxony], the second largest in the Federal Republic, could be destroyed by three H-bombs of the 1954 type. (HANNOVERSCHE PRESSE)

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Twenty bombs would suffice to annihilate West Germany completely.
(Munich DIE SUZDPOST)

One bomb dropped over Washington while the wind was blowing northeast would create a broad 'death strip' ranging to the heart of New York City, located 400 kilometers away. Death would threaten 11 million people within an area of 11,000 square kilometers.
(Linz NEUE ZEIT)



There is some discussion of the release as a warning to the Soviet Union:

America wishes to impress the Soviets with its atomic power so long as no really effective international atomic disarmament agreement has been reached. (FRANKFURTER ALLOMEINE)

These words may be intended primarily for the Kremlin, for although Russia has recently taken to boasting of her successes in the field of nuclear fission, it is more than half suspected that her bold front is a sign of considerable dithering in the background. (Adelaide ADVERTISER)

The report made clear that until a real disarmament plan can be put into effect the United States will continue testing and studying all types of atomic weapons, and it will be recalled that in the recent Hearst interview Marshal Bulganin indicated that the Soviet Union does not want to limit "experimental explosions of nuclear weapons." (Tokyo NIPPON TIMES)

The report appears to have occasioned no debate on the desirability of prohibiting the production or testing of nuclear weapons. Although West European Communist papers continue to parrot Moscow's ban-the-bomb propaganda, they apparently have not exploited the AEC release in that connection. (The Communist HAMBURGER VOLKSZEITUNG, however, calls the report a "demonstration of contempt for human life." REUTERS quotes Indian statesman C. Rajagopalachari's reference to 'the proved and admitted consequences of the tests that America is conducting for her own misconceived security,' but there is no monitored Indian comment utilizing the AEC findings to reinforce the consistent Indian advocacy of a halt to production of the bombs.

In the only direct British reference to the AEC announcement, the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN notes that the British White Paper on Defense admitted that current lack of detailed knowledge of the fall-out effects precludes a definite policy on shelters and evacuation, and asks whether the British Government was denied access to information on radiation and fall-out at Bikini or whether it "considered the American conclusions inadequate."

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2. Communist Comment

Radio Moscow to date has ignored the AEC release, in line with its consistent avoidance of graphic detail concerning the effects of nuclear weapons. Although the threat, particularly to Western populations, inherent in U.S. atomic weapons development is evoked in general terms in Soviet propaganda assailing Western "atomaniacs," Moscow broadcasts continue to minimize if not disregard altogether any tangible evidence of U.S. progress in atomic research. Thus AEC activities are usually ignored or belittled; Moscow acknowledged the existence of the Neutilus in a single deprecatory comment last year but did not report its launching, and U.S. atomic weapons tests have never been exploited extensively. There has as yet been no Soviet mention of the current Nevada tests, and even the Bikini explosions -- which occasioned immediate and widespread Western reaction -- were accorded scant attention in Moscow broadcasts and discussed in terms of Western protests rather than as demonstrations of the military impact of the bomb.

While there is considerable discussion of atomic warfare over Communist Chinese radio there is no mention of the AEC report. In fact, the tenor of commentary is that China has little to fear from atomic warfare, that only the highly industrialized Western countries would be devastated.

Of the other Bloc radios, only East Berlin mentions the AEC report; a 16 February commentary points out that the contaminated area described in the release is equivalent to a belt 30 kilometers wide from Bremen to Cologne on which all life would be destroyed by a single hydrogen bomb, and a broadcast on the following day calls the magnitude of the bomb's effect "beyond the imagination."

Communist radios give greater attention to the White Paper announcing Britain's decision to manufacture a hydrogen bomb. Moscow quotes the 20 February PRAVDA as declaring that the decision converts Britain into a U.S. atomic base; the East German ADN attacks the Churchill Government for flouting world public revulsion against nuclear warfare; and a Prague broadcast, calling the British document a "provocation against the nations of the world," warns that in the event of war Britain would be destroyed within 24 hours.

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