

**THE DIPLOMACY OF THE TEST BAN TREATY  
THE U. S. POSITION**

by 1264

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## CHAPTER I

### FIRST ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL ATOMIC ENERGY

When Professor J. Robert Oppenheimer of the University of California and his associates gathered at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in March of 1943, few knew that their job was to design, assemble, and test an atomic bomb. The destructive power of this bomb was not general knowledge until the United States became the first nation to use it against Japan by dropping one on Hiroshima, an important Japanese base on Honshu Island, on August 6, 1945. This bomb, developed at Los Alamos, was more than 12,000 times as powerful as the best improvement on TNT. One hundred and twenty-three of these bombs would have contained as much destructive power as all of the 2,435,595 tons of bombs dropped by the Allies on Europe during World War II.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not this destruction was necessary to bring the Japanese to an early surrender has been debated many times, but the horror of this weapon was obvious to anyone who knew anything about Hiroshima.

The reactions of other nations, after Hiroshima, ranged from Winston Churchill's hope, "that these awful agencies will be made to conduce to peace among the nations, and that instead of wrecking measureless havoc upon the entire globe they may become a perennial fountain of world

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<sup>1</sup>"Atomic Age," Time, vol. 46, Aug. 20, 1945, p. 32.

prosperity,"<sup>2</sup> to the Swedish harsh criticism of the act. The Swedes did not accept the American justification of the act as the British had. The United States reasoned that the bomb would shorten the war and thereby save the lives of untold thousands of American and Allied soldiers, who otherwise would have been killed in battle.<sup>3</sup> On August 9, the liberal evening newspaper of Stockholm, the Aftonbladet, stated in a leading article, "It is all very well if atom raids can shorten the war, but this experiment with the population of an entire city as a guinea-pig reflects no martial glory on its authors. The professors who thought out the whole theory can hardly feel any joy over the first application of their discovery."<sup>4</sup>

After the destructive powers of the bomb had been realized, many wondered if the scientists who helped in developing it felt a sense of guilt. Dr. Harold C. Urey, a Nobel Prize Winner whose research helped pioneer the atomic age, spoke for many scientists when he answered this question of guilt by saying, "Atomic energy is in nature. It can't be concealed. Scientists can't prevent modern war by refusing to do scientific work. The solution is political."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, it had to be recognized that as people became better

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<sup>2</sup>The Times (London), August 20, 1945, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>U. S., Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Military Affairs, Hearings, An Act for the Development and Control of Atomic Energy, 79th Congress, 1st Session, 1945, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>The Times (London), August 10, 1945, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>"Interview with Professor Harold C. Urey," New Yorker, vol. 21, Dec. 15, 1945, p. 24.

informed about the potential of atomic weapons, there was the possibility of a reaction against science. As J. Robert Oppenheimer stated:

Whatever the individual motivation and belief of the scientist, without the recognition from his fellowmen of the value of his work, in the long term science will perish. I do not believe that it will be possible to transcend the present crisis, in a world in which the works of science are being used, and are being knowingly used, for ends men hold evil; in such a world it will be of little help to try to protect the scientist from restraints from controls, from an imposed secrecy, which he rightly finds incompatible with all he has learned to believe and cherish.<sup>6</sup>

The only redemption from this dilemma, Oppenheimer believed, was for scientists to recognize the threat of this new power and then to do all in their power to help remove the factor that made nuclear power a threat. This factor was war. Oppenheimer thought that it was necessary to strengthen ties among scientists of different nations which would help establish confidence among nations. Without this confidence, an armaments race was sure to develop. People would again reason, "that somehow these separate distrustful atomic arsenals would make for the peace of the world." Oppenheimer continued, "It would seem to me visionary in the extreme, and not practical, to hope that methods which have so sadly failed

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<sup>6</sup> J. Robert Oppenheimer, "Atomic Weapons and the Crisis in Science," The Saturday Review of Literature, vol. 28, Nov. 17, 1945, p. 11.