

## EDITORIAL

### OF ATOMS AND MAN

The concept of the "infinitesimally small" has for long plagued the imagination of man, and as early as 2300 years ago, Chuang Tze referred to the absolute by stating — the actual text runs, "A small thing is one that can have no inside to it, and a large one no outside to it". — that the ultimate in the extremes of sizes is in the indivisibility of the absolutely small, and the unsurpassibility of the absolutely large. The atom has been defined as an article too small to be divided, and, this concept has received its material confirmation in physical science not many years ago. Since then science has marched on, and the indivisible has been divided as the atom was split. This new knowledge like many others came to the realisation of man in the form of a catastrophe — one which spelt hundreds of thousands of lives, and probably as many more in terms of lingering deaths of leukaemia, cancers and mutations incompatible with life. The first announcement of this discovery has been in the bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki — an incident round which still rages the many controversies of rights and wrongs of morality even today.

However, the arguments on the right and wrong of the atom issue have taken on a personal interest as nations enter the nuclear weapon race. First America, then Soviet Russia, then United Kingdom, and most recently France began to test their weapons in the Pacific islands, Arctic regions, Australia and the Sahara desert. The finding, that each test scattered radio-active material into space to be of immediate noxious effect on the near surroundings, and later distributed its relentless and up till now irremediable danger all over the world, has disturbed man so much that protests came up like mushrooms all over the world. In America and England, active anti-nuclear groups demonstrated and carried out protest activities. Quite a few scientists with a sense of responsibility gave warnings of increasing deaths in the form of leukaemia and mutations. Of late, the cry has been taken up in the forum of the United Nations where the danger of nuclear test to man is fully ventilated, and the anxiety of responsible statesmen made widely known.

The result as we know, has been the proposal of the banning of nuclear tests, and disarmament.

There have been talks of open skies, dumping nuclear weapons, stopping nuclear tests, and nuclear inspections. So far, the negotiation has been literally one between America and Russia. Nevertheless, whilst we await breathlessly for miracles to happen in the way of a mutual agreement, reason must tell us that such talks are usually barren of results. War is an activity where the goal of winning the battle overshadows everything, hence the saying goes: "All is fair in love and war". Strategists point out that to be successful in war, one must be prepared, and be in a position to surprise the enemy with as many crippling blows as can possibly be delivered. This must mean espionage, deceit, breach of agreements, brutal and indiscriminate killing of combatants and non-combatants alike, wanton destruction of strategic and non-military objectives, and in short, only insane idealists or liars can talk of war in terms of morality. No war is moral, and anyone engaging in martial activities efficiently has to be cunning, cruel, unmerciful and unprincipled! Indeed, the difference between honour and knavery in a war is but a razor's edge, for there can be no doubt that had the tide of the last war been different, the war criminals in Japan, Germany and Italy, would be heroes to be honoured and feted!

If that is war, then obviously any talk of disarmament, and inspection must fail, for there does not seem to exist any physical possibility for anyone to be sure that his opponent will not have an arms-cache hidden somewhere. After all war measures are always enshrouded in secrecy, and even prominent citizens and high officials of United States or Soviet Russia would not be in a position to know where the weapons of their own country are being made or hidden! To expect an inspecting team to be able to do better in a hostile country would be, to say the least, naive. If a fool-proof inspection is not possible, then the lurking fear that the other party will not honestly observe the agreement to disarm or stop manufacturing nuclear weapons cannot be dispelled. No one in his senses would be prepared to be the first to disarm so as to be at the complete mercy of the other. Hence so far the outcome of all the negotiations on these pressing topics has been no more than mutual lip service to peace, intermittent sable-rattling reminiscent

of puerile pugilists, and incessant condemnation of the other party for being insincere.

But if we cannot expect results along present lines, we can at least hope that by an increasing pressure of public opinion all over the world, the holocaust may be postponed, if not averted. Everyday gained is a day of hope for the future, and hence it is a timely thing that Inche Abdul Aziz of Malaya should join the banner of anti-

nuclear movements. This is a measure which all thinking men must support, and doctors most of all, as they are pledged to the saving of life, and hence must be opposed to the destruction of the living. In such an issue where the future of man is involved, colour, religion, race, culture, ethics and professional differences must count as nought, for in this, we must strive together, or else we shall perish as one.

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