REVIEWS

ATOMIC POWER AND WORLD ORDER*

The authors of this book, impressed by "the urgency of finding solutions to the transitional problem" created by the atomic bomb, present a discussion of how security may be found during the coming few years when the atomic bomb might have the character of an "absolute weapon." One of the major conclusions as set forth by Arnold Wolfers is that "a well-planned and comprehensive policy of determent aiming at preventing the Soviet Union from risking a war with this country offers appreciable chances of success." The same conclusion is stated by Bernard Brodie in these words: "A nation which is well girded for its own defense as is reasonably possible is not a tempting target to an aggressor." The theories of many physical scientists about a future atomic war, and about that war's expected surprise beginning, depend "on one vital but unexpressed assumption: that the nation which proposes to launch the attack will not need to fear retaliation. If it must fear retaliation, the fact that it destroys its opponent's cities some hours or even days before its own are destroyed may avail it little."

The authors recommend that the military policy of the United States be based on the principle that retaliation offers, under present circumstances, the best protection against atomic attack, provided the armed forces have been deployed in such a manner that they remain capable of striking back even after initial attack. While retaliation will undoubtedly be a deterrent if the aggressor thinks along western and rational lines, an opponent of a different kind may not fear retaliation. Professor Dunn writes that even though the violator of an atomic agreement may succeed in "winning the war, he would find that he had conquered nothing but a blackened ruin. The prize for his violation of his agreement would be ashes!" True, but "ashes" may be the desirable objective of revolutionary groups; it is a basic tenet of many radical doctrines that a truly new life can be built only on "ruins."

Professor Dunn wants to combine the effectiveness of retaliation with that of a "constant exercise of far-sighted, conciliatory diplomacy" designed to avoid the building up of tensions that might tempt nations to seek a solution through the use of force. Thus we come to the final paradox that while the best way to avoid atomic warfare is to get rid of war itself, the strongest present ally in the effort to get rid of war is the capacity to resort to atomic warfare at a moment's notice."

The authors, in other words, have not yet written mankind off the books—an almost disconcerting optimism in this neo-Manichaeistic period.


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sor Dunn does not even give up hope in international treaties which "are tools which will perform well under certain conditions and badly under others. If a favorable set of conditions can be coaxed into existence, there is no reason to despair of finding a treaty structure that will withstand the strains which are likely to occur." This is the more reassuring as the authors demonstrate that various schemes of international re-organization presently in vogue—world-government, share-the-secret, destroy-the-bombs, etc.—are not practical; the arguments used in this connection are similar to, and sometimes identical with, those set forth by the present writer in The Review of Politics, April, 1946. Great emphasis is laid on Professor Viner's observation that actual power is difficult to surrender and that world government could provide security only, perhaps, if the United States and the Soviet Union dismember themselves. "Splitting the United States and splitting the Soviet Union seem to present a more difficult problem than splitting the atom proved to be" (Jacob Viner).

The problem of control is taken up in a non-technical but excellent chapter by William T. R. Fox, who points out that control can hardly be effective "against violations committed with the tacit approval of national authorities," let alone, it could be added, with their systematic and effective support. Dr. Fox thinks, probably correctly, that "no one questions the capacity of a national government to protect itself against the illegal production of bombs within its territory," hence control seems to be technically possible. The technical feasibility of control would be improved "if adequate inspection is possible through careful inspection of a few strategic control points" rather than through the "policing of the internal affairs of each country so completely that that country's basic social institutions are threatened." The obstacles to atomic controls are, therefore, political. No suggestion is offered as to how these obstacles can be overcome; it might have been advisable if the authors had stated clearly and frankly whether or not they believe these obstacles to be removable, and under what conditions.

Percy E. Corbett analyzes the impact of the atomic bomb on international organizations and concludes that the "fullest and speediest possible development of all the conciliatory, judicial, economic and social activities planned for the United Nations Organization" may perhaps prevent "a clear-cut polarization of power around the two great continental countries, the Soviet Union and the United States." Mr. Corbett is himself not too much convinced of this idea which, in truth, is a perfect non-sequitur. Why is it necessary to bow to an uninformed "public opinion," instead of making it quite clear that a foreign policy merely aiming at international organization and arbitration is irrelevant insofar as atomic problems are concerned? Mr. Corbett advocates that the Lilienthal report be made the basis of American foreign policy "as it would go far to achieve this objective," namely the prevention of power polarization. Yet this objective is unattainable: a two-power polarized world does already exist. It ought to have been pointed out that American foreign policy, if it is to attain the overall objective of "deter-
ment," must be activated in many fields. For example, Mr. Corbett speaks of the "drawing-power" of Moscow and envisages the possibility that France may enter the "Russian orbit"—yet he does not say what we should do to
strengthen our "drawing-power" and to keep France within our "orbit." The United States will acquire determent-power in proportion to its increasing drawing-power. If the United States foreign policy will continue to be determined almost exclusively by the fetish of the United Nations and the fear of "entangling alliances," catastrophic developments may indeed ensue. Instead of talking at length of international organizations which, today, are still in the embryonic stage, attention should have been given to those domestic circumstances and machineries which at present make a rational foreign policy rather difficult. Yet the immutability of American foreign policy and its methods seems to have been taken for granted.

The political discussions of the present book are preceded by two military chapters written by Bernard Brodie. The first of these chapters is a rational, somewhat moderate exposition of the well-known opinions held by most physicists concerning the effectiveness of the atomic bomb. The chapter was written only a few weeks after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and is based on slightly haphazard information. It tries to demonstrate that the atomic bomb is the "absolute weapon" without, however, defining the meaning of that enigmatic term. If the atomic bomb were really an "absolute" weapon, the retaliation argument could not be valid, for this argument is predicated on the fact that there is a powerful weapon against the atomic bomb—another atomic bomb. Brodie does not discuss the possible use of atomic fission in weapons other than bombs, nor does he clearly understand the implications of the fact that, at present, the atomic bomb is an element of air power.

Brodie's second chapter is a brilliant discussion of the changes which have become necessary in the organization as well as in the basic mission of the armed forces. Brodie suggests that the armed forces must make themselves independent of urban communities and industries for supply and support, as otherwise they would not retain their ability to fight back after surprise atomic attacks on the major cities. He also states, somewhat pointedly, that while the chief purpose of military forces has heretofore been to win wars, it must from now on be to avert wars. Brodie's most important suggestion is to divide the armed forces into three main categories: "The first category will comprise the force reserved for retaliatory attacks with atomic bombs; the second will have the mission of invading and occupying enemy territory; and the third will have the purpose of resisting enemy invasion and of organizing relief for devastated areas."

It is not possible to discuss these novel and, in the reviewer's opinion, excellent ideas in detail. Brodie's second chapter is one of the first, and very few, original attempts to "re-think" war in atomic terms. One may disagree with some of his ideas, but one cannot help being greatly stimulated by them. This second chapter is indispensable reading, because Brodie presents constructive suggestions on how to get out of the present impasse of military security. By his own example he demonstrates that sterile defeatism and political utopianism are the wrong approaches to the atomic problem which can be brought under control only by creative and realistic thinking.

—Stefan T. Possony