

# Liberation

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One Shilling

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EDITORIAL

## A CALL FOR COURAGE

"It must not happen that we do not pull ourselves together before it is too late. We must muster the insight, the seriousness and the courage to leave this folly and face reality."

— Dr. Albert Schweitzer.

Some things are too small to be seen. Some things are too big.

Let us suppose that you knew someone was poisoning your food. You would do something about that person. You would notify the police. You would take steps to stop him. You would do everything you could to protect yourself and your family from being killed.

But in fact your food is being poisoned. You are being threatened with death. And you are doing nothing about it.

There are at present three countries which have the resources and the means to produce atomic and hydrogen bombs: the United States, the Soviet Union and Great-Britain. They are not only making these bombs, but they are exploding them to test their effects. On a number of occasions in the first half of 1957 each of these countries has held test explosions of hydrogen bombs.

Every time such a bomb explodes it releases poisonous radiation into the earth's atmosphere. The radiation is carried all over the world by wind-currents. It does not go away, but remains for many years. It is absorbed by the bodies of human beings and by the plants and animals which we eat. If we build up enough radiation, over a period of time, it

will kill us. It will rot our bones. It can, even without our knowing it, affect our reproductive organs, so that our unborn children and grandchildren will be still-born, or born physically or mentally defective.

You cannot see atoms, or the radiations they cause. They are too small. And most of us cannot see the terrible threat of the hydrogen bomb. It is too big.

But we must open up our eyes and our minds to this problem and do something about it quickly — if we want to live.

## HERE IS THE EVIDENCE

We do not make these statements without due reason or evidence. Many of the world's most famous scientists and leaders have issued grave warnings already. From his lonely medical mission in Central Africa, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, famed 82-year old Nobel Prize Winner, scientist and musician of genius, called upon the Norwegian Nobel Committee to broadcast his message to the world:

"Radio-activity is a catastrophe for the human race . . . Our descendants are threatened by the greatest and most terrible danger . . ."

A Committee of the British Atomic Scientists' Association which included Professor J. Rotblat, Professor Alexander Haddow and Professor L. S. Penrose, eminent nuclear physicists, has declared:

"At least 50,000 may suffer from bone cancer as a direct result of the hydrogen bombs already exploded."

On April 18 leading West German nuclear physicists (including Professor Otto Hahn, discoverer of the nuclear fission of uranium) declared they would not participate in the production, testing or use of atomic weapons:

"No limit is known to the life-destroying effect of strategic atomic weapons," declared their statement. "By spreading radio-activity through hydrogen bombs, one could exterminate the population of the German Federal Republic."

Professor Bakulev, President of the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences, declared:

"Soviet doctors and scientists must press for the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons."

Dr. P. Kusch, American Nobel Prize winner, said:

"As scientists we have been concerned with the possibility that cumulative effects of large numbers of nuclear explosions will pose a threat to the health and even the life of the entire human race."

Professor Joliot Curie, former French High Commissioner For Atomic Energy, Nobel Prize winner:

"If these experiments are not stopped the amount of strontium (a substance released in nuclear explosions) affecting men and women, and in particular young children who are growing, will

certainly reach a level sufficient to cause numerous bone cancers and leukemias." (Leukemia is an incurable blood-cancer.)

And here finally, is a statement by Dr. Linus Pauling, (U.S.A.) Nobel Prize winner, who headed two thousand American scientists in protesting against a continuance of the bomb tests:

"Each nuclear bomb test spreads an added burden of radio-active elements over every part of the world.

"Each added amount of radiation causes damage to the health of human beings all over the world and causes damage to the pool of human germ plasm such as will lead to the increase in the number of seriously defective children that will be born in future generations.

"The bomb tests are causing now 1,000 additional deaths by leukemia each year, and even more by bone cancer.

"I am convinced that there will be born in future generations hundreds of thousands of feeble-minded children with serious physical defects because of the tests that have already been made."

#### WHO IS GUILTY?

And these are only a few of the innumerable statements that have been made during this year, 1957, by scientific men of unquestionable ability, knowledge and integrity all over the world. They have warned us with a stark clarity that leaves no room for misunderstanding that the hydrogen bomb tests are causing cancer, poisoning our food supplies, threatening unborn generations.

Why do we not know about these warnings? Surely if these facts were sufficiently well-known and understood, there would be universal discussion of them. Why this conspiracy of silence?

A heavy responsibility rests on our daily newspaper press, and the agencies which feed it and us with information. They have deliberately sat upon and hushed up the biggest news story of 1957.

Most people rely on the newspapers for information. If ever the newspapers have failed in their duty to keep the public informed on a matter of vital public importance, it is on this very question of the nuclear weapons. Not only have they failed to inform the people of these vital warnings from eminent scientists, cited above. They have also suppressed the appeals of eminent world statesmen. We are not referring here only to the numerous statements by spokesmen of the Soviet Union, China, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other Communist leaders, who are always accused of making propaganda, whatever they say. But why were we not told of the repeated appeals of the Government of Japan — whose people were the first victims of nuclear weapons — for the ending of the bomb tests? And the similar appeals by the Governments of India, Ceylon, Indonesia and Burma?

Not only in the East, but also in the West leading public figures have appealed for an immediate ending of the tests. Among them we may list Mr. Tage Erlander, Prime Minister of Sweden, who proposed at least "the temporary ending of all nuclear tests," the Swiss Foreign Minister, Mr. Max Petitpierre, and the British Labour Party which at its last annual conference unanimously resolved to oppose the continuation of H-bomb tests and demanded the abolition of all atomic weapons.

Finally, we may cite Mr. Adlai Stevenson, head of the Democratic Party in the United States, and its candidate for the Presidency in the last elections. On October 10, 1956, he called upon President Eisenhower to give a lead in the banning of hydrogen bomb tests. And he added the telling accusation that the U.S. Government

"has even withdrawn its own proposals when others indicated their willingness to accept these proposals."

By shutting all these vital facts out of prominence, and in many cases out of any mention in their columns, our newspapers are contributing in no small measure to the danger. Mankind's main hope of survival in the face of this dreadful peril lies in the people becoming aroused and taking steps to protect themselves. They cannot do this while they are deliberately kept in ignorance of the issues.

#### WHAT'S BEHIND IT?

Why have the people not been given the facts?

The answer must be sought not in the blindness of our newspaper editors and proprietors, but in the political and military policy of the ruling circles in Britain and America to whom our press, radio and other instruments of public information are subordinate.

For the fact must be faced that of the three nuclear powers it is the Americans, followed by the British, who have consistently justified and refused to renounce nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union, ever since the ending of the Second World War, has repeatedly proposed and demanded that these weapons be outlawed by international agreement, just as poison-gas was outlawed after the First World War, as a weapon of mass destruction directed against innocent non-combatants, women and children.

Just as consistently, the United States has refused to enter into any such agreement, or even to make a formal statement condemning the use of nuclear weapons in warfare. The reason is that the fundamental policy of the U.S.A. Government is — and has been ever since the defeat of Hitler — based on two suppositions (both of them, incidentally, false) which underly all its actions in the sphere of foreign affairs. The first is that a Third World War is inevitable, with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. as the two main antagonists. The second is that of America's alleged superiority in nuclear weapons, which are assumed to be the decisive factor in such a war.

When the Americans dropped the atom bombs that wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, they were no longer thinking about the war with Japan — Japan was already virtually defeated and suing for peace.

The bombs were the first shots in the cold war against the Soviet Union. The man in charge of the construction of the bombs was U.S. General Groves. He stated publicly in 1954:

"There was never any illusion on my part but that Russia was the enemy, and the project was conducted on this basis."

In June, 1954, General Gruenther, head of N.A.T.O. (then known as Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in Europe) told a press conference that he was engaged in working out "a philosophy of war" which was "projected some three years in the future." He said:

"In our thinking we visualise the use of atomic bombs in support of ground troops. We also visualise the use of atomic bombs on targets in enemy territories."

At the beginning of this year, Mr. Charles Wilson, Secretary of Defence, told the United States Congress:

"Our basic defence policy is based on the use of atomic weapons in a major war, and is based on the use of such atomic weapons as would be militarily feasible in a smaller war."

And, on May 12, 1957, General Norstad, Supreme Commander in the West, said in New York, that the Western Powers would "use atomic weapons first", even if the other side did not do so.

### **IT MUST BE STOPPED!**

It is this thinking and this strategy which lies behind the persistent and stubborn refusal of the United States and its supporters to renounce atomic weapons, and their failure in the face of the ever-mounting volume of protests and warnings, to enter any agreement to halt, even temporarily the testing of hydrogen bombs. And it is because they are slavishly bound to U.S. and British cold war policies that our South African newspaper editors, Nationalist and U.P. alike, have suppressed news of the great debate of 1957 over the continuance of these tests.

But the issue involved — the question of life or death for millions of people — is too great for us to allow it to be buried in silence any longer.

One of the factors which keeps many people from speaking out is that the Soviet Union is a strong advocate of outlawing and destroying all nuclear weapons, and of calling an immediate halt to the testing of such weapons. The Soviet Government declared its readiness to stop the tests, if the U.S. and U.K. Governments would make similar undertakings, in May 1955. It repeated this offer in November 1955, in July 1956, in November 1956 and in January 1957. In March of this year, the Soviet Union suggested an agreement to suspend all tests for a fixed period. Its statement declared that the Soviet Government stood for the complete cessation of all such tests, but in view of the Western Powers rejection of previous proposals for complete cessation it was prepared to agree to a temporary cessation. (President Eisenhower and Mr. MacMillan replied in a joint statement declaring that "the security of the free world must continue to depend in a marked degree on the nuclear deterrent. To maintain this effectively, continued nuclear testing is required.")

Now some people take up the standpoint that Communism is so wicked that anything the representatives of the Soviet Union say must necessarily be wrong, and if Mr. Krushchov and Mr. Bulganin were to make a statement condemning cannibalism, such people would no doubt immediately begin to consider whether there is not, after all, much to be said in favour of eating people. Apart from such lunatics, there are ever so many perfectly sane and rational people who are afraid that if they give any indication of agreeing with anything that is said by Soviet leaders on any question whatsoever they will be listed by Mr. Swart and his security police as Communists, and banned, refused passports and otherwise made to suffer.

Such, unfortunately, is the mental climate in our country that we cannot deny the reality of such fears.

### WE MUST SPEAK OUT!

Yet, with all the sincerity and earnestness at our command, we do appeal to everyone who reads this article to put aside every such consideration from his mind. For when we think of what is at stake, the very survival of ourselves, our children, our country and all mankind, we cannot, we dare not, evade our responsibilities and take refuge in silence.

Let no-one deceive himself that we are safe in our corner of the world. The winds that blow about the globe, laden with poisonous radiation, blow also over Africa. Already, who knows how many in our country have suffered harmful or fatal effects from the hydrogen bomb tests?

Above all, all the double talk about "the great deterrent" cannot conceal the fundamental logic of the continuation of nuclear tests and nuclear armament. Every year the great powers are adding to their stockpiles of these terrible weapons, and every year the weapons become more terrible. The bomb that killed over 50,000 in a second at Hiroshima in 1945 is already obsolete and out of date. If the nations carry on with this lunacy of testing and perfecting these diabolical engines there can be only one end to it all — the ultimate horror of nuclear warfare.

The Lord President, Earl Home, comfortingly told the British House of Lords on May 9, that "in the event of nuclear war there would be some areas where some people would survive."

We in South Africa would not do well to deceive ourselves that many would survive in our country. This country would almost inevitably become a major target in nuclear war, and not only our great seaports in the South and the East, but even more so our densely populated mining areas in the North. For our great gold mines in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State have become producers of something more harmful than gold — uranium, raw material of every nuclear weapon.

The recent annual report of the Transvaal and Orange Free State Chamber of Mines revealed for the first time the fantastic extent to which uranium production has developed in the past few years. In 1956 uranium oxide reached a total of 8,726,308 lbs., and produced a profit of £24,662,000 more than half last year's profit on gold, which was itself a record.

Not even Mr. Erasmus would seriously contest the fact that the Union is practically defenceless against atomic attack.

We must do something about it, and urgently too.

Mr. Cecil Williams and the fifty-odd prominent theatre and radio personalities who wrote to Mr. Strijdom asking him to use his influence "to bring about an immediate cessation of these tests" in defence of "not only our lives but the culture we hold dear" — these have shown us the way.

We must speak out! Our scientists and our educationists must follow the path charted by Dr. Schweitzer and so many others, and follow the example of the artists headed by Mr. Williams. And our women's and cultural organisations, our political and trade union leaders, our writers, our lawyers, our workers and farmers.

"Insight, seriousness, courage." Those are the qualities which Dr. Schweitzer correctly called for at this grave time. Let it not be said that our people were wanting in those qualities when every human achievement and aspiration was in peril.

# AFRICAN WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS

by BEN TUROK, M.P.C.,

Assistant Secretary, Metal Workers Union (Non-European)

The new Industrial Conciliation Act, which came into operation at the beginning of 1957, despite the opposition of trade unions and employers alike, has led to a great deal of discussion of basic policy in the trade union movement. There has been a process of soul-searching, reassessment of past policies and attempts to find a way out for the future, and this process is still continuing. This discussion will not be fruitful unless it takes into account the importance of the largest group of workers, the Africans, in relation to the trade union movement as a whole.

This discussion should also take into account the powerful tendency to organisation and trade union action arising out of the sharp decline of real wages over the past decade, with the very real poverty and distress that this has caused, particularly among the lowest-paid section.\*

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\* Miss Olive Gibson, in her recent detailed study "The Cost of Living for Africans", points out that there has been a "grave deterioration in conditions for Africans." In his recent book on the African workers, Mr. Alex Hepple, M.P. confirms this opinion. He says, "Taking wages and cost-of-living allowance together, and taking account of the small rise in wages granted to them in 1942, unskilled workers are receiving less real wages than they did before the war."