The magnificent scientific mind of man had devised the means of man's total destruction. The laggard political mind of man would now struggle with the problem of saving man from his own ingenuity.

And that struggle was to determine what human history would be like in the age beginning with 1954—unless the struggle was lost and history stopped there.

For the H-bomb tested by U.S. officials in the Pacific was so destructive that it would wipe out any city in the world and that city's far environs. And a still more explosive bomb was loaded and about to be dropped.

Washington experts thought Russia probably didn't, as yet, have anything quite that big, but they were sure it soon would have. Both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had planes capable of delivering H-bombs to the other's centers.

U.S. officials already had intimated that they would use every weapon available to them—including the latest H-bomb—if the Russians, in furtherance of their ambitions for world power, persisted in their encroachments upon free world territory.

Last week, however, Administration spokesmen were at pains to explain that its so-called new-look military policy was aimed at preventing, not starting, an H-bomb war.

Meanwhile, American and Russian officials exchanged notes exploring ways of creating an international pool of atomic materials in furtherance of a plan proposed to the United Nations by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. This plan, if it worked out, could be a preliminary to eventual atomic-arms control.

Man seemed to be faced with a simple choice—whether to destroy himself or live on. But that choice was complicated by the conflict between a system of freedom and a system of slavery over social man's future living arrangements. It wouldn't be as simple as it looked.

THE BOMB: Moment in Eternity

In Washington, a city famous for leaks, the secret was too big to keep: the Atomic Energy Commission had exploded a spectacular H-bomb at Bikini. Dropped from a tower, it was deliverable in combat, twice as devastating as the thermonuclear device tested in 1952, and four times as powerful as scientists had expected. And the AEC was ready this week to drop an even more powerful bomb from a plane.

When word of the mighty blast reached the military.
reached the U.S., the AEC merely offered a tight-lipped explanation that a "routine" atomic device had been exploded and that it was "the first in a series." But the less reticent members of the Joint Congressional Atomic Energy Committee were willing to supply some startling details.

- The new bomb was a revolutionary "three-stage" weapon. An atom bomb triggered small amounts of tritium, touching off lithium, which in turn set off the thermonuclear reaction. Because tritium is prohibitively expensive, the cost factor had held up production of the new bomb until the AEC devised the three-stage method.
- The March 1 blast was said to have obliterated the test island.
- The blast equaled in explosive power some 12 million tons of TNT, as compared with the 5-million-ton power of the 1952 test and the 20,000-ton effect of the Hiroshima A-bomb.
- The explosion shot a nuclear cloud 17 or more miles into the air.
- There was "complete" damage in an area at least 6 miles in diameter, or roughly 20 square miles, and diminishing damage in an area of about 20 miles in diameter, or over 300 square miles.
- The AEC was reaching the point where, according to chairman Dewey Short of the House Armed Services Committee, "H-weapons are getting so big that if they get much bigger, we won't be able to test them."

Preparations for the H-bomb test began last January when thousands of servicemen from Task Force 7 and AEC technicians moved into the Eniwetok proving grounds. A tower was rigged, measuring and testing devices were set up, and planes warned all fishermen to stay out of waters within an 80-mile radius of the test island.

**Death of Civilization**

Premier Georgi Malenkov, recognizing the power of the H-bomb but opposing its effective control, has said:

"The Soviet government is for a relaxation in the international tensions, for a lasting peace, against the policies of a cold war, because these policies are a preparation for a new world war, which under contemporary conditions of war [air-born nuclear bombs] means the death of world civilization."

The Men Who Know the Worst Weapon Have a Warning . . .

The new H-bomb is a "horrible thing" whose magnitude was not foreseen by the U.S. scientists who tested it. Yet it can now be delivered by this nation to any place in the world. The Russians may not have it yet, but if they don't they will in "one to three years." When they get it, they'll have what it takes to devastate any metropolitan area in the United States. (Maps show in solid color areas in which victims would be killed or burned and in light color areas in which they would feel heat and radiation in New York, Chicago, and L.A. districts.) Members of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy—the laymen who know most about the new bomb—are authorized for these statements to Newsweek.

> Chairman W. Sterling Cole (Republican Representative, N.Y.): We have passed another milestone. We now have a deliverable hydrogen weapon that can be dropped anywhere in the world.

> "The recent blast means that we have made great progress, yet we can't relax, and we must assume that the Russians are doing just as well. Russia may be able to deliver similar weapons on the U.S. in one to three years."

> "I feel that greater precautionary steps should have been taken, and should be taken in the future, to protect human life from radiation hazards. But I don't want to blame anyone for the March 1 explosion."

> Vice Chairman Bourke B. Hickenlooper (Republican Senator, Iowa): These present tests are a part of the program of experiment and development of atomic force. In fact, I would call them routine necessary operations, some of which produce far greater power than others.

> "They will contribute to the maintenance of our great and necessary superiority in atomic matters."

> "I am sorry that some sensational claims have created unwarranted confusion, and I have no evidence of any . . . "

Newsweek
Meanwhile, production began on the "long rifle of the air age," an eight-engine swept-wing bomber capable of delivering the new bomb wherever and whenever the U.S. decided to drop it. As the first production model B-52 rolled off a Boeing assembly line in Seattle, Gen. Nathan F. Twining, the Air Force Chief of Staff, told workers who had built it that this was the plane which would "keep that Red fellow in his place."

THE PROBLEM:
Let No War Come

The most powerful weapon of war ever devised by man is also the most powerful deterrent to war in the world. Winston Churchill first recognized this fact, but it since has become an integral part of American foreign policy. As far back as March 1949, speaking at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Churchill declared that Europe would long since have been under Communist rule and London under bombardment "but for the deterrent of the atomic bomb in the hands of the United States."

Churchill was speaking of the relatively primitive A-bombs which then were a U.S. monopoly. The new, awesome H-bomb, the first of which the Atomic Energy Commission exploded this month, was certain to give the Russians even greater pause, even though Russia now possesses atomic weapons, too. Last week, for the first time, the United States was boasting of Russia's A-bombs, the first in a series of self-conscious attempts to ram home the point that the atomic bomb is an integral part of American foreign policy.

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The admission came from the Soviet Premier, Georgi Malenkov. Making a new plea for a settlement of the cold war (on Russia's terms), he declared that a third world war, "under contemporary conditions of war, would mean the death of world civilization."

At the same time, other Soviet leaders were boasting of Russia's progress in atomic development. Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov, for example, was saying: "Our scientists all the more occupy advanced positions in the development of world science." Malenkov's words were far more significant, however. In the Aesopian language that Communists characteristically employ, he was finally confessing that Russia hesitated to start a third world war because it would mean the destruction of Russia.

The threat of U.S. atomic development might conceivably have another historic effect. In December, President Eisenhower made a proposal for an international pool of nuclear materials for peaceful development. The President did not deal with the question of international control of atomic weapons, but his proposal clearly was designed to open the way for such control eventually.

Last week, for the first time, the Russians got down to considering the proposal. State Department officials weren't too optimistic about the possibility of reaching agreements with them in the near future, but they were heartened anyway. Some progress had been made.

Meanwhile, the precise role that atomic development should play in U.S. foreign policy was the subject of continuing debate in Washington—and elsewhere in the Western world. Reckless, uninformed talk about the "new look" in defense had made many Americans and most Western Europeans fearful that some foreign-policy planners were on the verge of going "bomb happy." These policymakers seemed to place exclusive reliance on atomic retaliation. They talked as though any new Communist aggression anywhere should be answered by wiping out Russia and China, even such outbreaks as the Communist civil war in Greece and the North Korean attack on South Korea.

DANGERS IN RETALIATION: The allies of the U.S. had no objection to atomic retaliation if the situation warranted it—but they wanted a voice in deciding whether the situation did, since atomic retaliation would mean a third world war, which could end in their destruction, too. Some critics saw another objection in relying solely on atomic retaliation: Congress simply would never test present completely different problems from the earlier atom weapons. With those, we knew a little more about what we were doing.

"It is almost miraculous, it seems to me; that there haven't been far more casualties ... As you know, some residents of the islands received radiation exposures far in excess of the usual tolerances set for people who work with atomic material.

"This unexpected exposure seems to be the result of a much larger explosion than expected, and tricky shifts in winds at high altitudes."

Despite these hazards, the hydrogen weapons ... The people should be told about this tremendous new force... it is such a horrible thing that it's best to tell the world about it."

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March 29, 1954
None Could Live Half a Minute

In liquid form, a tiny drop splattered on a man’s hand would paralyze him instantly, deaden his brain in a few seconds, and kill him in 30 seconds.

Depending on the winds and the weather, a quart could kill every living thing within a cubic mile.

It’s the deadliest gas that man has ever invented. You can’t see it, smell it, or taste it—but it will kill you on contact.

The Army calls it G-gas.

Out at the $50 million Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver, where the gas is now being produced—in steel and concrete buildings, behind barred wire—the workers must wear gas masks and rubberized suits, and they must take frequent showers. There is a highly intricate electrical-alarm system to warn of leakage. White rabbits and canaries are used as a second alarm system; they are more susceptible to the deadly gas than humans.

Arthur W. Radford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee that, ‘despite recent cutbacks in the Army and Navy, U.S. defense forces continue to constitute an effective and efficient contribution to the collective strength of the free world.” However, there evidently were military leaders who disagreed. Testifying before the committee, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, Army Chief of Staff, clearly implied that he believed the Army had been cut back too much.

Whether or not this was so, the Administration had no idea of putting all its defense eggs in one basket labeled “Atomic Retaliation.”

Big plane for big bombs: Near Seattle, Boeing began to produce this B-52, which could carry the H-bomb.