

Entire Cities to Be Evacuated

Soviet H-Bomb Claim Changes U. S. Civil Defense Policy

Dr. Lapp, a noted nuclear physicist, was formerly a high official in the Government's atomic bomb project. This is the last of three articles on the Soviet H-bomb announcement.

By Ralph E. Lapp

Malenkov's claim that the Soviets have the H-bomb has produced a drastic change in policy in United States civil defense. While not yet officially announced, the new Federal Civil Defense policy is evacuation of city populations before an attack.

The policy crisis within the Federal Civil Defense Administration has been building up ever since President Eisenhower appointed Gov. Val Peterson to head up our lagging civil defense effort. Malenkov's dramatic announcement, whether true or false, precipitated the issue in FCDA.

The issue was simply this: Could a civil defense be geared

to the increasing destructiveness of modern nuclear weapons? Even before the advent of the H-bomb, the threat posed by bigger and bigger A-bombs had caused CD leaders to reexamine "their planning assumptions about Soviet atomic capability."

Originally, the Soviets were credited with being able to produce only a Nagasaki-type bomb—one equal to 20,000 tons of TNT in power. Quite recently, FCDA shifted its sights to a Soviet A-bomb 2½ times more powerful. And just prior to Malenkov's speech CD planners were urging that still

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bigger A-bombs—equal to 100,000 tons of TNT—be assumed.

As the assumed power of the Soviet A-bombs was raised our civil defense experts became increasingly worried that no corresponding change was being made in CD plans for our cities.

Some FCDA officials recognized that the United States civilian defense was scarcely capable of coping with the threat of old-fashioned 1945 model A-bombs. Our CD measures consisted largely of disaster relief operations which were designed to pick-up-the-pieces after an atomic attack. In effect our civilian defense was a warmed-over version of the kind which Britain used in the last war, effective then, ridiculous now.

The thing which convinced FCDA that it had to change its plans was a lengthy study known as Project East River. Officially released to a limited group early this year, this report is a careful analysis of the vulnerability of the United States to atomic attack. One

hundred atomic scientists and civilian experts participated in the study.

Unfortunately, the report is not really available to the public but it will be published in a popular version in the September issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

Key scientists working on Project East River had full access to atomic data. As a result they made their analysis based upon the assumed existence of nuclear weapons in the megaton range—meaning H-bombs, the equivalent of more than one million tons of TNT. This was a big break for FCDA for it prepared the agency for Malenkov's H-bomb and its impact on United States civil defense.

It is impossible to attempt any summary of the voluminous East River report but a few "target" statistics on United States vulnerability may indicate how the experts viewed the over-all problem.

In 11 of our cities which are highest on the H-bomb target list there are some 36-million people. Over two-thirds of these urbanites live within direct striking distance of an H-bomb accurately dropped on each city.

Some 76 million people live in our 100 largest metropolitan areas. Not all these 100 targets would be worth an H-bomb—at least a big H-bomb. Most of them in fact could be thoroughly smashed by very powerful A-bombs. Some could be devastated by bombs not much larger than that dropped on Nagasaki.

However, the astonishing conclusion is that one out of every two American lives in a city which qualifies militarily as an A- or H-target.

It is an ironic fact that the "best targets" for H-bombs are found in the United States, not in Russia. Only two Soviet cities—Moscow and Leningrad—compare with some dozen United States cities on the H-target list, the criterion being concentration of people and industry.

These dry statistics suggest the extreme peril which modern nuclear weapons pose for the United States. Project East River analysts concluded that a full-scale attack on 100 United States targets could produce almost 20 million deaths and an equal number of casualties.

Little imagination is required to visualize the effects of such a blitz. Even if our factories still

had roofs they would be ghost plants—without workers, without power, and without supplies to feed the production line.

The United States could be knocked out by a savage and sustained atomic attack. This conclusion is confirmed by cold statistics compiled by expert analysts.

What, then, do we do about this unprecedented threat? How do we manage to survive?

Our first line of defense is clearly a military one. In yesterday's article in this series the need for a strong air defense to intercept enemy bombers was emphasized. However, air defense cannot be perfect. Some bombers will always get through—and this is where civilian defense comes in.

Civil defense has one prime objective—to protect your life. You are the least common denominator of our civil defense. Reduced to its simplest terms the problem confronting civil defense is your individual survival, and that of your family, and of the millions of people in our target cities.

How do you survive an A-bomb? Or an H-bomb?

Three different answers have been given but to date one of these has been only whispered about.

1. One philosophy proposed by the die-hards of civil defense has been "stay put and take it." This concept akin to "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" might work for TNT blockbusters but it won't work for city-busters. Still, up to last week some local CD directors stoically maintained that civilians should take their chances just as do soldiers on the front line.

The meaning of the H-bomb and of the big A-bomb is that if you stay put and take it you will probably stay put permanently.

2. A second school of civil defense thinking is based upon everyone's having good shelters to which they can retreat in time of attack. There is no doubt that shelters can provide protection from A-bombs and even H-bombs.

However, there are some big ifs. If you have the shelter, if you are not too close to the bomb burst, and if there is no firestorm to sweep the city, then you stand a good chance of surviving. The biggest IF is constructing the shelter. Good shelters cost money and to date very few have been built. When FCDA proposed a big shelter program to the Congress it was flatly turned down.

3. The third philosophy of atomic survival is to GET OUT OF TOWN. In other words to leave the target city in advance of the attack. The big IF here is getting enough warning so that you have time to put distance between you and the bomb.

However, if we establish an early warning system in the

Arctic (ground-based radar and search radar carried by B-36 patrol aircraft flying across the North Pole) we can get early warning. We do not have this early warning now because our radar installations are too close to home.

The Federal Civil Defense Administration was driven to adopt a new policy—evacuating our cities—because its experts recognized that you simply cannot stay in the city and have much hope of coming out unscathed. Getting out of the city is the only way out for civil defense.

Just when FCDA will officially announce its new civil defense policy is problematic. It is a highly touchy subject.

For one thing it flatly contradicts previous FCDA policy. A former director laid down the policy, "Don't take to the hills."

Furthermore, and most basic to the issue, FCDA is not allowed to talk about the H-bomb. This fact above all stymies anything the agency tries to do. Any civil defense plan worth the paper it is written on has to be backed up with facts. How do you plan without the facts? Or without being able to tell the facts?

This is the enigma posed by our near-blind policy of atomic secrecy.

In the absence of facts rumors will grow. These rumors will exaggerate the power of the H-bomb until it assumes the proportions of a weapon against which you cannot hope to plan a defense. This is already happening.

Consider, for example, the statement made by one Senator that an H-bomb burst over Chicago would wipe out Milwaukee. This statement is not based upon fact. It demands official refutation. Unofficially, one can calculate how big such a bomb would be. It would be a monstrous contraption—if it could by some weird stretch of the imagination be constructed at all—weighing much more than 100 tons. No airplanes are

even in the dream stage to carry such a bomb.

The irony of the situation is that Milwaukee is one of the few cities to work out a good civil defense plan. Carefully

made plans have been drawn to evacuate Milwaukee city-dwellers to safe locations outside the metropolis. How is their civil defense director going to assure his charges that any place will be safe?

There is absolutely no reason why the Atomic Energy Commission and the Defense Department should continue to refuse to release the facts about what modern nuclear weapons can do. After all, the facts needed concern the effects of bombs, not their internal archi-

ecture nor how you produce them.

Our Federal Government can no longer evade the issue. It must break secrecy on the H-bomb, admit that the weapon is in existence, and describe its effects. Otherwise civil defense will sink to deeper throes of apathy and we might just as well forget about it. Likewise, unless the facts can be told, the Federal Civil Defense Administration may never announce its new policy of evacuation—no one will have any confidence that it will be effective.

That is why President Eisenhower must take matters into his own hands and crack the hard shell of secrecy about the H-bomb.