

NUCLEAR WEAPONS - THE CHOICE BEFORE US

BY

M.R. MASANI

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What is the choice for this country faced with the Chinese atomic explosion? As I see it, we have three possible alternatives open to us. The first is that we should appeal to the United Nations and world opinion and thus persuade the Chinese Communists to abandon their nuclear weapons. In all seriousness, in 1964, to expect world opinion to stop Mao Tse-tung from going his own way is to mistake illusion for reality. The Chinese Communist dictatorship has shown that they care two hoots for world opinion. Did they not offend it when they attacked Tibet in 1950 and again in 1960? Did they not flout world opinion when they attacked India in 1962? Is not every act of theirs a flouting of world opinion? Did they not show what they thought of world opinion when they ignored Khrushchev's appeal to join and sign the anti-nuclear test ban treaty? Therefore, to expect Mao Tse-tung to show any respect for world opinion and to count on world opinion to protect us from the Chinese nuclear attack is to expose the people of the whole of Northern India, in a most callous and irresponsible manner, to destruction and external aggression.

It is not without significance in this context that the policy of doing nothing and appealing to world opinion is the policy that is accepted by both wings of the Communist Party in India - the Moscow Wing and the Peking Wing. Surely, that support coming from these two quarters and their affiliation with Peking and Moscow should make us consider whether we as patriots, we as nationalists, we as lover of the

people of our country can chime in with that line.

This line leads to conceding hegemony to communist China in Asia. It leads to our sinking gradually into a satellite status of either Moscow or Peking. It would amount, if pursued, to the abandonment of the Union Government's very first duty to defend the country's frontiers, its sovereignty and its people.

That bring us to the second alternative that is before us, and that is to make the bomb or, as somebody has quite aptly described it, "to keep us with the Joneses across the Himalayas". I find that there is a great amount of confusion about it. Would the objective to make atom bomb be to retaliate? Would it be to drop a bomb on Peking after Delhi is destroyed? No, that would not be the objective. The objective would be to have a deterrent. It would be to stop the Chinese from dropping a bomb on us. Therefore, our bomb cannot be a retaliatory bomb but a deterrent bomb. If that is so, let us consider whether it is feasible for us to undertake it.

First of all, can we afford the cost? An American expert, Christopher Hohenhemser, estimates that the cost of capital investment on a militarily significant nuclear programme for us would be Rs 25 crores with an annual operating cost of Rs 10 crores. The US Atomic Energy Commission has given another estimate that we can establish enough plutonium production to manufacture one crude bomb at a cost of Rs 25 crores. Then somebody else has estimated that the cost of establishing a diffusion plant for the separation of Uranium 235 involves a capital cost of Rs 500 crores and an equal amount of Rs 500 crores for running the plant, which means Rs 1,000 crores.

The other day, Frunch Cabinet accepted a military budget, defence budget, largely for nuclear purposes, because, as we know, they are trying to go forward with the process of making their own bomb. That budget runs to 16,000 million French francs or, let us say, roughly £ 1,600 crores for the coming year plus an equal amount, another £ 1,600 crores, on the air arm for developing the Mirage 4 so that the bomb could be delivered to its target. These two total £ 3,200 crores for one year for France, about three-quarters of the entire outlay of our proposed Fourth Plan per year. So, only one-fourth of the Plan would be left for other purposes, three-fourths would be eaten up by our endeavours, if we were to put ourselves in the position of France.

Then the cost of the bomb is not the only thing, the cost of delivery is as expensive, as the French budget points out. The vital Chinese targets are 2,500 miles away, targets like Peking, Shanghai and the Manchurian industrial complex, comparable to our Bihar-Bengal-Orissa industrial complex, or is even farther. We would, therefore, require an entire supersonic jet air force to deliver the bomb, to make it a real deterrent. On the other hand, our own targets like Delhi, U.P., Bihar and Bengal are only 300 miles away from the Chinese communist bases in Tibet. So, any old conventional bomber which gets through our lines of defence can drop the bomb and blow up millions of people. Therefore, they do not need any supersonic air force. As the atomic race develops, we can imagine what astronomical figures such budgets would involve us in and what would ^{be} their effect in our economy, what would be their effect on the life of our people.

Marshal Chen Yi boasted that the Chinese must have their atom bomb even if they had to go without pants. In the brutal, heartless dictatorship over the Chinese people such as he exercises, he might get away with it. But can any democratic government, whatever the party, hope to survive in a democracy if it asks the people to do without food and clothing so that the wretched bomba may be made? Famine and misery would stalk the land and there would be vast economic discontent and people would revolt against starvation imposed on them.

And who would be the biggest beneficiaries of that discontent? The Peking Fifth Column in this country. Therefore, I can conceive of no more scientific, no more thorough method of playing Peking's game to perfection than to enter into this mad competition with them in making the bomb. The case against making the bomb is a practical one of the basic national interest, of what is good for this country, for its very survival. I am pitching it as low as that. I do not appeal to non-violence or Mahatma Gandhi in this context. I say we should not make an attempt to make the bomb because we cannot make it an effective deterrent.

This brings us to the third choice. The third choice is to accept the principle of interdependence, to admit that we are living in a world where none of us can stand entirely on our own, that 'no man is an Island', as John Donne has said, 'He is a part of the Main'. If no man is an island, no country can be independent, which means that we are living in one world. We talk of one world. When statesmen send messages of greetings, they give expression to that very laudable objective. How about striving for one world for a change? How about moulding our policies in

that direction instead of making platonic statements? That is why I urge that the only answer to the Chinese bomb is the acceptance of the principle of interdependence in nuclear affairs.

Today there are two major nuclear powers who can exercise that deterrent on our behalf - one is the United States and the other is the Soviet Union. Let us certainly invite both of them to enter into an agreement with us, separately or jointly, to guarantee to protect us from nuclear attack in case such an attack is made against us. Let us do so, if we like, not by ourselves; let us do it with other free countries, the freedom-loving countries of Asia, like Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Japan, and tell these governments: we want you to let the world know that if anyone threatens to drop the bomb in any of these countries, you will see to it that it is prevented from doing so by the first strike. If both of them agree, let us welcome it. But I think it would be right to ask both these powers to give us this assurance. If one of them turns it down and the other gives it, we should go ahead and accept that protection. There is no reason why we should give a veto to either of these powers in regard to the protection of our people and their lives.

Today, if there is any one deterrent available, certainly it is the deterrent of the United States, a deterrent that has in fact, whether we like it or not, protected our sovereignty and the sovereignty of the other free countries of Asia and Europe during the last twenty years since the Second World War. If it were not for that deterrent, Stalin would have over-run the whole of Europe and Mao Tse-tung the whole of Asia. Today no country can guarantee its sovereignty and independence unless it has

the good sense to pool its security and independence in collective security with the other free countries of the world. We are living in a world where independence of the old type is outmoded and has no reality. It is a myth.

Some people have said: "Why ask for an American assurance openly? Do we not already have it? Let us be Machiavellian! Let us pretend that we shall not ask for it but we know and they know that they will always come to our rescue!" They ask: "Has not President Johnson said so?" Let us carefully read President Johnson's very interesting and encouraging statement of 18th October. President Lyndon Johnson said:

"Nations that do not seek nuclear weapons can be sure that, if they need US support against the threat of nuclear blackmail, they will have it."

Please mark the words carefully. There is an 'if'. It is a conditional offer. It is an invitation to anyone who feels like it to go and say so, to get up and say: "Yes, I want your support because I am exposed to nuclear blackmail." In that event, President Johnson says that the United States is pledged to guarantee freedom from nuclear attack by giving the protection of their own superior nuclear force.

Therefore, it is quite clear that to rely on that offer and read something more in it than there is would be misleading and unfair both to ourselves and to the person who made the offer. It is not enough to leave the offer in the air. We have to come forward and accept. It is not enough if we shout after being attacked, "Please come and help us", as we did the last time, and ask the United States to drop the bomb on Peking because, as we agreed earlier, what we want is to deter an attack and not to retaliate.

We want the US to act as a deterrent so that no bomb is ever dropped on us and we want to do it in a way without destroying the economic life, the hopes and dreams of our people and without putting ourselves in a mad attempt to compete with China. That is the way to do it. That people and independence and, at the same time, without any cost to ourselves.

On whose mind must a deterrent work? We may know that the Americans will come to help us. The Americans may know it. Let us say that we privately settle that with them. But that is not good enough. It is the mind of the person who is to be deterred that counts. It is the man in Peking with his finger on the trigger who must know that, before his bomb can drop on us, he will be destroyed. That is the deterrent. That can only be done by a public agreement, publicly announced. There is no other way to do it. Hence, the absolute necessity for the survival and protection of Northern India is an open Mutual Security arrangement entered into with the United States and, if possible, with the Soviet Government.

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