

STATEMENT BY ALBERT SCHWEITZER
WITH REFERENCE TO THE
PRESENT NUCLEAR CRISIS IN THE WORLD

IN THREE PARTS

Part II will be released April 30.

PART II
PLEASE OBSERVE RELEASE DATE AND HOUR

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Today we have to envisage the menacing possibility of an outbreak of an atomic war between Soviet Russia and the United States. It can only be averted if the two powers decide to renounce atomic arms.

How did this situation arise?

In 1945 America succeeded in producing an atomic bomb with Uranium 235. On August 6, 1945, this bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9.

When America came into possession of such a bomb, it held a military advantage over other countries.

In July 1949 the Soviet Union also test-exploded its first nuclear bomb. Its power was approximately equal to the American bomb then existing.

On October 3, 1952, England exploded its first atomic bomb on the Isle of Montebello (situated on the northwest coast of Australia).

In the quest for nuclear supremacy, both the Soviet Union and the United States moved towards the development of a nuclear weapon many times more powerful - - the hydrogen bomb. A series of tests was undertaken by the United States in the Marshall Islands beginning in May 1951, and culminating in a successfully exploded hydrogen bomb in March 1954.

At approximately the same time, the Soviet Union also started its experimentations, exploding its first hydrogen bomb on August 12, 1953.

War today depends on the ability of mighty airplanes to carry bombs to their targets. Now there are guided rockets that can be launched from their starting point and directed with accuracy at a distant target. Rocket missiles are carried by rockets containing the fuel necessary for their propulsion. This fuel proceeds at a tremendous velocity through a narrow opening. One is in the process of discovering a fuel which is similar and more efficacious to deal with.

The missile which is carried by the rocket can be an ordinary missile or one which contains an Uranium warhead or a hydrogen bomb warhead.

It is said that the Soviet Union already has available rockets with a range up to 600 miles. Soon to come are rockets with a range up to 1080 miles - if they are not already in use.

It is said that America is attempting to develop rockets with a range of 1440 miles.

Whether the intercontinental ballistic missile with its range of 4800 miles

already exists cannot be ascertained. The Soviet Union has claimed it already has such a missile.

Even without respect to intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarines could launch nuclear attacks on the United States.

The long-range rockets attain unbelievable speed. It is expected that an intercontinental rocket would not take more than 20 minutes to cross the ocean with payloads of nuclear bombs weighing from one to five tons.

How could an atomic war break out today? Once the so-called local war would be taken into consideration. But today there is little difference between a local war or a global war. Rocket missiles will be used up to a range of 1440 miles. The destruction should not be underestimated, even if caused only by a Hiroshima type of bomb.

It can hardly be expected that an enemy will refrain from using atomic bombs, or the most perfected hydrogen bombs on large cities at the very outset of a war. The hydrogen bomb is a thousand times more powerful than the atomic bomb.

In a future atomic war both rocket projectiles and large explosives will be used together. Rocket projectiles and large nuclear explosives will be married to each other.

A hydrogen bomb when released will have a destructive radius of many miles. The heat will be 100 million degrees. One can imagine how great would be the number of city-dwellers who would be destroyed by the pressure of the explosion, by flying fragments of glass, by heat and fire and by radioactive waves, even if the attack is only of short duration. The deadly radioactive infection, as a consequence of the explosion, would have a range of some 45,000 square miles.

An American general said to some Congressmen: "If at an interval of 10 minutes 110 hydrogen bombs are dropped over the U.S.A. There would be a casualty list of about 70 million people; besides, some thousands of square miles would be made useless for a whole generation. Therefore countries like England, West Germany, and France could be finished off with 15 to 20 hydrogen bombs."

President Eisenhower has pointed out, after watching manoeuvres under atomic attack, that defense measures in a future atomic war become useless. In these circumstances all one can do is to pray.

Indeed, not much more can be done in view of an attack by hydrogen bombs than to advise all people to hide behind a very strong wall made of stone or cement, and to throw themselves on the ground and to cover the back of their heads, and the body if possible, with cloth. In this way it may be possible to escape annihilation and death through radiation. Very important is that the people surviving are given food and drink which are not radioactive and that they be transported away from the radioactive district.

It is impossible, however, to erect walls of such thickness for the whole population of a city. Where would the material and the means come from? How would a population find time even to run to safety in such bunkers?

In an atomic war there would be neither conqueror nor vanquished. During such a bombardment both sides would suffer the same fate. A continuous destruction would take place and no armistice or peace proposals could bring it to an end.

When people deal with atomic weapons, it is not a matter of superior arms that will decide the issue between them, but only: --"Now we want to commit suicide

together, destroying each other mutually..."

There is a reason for an English MP saying - "He who uses atomic weapons becomes subject to the fate of a bee, namely, when it stings it will perish inevitably, for having made use of its sting."

Nuclear weapons used by the nation would become subject to a similar fate. Radioactive clouds resulting from a war between East and West would imperil humanity everywhere. There would not be any need to use up the remaining stock of atomic and hydrogen bombs. There literally thousands of them.

A nuclear war is therefore the most senseless and lunatic act which could ever take place. This must be prevented.

Unfortunately the danger exists that a cold war may turn into an atomic war. This danger is made greater today than it has ever been. The reason lies in the possibility of employing long distance rockets.

When America had its atomic monopoly, it was not necessary to equip its armies with nuclear weapons. Owing to the end of the monopoly, however, this situation is changing. A whole family of nuclear weapons now exists that can be fitted into the military capability of smaller nations.

As a result, the United States is considering deviating from its stated principle not to put atomic weapons into the hands of other countries. This is a decision that could have the gravest consequences. On the other hand, it is comprehensible that the United States wishes to supply the NATO countries with such new weapons for defense against the Soviet Union. The existence of such arms constitutes a new threat to the Soviet Union, one that did not exist before. Hereby the ground is laid open for an atomic war between the United States and the Soviet Union on European soil. This situation did not exist before. Now the Soviet Union can be reached with such long-range rockets from European soil, as far as Moscow and Kharkov, up to 2400 miles away.

Rockets of an average range could therefore be used for defense purposes by Turkey and Iran against the Soviet Union. They could penetrate deeply into its country with arms accepted from America.

The Soviet Union is countering these measures. Both America and the Soviet Union may now seek alliances with the middle East by offering those countries various kinds of financial support. Therefore events in the middle East could endanger the peace of the world.

The danger of an atomic war is being increased by the fact that no warning would be given in starting such a war, but it could take place merely on the basis of some incident. Thus the factor enters - the side that attacks first would have the initial advantage over the attacked. At the very start the attacked would find himself having sustained losses which would reduce his fighting capacity considerably.

As a result one has to be on the alert all the time. This factor comprises an extreme danger in the event of a sudden outbreak of an atomic war. When one has to act with such speed, one has to reckon with the possibility that an error may occur on what is registered on the radar screen, and that this could result in the outbreak of an atomic war.

Attention was drawn to this danger by the American General Curtis Le May. Quite recently the world found itself in such a situation. The radar station of the American Air Force and American Coastal Command reported that an invasion of unidentified bombers was on the way. Upon this warning the general who was in

command of the strategic bomber forces ordered that reprisal bombardment should be made. However, realizing that he was taking a great responsibility, he hesitated. Shortly afterwards it was pointed out that the radar stations had committed a technical error. What could have happened if a less balanced General had been in his place!

In the future such dangers are likely to increase. This might cause a sudden outbreak of an atomic war. Owing to the fact that small rockets exist which pass through the air with terrific speed and are registered only a little later – defense possibilities become very limited. There remains only seconds to decide, in order to proceed to the defense. There remains only seconds to decide whether what registered are genuine rockets, so that the defense can spring into being. This defense consists of sending out rockets to counter attack and to explode those rockets of the enemy before they can reach their targets and also to dispatch bombers with a view to destroying the ramps from which they are launched.

Such decisions cannot be left to the human brain. It works too slowly. It has to be entrusted to an electronic brain.

If it appears that enemy rockets are really on the way on the radar screen, calculations as to their distance have to be made to a fraction of a second, so that an immediate start can be made by releasing defense rockets.

All this proceeds automatically. Such is our achievement that we now depend entirely on an electronic brain, and on errors and omissions with which one has always to reckon. In every respect the human brain is at a disadvantage. The making of a decision by means of an electronic brain is not as thoroughly reliable as the making of a decision by the human brain. Somehow the mechanism of the electronic brain may become faulty. Moreover, the electronic brain is again dependent on the absolute reliability of its complicated functions. Everything has to click to the minutest detail.

It is therefore not excluded that the whole situation could worsen. We have to reckon with the fact that America may proceed with the supply of atomic weapons to other countries. These weapons are entrusted to them in the belief that these countries will not use them selfishly, or uncautiously. Both the other atomic powers are at liberty to do likewise.

Yet, who can guarantee that among the favored countries in possession of such weapons there may not be a “black sheep” acting on his own, without troubling about the consequences? Who is able to make them renounce the use of atomic weapons, even should other countries have decided to make such a decision in common? The dam is punctured and it may break down.

That such worries have become very real is shown by an explanation on January 13, 1958 on behalf of 9325 scientists to the United Nations regarding the cessation of atomic tests. One of their explanations is the following: “As long as atomic weapons remain in the hands of the three great powers, an agreement as to their control is possible. However, if the tests continue and extend to other countries in possession of atomic weapons, the risks and responsibilities in regard to an outbreak of an atomic war become all the greater. From every point of view the danger in a future atomic war becomes all the more intense, so that an urgent renunciation of atomic weapons becomes absolutely imperative.”

America has wisely declared that its objective is to outlaw nuclear weapons. Yet, at the same time, America seems to be moving away from the measures

necessary to achieve it. America insists that the rockets which it offers to other countries should be accepted as soon as possible. It wishes to hold such a position as to be able to maintain peace by nuclear deterrent. It happens, however, that most of the NATO countries are not in any hurry to acquire such weapons. An increasingly strengthening public opinion is the cause of this.

It would be of immense importance in this hour of destiny if the United States would work for a renunciation of nuclear weapons in the world. The attempt to achieve peace through a balance of terror may actually heighten the danger of war.

A ray of light in darkness! In December 1957, the Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki (on his own initiative and not, as one might assume, at the suggestion of the Soviet Union) made a proposition to the effect that Poland, Czechoslovakia, East and West Germany should remain an atom-free zone. If this proposition is also accepted by other adjoining countries who would consider themselves privileged to accept this plan, and thereby enlarge the atom-free zone, the present maintenance of peace might thus be insured.

With this sensible proposition, the public opinion in Europe is in strong agreement. It has been convinced during recent months, that under no circumstances is Europe to become a battlefield for an atomic war between the Soviet Union and America. From this position it will no longer deviate. The time is past when a European power could plan secretly to establish itself as a big power by manufacturing atomic weapons exclusively for its own use. In view of the fact that no public opinion would agree to such an undertaking, it becomes senseless even to prepare secretly for achieving such a plan.

Gone, too is the time when NATO generals and European governments can decide on the establishments of launching sites and stockpiling of atomic weapons. In view of the fact that the dangers of atomic war and its consequences cannot be avoided, a political procedure as employed hitherto can no longer be considered.

Only agreements that are sanctioned by public opinion are now valid.

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