

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A SANE NUCLEAR POLICY

India, Japan, and the Bomb

by Donald F. Keys*

A recent world journey, taken in connection with a series of conferences on world peace, provided the opportunity for a first hand assessment of attitudes on nuclear weapons, China and Vietnam in India and Japan - two countries whose attitudes and roles will be of the greatest significance for the future of Asia in the next decades. The most impressive and most moving encounter during these soundings was a visit with the philosopher-President of India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, in his red-granite palace residence in New Delhi.

"The Lord Shiva was presented with the Moon and a poison. The Moon he put on his head to wear. The poison he could not spew on the world without destroying it. He could not swallow it without destroying himself. Therefore he holds the poison in his throat, neither swallowing it nor spitting it out. Thus Shiva came to be known as 'The Blue-throated One.' The position of the United States in Vietnam is like that of Shiva. The United States cannot conclude the matter, and it cannot let go." Thus President Radhakrishnan described to me the predicament of the U.S. in Vietnam. In general, the position of the Government of India on Vietnam is precisely the same as the position of SANE. In his message to the nation on the eve of Indian Independence Day, August 15, 1966, Dr. Radhakrishnan stated: "Deeply disturbed by the horrors and brutalities of war and the sufferings of the people of Vietnam, and gravely concerned about any further enlargement of the conflict into world conflagration, we suggested the 'de-escalation' of the conflict in Vietnam as the first step to lessen tensions and prepare the atmosphere for an honorable settlement."

Commenting further on Vietnam, President Radhakrishnan stated that the Vietnamese do not see the difference between the United States, France, Japan or China in the respective efforts they have made to control that country. He felt that in any case the communism of Ho Chi Minh would inevitably encompass Vietnam, but pointed out that communism in Vietnam would be different from Chinese communism, just as communism differs in Yugoslavia, Poland or Romania and is very much modified by national attitudes and conditions. He emphasized that the Vietnamese do not want Chinese influence. Thus he did not fear this development; rather the President feared that the U.S.S.R. might reluctantly be forced to abandon its coexistence policy with the West if the trend in the Vietnam war continued.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, has made clear the Indian belief that no peace moves are possible until the bombing of North Vietnam is halted unconditionally. On August 18 the Prime Minister commented in an interview: "We do not think that there can be a military solution to the problem of Vietnam. Military action will only prolong the conflict. Therefore it is necessary to find ways and means of seeking a political solution. In our opinion, the first step for this is the stoppage of the bombing of North Vietnam followed by a cessation of hostilities throughout Vietnam. This will create a climate in which peaceful talks could take place and a Geneva type conference be convened to which all the parties concerned, including the South Vietnam National Liberation Front, should be invited. Foreign troops should be withdrawn, and the Vietnamese people should be left free to decide their future without interference from any outside forces or pressures."

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During a brief stay in India, I also had the opportunity to speak with a number of government officials, Members of Parliament and independent observers. On Vietnam there was fair unanimity - the bombing must stop, to be followed by negotiations. Clarity on the substance of the negotiations, or what should follow them, was not so great. There was some wistful concern whether India would be able to withstand the pressure of developments in Southeast Asia without some sort of American presence remaining. The recent experiences with China at the northern border and the sharp clash with Pakistan have had a traumatic effect on India from which she has not recovered. These conflicts have raised for India a new and particularly excruciating dilemma: that the enlargement of defense and the increasing focus on arms and armament run counter to the deeply-felt ideals of Gandhi and to the tolerant and inclusive emphasis of India's national history. It is recognized too that a growing armament race will seriously erode India's precarious economic gains.

Overshadowing all other fears is the fear of Chinese encroachment - that China might again at any time move into Indian territory. China may have been totally to blame, or she may not. In any case, it is politically impossible in India, my informant told me, to secure a hearing for the thesis that India might also have been partially responsible for the clash - by fortifying a hitherto unfortified and undefined border - or to point out that the Chinese withdrew of their own will under no duress from the Indian side. National pride was deeply hurt, and it was felt that the trust in Chinese-Indian friendship - or at least "co-existence" - was irreparably damaged. Of one thing the Indians are sure: the Chinese would find a very different situation in the state of Indian readiness if another clash should occur.

There is the real danger of an Indian over-reaction to the Chinese "threat." The defense budget has already trebled, threatening any program for economic and educational progress. There is a general feeling that India ought to be doing something more to counter China but there is no clarity on what that "something" should be. Some think India should seek formal U.S. guarantees, or even that India should openly approach both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. for firm agreements of military protection. If the U.S.S.R. could not agree, then it would be made clear to the Soviet Union that the only other option was the acceptance of help from the U.S. alone and that this did not represent any change in U.S.S.R.-Indian relations. Those who argue this line - of seeking Big Power guarantees - recognize that there is no possibility of India's ever matching China militarily.

There are also the arguments presented in favor of India's building the nuclear bomb. This course is a technological temptation inasmuch as India is one of the top nations in terms of nuclear development and experience. However, the position of the present Government of India, as represented by the President and Prime Minister, is unequivocal: India will defend her borders if she must, but will not build an atomic bomb. Moral, economic, and strategic considerations are all present. The leadership feels an Indian bomb would be a moral and economic disaster and a strategic failure.

The question of India's building the bomb was set into perspective by the chief of atomic development, Dr. Vikram A. Sarabhai, in a press conference in Bombay, June 1, 1966. Among Dr. Sarabhai's comments were the following:

"I would like to emphasise that security can be endangered not only from the outside but also from within. If you do not maintain the rate of progress of the economic development of the nation, I would suggest that you would face a most serious crisis, something that might disintegrate India as we know it....

"Those who have studied military strategy would all agree that paper tigers do not provide security - that is, you cannot bluff in regard to your military strength. If you want to rely on the atom bomb for safeguarding your security, in the sense that, say, the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. has it - a series of balanced deterrents - this is not achieved by exploding a bomb. It means a total defense system, a means of delivery in this case. You have to think in terms of long-range missiles; it means radar, a high state of electronics development, a high metallurgical and industrial base. How do you develop such a system? It is not only for the scientist to produce one prototype, and then you have a defense system. It requires a total commitment of national resources of a most stupendous magnitude...."

The President's comments on the bomb in his Independence Day address were as follows:

"Whatever arguments and attitudes may have justified wars in the past, the conditions of modern warfare and the growing conscience of mankind make it clear that wars cannot be ethically justified. Nuclear and bacteriological war means death to millions of men, damage to man genetically and contamination of earth, water and air. All these will make human survival difficult, if not impossible. In a nuclear war defense would bring its own destruction. We may arm ourselves with the most terrifying weapons, but a mortal blow will destroy the enemy and ourselves."

The voices in favor of Indian nuclear weapons are somewhat defensive but rising. Some argue that India should "keep open the option" to develop the bomb. India should not fall behind China in preparatory nuclear development, they say. If that should occur, what would be India's position vis a vis China in 20 years? The advocates question the usefulness of an American "nuclear umbrella". What would the U.S. consider vital? A border area? Or perhaps nothing short of Calcutta?

Some gentle voices in the Gandhi and Nehru tradition are heard. An old Liberal M.P. asked: "What would Nehru have done, I ask myself. He would have gone to have a talk with China, and with Ho Chi Minh. He would have realised that we must sooner or later find an accommodation." The same attitude was expressed by the President: "China and India will sooner or later, sooner than later, learn to live together in peace and cooperation. A just settlement of the questions dividing us is not impossible. Nothing should be avoided because it is thought impossible. The only relevant question is, 'Does it require to be done?' Then we must try and do it."

The current breakdown of sentiment in the Indian Parliament is approximately as follows: 300 members of the Parliament are on record as against building the bomb, 150 are asking for it, and 200 members are indifferent. There is among the advocates, according to the reports I received, a measure of political opportunism in addition to the genuine concern animating the debate. On the basis of the line taken by informed advocates of building the bomb, it seems unlikely that the development of an Indian nuclear bomb will go beyond the drawing-board stage as long as the present government persists.

The question of whether or not the U.S. would guarantee Indian defense is interwoven with the question of Pakistan. India fears that the U.S. will begin again to send arms to Pakistan, especially since that nation is receiving arms from China in the absence of U.S. aid. A more permanent and stable accommodation with Pakistan is desired and sought by India. While politically unpopular and unmentionable before

the forthcoming elections scheduled for February, 1967, a compromise settlement of the Kashmir dispute is beginning to be discussed by leading Indians who regard such a settlement as the only basis upon which closer relations with Pakistan will become possible. The compromise they envisage would grant Kashmir some sort of semi-autonomous status, guaranteed by India and Pakistan.

A settlement of the Kashmir question is regarded important in another way by some leading Indians. They are nervous about the Soviet role in the Tashkent agreement which ended hostilities between India and Pakistan because they fear Soviet and communist penetration of Kashmir and the subcontinent - an historic Russian goal. They point to the growth of communist influence in Kashmir, including laudatory presentations of communism in Kashmiri textbooks - which have now been discontinued. They are fearful that India may become a testing ground between two types of communism - Russian and Chinese. Only a Pakistan-India rapprochement, they believe, can keep communism out. A number of informants pointed out the difference in attitudes between East and West Pakistan. The eastern section of the country, they indicated, is amenable to adjustment, is seeking good relations with Bengal, and is resentful of rule by West Pakistan. West Pakistan, on the other hand, seeks to maintain its rule by keeping up tension between India and Pakistan.

Indians seem individually well-disposed to the Pakistani people as contrasted with Pakistani leadership. I was told a number of anecdotes of compassion and friendliness which occurred during the recent clash. The official government attitude was stated by President Radhakrishnan in his Independence Day address:

"The economic development of both our countries - India and Pakistan - requires our making up with each other. Friendship between the two countries is not difficult. We are ethnically the same people. We have the same cultural background and common history. We speak the same languages. Why should we not become good friends? That is what we should work for. The obligations accepted at Tashkent, to renounce the use of force, not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, not to indulge in hostile propaganda, apply to all issues that now divide us. Given goodwill, we can co-operate immediately in the matter of refugees, border adjustments, river waters and trade. If, however, we persist in misunderstanding and resort to building up of arms, both our countries would be enfeebled and endangered."

Other considerations bearing on Indian decision-making: Prime Minister Indira Gandhi does not enjoy the political advantages of the enormous prestige of her father, and consequently her room for political maneuver is correspondingly smaller. The tactic of the communist opposition within the parliament is to isolate Mrs. Gandhi by attempting to destroy the ministers around her. There is general agreement, however, that considering the limitations imposed upon her, Mrs. Gandhi has performed very ably indeed.

There is no substantial indigenous, independent and politically active peace movement in India. There are probably a number of contributing factors. For the first, the government has usually followed an exceptionally enlightened and moral foreign policy. Thus there has been no necessity to develop popular pressures to support a change in policy. The extant groups include a branch of the World Council of Peace - a communist oriented organization whose role in Indian affairs appears more related to internal political sniping than to supporting constructive

foreign policies. A second organization, The Gandhi Peace Foundation, does useful and effective work but is bounded politically by its foundation set-up and ruling board which precludes some important types of political activity. Also, according to some observers, the group has not adjusted its thrust effectively to meet the issues of today, but remains somewhat oriented to the views and concerns that animated the struggle for independence, and has not brought its approach forward to suit today's needs. Be that as it may, the Gandhi Peace Foundation is publishing and distributing important papers on the question of nuclear armament, and has recently secured the written support of 187 Members of Parliament for a non-nuclear defense. The group believes it could mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to protest if production of nuclear weapons was seriously entertained.

Several commentators felt that the time might be ripe to start a new peace and world affairs organization in India, now that internal support for India's foreign policies is increasingly divided and Mrs. Gandhi is subjected to increasing pressures and sniping. The specific assets upon which the Indians may draw in establishing organized popular support on international issues were pointed out to me. There is a real revolution of public concern and interest in electoral democracy taking place in India. And when they have the chance, the people appear to express the intrinsic common sense upon which the hope of democracy is based. Beyond this, Indians have an inherent and historic sense for universality and tolerance which, if it becomes organized and articulate, would provide strong support for a humanistic and enlightened world view.

Debate over nuclear policy is not so far advanced in Japan as in India. Questions under discussion do not involve whether Japan should build a nuclear bomb, but concern whether or not Japan should allow American nuclear weapons on her soil, making shelter under a U.S. "nuclear umbrella" credible. The primary factor in a discussion of Japanese response to armament and war remains the deeply rooted pacifism which resulted from the national experience in World War II. The Japanese as a people have demonstrated the capacity to extract from their suffering the wisdom of the experience, and this will not be lightly contravened. The symbolic opposition offered by demonstrators to the docking in Japan of atomic powered or atomic-firing warships is representative of a very general abhorrence. Much less representative are the statements and actions of the Liberal Democratic government and policies of Premier Sato.

A recent statement of Foreign Minister Shiina indicates the rather apologetic and cautious tone adopted by the government:

"Since the expression 'nuclear umbrella' is quite vague and ambiguous, it is not proper to decide categorically whether Japan is under it or not under it. However, in view of the fact that in the present international situation the nuclear retaliation capacity held by the U.S. is a major factor preventing a total war, it cannot be denied that we, too, are under the American nuclear umbrella in this general sense of the word. But if you interpret the concept differently and mean by it transformation of Japan into a nuclear base and Japan's participation in a multilateral nuclear force of Asia, if there is any, then we must say that at present we have no such intention. And we will not participate in such plans in the future, either" (February 19, 1966).

Much more intense and actual in Japan at the present time is discussion over the extent to which Japan is honor- or duty-bound to cooperate with the U.S. in the Vietnam

war. A recent (February, 1966) poll by NHK, the Japan National Broadcasting Corporation, gave the following results which indicate the deep underlying feelings of the Japanese:

A. "In connection with Japan's security and independence, do you think it is proper for us to have our own defense forces and continue as an ally of the United States?" Yes: 27%.

B. "Do you think it is proper that Japan alone be responsible for self defense by building up powerful defense capability?" Yes: 14%

C. "Do you think it is best that Japan maintains no arms and armed forces and sticks to neutrality?" Yes: 42%.

The Government takes a pro-American line on Vietnam as it does on most every other issue. There is a deeply held reluctance by all Japanese to go against the wishes and policies of the U.S. whom they greatly admire and regard as benefactor and friend. Additionally, the ruling circles, being identified with the ownership of the industrial and economic power of Japan, have their own unwritten alliances with the U.S. The conflict between Japan's renunciation of war and her desire to be a loyal ally has caused a psychological schism of a depth understandable only to those who are aware of the processes of thought belonging uniquely to that country. Characteristically, there is an apologetic tone in Government explanations of the use of Japanese facilities in connection with the Vietnam war:

"As long as the present pattern of the international situation persists, it is necessary for Japan to hold firmly to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty system. There is no need for revising it. It is necessary that we meet requirements and duties stemming from the treaty, and there is no reason why we can refuse to provide facilities and logistic support for the U.S. as stipulated in it. Efforts on our part are required to have the Japanese people understand this duty." (Premier Sato, January 31, 1966).

"We do not take an especially cooperative position over the Vietnam war. We are only loyal to the principles of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.... This means that we are not in a neutral position between the U.S. and North Vietnam.... The Americans are now conducting their military operations in Vietnam for the purpose of contributing to international peace and security in the Far East as are defined in the Security Treaty. In so far as the U.S. is acting that way it is Japan's duty - a duty stemming from the treaty - to let our installations be used by the U.S. armed forces." (Foreign Minister Shiina, May 31, 1966).

But out of the war experience of the Japanese has come a general capacity to identify with the sufferings of others. From this identification follows a widespread opposition to a continuation of the Vietnam war. A letter addressed to Premier Sato by a distinguished group of citizens contains the following key attitudinal phrase:

"There is no doubt that the common people of South Vietnam have grown tired of 20 years of war and do not want it to continue. But America, against the wishes of the common people, is continuing the war of destruction. We, the Japanese people, as a member of the Asian community, cannot close our eyes to the suffering of the South Vietnamese."

Indeed, the Vietnam war has brought into being in Japan a new and potentially strong organization, the Beheiren or Japan "Peace for Vietnam!" Committee, containing a broad cross-section of intellectuals, writers, and scholars. The group ran a compelling appeal in The New York Times (November 16, 1965) for an end to the war, and recently sponsored an important two-nation conference (U.S. and Japan) on the Vietnam war (August 11 - 15, 1966). There is little doubt that public sentiment is strongly against the war, but that in this matter as in others related to military relations with the U.S., this sentiment finds seriously inadequate expression through the Sato government.

Extensive discussions with scholars and public officials provides convincing evidence that if substantial U.S. pressure is applied to increase Japanese participation in support of the Vietnam war, there would be considerable reaction and great resistance from the Japanese people. This resistance was shown, it was pointed out to me, during the ratification of the Security Treaty, and it is generally believed that resistance in connection with the Vietnam war would be even stronger.

The peace movement is very strong in Japan. For instance, Gensuikin (Congress Against A and H Bombs) enjoys the wholehearted support of the Socialist Party and Sohyo, the General Council of Trade Unions, largest and most powerful Japanese trade organization. Gensuikin is currently engaged in a nation-wide referendum to declare Japan nuclear-free, and in the effort to bring effective pressure for the return of Okinawa, now a major U.S. base, to Japan. Okinawa is essentially under U.S. military rule without any possibility of the expression of self-determination. Additionally, there are about 150 U.S. military bases and installations on the main islands of Japan itself. Sohyo is considering a general strike this fall against the visit of U.S. nuclear-powered warships and the increasing militarization of Japan. The Socialists, long confined to about one-third of the Diet seats, are in fact picking up a few seats with each passing year.

Japan does not share America's outsize apprehensions about China. Generally, however, the Japanese do not agree with the direction China is taking. And while Japanese businessmen would like to resume trade with China, resumption would indicate no approval of Chinese policies of politics. Since World War II the U.S. has replaced China as the prime Japanese market, but the time has come when increasing overtures for reopening substantial mainland trade can be expected. Realism dominates the Japanese attitudes. There is no expectation that there can be a real lessening of tensions between China and the world until the present Chinese inflexibility has been waited out as has been the case with the U.S.S.R.

Japan and India are the pivotal nations in the coming effort to re-educate China to a constructive role in Asian and world society. Japan is intrinsically pacifistic and genuinely pro-American. India is inherently non-violent and neutral. Japan will be the dominating industrial power in the Far East for the next decade. During the same time, India, with proper help, could solve her worst problems and become a major, industrializing world power. If the U.S. can adequately glimpse the importance and value of the existence of these neutralist and mediatory nations in responsibly seeking a realignment of forces in Asia, she will spare no effort to support their well-being and independence - independence from the U.S. as well as from China. No greater tragedy could eventuate than for the U.S. to continue to attempt undoing the national attitude of warlessness wholeheartedly adopted by Japan, or to fail in generous support of India because that nation insists on an independent course. In these nations lies the greatest hope in Asia for the advance of functional democracy.