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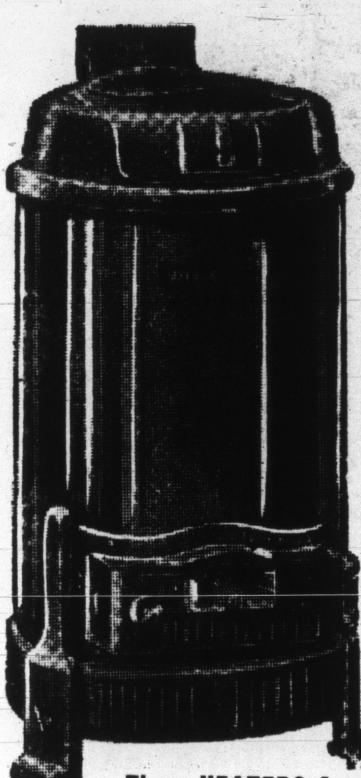


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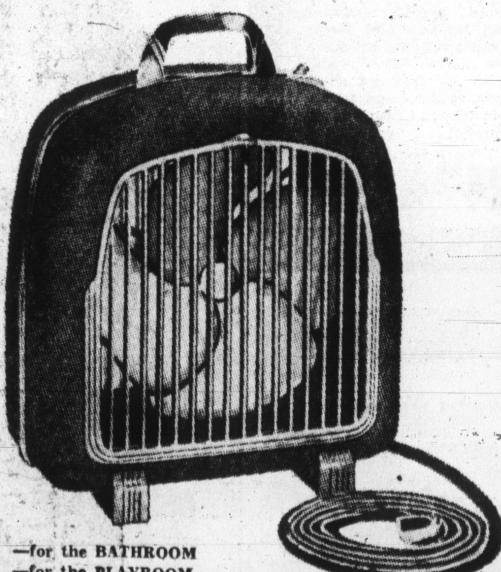
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Nation's State of Preparedness Weakened by Confusion Over Future of Atom Bomb

(Fourth of a Series)

By GUY RICHARD
Written for Scripps-Howard Newspapers

NEW YORK, Oct. 3.—Confusion over the future of atomic weapons has in several ways served to sabotage the armed forces and damage our state of preparedness in 1946.

The confusion has placed an air of uncertainty over the value of our navy at a time when our navy was never more important.

For several months, it shifted the emphasis on security and defense from the armed forces to the state department to the United Nations' bewildered military staff committee.

It created the public impression that almost all the war-tested doctrines of the army, navy, air force and marine corp were obsolete.

Contradictory Conceptions

It produced a series of contradictory conceptions by which it appears (a) that we spent a national fortune developing the atomic bomb; (b) that the bomb requires us to spend another national fortune redesigning and rebuilding our

navy, weapons, equipment, bases, cities and harbors against atomic attack; (c) that atomic weapons must be, and will be, outlawed, in which case we will revert to the status quo and will not have to rebuild anything, or even worry about the army and navy—the United Nations will do it all; (d) that the whole issue is fraught with horror and danger—therefore, let us do nothing drastic until we see how things work out, and let us hope that the atomic bomb will be outlawed.

The atomic bomb, as a weapon of mass destruction, as a blind and ruthless destroyer of non-combatants, probably will be discarded in practice if not outlawed by international law.

When the atom bomb secrets are possessed by other nations it seems likely it will be rejected, just as poison gas was rejected.

The Russians apparently know this. Their own atomic control plan discloses their predominant interest in the sharing of the secrets.

Advantage for Trading

Their invasion by the Germans, following the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact, may have taught the Russians to be less naive about the relative value of treaties—the fact that they are less naive is being written all over Europe today.

Meanwhile, exclusive possession of the bomb secrets is a military advantage which should be traded only for an equal advantage.

Let us make no mistake about naval in the atomic-rocket-radar age. Until the air-ton-mile displaces the sea-ton-mile as a medium for heavy transport (and that seems a long way off) sea power and naval power will be as important as ever.

Twenty-five years ago the oceans

were not only supply routes; they were bulwarks of our defense. Now they are not only supply routes but sheltered and secret avenues of approach by which new weapons can arrive with potentially greater security than over the land.

At first glance, the atomic bomb seems to lessen the importance of barrier territories, sea power and coastal defenses. Considering all the new weapons collectively, including the rockets now zooming through the air, it turns out that just the opposite is true.

In parts of the world where we have no land bases and no nearby airfields, defensive instruments and countermeasures must be carried by naval vessels and carrier-based planes—the same planes which can

still impose an airpower checkmate cities, when the Italians bombed Ethiopian villages, when the Germans launched their blitz on London, it seemed to the invaders that they had a chance for making knockout blows without much danger of reciprocal damage at home. In time, they were all proved wrong.

About Bomb Secret

In the public excitement over the atomic bomb we have forgotten the nightmarish stockpiles of gas and deadly bacteria that were ready on both sides during the past war—but which were never used. The reason? Both sides knew they were ready. The chance for knockout blows was offered to neither side without the certainty of reciprocal

The spirit of this mutual aversion has already been expressed by the United States in the Baruch Plan. It appears also in the Soviet Plan. For great as the holocaust that one nation can inflict on another through a surprise attack with atomic weapons, it cannot bring a knockout blow before the aggressor is subject to the same damage.

Whether Russia should be left to discover the secrets for herself, and the kind of assurance we ask if we give her the secrets beforehand, must be determined by the status to which our military position reverts on the day atomic weapons are outlawed.

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