

or watching us." As they walked, a large crowd collected behind them. Khrushchev turned and said, "This is Gospodin Harriman. We've just signed a test-ban treaty. I'm going to take him to dinner. Do you think he's earned his dinner?" The people applauded and applauded. On his return Harriman went straight to Hyannis Port. The President, without ceremony, said, "Well, this is a good job."

It was a good job, and it would not have come about without the intense personal commitment of Kennedy and Macmillan. America and Britain had offered the Soviet Union a limited test ban four times in four years; now it was accepted the fifth time around — two less than Robert Bruce and the spider. Left to itself, the Soviet Union, to judge from Khrushchev's attitude in the spring of 1963, would not have perceived that a test ban was to its own interest and would not have understood its potentialities as a key to the future. Left to itself, the Department of State would not have persevered with the issue, nor would it have ever proposed an American University speech — that speech which, in its modesty, clarity and perception, repudiated the self-righteous cold war rhetoric of a succession of Secretaries of State. Mao Tse-tung was also entitled to credit for his indispensable assistance in making the treaty possible.

One more man deserved mention. When Harriman arrived in Washington on July 28, his Georgetown neighbors staged an impromptu welcome for him. Bearing torches and candles, they marched to his house on P Street, serenading him with "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and then one of his old campaign songs, adapted from George M. Cohan, "H-A-double-R-I-M-A-N spells Harriman." Finally Averell, tieless and in shirtsleeves, came out on his front steps and spoke a few quiet words of thanks. One girl with a very small baby in her arms said to him, "I brought my baby because what you did in Moscow will make it possible for him to look ahead to a full and happy life."

5 THE TEST BAN ON THE HILL

Negotiation, however, was only half the problem; ratification remained. The President regarded the test ban treaty as the most serious congressional issue he had thus far faced. He was, he told

us, determined to win if it cost him the 1964 election. But the opposition was organized and strong; and, while he felt sure the great majority of the people were for it, he was not sure they could make themselves heard in time. I happened to be with him ten days after the American University speech when someone brought in the mail report. He noted that the mail received in the White House in the week ending June 20 totaled 50,010 letters as compared to 24,888 a year earlier and 9482 in the comparable period of the last Eisenhower year. Then he looked at the breakdown. Of this vast accumulation, the American University speech had provoked 896 letters—861 favorable and 25 hostile. In the same period, 28,232 people had sent letters about a freight rate bill. The President, tossing the report aside, said, with disgust, "That is why I tell people in Congress that they're crazy if they take their mail seriously." *

Addressing the nation the day after the treaty was initialed in Moscow, Kennedy recalled mankind's struggle "to escape from the darkening prospects of mass destruction." "Yesterday," he said, "a shaft of light cut into the darkness." He did not exaggerate the significance of the agreement. It was not the millennium: it would not resolve all conflicts, reduce nuclear stockpiles, check the production of nuclear weapons or restrict their use in case of war. But it was "an important first step—a step toward peace—a step toward reason—a step away from war." He concluded with the Chinese proverb he had put to Khrushchev two years before in Vienna: "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."

The prospective end of radioactive fallout was, of course, an immense boon for humanity. But I think that Kennedy saw the main point of the treaty as a means of moving toward his Vienna goal of stabilizing the international equilibrium of power. After all, both America and Russia knew that each had enough nuclear strength to survive a surprise attack and still wreak fearful destruction on the other: the test ban now indicated a mutual willingness to halt the weapons race more or less where it was. In the Soviet case this meant acquiescence in American nuclear superiority. Though our superiority was not decisive, it was still considerable;

* The following week the American University speech produced 781 pro and 5 con; the freight rate bill 23,646.

in 1964 the Defense Department said that we had twice as many intercontinental bombers on constant alert and at least four times as many intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Russian willingness to accept such margins showed not only a post-Cuba confidence in American restraint but a new understanding of the theories of stable nuclear deterrence. And, in addition to slowing down the bilateral arms race, the treaty held out the hope of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to new nations. Moreover, the effect, both practical and symbolic, of Soviet-American collaboration in stopping nuclear tests and dispersion might well lead to future agreement on more general disarmament issues.

So the supporters of the treaty saw it. But sections of the military and scientific community continued in strong opposition. Some, like General Thomas D. White, a former Air Chief, considered the whole theory of stable deterrence as "next to unilateral disarmament . . . the most misleading and misguided military theme yet conceived." True security, he and others argued, lay in unlimited nuclear supremacy, and this required unlimited testing. Much of the dissent focused on the contention that the ban would block the development of an anti-missile missile this in spite of firm statements by McNamara, General Maxwell Taylor and a number of scientists that the hard problems here were non-nuclear and required analysis in the laboratories, not testing in the atmosphere. Edward Teller predictably called for the immediate resumption of atmospheric testing, though he was willing to ration this to one megaton of radioactivity a year. To the Senators Teller cried: "If you ratify this treaty . . . you will have given away the future safety of this country." Admiral Lewis Strauss said, "I am not sure that the reduction of tensions is necessarily a good thing." Admiral Arthur Radford, a former Chairman of the Chiefs, said, "I join with many of my former colleagues in expressing deep concern for our future security. The decision of the Senate of the United States in connection with this treaty will change the course of world history." General Thomas Power, the chief of the Strategic Air Command, attacked the treaty in secret hearings before the Armed Services Committee.

The assault had its effect, if not on the treaty itself, on the nature of the Senate debate. Given such opposition, ratification would

be impossible without the support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the spring the Chiefs had opposed a comprehensive test ban on the ground that the Russians would assuredly cheat; and General Curtis LeMay, the Air Force chief, testified now that he would have opposed the limited ban if the signing of the treaty had not created a situation where its rejection would have serious international consequences. (People sometimes wondered why Kennedy kept on Chiefs who occasionally seemed so much out of sympathy with his policy. The reason was that, in his view, their job was not policy but soldiering, and he admired them as soldiers. "It's good to have men like Curt LeMay and Arleigh Burke commanding troops once you decide to go in," he told Hugh Sidey. "But these men aren't the only ones you should listen to when you decide whether to go in or not. I like having LeMay head the Air Force. Everybody knows how he feels. That's a good thing." He was in addition sensitive to the soldier's role—dangerous in war and thankless in peace. He had copied an old verse in his commonplace book of 1945-46 and often quoted it later:

*God and the Soldier all men adore,
In time of trouble and no more;
For when War is over and all things righted,
God is neglected the old soldier slighted.*)*

Now the Chiefs, in effect, exacted a price for their support. General Maxwell Taylor, whom Kennedy had appointed Chairman of the Chiefs in August 1962 and who had played a judicious and effective role in bringing his brethren along, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "the most serious reservations" of the Chiefs had to do with "the fear of a euphoria in the West which will eventually reduce our vigilance." The Chiefs accordingly attached "safeguards" to their support: vigorous continuation of underground testing; readiness to resume atmospheric testing on short notice; strengthening of detection capabilities; and the maintenance of nuclear laboratories. The President, determined that the treaty should be ratified, gave his "unqualified and unequivocal assurances" that the conditions would be met. Secretary McNamara,

* He noted, "Lines found in an old sentry box found in Gibraltar. Based on poem by Thomas Jordan."

while questioning whether "the vast increases in our nuclear forces" had "produced a comparable enhancement in our security," nevertheless assured the Senate that he would move in the next years further to raise "the megatonnage of our strategic alert forces." Senators, reluctant to be associated with what critics might regard as disarmament, seized with delight on the chance of interpreting the renunciation of atmospheric tests as a green light for underground tests. The effect for a moment, as Richard Rovere put it, was to turn "an agreement intended to limit nuclear testing into a limited warrant for increasing nuclear testing."

The President was prepared to pay this price to commit the nation to a treaty outlawing atmospheric tests. He had called the treaty a "step toward reason." For all the concessions in the presentation to the Senate, his reliance on reason was now being broadly vindicated. For two and a half years he had quietly striven to free his countrymen from the clichés of the cold war. In speech after speech he had questioned the prejudices and platitudes of the fifties, cautioned against extreme solutions and defined the shape of terror in the nuclear age. The American University speech was the climax of a long campaign. If it had produced few letters to the White House, this might have been a measure of the extent to which people read it as sheer common sense. The absence of major criticism, whether in Congress or the press, showed the transformation which, despite Berlin and despite Cuba, the President had wrought in the mind of the nation. Public opinion polls indicated a marked swing in favor of the treaty — 80 per cent by September. And on September 24 the Senate gave its consent to ratification by the vote of 80 to 19 fourteen more than the required two-thirds. The action, Kennedy said, was "a welcome culmination of this effort to lead the world once again to the path of peace."

6 FURTHER STEPS ON THE JOURNEY

If the treaty were to have its full effect, it would have to include all present and potential nuclear powers. This gave Khrushchev the problem of signing up China, as it gave Kennedy the problem of signing up France. These were not easy assignments. Neither Peking nor Paris shared the Washington-London-Moscow view that