

## Part VI:

set up a Postwar Policy Committee, charged with making recommendations on the proper government role in postwar atomic research and development. The committee, composed of Richard Tolman (chairman), Warren Lewis, Henry Smyth, and Rear Admiral Earle W. Mills, recommended that the best way for the government to maintain a vigorous nuclear program was to set up a peacetime version of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Niels Bohr, aware that the Russians had known about the Manhattan Project since 1942 and convinced that the Soviet Union would spare no effort to catch up with the United States, advocated a policy of full publicity and international cooperation.

Roosevelt and Churchill included postwar planning on their agenda when they met at Hyde Park in September 1944. They immediately vetoed the idea of an open atomic world (Churchill adamantly rejecting Bohr's recommendation). Bush and Conant, meanwhile, contacted Stimson on September 19 and spoke to the necessity of releasing selected information on the bomb project, reasoning that in a free country the secret could not be kept long. When Roosevelt asked Bush for a briefing on S-1 several days later, Bush discovered that Roosevelt had signed an "aide-memoire" with Churchill, pledging to continue bilateral research with England in certain areas of atomic technology.<sup>63</sup> Bush feared that Roosevelt would institute full interchange with Great Britain without consulting his own atomic power experts. Bush argued, prophetically, that leaving the Russians out of such an arrangement might well lead to an arms race among the Allied victors.

### The Baruch Plan

Bush and Conant presented their views more fully on September 30. They held that the American and British lead would last no more than three or four years and that security against the bigger bombs that surely would result from a worldwide arms race could be gained only through international agreements aimed at preventing secret research and surprise attacks. Bush and Conant's basic philosophy found expression in the Acheson-Lilienthal report of March 1946, fashioned primarily by Oppenheimer and evolving into the formal American proposal for the international control of atomic energy known as the Baruch Plan.

Bernard Baruch, the elder statesman who had served American presidents in various capacities since World War I, unveiled the United States plan

in a speech to the newly-created United Nations Atomic Energy Commission on June 14, 1946. Baruch proposed the establishment of an international atomic development authority along the lines proposed by the Acheson-Lilienthal report, one that would control all activities dangerous to world security and possess the power to license and inspect all other nuclear projects. Once such an authority was established, no more bombs should be built and existing bombs should be destroyed. Abolishing atomic weapons could lay the groundwork for reducing and subsequently eliminating all weapons, thus outlawing war altogether. The Baruch Plan, in Baruch's words "the last, best hope of earth," deviated from the optimistic tone of the Acheson-Lilienthal plan, which had intentionally remained silent on enforcement, and set specific penalties for violations such as illegally owning atomic bombs.<sup>64</sup> Baruch argued that the United Nations should not allow members to use the veto to protect themselves from penalties for atomic energy violations; he held that simple majority rule should prevail in this area. As on enforcement, the Acheson-Lilienthal report had studiously avoided comment on the veto issue.<sup>65</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Soviet Union, a non-nuclear power, insisted upon retaining its United Nations veto and argued that the abolition of atomic weapons should precede the establishment of an international authority. Negotiations could not proceed fairly, the Russians maintained, as long as the United States could use its atomic monopoly to coerce other nations into accepting its plan. The Baruch Plan proposed that the United States reduce its atomic arsenal by carefully defined stages linked to the degree of international agreement on control. Only after each stage of international control was implemented would the United States take the next step in reducing its stockpile. The United States position, then, was that international agreement must precede any American reductions, while the Soviets maintained that the bomb must be banned before meaningful negotiations could take place.

The debate in the United Nations was a debate in name only; neither side budged an inch in the six months following Baruch's United Nations speech. In the end, the Soviet Union, unwilling to surrender its veto power, abstained from the December 31, 1946, vote on Baruch's proposal on the grounds that it did not prohibit the bomb, and the American plan became a dead letter by early 1947—though token debate on the American plan continued into 1948. The United States, believing that Soviet troops posed a threat to eastern Europe and recognizing