

papers, nourished by a preceding barrage of "eyewitness letters home" describing a two-mile-wide sheet of flame, screamed H-Blast in their headlines and confidently predicted bigger ones to come. Two days later the Federation of American Scientists released a statement by its chairman, Jules Halpern of the University of Pennsylvania physics department, who called upon the country to "distinguish between the false security of bombs and the genuine security, which requires a slow, step-by-step, but positive approach to peace by mutual agreement, by gradual disarmament, and by world wide economic reconstruction and development. . . ."

"Almost three years ago," the FAS statement continued, "we urged establishment of a top-level commission with broad perspective to make a fresh start on our atomic policy. A State Department advisory panel has this objective in part and release of their findings is eagerly awaited. The entire problem must be a matter of the first and most urgent consideration by the new administration. Efforts toward international atomic control must be pushed forward in spite of present obstacles. The AEC announcement is a sober and grim reminder to the world that a way must be found to prevent the use of these and even more potent weapons to come."

The last sentence of the Commission's released statement, against the background of earlier beliefs that the thermonuclear release of energy could be applied only in terms of super-explosions that would be some orders of magnitude greater than those of atomic bombs, raised some of the same eyebrows that had previously been affected by a remark of the late chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, Senator Brien McMahon, who had suggested that "important peacetime applications of hydrogen principles" might turn out to be an ultimate consequence of the AEC's thermonuclear research.

End of a Project

Richter's Arrest Reported

An officially unconfirmed story from Buenos Aires has indicated that Argentina's well-publicized attempt to produce thermonuclear energy for industrial purposes has finally fizzled out. According to a special dispatch to *The New York Times*, written by Edward A. Morrow and datelined December 4, all three hundred workers at the secret Huemul Island laboratory on Lake Nahuel Huapi near the Patagonian town of San Carlos de Bariloche are reported to have been dismissed, and laboratory director Ronald Richter is said to have been arrested by the Argentine government.

As late as last July, according to the *Times*, President Perón promised that within eighteen months to two years Argentina would have an atomic power plant in operation. It was also reported that there have been many changes in the Argentine Atomic Energy Commission during the past year—perhaps the most outstanding one being the appointment of Commander

Pedro Goytia to succeed Colonel Enrique Gonzales as AEC chairman.

In March 1951, the Associated Press quoted President Perón as declaring that one month earlier, in the pilot plant on Huemul Island, "thermonuclear experiments were carried out under conditions of control on a technical scale". Argentina, he explained, had given much thought during the early postwar period to whether it was worth the trouble to make the necessarily enormous capital investment required to produce nuclear fission or whether it might be preferable to "run the risk of creating a new system which might lead to better results but also might lead to failure".

"The new Argentina," he continued, "decided to take the risk and adopt all measures which might bring the desired result. Preliminary tests were crowned with success, encouraging us to install on Huemul Island a pilot plant of atomic energy with the aim of creating new conditions of work which would permit us to carry out the new project."

"There, contrary to what has been done in foreign experiments, Argentine technicians worked on the basis of thermonuclear reactions, which are identical with those whereby the sun releases atomic energy. In order to produce such reactions it was necessary to have enormous temperatures of millions of degrees."

"For that reason the fundamental problem to be solved was how to produce such temperatures. The next step consisted in injecting within the zone of reaction nuclei capable of reacting. To avoid catastrophic explosions it was necessary to find processes whereby it would be possible to control thermonuclear reactions in a chain. That objective, almost unattainable, was reached."

"The result of this and many other previous experiments led up to that of February 16, when there was held with complete success the first tests which, with the use of this new method, produced controlled liberation of atomic energy."

In concluding his official statement, President Perón is reported to have said, "I wanted to inform the people of the republic with the seriousness and veracity which is my custom concerning a happening which will be transcendental for their future life and, I have no doubt, for that of the world. In so doing I hope to exhort all Argentines to collaborate in this great project which will redound so much to the enormous benefit of our country. . . ."

"Each one of us must, with his knowledge, his studies, his material assets, bend his work and effort toward making this project successful. The country will owe them in the future a greatness which today we cannot begin to imagine. So be it."

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