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Atomic Bomb

WHILE it is true that no one seems to be particularly happy or exultant over the fact of the atomic bomb and the fact of our use of it against Japan, it is disturbing that there has been so little public protest. In England the record is better, but in this country one of the very few condemnations of our *use* of this instrument appeared in a joint statement signed by more or less the old familiar group of pacifist Protestant ministers and educators. This statement, although marred at the end by a certain lack of clear thinking, is eloquent and deserves praise. The nearest thing to a condemnation we have seen by any journalist is the following paragraph of implication written from Washington by David Lawrence:

> Winston Churchill says 1,000,000 American lives were saved by its use. This is sheer exaggeration. The Army Air Forces were going to demolish Japanese military installations and communications completely so our invading troops could go in standing up. At least the air folks boasted so only a few weeks ago. While the atomic bomb did save some lives, the American precedent in using it may cost the world some day many times the number of lives now saved. For perhaps no nation will feel again that the atomic bomb is a barbarous weapon, because Britain and America sanctioned its use.

The general American reaction, then, is one of stunned disquiet. It is not jubilant, yet it contains almost no real feeling of guilt. Perhaps this is for the very natural reason that people hesitate to criticize an action which is said to have spared American lives. The question immediately arises: did it spare American lives? Here we find an opinion that it spared very few if any of the lives of our men. But even assuming that it did save many lives, this should be balanced against the number of lives in the future which its use by us placed in jeopardy. And if this be done, we are confronted with an obligation to condemn what we ourselves did, an obligation to admit that our victory has been sadly sullied not only because we used this weapon but because we have tacitly acceded to its use.

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