

Editorial

Hiroshima, then Nagasaki

Bertrand Russell constantly sought fresh ways to work for peace and nuclear disarmament. ‘The nuclear age,’ he wrote in 1964, ‘imposes new ways of thought and action and a new character in international relations’. It was during the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October ’62 between the Soviet Union and the United States. ‘This was a moment of great importance,’ wrote Russell. ‘It showed that neither considered it desirable to obliterate the human race ... The first fruits of the new more friendly relations between East and West was the Test Ban Treaty.’

Now, in less auspicious times, President Trump threatens renewed explosive nuclear testing in the United States. He has prompted a volley of informed opposition, domestic and international, which we report in this issue of *The Spokesman*. In particular, concerned American scientists with expertise on nuclear weapons emphasise that ‘there is no technical need for a nuclear test’. Meanwhile, Stephanie Malin in her interview with Becky Alexis Martin recounts some consequences of the nuclear era for ‘uranium communities’ in Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. And the External Action Service of the European Union insists to the Russell Foundation that the ‘EU is your friend in this endeavour’ of upholding and extending the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Seventy-five years ago, on 6 and then on 9 August 1945, the United States tested two different atomic explosions when the US Air Force bombed Hiroshima and, a few days later, the port city of Nagasaki, further south in Japan. Thus, the nuclear era was inaugurated with the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Japanese people of all ages. Major Claude Eatherley, Commander of the bomber group responsible for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki raids, could not ignore what had been done. These gross acts imposed ‘new ways of thought and action and a new character in international relations’, of which Russell later spoke. Eatherley eventually recorded his own enduring sense of responsibility in correspondence with the Austrian philosopher, Günther Anders, published as *Burning Conscience*.

It is fitting that we situate such landmark anniversaries in the new and difficult circumstances of corona virus. Tomihisa Taue, the Mayor of Nagasaki, tellingly points out that the ‘novel coronavirus disease, global warming and the problem of nuclear weapons share one thing in common, and that is that they affect all of us who live on this earth’. He and Kaumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima, speak for their own communities and for wider humanity.

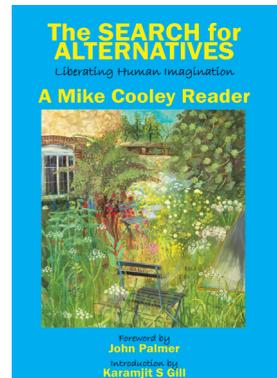
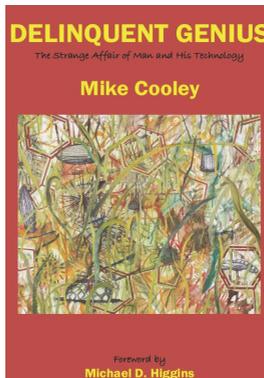
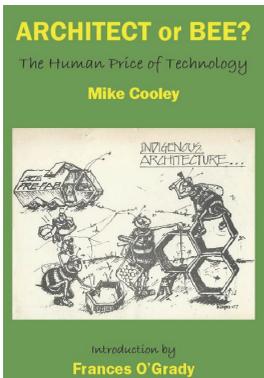
Russell’s considered response to the nuclear age was to establish the Foundation, by which he meant the Atlantic Peace Foundation and the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. The former is a charity for purposes of research in matters of war and peace, which works in co-operation with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. ‘The latter implements the purposes of the Atlantic Peace Foundation,’ wrote Russell.

In this issue, we trace some of the beginnings of the Foundation, in Russell’s own words, as well as via a timeline compiled by his wife, Edith. We add a foretaste of the tumultuous 1960s with Ken Coates’ urgent question to his fellow students in 1958: ‘Will it be the red ’sixties?’ Ten years have passed since Ken died – his words sound fresh and audacious.

Tony Simpson

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As we go to press, the sad news of Mike Cooley’s death reaches us. Mike was a long-time friend and comrade of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and the Institute for Workers’ Control. In recent years we were pleased to publish three books from his hand. We will revisit his inspiring life and work in our next issue.



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