

Letter

Nuclear Club Dangers

8/27 9/25/66
Your Sept. 20 editorial on "Non-Nuclear Germany" attacked the recent statement of the Educational Committee to Halt Atomic Weapons Spread, which urged prompt negotiation of a nuclear nonproliferation treaty by which the non-nuclear powers, including Germany, would renounce the nuclear path. On behalf of the committee I write to protest your editorial condemnation of the committee's statement, which you did not accord the courtesy of printing in your news columns.

Your editorial concedes that "the effort to halt proliferation is worth making," but couples this faint concession with nitpicking objections to the committee's recommendations. You include such warnings as the possibility that India might in any event build nuclear weapons, or that China and France might not sign the international compact. But these objections amount to no more than the familiar error that if we cannot make perfect progress we should seek none at all.

More serious is your objection to the United States' forthrightly informing Germany that our present position against renouncing the veto on use of our nuclear weapons is also our permanent position. Interestingly enough, you state that "No responsible German source advocates national ownership or control of nuclear weapons," and then in the same breath assert that a United States offer of a treaty which bars German nuclear weapons "would cause

needless political turmoil in Germany."

But worst of all is the tone of indifference exhibited in your editorial to the imminent prospects of world nuclear anarchy. This indifference is particularly noted in your assertion that "An advance statement by the United States aimed at Germany [announcing our permanent intention to keep it non-nuclear] would be an invitation for the Soviet Union to demand new concessions for a nuclear treaty . . ." Do you reject President Johnson's recent statement that both sides must make concessions in their present Geneva positions? Or are you suggesting that the United States should offer the Soviets a treaty incorporating the non-nuclear Germany guarantee without advance notice to our German allies?

The basic flaw of your discussion is precisely the inversion of priorities which the committee's statement has protested. Chancellor Erhard's political problems are not of more concern to the United States than the prospects of unchecked proliferation and world nuclear anarchy. The committee's desire was to awaken those who shrug off the mounting dangers if we do not promptly move against the enlargement of the nuclear club. Sadly, you appear to be among those who remain unawakened to the imperative need for real statesmanship to replace the petty NATO politics which has long postponed achievement of an international nonproliferation treaty. JOHN SILARD.

Bethesda.