Response Week 8

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HST 415 / Alex Wellerstein

What was the general sentiment at the time? I see the liberals making fun and protesting the treaty, but it doesn’t seem they are in the minority. Was the US taking in Nazis publicized?

Kahn has a few points about thermonuclear war and how we can and should respond. Most of his points boil down to if the war ever occurs what could possibly happen as a response. There is of course more to discuss in this area. I like the idea of having just enough deterrence to keep other countries from attacking. It is such as novel idea. Anybody who attacks you will be insane since they have assured mutual destruction. I don’t remember anything else in history quite like this. Kahn also goes into stereotypes of SU and US, to as how they would respond in a crisis or imminent threat. Ultimately he argues for a first strike capability so that we can assert dominance and the Soviets would be unsure of provoking us much less destroying a city. In a tense situation the Soviets would not know if a provocation would start an all out war. This would prevent the Soviets from escalating provocations in theory.

I don’t think that Kahn had the wrong idea. This issue is so complex and there seem to be many answers/solutions to this problem. With the goal of preventing war, I think this might be the wrong approach. I personally would like a way of deescalating the situation. This buildup seems that we would always be on edge and always have this capability. There seems to be no way out of this and actually prevent nuclear war. However, I do like the quote from that general that says that the purpose of the button is to never use it. I guess how Kahn views it as well. The purpose of this first strike is to never have to use it. After reading Neumann’s critique of the book I was very surprised. He took most of the points in the book and completely destroyed them. Neumann has nothing but contempt for this writer for even having these thoughts. The points Neumann makes I don’t disagree with. The economic recovery for me makes the most sense. If the area is irradiated with fallout then it will be uninhabitable for years and that’s if people even want to work. I feel like with so much loss people would just sit around and wait to die. I agree with Neumann’s views, but I also think Kahn wants to avoid that as well but does not articulate very well that it is just a thought exercise meant to prevent an all out war. At least that’s what I think.

Tom Lehrer sounds a like a cool guy. These songs make fun of the inevitability of war. The Wernher Von Braun song talks about the evil scientists that do not care about where the bombs land, they only care about building them. The So Long Mom song also makes fun of the people who support and want to fight the war. The satire is actually pretty funny even today. It shows that the sentiment is like towards our current president. They want it to go away but the current situation won’t allow it to happen. It seems like the only way to let loose about this tense subject is to make fun of it.