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Roberts, Geoffrey

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Science, Peace and Internationalism: Frédéric Joliot-Curie, the World Federation of Scientific Workers and the Origins of the Pugwash Movement

The Pugwash Movement traces its origins to the so-called Russell-Einstein manifesto of July 1955. Launched at a press conference in London the manifesto warned of the dire threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons of mass destruction:

"In view of the fact that in any future world war nuclear weapons will certainly be employed, and that such weapons threaten the continued existence of mankind, we urge the Governments of the world to realize, and to acknowledge publicly, that their purpose cannot be furthered by a world war, and we urge them, consequently, to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them." ¹

Such a statement by the world's most famous philosopher and the world's most famous scientist was bound to generate considerable public interest but what grabbed the attention of journalists at the press conference was the political composition of the manifesto's sponsors. As well as Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, the manifesto was signed by nine leading scientists from Britain, Europe, Japan and United States, eight of whom were Nobel laureates. They included Frédéric Joliot-Curie, President of the communist-dominated World Peace Council (WPC), the physicist Leopold Infeld who was a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a Vice-President of the WPC, and C.F. Powell, a leading member of the World Federation of Scientific Workers, an organisation over which Joliot-Curie also presided. In answers to journalists' questions Russell stressed that although he had failed to secure any signatures from Soviet scientists they were sympathetic to the manifesto and he was confident that some would participate in the proposed international conference.²

The Russell-Einstein manifesto opened with the statement that "in the tragic situation which confronts humanity, we feel that scientists should assemble in conference to appraise the

¹ <https://pugwash.org/1955/07/09/statement-manifesto/>

² A.G. Bone (ed), *Man's Peril, 1954-55: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, vol. 28, Routledge: London 2003 pp.321-333.

perils that have arisen as a result of the development of weapons of mass destruction”. It was this appeal that led to the first Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs in Nova Scotia in July 1957. Crucial to that conference’s success as a scientific bridge across the political divide of the cold war was the participation of Soviet scientists. The high-powered Soviet delegation was led by Alexander Topchiev, chief scientific secretary of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He was accompanied by his deputy, V.P. Pavlichenko, by A.M. Kuzin, a leading radiation chemist from the Institute of Biophysics, and by Dmitry Skobel’tsyn, an old friend of Joliot-Curie’s, who was director of the Lebedev Institute of Physics in Moscow and also headed the committee that awarded the Soviet government’s Stalin/Lenin Peace Prizes.³

Soviet participation in the first Pugwash conference was but one example of a significant expansion of East-West cultural, sporting, and scientific relations that developed after Stalin’s death in March 1953. An important but hitherto unacknowledged contributor to this opening up of the Soviet system was the networking activities of the communist-led peace movement, which helped counteract the isolationism of the late Stalin era and facilitated the flowering of East-West contacts in the post-Stalin years.

Neither Russell nor Einstein was the author of the call for a conference of scientists, which was inserted into the manifesto at Joliot-Curie’s insistence. As Sandra Ionno Butcher noted, it was Joliot-Curie’s negotiations with Bertrand Russell that “resulted in the critical call for a conference of scientists that was a pillar of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto.”⁴ Joliot-Curie and the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW) had been lobbying for such a conference since the early 1950s but had made little headway in the face of escalating cold war tensions, which reached a crescendo with the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. The Russell-Einstein initiative gave Joliot-Curie an opportunity to secure endorsement of the

³ The International Stalin Peace Prize “for strengthening peace among peoples” were first awarded in 1950-1951. In 1956 the name of the prize was changed to the Lenin Peace Prize and all previous recipients’ prizes were renamed accordingly. J.D. Bernal, a member of the committee that awarded the prize, and himself a recipient of the Stalin award, was not enthusiastic about the name change, which he thought was far too obvious a move now that the Soviet dictator had been denounced by Khrushchev at the 20th party congress. He argued for widening the scope of the prizes and creating a new prize for contributions to human knowledge and welfare, which could be named after Lenin. He felt that such a prize would be more palatable to the likes of Bertrand Russell who would not accept a peace prize because it was too closely associated with the Soviet Union. (Bernal letter to Skobel’tsyn, Ehrenburg and Alexandrov, 30/8/1956, Bernal Papers, Cambridge University Library Manuscripts Room, GBR/0012/MD Add.8287/I23 (hereafter Bernal Papers) (Stalin and Lenin Peace Prize file).

⁴ S.I. Butcher, “The Origins of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto”, *Pugwash History Series*, no.1 May 2005 p.10.

conference proposal by a prestigious group of scientists of diverse political views. Crucially, after the manifesto was published Joliot-Curie and WFSW continued to work for the convening of a broad-based international meeting of scientists. Without their efforts Pugwash might never have happened.

This article examines the role of Joliot-Curie and the WFSW in the origins of the Pugwash movement under three headings.

First, the lobbying by Joliot-Curie and the WFSW for an international gathering of scientists that would highlight the growing dangers of weapons of mass destruction.

Second, Joliot-Curie's efforts as leader of the World Peace Council to rally anti-nuclear opinion across the world, especially among scientists.

Third, the negotiations between Joliot-Curie and Bertrand Russell about the content of the Russell-Einstein manifesto and the WFSW's subsequent efforts to implement the manifesto's call for a conference.

Joliot-Curie and the World Federation of Scientific Workers

Like many scientists of his generation Joliot-Curie (1900-1958) was radicalised by the rise of fascism in the 1930s and by the accumulating political and economic crises that led to the outbreak of the Second World War. He was inspired, too, by what he saw as the progress of the socialist experiment in the Soviet Union. In 1934 Joliot-Curie joined the French socialist party but was disillusioned by the party's support for non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War; given the massive German and Italian support for General Franco's military mutiny, non-intervention was a policy tantamount to aiding the fascists, or so it seemed to Joliot-Curie, who was a founder of the *Comite de vigilance des intellectuels antifascists* and a member of *Union des intellectuels francais pour la justice, la liberte et la paix*.⁵ Importantly, as Patrick Petitjean has shown, the 1930s was time of flourishing contacts between radical

⁵ On Joliot-Curie's political formation see the various contributions to M. Bordry & P. Radvanyi (eds), *Oeuvre et Engagement de Frederic Joliot-Curie*, EDP Sciences: Paris 2001.

scientists in Britain and France. From these contacts emerged the idea of an international organisation of scientists against war.⁶

Of particular importance to Joliot-Curie personally was the relationship he forged with the Irish-born crystallographer John Desmond Bernal, with whom he worked closely in the peace movement after the war. Bernal was the author of the highly influential *The Social Function of Science* (1939) and a leading light in the social relations of science movement, inspired by the idea that scientists had social and political responsibilities and that science itself could only flourish fully in a socialist-type society. Bernal (and Joliot-Curie) believed that scientists were members of an international scientific community that should use its power and influence in the interests of peace.⁷

Contacts between British and French progressive scientists were disrupted by the outbreak of war in 1939 but rapidly re-established after the liberation of France and Joliot-Curie was a key figure in the renewal of these relations.

In the 1930s Joliot-Curie was more famous for his science than his politics. In 1935 he and his wife Irene, the daughter of Marie Skłodowska Curie, were awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for their discovery of “artificial radioactivity”. This led to his appointment as a professor at the College de France, where he worked on nuclear chain reactions.

When Einstein wrote his famous letter to President Roosevelt in August 1939 – that led to the Manhattan Project - he singled out Joliot-Curie as a pioneer of the work that could lead to an atomic bomb:

“Through the work of Joliot in France as well as Fermi and Szilard in America...it may be possible to set up a nuclear chain reaction in a large mass of uranium, by

⁶ P. Petitjean, “The Joint Establishment of the World Federation of Scientific Workers and of UNESCO after World War II”, *Minerva* (2008), no.46, pp.247-270.

⁷ On Bernal see Andrew Brown’s biography: *J.D. Bernal: The Sage of Science*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 2005; on the radical science movement in Britain in the 1930s see the work of Gary Werskey, *The Visible College: A Collective Biography of British Scientists and Socialists of the 1930s*, Allen Lane: London 1978; “The Visible College revisited: second opinions on the Red scientists of the 1930s”, *Minerva*, 45(3), (2007); and “The Marxist Critique of Capitalist Science: A History in Three Movements?”, *Science as Culture*, vol.16, no.4, December 2007

which vast amounts of power and large quantities of new radium-like elements would be generated.”⁸

During the war Joliot-Curie chose to stay in France rather flee Nazi occupation. Active in the Resistance, he became President of the *Front National de Lutte pour la Liberation et l'Independence de la France* in May 1941 and in 1942 joined the French communist party (PCF). During preparations for the Resistance insurrection in Paris in summer 1944 Joliot-Curie's laboratory was turned into a factory for the manufacture of Molotov cocktails.

After the liberation of France, Joliot-Curie became director of the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) and then, in autumn 1945, was asked by General de Gaulle to head up the *Commissariat a l'Energie Atomique* (CEA).⁹ At this time the PCF was by far country's biggest political party and communist ministers served in the governing coalition. The early postwar years were a period in which hopes remained high that the Soviet-Western coalition that defeated Hitler would continue to collaborate after the war. These hopes did not dissipate until the Truman Doctrine speech of March 1947 when the US president called on Congress to use American power to defend the free world from encroachments by totalitarian states and authoritarian movements. Six months later, at the founding meeting of the Communist Information Buro (Cominform), Stalin's ideological chief, Andrei Zhdanov proclaimed that the postwar world had split into two camps – a camp of imperialism, militarism and war and a camp of peace, socialism and democracy.

Joliot-Curie was a passionate believer in the peaceful uses of atomic energy and under his leadership France had developed its first atomic pile by 1948 – dubbed the “Communist Pile” by *Time* magazine.

Joliot-Curie was fundamentally opposed to the weaponisation of nuclear energy and refused to take part in military-related research. Joliot-Curie's consistent goal was the prohibition of nuclear weapons - an easy stance for a communist scientist when only the United States possessed atom bombs. Things became more complicated after the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb in August 1949. However, the USSR remained officially committed to the

⁸ <http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Begin/Einstein.shtml>

⁹ On Joliot-Curie's activities during and immediately after the war see Michel Pinault's biography: *Frederic Joliot-Curie*, Editions Odile Jacob: Paris 2000 pp.163-363.

universal prohibition of nuclear weapons and Joliot-Curie believed that Soviet intentions – unlike those of the Americans - were peaceful and well disposed towards negotiations for nuclear disarmament and arms control.

Joliot-Curie always claimed he was a patriot as well as a communist but with the outbreak of the cold war in the late 1940s - amid scandals about Soviet atomic espionage - his loyalty to France was questioned. He responded by ridiculing suggestions he would pass atomic secrets to the Soviets:

“A French Communist, as any other citizen, holding a post entrusted to him by the Government, cannot honestly think of communicating to a foreign power, whoever she may be, results which do not belong to him but to the community which has allowed him to work.”¹⁰

But under the polarising pressures of the cold war Joliot-Curie’s position hardened and in April 1950 he told the 12th congress of the PCF that “progressive scientists, Communist scientists will never give a scrap of their science to make war against the Soviet Union. And we shall stand firm, upheld by our conviction that in acting in this way we are serving France and the whole of mankind.”¹¹

This was too much for the French government, which had ejected its communist ministers from the coalition in May 1947. By the end of the month Joliot-Curie had been removed from his CEA post. The political temperature in France continued to rise and a year later – in April 1951- the French government banned the WPC from establishing its HQ in Paris, forcing relocation first to communist-controlled Prague and then to neutral Vienna.¹²

J.D. Bernal was a leading member of the British Association of Scientific Workers (ASW), a scientists’ trade union with decidedly left-wing leanings. In June 1945 the ASW decided to establish an international federation that would link similar organisations in other countries, including Joliot-Curie’s *Association des Travailleurs Scientifiques*. There were further

¹⁰ M. Goldsmith, *Frederic Joliot-Curie*, Lawrence & Wishart: London 1976 p.158

¹¹ *ibid.* p.163

¹² N. Yegorova, *Narodnaya Diplomatiya Yadernogo Veka: Dvizhenie Storonnikov Mira i Problema Razoryzheniya 1955-1956 gody*, Akvilon: Moscow 2016 p.78.

discussions about this matter at an ASW conference in London in February 1946 on “Science and the Welfare of Mankind”. Joliot-Curie was unable to attend but sent a speech that called for the free international exchange of information on atomic energy. This conference led to a request to the ASW Executive to draft a constitution for a new international organisation of scientific workers. The founding conference of the new organisation in London in July 1946 was attended by representatives of 18 associations from 14 different countries and Joliot-Curie was elected President of the WFSW or *Federation mondiale des Travailleurs scientifiques*¹³

As his biographer noted, Joliot-Curie was an obvious, prestigious choice to preside over the new body, but his strong and very public communist connections cast doubt on the neutrality of an organisation whose stated purpose was to include in its ranks scientists with a variety of political perspectives. However, in 1946 the cold war had yet to begin in earnest and Joliot-Curie’s political partisanship was considered to be a secondary matter, not least by those in the Federation – like Bernal - who shared his communist politics.¹⁴

WFSW’s constitutional aims included the use of science to promote peace; international co-operation in science and technology; and the international exchange of scientific knowledge. Because of financial difficulties the Federation did not hold its first general assembly, in Prague, until 1948, by which time it had 24, 000 members worldwide. A second general assembly was planned for Paris in 1951 but because of political difficulties it, too, was held in Prague. In his presidential address Joliot-Curie responded to critics who charged the WFSW with political bias. While he accepted that the WFSW was a politically-engaged organisation he denied that it was the champion of any particular regime, insisting that its role was to unite scientists of all opinions in accordance with the goals of its constitution.¹⁵

¹³ On the history of the WFSW see D. Horner, “The Cold War and the Politics of Scientific Internationalism: The Post-War Formation and Development of the World Federation of Scientific Workers, 1946-1956” in A. Elzinga & C. Landstrom (eds), *Internationalism and Science*, Taylor Graham: London 1996. For a view of the WFSW through the prism of British intelligence surveillance of the organisation see W. Styles, “The World Federation of Scientific Workers, a case study of a Soviet Front Organisation: 1946-1964”, *Intelligence and National Security*, DOI:10.1080/02684527.2017.1323479. On the WFSW and Pugwash in the 1950s and 1960s see Doubravka Olsakova’s essay in this volume.

¹⁴ Pinault p.389.

¹⁵ Goldsmith p.179.

At the 1951 assembly, Leopold Infeld called for a conference on the theme of “science for peace”, to be organised by a committee of 20 members, called together by the Federation, but politically diverse and independent of the WFSW.¹⁶ The resolution passed by the assembly called for the “speedy convocation of a Congress, where all scientific workers throughout the world could unite with the aim of ensuring a happy future for all mankind”. The call for such a conference was reiterated by the WFSW’s Executive Committee when it met in Vienna in June 1952. “The conference should be one with the widest aims to secure the participation of scientists of the most diverse opinions”, Joliot-Curie told the Executive. “It should have two major objectives in view; to examine the nature of the present tensions between nations and to discuss the role that scientists play in this situation and how best they can contribute to the cause of peace.” In September 1953 the Federation’s third general assembly, held in Budapest, instructed the Executive to organise a broadly-based international conference on the dangers of weapons of mass destruction.

In January 1954 the WFSW’s Indian affiliate asked the Federation to approach the United Nations to organise an international convention of scientists to suggest effective measures to ban all weapons of mass destruction. This request became all the more urgent when the United States tested a massive hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific on 1 March 1954. There was significant radio-active fallout, including the contamination of 23 crew of a Japanese fishing boat. An international outcry ensued. At its meeting in Vienna in September 1954 the WFSW Executive decided that the organisation of “an international conference of scientists is the Federation’s most important task. The conference should be as broad as possible and should be held in the spring of 1955”. While it was agreed to ask the United Nations to organise such a conference the WFSW would through its own efforts try to assemble a broad initiating committee of eminent scientists. Important for later developments was the positive response that this initiative received from the WFSW’s Soviet affiliate. In a letter to Joliot-Curie, biochemist Alexander Oparin, Moscow’s representative on the WFSW

¹⁶ The account that of the role of the WFSW in the origins of the Pugwash movement that follows is based in part on E.H.S. Burhop, “Actions of the W.F.S.W. Leading up to the First Pugwash Conference” Burhop Papers, University College London Special Collections, MS ADD385, file B13 (hereafter Burhop Papers). This unpublished typescript dates from the late 1960s. It appears to be a chapter from a book on the history of the WFSW, whether a monograph or an edited collection is not clear. Since it has a strong memoir dimension it is referenced as Burhop Memoir. An earlier piece by Burhop, dating from the early 1960s entitled “The World Federation of Scientific Workers and the Origins of the Pugwash Movement” may be found in RTBT 5/1/46 in the Joseph Rotblat Papers (hereafter Rotblat Papers) in the Churchill Archives in Churchill College Cambridge. (I am very grateful to Alison Kraft for providing me with a copy of this document.). The two texts are broadly similar with the later version being a little fuller.

Executive, reported that Soviet scientists would participate in the proposed conference and that if the conference was held outside the UN framework he would nominate Dmitry Skobel'tsyn to serve on the organising committee.¹⁷

As Oparin noted, Skobel'tsyn (1892-1990) was well-known to Joliot-Curie. Indeed, the two men were good friends and colleagues, having worked together in Marie Curie's Laboratory in Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s. After Skobel'tsyn's return to Russia they kept in touch and on two trips to the USSR Joliot-Curie met him and other Soviet scientists. They met again in Moscow in 1945 at the celebrations of the 220th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Joliot-Curie then served with Skobel'tsyn on the committee that awarded the Stalin Peace Prizes and was himself among the first batch of the prize's recipients in 1951.¹⁸ Skobel'tsyn attended the first three Pugwash conferences and was a key Soviet participant in the early years of the movement, including serving on the Continuation Committee established by the first conference. When Joliot-Curie died in 1958 Skobel'tsyn flew from Moscow to attend the funeral in France.

Around this time the UN decided to organise an international scientific congress on the peaceful uses of atomic energy (eventually held in Geneva in August 1955). Responding to this development, on 5 November 1954 Joliot-Curie wrote to the President of the UN General Assembly proposing that the UN's conference should include discussion of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction and the scientific and technical problems associated with controlling them.¹⁹

As well as writing to the UN, Joliot-Curie wrote to Eric Burhop in Britain suggesting that he organise on behalf of the WFSW a broad international scientific congress on the dangers of nuclear weapons. Burhop was Chairman of the ASW's Atomic Science Committee and Secretary of the British Atomic Scientists' Association. Burhop (1911-1980), who was to play a vital role in organising the first Pugwash meeting, was a British citizen born in Tasmania. Radicalised while a postgraduate student at Cambridge in the 1930s, he returned to Australia before the Second World War but later worked on the Manhattan Project. In 1945

¹⁷ Oparin's undated letter to Joliot-Curie may be found in the Burhop Papers, file B5.

¹⁸ P. Akhmanev, *Stalinskie Premii*, Russkie Vityazi: Moscow 2016 pp.159-195.

¹⁹ Burhop Memoir.

he was appointed Lecturer in Mathematics at University College London. Heavily involved in the pro-Soviet peace movement, Burhop was scheduled to visit the USSR as a member of a delegation of scientists in summer 1952 but on the eve of departure his passport was revoked on security grounds. Some newspapers suggested it was withdrawn because it was feared he would defect to Russia just like the “Cambridge spies” Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean had done a year earlier. Burhop sued the papers and was paid damages. While his passport was restored quite quickly he had to obtain permission from the Foreign Office to travel to communist bloc countries, an obligation that did not lapse until 1962. Burhop served as President of the WFSW from 1971 to 1980 and in 1972 was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize.²⁰

Together with Joliot-Curie, Burhop drew up a statement which on 4 January 1955 he sent to a hundred scientists across the world:

“The danger that faces humanity appears to us so terribly real that we believe it essential to issue an objective statement on this matter, addressed to a very wide public, over the signature of scientists of great eminence and of such a broad range of views that it will be possible to raise a cry of alarm without any section of public opinion being able to doubt the sincerity of the warning.

The preparation of the text of such a statement will require careful study in different countries and we propose the holding of an international scientific meeting to discuss the results of these preliminary studies and the drawing up of the terms of the statement”.²¹

Joliot-Curie, Burhop and Pierre Biquard, General Secretary of the WFSW, also made personal contact with a number of other scientists who had been involved in independent moves to organise an international conference of scientists to consider the nuclear danger, including Joseph Rotblat in Britain, Eugene Rabinowitch in the United States and Max Born in the Federal Republic of Germany. According to Burhop “it was clear from the result of these various approaches that there was wide support for the holding of a conference...but

²⁰ My summary of Burhop’s biography based on the Burhop Papers. See further: H. Massie and D.H. Davis, “Eric Henry Stoneley Burhop, 31 January 1911-22 January 1980”, *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol.27, 1 November 1981.

²¹ Burhop memoir.

difficulty was being experienced in finding a scientist of sufficient eminence, influence and impartiality...to sponsor the first step.”²²

Meanwhile, Bertrand Russell had broadcast a programme on BBC radio called “Man’s Peril” in which he, too, warned of the nuclear threat to humanity. Joliot-Curie took the opportunity to write to Russell about the idea of a conference. Russell replied positively but thought there should be a statement first and then a conference.

Russell was anti-communist and in the late 1940s had advocated threatening the Soviet Union with preventative war if it did not agree to international control of nuclear energy.²³ That the two men were now prepared to talk to each other reflected not just Russell’s political evolution but the changed circumstances of the mid-1950s: the urgency of the situation post-Bikini; the respite in the cold war that had developed after Stalin’s death;²⁴ and the growing popularity of Joliot-Curie and the communist-led peace movement. It was indicative, too, of the extent of the change in the peace movement’s political character since its emergence at the end of the 1940s as a classic communist front organisation. By the mid-1950s the movement was quite diverse and its non-communist element increasingly assertive. It was still broadly pro-Soviet – as was Joliot-Curie – but was pursuing its own agenda and interests as well as supporting Moscow’s foreign policy demands.

Joliot-Curie and the World Peace Council

After his removal from the CEA in 1950, Joliot-Curie returned to the direction of laboratories at the CNRS and the College de France but spent most of his time working for the peace movement – which involved a punishing schedule of journeys, meetings, demonstrations, speeches and articles. As President of the World Peace Council Joliot-Curie became an international political celebrity in the 1950s, feted by progressives but shunned by those on the opposing side of the cold war divide.

²² *ibid*

²³ See R. Perkins, “Bertrand Russell and Preventative War”, *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies*, no.14, Winter 1994-1995.

²⁴ See G. Roberts, “A Chance for Peace? The Soviet Campaign to End the Cold War, 1953-1955”, *Cold War International History Project Working Paper No.57*, December 2008

The progenitor of the WPC was the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, held in Wroclaw in August 1948.²⁵ Contrary to western cold war legend, the congress was not a Soviet initiative – the idea came from French and Polish communist intellectuals – but it was inspired by Moscow’s anti-war propaganda, which became increasingly shrill as the postwar alliance with Britain and the United States broke down and the rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine clashed with Zhdanov’s two-camps speech. In 1946 the USSR had proposed the prohibition of all nuclear weapons. In 1947 the Soviets sponsored a UN resolution on banning war propaganda. In 1948 they called for the conventional armed forces of the five great powers to be reduced by a third.²⁶

The Polish authorities were anxious about Soviet support for the Wroclaw congress and concerned about what kind of delegation Moscow would send.²⁷ In the event, the Soviets were well-represented at the congress. Leading their large delegation was Alexander Fadeev, the head of the Soviet Writers’ Union, and the writer and journalist Ilya Ehrenburg, who, together Joliot-Curie, was the peace movement’s most important international emissary in the 1940s and 1950s.

The congress was quite diverse with some 500 delegates from 46 countries. The US presidential candidate Henry Wallace sent a message of support and the congress was attended by many prominent western writers, artists and scientists, including Bertolt Brecht, Pablo Picasso, J.D. Bernal, J.B.S Haldane and A.J.P. Taylor. Julian Huxley, the head of UNESCO was there, as were representatives of the WFSW. Joliot-Curie was unable to attend but his wife Irene (who was half-Polish) chaired the congress, which passed a manifesto in defence of peace and established an International Liaison Committee of Intellectuals for Peace. Based in Paris, the committee included Joliot-Curie among its members.

Seeing its potential to develop into a mass peace movement the Soviets quickly got behind the International Liaison Committee (ILC) with political and financial support. In April 1949

²⁵ On the history of the postwar peace movement see G. Roberts, “Averting Armageddon: The Communist Peace Movement, 1948-1956 in S. Smith (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 2014.

²⁶ *Vneshnaya Politika Sovetskogo Souza: 1949 god* Moscow 1953 pp.21-22

²⁷ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (hereafter RGANI), F.3, Op.21, D.2, L.1

the ILC organised a World Congress of Partisans of Peace in Paris. The Soviet delegation, led by Fadeev and Ehrenburg, came with instructions from Moscow that the movement should involve as many people as possible, irrespective of national, political and religious differences.²⁸

Before every meeting of the peace movement's leadership Ehrenburg and Fadeev were issued with instructions from the party about the line they should take. Crucially, these directives often reflected their own recommendations to the Soviet leadership and in turn derived from their prior discussions with the leaders of the peace movement, including Joliot-Curie. Hence, relations between Moscow and the peace movement were much more complex than the western cold war caricature of the WPC as a transmission belt for Soviet foreign policy.

Fadeev and Ehrenburg were the Soviets' main interlocutors within the peace movement. The constant theme of their reports to Moscow was the need for an influential, broad-based peace movement and the necessity to take political risks to achieve that goal.

The Paris congress was attended by nearly 2000 delegates, claiming to speak for 600 million people from 72 countries. Another 275 delegates, refused visas by the French government, gathered in Prague and listened to a live broadcast of the proceedings. The congress was graced by even more luminaries than the Wroclaw gathering: W.E.B. Du Bois, Charlie Chaplin, Arthur Miller, Heinrich Mann, Henri Matisse and Marc Chagall. Especially important to the political image of the congress was the presence of leading non-communist socialist politicians such as Pietro Nenni, the head of the Italian Socialist Party.

The congress was opened by Joliot-Curie, who appealed to scientists to stop the use of atomic energy for military purposes:

“It is our duty to prevent the use of atomic energy for destructive purposes, to prevent this abuse of science and to support the efforts of those who propose to outlaw atomic weapons...Scientists...cannot remain indifferent to this problem. They are correct in assuming that we can avoid the misuse of science

²⁸ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (hereafter RGASPI), F.82, Op.2, D.1399, Ll.5-6.

and many of them are working to this end. This is true of the World Federation of Scientific Workers of which I have the honour to be President.”²⁹

The resolution passed by the congress condemned NATO, opposed the rearmament of Germany and Japan and called for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Elected by the congress was a 100-strong Permanent Committee of the Partisans of Peace (PCPP) with representatives from 50 different countries and international organisations. At its first meeting the committee elected an executive Buro chaired by Joliot-Curie.

Throughout its history the communist-led peace movement was closely aligned with the Soviet Union and generally followed the twists and turns of Moscow’s diplomacy. At its second meeting in Rome in October 1949 the PCPP condemned Tito and the Yugoslav government and broke relations with the country’s peace committee - a move motivated by the Stalin-Tito split, which had precipitated a witch hunt for so-called ‘national communists’ who supposedly placed political independence above loyalty to the Soviet Union.³⁰ On the other hand, the relationship between the peace movement and Soviet and communist policy was a two-way affair. While the peace movement is often viewed as an appendage of the Cominform it quickly eclipsed that organisation as the centrepiece of Stalin’s foreign strategy. Indeed, after 1949 the Cominform increasingly functioned as an auxiliary of the peace movement. The pages of the Cominform’s newspaper – charmingly entitled *For a Lasting Peace, For a People’s Democracy!* - were filled with coverage of peace movement activities and these reports reflected the movement’s growing influence on the ideological direction of the Cominform. Of particular importance was the peace movement’s impact on the traditional communist doctrine of the inevitability of war under capitalism. From its inception the peace movement, particularly politicians like Nenni, was adamant that war could be prevented by political struggle. At a meeting of the Cominform Secretariat in April 1950 Mikhail Suslov, Zhdanov’s successor as Soviet ideology chief, echoed these sentiments and criticised fatalistic talk about the inevitability of war, which he said undermined the struggle for peace.³¹ This theme was taken up by an editorial in the Cominform newspaper:

²⁹ Supplement to *New Times* n.19, 1949 p.3.

³⁰ The proposal that the Yugoslav delegates not be invited to the Rome meeting came from the PCF leader Maurice Thorez (RGANI, F3, Op.21, D.2, L.173),

³¹ RGANI, F.81, Op.1, D.234, L1.35-36.

“One of the main propaganda theses of the Anglo-American imperialists is that of the inevitability of war. This thesis is the basis for the war hysteria which they are fomenting... We must be firm in the knowledge that war is not inevitable... its depends on the partisans of peace... That is why the exposure of the thesis of the fatal inevitability of war... is the most important task of the communist parties.”³²

This deviation from Marxist-Leninist tradition went too far for Stalin who in October 1952 felt compelled to intervene and publicly reaffirm the doctrine that wars were inevitable while capitalism continued to exist. However, Stalin qualified his remarks by stating that while war was existentially inevitable under capitalism each and every actual war could be prevented by the peace movement.³³ The goal of Stalin’s arcane reasoning was to salvage a semblance of the traditional doctrine whilst at the same time emphasising that the struggle for peace could be won within the framework of capitalism – an important point when war in the nuclear age threatened the very existence of human civilisation.

In the 1950s the peace movement’s campaigning revolved around a series of petitions. The first of these was the Stockholm Appeal of 1950 – a petition calling for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Joliot-Curie was the first to sign and across the world tens of thousands of local peace committees sprung up to collect signatures. The results exceeded all expectations. Within a few months more than half a billion people had signed the petition – a quarter of the world’s population. True, a good many of these signatures derived from the communist bloc, particularly China and the Soviet Union, but tens of millions signed in the capitalist world, too, including 17 million in Italy and 15 million in France. Many scientists signed the petition, including some who had worked on the Manhattan Project. Niels Bohr refused to sign and issued a statement that he could not associate with any appeal that did not demand freedom of information from all countries.³⁴ Bohr’s position was not as far removed from that of scientists associated with peace movement as he might have imaged. Broadly, they

³² *For a Lasting Peace, For a People’s Democracy!* 12 May 1950.

³³ Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow 1952 pp.37-41.

³⁴ “The Stockholm Appeal and the Men of Science”, *New Times*, no.25, 1950.

shared Bohr's concern for the free exchange of scientific knowledge. As a London conference on "Science for Peace" in January 1952 put it:

"We assert the permanently international character of science. It is a worldwide republic of the mind. The scientists of all countries are fraternally united in a common effort to understand nature; they could be united in a common concern for human betterment. We must seek to maintain everywhere the civil rights of scientists; and it is our duty to strive for the removal of all barriers that restrict or embarrass the free intercourse of scientists and the free exchange of information throughout the world."³⁵

In November 1950 the PCPP convened its second world congress, this time in Warsaw. It was at this congress that the World Peace Council (WPC) was established, with Joliot-Curie as its Chair/President. The first meeting of the WPC, in Berlin in February 1951, launched a new petition campaign – for a peace pact between the five great powers – a Soviet proposal that dated back to 1949. This campaign was even more successful than the Stockholm Appeal, collecting a hundred million more signatures than its better-known predecessor. But it was a hard-slog politically. As Nenni warned, "to gain 500 million signatures to the Stockholm Appeal it was enough to appeal to the emotions. It was necessary to appeal to reason and intelligence to secure support for the Appeal of Berlin."³⁶

The other problem with the Berlin Appeal was that it enhanced the WPC's identification with the Soviet Union at a time when Joliot-Curie and his co-workers were attempting to broaden the council's political basis and develop alliances with other peace movements and campaigners. At the Warsaw congress Bernal proposed a motion on co-operation with other peace organisations and at its Berlin meeting the WPC resolved to take a number of steps to engage with other peace activists, including a conference of scientists and approaches to "peace-loving scientists" who were asked to urge their national and international scientific organisations to adopt the principle that their discoveries would be used only for peaceful purposes.³⁷

³⁵ Bernal Papers file I31 (Science for Peace file). On the Science for Peace movement in Britain see further Werskey, *Visible College*, pp.307-308.

³⁶ Nenni speech to the Berlin session of the WPC, February 1951, Bernal Papers, World Peace Council box, Marx Memorial Library.

³⁷ *New Times*, no.11, 1951 pp.1-2. Since Leopold Infeld was a WPC Vice-President it may have been the council's call for a conference of scientists in February 1951 that inspired his proposal for such a conference at the WFSW Assembly in April 1951.

At its second World Congress in 1950 the peace movement called for the promotion of cultural intercourse as a means to create mutual understanding. After the congress an International Commission for Cultural Relations was established. In November 1951 the WPC proposed there should be celebrations in different countries of the anniversaries of significant cultural figures such as the 150th anniversary of the birth of Victor Hugo and the 500th anniversary of the birth of Leonardo Da Vinci.

One peace movement initiative of particular note is the little-known Moscow International Economic Conference of April 1952, which took place at the zenith of Stalinist isolationism during the early cold war. The conference originated from a Soviet proposal to the WPC in February 1951. Its aim was to erode the western cold war economic blockade of the communist bloc. The idea was that the peace movement would utilise its contacts to mobilise support and participation in the conference by economists and business leaders. Particularly active in recruiting support were the British and French peace committees. The conference attracted 470 delegates from 48 countries, including large delegations from Britain and France.³⁸

There was much common ground between the WPC and other peace campaigners but the council's political partisanship, its identification with the Soviet Union and the leading role of communists in the organisation were barriers to close collaboration. To help overcome these problems, in July 1952 the WPC decided to convene a Peace Congress of the Peoples, which was held in Vienna in December.

Joliot-Curie and the WPC's organisers worked hard to ensure the Vienna congress was as diverse as possible. It attracted 1857 delegates from 85 countries, including many representatives from religious groups, trade unions, political parties and social organisations with no previous connection to the communist peace movement. A number of parliamentarians attended, among them Giuseppe Nitte, the liberal chair of the Italian parliament's peace group. Among the intellectuals speechifying at the congress was Jean-

³⁸ M. Lipkin, "Avril 1952, la conférence économique de Moscou : changement de tactique ou innovation dans la politique extérieure stalinienne?", *Relations Internationales*, 2011/3 (n.147). An English version of this article may be found in O. Bange & P. Villaume (eds), *The Long Detente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s-1980s*, Central European University Press: Budapest 2017.

Paul Sartre. In his speech opening the congress Joliot-Curie said that the peace movement's "first task was to secure controlled prohibition of weapons of mass destruction". In the first rank of this struggle should be scientists who "must insist that science be used for welfare and not destruction". He also alluded to the failures of past peace movements, particularly pre-World War II pacifists who had been disunited and had failed to act to prevent war.³⁹

The call for a peace pact was supported by the congress, as was the demand for a ban on atomic, biological and chemical weapon, but its resolutions were far less strident than those passed at the Paris and Warsaw world congresses.

A new theme at Vienna was the need to foster a political atmosphere in which international tensions could be eased. This presaged a major WPC campaign in 1953-1954 for international negotiations to resolve problems of peace and security. To this end the WPC organised a conference on the reduction of international tensions, which took place in Stockholm in June 1954.

Following the Bikini tests the WPC began to foreground nuclear issues once again and in January 1955 it launched another petition on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. The new campaign was taken up with particular enthusiasm in the USSR, where the Soviet Peace Committee (SPC) collected nearly 120 million signatures.⁴⁰

The SPC was by far the most important national section of the WPC. It was the conduit for Soviet direction and advice to peace movement leaders and the channel for Moscow's substantial funding of the WPC. The SPC supplied personnel to serve in the peace movement's headquarters and facilitated WPC access to the resources of the Soviet diplomatic apparatus, which proved invaluable when it came to recruiting attendees to its world congresses. Above all, the SPC served as an interface between the international peace movement and Soviet society and its political elite. WPC leaders attended Soviet peace congresses and there was massive coverage of the international peace movement in the Soviet press. Through its relations with the SPC the international peace movement functioned as an

³⁹ Supplement to *New Times*, no.1 pp.5-7.

⁴⁰ On the Soviet peace movement see Timothy Johnston, "Peace or Pacifism? The Soviet "Struggle for Peace in All the World", 1948-1954", *Slavic and East European Review*, 86/2 (April 2008),

agency for Soviet contacts with the outside world, very important in the late Stalin era, which was characterised by a retreat into isolationism, a growth of nationalism and xenophobia, and a return to the siege mentality of the 1930s. During this period contact with the outside world was curtailed in every sphere and contact with foreigners forbidden, but the prohibition did not apply to peace movement activists who continued to visit the USSR and to receive Soviet delegations to their own countries. As the peace movement grew globally in the early 1950s so did the invitations for SPC leaders to travel abroad. After Stalin's death these political-cultural contacts via the peace movement increased substantially.

In 1954 the Soviet peace committee welcomed 32 foreign delegations – 1300 visitors – including 800 participants in a bicycle peace race, and 23 Soviet delegations – 130 people – were dispatched abroad. In 1955 the Soviets sent 27 delegations – 148 people – abroad. Received in the USSR were 42 delegations of 300 people. So busy was the SPC in this respect that on more than one occasion it had to ask the party leadership for additional funds and foreign currency reserves, requests granted without demur.⁴¹

Whenever Bernal and Joliot-Curie visited the USSR they made sure they met Soviet scientists and visited scientific installations. Bernal, in particular, was keen to keep open lines of communication between Soviet and western scientists and was involved in sponsorship of exchange schemes. When Bernal composed a 15-year plan for the development of Soviet science in 1959 its very first point was the improvement of scientific communications with the USSR.⁴²

Joliot-Curie was an important figurehead for the peace movement and the Soviets were keen to retain him in that role, notwithstanding his bouts of illness and frequent absence from meetings of the WPC central apparatus. A December 1953 note entitled “Concerning Joliot-Curie”, written by Ehrenburg and others, urged the Soviet leadership to give all the support they could to the WPC President such as inviting him to the USSR to meet party and state leaders and showing respect for his scientific work by publishing it in Russian.⁴³ Another document pointed out that Joliot-Curie was the kind of person who sometimes required moral

⁴¹ RGANI, F.5, Op.20, D.360, Ll.157, 235; D.384, Ll.1.

⁴² Bernal Papers H32 (file on correspondence with the Soviet Academy of Sciences)

⁴³ RGANI, F.3, Op.21, D.7, L.83.

support and encouragement, especially from the USSR.⁴⁴ Equally, the Soviets had high regard for his management skills. As Ehrenburg recounted in his memoirs: “there were difficulties, all-night vigils, political tensions, also at times personal antagonisms, but Joliot always succeeded in conciliating people and putting new heart into them.”⁴⁵

There was a broader, Franco-Soviet context to the importance that Moscow attached to good relations with Joliot-Curie. In the 1950s France was the object of persistent Soviet efforts to break up the western cold war alliance. The Kremlin believed that France and the USSR had a common interest in the containment of a revived Germany, which the British and Americans were sponsoring as a means to strengthen NATO. Soviet political influence in France was considerable. The French communist party was very strong, as was the peace movement. The pro-western orientation of French foreign policy was challenged on the right as well as the left, and the Soviets invested a lot of time and effort in cultivating relations with the Gaullist movement, which was seen as sympathetic to a Franco-Soviet rapprochement.

While Moscow failed to woo the centrist politicians that governed France, its strategy had its successes. In August 1954 the French parliament refused to ratify the establishment of the European Defence Community, including the rearmament of West Germany. There was a significant expansion of Soviet-French cultural, scientific, economic and political contacts after Stalin’s death in 1953. In May 1956 a high-powered French government delegation travelled to Moscow, where it was met with wild enthusiasm by the Soviet public. In all these developments the peace movement in France and internationally was highly active.

Little of concrete value resulted from the summit with Kremlin leaders but the Franco-Soviet mini-détente of mid-1956 was only blown off course by the combined impact of the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt and Moscow’s military intervention in Hungary in October-November 1956.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ RGANI, F.3, Op.21, D.7, Ll.1-2. This was a comment by Fadeev in a report to Malenkov in March 1953. He reported that Joliot-Curie was thinking of relinquishing the presidency of the WPC and going to work in China because he found it difficult to combine scientific and political work.

⁴⁵ I. Ehrenburg, *Postwar Years, 1945-54*, MacGibbon & Kee: London 1966 pp.184-185.

⁴⁶ See G. Roberts “Impossible Allies? Soviet Views of France and the German Question in the 1950s” in Frédéric Bozo & Christian Wenkel (eds.), *France and the German Question, 1945-1990* Berghahn Books: New York 2019. When the WPC met in Helsinki to consider the Hungarian events there was split and the Soviets

Relations between Joliot-Curie and the Soviets were not always smooth. One notable instance of discord occurred at the Vienna meeting of the WPC Buro in January 1955. In his opening speech Joliot-Curie spoke about the danger of a nuclear war that could destroy all human life. Joliot-Curie's statement was commensurate with what Soviet Premier Georgy Malenkov, under advice from Soviet scientists, had said in an election speech in March 1954: "a new world war with modern weapons means the end of world civilisation".

In January 1955, however, Malenkov was ousted from office and this statement was attacked by his critics as being too pessimistic about the survival of socialism in the event of nuclear war. When Moscow heard that Joliot-Curie was saying much the same thing urgent instructions were sent to the Soviet representatives at the Buro meeting directing them to get him to retreat from this position in his closing speech.⁴⁷ But Joliot-Curie was not for turning. According to Ehrenburg, Joliot-Curie was determined to resign the presidency of the WPC rather than take back his convictions as a scientist. Looking back on the incident Joliot-Curie told Ehrenburg:

"We once had an argument – you remember, it was in Vienna – [Fadееv] tried to persuade me to take back my words about an atomic war being able to annihilate life on our planet, and he kept saying: 'we know you're a loyal friend'. I replied that loyalty was a good thing in friendship but in politics, as in science, to have faith is not enough, one must also think."⁴⁸

In May 1955, on the eve of a WPC-organised World Peace Assembly in Helsinki, Ehrenburg raised the matter again with Joliot-Curie and was told that if the French scientist wasn't allowed to "rehabilitate" the phrase that nuclear weapons "theoretically have the technical possibility to destroy humanity" he wouldn't go to the meeting.⁴⁹ Joliot-Curie got his way and in his speech to the World Peace Assembly he said: "Scientific specialists can now say that it is technically possible to destroy all life on the planet" – a reality that made even more

failed to secure agreement on a resolution supporting their action. Joliot-Curie, who was ill, did not attend this meeting but Bernal was present.

⁴⁷ RGANI, F.3, Op.21, D.8, Ll.174-175

⁴⁸ Ehrenburg p.187.

⁴⁹ RGANI, F.3, Op.21, D.9, L.32.

urgent the banning of nuclear weapons and international control of civilian uses of nuclear energy.⁵⁰

Towards Pugwash

Russell's "Man's Peril" was broadcast by the BBC on 23 December 1954 and a text published in *The Listener* a week later. Among those who wrote to Russell in response to the broadcast, on 21 January 1955, was Max Born. It was Born, in fact, who first suggested to Russell the idea of a statement by distinguished scientists.⁵¹ However, it may be that Born was a recipient of a letter that Burhop sent to 100 scientists on 4 January urging the convening of an international scientific meeting to draw up such a statement.

On 31 January Joliot-Curie wrote (in French) to Russell, repeating the contents of the Burhop circular and adding that Russell's distinguished support would help promote the idea of such a conference. While Russell's reply to Joliot-Curie on 4 February resisted the idea of a conference, arguing a statement should come first, he echoed some the Frenchman's other sentiments:

"I think it very important that the signatories should have no common political complexion, and that their declaration should strenuously abstain from any blame to either side...If such a declaration as I have in mind is to be effective, the signatories should represent all shades of opinion so that, collectively, they could not be regarded as leaning towards either side."⁵²

On 11 February Russell wrote to Einstein enthusing about idea of a statement but not a conference:

"Joliot-Curie apparently pins his faith to a large international conference of men of science. I do not think this is the best way to tackle the question. Such a conference would take a long time to organise. There would be difficulties about visas. When it met there would be discussions and disagreements which would prevent any clear and dramatic impression upon the public. I am

⁵⁰ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GARF), F.9539, Op.1, D.410, Ll.23-44.

⁵¹ Butcher p.9.

⁵² Burhop Memoir.

convinced that a very small number of very eminent men can do much more, at any rate in the first instance.”⁵³

In a letter of 2 March Joliot-Curie suggested to Russell that he discuss the content of proposed statement with Burhop. The two men met at Russell’s home in Richmond, London and the result was a draft of 5 April which included the manifesto’s famous first line that there should be a “conference to appraise the perils that have arisen as a result of the development of weapons of mass destruction.”⁵⁴

Albert Einstein died on 18 April and when Russell (who was attending a conference of Parliamentarians for World Government) met Joliot-Curie in Paris on 21 April the latter agreed that it would not now be possible to make any substantial changes to the draft statement. According to Pierre Biquard, Russell told Joliot-Curie “I am an anti-Communist, and it is precisely because you are a Communist that I want to work with you.”⁵⁵ Doubtless Joliot-Curie felt the same way, but he was not prepared to sign the statement until some more amendments had been made. Russell agreed to these changes but Joliot-Curie continued to prevaricate about adding his signature to the statement.⁵⁶

A clue to Joliot-Curie’s thinking is contained in a report from Ehrenburg to the party leadership in Moscow about a discussion with him about the proposed statement. Joliot-Curie was worried that Russell’s corrections to the text had introduced pacifist elements. He asked Ehrenburg: should he break off discussions with Russell or should he say that a conference of scientists should agree the text of a statement? Ehrenburg asked Moscow for instructions, which in reply requested further details and wanted to know what Joliot-Curie thought was Russell’s purpose in proposing the statement.⁵⁷

Around the same time there was another visitor to Paris: Skobel’tsyn. Russell had sent him the April 5 draft of the manifesto and invited him to sign. But Skobel’tsyn did not see

⁵³ Butcher p.11.

⁵⁴ Burhop memoir; A.G. Bone, “Russell and the Communist-Aligned Peace Movement in the mid-1950s”, *Russell: The Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies*, no.21, 2001 p.50.

⁵⁵ Butcher p.11

⁵⁶ Bone, Russell Papers, vol.28, p.308.

⁵⁷ RGANI, F.5, Op.20, D.357, Ll.184-116. This summary of Ehrenburg’s report from Paris is dated 12 May 1955.

Russell's letter until after his return from the French capital on 7 June. He drafted a reply to Russell, which was then submitted to the party leadership for approval on 25 June.

Skobel'tsyn's reply said that if he understood Russell's text correctly, its underlying thesis was this: "Recognising the consequences arising from new means of destruction and mass annihilation it is necessary that all disputed questions in international relations should in future be resolved peacefully, given the inadmissibility of war as a means to resolve such issues." If the text could be amended to reflect this thesis, wrote Skobel'tsyn, it would be possible to secure all the necessary signatures. But given the aim was to involve the representatives of different political tendencies the text would have to be carefully drafted. With this in mind, Skobel'tsyn suggested a meeting of the proposed signatories to agree a text.⁵⁸

Skobel'tsyn's draft was accepted by the Soviet party leadership and it is probably the closest that Moscow came to adopting an official position on the incipient Russell-Einstein manifesto.

In view of Joliot-Curie's closeness to Skobel'tsyn it is difficult to believe the two men did not meet in Paris and discuss Russell's proposal. Certainly, Joliot-Curie would have had no difficulty in agreeing with what Skobel'tsyn said in his letter to Russell; it was the standard Soviet-Communist line and he had said as much himself on innumerable occasions.

In any event Joliot-Curie continued to delay and to suggest changes to Russell's draft. On 17 June Russell wrote to Joliot-Curie in exasperation that while he would regret a failure to sign a joint statement the best outcome of their discussions might be for the two of them to issue separate statements simultaneously.⁵⁹ Joliot-Curie did not reply to this letter until two days before the press conference on 9 July at which the manifesto was launched by Russell.

Joliot-Curie's delay in replying may have been connected to another event: the convening in Helsinki of the World Peace Assembly from 22-30 June.

⁵⁸ *Akademiya Nauk v Resheniyakh Politburo TsK KPSS : Buro Prezidiuma, Prezidium, Sekretariat TsK KPSS, 1952-1958*, Rosspen: Moscow 2010 doc.78. I am grateful to Fabian Lüscher for sending me a copy of this document.

⁵⁹ Bone, Russell Papers, vol.28, p.312.

The Soviets were keen to get Russell to participate in the assembly and they sent an emissary to see him – B.R. Isakov, a journalist working out of their London embassy. The two men talked about past anti-Soviet statements by Russell, but the philosopher indicated he was now ready to cooperate with the communist peace movement. “You can be sure”, said Russell, “that I will not speak at international meetings in the spirit of my pronouncements in past years. I will make conciliatory speeches.”⁶⁰

Russell did not go to Helsinki but he did send a speech, which was read out by William Wainwright, the communist secretary of the British peace committee. Russell criticised the peace movement for demanding the prohibition of nuclear weapons, arguing that such agreements and declarations could not guarantee the non-use or non-development of nuclear weapons. As a first step to nuclear disarmament Russell proposed that there should be a statement by important scientists on the consequences of nuclear war, a statement that would then be adopted by governments.⁶¹ Not all delegates liked being lectured to about world peace by a former advocate of preventative nuclear war but Russell’s intervention was welcomed by Joliot-Curie as a contribution to discussion and his speech was subsequently published in the assembly’s book of documents.⁶²

It is worth noting that after the launch of the Russell-Einstein manifesto the philosopher continued his collaboration with the communist peace movement. Indeed, in November 1955 Bernal nominated Russell for the Stalin Peace Prize on grounds that he was “undoubtedly the most reputed peace fighter of the year and has done enormous work on uniting scientists against nuclear warfare”. Bernal cautioned, however, that Russell was unlikely to accept the prize and that even mentioning it to him might make him think he was being unduly influenced: “negotiations would have to be carried out with great tact.”⁶³ Nothing came of Bernal’s suggestion but in November 1957 Burhop tried to nominate Russell for one of the WPC’s International Peace Prizes. Russell declined on the grounds that as a peace

⁶⁰ RGANI, F.3, Op.21, D.9, L.72. Isakov also went to see James Aldridge and Sean O’Casey, whom he found living in genteel poverty in Torquay. The two writers were willing to go to Helsinki as long as their expenses were paid. They took the opportunity to complain about the failure of the Soviets to pay royalties on translations of their works (the USSR did not adhere to international copyright laws until decades later).

⁶¹ GARF, F.9539, Op.1, D.410, Ll.62-69.

⁶² Bone, Russell Papers, vol.28, pp.297-298.

⁶³ Bernal letter to Skobel’tsyn, 10/11/1955, Bernal Papers, file I23 (Stalin and Lenin Peace Prize file).

campaigner he needed to remain, and be seen to remain, impartial, a judgement that Burhop readily accepted.⁶⁴

While Bernal and Joliot-Curie had a lot of time for Russell they did not think that lobbying by scientists alone could contain the nuclear danger and pave the way to disarmament. The efforts of scientists had to be supplemented by popular struggle for peace – an idea that Russell himself embraced later in the 1950s when he supported the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Britain. Needless to say, Bernal and Joliot-Curie had a much more benign view of the Soviet Union than did Russell, though neither of the two men were happy with all aspects of Moscow's interference in the peace movement. When he succeeded Joliot-Curie as President of the WPC Bernal resisted Moscow's efforts to involve the peace movement in the Sino-Soviet split and in 1968 he opposed outright the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia,

The Helsinki Assembly was by far the most diverse and open of the WPC's world congresses. Afterwards the Soviets conducted a comparative analysis of the delegate profile of the Assembly and the Vienna People's Congress. The two events were found to be broadly similar in terms of numbers of delegates, countries represented, gender balance (75/25% men/women), and occupational profile (mostly middle-class). But in two respects there were striking differences: at Helsinki there were many more parliamentarians present (146 compared to 46 in Vienna) and significantly more representatives from organisations with no previous connections to the peace movement (269 compared to 46). In an analysis of the political composition of the 446-strong WPC elected at the Helsinki assembly (a similar size to that elected at the Vienna congress) the Soviet authors concluded that, excluding delegates from the USSR, China and the People's Democracies, 84 members of the council were communists, 79 were communist sympathizers and progressives, 23 were socialists or socialist sympathizers, and, significantly, 98 were representatives of "bourgeois political parties".⁶⁵

In his report to the Soviet leadership on the assembly Ehrenburg stressed not just the greater political diversity of the assembly compared to previous peace movement congresses but the more critical discussion of the policies of the WPC and of the USSR. At the same time,

⁶⁴ Correspondence between Burhop and Russell, November-December 1957, Burhop Papers, file A21.

⁶⁵ RGANI, F.5, Op.28, D356, Ll.163-170.

reassured Ehrenburg, Helsinki was “evidence of the great turn among broad sections of international public opinion in favour of negotiations and the reduction of international tensions. It is necessary to note that the Soviet delegates had never met with such warmth and attentiveness... This happened because almost all the speakers at the assembly stressed the enormous contribution of the Soviet Union to peace in the recent period.”⁶⁶

Ehrenburg was referring to the Geneva Summit of July 1955 – the first such meeting of the leaders of Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States since the end of the Second World War. There was much talk in the press about the spirit of Geneva – the idea and hope that the post-Stalin respite in the cold war could develop into a prolonged East-West “détente” of the kind that actually did develop in the 1960s and 1970s, though use of the term itself was not common in the 1950s. The Geneva summit discussions were continued in the autumn by the four powers’ foreign ministers. These negotiations failed but public opinion remained wedded to the idea that a fundamental breakthrough in the resolution of the cold war had occurred and remained so until the Hungarian and Suez crises of November 1956.⁶⁷

When, on 4 July, Joliot-Curie finally replied to Russell’s 17 June letter it was in a much more constructive spirit than their previous correspondence about the manifesto. It is possible that Joliot-Curie’s change of attitude was the result of advice from Skobel’tsyn or the Soviets but more important may have been the impact of the pluralistic and open atmosphere of the Helsinki Assembly. In Joliot-Curie’s mind, too, must have been the prospect of achieving the international conference of scientists that he had long sought.

To help finalise the draft Russell and Burhop were joined on 7 July by Pierre Biquard. Joliot-Curie had some final textual amendments but these were quickly and easily dealt with by the device of adding a couple of qualifying notes and on the eve of its launch Biquard signed the manifesto on his behalf.⁶⁸

At the last moment Russell asked one of the manifesto’s signatories, Joseph Rotblat, to chair the press conference which launched it and to field any scientific questions. Rotblat, a

⁶⁶ Ob Itogakh Vsemirnoi Assamblei Mira (22-29 Iunya 1955g. Khel’sinki)”, RGANI, F.5, Op.20, D.356 , Ll.146-153. The report was co-signed by A. Korneichuk and V. Tereshkin.

⁶⁷ See Roberts, *A Chance for Peace?*

⁶⁸ Bone, *Russell Papers*, vol.28 p.312.

physicist of Polish origin was co-founder of the Atomic Scientists Association, its Executive Vice-President and editor of its bulletin. Russell had met Rotblat when they both appeared on a BBC show to discuss the Bikini Atoll test. In 1954 Rotblat had corresponded with another manifesto signatory, Eugene Rabinowitch, editor of the US *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, who had put forward the idea of an international scientific conference on the nuclear danger. Rabinowitch and Rotblat had in mind a more technical and western-oriented conference than that proposed by the WFSW but they encountered the same problem as the Federation: the reluctance of non-aligned scientists to support a venture that might be seen by western governments as politically hostile to them.⁶⁹ The cold war had moderated after Stalin's death but it was far from over. West Germany was being rearmed and integrated into the western bloc, joining NATO in May 1955. In response the Soviet and their allies established the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, while Moscow's proposals for disarmament, arms control and European collective security were spurned by the western powers.

As Andrew G. Bone has written, the most logical follow-up to the Russell-Einstein manifesto was the conference proposed by Joliot-Curie, and Burhop was keen to see what help the WFSW could give to this venture.⁷⁰ On 22 August Biquard and Burhop informed the WFSW's affiliated organisations that they had offered the Federation's support to the conference proposed by the manifesto and urged them to spread the idea among scientists and scientific organisations in their own countries.⁷¹ At its Fourth Assembly, held in Berlin at the end of September, the WFSW passed a resolution "on the need for an international conference" and Burhop stressed that such a conference had to be politically independent as well as scientifically authoritative.⁷²

For his part Russell asked Rotblat to help with the organisation of the conference and suggested to another manifesto signatory, Herman J. Muller, that he should work on the enlistment of what he called scientists of a "western outlook". However, the American geneticist declined on grounds that he was too left-wing for such a task. Russell was disheartened and wrote to Rotblat on 10 September:

⁶⁹ Correspondence between Rabinowitch and Rotblat, Rotblat Papers, 5/1/1/1.

⁷⁰ Bone, Russell Papers, vol.28 p.315.

⁷¹ Burhop Memoir.

⁷² Horner p.155.

“I do not feel that I personally can do anything more among scientists...further steps among scientists ought to be taken by scientists...I am not wholly convinced of the necessity of such a conference...and in any case I do not feel it is my business to organise it.”⁷³

Undeterred, Burhop and Rotblat continued with preparations for the conference. At the end of October 1955 Burhop, working with Rotblat, drafted a letter on the formation of an initiating committee of eminent scientists that would organise an international scientific conference on the problems posed by nuclear weapons. The draft stated that the conference should be organised “in such a way as to not arouse the hostility of governments” and must not “appear to be directed against this or that particular government.” Furthermore: “it is our view that the presence of scientists of both East and West is necessary on this committee and in view of the atmosphere of détente created by events this summer, is entirely appropriate.”⁷⁴

Before committing himself to it, Russell sent this draft to another manifesto signatory, Max Born, who in turn consulted his German compatriot, the chemist Otto Hahn, who was at that time in the United States. Born’s view was the international situation was not propitious for such a conference⁷⁵ while Hahn thought American scientists would see it as a communist venture and would not participate in it, at least not in large numbers. Russell’s response to this negative feedback was, once again, to row back from the idea of a conference. As persistent as ever, Burhop argued that a meeting of a small initiating committee of 20-30 participants would still be useful even if a large-scale conference was not feasible at this time. Fortunately, an opportunity to pursue this line of action was presented by an imminent trip – in February 1956 - to the Far East of the Chairman of the WFSW’s Executive, C.F.Powell.⁷⁶ A visit to Japan was on Powell’s itinerary and the idea was that he would discuss matters with fellow manifesto signatory, Hideki Yukawa. However, Powell’s route took him first to India and there he discussed nuclear issues with Indian scientists and with the country’s Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

⁷³ Bone, Russell Papers, vol.28 pp.315-316.

⁷⁴ Rotblat Papers, 5/1/1/3. The final sentence quoted was amended by hand to read: “it is our view that the presence of scientists of both East and West is both necessary and appropriate.”

⁷⁵ Born may have had in mind the failure of Soviet-Western negotiations at the Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference of October-November 1955, which ended hopes for an agreed resolution of the German question and the reunification of East and West Germany.

⁷⁶ On Powell see F.C. Frank & D.H. Perkins, *Cecil Frank Powell, 1903-1969, Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol.17, November 1971 pp.541-563.

Following these discussions Powell composed a memorandum which proposed that the Indian government should sponsor a gathering of a small group of scientists who would meet in India immediately before a meeting of the Indian Science Congress in January 1957. This suggestion was welcomed by the Indians and embraced by Russell.⁷⁷ In mid-1956 Russell, Powell, Rotblat and Burhop began to organise for a meeting in India, to be held in January 1957. Invitations were sent to some 30 scientists and by October about 20 acceptances had been received. Much of the organisational donkey work was done by Burhop, with Rotblat and Powell also making a substantial contribution.⁷⁸ Burhop sent detailed progress reports to Biquard and Joliot-Curie. “It is clear that the response has been very satisfactory”, he wrote to Biquard on 16 October, “although the American representation will probably not be as strong as one would have hoped, and one must feel a little uneasy at the continued absence of definite replies from Soviet scientists. However, on the basis of the replies already received there is no doubt at all that the meeting is well worth having.”

That same month – October 1956 – Russell had a meeting with the man who was to head the Soviet delegation to the first Pugwash Conference – Alexander Topchiev, who was in Britain to attend the opening of Calder Hall in Cumbria – the world’s first commercial nuclear power station. The previous year Topchiev had attended discussion on nuclear issues at the World Association of Parliamentarians in London and the UN’s conference on the peaceful uses of atomic power in Geneva.⁷⁹

Russell met Topchiev, together with Powell, in Chirk in Wales. During the meeting Russell canvassed for Soviet participation in the projected meeting in India but Topchiev was non-committal, at least according to his own report of the meeting. The future of humanity depended on co-operation between the Soviet Union and the United States, Russell told him, and contacts among scientists would help foster mutual understanding between the two countries.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ A.G. Bone (ed), *Détente or Destruction, 1955 – 57: The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol.29*, Routledge: London 2005 pp.xxvi-xxvii.

⁷⁸ The relevant correspondence may be found in the Rotblat Papers 5/1/1/3 and Burhop B4.

⁷⁹ On Topchiev see Fabian Luescher’s essay in this volume.

⁸⁰ “Spravka o Besede Akademika A.V. Topchieva s B. Rasselom i Professorom Pauellom” (25 October 1956), ARAN f. 2193, op. 1, d. 2. I am grateful to Fabian Luescher for providing me with a copy of this document from the archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

There was a fly in the ointment, however: the lack of money to finance the Indian meeting which meant, wrote Burhop, that the odds on it happening were no more than 50/50.

Moreover:

“The difficulties in this connection are increased on account of the marked reluctance of Rotblat to accept help from any source which he may regard as associated with a particular political orientation. For example, he is not even prepared to accept the £500 from the WFSW...opportunities for approaching people are being lost or delayed by this attitude.

The meeting, when it assembles, will be purely an informal one, called on behalf of the eight sponsors, and there will be nothing to indicate that any organisation, including the WFSW, has played any part at all in calling it together. I have discussed this matter with Bernal and Powell and they are very much of the opinion that this is exactly as it should be and that the importance of the meeting transcends all other sectional considerations.

The guiding principle as far as Rotblat is concerned has been to secure American participation, or at least that of Rabinowitch, and he quite sincerely believes that this is incompatible with any mention at all of the World Federation.”⁸¹

One hope for financial sponsorship was Cyrus Eaton, the Chairman of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company, who shortly after the publication of the Russell-Einstein manifesto had written enthusiastically to Russell offering to host a meeting of scientists in the little village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia. In the same letter he wrote: “if you feel that some other place might be more convenient, I should be happy to be of assistance.”⁸² With this in mind, on 4 September 1956 Russell wrote to Eaton asking for a contribution toward the £8000 needed to finance the meeting in India. Eaton replied on 10 September declining to help the Indian conference but leaving open the possibility of a meeting in Pugwash.⁸³

⁸¹ Burhop B1.

⁸² Eaton to Russell, 13/07/55, Rotblat Papers, 5/1/1/3

⁸³ Rotblat Papers 5/1/1/2

Following this and other rebuffs from potential sponsors it was decided to postpone the January meeting in Delhi. In a letter to his WFSW contacts on 11 December Burhop explained that the postponement was mainly for financial reasons, mentioning also that the “troubled international atmosphere” (a reference to the Hungarian and Suez crises – GR) would have prevented some delegates from going to India. But Burhop was hopeful the meeting would go ahead sometime in the spring. After outlining the proposed agenda for the meeting – the destructive power of nuclear weapons, the peaceful uses of atomic energy, disarmament and arms control – he suggested that the interval created by the postponement be used to prepare background papers on these topics. “I know that I do not have to point out that the meeting is being assembled by the invitation of Earl Russell”, concluded Burhop, “and that neither the World Federation of Scientific Workers nor any other body has any direct organisational connection with it. In these circumstances the most effective way of drawing attention to the work of the Federation and the various bodies affiliated to it would consist in the submission of relevant contributions connected with the agenda.”⁸⁴

By the end of 1956 Russell, Rotblat, Powell and Burhop had concluded that it was Nova Scotia or nowhere and in early 1956 letters were sent to interested parties explaining that for financial and other reasons the meeting in India had been cancelled but there would be a conference in Pugwash in July.

Burhop continued his active role in preparations for the conference, particularly in relation to securing the attendance of Soviet scientists. On 6 May, for example, he telegraphed Oparin in Moscow asking him to submit without delay the names of the Soviet scientists who would travel to Canada.⁸⁵

These efforts notwithstanding, Burhop was not himself slated to go to Pugwash. But Biquard and Joliot-Curie were keen that he should do so, particularly after the British left-wing scientist, C.H. Waddington, dropped out.⁸⁶ Russell and Rotblat agreed to Burhop going to Pugwash but only as a member of the technical support team and when the post-conference Pugwash statement was issued Burhop’s name was omitted. As Burhop informed Biquard in

⁸⁴ Burhop B1

⁸⁵ Burhop Papers B3

⁸⁶ Correspondence between Burhop and Biquard June 1956, Burhop Papers B3.

a letter dated 14 November 1957: “this was entirely my own decision and was based on the ground that the addition of my name as well as Powell’s would have made the British delegation appear very left-wing and unrepresentative of British science.”

Equally, Burhop was peeved by the lack of recognition of the WFSW’s role in the success of the first Pugwash conference. Rabinowitch had published an article on Pugwash in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* which had mentioned several organisations but not the WFSW. While Burhop accepted that it would have been difficult to secure the representative participation of American scientists had the WFSW’s role been publicised before the conference, he noted that affiliated organisations in China, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union would find it difficult to understand why there was no mention of the Federation. “It all reduces to a question”, Burhop concluded in his letter to Biquard, “of to what extent we are justified in belittling the role of the Federation in the interests of achieving a very broad conference. I must confess that I am very uncertain of the limits to which one should go in this direction.”⁸⁷

Like Bertrand Russell, Joliot-Curie was unable to attend the conference because of ill-health but he received a detailed briefing on its proceedings from Burhop via Biquard. “Topichev appears very pleased with the results”, reported Biquard. “Skobel’tsyn less so. He gave Burhop the impression that it had been a big journey to achieve very little.”⁸⁸

Meeting in Helsinki in August 1957 the Fifth General Assembly of the WFSW welcomed the Pugwash conference and called for “ever more representative international conferences of scientists” and pledged its “support for efforts directed towards this end.”⁸⁹ In years to come many WFSW members and associates would take part in the Pugwash movement, including C.F. Powell, Joliot-Curie’s successor as President of the Federation. As Joseph Rotblat said after Powell’s death in 1969: “Cecil Powell has been the backbone of the Pugwash Movement. He gave it coherence, endurance and vitality.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Burhop Papers B4.

⁸⁸ Biquard to Joliot-Curie (in French), 19/07/1957, B4

⁸⁹ Burhop memoir

⁹⁰ Butcher p.17.

Soviet press coverage of the first Pugwash conference was scant initially with *Pravda* carrying only a brief report that did not even mention Soviet participation.⁹¹ However, when the Soviet delegation returned home the Academy of Sciences held a session on the conference and established a Pugwash working group headed by Topchiev, a body that by 1964 had morphed into the Soviet Pugwash Committee.⁹² On 13 August 1957 *Pravda* published a statement by 200 prominent Soviet scientists praising Pugwash and calling for a broader international gathering of scientists to consider steps towards a ban on nuclear testing and the prohibition of nuclear weapons.⁹³ On 16 August Topchiev published a laudatory article on Pugwash in *Pravda*, highlighting the immediate dangers of increased levels of strontium-90 as a result of continued nuclear testing as well as the existential threat to humanity posed by nuclear weapons.⁹⁴ Skobel'tsyn gave an interview to *Izvestiya*, and *Novoe Vremya* (New Times) also published an article on Pugwash.⁹⁵ In September 1957 Topchiev and Skobel'tsyn sent Powell a copy of the Academy of Sciences *Vestnik* (Bulletin) devoted to Pugwash. The Academy's members had discussed Pugwash, they reported, and the conference's conclusions were unanimously supported. They also highlighted the call in the 13 August statement for a much larger international meeting of scientists: "even if such a new conference dealing with same problems as in Pugwash, is unable to go much further ahead in the solution of these problems, the adherence of much larger circles of scientists to the principles adopted in Pugwash could be of great importance."⁹⁶

Conclusion

In his memoir about the origins of the Pugwash movement Burhop was characteristically generous about Rotblat's role in the process: "the greatest credit to any individual must go to Rotblat who has become the indefatigable Secretary General of the Pugwash Movement". But as this article has tried to show, the role of Joliot-Curie, Burhop and the WFSW was at least as important as Rotblat's, if not more so, in relation to the movement's founding conference. It was Joliot-Curie who inserted the call for a conference into the Russell-

⁹¹ "Zayavlenie Uchenykh-Atomnikov v Paguoshe", *Pravda*, 14 July 1957.

⁹² For further detail on the Soviet response to the first Pugwash meeting see Fabian Luescher's essay in this volume. On Soviet scientists and Pugwash after 1957 see M. Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War*, Cornell University Press: Cornell 1999.

⁹³ "Ob'edinit Usiliya Uchenykh v Borbe za Nemedlennie Zapreshchenie Yadernogo Oruzheniya: Zayavlenie Gruppy Sovetskikh Uchenykh" *Pravda*, 13 August 1957

⁹⁴ A.V. Topchiev, "Ustranat' Ugrozu Atomnoi Voiny", *Pravda*, 16 August 1957

⁹⁵ "The Scientist and the Atomic Weapon", *New Times*, no.32, August 1957.

⁹⁶ Rotblat Papers 5/1/1/2. The letter is undated but refers to the conference in Pugwash "about two months ago".

Einstein manifesto, it was the WFSW who secured Soviet participation in the first Pugwash conference, and it was Burhop who did the bulk of the organisational work.

Patrick Petitjean has argued that “the Wroclaw Congress...had two long-term negative consequences: the pro-communist scientists became more isolated from their former friends in the popular fronts; the WFSW lost its independence and was actually transformed into the scientist branch of the World Peace Council.”⁹⁷

Actually, it was not the peace movement but the cold war that isolated pro-communist scientists from some of their former allies. Moreover, persistent efforts by Joliot-Curie and the WPC to broaden the basis of the peace movement achieved considerable success in the early 1950s. By the mid-1950s there was much popular support for the policies espoused by the WPC and its Soviet partner. Without such a political context the Pugwash movement could not have come into existence. While the WPC and the WFSW were connected by shared politics and by the presidency of Joliot-Curie, the Federation pursued its own agenda, one result of which was the Russell-Einstein manifesto and the first Pugwash Conference. Far from using the WFSW to support the peace movement Joliot-Curie used the WPC to prioritise the abolition of nuclear weapons and to further the cause of scientific internationalism that he had first embraced in the 1930s.

Arguably, David Horner’s is fairer verdict on the WFSW:

“The Federation represented a genuine attempt to develop a new mode of scientific internationalism...the failure to achieve many of the objectives laid out in its Charter resulted primarily from the fragility of many of its affiliated organisations and the vehement conflicts aroused by the Cold War.

It was, nevertheless, able to contribute to the growth of a broader movement for the international control of nuclear weapons. In addition, its success was to have maintained a channel of communication between scientists of East and West for

⁹⁷ Petitjean p.261.

discussions of mutual concern against the background of a world deeply divided along ideological lines.”⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Horner p.157.