

# What Will President Tell Emperor Hirohito?

On Amchitka Island last Thursday, Dr. Mel Merritt of Sandia Laboratories and the Atomic Energy Commission insisted that the Cannikin five megaton nuclear detonation will be a self-sealing shot. The rocks and minerals at the bowels of the island at 6,000-foot level. (where the atomic device will be) will melt because the heat created by the blast will be nearly the temperature of the sun's surface. They said the outer layers of the explosion chamber will reform into kind of a glass bowl, shaped like a saucer, which will automatically seal on cooling, supposedly protecting the surrounding bedrock and the surface life forms—and atmosphere—from dangerous radiation (which will remain dangerous for years and years).

However, Merritt admitted that no tests were made after projects Longshot or Milrow (the two previous smaller Amchitka experimental blasts) to see if such a bowl did really form. He said that "it's not a point in question," when queried by the Tundra Times, referring to consistent experience in Nevada proving grounds underground tests.

AEC scientists are predicting that the Cannikin blast will register at about 7.0, or slightly more, on the Richter seismic scale, but insist that secondary earthquakes triggered by the blast are unlikely, and further insist that a damaging tsunami, commonly called tidal wave, is not likely to result although tsunamis have been known to originate in the Aleutian Chain from natural events in the past. These waves must travel south (toward Hawaii and Japan) since the Bering Sea to the north is so shallow.

AEC will not say exactly when the device will be detonated, but Joe La Rocca in a Fairbanks Broadcast Center exclusive report said on Wednesday, August 25, that the device was expected to arrive on the island "sometime this week," and a security restriction has been laid around the island to last until October 14.

Best estimates point that the blast will be in the first week of October, less than two weeks after President Richard Nixon and Mrs. Nixon are to receive Emperor Hirohito and Empress of Japan in Anchorage on September 26.

The President and the nation will be in an embarrassing diplomatic position, to say the least, if Nixon must announce that he has signed the order directing that the Amchitka shot be carried out at the same time he welcomes the first Japanese Emperor to ever set foot in this country out of Japan. The Japanese press and the public opinion appear fiercely set against the blast.

Press speculation beginning in the spring indicated, and was finally confirmed in July by the government, that the Cannikin shot is a major test of the warhead for the Spartan interceptor missile, part of the U.S. Safeguard Anti Ballistic Missile program, which has only been approved on a very limited-deployment basis by Congress. This in turn implies:

—The device is probably a "dirty" bomb—that is one causing an excessive amount of radioactive fallout, since the Spartan is intended to neutralize incoming missiles, not by explosive contact, but by releasing sufficient radiation to disable their electronic guidance mechanisms.

—On May 20, President Nixon made an announcement that may require him to postpone Cannikin indefinitely. On that date he said that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had agreed to talk "seriously" about limiting their ABM systems. Also the U.S. and the Soviet Union have been carrying on the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT).

The Russians may well be able to argue that the U.S. is not "bargaining in good faith" if the President executes the order authorizing the Cannikin blast. Coupling this with what he must say to Emperor Hirohito, we are inclined to think that Nixon could call off, or indefinitely postpone, the Cannikin shot. Otherwise he could place the nation in a precarious diplomatic position.