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The Harris Survey

Test-Ban Pact Has Cautious Support Of 73% of Americans, Poll Shows

By Louis Harris

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When Under Secretary of State Averell Harriman sits down a week from today in Moscow to negotiate a nuclear test-ban agreement with the Soviet Union, he can count on the cautious support of better than seven out of every ten Americans, according to a survey just completed of a scientifically chosen cross-section of the public.

Here is what emerged when the question of a test ban was put directly to the people:

Attitudes Toward Test-Ban Agreements with Russians

	Total Public Per Cent
Favor ban agreement	73
Unqualified approval	47
Qualified approval	26
Oppose ban agreement	17
Not Sure	10

Outright opposition to any ban agreement on atomic testing runs to no more than one voter in every six across the country. The number who would support a test-ban settlement with the Russians are divided, however, between those who feel we should bend any and all efforts toward this end, and those who insist that varying safeguards be strictly observed.

Here are the reasons of the American people—the “whys” behind their stated opinions—told in their own words:

Reasons for Favoring or Opposing Test Ban Agreement	Total Public Per Cent
Reasons for unqualified approval	47
Find way to end tests	16
End risk of atom war	11
Cut fall-out	10
Stop world suicide	6
Halt cost of testing	4
Terms for qualified approval	26
If Russia keeps word	11
Only with inspection	11
If on our terms	4
Reasons for opposing	17
Russia will break it	15
Can't be weak	2
Not sure	10

The 47 per cent who most

strongly urge a test-ban agreement feel that a continued nuclear arms race with further testing will lead to the ultimate destruction of the human race. However, this view constitutes a plurality, not a majority of the people. The balance of opinion rests with those who want an agreement, but only if it works. This means inspection and, by implication, leaving as little as possible to faith in dealing with the Russians.

It would be a mistaken reading of American public opinion for Chairman Nikita Khrushchev and the Communists to assume that the people of this country share in any measure a “ban the bomb, at any price” philosophy. If the Russians were to resume testing again, the pressures from the American public on

President Kennedy to begin our own testing again would be enormous and overwhelming.

This sentiment for nuclear test resumption was evident when we asked the voting public how they now feel about Mr. Kennedy's decision in 1961 to renew American nuclear tests after the Soviets resumed their tests:

Attitudes Toward U. S. Decision to Test When Russians Test

	Total Public Per Cent
Approve U. S. testing	82
Oppose U. S. testing	10
Not Sure	8

There is little doubt that any Soviet move to resume testing would meet with a massive response that this country should test nuclear weapons immediately. Here is the reasoning behind these attitudes, as people expressed them in their own words:

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Reason for Approving or Opposing U. S. Testing	Total Public Per Cent
Why approve U. S. tests	82
Stay ahead of Russia	45
No other choice	13
Be ready for anything	12
Develop weapons system	6
Stand up to Russia	5
Test peaceful uses	1
Why oppose U. S. tests	10
Tests endanger health	4
Have enough bombs now	3
Two wrongs don't make a right	3
Not Sure	8
As on so many issues, American public opinion is both tough and practical-minded. Our people recognize the dangers of total nuclear war and want every effort bent to avert it. By the same token, most Americans embrace the policy of peace through strength, feeling that a ban on testing is possible only when this country possesses a striking power sufficient to discourage any Russian move toward nuclear aggression.	