

Profiles in Diplomacy

GALE WARNER

Physician to the World, Dr. Bernard Lown

Half a world away, hundreds of people are staring at each other as if they were children on their first visit to the zoo. Here are creatures they had never seen before, except in books, magazines, and newspapers. Through the technical wizardry of satellite telecommunication and large video screens, two audiences, one American and one Soviet, are now finally together, face to face. For many of the people jammed into the two auditoriums, it is their first opportunity to look the "enemy" straight in the eye. Many seemed surprised to discover how much the members of the "other side" looked like themselves—that they, too, breathe, smile, chat, and wave. So this is what our threats of global nuclear incineration are all about?

Though it is 7:30 in the morning in Moscow, the Russians are dressed up in their best evening clothes. The Americans, too, are impeccably clad after having paid fifteen dollars each to attend this event at Moscone Center at 8:30 in the evening. The occasion for these gatherings is a dramatic simultaneous ceremony in both San Francisco and Moscow. The Creative Initiative Foundation, an organization of several thousand successful professionals dedicated to reversing the arms race, is presenting its 1984 "Beyond War Award" to Drs. Ber-

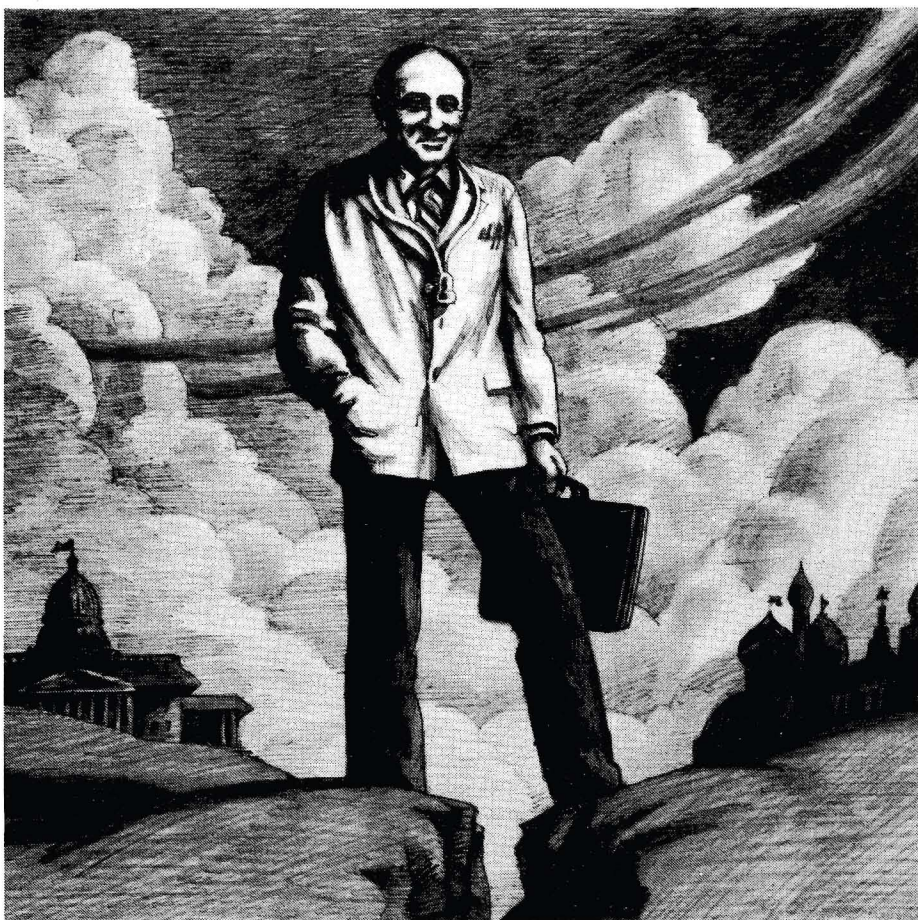
nard Lown and Evgueni Chazov, co-founders and co-presidents of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). They are honoring Lown and Chazov for their role in having put together a coalition of 130,000 doctors in 53 countries that has literally revolutionized public perceptions about the unsurvivability of a nuclear war.

In the midst of thunderous applause resounding from both audiences, Dr. Bernard Lown walks onto the stage. For Lown, this moment is the culmination of nearly twenty years of reaching out to the Soviet Union and carefully building friendship and trust. Few in either auditorium could realize that what distinguishes the bond between Dr. Lown and Dr. Chazov is not a placid, trouble-free history but rather an ability to weather difficulties, to handle deftly issues which have stymied national leaders, and to work out compromises for the sake of a shared vision. Perhaps Lown himself, as he paused before the microphone and cleared his throat, reflected on the long, arduous road that made this all possible.

Prescription for an Unhealthy Patient

Bernard Lown is a cardiologist at Harvard's School of Public Health who thinks of the world as his patient. With its worsening nuclear arms race, he believes, the world has a serious illness and must face up to the necessary prescription: thaw out the Cold War and get rid of nuclear weapons.

"Scratch any American," says Dr. Lown, "and his response whether he's a professor at Harvard or a truck driver is always the same on the Russian question, and that is *shocking* to me. . . They will tell you that the Russians are dangerous, they're out to take over the world, you cannot trust a Russian, they have a terrible government, they're living like pigs, they have nothing, they've achieved nothing. Everybody responds the same. And that tells me another thing: we have become conditioned by a massive process of propaganda. . . What have we done for thousands of years when confronted by an enemy? Reason? Tried to work out the conflict amiably? No, we



CHRIS HANSEN

"Profiles in Diplomacy" is a new, regular feature of The CID Report describing the personal stories of individuals who have undertaken noteworthy diplomatic initiatives. The following piece is an abridged version of a chapter in a forthcoming CID book entitled The New Diplomats written by Gale Warner, a freelance writer now living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

picked up a rock. Nowadays we pick up a missile."

"We must have reciprocating initiatives compelled by people power and people's understanding," he says. "The moment one side takes a measure then enormous public opinion concentrates on the other side to compel them to do the same. And if the world is kept in suspense wondering what the next step will be, you create suddenly public involvement in a process. Negotiations then occur of agreements in place. You bring in the experts at the end, not the beginning, to obfuscate the matter like medieval scholars with their trivial esoterica."

Lown is fully aware that for the treatment to work, the patient must be fully convinced that this course is the only viable one. The role of the physicians' movement, therefore, is to create this climate of world opinion by making clear just how dreadful a nuclear war would be and thereby goad citizens into taking action. "We have to develop people's diplomacy and a people's dialogue to negotiate a deeper understanding of one

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another. . . As doctors we actuate our patients to comply with prescriptions, and change a lifestyle in order to make it congruent with good health. And we must do it here. We must develop a dialogue with the Soviets, and thereby diminish the fear and paranoia . . . that fuels this engine of death."

"Citizen diplomacy," according to Lown, "expresses a massive popular frustration with government. Government is now holding us hostage for our lives. Its aim was once to defend us, but now it's turning in another direction. This attempt at popular diplomacy is . . . a desperate shriek of humanity aiming for survival."



Dr. Bernard Lown and Dr. Evgueni Chazov

Early Activism: The Founding of PSR

Lown is well qualified for his role as the world's physician. "World-famous" is a term that tends to be used rather loosely in medical circles, particularly in Boston, which considers itself to medicine what 19th century Paris considered itself to art. But in Lown's case the appellation appears deserved. He has lectured on cardiovascular disease throughout the world. His papers are translated into a dozen languages. His development of the "direct-current defibrillator" made his tiny laboratory a worldwide center for heart patients. The only continent without a former Lown Fellow is Antarctica.

Dr. Lown's journey to such prominence is a classic story of triumph over adversity. As a Jewish applicant to Harvard Medical School in the late 1930s, he was rejected and told by the admissions dean the school had "already met our quota of, er, people like you." Lown enrolled instead at Johns Hopkins. There he was kicked out for giving "colored" blood to white patients. His student group, however, created a ruckus and took his case to the White House; after the government intervened with Johns Hopkins authorities, he was reinstated.

After a long job search, complicated by his refusal to admit his and others' membership in various student organiza-

tions deemed "subversive," he finally landed a position at Harvard's Brigham Hospital and this led to a faculty position at the School of Public Health, where he has distinguished himself ever since.

Lown traces the beginnings of his activism on nuclear issues to a speech given by Nobel-prize-winner Philip Noel-Baker in Cambridge in 1960. Lown and two physician friends, Sidney Alexander and Roy Menninger, were deeply affected by Noel-Baker's suggestion that doctors ought to play a special role in publicizing the health costs of atmospheric testing. The three physicians called a meeting of other prominent Cambridge doctors in Lown's living room and formed a new organization—Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). Through Lown's leadership, PSR became a leading proponent of what ultimately became the Limited Test Ban Treaty in August 1963. After this Treaty was signed, however, PSR's members drifted to other issues and the organization went dormant.

Leaping the Iron Curtain

Lown met Evgueni Chazov at a cardiology conference in New Delhi, India in 1965. The two young cardiologists had many similar interests and liked each other from the start. But they did not meet again until June 1968, when Lown traveled to the Soviet Union as a special

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guest lecturer at the Soviet Academy of Medical Sciences. Frustrated by his inability to drum up much enthusiasm for his special interest—sudden cardiac death—in American medical circles, he decided that if he could get the Russians keenly interested in the issue, Americans would suddenly decide they were as well.

In 1968, the Soviets barely nibbled, but by 1972, they decided that cardiac sudden death was a major problem and summoned Lown for help. It was the heyday of detente, and a cooperative American-Soviet study was undertaken with Lown and Chazov chosen as co-directors. The study lasted for eight years and helped cement between both men a close personal and professional relationship. But one subject was never discussed—the threat of nuclear war.

In 1978, as detente began to unravel, Lown and several other Harvard doctors began discussing the possibility of setting up some sort of Soviet-American physicians' group to discuss the arms race. In February of 1979, Lown wrote a letter to Chazov on the subject, but he received no reply. "I was very perturbed," he admits, "but what went through my mind was that I was not going to give up easily, that if I was rebuffed I'll come back for more punishment..."

Then a chance meeting with a visiting Soviet physician in Boston broke the ice. "I asked her, 'Where do you come from?' and she said, 'I'm the head of rehabilitation medicine in the Soviet Union.' I said, 'You *are*? Where do you work?' and she said, 'With Dr. Chazov.'" Lown seized the moment, invited the woman for Sunday brunch at his house, and placed a letter in her hand for personal delivery. By December 1979, Lown received the positive response from Chazov he had been looking for, endorsing the goal of putting together a conference and organization of American and Soviet physicians.

Meanwhile, PSR was enjoying a veritable renaissance. A symposium at Cambridge on the medical consequences of nuclear war, which was expected to draw only 100 physicians and other health workers, wound up attracting 700. Money was collected there to pay for a full page open letter in *The New York Times*—to Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev.

In response to the ad, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, called a meeting with the PSR leaders to deliver Brezhnev's personal response: The idea of a joint Soviet-American conference of physicians to discuss nuclear war had received high-level approval. Dobrynin expressed caution, however, about the Soviets issuing a direct invitation, fearing that the ensuing conference would be labeled "Soviet-inspired." The PSR leaders mentioned to Dobrynin that Dr. Lown happened to be in London and could possibly travel to Moscow.

Bucking all the rules of official protocol, Lown and his wife received Soviet visas in two days. After Chazov picked them up at the airport, Lown unleashed his considerable powers of persuasion. Although Chazov had given the idea of a Soviet-American physicians' effort his blessing, he was still reluctant to become personally involved. So Lown began talking about "the nitty-gritty of what a nuclear bomb does. . . . He was really shaken up by that. . . . Then I talked about the moralistic tradition in medicine, how the morality of physicians compels them to get involved. . . . And then I talked of a third area, of Soviet suffering, of how deeply the anti-war tradition is immersed in their souls..."

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Chazov was moved: "I told my whole family about the idea and about Dr. Lown, and they all told me, 'You should be involved in this. You have already a grandchild.' The next day, I met with Dr. Lown and I told him I was ready to work."

They met for five hours straight the next day and set down the group's guiding principles: political neutrality and limitation to the single issue of the medical consequences of nuclear war. The enemy would not be East or West,

but a third party—the weapons themselves.

IPPNW Inaugurated

The first Congress of the IPPNW was held at the Airlie House Convention Center in Washington, D.C. in March 1981. To attract the American media, Lown suggested to Chazov that they invite Georgy Arbatov, a key Soviet official, to speak at one of the plenary sessions with Harvard's George Kistiakowsky and Stanford's Wolfgang Panofsky. This was a double-edged blessing, however, as Arbatov's presence also might give skeptics within the press a handle on which to cast doubts on the "apolitical" nature of IPPNW. Lown himself was a little nervous, and when he met the Soviets at the airport, he took Chazov aside, asking him to please emphasize to Arbatov the importance of not using this opportunity to criticize the United States. Apparently Chazov did so; at lunch, before speaking, Arbatov leaned over to Lown and said, "Bernard, you're a nice fellow. Don't you worry, I'm your guest, I won't do anything to embarrass you." And he kept his word. The only fodder he provided to those anxious to report on any hints of pro-Sovietism was a quip he doubtless could not resist: "Doctors of the world, unite!"

The Airlie House congress, which attracted 73 physicians from 13 countries, was given wide and generally favorable media coverage. But some editorial commentators accused the doctors of something just short of treason. As Dr. Jim Muller put it, "We have always faced the problem that if the Russians say the sun is shining, and we say the sun is shining, then we are fitting the Soviet position." Lown considers this kind of primitive logic a symptom of the disease IPPNW is fighting: "We should be happy that the Russian government is taking the position of supporting the nuclear weapons freeze, the no first use policy, the test ban. Can the Russian doctors only gain credibility by disagreeing with their government? If the American government favored these things, wouldn't we want to support its position?"

A second congress was held in Cambridge, England in March 1982, attended by more than 170 delegates from 31 countries. The delegates approved a call for a nuclear freeze and a declaration that there could be no civil defense during a nuclear attack. The movement was growing and

broadening and becoming more specific. In December 1982 more than 1,500 Soviet health workers assembled for the first conference of the Soviet national physicians' group.

Uncensored Soviet Prime Time

Press coverage of the second congress, however, had not been as extensive as that of the first, and IPPNW leaders began to wonder what they could do to capture world attention again. The U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union had made light of the Soviets' extensive newspaper coverage of the first two congresses, saying that "you haven't gone on television, and until you do that you haven't made an impact." This set off Lown's thinking, and during a meeting in the spring of 1982 with Dobrynin, Lown brought up the idea of a roundtable discussion by Soviet and American physicians to discuss medical aspects of nuclear war on Soviet television. "Why not?" said Dobrynin.

The Americans insisted that the show not be edited, cut, or censored in any way, that it be allowed to air on prime time without comment, and that the American press be allowed to witness the taping. Once again, Lown showed a

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brilliance for taking risks at just the right moment. A delicate point of contention at the second congress had been the issue of civil defense, since IPPNW's declaration was at odds with both Soviet and American shelter and evacuation programs. The subject was clearly a touchy one, and Lown puzzled over whether to bring it up during the television show. Midway through taping, he made his

decision. Lown dismissed the effectiveness of shelter and evacuation programs, saying "we physicians have concluded that the only remedy is prevention, not civil defense measures, and it's time we said so openly." Two days later, more than 100 million Soviets viewed the program; demand was so great that it was aired again.

From that moment, IPPNW experienced astronomical growth. It held its third congress in the Netherlands in June 1983 and received warm messages of support from Ronald Reagan, Yuri Andropov, U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, and Pope John Paul II.

Following that congress, the IPPNW began collecting signatures to an "International Physicians Call for an End to the Nuclear Arms Race" and, in less than a year, it had gathered more than one million signatures of physicians from 83 countries—more than 25% of the physicians in the world. At the fourth congress, held in Helsinki in June 1984, more than 400 physicians from 53 nations approved adding the following words to the Hippocratic oath: "As a physician of the twentieth century, it is my duty to warn my patients of the dangers of nuclear war and work for its prevention." The movement Drs. Lown and Chazov had begun that evening in Moscow was reaching proportions neither had ever dreamed possible.

Dialogue Between Colleagues

With thousands of Americans and Soviets looking on, Dr. Lown finally begins speaking. "On behalf of more than one hundred thousand physicians worldwide, who are actively engaged in struggling against the nuclear peril, I accept with gratitude and humility this extraordinary award. Through the nearly magical advances of science we are able to traverse a great distance in seconds. But," he says, eyeing both audiences purposefully, "we must honestly confront the bitter fact that the misapplication of science and technology has brought us microseconds away from unparalleled disaster."

"The most important contribution of the physicians' movement," Dr. Lown says, "is the free-flowing dialogue that has



Lown and Chazov preparing for TV broadcast.

been promoted between colleagues of the two contending power blocs." He now waves his hand for emphasis. "We and the Soviet people have a linked human destiny. Nuclear weapons are our shared mortal enemy. We either live together or die together, and there is no other alternative." Both audiences interrupt him with roaring applause—applause through which each audience is signalling its solidarity with the other.

Dr. Evgueni Chazov steps to the microphone in Moscow. "I, like Dr. Lown, am a cardiologist, and every day we listen to the beating of the hearts of our countrymen." He maneuvers the microphone to his chest and exhorts, "This is the sound of the heart of a healthy Russian." The familiar lub-dub is broadcast to both audiences. "And this is the sound of a healthy American heart." The lub-dubbing continues unchanged. "You can hear they sound exactly alike. You can hear their desire for love, for well-being. All of this is can only occur, however, when on our planet we have peace, and this is why we physicians, by virtue of our Hippocratic oath, are called upon to protect the life and health of our patients and our peoples. Either we will live together on our beautiful planet, or we will die together in the flames of nuclear war."

The crowd's fervor approaches undiluted hero-worship for these two men. In the giddy atmosphere of the simulcast, it all seems so easy and effortless. Tears flow on both sides as the audiences join in singing before waving good-bye. More than a few gulp as the screens go black and the vision disappears. ■