

Atomic Self-destruction:

# 'Clock of Doom' Moves One Minute Closer to Midnight

By Helen Farlow

Many thoughtful people who are not otherwise clock-watchers wait with anxiety and apprehension for their first glimpse each month of a printed clock face on the cover of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

Dr. Eugene Rabinowitch of the University of Illinois is editor of this learned publication, which is intended for the literate layman as well as for the scientist.

Cover of the Bulletin bears, perennially, a sketch of an "atomic clock" with the hands pointing to a few minutes before midnight.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has been in publication since 1946. The "atomic clock" was first drawn for the cover in 1947.

Since then, ominously, the hands of the clock twice have been moved closer to midnight—or, as Dr. Rabinowitch calls it in a terrifying, matter-of-fact tone, "the hour of doom."

### First Minute

The first time was in 1949 when the first Soviet atomic explosion was announced.

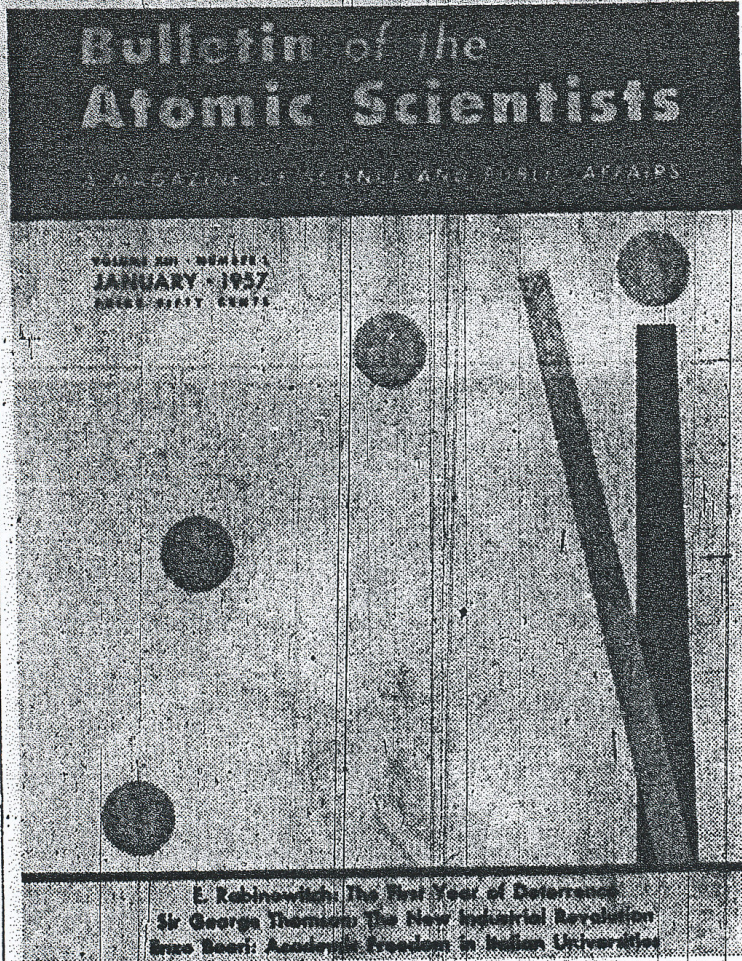
The second time was in September, 1953, when the Soviet Union tested its first hydrogen bomb in Siberia.

Now readers of the Bulletin have been stopped in their mental tracks by a statement in Dr. Rabinowitch's lead article in the current (January, 1957) issue.

In recent months, Dr. Rabinowitch says with calm finality, mankind has come "a great stride closer to atomic self-destruction. The hand on the Bulletin's cover has moved nearer the hour of doom!"

Actually, the clock hands on the printed cover were not moved forward, but Dr. Rabinowitch told The Courier that "they should have been" and that they would have been, except that there is "not much space left. There is not much time left, either."

Dr. Rabinowitch actually talked to an artist about moving the hands on the "atomic clock," but the "no room" argument held good. As a result, he said in effect here



Bulletin's Cover Approaches Atomic Midnight

that the cover clock may have to be re-designed to allow for a new scale of advancement, as the hands move, minute by minute and incident by incident, toward "doom."

### Latest Incident

What is the incident that moved the hands of the fateful clock closer to midnight?

Dr. Rabinowitch writes that it was the fact that England and France backed out of the Suez "at the outset of a victorious operation which they considered absolutely vital for their survival" because of a threat by the Soviet Union to turn on them the fury of Russian "deterrent" weapons.

"This demonstration of the power of air-atomic deterrence is a turning point in history, and we should not be distracted from recognizing its significance by incidental ev-

ents, such as the diplomatic pressure the United States exerted upon England and France, or the speeches given, and resolutions passed in the United Nations."

These incidental events, Dr. Rabinowitch said in his article, were probably anticipated by England and France.