THE OTHER GAS CRISIS — CHEMICAL WEAPONS: PART II

by

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Part I of this article, appearing in the September issue, discussed the historical problem of chemical weapons in the context of international disarmament and arms control efforts. It demonstrated the importance of adequate verification measures in any US-Soviet agreement and noted the Soviets' refusal thus far to accept such measures. Part II, the concluding portion, turns to the real and serious threat to Western security posed by the present imbalance in chemical warfare capabilities—an imbalance strongly favoring the Soviet Union.—Ed.

THE MILITARY IMPLICATIONS[1]

It now becomes necessary to explore the nature and meaning of the threat posed by the chemical warfare capability of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. To put it very bluntly, the present Warsaw Pact advantage in chemical weapons increases the risk that someday a President of the United States might have to choose between acceptance of defeat or nuclear war in the event of a Soviet-Warsaw Pact attack into NATO Europe. As will be shown, this candid assessment derives both from the nature of chemical weapons and the role they would likely play in the event of a major NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation.

Modern chemical agents, the so-called "nerve agents," can kill or disable. Their effects can occur within minutes of exposure to casualty-producing dosages (very small amounts in the case of the more toxic nerve agents). Other less-volatile agents can effectively contaminate terrain, materiel, buildings, or other objects upon which they settle. These latter, referred to as "persistent" agents, cause casualties either by inhalation or by penetration of the skin or eyes, and thus can present a lethal contact hazard of fairly long duration. The danger that these chemical agents pose is heightened because they can be odorless and invisible and, in volatile form, can penetrate structures, fortifications, armored vehicles, or anything else that is not completely airtight.

Modern chemical agents could have application across the entire spectrum of warfighting categories, from terrorist activities to strategic nuclear war. However, it is the tactical use of chemical agents which is of greatest concern. Because chemical agents can be delivered by a multitude of weapons and delivery systems (such as land mines, artillery, rockets, missiles, and aircraft), they can be employed throughout an extensive area within a theater of operations. Thus, they may be used against targets in the immediate battlefield area as well as against deeper supporting units and facilities or even cities and industrial areas. Because a chemical agent cloud can extend the effect of chemical weapons beyond their point of release, chemical weapons can kill or disable quickly over fairly large areas under some circumstances.

Defense against chemical weapons requires special protective equipment and the ability to cope with the toxic environment created by their use. It is correctly argued that the more efficient one's protection, the less the value of the other side's chemical weapons. (Efficiency as used here means lack of interference with routine activities of the user). But today's state-of-the-art protection against chemical weapons is highly inefficient and substantive improvements are *not* projected. Protective equipment quickly tires the individual soldier and impedes his ability to use his weapons or to operate instruments or machines. In fact, ordinary matters such as eating, drinking, and simple body elimination become complex problems. The collective impact of being forced into a protective posture thus lowers the fighting efficiency of combat units. This effect assumes major proportions if the combat power of only one side is so degraded.[2]

Additionally, even if individuals are inside special clothing and wearing gas masks, a unit might expect 5 to 15 percent casualties in the event of a chemical attack just from errors, oversights, or such faulty equipment as a leaky overgarment or gas mask.[3] Furthermore, while full recovery from less-than-lethal doses of modern chemical agents is possible, such doses still can put people out of action for days or weeks, depending on dosages involved and available medical treatment.[4]

Chemical warfare is a unique form of warfare, not only in terms of certifiable killing power, but also in terms of altering the nature of combat. The use of chemical weapons would, in fact, have a tremendous impact upon the subsequent conduct of a war. A battlefield where chemical agents were present would differ markedly from one where they were not. It is hard to improve upon the description by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) of how the frontline situation would look:

> The whole process of tactical maneuver, of using weapons and equipment and of supplying forward units would become considerably more complicated. A [chemical protective] regimen would have to be enforced at all times, with troops either wearing [gas masks] and protective clothing, or having them immediately at hand. Elaborate arrangements would be needed for the servicing of these equipments, for decontamination, and for the resting of combat troops. Careful reconnaissance by [chemical agent] detection patrols would be necessary before moving positions. Special medical supplies and decontaminants would have to be moved up to all forward areas, and sufficient time for their use would have to be fitted into the scheduling of operations. The latter would also have to take into account the likelihood of reserves being needed earlier than usual, for in a [chemical] environment, the length of time for which a given combat unit can operate effectively will be shortened.[5]

To the rear, the impact of chemical weapons would be just as bad or probably worse. Here, logistic areas, weapons storage sites, communication complexes, airfields, ports, and other military facilities are dependent—in varying degrees—upon the availability of non-US skilled and unskilled civilian labor for their successful operation. The application of chemical weapons to such

facilities may be expected to cause casualties and severely disrupt operations due to the necessity for protective measures and extensive decontamination. For example, chemical weapons with persistent agents would likely be very effective for disabling nuclear capabilities that are dispersed over areas such as airbases and nuclear supply depots. Soviet use of chemical weapons could put such facilities out of action for extended periods of time with only a few repeated strikes, due to the requirement for decontamination. In addition, it may be assumed that such uses of chemical weapons would have a significant impact on the availability of an easily terrorized civilian labor force.

Chemical weapons, therefore, are not just another weapons sytem or an isolated tactical problem. In terms of substitutability, there is no other type of weapon—including nuclear—which can produce quite the same effects and battlefield havoc. The conclusion has to be that chemical weapons, used on a large scale so as to capitalize on their unique capabilities, would be extremely effective even against well-trained and well-protected troops.

A SPECIAL DANGER FOR NATO

It is in the NATO context that the possibility of chemical warfare is most frightening. The basic goal of NATO is to deter a Warsaw Pact attack and, failing that, to control the war and terminate it on terms acceptable to the alliance. To accomplish this, NATO has adopted the strategy of flexible response, which has been designed to meet with like force and as far to the east as possible the full range of Warsaw Pact threats—conventional, chemical, and nuclear.

Given the present situation, NATO would choose to defend against a conventional attack conventionally, at least until such time as that is no longer possible. At this deliberately ambiguous point in time, NATO would then consider employing its tactical nuclear forces to redress the situation. Obviously the United States is anxious to delay arrival of such a decision point if for no other reason than assuring sufficient time to fully determine enemy intentions and adequately testing nonnuclear defenses. However, the more basic reason underlying this US attitude really has to do with the uncertainties associated with tactical nuclear forces, and in particular, the possibility that any use of these weapons might lead rapidly to an uncontrollable escalation. Equally worrisome is the possibility that even under conditions of tactical and strategic nuclear parity, the Soviet Union could be encouraged to escalate the hostilities themselves to the nuclear level, thereby forcing the United States to choose between tactical nuclear defeat or a strategic exchange.

Here, then, is why chemical weapons may be so important—they seem to bear directly on NATO's nuclear dependence and the plethora of escalation control problems associated with such dependence. For while it is possible that the United States and NATO could fight and win a conventional conflict, it is not probable that a *one-sided* use of chemical weapons could be effectively countered without escalation.

Chemical weapons could be used by the Warsaw Pact at any stage of conflict, either conventional or nuclear. Their use could be limited to the immediate battlefield or it could involve theater-wide strikes on the full

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array of military and civilian targets. If chemical weapons were widely used in an otherwise conventional war, they would dramatically reduce NATO's ability to defend conventionally and greatly speed up the arrival of circumstances requiring a decision on the use of tactical nuclear forces. *Indeed, it is conceivable that they would be used in such a way as to render a decision on the use of tactical nuclear forces by NATO moot.* For example, in conjunction with other major Warsaw Pact advantages (such as choice as to timing of the attack and advantage in conventional force ratios), they could be used—with synergistic effect—for disabling NATO tank defenses, paralyzing NATO nuclear capabilities, and rendering logistic areas and equipment depots inaccessible. The resulting blitz could so shorten the war that a NATO defense would collapse before either NATO's reserves could be mobilized and fully brought to bear or the necessary political decisions with respect to the use of tactical nuclear forces could be effected—even if the tactical nuclear forces were still available to be employed. The use of chemical weapons by the Warsaw Pact in conjunction with a conventional and tactical nuclear attack in central Europe would be equally disastrous to a NATO defense. In either case, the remaining choices could be either defeat or a strategic nuclear exchange.

The risks associated with a one-sided use of chemical weapons in Europe are so great that such use must either be successfully deterred or effectively countered on the battlefield. The possibility of political costs for the user certainly won't suffice for either. The potential military benefits to be derived are far greater than any additional incremental risk or political cost associated with the employment of chemical weapons over that of simply starting a war itself. Further, since a user's protective requirements are *significantly less* than a defender's, and the costs associated with assuming a full protective stance so great, it is virtually certain that an impressive protective posture alone would not dissuade an enemy from using chemical weapons if he did not have to fear retaliation in kind. It is also unlikely that the threat of a conventional counteraction would deter. Given the Warsaw Pact's advantages from the outset and the casualties, force degradation, and logistic constraints which would occur with a one-sided use of chemical weapons in a major war in Europe, it is hard to see how exploitation of the drastically changed tactical balance could be prevented by conventional countermeasures. It seems very unlikely that their threatened use would alter an enemy's perception of the risks to him from his use of chemical weapons.

Even nuclear weapons do not seem up to the task. An enemy could actually be encouraged to use his chemical weapons if he perceives NATO would not or could not use its tactical nuclear forces as the result of an attack which included chemical weapons. Further, in terms of risks perceived by the Soviets, the threat of NATO's tactical nuclear forces is already there. If they choose to begin a war, they will already have considered the likely military and political costs, including a NATO nuclear response. And, if they are willing to risk the possibility of nuclear retaliation merely by attacking, a one-sided use of chemical weapons could be seen as essentially a no-risk means for acquiring additional and significant military advantage.

For these reasons, the United States has long held the considered position that a capability to retaliate in kind is a necessary component of its deterrent to a one-sided use of chemical weapons and the least escalatory means for effectively countering such use. Chemical weapons are decidedly unpleasant, but they are a remarkably good nonnuclear answer to a Soviet-Warsaw Pact use of chemical weapons in Europe. They provide the ability to force the other side to incorporate the possibility of retaliation in kind into their planning, and they offer a capability to at least stalemate and to buy extra time.[6] As Robert Mikulak notes:

> The initial [chemical warfare] attack will compel the attacked force to implement extensive [chemical warfare] defensive

measures. If the attacker expects retaliation in kind, he is likely to adopt extensive defensive measures in advance, thus avoiding agent casualties. In fact, the primary purpose of the retaliation may be to force the attacker to continue this defensive posture.

Ideally, retaliation in kind should dissuade the attacker from further use of chemicals. . . . If both sides are evenly matched in [chemical warfare] offensive and defensive capabilities, a stalemate may result in which neither side suffers many agent casualties, but both are encumbered by decreased mobility and increased logistical burdens.[7]

Unfortunately, a solution has not yet been found for the problem of deterring a one-sided use of chemical weapons in Europe without incurring unacceptable risk, while simultaneously attempting to negotiate verifiable chemical weapons disarmament. As to whether NATO can deal with a chemical attack under present circumstances, General George S. Blanchard, former Commander of the US Army in Europe, says: "I don't know. We have a long way to go."[8] Others assert:

The imbalance is continuing to grow and may soon reach the stage where it becomes threatening to (1) our ability to survive in Europe, (2) our ability to fight in Europe, and (3) our ability to control escalation.[9]

THE INADEQUACY OF GOOD INTENTIONS

The situation has not been helped by the attitudes of some of the most passionate advocates of arms control and disarmament. While sincere and dedicated, they too often give the impression that simply because their goal is important, it must have precedence over legitimate security concerns.[10] Much of the so-called expert testimony before congressional committees, explicitly on chemical weapons disarmament, on the meaning of particular chemical weapons programs, on "the chemical arms race," and on chemical weapons proliferation theory may have been well-intentioned, but most has simply been fallacious.[11] It has contributed little or nothing to the establishment of relevant truth. The past 10 years of congressional testimony offered by academics and others on chemical weapons and arms control prospects are replete with theories and propositions which may or may not conform with reality but which have, nevertheless, been expounded with an unshakable certitude. Some experts and so-called experts appear to possess an intellectual arrogance that is—at one and the same time—a paradox of intelligent naiveté and an inability to question one's own assumptions. Unless policy judgments and theoretical propositions are prefaced with appropriate qualifications, it is virtually impossible to protect policymakers against the views of highly confident men and the tyranny of their assumptions.

In the chemical weapons area, some individuals—with neither political, diplomatic, nor military credentials—have managed over the years to become accepted, before the US Congress and on the international scene, as "experts" on chemical weapons and chemical warfare. Their opinions as to what the Soviets may do with their chemical stockpile or on whether the United States should proceed with binary chemical weapons seem to be given an inordinate degree of credibility. As with their testimony, their writings are a subtle blend of unarticulated assumptions, unattributed and selected facts, and faulty logic. For example, in "Chemical Weapons for NATO?" Julian Perry Robinson weaves an intricate but highly superficial case around the theme that "however many chemical weapons the USSR and its allies may have stockpiled, the threat which they represent to NATO can at best be marginal."[12] This and other patently dubious assertions come to rest, at the bottom line, upon NATO's nuclear forces and the simplistic and extremely dangerous notion that they can be and are an effective and acceptable ultimate solution for each and every type of NATO-Warsaw Pact military

confrontation. The United States has wisely repudiated the use of nuclear weapons and nuclear escalation as the sole basis for force planning or the use of forces.[13]

Some have been able to attain "expert" status with respect to chemical warfare and chemical weapon disarmament, at least in part, because they are articulate. However, it may be more a matter of opportunism, a reflection of the lack of serious attention given these subjects by individuals, institutions, and organizations who regularly deal with problems of national and international security and defense. Indeed, the number of Americans who follow developments in the tactical balance in Europe, in comparative doctrines and capabilities for chemical warfare, and in the chemical weapons disarmament negotiations is small. These subjects are the preoccupation of specialists. Because arms control is a profoundly political process, and because questions relating to chemical warfare appear so formidable and esoteric, there seems to be an almost knee-jerk reaction toward arms control which affects the decisionmaking atmosphere and lends impetus to the inherent tendency of discussion about chemical weapons to slide into areas of emotion and irrationality.[14]

On the international scene, understanding of the chemical weapons problem is no better.[15] Simplifications are cheered and only rarely questioned. Simplified moral passion and tactics typify what passes for debate. The Soviets and their allies keep the political pressure on by assertions that, despite their best efforts, it is the United States which stands in the way of immediate chemical weapons disarmament by advancing "a whole range of unrealistic demands."[16] The gullible are given to infer from Soviet pronouncements that the Soviets alone operate from some lofty concern for humanity.

The issue of verification has been an especially useful vehicle for the Soviets. Because it is such a complicated issue—one difficult to explain to a world public weary of large defense budgets, and one that cannot be explained in the space of a newspaper column or the time of a one-minute spot in the evening television news—the public's natural tendency to oversimplify complex issues is more than usually present. Thus, the Soviets are able to make great political capital out of the more dramatic, more easily registered "ban the bomb" approach. For example, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told the UN General Assembly in September 1976:

> There is no reason, and there cannot be any, for delay as regards the question of banning chemical weapons. What is needed is to show political will and desire to reach a generally acceptable agreement.[17]

This statement is typical of the hyperbole and hypocrisy that have been hallmarks of the Soviet approach to disarmament over the years.[18] There is no doubt that Soviet assertions about the need, desirability, and ease of reaching chemical weapons disarmament obscure the reality that their public posturing does not lead to adequate agreement on the essential, if less dramatic, details.[19]

In the area of chemical weapons, considerable international political pressure has developed for a chemical weapons prohibition. Having declared the 1970's as the "Disarmament Decade," the United Nations can be relied upon to pass annually a resolution calling for early achievement of comprehensive chemical disarmament as a matter of urgent priority. The Committee on Disarmament is, of course, another major source of attempts to influence political and public opinion with respect to chemical weapons disarmament.

The 40-nation Committee on Disarmament replaced the 31-nation Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) in January 1979. Like its predecessor, the committee was created as a multilateral arms control and disarmament negotiating body; also like its predecessor, it is desperately looking for something to negotiate.[20] Even though the CCD played a role in producing some arms control agreements, it customarily

had to await prior agreement among the nuclear states or between the United States and the Soviet Union before elaborating a treaty. In 1974, it was even suggested that the further existence of the CCD was threatened because of US failure to table a draft chemical weapons treaty and because of the stalemate over verification already apparent at that time.

The Committee on Disarmament is a "new" organization, and many of its members, especially those with strong emotional attachments to disarmament as an abstract concept, are anxious to obtain substantive results in a hurry. Since the committee is unable to get directly involved in the SALT, Comprehensive Test Ban, or other nuclear negotiations, the chemical weapons area looks to many delegations like the best, if not the only, opportunity for finding something to do. Thus, some member countries, most notably those with no chemical weapons and limited security concerns, avail themselves of every opportunity to demand an early chemical weapons agreement.

Although a number of working proposals and three draft chemical weapons treaties were submitted to the CCD between 1972 and 1978, all came to naught. Some members of the Committee on Disarmament, along with Sweden's former Minister for Disarmament Alva Myrdal, apparently continue to believe that a chemical weapons agreement can be reached by the committee independently of the United States, the Soviet Union, and "their obedient allies."[21] This view seems to be a manifestation in varying degrees of frustration, of an illusion that both superpowers can be forced to disarm against their will, and of a willingness to support even ineffective treaties in order to be able to claim "progress." It should be obvious even to the most zealous, however, that there can be no meaningful international chemical weapons treaty without US-Soviet agreement on its terms. It should also be obvious that there are major issues as yet unresolved in the bilateral negotiations, and their prospects are, at best, uncertain. If it is genuinely interested in real chemical weapons disarmament, the Committee on Disarmament should realize that it would be wise to avoid importunate activities which could jeopardize the outcome of the bilateral talks.

The attitude of some members of the committee is unfortunate, for despite its many weaknesses, nobody wants to see the committee go under. It is a valuable forum for the exchange of ideas, and its role in extending treaties multilaterally is important. The CCD made, and the Committee on Disarmament could also make, a significant contribution in this regard. In any event, committee members can be expected to keep up their clamor for a speedy, joint US-USSR initiative on chemical weapons. Perhaps greater openness by the negotiating parties with respect to the status of, and prospects for, the bilaterals, and on the major unresolved issues such as verification, is the only way to deflate the unrealistic expectations which currently exist in the committee, and to dissipate pressures for precipitate committee activity on the chemical weapons issue. In any event, while the United States should attempt to empathize with the committee's concerns and hopes, it must avoid being overly sensitive to them.

COMING TO TERMS WITH REALITY

The present situation can be summarized as follows:

- The United States is committed to effective and complete chemical weapons disarmament, not merely as another limitation on arms, but as a genuine disarmament measure calling for the total destruction of an entire class of existing weapons.
- To this end, the United States has participated in multilateral talks for years and undertook bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1976.
- In the interest of facilitating progress in achieving chemical weapons disarmament and of relieving political pressures from the United Nations, the Committee on

Disarmament, and other arms control lobbies, the United States has unilaterally restrained an already deficient chemical weapons program—the source of a major component of the US deterrent to chemical warfare.

- The existing imbalance in chemical weapons is not an isolated tactical problem and may have reached a point where a widespread and one-sided use of chemical weapons by the Soviet Union against NATO forces would have ominous tactical and strategic implications.
- The bilateral negotiations have—in almost three years—made little or no progress on major issues, such as verification, to which the United States attaches great importance. In fact, the Soviet position on verification remains essentially unchanged from what it was in the late 1960's.
- The US desire for on-site verification of the destruction of chemical weapons stocks and of the facilities which produce and fill such weapons is not unreasonable for a disarmament measure of such potentially historic proportions and precedent-setting importance. By comparison, earlier arms control agreements were much easier to attain principally because they were limitations which involved either armaments of marginal importance, matters with which the parties had no intention of becoming involved anyway, or situations wherein adequate verification could be accomplished through national technical means. None of these apply in the chemical weapons case.

Given this situation, how should the United States proceed in order to break the apparent negotiating stalemate over verification of a chemical weapons ban and to deter the Soviet Union and its allies from capitalizing on their perhaps decisive advantage in chemical weapons?

The best answer from both the arms control and the military points of view seems obvious: *The United States must make a believable threat to improve its prime deterrent to chemical warfare—its stockpile of chemical weapons.* Such action is needed to influence the Soviet negotiating position, to reduce the risk that a war in Europe might include the use of chemical weapons, and to better cope with such an eventuality if it occurred.

The need for an improved deterrent and retaliatory chemical weapons stockpile does *not* conflict with the desirability of chemical weapons disarmament. It is not a matter of having to choose one or the other; both can and must be pursued as prudent, logical, and complementary approaches to the eventual elimination of the possibility of chemical warfare. Near-term national and collective security requirements need not—and should not—be sacrificed to the allure of an elusive disarmament agreement. Indeed, as Fred Iklé, former Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, has pointed out, experiments in unilateral self-restraint may make such an agreement even more difficult to obtain. Under the present circumstances, continued unilateral restraint by the United States would be folly.

The Soviets have already demonstrated an apparent unwillingness to reciprocate US restraint with chemical weapons. Yet they have said:

> The Soviet approach [to the disarmament problem] is marked by consistency and a desire to do everything possible to put an end to the arms race. . . . One cannot disarm and arm himself at the same time.[22]

Against this Soviet view, how is the Soviet buildup in chemical warfare capabilities to be explained? It is hard to escape a conclusion that the Soviet Union is more interested in employing the chemical weapons negotiations for political purposes and for obtaining military advantage than as a route to effective chemical weapons disarmament.

The US approach of negotiating from a position of restraint rather than from one of strength was based on good intentions and high expectations. It may have been worth the try. But, it clearly has not produced the desired result to date and there is no rational basis for believing it will work in the future. It now seems inconceivable that the Soviets will be willing to make the concessions

necessary on issues such as on-site verification—issues on which they have been adamant in their position for years—so long as the United States is, in effect, unilaterally disarming. Common sense dictates that the United States must have something to give up in exchange for a chemical weapons agreement which includes a degree of verification of precedent-setting proportions.

Binary munitions seem the best chance for the United States to use its technology to offset the overwhelming Soviet advantage in chemical weapons. If stopping binary technology was the Soviet objective in undertaking the bilateral negotiations, they have certainly succeeded. Not only has the United States been prevented from even initiating construction of a binary production facility, but its stocks of conventional chemical weapons have "as a matter of policy" been "maintained without improvement, although agent and munition deterioration have continued to degrade capability."[23] If this situation persists, time and other factors will continue to take their toll on the US deterrent retaliatory stockpile, the United States will have in effect disarmed, and it will not have cost the Soviets very much to find out whether an agreement was possible on their terms.

The Soviets may continue to prolong the chemical weapons negotiations as long as possible if the United States continues to mark time in its own program in the apparently vain hope of inducing similar restraint on the Soviet side or of reaching a satisfactory agreement. The chemical weapons situation seems analogous in some respects to US decisionmaking during the SALT II process: cancellation of the B-1 bomber, postponement of the MX missile and the Trident submarine, and deferral of the enhanced radiation weapon—the so-called "neutron bomb." The Soviets undoubtedly sense, probably correctly, that negotiations per se tend to lull US concerns and that US decisionmakers are reluctant to make weapons program decisions which have any potential for disrupting ongoing negotiations.

It also seems clear that improvement in the US chemical weapons capability is essential for enhancing the ability of US and NATO forces to deter Soviet and Warsaw Pact use of their significant advantage in chemical weapons. Because chemical weapons are unique and have the potential for determining whether the United States will be compelled to resort to nuclear weapons on a European battlefield, the United States and NATO must be reasonably assured that a satisfactory conclusion to a major conflict in Europe can be achieved without resort to a strategic nuclear exchange. To accomplish this, the Soviets must not be allowed to perceive chemical weapons as the capability that could make the difference at the battlefield level by enabling a "quick win." It is unlikely that such a perception, to the extent it exists, can be altered other than through the improvement of the US deterrent chemical weapons stockpile.

A TAILORED APPROACH

Defense Secretary Harold Brown has quite properly attacked the simple quantitative comparisons often used in assessing the ability of the United States and NATO to successfully defend Europe, such as comparing numbers of tanks with numbers of tanks and so forth in a side-by-side manner.[24] He correctly notes that such simplistic comparisons do not really tell what the United States needs and that it is senseless for the United States to try to duplicate each Soviet capability. Following his reasoning, the United States should not necessarily care whether the Soviets have a larger quantitative capability so long as, in the event of a Soviet attack incorporating chemical weapons, the United States and its allies can throw back the attack and can avoid a primary reliance on nuclear weapons for this purpose. However, as previously discussed, while chemical weapons are only one element of combat power that the Soviets can bring to bear, they are unique in that a one-sided use of chemical weapons is capable of changing pre-chemical weapons force ratios to the distinct advantage of the user; and, retaliation in kind is the best

and least escalatory means for redressing that discrepancy.

For a nuclear war in NATO Europe, retaliatory chemical weapons may be the only answer short of a strategic exchange. While the United States may not need to match the Soviets chemical round for chemical round, or chemical bomb for chemical bomb, we require a capability sufficient to insure that a forward defense can be maintained by conventional forces. Or, in the event the Soviets attack with theater nuclear forces, we require a capability sufficient to persuade the Soviets that a one-sided use of chemical weapons for acquiring additional and significant military advantage is not a no-risk option. There seems to be little doubt that a serious gap in the spectrum of US and NATO deterrence presently exists, one which completely undermines the concept of flexible response. Deterrence cannot be a bluff; it must be credible if the United States and NATO are to successfully deter or defend.

The chemical weapons negotiations should be used to enhance the security of all parties, not to gain unilateral advantage. Continuing to negotiate without improvement of the US chemical weapons posture equates to a false and dangerous illusion of progress and not only cements the basic asymmetry in capabilities, but also practically guarantees that it will become worse. In effect, unilateral restraint will be transformed into unilateral disarmament, and the Soviet Union will continue to be rewarded for its behavior. The chemical weapons disarmament effort must no longer be viewed as a substitute for a chemical weapons program. National and collective security requirements should no longer be sacrificed. Deterrence incorporating a credible threat of retaliation in kind must be reestablished and continued until an acceptable agreement is reached, whether it is forthcoming in the near future, the longer term, or not at all—each being possible outcomes of the current negotiations.

If the United States wishes to make real progress, it must take a balanced approach to arms control and security which provides for both deterrence and a verifiable agreement. The United States should undertake a binary chemical weapons program to obtain leverage in the negotiations and to provide insurance in the event a satisfactory agreement cannot be attained. The binary program should be tailored to accommodate the US negotiating position with respect to verification.[25] The phasing of various aspects of the program should accommodate continued negotiations. For example, the delays built into the US budget process will, as a practical matter, allow considerable time (probably a year or longer) for further negotiations before construction of a facility actually begins. Construction itself is likely to require another year or two before production could begin. Announcement of the program should clearly indicate that the program is not an effort to obstruct the negotiations and that the United States will promptly terminate it when an acceptable agreement has been reached.

Obviously, it is not being suggested that diplomatic efforts aimed at chemical weapons disarmament be discontinued. The United States is committed to continue to negotiate, and a serious attempt to obtain real chemical disarmament is surely worth a sustained effort. However, contrary to its normal proclivity for quick results, the United States should take the long-term view and negotiate without setting time limits in order to achieve an acceptable agreement. Further, the United States should insist that, although it is willing to continue to negotiate, it will not conclude an agreement without prearranged on-site verification—an agreement which would truly improve our security and that of our allies.

Objections to this approach can be anticipated. Some will say it is too expensive to start a weapons program that may be negotiated away. However, in terms of relative costs, the price would be nominal. For example, a binary production facility would not cost much more than one F-16 multi-mission aircraft.[26] Moreover, if the program is the only lever left that may bring about conclusion of an acceptable agreement, and it facilitates improvement of the security posture of US and allied forces in the interim, it surely should be seen as having been worth

the expense. Opponents may also be expected to postulate that the Committee on Disarmament and others will no longer be able to have confidence in the "good intentions" of the United States. Such critics can be expected to assert that the United States is not maintaining a "positive attitude" toward the negotiations and to imply that the bilateral negotiations will collapse completely. Almost three years of intensive negotiation and a willingness to continue should serve to dispose of the question of attitude. If prudent security precautions cannot be seen as well-intentioned, then there is probably no possibility of rational dialogue to begin with. And, if the Soviets were to use the US action as a pretext for withdrawing from the negotiations, it would be quite a statement on how serious they had been all along. Fleeing from agreement on reasonable terms would be bogus. After all, it is the existing capability of the Soviet Union which generates the need for deterrence, and a modest US program is unlikely to "provoke" them into increasing their already overwhelming capabilities. Should they attempt to justify their buildup as "defensive," only pure *chutzpah* could explain a rhetorical attack upon the United States for taking similar precautionary measures.

The arguments against such an action by the United States will probably consist of equal parts of fear, guilt, and wishful thinking. But, in the chemical weapons area, the United States has too long engaged in Hamlet-like soliloquies on the moral dilemmas of action. The United States cannot maintain the military power necessary to pursue its national self-interests without encountering resistance. There are some individuals and groups who, regardless of the threat or how thoughtfully serious objections might be countered, will not be satisfied. Many are the same strident people who oppose most US weapons programs. Knowledge of the chemical weapons threat may clash with one's preconception of it and of detente, so disbelief or a search to "learn more" or "try harder" may be adopted as an evasion of the disagreeable reality.[27] The problem with many such people is a refusal to accept responsibility for knowing things, for otherwise they would have to do something about it. To them, the real problem is not in finding the truth but in facing it.[28]

REAL DISARMAMENT IS THE GOAL

The United States will need both political will and patience to make the difficult but necessary decision to embark on a binary program and to resist pressure for a less-than-acceptable chemical weapons agreement. American leaders must resist international political pressures when the best interests of the United States are at stake, just as the leaders of the Soviet Union do.[29] An agreement without on-site verification of the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles and of the disposition of related facilities would convey all the wrong signals to the Soviets about US eagerness for disarmament agreements and could be justified only if the United States believes unequal restraints are valuable because US weapons are a threat, and perhaps a principal threat, to peace.[30]

Fortunately, under the circumstances, it is not likely that any administration or Senate would consent to a nonverifiable chemical weapons treaty with the Soviets. For the United States to back down from its long-standing position in this field would not be prudent. Although some Americans seem to show a proclivity for thinking that the fact of reaching an arms control agreement is more important than what is in the agreement, an inadequately verifiable chemical weapons treaty must continue to be resisted. To do otherwise would mean that Soviet intransigence had been permitted to determine the scope and thus shape the result of the negotiations. As Henry Kissinger has said:

> Involved explanations are advanced that we can trust the Soviet Union to observe any agreement. Almost all these are essentially irrelevant. . . . Useful schemes ought not to depend on whether or not we can trust the Soviet leaders. . . . Indeed, if we could trust

them, [the agreements] might be less important. All schemes will be effective . . . if there can be confidence, not in the other side, but in the [verification] arrangements.[31]

If true disarmament progress is to be made, there must be a will to cooperate and a development of conditions that make solid verification arrangements either acceptable or no longer necessary. No one can predict when such conditions might occur. Some arms limitations, those most readily measured or requiring a minimum of verification, have already been completed. The basic problem now is to make the difficult transition from mere arms control to real disarmament. Initial measures that will start the world on the true disarmament path and provide grounds for confidence on the part of suspicious governments must be identified and undertaken while, at the same time, avoiding confrontation of those difficult issues that cannot be solved under today's conditions. Chemical weapons may be that first step, but then again, they may not. Under present circumstances, effective verification measures are essential. However, existing differences in verification positions may, in fact, not be solvable under present conditions. Nevertheless, acceptance of anything less would establish a very dangerous precedent for future disarmament proposals. A government that sincerely wants multilateral disarmament must not be willing to settle for less.

Meanwhile, the arms control aspects of chemical weapons must be brought back into balance with the military realities. In today's world, it is vital that the pursuit of political ideals be reinforced by the maintenance of that military power necessary for defense needs. It is time that chemical warfare be taken off the list of national security risks incurred for the sake of arms control and disarmament. Confidence in the nonnuclear deterrent of the United States must be restored. Arms control activities should affect how far defense programs go, but, pending acceptable agreements, not whether they exist. Otherwise, legitimate defense programs and national security become hostage to Soviet responsiveness in negotiations. As Vice President Mondale has wisely observed:

> The prudent policy of any nation must include both sufficient military preparedness and arms control efforts—if its security is to be insured. In the short run, no nation can be asked to reduce its defenses to levels below the threat it faces.[32]

NOTES

1. This section is drawn largely from my article, "Chemical Warfare and the Military Balance," *Parameters*, 7 (No. 2, 1977), 39-53. Interested readers are referred to this article for a fuller exposition on chemical weapons and the likelihood and impact of their use in Europe.

2. Anyone who doubts this should be required to participate in combat-associated activities while wearing the protective mask and protective garments for at least an hour, preferably more. They should then try to visualize facing an enemy not similarly encumbered.

3. Amoretta M. Hoeber and Joseph D. Douglass Jr., "The Neglected Threat of Chemical Warfare," *International Security*, 3 (Summer 1978), 59.

4. The special handling and medical treatment required for chemical casualties make it likely that chemical warfare would also severely tax an already strained field medical care system.

5. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "CB Weapons Today," in *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1973), II, 150. A nongovernmental organization, this institute has been an active advocate of chemical weapons disarmament for years. When they say that the use of chemical weapons by one belligerent "cannot fail to have a profound influence" on the course of a war, one can logically assume that its impact would be at least this bad.

6. Indeed, the specter of chemical warfare is so frightening that while Presidents Roosevelt (in 1943), Eisenhower (in 1960), and Nixon (in 1969), each said the United States would never initiate it, each also explicitly or implicitly threatened retaliation in kind as the major deterrent to the use of chemical weapons by an enemy. This is all the more interesting because Roosevelt, in particular, was outspoken about his personal abhorrence of chemical warfare, but even he was unwilling to give up the threat of retaliation in kind as the principal US deterrent. He apparently could not believe that a regime which consigned women, old men, and children to gas chambers would respect the Geneva Protocol and felt it was more likely that it was the fear of retaliation, rather than "the conscience of mankind," which would deter Hitler.

7. Robert Mikulak, "Preventing Chemical Warfare," in *Chemical Weapons and Chemical Arms Control*, ed. Matthew Meselson (New York and Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1978), p. 71.

8. "My Mission Is to Stop an Attack," *Newsweek*, 26 February 1979, p. 60.

9. Hoeber and Douglass, p. 78.

10. Some seem not even willing to acknowledge, for example, the legitimacy of military concerns. For them, it is more a matter of preventing the "Dr. Strangeloves" from acquiring more "deadly toys." In actuality, few military officers of any consequence are opposed in principle to a good chemical weapons agreement; what they want is a truly verifiable treaty that will enhance, rather than imperil, the security of the United States and its allies.

11. The term "arms race" is a rallying cry for those strongly interested in arms control and disarmament. It takes at least two to have a race, and with respect to chemical weapons, all indications seem to be that the United States at least isn't even on the track.

12. J. Perry Robinson, "Chemical Weapons for NATO?" in *Chemical Weapons and Chemical Arms Control*, p. 32.

13. Harold Brown noted in the *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1980* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 12:

> This administration, like its four predecessors, has decided that while it cannot and will not neglect our nuclear forces, it will keep the barrier to nuclear warfare—primarily in the form of our nonnuclear capabilities—at a high level. . . . We reject nuclear escalation as the sole policy on which to base the planning or use of our forces.

14. After all, if anyone (especially a politician) doesn't understand a subject but must take a position on it, he or she can be expected to choose to be on the side perceived as that of the angels.

15. For example, the article "Chemical Warfare: Rearmament or Disarmament?" in *Nature* (London), 22 March 1979, p. 293, says that in Britain, "public discussion is just about nonexistent . . . ; presumably in the restricted circles of ministers, generals, and top civil servants some people are thinking hard about options." *Nature* editorializes that "it is time the debate was widened."

16. "General Haig Uses Chemical Weapons Threat as 'Smokescreen,'" *FBIS Daily Report (Soviet Union)*, 22 September 1978, p. E4.

17. From an unofficial translation of the address by Foreign Minister Gromyko, *Memorandum of the Soviet Union on Questions of Ending the Arms Race and Disarmament*, delivered 28 September 1976, p. 3.

18. As Alva Myrdal notes:

> The Soviet government has often felt free to launch broad proposals for disarmament, which serve to keep its masses and intellectuals [as well as others] convinced that it stands for peace, ending the arms race and general disarmament.

Their approach invariably puts the West on the defensive, to be seen or easily portrayed as obstructionist. Alva Myrdal, *The Game of Disarmament: How the United States and Russia Run the Arms Race* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), p. 294.

19. To a totalitarian regime, words are merely another aspect of power and "truth" means any utterance, however gross or false, that can be made to stick. Unfortunately, it seems to be a very effective approach internationally, for it plays well in the media and feeds the shibboleths of arms control orthodoxy which flourish among foreign policy and diplomatic establishments.

20. Franklin A. Long says the situation was such that the CCD "degenerated into a debating club." It must be frustrating for career negotiators, whose professional success is in part measured by agreements attained, to have nothing to negotiate. Franklin A. Long, "Arms Control from the Perspective of the Nineteen Seventies," in *Defense Policy and Arms Control*, ed. Franklin A. Long and George W. Rathjens (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976), p. 5.

21. Myrdal, p. 328. If a country does not possess certain weapons, it is very easy to articulate reasons why other countries should disarm theirs and to propose methods for doing so. The justification for independent CD action seems to be that, while all countries do not possess chemical weapons, many countries do have chemical industries which could be affected to some degree by a chemical weapons agreement. To many, this is an attractive argument which the United States has tended to abet through statements aimed primarily at underscoring the importance of a chemical weapons agreement. However, as is the case in nuclear weapons negotiations, while many countries would be affected to some degree by a chemical weapons agreement, it is clear that those countries possessing the weapons would be affected to a much greater degree than those which do not.

22. "Kremlin View of Disarmament," *International Herald Tribune*, 4 June 1978, p. 4.

23. Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *United States Military Posture—A Supplement to the Chairman's Overview for FY 1980* (Washington: Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, January 1979), p. 76.

24. Harold Brown, "How DOD Measures the Balance of Power," *Command*, 1 (September 1978), 6.

25. In the opinion of experts, there are ways of assuring that single purpose chemical agents are not being manufactured. Since one of the components in the binary process is not a commercial chemical, verification of its nonproduction should not be intrinsically more difficult than in the case of other single purpose chemicals.

26. While detailed figures are not available, construction funds are "expected to be less than $15 million [including] some 'long-lead' funds for actual production of weapons," according to "Administration Wants to Build Plant for Binary Gas Weapons," *The Washington Post*, 20 October 1978, p. A9. In fiscal year 1978, 105 F-16s were procured for $1,486,800,000 or $14.16 million each, according to the *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1980*, p. 186.

27. The closely related "look at it again" approach also seems to be a common bureaucratic ploy to avoid difficult decisions. Issues will be studied and restudied, in perpetuity if need be, until a result is produced which fits the prevailing expectation or someone's preconception of it. As Meg Greenfield says in "Why We Don't Know Anything," *Newsweek*, 18 December 1978, p. 112: "We need historians and deciders and people who are not afraid of what they know [and the implications of it] . . . and people with guts to turn around this really weird and dangerous condition of government."

28. To some, the easy reaction is outrage. If only those content to be outraged would undertake the hard work of seriously thinking about and through alternatives! In the United States, such people and their cacophonies will just have to be endured as a legitimate, if unenlightening, side effect of maintaining military power.

29. Pressures to reach an agreement are typically asymmetrical: public and world opinion, to which the United States and the Western democracies seem very sensitive, do not matter in the Soviet Union. By stressing the urgency of reaching a particular agreement, the United States in effect puts pressure on itself to reach one. Then, as George Will says, unlike the Soviets, we fret "about what bad thoughts 'the world' might be 'forced' to think about us if we refused to ratify an agreement shaped by asymmetrical pressures." George F. Will, "'Weasel-Words' on SALT," *The Washington Post*, 29 April 1979, p. B7.

30. This approach, which assumes that the United States cannot be trusted to handle military power responsibly, has been labeled the "Utgoff Principle" of self-deterrence: If the United States doesn't have any chemical weapons, it can't ever

be tempted to use them. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Utgoff Principle," *The Washington Post*, 17 April 1978, p. A19.

31. Henry A. Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 283-84.

32. Walter Mondale, address to the UN Special Session on Disarmament, text in "ARMS CONTROL: U.N. Special Session on Disarmament Convenes," *Department of State Bulletin*, 78 (June 1978), 31-32.