

crease the security of this country or of any other.

We agree with Rothschild that the fundamental problem is that of preventing war itself. He holds that therefore it is unsound to attempt to prevent the use of any particular weapon, while allowing the use of others. We disagree. For example, it is clearly desirable to prevent the use of nuclear weapons even while the problem of preventing war in general remains unsolved. The use of even the smallest nuclear artillery shell in combat would break down barriers to the use of more powerful nuclear weapons and no one could foretell where the escalation might end. The use of chemical or biological weapons, even relatively mild ones, involves similar but less well-recognized dangers.

### Proliferation of CB Warfare

Rothschild, in advocating use by the United States of chemical and biological weapons (Letters, 14 Apr.) exaggerates the favorable characteristics of such weapons while ignoring their great potential dangers. CB weapons are potentially comparable to nuclear weapons for the killing of large populations. Once developed, these devastating weapons could be exceedingly cheap, easy to produce, and quick to proliferate. If they were considered acceptable for use in war, there would be a powerful temptation to use them in surprise or covert attacks, since preparations and training by the defense would greatly diminish the effectiveness of CB attack. These attributes—cheapness, a great potential for killing entire populations, and a premium on unexpected or covert use—are not likely to in-

Rothschild justifies the program of crop destruction in Vietnam on the ground that depriving the enemy of food is a standard technique of warfare. We grant that it has been widely and repeatedly used. We would emphasize, however, that starvation is a weapon that is directed *primarily* against the civilian population, and especially against the children. The blockade of central Europe during the first World War led to the starvation of millions of children, who either died or led permanently warped lives thereafter. (See Jean Mayer's letter, "Crop destruction in Vietnam," 15 Apr. 1966.) Crop destruction in Vietnam strikes at the whole civilian population in the affected areas. On a small scale it is ineffective; on a sufficiently large scale it is disastrous for the whole community, particularly in a country that depends on rice to live. If our aim is to win the support of the people, and to help rebuild a peaceful and prosperous Vietnam after the war, we shall do well to refrain from crop destruction.

We consider that the possibility of making war more humane through the use of "non-lethal" CB agents is greatly exaggerated by proponents of CB warfare. The effect of a weapon depends upon how it is employed. Under the desperate pressures of a war being fought with artillery, bombs, napalm, and other lethal weapons, it is only reasonable to expect that "non-lethal" weapons, once introduced, will come to be used to achieve maximum military effectiveness, regardless of whether such use is lethal. This has happened in Vietnam, where we spread riot gas over large areas to make persons emerge from protective cover to face saturation

attack by fragmentation bombs. If such use of so-called "non-lethal" CB weapons becomes widely practiced and generally accepted, the way is paved for a chemical and biological arms race and progressive escalation in this or future wars to the use of the entire spectrum of CB weapons.

In this connection we would like to quote the strategic analyst T. C. Schelling [*Arms and Influence* (Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1966), p. 131] on possible agreements for preventing the use of gas in warfare:

"Some gas" raises complicated questions of how much, where, under what circumstances; "no gas" is simple and unambiguous. Gas only on military personnel; gas used only by defending forces; gas only when carried by projectile; no gas without warning—a variety of limits is conceivable . . . But there is a simplicity to "no gas" that makes it almost uniquely a focus for agreement when each side can only conjecture at what alternative rules the other side would propose and when failure at coordination on the first try may spoil the chances for acquiescence in any limits at all.

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