

Symott

3 Concord Avenue  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

June 26, 1980

Dear Professor Meselson:

Reading with interest an article in today's Wall Street Journal, "Soviet threat spurs U.S. Proposal to make chemical weapons again", and noting that Kenneth H. Bacon, the writer of the article, quotes you, saying that "chemical weapons contribute nothing to fire power unless the other side chooses to use chemicals first", I believe you may find the following of interest.

This coming Tuesday I will be in Albuquerque, NM, attending a reunion of my World War II outfit. What will most certainly be discussed will be the time we were subjected to mustard gas poisoning when German aircraft destroyed the installations at Bari, Italy. Glenn Ingraham, whom, long ago, I had given some information about our experiences, wrote a best seller about the affair called "Disaster at Bari".

I recall quite vividly the spectacle, and how some of the men in our organization suffered mustard gas poisoning - our own gas, that had been released in the air attack. If we can believe Ingraham, the casualties were truly immense. Since time is passing all too quickly now, it would be interesting to know if those of our outfit who have died over the years had died simply because they are getting old or, as Ingraham suggests, because of their exposure to mustard gas during the Bari attack.

Since I recall driving along the waterfront hours after the attack and witnessing the tremendous destruction, I remember that I, and my companions, had been prudent enough to don our gas masks: perhaps the only time that American soldiers had had to do this during World War II.

Since some reputable military scholars tell us that the raid on Bari was so important it prolonged the war for perhaps two or three years longer, and since it surely had an adverse effect on troop morale - certainly on ours - perhaps we would be wrong to underestimate the effects of such powerful weapons. Finally, since I was a civilian staff member of the Naval War College for many years, I have not the slightest doubt in the world that this weapon, no less than any other, however horrendous, that comes down the pike, will, when the occasion calls for it, be used. Make no mistakes about that!

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,

