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Dear Solly,

You may like to know, if you do not already, of the provisions for a chemical disarmament convention presented by Gromyko at the UN Special Session last month. The part of greatest interest is their apparent acceptance of the need for 'systematic international on-site inspection'. See page 8 of the enclosed. Until now, the Soviets had agreed only to the quite different concept of inspection by challenge, with the challenged party having the right to refuse. The new feature is the acceptance of the term 'systematic'. In the bi-lateral chemical talks (suspended by the present administration), the US employed the term specifically to mean mandatory and continuous. (Continuity could be provided by resident inspectors or by instrumentation inspected periodically).

While it is true that the Soviets have agreed in the CTB talks to mandatory international inspection of explosions with greater than 150 kT yield, this is quite different from systematic inspection, since they could and presumably would avert any inspections at all simply by keeping yields below the threshold.

There still appear to be important deficiencies in the Soviet position. For example, systematic on-site international inspection is accepted for verification of the destruction of declared chemical weapons and agents but not for verification that the declared production facilities to be destroyed are actually CW facilities.

Still, it is most important that, for the first time since Krushchev's precarious and ill-fated offer of three inspections per year for a complete nuclear test ban, the Soviets are willing to consider regular on-site international inspection for an arms-control agreement. Someone advising Mrs. Thatcher seems to understand this, judging from the lines on page 7 of her 23rd June statement to the UN which is enclosed. There are contending views in the U.S. Government, some seriously interested but others simply derisive. What I wonder is if you can give encouragement here and on the Continent to taking the Soviet proposals seriously.

As ever

Matthew Meselson