

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES  
16 DIVINITY AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

December 17, 1968

Mr. Julian Perry Robinson  
SIPRI  
Sveavagen 166  
113 46 Stockholm  
Sweden

Dear Julian:

Thank you for your letter of 7 December. I am in complete agreement with you regarding the desirability of an extensive interpretation of the Geneva Protocol. No nation has taken up the 25 August proposal made by Sweden made at the ENDC. Neither has Sweden pressed the issue. However, this would seem appropriate at this time in view of the fact that the Secretary General's study is about to begin. Once the study has been completed the time might be ripe for pressing the Swedish proposal or for a UNGA resolution such as you suggest. The study might facilitate matters by discussing the manner in which non-lethal gases may be used in conjunction with lethal high explosives and other lethal weapons to increase the effectiveness of the latter.

One of the problems facing us now is to find an acceptable formula under which the United States might subscribe to an extensive interpretation of the Protocol, assuming that the United States wishes to move in that direction. I have written a memorandum, a copy of which is enclosed, to be used as a "talking paper" in discussing this matter with persons here. My intention is to prevent the discussion of tear gas and similar gases from placing primary emphasis on moral or even legal considerations at this time. Clearly, if the matter is viewed from a moral or legal point of view, the United States would have no choice but to defend its present practices.

However, if the question can be seen instead as a technical one it might be possible to broaden the discussion enough to include an extensive interpretation of the Geneva Protocol. The conclusion might then be reached that although the legal status of tear gas and similar gases has been ambiguous since the inception of the Protocol itself, it would seem that the most workable and generally acceptable standard is "no gas of any kind". In other words, the United States might allow itself to be convinced of the desirability of an extensive interpretation, not because of legal considerations and certainly not because of moral considerations, but rather because of technical ones. I should greatly appreciate your reaction to my memorandum and your further thoughts on this subject in general.

I enclose a copy of a British command paper mentioned by Brownlie at the London Conference. I have not yet attempted to learn the outcome of the proposal contained in point no. 5. If you have any information about this, I would appreciate receiving it.

I trust you have noticed the publication of "Chemical Warfare, a Study in Restraints" by Frederick J. Brown, published by Princeton University Press this year. Although Brown's underlying philosophy seems to me rather immature, he has uncovered a mountain of new material.

With best regards as ever,

Matthew Meselson

MSM/psl