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<<<<**** SAS DOCUMENT HEADER ****>>>>

DOC_NBR= 84GENEVA04858

FILM= D840382-0230

DATE= 13 JUN 84

TYPE= TE

FROM= GENEVA

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Grafeld, Dir. *AG*
 Release () Excise () Deny Declassify
Date 2/22/99 Exemption _____

DRAFTER= n/a

OFFICE= ACTION PM

TO= STATE

CHANNEL= n/a

ORIGHAND= n/a

ORIGPHAND= n/a

ORIGCLASS= ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

ORIGPCLASS= n/a

EO= OA

SUBJECT= FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON CHEMICAL AND - BIOLOGICAL WARFARE, GENT,
BELGIUM

REFERENCE= n/a

CONTROL_NBR= n/a

ENCLOSURE= n/a

LOCATOR= TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM

ERRORS= N/A

CONCEPTS= WORLD, CONGRESS, CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL WARFARE, SCIENTIST, CLAIM,
EVIDENCE, VERIFICATION, DEVELOPMENT, GAS, NERVE

TAGS= PARM, IR, UNGA, CDG, (HEYNDRICKX, A)

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NSAE-00 EAP-00 OES-09 ACDA-12 /066 W
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NOFORN

DEPT FOR PM COL. LEONARD AND INR HOWELLS

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(PASS TO WATSON AND SARVER)

EO 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PARM UNGA CDG IR IZ
SUBJECT: FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON CHEMICAL AND
- BIOLOGICAL WARFARE, GENT, BELGIUM

1. (U) THIS REPORT IS SUBMITTED BY GARY B. CROCKER,
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH, DEPARTMENT OF
STATE, WHO IS ATTACHED TO THE U.S. MISSION, GENEVA,
WHILE HE IS PARTICIPATING IN THE DCI EXCEPTIONAL
ANALYST PROGRAM. MR. CROCKER ATTENDED THE CONGRESS
IN GENT AS PART OF HIS RESEARCH PROGRAM AND PRESENTED
A PAPER TITLED "THE EVIDENCE OF CHEMICAL AND TOXIN
WEAPONS USE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN" WHICH
HAS BEEN CABLED TO WASHINGTON BY USIS, GENEVA.

2. (U) THE FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON 'NEW COMPOUNDS
IN BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL WARFARE: TOXICOLOGICAL

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EVALUATION' WAS HELD IN GENT, BELGIUM, MAY 21-23.
REPRESENTATIVES FROM OVER THIRTY COUNTRIES, GOVERN-
MENT AND PRIVATE, ATTENDED THE CONGRESS ORGANIZED
BY PROFESSOR A. HEYNDRIKX, UNIVERSITY OF GENT.
INITIAL SKEPTISIM BY A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES ABOUT
THE USEFULNESS OF THE CONGRESS APPARENTLY LESSENERED,
JUDGING FROM THE LATE REGISTRATION OF MANY MORE
PARTICIPANTS THAN ANTICIPATED. THIS COMPLICATED
THE PLANNING AND PRODUCED SOME NEGATIVE VIEWS ABOUT
THE SCHEDULING OF SPEAKERS. THE CONGRESS BROUGHT
TOGETHER EXPERTS FROM MANY DISCIPLINES AND WAS A

USEFUL FORUM FOR SHARING EVIDENCE AND EXPLAINING THE U.S. POSITION ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE. THE MAIN ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THE CONGRESS WERE CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE IN LAOS, KAMPUCHEA, AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN, BUT THERE WERE ALSO PURELY TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS ON CHEMICAL AND TOXIN AGENT DETECTION.

3. (U) PROFESSOR HEYNDRICKX HAD CREATED CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY BEFORE THE CONGRESS BY PUBLICLY STATING THAT HE HAD EVIDENCE THAT MYCOTOXIMNS HAD BEEN USED ON THE IRANIANS AS WELL AS MUSTARD AND NERVE GAS. THE LEADING TOXICOLOGISTS AT THE CONGRESS, INCLUDING THOSE FROM THE U.S., WERE IN AGREEMENT THAT THE LABORATORY PROCEDURES USED BY HEYNDRICKX COULD NOT CONCLUSIVELY DETECT MYCOTOXINS IN THE BIOMEDICAL SAMPLES. UNFORTUNATELY, TWO AUSTRIAN PROFESSORS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA (MANDL AND PAUSER) PRESENTED THEIR VIEWS THAT IRANIAN VICTIMS SUFFERED FROM MYCOTOXIN POISONING AT THE LAST SESSION OF THE CONGRESS, PRECLUDING ANY DISCUSSION OF THEIR MEDICAL CONCLUSIONS. DESPITE OPPOSITION TO HIS FINDINGS, HEYNDRICKX WAS COMMENDED BY MANY DELEGATES

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AND BELGIAN OFFICIALS FOR ORGANIZING AND CONDUCTING THE CONGRESS IN A CONGENIAL AND PROFESSIONAL MANNER.

4. (U) IRAQI USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND THE TREATMENT OF IRANIAN VICTIMS IN EUROPE WERE THE DOMINANT THEMES. HEYNDRICKX TOOK STEPS TO LIMIT IRANIAN PROPAGANDA AFTER IRANIANS PASSED OUT LITERATURE, WITHOUT APPROVAL, AT THE FIRST SESSION. IRANIAN FILMS WERE NOT SHOWN UNTIL THE DAY AFTER THE CONGRESS OFFICIALLY ENDED. HOWEVER, MANY SLIDES AND FILMS OF VICTIMS WERE SHOWN BY THE SWEDISH, AUSTRIAN AND BELGIAN PHYSICIANS. SEVERAL IRANIAN PHYSICIANS PRESENTED DESCRIPTIONS OF EXAMINATIONS AND TREATMENT OF CHEMICAL WARFARE VICTIMS IN IRAN. PHYSICIANS FROM SEVERAL COUNTRIES COMMENTED THAT IRANIAN MEDICAL TREATMENT WAS SURPRISINGLY EFFICIENT. THERE WAS OBVIOUS INTEREST BY EUROPEANS IN PROVIDING THE IRANIANS A BETTER CLINICAL AND ANALYTICAL CAPABILITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, MOST DELEGATES RESENTED THE HIGH-HANDED IRANIAN PROPAGANDA AT A SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE.

5. (C) PROFESSOR GOTTFRIED MACHATA OF AUSTRIA PRIVATELY PROVIDED THE CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF THE MATERIAL FOUND WITH MUSTARD IN A BOMB BROUGHT BACK FROM IRAN (SILICIUM, CA, MG, FE, ZN, MN, AL, NA, TI, CD). HE CONCLUDES IT IS A LIQUID FILLED WITH

DUST PARTICLES USED AS A CARRIER FOR THE MUSTARD.

6. (C) ON CW USE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, DR. CHESTER MIROCHA, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, AND DR. JOSEPH ROSEN, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, PRESENTED COMPREHENSIVE

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EO 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PARM UNGA CDG IR IZ
SUBJECT: FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON CHEMICAL AND

DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR ANALYSIS FOR TOXINS IN PHYSICAL
AND BIOMEDICAL SAMPLES. THEY STRONGLY SUPPORTED
THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CONCLUSIONS IN WELL-PREPARED
PAPERS. ONLY PROFESSOR MATTHEW MESELSON OF HARVARD
CHALLENGED THEIR RESULTS AND HE WAS EFFECTIVELY

COUNTERED BY BOTH SCIENTISTS WITH AN INVITATION TO DOCUMENT HIS SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY IN A PROFESSIONAL MANNER. DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER SCIENTISTS REVEALED A SIMILAR ATTITUDE BECAUSE MESELSON HAS NOT DOCUMENTED HIS EVIDENCE FOR OTHERS TO EXAMINE. A NUMBER OF DELEGATES COMMENTED THAT MESELSON HAD GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO PROVE THAT BEES DEFECATE. FRUSTRATION WAS ALSO EVIDENT OVER MESELSON'S TENDENCY TO CHANGE

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HIS POSITION. FOR EXAMPLE, DR. HUGUETTE COHEN FROM OTTAWA PRESENTED A LENGTHY DESCRIPTION OF AN EXPERIMENT DESIGNED TO PROVE WHETHER POLLEN AND BEE FECES PROVIDE A GOOD MEDIUM FOR THE GROWTH OF TRICHOHECENE TOXINS. LAST YEAR MESELSON RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT TOXINS MIGHT BE PRODUCED FROM FUSARIUM GROWING ON BEE SPOTS THAT CONTAIN DIGESTED POLLEN. COHEN DEMONSTRATED THAT BEE SPOTS WERE NOT A GOOD MEDIA FOR TOXIN PRODUCTION AND FUSARIA COULD NOT BE ISOLATED FROM YELLOW BEE SPOTS ON LEAVES. AN ASSOCIATE OF MESELSON'S STATED TO COHEN THAT MESELSON HAD NEVER MADE SUCH A CLAIM AND HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE CANADIANS HAD GONE TO SO MUCH TROUBLE. FOR ANOTHER EXAMPLE, MESELSON HAS CLAIMED FOR SEVERAL YEARS THAT TRICHOHECENES COULD BE PRODUCED NATURALLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE HAS OFTEN CITED THE FINDING OF T2 TOXIN IN A HOT AREA OF INDIA AS EVIDENCE THAT TRICHOHECENES COULD OCCUR NATURALLY IN THE HOT JUNGLE AREAS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. AFTER DR. BRUNO SCHIEFFER OF CANADA MADE A STRONG PRESENTATION REFUTING THE NATURAL OCCURENCE THEORY, MESELSON TOLD HIM THAT HE WAS BEGINNING TO DOUBT THAT THE TRICHOHECENES FOUND BY MIROCHA AND ROSEN WERE NATURAL.

7. (C) MESELSON QUESTIONS THE FINDINGS OF NOT ONLY MIROCHA AND ROSEN, BUT ALSO HEYNDRICKX AND FRENCH SCIENTISTS. IN A LENGTHY CONVERSATION ABOUT THE EVIDENCE, HE SAID IT IS STILL POSSIBLE THAT THE LABORATORIES WERE CONTAMINATED OR THAT THE TOXINS GREW ON THE SAMPLES DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS. HE ALSO CLINGS TO THE IDEA THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT COLLECTED A LIMITED NUMBER OF SAMPLES THAT CONTAINED TOXIN, AND THEY WERE ALL FROM THE DRY

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SEASON WHEN THE BEES WERE SWARMING. HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE A DEFINITIVE EXPLANATION FOR THE ILLNESS

ASSOCIATED WITH "YELLOW RAIN," HAVING COMPLETELY DROPPED OFF THE IDEA OF PLEGRA AS A CAUSE FOR THE HMONG BEING SICK. HE IS STILL CONVINCED THAT TOXINS FOUND IN THE BLOOD CAME FROM EATING CONTAMINATED FOOD. ODDLY ENOUGH, MESELSON DOES NOT QUESTION THE LABORATORY TECHNIQUE OF THE INDIAN WHO FOUND T2 TOXIN. HE ACCEPTS THIS ONE DATA POINT AS A FACT, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL TOXICOLOGISTS PRESENT DO NOT ACCEPT THE INDIAN'S ANALYSIS.

8. (C) DURING A PRIVATE CONVERSATION, MESELSON SAID THAT HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INDICATED HIGH LEVEL DOUBT ABOUT THE U.S. EVIDENCE. HE REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO THE UK AND FRANCE, BUT HE ALSO SAID THAT HE FOUND "HEALTHY SKEPTICISM" AT THE U.S. EMBASSY IN BANGKOK. HE TOLD A NUMBER OF DELEGATES THAT THE DCM, STAPLETON ROY, DOUBTED THE EVIDENCE THAT CHEMICAL WEAPONS HAD BEEN USED, AND THEREFORE, THE U.S. EMBASSY HAD A TEAM OF EXPERTS WORKING TO DISCOVER THE "REAL TRUTH" ABOUT YELLOW RAIN. AT THE CONGRESS, MESELSON SAID SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE NOW DOUBTS THAT ANY CHEMICAL WEAPONS HAVE BEEN USED IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN BECAUSE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS HAS BEEN WRONG ON "YELLOW RAIN." ALTHOUGH SEVERAL U.S. JOURNALISTS WHO WERE PRESENT MAY REPORT DIFFERENTLY, MESELSON DID NOT MAKE A PERSUASIVE PRESENTATION NOR WAS HIS HYPOTHESIS A FOCAL POINT OF THE CONGRESS. THE MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES WERE SERIOUS SCIENTISTS, NOT ATTRACTED TO PROPAGANDA,

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P 131658Z JUN 84

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SUBJECT: FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON CHEMICAL AND

POLEMICS, OR CHARGES MADE WITHOUT SCIENTIFIC DOCUMENTATION. THEY WERE IN NO WAY IMPRESSED WITH THE POLITICAL STATEMENTS MADE BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, KAMPUCHEA AND THAILAND. DOUBTS WERE EXPRESSED BY EUROPEANS AND ASIAN DELEGATES ABOUT THE U.S. EVIDENCE ON MYCOTOXIN USE, BUT ON SCIENTIFIC GROUNDS THAT MORE EVIDENCE IS NEEDED TO MAKE THE CASE CONCLUSIVE.

9. (C) MESELSON AND WILLIAM KUCEWICZ OF THE WALL STREET JOURNAL HAD A LENGTHY DEBATE IN THE CORRIDORS ABOUT THE SERIES OF ARTICLES ON GENETIC ENGINEERING IN THE SOVIET UNION WRITTEN BY KUCEWICZ. MESELSON

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ARGUED THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS WERE ENGAGED IN THIS RESEARCH FOR MILITARY REASONS. MOREOVER, HE MAINTAINED THAT THE WALL STREET JOURNAL WAS DAMAGING RESEARCH IN THE U.S. BY RAISING THE POSSIBILITY THAT IT HAD MILITARY IMPLICATIONS.

10. (C) ANOTHER ARGUMENT OF MESELSON, AS WELL AS OF JULIAN PERRY ROBINSON OF SUSSEX UNIVERSITY, IS THAT TRICOTHECENE TOXINS DO NOT CAUSE THE SYMPTOMS DESCRIBED BY THE VICTIMS FROM LAOS AND KAMPUCHEA, IN PARTICULAR THE MASSIVE INTERNAL BLEEDING. THEY BOTH STATED THEIR OPINIONS ON THIS IN THE 1981 ABC TV FILM, SO THERE IS A RECORD OF THEIR SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ON TOXINS. PRESENTATIONS BY DRS. MIROCHA, SCHIEFER, AND Y. UENO OF JAPAN REINFORCED PREVIOUS STUDIES CITED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT THAT TRICOTHECENE TOXINS WOULD CAUSE THE VARIOUS SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED

WITH CHEMICAL WEAPONS ATTACKS IN LAOS, KAMPUCHEA AND AFGHANISTAN. FURTHERMORE, THE THREE PRESENTATIONS PROVIDED EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE OF MASSIVE BLEEDING, SKIN LESIONS AND THE PROLONGED PRESENCE OF TOXINS OR METABOLITES IN THE BODIES OF ANIMALS.

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11. (C) NEUTRAL COUNTRIES LIKE AUSTRIA, FINLAND, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND AND YUGOSLAVIA ARE IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE NATIONS CONCERNED ABOUT BEING CAUGHT IN A WAR WHERE CHEMICAL WEAPONS ARE USED. DISCUSSIONS WITH DELEGATES FROM THESE COUNTRIES INDICATED THAT CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO PROTECTION FROM CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL AGENTS, INCLUDING RESEARCH INTO DETECTION OF AGENTS WHICH HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION UNDER A FUTURE CONVENTION. THUS, ALL OF THESE

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COUNTRIES SEE A ROLE FOR THEMSELVES IN DESIGNING BETTER VERIFICATION MECHANISMS AND PERHAPS PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL INSPECTIONS. THESE COUNTRIES ALL MAINTAIN STRICT NEUTRALITY ON THE CW USE ISSUE, IN TERMS OF CONDEMNING THE USERS, AND TAKE A BALANCED PUBLIC APPROACH TO THE THREAT POSED BY U.S. AND SOVIET CHEMICAL WARFARE CAPABILITIES. PRIVATELY, THEY ARE EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN U.S. INFORMATION ON NEW SOVIET WARFARE AGENTS AND THE EVIDENCE FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN.

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12. (C) DELEGATES FROM THE UK, FRANCE AND THE FRG MAINTAINED A LOW PROFILE AT THE CONGRESS BUT WERE VERY ACTIVE IN THE CORRIDORS. COL. HELM, RETIRED FRG MILITARY MEDICAL OFFICER, PROVIDED USEFUL FEEDBACK ON HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH PHYSICIANS WHO TREATED IRANIAN VICTIMS, INCLUDING THOSE FROM TEHRAN.

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13. (U) MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES FROM A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS AT THE CONGRESS NAD ASKED MANY OF THE QUESTIONS AT THE FORMAL SESSIONS. SOME ARTICLES HAVE ALREADY APPEARED, BUT MORE LENGTHY ARTICLES CAN BE EXPECTED (E.G., TIME MAGAZINE, CHEMICAL AND ENGINEERING NEWS) AND FILM FOOTAGE MAY BE USED BY BBC, WHICH HAS ALREADY PRODUCED SEVERAL RADIO AND TV SHOWS ON CHEMICAL WARFARE. ARTICLES CAN BE EXPECTED BY PETER PRINGLE IN THE LONDON OBSERVER, ALAASTAIR HAYE IN THE NEW SCIENTIST, AND I. URBAN IN DIE WELT.

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14. (U) A COMPENDIUM OF THE PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE CONGRESS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM HEYNDRICKX. HEYNDRICKX WANTS ANOTHER CONGRESS TO BE HELD NEXT YEAR IN ANOTHER COUNTRY. AUSTRIA AND SWEDEN ARE LIKELY CANDIDATES. GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY THEIR DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENTS, ARE BECOMING MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN DEFENSE AGAINST CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE. THERE IS A CORRESPONDING INTEREST IN MARKETING PROTECTIVE AND DETECTION EQUIPMENT. COMMERCIAL BOOTHS WERE SET UP INSIDE THE MEETING AREA OF THE CONGRESS.

15. (C) THIS FIRST WORLD CONGRESS WAS A SUCCESSFUL,
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INITIAL ATTEMPT TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE MULTI-FACETED, COMPLICATED ISSUE OF CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WARFARE. IT WAS APPARENT THAT MANY DELEGATES WERE SURPRISED BY THE EXTENT OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN ON THE USE OF CHEMICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS. THE U.S. POSITION RECEIVED MORE SUPPORT THAN DOUBT AT THE CONGRESS, AND MANY DELEGATES WERE EXPOSED TO SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES. IT WAS CLEAR, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LAST YEAR IN GENEVA AND OTHER EUROPEAN LOCATIONS, THAT MANY CHEMICAL WARFARE EXPERTS HAVE NOT TAKEN THE TIME TO STUDY THE U.S. EVIDENCE. MESELSON AND OTHERS HAVE CAUSED CONSIDERABLE DOUBT ABOUT THE CREDIBILITY OF U.S. SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE. HOWEVER, MESELSON WAS PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE AT THE CONGRESS BY SCIENTISTS WHO DEMANDED THE SAME TYPE OF SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS THAT MESELSON HAS DEMANDED FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

16. (U) REQUEST DEPARTMENT DISTRIBUTE THIS CABLE TO OTHER POSTS INTERESTED IN CW, AS APPROPRIATE. CARMEN

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