

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

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MILL HILL,
LONDON, N.W.7.

31st May, 1969.

Dear Mat,

I saw Mr. C.G. Hope-Jones of the Foreign Office yesterday. He is largely responsible for the drafting of the proposed disarmament convention which the British Government is going to put forward in mid-Summer. Our interview, which lasted about an hour, was friendly and, I think, productive. Hope-Jones agreed that the wording of the preamble to the proposals put forward by Mr. Mulley in July last year was a tactical mistake and that it is indeed necessary to stress the positive achievements of the Geneva protocol and to leave out any specific criticisms of its shortcomings or lack of clarity. He read me out the preamble to the new draft convention and, so far as I could see, it is very much along the lines we would hope.

Hope-Jones is au fait with what is going on in America and more or less told me that he knew more about the American attitude than you and I (which I expect to be true!). He is not so sure that the US can alter its position on the use of non-lethal chemicals in war, but he was of the opinion that the Russians have changed their attitude. He regards the Soviet appeal as being very significant and is pretty sure that it could not have been circulated (in view of the signatories) without top level approval. In fact he went so far as to wonder whether the Russians might not trump the British proposals at Geneva with more sweeping proposals which would include an undertaking not to use chemical weapons under any circumstances.

I took up with him the general point that it was a mistake to equate harassing agents with their use for riot control in civilian life. He seemed quite impressed by your arguments that CN etc. had been stockpiled in World War I and World War II and that there was no intention in those wars of using them for saving life. He furthermore agreed that there was nothing much to indicate that CS had been used to save life in Vietnam. He said that he would put this point to Sir Solly Zuckerman (and I left your notes for this purpose) but he says that Solly is somewhat on a high horse about this and maintains that he is writing as an individual adviser and does not wish to be subjected to pressure. Apparently I was the third person in three days to come along to put pressure of one kind or another upon him! He said that the Foreign Office had refrained from defining the British attitude towards the use of non-lethal chemical weapons but supposed that if forced to do so they would probably return to the attitude taken in 1932-34. This last point has some bearing on the comments in your letter regarding a question in Parliament. Nevertheless I can see no purpose in raising the issue in Parliament at this moment.

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I have been on the phone with Maurice Wilkins and Steven Rose who were somewhat puzzled by the papers which you provided. They are quite willing to come out strongly on the question of non-lethal chemical weapons but think that the right time would be immediately after the report to the Secretary General of the UN is made public, and the British draft convention has been tabled. I have agreed to help them when the time comes.

With best regards,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John".

J.H. Humphrey

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