

March 16, 1970

Mr. Sven Ekberg  
Glomsta Herrgård  
141 49 Huddinge  
Sweden

Dear Mr. Ekberg,

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of February 27. In spite of setbacks, I think we are making real progress in reducing the threat of biological warfare. President Nixon's decisions on germ weapons and more recently on toxin weapons amount to a total renunciation of biological warfare. Of course, it is still up to the United States Government to convince the world that this is the case but I expect that in coming months we will see some important efforts in this direction. For example, Fort Detrick and Pine Bluff may very well be completely opened as a guarantee that no secret work goes on at those installations. Furthermore, inspectors from other nations may be invited to witness the actual destruction of existing stocks of biological weapons at Pine Bluff. Even more important, in my opinion, is the pledge of the United States Government that it will never engage in biological warfare even if attacked with biological weapons and that we shall not engage in the development and production of such weapons. These pledges made by President Nixon on November 25 and again on February 14 have put an end to foolish and dangerous activities that were being conducted in this country. Although I have no reason to believe that any other nation is now preparing biological weapons of any kind, it is obviously important that secrecy in biology and medicine be brought to an absolute minimum throughout the world so as to make it difficult for a misguided nation to embark upon a BW program.

The situation with chemicals, unfortunately, is not so good. It is tragic that a divided British Cabinet has declared that CS is not prohibited by the Geneva Protocol. There is still some chance that the United States will agree to give up using CS and chemical herbicides as it moves to ratify the Geneva Protocol but the British action has made matters more difficult than before. My own belief is that it would be in our own best interest

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to give up all forms of chemical warfare entirely. The military benefits of using tear gas and defoliants are marginal and transient. The benefit to all of us of erecting a lasting prohibition against all forms of chemical and biological warfare will be much greater.

You might be interested to read the symposium on CBW in the January issue of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson  
Professor of Biology

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