

(Mr. Luce, United Kingdom)

It was commendable that the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons was promptly re-established at the beginning of the 1985 session. Chemical weapons are the area in which this Conference has recently made the most progress. The Committee's report for 1984 identified encouraging areas of common ground and should make the Committee's work easier this year, under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Turbanski of Poland.

I must say, however, that I had hoped to see more progress here in the year since my last visit. The Geneva Protocol of 1925 concluded here in this city 60 years ago has been and remains of inestimable value to mankind. There is, however, a generally recognized and increasingly urgent need for this existing prohibition of the use of chemical weapons to be supplemented and buttressed by a total ban on all elements of chemical warfare including development, production, and stockpiling of these appalling weapons. There is a major, and a growing, imbalance between East and West. My own country gave up its chemical weapons a quarter of a century ago. The United States decided in 1969 not to produce any new chemical weapons. From that time, they have not done so. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, has neither abandoned chemical weapons nor stopped producing them. On the contrary, it has relentlessly built up larger stockpiles than any other country. Those stockpiles now comprise over 300,000 tons of lethal chemical warfare agents, and they are still growing. We therefore face a specific and worrying threat from an existing capability to wage chemical warfare.

But all of us, as Secretary Shultz noted in his important speech last week, face the danger of proliferation of these appalling weapons. Recent events have sadly demonstrated that no part of the globe is safe from the threat of chemical weapons. There are continuing reports of their use in South East Asia. The confirmation in March 1984 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations that chemical weapons had been used in the Gulf War is another cause for deep concern. Following this, my Government and other Western Governments acted quickly to impose export controls, until further notice, on certain chemicals which could be misused to make weapons. In view of the threats we face, there is a danger that States will proceed to chemical rearmament, unless we make swift progress towards a comprehensive ban. Let

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