

(Mr. Vejvoda, Czechoslovakia)

These, and possible future developments in the delivery means for CW, could lead to dangerous calculations about increased use of CW against the civilian population. It is obvious that, even without this "special concern", civilian populations will have to pay an extremely high price in the event of a conflict with the use of CW. It has been estimated that the ratio between killed soldiers and civilians could be as high as 1 to 20. In case of conflict in densely populated Europe, or other similar regions of the world, the civilian casualties would be immense.

These indiscriminate effects of CW, against both armed forces and the civilian population, render chemical weapons, by their nature, primarily offensive weapons. Since chemical weapons would demonstrably cause greater loss of life among civilians than among military personnel, it would make little sense to employ them as a means of defence against an invader. Instead of halting the enemy's advance, CW would, in the first place, provoke severe losses among one's own civilian population. Thus, the justification of the need for chemical weapons to serve defensive purposes simply does not hold water. Likewise, the necessity to possess CW in order to deter chemical aggression would simply disappear with the universal elimination of CW stockpiles. Weighing all the pros and cons, the most accurate conclusion seems to be that for supporters of the development and manufacture of ever new chemical weapons these play a far from insignificant role in scenarios for the offensive use of military power.

The NATO Airland Battle Doctrine is quite outspoken in this respect. The possible use of CW in offensive military operations might also be contemplated in conjunction with both nuclear and conventional weapons. Under certain scenario CW could be more readily used in place of another kind of weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear weapons. This could apply to situations when long-term contamination of an attacked area is undesirable. Some chemical warfare agents may cause prolonged ground contamination, but this property is limited to only a few of these weapons. As a rule, chemical contamination would be much more shortlived than radioactive contamination due to nuclear weapons.

The increase in the toxicity of CW and the development of equipment for their use went through more or less clearly defined stages. It seems obvious that we are now somewhere between the two stages. The nerve agents of World War II are now firmly in the chemical arsenals of a number of countries and they have reached more than desirable perfection. But today, after long years of research and experiments, which in some instances took decades, a new generation of CW is already prepared for massive production.

It is thus only natural that the Conference on Disarmament has been considering the problem of a chemical-weapons ban in the course of the last six years. This fact alone confirms that the international community feels the need to prevent the introduction into arsenals of new, even more toxic and more sophisticated CW. To avert this new stage does not appear, however, to be an easy task. The problem is that it has in fact begun a long time ago. While existing CW were further improved, research on new weapons went on in parallel.