

Mr. WEGENER (Federal Republic of Germany): Mr. Chairman, I regret to have to take the floor again at this late hour in response to a statement by the Soviet delegation. I was surprised to hear this delegation, since the Soviet delegate made extensive reference to a private communication which I had written to a number of members of the Committee. He was not among the formal addressees. I had chosen this way of discussing an issue of fact in a deliberate attempt not to raise the issue to the level of public announcement in this Committee and to keep the discussion factual. Ambassador Issraelyan has broken the privacy of these communications and I am critical of him for this. On the other hand, I understand most intimately his emotional approach to the problems raised and I respect it. Inadvertently, I have resurrected extremely painful, personal memories of his, memories of difficult times, and I understand him the better since I, as a child, in the totally devastated eastern part of my country, saw the same horrors of the war, and in addition, the ensuing horrors of foreign occupation.

The population of my country at this juncture is composed of a percentage of two-thirds of those who were children, at most, at the end of the Second World War. A new generation has grown up. This new generation accepts the responsibility of the history of our country. This generation tries to draw the lessons out of the terrible things that have happened in the name of my country. The lesson we have drawn is the building up of a democratic State of which we are proud. But democracy and freedom also rest on truth and truthfulness. For my generation, which has deliberately accepted the heavy burden of the past without shoving it off to others, it is difficult enough to live with this painful chapter of history, but we also have a right to the truth about our own past. Horrible crimes have been committed and no new crimes have to be invented.

Ambassador Issraelyan has repeated his false allegations about a particular period of the history of the Second World War of which my letter speaks. In order that the records not stand uncorrected I reserve the right also to introduce future documentation, at the same level as his own allegations. At the moment, however, I would like to cite only one paragraph from my letter. I quote: "I have insisted in my letters to Ambassador Issraelyan that my delegation does not feel the slightest urge to defend the German army of the National Socialist period, let alone the National Socialist regime. Whoever wishes in this connection — or in any context — to evoke the war crimes and cruelties committed by the National Socialists before and during the Second World War would find my delegation in the frontline of those who will join in a condemnation of these atrocities. We would equally be among the first to deplore the horrible sufferings of those countries, including the Soviet Union, which had to submit to armed conflict on their soil as well as to foreign occupation. This, however, is not the issue at stake. The much more narrow question is whether or not chemical weapons were used by any of the parties to the Second World War in this case the German army. The issue is not merely of historical interest. I submit that we as negotiators to a chemical weapons ban should be keenly aware of historical precedent". End of quote.

Mr. Chairman, I do not think that it is legitimate for anybody from any country to prohibit an inquiry into historical truth and I also submit to you that no single country should claim the right to change the truth and to deflect it. When we deal with history we need precision and scientific rigour. There have been in earlier times, and even in very recent times, claims about the application of chemical weapons in various parts of the world. I am certain that Ambassador Issraelyan would agree with me that scientific rigour and historical truthfulness should be the criteria by which all these allegations are to be measured.