

(Mr. Issraelyan, USSR)

First of all we would like to emphasize very firmly the positive significance of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the parties to which number more than 100 States. Whatever attempts are made by some critics to find weak points in this instrument, with references to its lack of this or that provision, its brevity, etc., the main thing is that the Geneva Protocol placed an effective barrier in the way of the use of one of the most barbarous types of weapons. The Geneva Protocol, as we have already pointed out, has become an irrevocable part of international law. Given the lack of a comprehensive system of international disarmament treaties and agreements, it is even more valuable as a corner-stone for the creation of such a system.

Even the members of the fascist bloc which unleashed in 1939 the most bloody, merciless and inhumane war in the history of mankind, did not dare to make large-scale use of chemical weapons in combats at the front during that war. Although they prepared to use chemical weapons, they were to a large extent constrained by the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the unswerving determination of the major States of anti-Hitlerist coalition severely to punish the fascists for any attempt to violate the Protocol and use chemical weapons.

In this connection it is interesting to recall that in the spring of 1942 the Soviet Government informed Mr. Churchill, the British Prime Minister, of the possibility of the use by the Hitlerites of poison gases against the Soviet Union. In this connection the British Prime Minister informed the head of the Soviet Government, Stalin, in March 1942, of the decision of the British Government to treat any use of poison gas against the USSR exactly as if it were directed against England. "I have been building up an immense store of gas bombs for discharge from aircraft", Churchill wrote to Stalin, "and we shall not hesitate to use these over all suitable objectives in Western Germany from the moment that your armies and people are assaulted in this way." The stern warning of the heads of the anti-Hitlerite coalition States had its effect, although it has to be said that the fascist troops occasionally used chemical gases. In 1942, for example, they were used in the Crimea in the course of military operations against Soviet troops and civilians defending themselves in the Adzhimushky quarry.

There were reports of the use of chemical weapons by Japanese troops in China on a number of occasions. President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated on 5 June 1942: "Authoritative reports are reaching this Government of the use by Japanese armed forces in various localities of China of poisonous or noxious gases. I desire to make it unmistakably clear that if Japan persists in this inhuman form of warfare against China or against any other of the United Nations, such action will be regarded by this Government as though taken against the United States, and retaliation in kind and in full measure will be meted out. We shall be prepared to enforce complete retribution. Upon Japan will rest the responsibility."

It is known that chemical weapons were used by the Italian fascists in their aggression against Ethiopia in 1935-1936 and in some other cases.