

Book Reviews

Controlling battlefield chemicals

by William Barton

Towards a Chemical Weapons Convention (Aurora Papers 9) by Jane Boulden. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1989, 60 pages, \$12.00.

The history of efforts to ban the use of chemicals in war goes back more than a century. Public horror over the consequences of chemical warfare during World War I led to the adoption of the Geneva Protocol in 1925, which forbade the use, but not the possession, of such weapons. Later efforts by the League of Nations to negotiate a more complete ban came to naught. The United Nations did not pick up the charge until the 1960s, and the prospects for real progress did not become evident until the 1980s. This was partly due to significant modifications to the traditional Soviet position regarding inspection and verification, but perhaps even more significant was the worldwide revulsion at the use of chemical agents in the Iran-Iraq war. The impact of that public pressure manifested itself at the recent Paris Conference when world leaders called for an effective ban on the use of chemical agents.

The problems associated with negotiating a chemical weapons convention are complex, both politically and technically. The main problem areas can be summed up under the general headings of verification (both military and industrial), inspection, and implementing machinery (including costs). The trick is to balance the degree of comprehensiveness of the verification and inspection apparatus against feasibility in terms of intrusiveness and costs, and succeed in achieving wide political acceptability. This is why, notwithstanding the general climate of accommodation, the completion of the negotiations is likely to be a lengthy process.

Aurora Paper No. 9 is based on the Proceedings of a Conference entitled "Implementing a Global Chemical Weapons Convention," held in Ottawa, October 7-9, 1987. The author has incorporated

developments and changes in the draft convention up to the end of 1988.

Participants in the conference felt that the time had come "to involve the public in the negotiation process." People should be made aware that a convention is possible, but that there is a host of potential problems involved. "Public pressure can help to encourage a speedier resolution of outstanding issues."

As will rapidly become evident to those being exposed for the first time to the intricacies of the issues, the public which is likely to be willing and able to involve itself in the negotiating process is going to be a limited one. But for that select group Jane Boulden's account of the history of the negotiations, the scope of the proposed convention, and the problem areas that the negotiators are addressing, is clear, cogent and thorough.

Of course, the paper is commenting on an on-going negotiation, and thus a measure of obsolescence is unavoidable. For example, at the time of the conference the position of the French government was based on the concept that states should be allowed to maintain a minimum security stockpile until the states with the largest stocks disarmed to a minimum level. As was evident at the Paris Conference, President Mitterrand has substantially modified this position. That having been said, however, the main points brought out in the paper remain valid.

Included among the appendices to the study are useful papers, presented at the conference by some of the participants, on the scope of the convention, the verification of the declaration and destruction of stocks, the problems associated with the application of challenge inspection, and institutional machinery.

Aurora Paper No. 9 is a valuable addition to the literature on the subject of chemical disarmament, and will be particularly useful to the informed layman who wishes to follow this important international issue.

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NATO forever

by Courtney Gilliat

Canada, NATO and the Bomb: The Western Alliance in Crisis by Tom Keating and Larry Pratt. Edmonton, Alberta: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1988, 230 pages, \$14.95.

NATO: Towards the Year 2000 edited by J. J. Sokolsky, F.W. Crickard and Robert Boardman, Halifax, N.S.: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 1987, 80 pages.

This first book is one that should be read by anyone who has doubts about the need for Canada to continue to participate in, and fully support the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Its value lies in the fact that not only is the historical background behind the formation of NATO carefully documented, but as well the reasons for Canada's continued participation are placed in the broadest strategic perspective.

The only alternative to a multilateral approach to sovereignty and security for Canada through NATO is isolationism, or a form of lock-step security arrangement with the United States. This is rejected by the authors as both too expensive and leading to less, not greater, national independence or sovereignty. In a "Fortress North America" Canada would be forced to participate in such contentious US defence programs at the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and the potentially provocative US Navy forward maritime strategy.

The history of nuclear deterrence in Europe is traced and the continuing dilemma concerning the military utility of nuclear weapons is highlighted. The alternative, an all conventional defence, is rejected by some members of the Alliance on purely military grounds, as well as being very costly. Arms control agreements to limit or eliminate whole categories of nuclear weapons should in the authors' view go hand in hand with agreements to create a more equitable balance of conventional forces.