

UNITED NATIONS, Nov. 25—Diplomats handling disarmament negotiations enthusiastically welcomed today President Nixon's statement renouncing American stockpiling and use of biological weapons.

Mixed with the enthusiasm, however, was regret that Mr. Nixon's renunciation of "the first use of incapacitating chemicals" apparently did not extend to the employment of tear gas in warfare. In this respect, the statement disappointed those who have been pressing for United States enforcement of Secretary U Thant's report last September on chemical and biological weapons.

That report, prepared with the assistance of a group of international experts, said military use of tear gas is prohibited by the Geneva protocol of 1925, which Mr. Nixon today urged the Senate to ratify.

American use of tear gas and chemical defoliants in Vietnam has brought bitter criticism in the United Nations. This criticism also has focused on U.S. failure to ratify the Geneva protocol.

Diplomats interpreted the President's language today as leaving open the question of whether the United States accepts that tear gas is covered by the protocol. But one Western expert said that American ratification with a reservation on this point would be a retrogression.

#### British Praise

Britain's minister of state for disarmament, Lord Chalfont, praised Mr. Nixon's statement as "making it much easier to achieve" multilateral agreement on control of chemical and biological weapons.

Chalfont expressed gratitude that the United States had accepted the principle of a British draft resolution banning production and stockpiling of biological weapons and separating this from the more complex question of chemical weapons. He said both questions were likely to be referred back to the conference of the Committee on Disarmament at Geneva.

Sweden's minister of disar-

mament, Mrs. Alva Myrdal, also praised the portion of the Nixon statement dealing with biological weapons as "an enormous step forward." But, she added, to interpret the 1925 convention as allowing the military use of tear gas "would run counter to the spirit, and I would say also to the letter, of the Geneva protocol."

#### Thant Is Silent

Similar reservations are thought to have delayed a comment by Thant on the President's statement.

Along with the use of chemical herbicides and napalm in Vietnam, the use of tear gas to force Vietcong suspects out of caves has brought private denunciations here.

Critics contend that, far from being a humane weapon, the tear gas has enabled American troops to mow down fleeing enemy suspects.

A resolution stating explicitly that military use of tear gas is banned by the Geneva convention is among the items expected shortly in the General Assembly Political Committee.

Chalfont, however, conspicuously declined today to associate Britain with this interpretation. British troops have used tear gas for riot control in Northern Ireland.

#### Communist Resolution

Separately, Eastern European countries introduced their own draft resolution in the political committee prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological weapons.

Soviet Ambassador A. A. Roschin explained that, because materials used for peaceful purposes cannot be distinguished from those used for military purposes, it would be necessary to organize controls on a national basis. He depreciated the thought of foreign personnel intruding into chemical or biological installations.

American Ambassador Charles Yost read President Nixon's statement after informing the political committee officially of American ratification of nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

46 Wednesday, Nov. 26, 1969 THE WASHINGTON POST

# U.N. Diplomats Partially Back Germ-War Ban

By Robert H. Estabrook  
Washington Post Foreign Service