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Germ-Warfare Ban Proposed at Geneva

From News Dispatches

Britain proposed a broad new international convention yesterday to outlaw biological warfare.

At the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva, British Minister of State Fred Mulley introduced the outline of a draft treaty "to ban and proscribe the use for hostile purposes of microbiological agents causing death or disease by infection in man, other animals or crops."

He called for nations to "declare that use of microbiological methods of warfare of any kind and in any circumstances should be treated as contrary to international law and a crime against humanity."

Mulley told the conference

that the 1925 Geneva Convention banning the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons was obsolete. Many nations, including the United States and Japan, never ratified it. Nations that did sign it, including Britain, France and the Soviet Union, reserve the right to use such weapons against nonsigners.

The 1925 convention bans only the use, and not the manufacture, of bacteriological weapons. Mulley proposed that nations agree to ban their research, manufacture and possession, and submit to international inspection.

He admitted that it was impossible to devise a foolproof method for checking into the production of microbiological agents, and said the proposed pact would have to take into account that such agents also are needed for peaceful uses.

A U.S. spokesman in Geneva said, "We are studying Mr. Mulley's proposals with some interest."

The United States spends between \$350 million and \$400 million a year on chemical and biological warfare research. Additionally, in the past six years, the United States has sprayed more than \$175 million worth of jungle defoliants and rice-killing chemicals on Vietnam. In fiscal year 1968, it spent \$60 million on the defoliation pro-

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gram, and in fiscal 1969 will spend more than \$70 million.

The chemical used to kill Vietcong rice crops is called cacodylic acid and contains arsenic. Last month, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (with 110,000 members) urged the Pentagon to stop using cacodylic acid in Vietnam.

Just how much cacodylic acid has been used in Vietnam is not known, though an estimated 121,400 acres of cropland were sprayed with the chemical in 1967.

At the Pentagon, a spokesman noted that former Deputy

Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance said on Feb. 7, 1967, before the Senate Disarmament Subcommittee that "the Department of Defense has consistently supported measures aimed at achieving limitations on chemical and biological weapons."

The implication was that there has been no change in sentiment at the Pentagon since that statement was made.

At a press conference in Geneva following yesterday's session of the reconvened disarmament talks, Soviet delegate Alexei Rochchin said the So-

viet Union would study the British proposal, but that the first order of business should be to strengthen the 1925 convention.

The suggestion in the British proposal that civil, medical or health authorities have access to all research work in this field, for purposes of international inspection, appeared certain to meet with opposition from several nations.

During negotiations over the recently completed nuclear nonproliferation treaty, the Soviet Union steadfastly refused to accept inspection.

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