

RUSSIAN MOVE OPENS WAY FOR BIOLOGICAL ARMS BAN; BREZHNEV STATES PROGRAM



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Leonid I. Brezhnev opens the party congress in Moscow

OFFER AT GENEVA

Soviet Drops Demand for an Inclusive Pact Covering Gas, Too

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Text of the Communist draft convention is on Page 16.

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Special to The New York Times

GENEVA, March 30—In an unexpected turnabout, the Soviet Union announced a concession at the disarmament conference here today that could lead to an early agreement on an international convention banning biological weapons.

Against the background of the opening of the 24th Communist party Congress in Moscow—where Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, stressed his

country's peaceful intentions—Aleksei A. Roshchin, the Soviet delegate, introduced a draft agreement reflecting Moscow's conciliatory mood.

The draft dropped Moscow's insistence on the outlawing of bacteriological and chemical weapons at the same time. Mr. Roshchin said the new proposal aimed "to completely exclude any possibility" of waging bacteriological warfare.

Mr. Roshchin told the delegates that the Soviet proposal was intended to break a two-year deadlock on banning biological and chemical weapons caused by what he charged was Western unwillingness to give up chemical weapons.

In the first of its 14 articles, the Soviet draft treaty would bind nations "not to develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire" microbiological or other biological agents or toxins "not designed for the prevention of disease or for other peaceful purposes."

'An Important Step'

As delegates filed out of the big United Nations conference room overlooking Lake Geneva, James F. Leonard, the head of the United States delegation, told reporters that the move represented an "important step forward in our negotiations."

The United States negotiator recalled the Western view that a convention on bacteriological weapons offered the conference the "greatest opportunity for a really concrete and definite step forward" now, while it continued its efforts to get another agreement to ban chemical weapons.

Mr. Leonard indicated that he saw no major difference between the Soviet draft on biological weapons and one proposed by Britain two years ago with United States backing. In reply to a question, he said that it was possible to "look forward to achieving an agreement in the relatively near future."

The British delegation, through a spokesman, also "welcomed" the Soviet move,

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Soviet Moves for Biological Arms Ban

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which Western and nonaligned delegates said coincided with the disarmament policy statement made today by Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet party leader, at the party's 24th Congress in Moscow today.

The British were particularly pleased that the Soviet Union had agreed to the "two-step" approach to the problem of biological and chemical warfare that the West favors.

The United States and its allies have emphasized that biological weapons presented a simpler problem because, unlike chemicals, they have not yet been used in warfare and have not become a weapon the military counts on, if only because of the danger that its use could backfire.

The Western delegates have said they would be prepared to accept an accord on biological weapons mostly on "faith" and without the stringent verification measures that they would want to insure that an agreement on chemical arms was being observed by all.

However, it did not do as part of an international agreement but by means of a declaration by President Nixon on Nov. 25, 1969.

The disarmament conference started on the initiative of the Soviet Union and the United States, its co-chairmen, with only 17 nations representing the West, the Communist bloc and the nonaligned nations. Its membership has expanded to 25.

France has never accepted the seat offered her while Communist China, because it is not a member of the United Nations, has never been officially invited to participate.

While the conference has gone through long periods of stagnation, it can take credit for the treaties banning nuclear testing in the atmosphere and under water, outlawing the further spread of nuclear arms and prohibiting the emplacement of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed.

The "hot line" providing for direct communication between the White House and the Kremlin was also the result of an agreement initiated at the conference.

The Soviet Union stressed in the draft convention it proposed today that nothing in the proposed agreement was to be "interpreted as in any way limiting or detracting from the obligations" countries assumed in ratifying the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which banned the use of biological weapons as well as poison and other gases.

The United States has not approved that protocol, but President Nixon has asked the Senate for authorization to ratify it. Several American administrations have pledged that the United States would abide by the Geneva agreement provisions.

On presenting the convention on behalf of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, and Mongolia, Mr. Roshchin stressed that Moscow was reluctantly abandoning its demand for an all-encompassing ban that would include chemical weapons only to end the "deadlock."

The wider agreement was unattainable, he said, because of the "lack of desire of the part of the United States and other Western powers to give

up chemical methods of warfare."

But the Soviet delegate emphasized that the Soviet draft contained an article specifying that nations approving the convention would be committed to "conduct negotiations in good faith on effective measures for prohibiting the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and their destruction."

The negotiations, the article continues, would also cover "appropriate measures concerning equipment and means of delivery specifically designed for carrying out any use of chemical weapons as means of warfare." The British draft had similar provisions.

Despite the emphasis the Soviet delegate put on Moscow's disappointment over the absence of agreement on chemical arms, he stressed that by banning biological weapons and providing for the destruction of existing stockpiles within three months of the convention's ratification, the more limited agreement was an effective disarmament measure.

Provisions in the Soviet draft for recourse to the United Nations if there is a violation of the proposed convention and on ways of reviewing and amending it after it has entered into force all closely paralleled the British plan.

The Soviet concession on the issue of how to attack the problem of chemical and biological warfare is expected to help the arms talks, now in their 10th year. It came as a surprise because there was little expectation among the non-Communist delegations that any progress would be made at the current session.