

The Campaign to Make Chemical Warfare Respectable

WALTER SCHNEIR

IN THE JULY 5 issue of the New York *Sunday News* this question was posed in the "Inquiring Photographer" column: "Gen. William Creasy, former head of the Chemical Corps, says we can paralyze the enemy with gases they cannot see, smell or feel. He thinks we should announce we'll use them in another war. Should we?" The majority of those whose answers were selected for publication thought we should.

During the past several months, many news and feature stories have appeared in American newspapers and magazines on the subject of germ and gas warfare. This is no chance occurrence. A sizable public-relations campaign is currently being conducted in order to counteract traditional public revulsion against the use of germs and gas as weapons.

SOME EXCERPTS from recent speeches by Major General Marshall Stubbs, the Army Chief Chemical Officer, are illuminating:

¶ Wilmington, Delaware, April 14: "Since toxic chemical warfare has not been used since World War I,

this generation is not so well informed on its capabilities and consequently is apathetic as to its combat effectiveness. Coupled with this is the widespread belief left over from the first World War that its use is cruel and unethical. People fear what they do not understand. We can render a great service to our country by removing the cloak of doubt and suspicion surrounding the use of chemical and biological agents in war. . . .

"Statements by Soviet military leaders on the role of chemical and biological warfare in any future war are positive and are indicative of Soviet preparation to use, if they see fit, all weapons including toxic munitions. . . .

"Recently within the Corps, we have accelerated our information program."

¶ Chicago, April 23: "The public must be brought to realize that other nations have a strong CBR [chemical, biological, radiological] capability . . . It must also be aware that chemical and biological agents are not the cruel weapons of total destruction as

they have been branded by many writers."

¶ Washington, D.C., May 21: "Attitudes toward the entire field of chemical and biological warfare are one of our greatest problems. . . . The first big step, as I see it, is to get our people to understand that equipment and wherewithal to establish a CBR defensive is not enough. Unless the public accepts the fact that we must be prepared to use these weapons, we will not achieve a balanced weapons system."

WITH THE CAMPAIGN only a few months old, the number of aids to public understanding that have appeared in print is impressive. The following list is far from being complete: United Press International, May 11, "Urges Telling People Germ Warfare Facts," by George B. Brown; *This Week*, May 17, "War Without Death!," an interview with Major General William M. Creasy, retired; *Christian Science Monitor*, May 27, "Silent Weapons Aired," by Courtney Sheldon; *Harper's*, June, "Germs and Gas: the Weapons Nobody Dares Talk About," by Brigadier General J. H. Rothschild, retired; *Science Service*, June 24, "Russians Work on Combined Germ-Radiological Warfare." In July, all the Hearst newspapers ran a five-part series on germ and gas warfare by Dan Brigham, who interviewed General Stubbs in what was described as "an exclusive interview, the first that any chemical authority of the U.S. Armed Forces has given a newspaperman since World War I." During August similar series on the subject were run by both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Daily News*. On August 9, the *New York Times* took notice of the Pentagon's new public-relations drive in a signed article by Jack Raymond: "Pentagon Spurs Chemical Arms; Versatility of Gas Warfare Held Underrated by U.S.—More Funds Urged."

Love That Germ!

The techniques by which the Chemical Corps is attempting to influence public opinion are neither mysterious nor complex. Here are the principal elements of the campaign:

¶ High military officers make speeches to specially selected groups.

¶ Officers testify at Congressional

hearings (closed to the press), and carefully screened material is then released with some fanfare. Such hearings are also the occasion for "spectacular" demonstrations of the effects of various drugs on animals.

¶ Articles by retired officers, who cannot be held accountable, appear in magazines.

¶ Word is passed around among writers who specialize in scientific and military subjects that formerly classified material is now available to them for stories; or sometimes a writer will be given a tip on where classified material may be found in non-classified publications.

¶ Writers are also informed that certain high military officers are now receptive to interviews.

¶ Writers and editors are privately briefed by some civilian with a pipeline to difficult-to-obtain data who uses opportunities for exclusive stories as bait.

I MYSELF have been the beneficiary of this "private briefing" technique. This is how it works: The individual doing the briefing meets informally with a writer and stresses that the information he gives is "not attributable." Thus the person doing the briefing cannot be held accountable for anything he says and the reader has no way of knowing the source of the story.

An ex-newspaper and wire-service writer has been hired for a four-month stint by the Army's chief of research and development, Lieutenant General Arthur G. Trudeau, in order to look over the Army's whole research program for good story possibilities; the chemical service has proved to be a particularly fertile field. The practice of hiring an outside public-relations consultant is fairly routine throughout the Pentagon, one advantage being that a civilian on temporary assignment can operate with more freedom of action than the regular public-information personnel.

Such private briefings are, of course, merely one part of any large-scale public-relations campaign. A writer can almost always avail himself of other sources so as to obtain a less biased, more rounded view of his subject. For a variety of reasons, however, quite a few newspaper and magazine writers today choose to

glide with the prevailing winds, preferring briefings and fat press kits (crammed with everything they need for a particular story) to the more arduous effort of journalistic leg work.

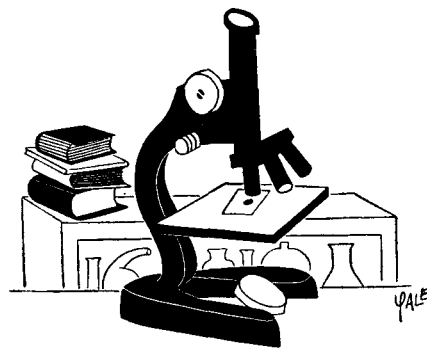
A study of recent stories on germs and gas reveals, to a remarkable degree, the very same themes that run through General Stubbs's speeches and Congressional testimony. In outline, the Chemical Corps' message to the American people may be summarized as follows:

¶ The public must be informed about germs and gas to correct the mistaken impression that these weapons are barbarous.

¶ Actually, these weapons are humane. Some of them, such as psychochemicals and non-lethal gases, can cause temporary insanity, destroy the will to resist, turn brave men into cowards—all without killing people.

¶ Germs and gas do not destroy property.

¶ The Soviet Union has such weapons and would use them.



¶ Our present policy not to use these weapons except in retaliation is dangerous and exposes us to disaster.

¶ A man with a briefcase filled with germs or gas would be able to introduce one or both of these weapons into the ventilating system of a building.

¶ In order to improve its research and development of germ and gas weapons, the Chemical Corps needs more money.

War Without Death?

During the last few months millions of Americans have read stories about amazing new psychochemicals and non-lethal incapacitating agents

that could make war relatively bloodless. Here are some examples:

Brigadier General J. H. Rothschild, retired (*Harper's*, June): "To me this neglect of non-lethal chemical weapons is nothing short of tragic. Man is now confronted with the possibility that he can, in some important measure, eliminate death from war."

Major General William M. Cressy, retired (*This Week*, May 17): "... there is no question in my mind that for the first time in history there is the promise—even the probability—that war will not necessarily mean death."

Austin Kiplinger (the *Kiplinger Washington Letter*, June 27): "U.S. has a 'family' of gases ready for use or in production. Some to kill. Others to paralyze. Others to cause temporary insanity."

Ray Cromley (NEA staff correspondent in the Frederick, Maryland, *News*, June 25): "An inconspicuous man with a brief case could openly walk into the Department of Defense, put his brief case down near an appropriate vent in the ventilation system and cause the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, and all their assistants to lose their sense of reality for hours."

Roger Greene (AP news-features writer in the *Washington Post and Times Herald*, September 6): "Working in deep secrecy, American scientists almost overnight have developed an arsenal of fantastic new weapons, variously known as psychochemicals and 'madness' gases, which could virtually paralyze an enemy nation without firing a shot."

WHAT ARE the actual facts? At present, two classes of lethal gases are being stockpiled—nitrogen mustards and nerve gases. The first is an improved version of the old First World War mustard gas that killed or incapacitated thousands of doughboys; the second is a German invention, developed during the Second World War and captured by both American and Russian troops.

The existence of nerve gases has been public knowledge for many years. As a matter of fact, eight years ago Congressman L. F. Sikes (D., Florida) described these gases in

some detail in *Saga* magazine in an article entitled "Nerve Gas! The Inside Story of the Incredible Weapon."

There is nothing particularly humane about nerve gas and few would deny that it is an extremely lethal weapon. At Rocky Mountain Arsenal, near Denver, where the gas was manufactured until recently, there have been more than eight hundred industrial casualties in the past six years, some of them fatal. Nerve gas can be absorbed very quickly through the skin; a small drop on a man's hand will halt his respiration in a few minutes, unless an antidote is speedily injected.

As for the so-called non-lethal weapons, there are two non-lethal gases presently stockpiled, both unspectacular: tear gas and vomit gas. There are, of course, many hundreds of drugs known to pharmacology whose effects on man are more or less incapacitating, e.g., anesthetic agents.

But the existence of such drugs, or even their dramatic demonstration on animals before goggle-eyed audiences, does not mean that they can be produced in sufficient quantities to be used as weapons or that their large-scale effects on human beings would be either predictable or militarily desirable. That is why such headlines as "Secret Weapons Paralyze Animals" on a June 23 UPI story do not mean exactly what they say.

The much-touted psychochemicals are drugs that are currently being used by a few psychiatrists to study the causes of psychoses. Best known are LSD-25 (lysergic acid diethylamide), mescaline, and psilocybin, the latter derived from a Mexican mushroom. These hallucinogenic drugs, whose properties have been known for about sixteen years, in some way disturb a man's mental processes, but the extent of the disturbance is highly unpredictable, and at present the usefulness of the drugs is largely limited to medical research.

Perhaps the most realistic appraisal of the Chemical Corps' present preparedness for waging "humane" warfare with psychochemicals was contained in testimony given before a Congressional committee last

year by Major General William M. Creasy, then the Army's Chief Chemical Officer:

REPRESENTATIVE DANIEL J. FLOOD (D., Pennsylvania): "You have various degrees of gases that produce temporary paresis?"

GENERAL CREASY: "I would not want to say 'Yes' to that for this reason: While there are varying lethal doses for those G-gases [nerve gases], all of these gases or doses are so small as to be hard to guarantee that any amount is not going to be fatal. You say 'temporary' but I am afraid—"

MR. FLOOD: "I was trying to expressly preclude fatal results. . . ."

GENERAL CREASY: "You are in the area of psychochemicals. There are many things that we would like to work on that hold possible hope. For example, if we could come up with



something that produces temporary blindness, this would be the ideal type of thing where no one would be maimed tomorrow. The best that we can offer at this time, and this is much better than anything else we are using, is to come in with a debilitating disease. You do not want to use smallpox. Not only do you kill people but even those that get well will be an eternal reminder of the thing that we did in this country that we may want to be friendly with later on."

Bugs on Our Side

Germ, of course, are the more usual—and generally more predictable—causes of the debilitating diseases General Creasy favors. According to a new limited-circulation Army pub-

lication ("U.S. Army Capability In the Space Age"), the Chemical Corps has pioneered in the mass rearing of insects for biological warfare. Research centers for biological warfare are located at Dugway Proving Ground, eighty miles southwest of Salt Lake City, and at Fort Detrick, in Barbara Frietchie's home town of Frederick, Maryland.

I was told that infected insects are kept constantly available at the Fort Detrick installations. The inventory includes mosquitoes infected with yellow fever, malaria, and dengue; fleas infected with plague; ticks with tularemia, relapsing fever, and Colorado fever; houseflies with cholera, anthrax, and dysentery. The facilities at Fort Detrick include laboratories for mass breeding of pathogenic micro-organisms and greenhouses for investigating crop pathogens and various chemicals that harm or destroy plants. Studies are in progress on the most effective means of spreading plant diseases that attack wheat, barley, oats, rye, rice, and cotton.

In addition to the use of insects as disease carriers, methods of spreading various bacilli, viruses, and toxins in the form of aerosols have been successfully developed. Last year a Fort Detrick physician, Dr. LeRoy D. Fothergill, reported at the American Medical Association meeting in San Francisco:

"I should like to say at this point that many of these aerobiological instruments and techniques have been developed to a remarkable state of technical perfection."

NEVERTHELESS, differences of opinion have long existed as to whether or not biological warfare is actually possible or effective. In November, 1952, Major General Raymond W. Bliss, retired (a physician and former Surgeon General of the Army), wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly*:

"Recent repeated allegations that the United Nations has been using germs of disease as a weapon of warfare against man [in Korea] have brought the subject of biological warfare into prominence. This is one form of warfare which has not yet been thoroughly accepted or tried. *We have not employed it and probably never will.* It is extremely doubtful if it could be used

with any success except in a localized and isolated area, and then with a very minor degree of effectiveness."

Some experts on epidemiology have expressed similar points of view, but the Chemical Corps strongly disagrees and is convinced from various harmless field trials that germs could be an extremely potent weapon. For example, a few years ago the Chemical Corps had two hundred thousand mosquitoes in special containers dropped near a Florida airbase, located in a relatively mosquito-free area. Within a few days, a high percentage of the people living on and around the base had been bitten many times. Had the mosquitoes been carrying a disease such as yellow fever, the Chemical Corps believes most of the local inhabitants would have been infected.

A few years ago, war games in the Far East simulated this situation: A large Chinese army had penetrated far into South Vietnam and was heading northwest toward the capital of Cambodia, Pnompnh. American troops in Thailand were assumed to be unable to reach Pnompnh before the enemy. A simulated attack with biological weapons was ordered. When Chemical Corps experts calculated the results, the State Department was so alarmed that it made a vain effort to suppress them. For along with the seventy-five per cent of the enemy troops assumed to have been killed or incapacitated were some 600,000 casualties among friendly or neutral civilians.

WASHINGTON sophisticates have frequently pointed out that you can gauge the size of the Navy's budgetary request by the number of Soviet submarine sightings reported off our coasts in the weeks prior to appropriation hearings.

During my briefings by the Chemical Corps' civilian public-relations consultant, he made it clear that at least one important reason for the campaign is the Corps' desire to obtain increased appropriations. General Rothschild, in his *Harper's* article, also italicized the need for funds: "*Unfortunately, the entire amount of money now allotted to the Chemical Corps for research and de-*

velopment is less than the cost of two B-58 bombers. Given such limited resources, the Chemical Corps must concentrate on the lethal weapons for which a need has definitely been established—however desirable and potentially useful it may consider the non-lethal agents to be."

In the copy of "U.S. Army Capability in the Space Age" that was lent to me, someone had carefully circled in red two figures—\$17.4 million and \$18.9 million. The first is the chemical research and development budget for fiscal 1959; the second the biological-warfare research and development budget for the same period. The items were pointed out to me several times with the comment that a proper development program for the psychochemical lysergic acid alone might cost \$100 million.

Policy (Off the Record)

President Roosevelt set United States policy regarding gas warfare when he issued the following statement in 1943: ". . . I have been loath

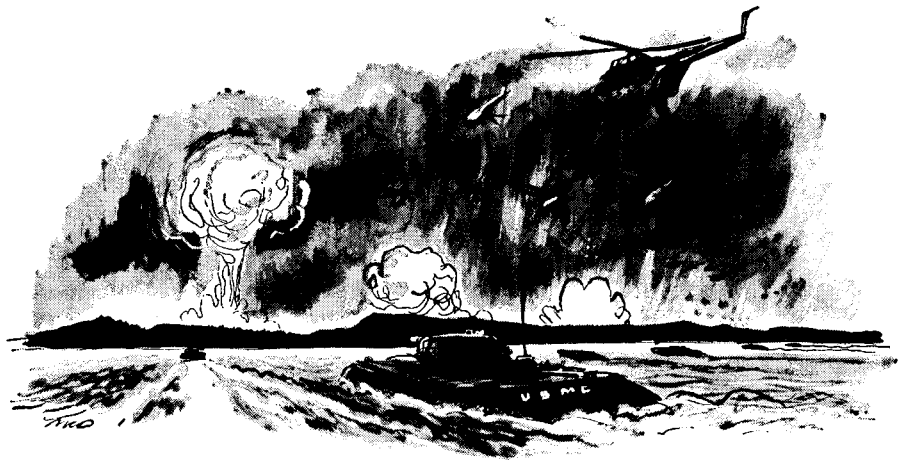
Corps) has taken sharp issue with this officially stated government policy. In his *Harper's* article he wrote: ". . . we must reject once and for all the position stated by President Roosevelt that an enemy can have the first chemical or biological blow wherever and whenever he wishes. That blow could be disastrous. We must make it clear that we consider these weapons among the normal, usable weapons of war."

Actually, some confusion exists as to just what American policy on germ and gas warfare is today, i.e., whether President Roosevelt's statement is still supported by the present administration. A verbatim excerpt from Congressional testimony by General Creasy in 1958 illustrates the impossibility of knowing just what our policy is.

GENERAL CREASY: "First I will start off with the national policy." [Discussion off the record.]

REPRESENTATIVE GERALD R. FORD, JR. (D., Michigan): "May I ask how long that policy has been in effect?"

GENERAL CREASY: "Since about



to believe that any nation, even our present enemies, could or would be willing to loose upon mankind such terrible and inhumane weapons. . . .

"Use of such weapons has been outlawed by the general opinion of civilized mankind. This country has not used them, and I hope that we will never be compelled to use them. I state categorically that we shall under no circumstances resort to the use of such weapons unless they are first used by our enemies. . . ."

Brigadier General Rothschild (who formerly served in the Chemical

October, 1956, about a year and a half ago. The national policy has been implemented by a Department a Defense directive." [Off the record.]

ONE DAY this last summer, the Chemical Corps' unofficial briefing officer telephoned from Washington to say that he could see me the following Saturday at his summer residence near New York. "Bring your bathing suit," he suggested. That Saturday afternoon I sat with him for more than two hours in the living room of his summer cottage

while he briefed me on the subject of germ and gas warfare.

After he had told me about a half dozen or more articles that were in the works for publication in various national magazines and important newspapers, I asked him: "Well, if I don't write anything on this for a couple of months, do you think the story will be dead?"

"No, no, not at all," he assured me. "You're getting in on the ground floor. This is a big new field and it's just opening up. In a few months it will probably be opened up much more than now."

"In a few months? How's that?"

"Well, there's a Department of Defense directive drawn up and if all goes well it will be sent to Murray Snyder's office [Defense Department public relations] telling him to set up a good solid public-relations program on BW and CW. [Secretary] McElroy will have to sign the directive, of course."

"Does he know about it?"

"No, I'm not sure. I don't think so. Of course a lot of other people will have to approve it. The State Department."

"And the President?"

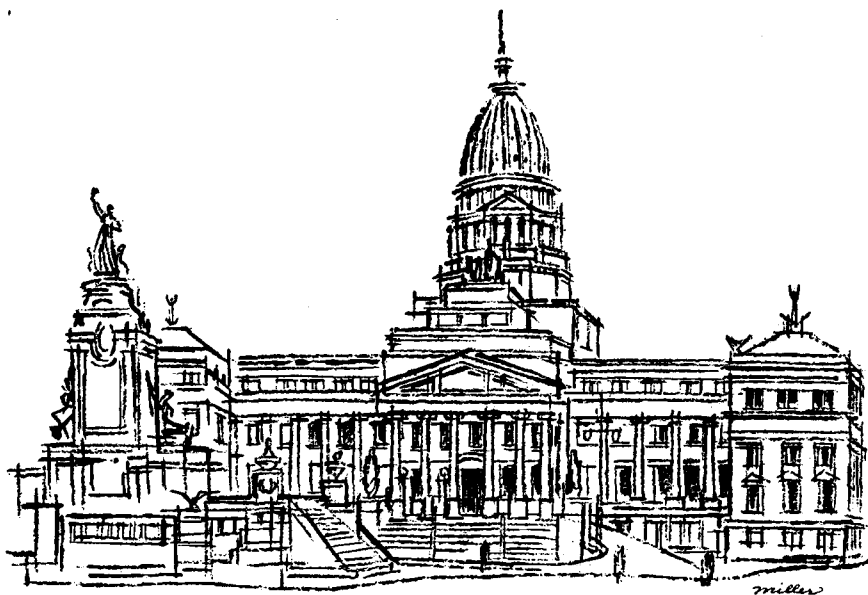
"Oh, yes. Probably. I would think he would see it."

"What would be the advantage of such a directive? You have a publicity campaign going now."

My host laughed indulgently. "Why do you think we're having this clandestine briefing? We could do all this completely in the open then. The whole field would open up. Press tours to Detrick, everything. Why, there's even a plan afoot to give some gas to some wardens for use in prison riots. You could paralyze them right where they stood. What a demonstration to the whole country that would be!" (If the prisoners received a nerve gas, presumably an antidote would be quickly administered to save their lives.)

I asked him whether he thought a broadened campaign might provoke some controversy and criticism.

"Yes," he said, "that's possible. In fact, I've told General Stubbs that he'd better expect some and if it comes he should just sit tight and not get excited and weather the storm. Then when it's over we'll pick up where we left off and continue the campaign."



President Frondizi And the Brink of Anarchy

GLADYS DELMAS

BUENOS AIRES

THE HEADLINES show only the surface eruptions in Argentina: the armed forces mutter and threaten; the streets resound with riots; strikers, from bankers to butchers, halt the national economy; President Frondizi twists and turns and reverses himself. Then a new surface calm is achieved. Nevertheless the crisis continues, deep in the fabric of the nation's life.

Argentina is a sort of bellwether for Latin America. Long the most prosperous and progressive of the South American republics, it likes to think of itself as the leader of the south, the counterpart of the United States in the north. Its fall from this high estate just when our influence within the country is making itself felt as never before could have repercussions even greater than civil war in Cuba. Furthermore, the Communist Party is already at work, capturing the leadership of various trade unions, infiltrating the lower echelons of the army, pouring oil on the fires of public discontent. Communism thrives on political chaos, economic depression, and

moral confusion. All three are present in Argentina.

The political crisis is the easiest to understand: After a decade of dictatorship, and before that more than a decade of rigged elections by which the Conservatives held the power they had won in a 1930 *coup d'état*, it is not surprising that the ways of democracy should seem strange and political thought be atrophied. None of the traditional political parties has come forward with either personalities or programs equal to present-day problems. Fascists, Socialists, Radicals, and Conservatives still brandish the slogans of the 1930's, related to world depression, anarchy, and "imperialisms" long since dead. The new Christian Democratic Party is so concerned with religious education and other confessional matters that it has little time for broader issues. Frondizi's own party is a splinter of the Radicals, held together largely by his own personality and his ability to capture the votes of such disparate groups as the right-wing Catholics, the Communists, and the Peronists. Its sobriquet "Intransi-