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RUSSIA'S POISON WEAPONS

A blind faith in treaties (especially with the Russians) is an unshakable dogma of liberal ideology. Treaty-signing is a sort of religious ritual which cannot be questioned lest one be excommunicated as a heretic from the parlors of diplomacy.

That's why, if you want any evidence of treaty violations, you must look to conservative sources. It's hard to understand why it should be "conservative" to face facts and "liberal" to ignore reality, but that's the way it is when it comes to the matter of U.S.-U.S.S.R. treaties.

The conservative think-tank, the Heritage Foundation, has just released a study called "Moscow's Poison War" showing that evidence is irrefutable that the Soviet Union is conducting chemical warfare in violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1972 Biological Warfare Convention. This should be called a "brutal poison holocaust."

These poison-gas atrocities started in Laos in 1976. Terrorized refugees fled their Laotian homeland because of what they called "yellow rain": a poisonous yellow cloud containing small particles that make sounds like raindrops when they fall.

The mysterious yellow poison, which arrived via aerial bombs and artillery attacks, caused bizarre and grievous injuries including breathing problems, extreme irritation of eyes, nose, throat and lungs, skin blisters, massive hemorrhaging, vomiting of blood, dizziness, convulsions, and a painful death. Shortly after death, the skin turned black.

Over the next few years, similar tales of chemical attacks causing agonizing deaths from a combination of unusual medical symptoms were described by refugees from both Cambodia and from Afghanistan. The similarity of persistent reports from remote rural peoples, who had no contact with each other, was striking.

The Cambodians (a nation of fishermen) described the victims in their death throes as "jerking like fish when you take them out of the water." The Afghans (a land-locked nation) described the victims as "jerking like dogs with broken backs."

A U.S. Army medical team, sent to Thailand by the Pentagon in 1979, reported that

poison attacks were indeed taking place, and they identified some but not all of the chemicals. The Carter Administration, pushing hard to ratify the SALT II Treaty, continued in its policy of "hear no evil, see no evil" about the Communists.

After the Reagan Administration took office, more evidence was gathered from Laos and Cambodia. On September 13, 1981, Secretary of State Haig announced that the United States had identified the chemical in "yellow rain." Our country has also acquired strong evidence that it is Soviet-made and Soviet-supplied.

Some reports say that the Soviets have taken part directly in some of the chemical attacks. The Kremlin has continually blocked the creation of an impartial United Nations commission to investigate the situation.

The Soviet Union is the only Communist nation possessing chemical warfare testing and production facilities that can produce large quantities of poisons to use as weapons. The particular chemical used in yellow rain is not indigenous to Southeast Asia, but does occur naturally in a fungus that grows in the cold, wet climate of the Soviet Union, where it has caused repeated epidemics of a bleeding disease.

The Soviet Union, which can't grow enough grain to feed its own people, is devoting enormous resources to growing the grain fungus from which it extracts the poison chemical. Soviet stocks of chemical weapons materials exceed ours by at least 4-to-1, and perhaps by 10-to-1. The U.S.S.R. has 80,000 to 100,000 chemical warfare troops devoted to chemical warfare "defense," whereas the U.S. has only 2,000 such troops.

The Communist Vietnamese and Pathet Lao are also using other chemical poisons, especially since 1979. The State Department has evidence of more than 50 chemical attacks in Afghanistan, using three different types of gases. The eye-witness accounts are remarkable. A yellowish brown cloud appears; the bomb makes no noise; the victims have no marks on them, but they die quickly, jerking about "like crazy people" with blood spurting from their eyes, nose and mouth. Survivors describe their compatriots as dying in spasms "like earthworms wriggling in a lethal spray of insecticide."

Even the Nazis refrained from using their poison gas stocks on the battlefields of World War II. But since the Soviets are already in open violation of the two treaties, can anyone be sure they would not use it against NATO -- or us? And given the tiny stocks of chemical weapons in Western hands, the Soviets would not need to fear any retaliation.