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To the Editor
New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
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I was disappointed that your editorial "Sideshow at Geneva" (Feb. 25) should be so imperceptive about the potential dangers of biological weaponry, that you should think their effective control would be a merely cosmetic adornment. One can argue, it is true, that these are "weapons nobody expects to use anyway", because "such agents pose as much of a threat to the potential user as to the potential enemy." It is also true that President Nixon's unilateral renunciation of U.S. efforts in biological warfare was an important step towards the control of these perils.

But this is only half the story. The unilateral moratorium by the U.S. has elicited no similar initiative from the Soviet bloc, no commitments, no information concerning any efforts they may be continuing in this field, without the benefit of the public ventilation that has moved U.S. policies. Instead, they have proposed a bland, really meaningless avowal to ban the production of "all chemical and biological weapons". In this form, the proposal cannot even be defined, much less verified, since many potential chemical warfare agents are common articles of commerce -- for example, chlorine gas, widely used to sanitize city water supplies, was used in the first major chemical attack by the Germans in World War I. Such vague proposals can hardly be regarded as a serious basis for regulating national behavior; and together with the curtain of silence about biological warfare research outside the Western bloc, they bode ill for the seriousness of purpose of some of the participants at the Geneva conference.

Your nonchalance about biological weapons never being used presupposes a rationality about decisions made under military stress that is denied by all of history, and almost daily in your news columns and editorials. Recall that it took 30 years for U.S. policy to reach the point of the current moratorium!