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COMMITTEE OF POLITICAL ADVISERS

PROPOSED TACTICS AT THE INTERNATIONAL
RED CROSS CONFERENCE AT NEW DELHI

Note by the United Kingdom Delegation

The ideal solution would be to get the draft "Rules for the limitation of the dangers incurred by the civilian population in time of war" taken off the Conference agenda. Unfortunately this does not seem possible. The draft Rules were placed on the agenda by the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross in 1955 and they were drawn up on the basis of a unanimous Resolution by the Red Cross national societies. Moreover, ever since World War I, the Red Cross has not hesitated to advocate the prohibition of non-directed weapons, even though any decision of that kind was necessarily political. If the International Red Cross were to drop the draft Rules now, it would certainly lay itself open to accusations by the Communist countries that it had "surrendered to pressure by the war-mongers" and that it was not the impartial and non-political institution that it claimed to be. Therefore any attempt by NATO countries to stop discussion of the Rules would be doomed to failure.

2. At the opening Plenary Session of the Conference, the Communist and perhaps also neutral Delegations, may be expected to urge that the Rules should be adopted as they stand. Our line would be to say that while we fully sympathised with the humanitarian ideals that underlie the Rules, the latter did raise complicated questions of international law and practice and required further examination by experts. We should accordingly propose that the Conference should set up a special Legal Commission to examine them. This move would probably fail and the Rules might be referred to the Conference Human Rights Commission. At this Commission the legal members of the United Kingdom Observers team would do their best to secure acceptable modifications of the Rules, especially Articles 9, 10 and 14. But the fact must be faced that the underlying purpose of the draft Rules as a whole is to rule out the use of all weapons of mass destruction as being incompatible with the protection of the civilian population and that any attempt to exclude the Articles mentioned above is likely to meet with opposition and not only from the Communist bloc.

3. When the Rules go back to the Plenary Session of the Conference, the Communist Delegations would probably either propose or support the Resolution asking the Conference to call upon Governments to accept the Rules. We would then put forward an alternative Resolution to the effect that the Conference

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should express its admiration for the humanitarian ideals that prompted the International Red Cross to put forward the Rules and should commend them to the attention of Governments. We have no exact form of wording in mind as yet, but would welcome any suggestions our Allies might be able to make. We should support our Resolution by the argument that while it is for the Red Cross to promote general humanitarian principles, the application of those principles must be a matter for Governments and any discussion about their application should take place in the organisations established for the purpose.

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