

On Jan. 16, three low-level officials at State sent to the White House a draft of an answer for the new national security adviser. "There is complete agreement," the memo states, despite disagreement by some defense officials, "that the USG should not take any action which increases the risk that Poland could be declared in default . . . it is imperative that USDA take all possible steps to avoid any inducement for banks with claims on C.C.C. to call default. . . ."

Among these "all possible steps" were extraordinary means to get around the rules: "We therefore urge that you explore all possible methods under the C.C.C. charter to authorize payments by the C.C.C. in the absence of a declaration of default," and three such methods were suggested: "Through interpretation of the regulations, the issuance of a temporary and emergency amendment to the C.C.C. regulations, or through the direct

received an order from the White House to authorize C.C.C. payment without the normal demand of default.

Meanwhile, President Reagan — who has probably not been briefed on this, because his N.S.C. briefer may not yet comprehend the import of the decision — blithely sails along, assuring one and all that more stringent methods are on the way unless Poland's junta eases off.

Just the opposite is taking place: the secret regulation giving the junta extraordinarily lenient treatment makes a mockery of pretensions of pressure.

In an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, the Reagan Administration has just blinked. Poland's rulers can afford to dismiss the Reagan rhetoric because they have seen that the U.S. is ready to do regulatory nip-ups to save them from default.

Beginning Thursday, Flora Lewis's column will appear Thursdays and Sundays.

what is reasonable and acceptable and what the Israelis find reasonable and acceptable.

A. I know that there is a big gap between their opinions and ours, but it should be narrowed. We stated our position several times and we can't give any concessions on something which we don't possess. The West Bank and Gaza is not Egyptian land at all, so I can't give concessions.

Q. In Israel there is a concern that when Egypt gets the Sinai back, that it will only drag its feet or that it will align itself with the Arab world once again.

A. We are not going to change our policy after the 25th of April. Why? For one simple reason: Now we have relations with the Israelis. I am sure that with these good relations we could play a good role to relieve any tension which may arise at any time with our Arabs, the neighbors with Israel, and this may help a lot in future to push the

on and continue. I am looking for peace as a very important and vital thing. We have to complete the comprehensive peace and settlement in the whole area. We stayed for 30 years in blood, hatred, war and all things. We have consumed our own sources. Now we should do our best for peace to prevail so our people can live.

Q. And you don't expect the rest of the Arab world to put enormous pressure on you once you get the Sinai back?

A. I never accept any pressure from any place.

Q. Have you felt it, however?

A. I never feel it because I reject any pressure. I should think carefully in any problem and study it very well and ask my aides, then form a decision. When a decision is formed, I don't worry.

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not commit the U.S. to anything beyond actual production of the weapons.

There was a flap in Britain a month ago when a Pentagon official disclosed that a 1980 report of the Defense Science Board recommended deploying a planned new binary nerve-gas bomb, the Bigeye, at U.S. air bases in England. Britain's Minister of Defense, John Nott, quickly said there had been no approach to him about such a deployment — "Nor is one expected."

Germany is the potential NATO battlefield, and West Germans are if anything more sensitive than the British on the subject of the binary weapons. One reason is that any significant use of nerve gas on the battlefield would inevitably cause heavy civilian casualties.

Maj. Gen. Niles J. Fulwyler, head of the Army's nuclear and chemical warfare directorate, explained it candidly in Congressional testimony last September. He said NATO governments'

has an enormous deterrent already. many hundreds of thousands of nerve-gas shells stored in this country and in Germany. Ironically, new weapons could arouse German opposition to the weapons already there.

The promoters of binary weapons dismiss our existing stockpile of nerve-gas shells as "aging" or "unsafe" because they were made before President Nixon put a moratorium on production in 1969. But no one has ever been hurt by a leak from one of those weapons. According to military sources, they are all ready for use or soon will be under a maintenance program.

To start producing a new generation of chemical weapons would be a dangerous step politically and a pointless one militarily. It would cost at least \$6 billion in the next five years. It would be an extreme example of technological folly: a clever, costly cure for a problem that does not exist.

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'Playing God'

By Sharon McAuliffe and Kathleen McAuliffe

In general, Americans have a positive attitude toward technology. A study recently published by the National Science Foundation reports that the use of science is favored to increase life expectancy, discover intelligent beings in outer space, modify weather, and even detect criminal tendencies in young children. But when it comes to genetic engineering, many people still take a deep breath.

Despite reports of man-made bacteria that produce insulin and gobble up oil slicks, those people conjure up images of cloned human beings and new microbes that escape from university laboratories to unleash terrible, unknown diseases.

The phrases "tampering with life," "overstepping moral and ethical bounds," and "playing God" exemplify the anxiety that this new technology evokes. At the root of this fear is the belief that genetic engineering is unnatural — that the ability to construct life, even if, now, only a single cell, is somehow perverse. Not surprisingly, the same National Science Foundation's study found that two out of three Americans opposed research leading to the creation of new life forms. There is something ironic about this gut reaction, for in reality genetic engineering is the quintessence of a natural innovation. And, it might be added, one far more ecologically sound than many of the technologies it promises to replace.

Our mammoth chemical factories

are hardly a tribute to environmental science, generating millions of tons of toxic waste each year and consuming vast amounts of fuel. By contrast, gene-spliced micro-organisms are far more efficient industrial processors, manufacturing the same substances without the pollutant byproducts that accompany traditional synthesis, and with great savings in energy. These advantages explain why biotechnology will undercut the cost of mak-

ing products such as plastics and ethylene glycol (the chief component of antifreeze) by up to 50 percent.

Still other manmade microbes will be harnessed in a reverse way, to break down DDT, Agent Orange, and a range of deadly compounds once labeled non-biodegradable.

Though progress continues, genetic engineering remains branded in the public's mind as a monstrous threat to the ecosystem. So long as we let fear numb

our rational faculties, we will remain blind to biotechnology's most outstanding virtue. Far from upsetting the natural order, it will allow man to tap into the Earth's balanced economy, to use living systems to provide our raw materials, to process them into desired products, and to break wastes down again for reuse. In the "age of biology," the effluence of one industry will become the feedstock of the next.

Given this technology's enormous

potential in combating pollution and conserving scarce resources, its failure to attract greater interest among people concerned about ecology is indeed unfortunate. The Sierra Club, the National Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, and other environmental groups initially opposed the technology. Today, in light of favorable results from several safety studies and reassurances from scientists, the environmental movement has re-

mained silent.

Dazzling medical advances have at least helped paint a more positive picture of genetic engineering. Yet to most Americans, the fear of creating artificial epidemics still seems much more real than the likely outcome of this research. Rather than generating new disease, genetic science promises to cure age-old afflictions — including malaria, hepatitis, and cancer. Bacteria that have had human genetic material transplanted into them can churn out vast quantities of body proteins — the chemicals precisely designed by nature to ward off sickness. For example, access to highly specific antibodies — the immune system's "guided missiles" — should enable physicians to detect illness at the earliest possible stage and slay tumors without the toxic side-effects of traditional chemotherapies.

Of course, any powerful science can be abused or mishandled — and genetic engineering is no exception. Although most scientists now believe that this research is unlikely to pose a risk to public health, it is important to remain alert for unforeseen hazards and to ensure that appropriate safety precautions are taken — especially as bio-business heats up. And while the engineering of human traits is still considered a remote prospect, it is not too soon to begin thinking about the issues that may arise from genetic science.

It is time, however, that we overcome our fear of the term "genetic engineering." In a country that is addicted to foreign energy, where mounting pollution poses a serious threat, where productivity growth is among the lowest of the industrialized nations, and where cancer kills one in four, the ability to "play God" could be nothing short of a godsend.

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our biggest manufacturing enterprise, the economic and social health of the Midwestern Industrial heartland, and an even worse deficit in our balance of trade if we lose. Already, imports

To Join the Car Race

WASHINGTON — Volkswagen of Wolfsburg, West Germany, is whizzing past General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler of Detroit in the race to develop the world's next generation of

panies that want to invest their own funds to develop an auto to meet the specifications that will enable them to outdo the European and Japanese

comes to innovation.

A competition open to all American companies would offer the only practical way of bringing the nation's engi-