

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



SEP 25 1970
Kaplan
CBW
ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉ

1211 GENEVA 27 - SWITZERLAND
Telegr.: UNISANTE-Geneva

Tél. 34 60 61 Télex. 22335

1211 GENÈVE 27 - SUISSE
Télégr.: UNISANTÉ-Genève

In reply please refer to:

Prière de rappeler la référence:

22 September 1970

PERSONAL AND UNOFFICIAL

Dear Bernie,

This will summarize the present position concerning the Pugwash Symposium on "Rapid Detection and Identification of Microbial Agents" that I discussed with you briefly on the telephone before returning to Geneva.

You will recall that during the Pugwash meeting in Wisconsin, Professor Dominicé, Dean of the Law School at the University of Geneva and representative of the Swiss group, and I discussed with Millionshchikov and Reutov of the USSR the question of having three or four USSR participants at the above Symposium scheduled for 18-22 February 1971 in Geneva. Both Millionshchikov and Reutov affirmed that this would be done, which in turn should ensure participation of Czechoslovakia. Dominicé and I also discussed this matter with Ted Nemeec who promised to help with respect to Czechoslovak participation. Miettinen of Finland said he would send appropriate names concerning Finnish participation. Tammelin of Sweden has already sent a list of suggested participants from various European countries, including his own, and we are awaiting suggestions from Gordon Smith of Porton. We expect Sir Solly Zuckerman to use his influence to ensure appropriate British participation, if there appears to be some hesitation on the part of the Porton group.

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Professor Bernard Feld
Laboratory for Nuclear Science - Room 26-245
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Mass. 02139
USA

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You will also recall that according to recent statements attributed to Pentagon sources (see Science, 31 July 1970, p. 454) there might be some modification in the policy stated by President Nixon and confirmed presumably by Kissinger to the effect that no (or very minimal?) secret research would be carried out on biological agents. This caused great concern among participants of the working group discussing CBW in Wisconsin, and elsewhere, because such a retrograde step would seriously compromise the credibility of President Nixon's statement, and such a group devoted to secret research on biological warfare, even though for so-called "defensive" reasons, would inevitably undertake work on new strains and agents which could very well lead to serious consequences, and could serve as a nucleus for expanding BW work again. For these reasons it is all the more necessary to further the principle of open research, and the Pugwash Symposium in February could be an important step in this direction.

After the Wisconsin meeting, I went to Washington where I met with Riley Housewright, formerly Director of Fort Detrick (until 1 September, and now working for Microbiological Associates in Bethesda, Md.), and Dr Benjamin Warshowsky, who is the principal worker there involved with rapid detection of microbial agents. We discussed the best choice of individuals for participation in the February Symposium and it was clear that Warshowsky himself would be most important. Other excellent participants would be Dr Leonard Goldberg of the Naval Biological Laboratories in Oakland, and Dr Michael Mitz, in charge of life detection systems in NASA, Washington DC. Housewright and Warshowsky also strongly recommended Dr Eli Mishuck, Aerojet Biological and Medical Division, Aerojet General Company, Elmonte, California. These four men would very well take care of particle detection, discrimination and fractionation, but this would leave the other topic item of identification uncovered. Apparently, very little has been done on the question of identification at Fort Detrick, as this problem was handed over to the Armed Forces Medical Service as far back as 1956. The best man that I know to cover the identification problem would be Dr Edward Lennette, who is in charge of the Viral Division of the California State Department of Public Health, Berkeley. Lennette could also cover the bacteriological aspects which are dealt with by a colleague of his. I know Lennette very well and I could write him about the Symposium in due course. A less satisfactory alternative would be Dr Morris Schaeffer, in charge of the public health laboratories of the City of New York. I would also recommend that Don Glaser of Berkeley attend because of his familiarity with automated apparatus in the microbiological field, and perhaps Ivan Bennett and Matt Messelson, although Matt told me that he probably could not attend.

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In discussing the matter with Housewright and Warshowsky, they pointed out that one should not expect all classified information on rapid detection to be revealed at the meeting in Switzerland, and that depending upon the response of other countries, it might be possible to have de-classified additional information for subsequent meetings. Further, they stressed that a considerable amount of unpublished and highly useful information could be presented at the February meeting which could serve very well as a start.

Two important questions concerning participants from the United States are, firstly, the coverage of their travel costs to Switzerland (with the Swiss group taking over hospitality expenses after arrival in Switzerland) and, secondly, the necessity for obtaining clearance for Warshowsky and Goldberg (and perhaps Mitz) in order to allow them to attend. Both Warshowsky and Housewright urged that this could best be done through Ivan Bennett at the OST or PSAC level in the White House. I believe that Ivan had been in touch with the Pentagon when the Symposium was first considered for Fort Detrick in September, and we hope very much that he can help arrange clearance with the appropriate authorities for the meeting in Switzerland.

Rotblat and the Swiss group are very anxious to send out invitations as soon as possible and we hope that you can take this matter in hand with Ivan Bennett at the earliest possible moment so that Rotblat will be in a position to issue specific invitations.

Sincerely yours,

Martin Kaplan

cc: Dr Ivan Bennett, New York
Professor Matthew S. Meselson, Cambridge, Mass.
Professor Joseph Rotblat, London