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9 April 1980

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Dear Phil,

My impression from talking with infectious disease experts who has reviewed the classified evidence is that there is much uncertainty regarding what may have happened in Sverdlovsk. The only other thing I can add which is not in the press comes from a computerized literature search done for me a few days ago. Over the past fifteen years we turned up about 100 references to Anthrax in the Russian language scientific literature. Two particularly important conclusions emerge: 1) There is a long standing anthrax problem in Russia. Animal and human infections are frequent. There are foci of semi-permanent infection in which the cycle between animals and the soil is yet to be broken. 2) The Soviets have conducted and continue to conduct a sizable program for producing anthrax vaccines. This, of course, entails the production of anthrax in considerable quantity.

Certainly on the basis of what I know, the case for a violation of the BW treaty is not made. I gather from all of the accurately quoted official U.S. statements that I have seen that our government is not certain either. How to end the uncertainty is the question. Some things are going on that might resolve the problem but I think I should not talk about them now. Julian Robinson has a piece in the 3 April issue of Nature dealing with the CW allegations and also things regarding anthrax.

as ever,

Matthew Meselson