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Dear Matt,

I'm now back from France, and very glad to find so many things from you.

I am intrigued to know how you came upon the Posev piece; maybe the fact of your having done so should increase its authenticity in my mind. My understanding is that Posev is a Springer cum Radio Liberty organ which does occasionally get copy from the dissident run, as is purportedly the case with the Sverdlovsk piece. ~~But~~ All the Soviet-studies people I have talked to here view Posev with the deepest suspicion. Would you say that the Robert Moss article (London Daily Telegraph) of 11 Feb and the Bild-Zeitung one of 13 Feb both draw from it, either directly or, in one or the other ~~piece~~ case or both, via the enclosed Economist Foreign Report article of 23 Jan? Or are there quite different parentages involved, ones which perhaps also produced the Ma'ariv piece of 21 March? Since US officials now seem, to judge from the press, to be taking an even stronger line on Sverdlovsk, one ought to suppose that there is something a great deal more solid in the background. Why, incidentally, does William Beecher now write (Globe 29 March) that Omutninsk has, after all, been discounted as a BW production site? (The Merieux plant was at Zagorsk, wasn't it?) And why, for that matter, does Charles Corddry write (Baltimore Sun 29 March) that there are thought to be nine Soviet BW production/storage sites, in contrast to Beecher's original six?

My first thought, when looking over your Anthrax-USSR bibliogs was to find out from Zhores Medvedev who the very diligent research assistants were who had been helping him go through the Russian scientific literature in connection with his book on the Kyshtym radiological accident: maybe they would take an interest in the Sverdlovsk affair. But maybe you are following-up on the bibliog already. And one would certainly hope that others, with governmental resources at their disposal, would by now have beaten out a similar track. If I were doing it--and it's the translation problem that really puts me off--I guess I would start from your numbers 8, 40, 50 and 44 (taking in 30, to relieve a horrid curiosity). No 42 surely has to be BW-related?

I think I told you in my last letter that Survival (the IISS journal) was about to carry a piece on CW. Apparently I had this wrong, and IISS have now asked me to do something for them, as you will see from the enclosed letter. But although this is just the opportunity you and I were talking about a while back, I am reluctant to accept the assignment, for time reasons, unless no one else can be persuaded. Should I suggest Mike Brown (?) to them? Or maybe he and I could collaborate?

I've also been asked by the nascent London version of the New York Review of Books to do 2000-4000 words for them on the Afghan allegations, &c. This I find very

tempting, though again I don't really think I have the time. How is your NYT Mag piece coming along ?

I see that the US press has given some coverage to our Defence Secretary's recent statement on the possible need for a British chemical-weapons capability; enclosed are some pieces from the British press. I am reliably informed that all this is not to be taken too seriously: that Pym was making an essentially political gesture. Studies are certainly in hand, but at a low level of effort: completion dates, and hence any decisions, are way into the future.

Also enclosed is another Robert Moss story, *etc*

As ever,



J P Perry Robinson

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