

19 December 1980

Ms. Beth Isacke, Assoc. Editor
The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists
1020-24 East 58th Street
Chicago, ILL 60637

Dear Ms. Isacke,

I have looked at the manuscript by Powell that came with your letter of 24 November. It makes a fairly clear case for Japanese experimentation with biological weapons during WWII, including experimentation on human beings. The evidence for a U.S. cover-up is less clear, at least as Powell presents it. This is partly because a considerable amount of this aspect of his case is presented in the footnotes. Moreover, there is quite a bit of surmise and not enough direct quotation from documents presumably in Powell's possession. It would be better to quote the documents and leave the reader to judge for himself.

There are some very important references which Powell may not have seen. These are both reports of the British Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee (BIOS). The two references are 1) BIO-JAP-PR-746, Report on Scientific Intelligence Survey in Japan, Sept-Oct, 1945, vol.5: Biological Warfare, and 2) BIOS-JAP-PR-614, Medical Targets-Japanese Bacteriological Warfare, 1946. This report, I believe, actually originated with the U.S. Naval Technical Mission to Japan. I remember reading one or both of these reports about fifteen years ago in the World Health Organization library in Geneva. It may be possible to obtain them through the WHO librarian. Alternatively, copies may be in the possession of Mr. Julian Perry Robinson, Senior Fellow, Science Policy Research Unit, Mantell Bldg., University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RF, England. Further valuable references and a detailed discussion and analysis are also given in the text and appendix II of Mr. Robinson's book, The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Humanities Press, 1971.

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I think it is important for this story to be told and told as accurately and as clearly as possible. I would urge that you ask Powell, as he himself has already suggested, that the manuscript be shortened and, more important, reorganized and if possible brought up to date to take account of any information or documents which have more recently come into Powell's possession.

The section in which Powell suggests that the U.S. may be doing work that violates the spirit of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention seems to me weak and based on a great deal of surmise and worst-case assumption. Perhaps some of this is a matter of style and could be remedied by presenting what relevant facts there are and, most important, raising the important questions. Incidentally, Powell is inaccurate to describe me as an "American Nobel laureate" on page 11.

I have taken the liberty of sending a copy of this letter directly to Powell so as to speed things up and make the communication between us a little more personal and direct. I hope you don't mind.

Sincerely Yours,

Matthew Meselson