

Lederberg



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. Ivan Bennett
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Dear Ivan:

Thank you for sending me the dissertation: I will certainly read it with great interest.

Lynn Rusten is moving very quickly towards a draft transcript of our meeting in Moscow and you should be getting a copy of that pretty soon for your own comments and corrections.

Meanwhile Paul Marks and I have been trying to put the question of scientific exchanges on vaccines etc. up through channels, so far the NAS and NIH. At some point we are going to have to counter the resistance that will almost certainly rise on technology export restriction policy considerations; and your input at that time would be particularly helpful.

I've also been briefing Bob Mikulak and agency people about my impressions of the meeting and of the Soviet story on Sverdlovsk 1979. I think it would be a good idea if we simply stop talking about the epidemic and go to the more primary questions in BW verification, namely what's going on in the facility and so forth. I tend to believe the account that Nikiforov gave; but I doubt if it will ever be possible to collect enough evidence to be totally compelling. Even more than that might be needed in order to get some of the people to budge off the limb they have crawled out on during these past many years. So my line is not that you have to believe their story; but that they have provided enough information to give it some face credibility. It is therefore no longer profitable to continue to press the airborne escape hypothesis whatever one's private belief may be.

Dr. Ivan Bennett
October 23, 1986

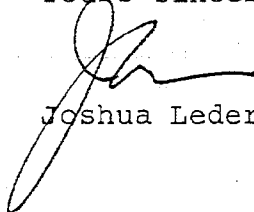
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The Soviets of course deserve great criticism for their unwillingness until now to talk about it; but I think we ought to offer them some reinforcements for their change of posture and hope that they continue to be forthcoming in more important areas. I'm sure you will be having your own private conversations on the same subject but of course none of us wants to be involved in any public embroil.

Matt Meselson has been holding to a similar line although I believe he is now organizing another trip to Moscow with more experts; and I suspect that the outcome of that will be some fairly strong public statements. I am not sure that sharp confrontation is all that constructive but there may not be that much that we can do about it.

Without going to any public media, I wonder if it would not be worthwhile to spend a few minutes briefing the DSB on our visit. I've offered that to Bert Fowler and if that comes off would you play whatever part you would care to in the discussion?

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg