

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



7 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

9 March 1989

Dr. J. Federov
Deputy Chief
Main Board of Epidemiology
USSR Ministry of Health

Dear Dr. Federov,

Thank you for your frank letter of 30 December. I am most grateful for the efforts you and your staff have made to locate data about the 1979 Sverdlovsk anthrax outbreak, especially in view of the recent heavy and unexpected additional duties that have confronted your ministry.

I have discussed the matter with my colleagues and we agree with you that a full scientific analysis of the 1979 outbreak cannot be done with the limited amount of data that remains.

Still, we believe there would be considerable scientific value in completing some of the aspects of the project agreed upon with Dr. Burgasov's group in Cambridge last April and in discussing the more recent outbreaks of anthrax mentioned in your letter. Therefore we propose for your consideration the following joint effort:

1) Drs. Albrink, Brachman, Crumrine, Guillemin, Langmuir Shelokov and I would visit the USSR for approximately 10 days at a mutually convenient time this Spring or Summer. We would cover all costs outside the USSR.

2) We would meet again with Drs. Burgasov, Nikiforov, Sergiev, and Yampolskaya to complete our discussions of the Sverdlovsk outbreak, especially the clinical and pathoanatomical aspects.

3) Dr. Albrink would bring histological slides from his own collection from human inhalatory anthrax cases in the US. He and Dr. Nikiforov would spend two or three days examining and comparing each others' collections of slides. From this collaboration, there should arise a joint publication on the histology and pathoanatomy of human systemic anthrax. This would be a unique and valuable contribution to the scientific literature.

4) We would like to visit Sverdlovsk to meet with local health and veterinary personnel who were involved with the 1979 outbreak. We would also like to meet with surviving patients, if any can be located.

5) We would meet with Soviet scientists familiar with recent anthrax outbreaks, as mentioned in your letter and would discuss relevant clinical and epidemiological data.

6) If you wish, one or more of us would present scientific talks on recent laboratory studies of Bacillus anthracis in the US and on other topics that may be of interest within the expertise of our group.

If our proposal is acceptable, I would ask that you suggest two or three alternative times during the Spring and Summer that would be convenient for you.

If you wish to reply by telefax, my direct telefax number is (617) 495-8308. The Harvard University telex number is 92 1496. Telex messages should have my name and telephone number (495-2264) in the address. The regular post is rather slow, taking up to a month to arrive.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson

Matthew Meselson
Professor of Biochemistry