

Gumbel #2

Call from me to Peter Gumbel ca. Saturday 10 August in the morning from Martin Kaplan's office in Geneva. This memo is written 27 August at Woods Hole, from scant notes and memory.

Since our conversation of July 19, Gumbel saw Sergiev, who seemed less than forthcoming. I mentioned that Sergiev said in the US that he came late to Sverdlovsk and had little direct role except in organizing the vaccination program for people in Sverdlovsk and in retrieving samples from a cow carcass in an abandoned mine shaft, from which *B. anthracis* was subsequently isolated. In Cambridge, Sergiev mentioned daily reports and an overall report he prepared for the Ministry of Health. He told Gumbel he would try to retrieve a report ("zacuchenya?"), presumably his own, from the MOH.

Gumbel saw Yampolskaya, who recalled her surprise at reading the Liturnaturnya and Rodina articles I showed her in January suggesting the epidemic was airborne and that there had been a cover-up. She was unable to say whether new cases of fatal anthrax continued all the way up until the time of her departure at the end of April although there were still cases in her ward. She referred to them as "generalized gastric". Gumbel also said there were cases "to the end" and that the distribution was "front loaded". I cannot recall how he established this. It agrees with the chronology of Bezdenejnyh.

I asked Gumbel where the ceramics factory was and whether the victims who worked there all worked the same shift. Gumbel said that the ceramics factory was about 1/2 mile SE of the facility, with an area of small wooden houses and then an area of 4-5 story brick apartment buildings between the facility and the factory. Farther SE beyond the factory there were fewer habitations (?). This is consistent with my SPOT photos. People at the factory could not recall whether all the victims worked the same shift or even what shift(s) they worked. There was activity at the factory day and night. I stressed that this could be an important point, since airborne exposure at the factory would be expected to be confined to a single shift.

Gumbel asked if the cases per day given in my FAS Public Interest Report article refer to admissions or deaths. I explained that it could not be deaths, since the total (96) is greater than the number of deaths (64). As stated in the Report, the numbers refer to presentations diagnosed as anthrax.

I told Gumbel I would send copies of numerous Sverdlovsk newspaper articles and posters from April-May 1979 warning of the danger of anthrax from uninspected meat, a short report from Burgasov, and audio tapes of the 15 April 1988 presentations in Cambridge (The photocopies were sent via WSJ/NY in mid-August, the tapes at the end of August.)

Gumbel would go to Sverdlovsk again, on Wednesday the 14th (?).

chronology

25-28 MARCH Sale of 29 tonnes bone-flesh powder at or from
Aramil

29 First animal anthrax, probably
30
31

1 APRIL
2
3
4 5 human cases (admissions), misdiagnosed.
5 5.
6 5. Nikiforov arrives
7 7. Anthrax provisionally diagnosed ca. this date
8 7. Yampolskaya arrives (?)
9 6.
10 10. Microbiological confirmation of anthrax
11 9.
12 7.
13 5.
14 4.
15 4.
16 1.
17 0.
18 0.
19 1.
20 0.
21 0.
22 2.
23 0.
24 0.
25 1.
26 0.
27 2.
28 1.
29 2.
30 1.

1 MAY 0. 11 1.
2 1. 12 0.
3 0. 13 1.
4 2. 14 0.
5 1. 15 0.
6 1. 16 0.
7 2. 17 0.
8 0. 18 1.
9 1.
10 0.

total admissions 96.