

Knudson



ARMED FORCES RADIOBIOLOGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

8901 WISCONSIN AVENUE
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20889-5603

18 October 1994

Dr. Matthew Meselson
Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02167

OCT 24 1994

Dear Dr. Meselson,

I was told that you were writing a summary report on the Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg) anthrax epidemic of 1979. If this paper has been published, I would appreciate receiving a copy.

I was involved in anthrax vaccine development at USAMRIID for several years and am presently conducting spore inactivation studies with ionizing radiation. There have been some questions concerning the Sverdlovsk epidemic that have puzzled me for some time and I would greatly appreciate your comments on these questions.

1. Boris Yeltsin stated that their military research lab was responsible for the accidental release of anthrax spores. Is there any information about how the accident occurred? Were they disarming obsolete munitions or constructed new BW weapons?
2. There were early reports of an explosion at the biological warfare facility. Did you find any medical reports on workers from Compound 19 being treated for wounds resulting from an explosion on 2 April 1979?
3. Were there any cultures of Bacillus anthracis available that were isolated from any of the fatal cases? Is there any evidence that the strain had been genetically altered? Is there any evidence that they were more resistant to penicillin or other antibiotics?
4. Two reports (Nature. 1980. 284:294, and Air Force Magazine, 1981. 64:124) listed the number of deaths at more than 1,000. Is this consistent with your recent findings?
5. Do you believe that there were similar incidents in Kirov, Kalinin and Novosibirsk?

6. What was their rationale for immunizing their citizens with the more reactive live anthrax vaccine (STI strain) rather than with a chemical (protective antigen) vaccine?

Thank you in advance for your time in sending me a copy of your paper and in answering these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory B. Knudson". The signature is written in black ink and has a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

GREGORY B. KNUDSON, Ph.D.
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army