

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



7 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Academician Yevgeny Chazov
Minister of Health
Rakhmanovskiy, 3
Moscow

September 30, 1988

Dear Minister Chazov,

As you know, in August 1986, at the invitation of the Ministry of Health, I visited Moscow to confer with Soviet physicians who dealt with the 1979 outbreak of anthrax in Sverdlovsk. Subsequently, Drs. P.N. Burgasov, V.N. Nikiforov and V.P. Sergiev accepted my invitation to come to the US in April this year and gave scientific lectures at the National Academy of Sciences, the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. At the end of the visit, which was most successful and well received, we agreed on the importance of further documentation in the scientific literature of this unusual outbreak of human anthrax. In particular, we began to plan for a trip to the Soviet Union by a small group of qualified American scientists.

In Moscow early this month I met with Drs. Burgasov, Nikiforov, Sergiev, and Yampolskaya. We agreed that the best time for the proposed visit would be two weeks early in January, 1989. Dr. Burgasov and I discussed in detail what work should be done in Moscow and in Sverdlovsk.

In Moscow, our work would include further technical discussions between Soviet and American specialists and a week of work by Dr. Nikiforov and Dr. Albrink (University of West Virginia Medical School), to study and compare their collections of patho-anatomical sections, photographs and other materials. Our hope is that this would culminate in the publication in Russian and English of an annotated atlas of patho-anatomical findings in human anthrax. There is no such work in the world literature and its appearance would be of considerable scientific value.

In Sverdlovsk and its environs, we would visit the various sites and institutions that became involved with the outbreak and would examine a number of surviving patients and interview local medical, public health and veterinary personnel. The objective would be to detail and discuss the clinical, epidemiological and epizootic aspects of the outbreak and to see through to completion a scientific publication on these aspects.

Short biographies of the scientists who would accompany me are attached. We would, of course, cover all of the costs outside of the Soviet Union. For purposes of obtaining Soviet visas, all invitations could be sent directly to me (telex 92 1496) or to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (telefax 617-576-5088), as the sponsoring institution of the project. On September 6 in Moscow, I spoke with Deputy Foreign Minister Petrovsky about our project and an official in his office who is well informed about its development is Mr. Nikita P. Smidovich, (telephone 244-26-94).

The undertaking of the proposed work would of course require the assistance and cooperation of the Ministry of Health, both in Moscow and in Sverdlovsk. Therefore I have taken the liberty of writing directly to you to seek your personal approval and support.

Sincerely yours,

Matthew Meselson

Matthew Meselson
Professor of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology

Enclosures:

- 1) Article from Washington Post of April 13, 1988
- 2) Public Information Report, September, 1988, Federation of American Scientists
- 3) Short biographies of American Scientists to take part in January 1988 visit to Soviet Union

cc: N.P. Smidovich

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