

DRAFT — to Prof John Steinbruner draft

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

pro bono humani generis

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Joshua Lederberg
UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

June 14, 1992

Dr. Vadim Ivanov
Shemyakin Institute
Moscow

Dear Vadim:

This message is sent after consultation with Pief Panofsky about the utility of reopening discussions with respect to BW arms control. The political context has, of course, changed dramatically since our last meeting; and we can look forward to the rapid dissipation of any adversarial tinge. Nevertheless, in light of the perils of proliferation, it is no less important that we reinforce our mutual understanding. The initiative to which we agreed in December, 1990, strongly condemning any use of biological weapons, and responding with alarm to the threats made on behalf of Saddam Hussein, is very much in the spirit of what I hope might be advanced by further discussions.

In addition, American scientists would like to find all possible avenues of support for biomedical research in the CIS: for example, I am on the advisory board of the new American-Russian Biomedical Research Foundation, and we would welcome your input on the most efficient ways in which such funds might be allocated.

We have also to bring to fruition our discussions about the smallpox sequencing project, and about standards of regulation and disclosure that would be appropriate for the stronger enforcement of the BWC; and above all how these measures might be applicable to the threats of 3-d country proliferation. To that end, our NAS group has been reinstated, and I hope to meet with them very soon with the aim of establishing an agenda, and specific proposals for a meeting with our counterpart Russian Academy of Sciences group. We would welcome your informal advice about the participation of other CIS republics' scientific organizations.

There is however a cloud on the credibility of all of our academies' activities, highlighted by Mr. Yeltsin's revelations concerning the Sverdlovsk (1979) anthrax epidemic. We are all very much encouraged by the candor with which he is addressing these past offenses, and look forward to the completion of his own investigations and their disclosure to the world.

Unfortunately, our own group will be widely pictured as the vehicle for the transmission of a false account of that incident, particularly on the part of Dr. Burgasov during his visit to the United States. I single him out as he was responsible for the epidemiological inquiry. When we questioned Dr. Nikiforov about that, he disclaimed any personal knowledge; and there is perhaps room for controversy about the interpretation of gross pathology that he presented directly to us in Moscow. It does not take much imagination to foresee that this will become

a matter of domestic concern in the Russian press, as grave as it also is in the arena of US-Russian scientific relations. I am well aware that you and your colleagues who met with us made no claims, and that you stated you had essentially no knowledge of the entire affair prior to our having placed it on the agenda of our discussions. In any event, it would be most helpful if you could suggest ways in which your academy could 1) further the complete ventilation of that lamentable history, and 2) clearly establish its distance from it, so as to dispel those clouds, and provide a confident basis for candid discourse.

You will recall that my own stand was to reserve judgment until the detailed account provided by Burgasov and Nikiforov had been widely published within the Soviet Union, so it could be given critical examination by your own colleagues and compatriots. The latter part of this expectation is being fulfilled for the first time right now, and plainly is the most reliable approach to establishing the truth.

Please let me hear frankly from you about any steps that I should recommend to our academy that would be of assistance to clearing away these clouds.

Yours sincerely,
— DRAFT —
Joshua Lederberg

Dear Pief—

Would this fill the bill?

Josh