

REFERENCE NOTE
On the causes of the anthrax outbreak in Sverdlovsk

In spring 1979 a big outbreak of anthrax was registered in Sverdlovsk.

The committee chaired by deputy minister for health of the USSR comrade P.N. Burgasov drew a conclusion of its natural origin, based on epidemiological analysis.

However, from the moment of the outbreak of the epidemic until recently, a question about the involvement of the USSR Defense Ministry Scientific Research Institute 44 (NII 44) in those events in Sverdlovsk has repeatedly been raised abroad, as well as among the population, medical and veterinary specialists.

In connection with the request of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, having examined this question additionally, the State Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers on military-industrial questions (comrade I. S. Belousov), USSR Ministry of Defence (comrade M. A. Moiseyev), USSR Ministry of Health (comrade E. I. Chazov) and the CPSU CC Defense Department (comrade O.S. Belyakov), considered it possible to confirm the earlier conclusions about the natural origin of the epidemic, although it does not appear practically possible to fully exclude the possibility of the connection between the epidemic and an accident at the above mentioned facility.

That's why in future it is also recommended to use the guidelines of the official materials supplied by the USSR in 1987 to the UN Department on Disarmament, to be specific:

- the epidemic analysis confirmed the natural origin of this outbreak;
- the 44 NII of the USSR Ministry of Defence deals with issues of military epidemiology, including decontamination of military equipment in contaminated areas; the facility is not engaged in the development of biological weapons;
- prior to 1985, the existing buildings and structures were used for the production and storage of chemicals manufactured to protect troops from biological weapons impact; at present time the equipment is disassembled and storage facilities are re-equipped for storage of inventory property of Central Military-Medical Department (CVMU) of the USSR Ministry of Defense.

At present, in the current circumstances, a visit of an international commission to the area of the epidemic does not seem expedient.

Comrade L.N. Zaikov agrees with this suggestion.

N. Shakhov, deputy head of the CPSU CC Defense Department
19 December 1989