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21 September 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR:

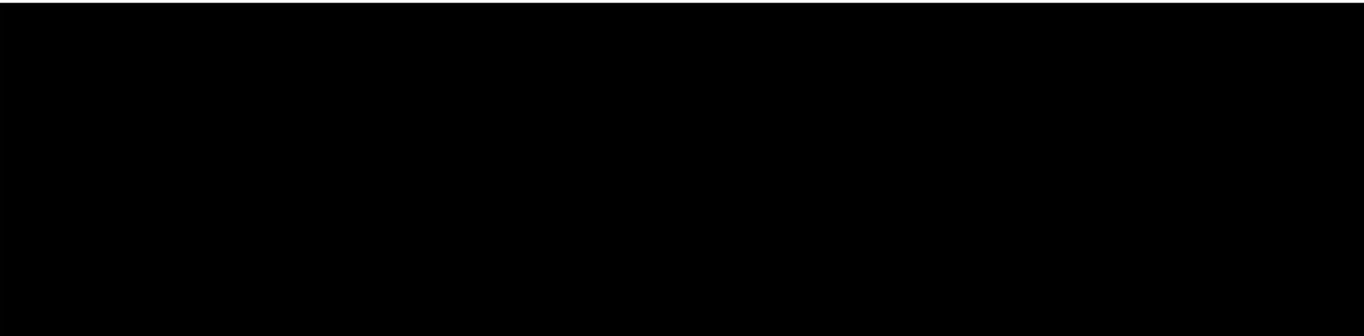
THROUGH:

FROM:

SUBJECT:

Possible BW Accident in USSR?

1. Soviet press reports of 18 and 19 September describe an outbreak of plague in Aralsk, Kazakhstan. One person has reportedly died and 340 hospitalized as a preventative measure, with the town (population about 40,000) under quarantine by the Interior Ministry. At least 200 medical workers have been dispatched to the scene and "disinfection" of the town is underway. The press accounts cite consumption of tainted camel meat as the cause. 


3. Comment. We do not know if this incident represents a BW accident or is a natural occurrence. If it is an accident, we do not know if it resulted from a test or from an attempted clean-up of the test site. Although it is theoretically possible that consumption of tainted meat could lead to contracting plague, the Soviet medical response is surprisingly large and rapid for a natural outbreak. At this time, we do not know of

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prior outbreaks of plague in Aralsk, although it is endemic to Kazakhstan and two cases were reported in the republic earlier this summer. The Soviet explanation of tainted meat is the same explanation offered for the 1979 Sverdlovsk accident. The quarantine suggests pulmonary transmission that can lead to death in a matter of hours to a few days. [REDACTED]

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REGIONAL AFFAIRS

officer, denied the reports of some mass media that bubonic plague had been diagnosed in a sick boy in Guryev Oblast.

The reply received by our correspondent sounded unambiguous: It was a false alarm. The boy simply had enlarged lymph nodes. God forbid, as they say.... But a little while later KAZAKHSTANSKAYA PRAVDA published an item by a KAZTAG correspondent: "Bubonic Plague: How To Guard Against It?" The article, citing Professor V. Stepanov, director of the USSR Health Ministry Central Asian Anti-Plague Scientific Research Institute, mentions two cases of bubonic plague this summer, both in Guryev Oblast, and it is specified that one case has already had a fatal outcome. Where is the truth? I had to ask Ya. Klebanov for further elucidation.

"Two cases of plague were indeed recorded in Guryev Oblast this summer," Yakov Arkadyevich admitted. "In the first case the patient was hospitalized with an utterly different diagnosis and so the treatment was correspondingly different. And only after his death, during the patho-anatomical study, an analysis of dead tissue showed the presence of the plague pathogen [vzbuditel]. I should immediately make it clear that this fact has absolutely nothing to do with us at the Kazakhstan Health Ministry—the patient was admitted to the railroad hospital and, as you know, that is an independent medical department....

"As for the second case which is already known," Ya. Klebanov continued, "it remains controversial. The 'bubonic plague' diagnosis was made for the child during an initial examination by a feldscher and was not confirmed subsequently. It proved impossible to determine whether he really had the plague because by the time a special examination was carried out special medicines had already been used which were able to nip the infection in the bud, so to speak.... We carried out all the necessary quarantine and anti-epidemic measures. As for the boy, he was discharged from hospital long ago and as far as I know is well."

In fact "did the boy really exist...?" But is the danger as unreal, as illusory as that? The above-mentioned interview with Professor V. Stepanov mentions that the forecast for 1990 warned that this summer an outbreak of very serious disease should be expected among the rodents within an enormous region including the territory of all the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. And the forecast proved correct: In Kazakhstan alone plague appeared among rodents on the territory of six (!) oblasts. And the republic's population, the public, learned of this at the height of summer, not before the summer for which this "peak" was predicted.

As regards the "railroad" case, we can only gesture helplessly. How much time did the plague victim spend in a ward with other patients receiving common food, treatments, and so forth? This incident occurred a month earlier than the next one involving the little boy,

but it was made known to the press far later and to all appearances only fortuitously—why? Is it not clear that the widespread notification of the population regarding such cases is one of the best ways of preventing epidemics? There are many questions, but which department should they be addressed to: the republican or Union health ministry or... the Ministry of Railways? One thing is obvious: Our doctors still prefer to conceal from people information which affects their health and even lives most directly.

Arask 'Plague' Kills One, Hospitalizes 340
*LD1809073790 Moscow World Service in English
0700 GMT 18 Sep 90*

[Text] An outbreak of the plague has been registered in the town of Arask in Kazakhstan.

One of the two people affected has already died; 340 people who were in contact with them have been hospitalized. Arask has been placed under quarantine, medical posts set up, and offices closed.

Specialists say the cause of the disease was eating camel's meat. The meat was traced down and destroyed.

New Kazakhstan News Agency Registered
*LD1709133790 Moscow Domestic Service in Russian
1100 GMT 17 Sep 90*

[Summary] A new Kazakh news agency called DANA PRESS has been registered today. The agency offers its consumers "objective information on international, interregional, and interethnic links; on political, economic, social, and spiritual life of the peoples and ethnic groups of the region". DANA PRESS has also received the right to be part of the all-Union information market.

Tajik SSR Official Meets Iranian Visitor
*LD1809170990 Dushanbe Domestic Service in Tajik
1300 GMT 18 Sep 90*

[Text] Today Makhkamov, Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR] Supreme Soviet member chairman, member of the CPSU Central Committee buro and Tajik Communist Party Central Committee first secretary, received Mohammad Eshaq Madani, member of the presidential office of the Islamic Republic of Iran [bureau records list him as advisor on Sunni affairs]. Makhkamov told the Iranian guest about the democratic changes taking place in the republic, and briefed him on the Tajik SSR sovereignty declaration adopted at the republic's recent Supreme Soviet session. It was noted that there are greater possibilities for boosting the Tajikistan economy and for the development of all-round, mutually advantageous contacts with foreign countries, including Iran. Mohammad Eshaq Madani thanked the Tajikistan people for the disinterested aid to ease the aftereffects of the earthquake in Iran. He noted that perestroika, started by Gorbachev, is a strong impetus to the new stage in the mutual relations between Iran and

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The prime minister suggested that Mikhail Grigoryan be appointed deputy prime minister for rural issues. Grigoryan was a member of the previous government.

Manukyan also nominated several candidates for ministerial posts, mainly newcomers.

At the afternoon session, the republican parliament has appointed the majority of the nominated candidates.

State Legal Affairs Department Chief Appointed

NC2009070890 Baku Domestic Service in Azeri
1730 GMT 17 Sep 90

[Text] Ayaz Mutalibov, president of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, has appointed Salik Kemaloglu Gadzhiev as the chief of the State Legal Affairs Department of the presidential apparatus.

Arson Damages Georgian Opposition Party Building

LD1909151290 Moscow TASS International Service
in Russian 1345 GMT 19 Sep 90

[Report by TASS correspondent Zurab Grdzlishvili]

[Text] Tbilisi, 19 Sep—Early this morning, on Rustaveli Prospekt—the central street in the Georgian capital—an attack was carried out on the headquarters of the National Independence Party of this Transcaucasian republic.

“The incident was the work of persons as yet unknown,” Vano Mezvrishvili, a member of the party, told a TASS correspondent. “The criminals broke windows and penetrated the building. They fired shots from firearms, threw Molotov cocktails into rooms, and went on a rampage. Considerable damage was caused to the headquarters themselves, to the editorial office and publishers of the ‘Droyeba’ newspaper, and other adjoining rooms.”

“At approximately 0400 this morning,” noted Rezo Maglakelidze, chief of the Mtatsmindskiy rayon internal affairs department, “Unknown persons burst into the building using firearms and committed arson. One room was burned out. The fire was prevented from spreading. Cartridge cases from automatic weapons were discovered at the site of the incident. A similar incident occurred the same night at another building on Rustaveli Prospekt occupied by the leadership of the National Democratic Party of Georgia. Militia officers recorded traces of arson here, too, and found ammunition cartridges. Investigation bodies are investigating the incident.”

Central Asia

‘Strict Quarantine’ Continues in Aralsk

LD1909124290 Moscow TASS International Service
in Russian 1105 GMT 19 Sep 90

[Text] Aralsk Ckzyl-Ordainskiy Oblast] 19 Sep (TASS)—The strict quarantine declared in connection with the

appearance of plague in the town is still in force. Some 237 people who have been in contact with those already diagnosed as having the illness have been isolated. Thorough medical supervision has been set up for those in the isolation ward.

Doctors have arrived from Alma-Ata and Tashkent. One hundred and ten medical workers are carrying out rounds at houses, while about 100 have been sent to work in hospitals. Numerous loads of foodstuffs and medicines are arriving.

A special disinfection of the town's territory is being carried out. About 300 camels have been treated, and the goal is to urgently protect all animals against infection. More than 10,000 animals are the area. Internal Affairs administration bodies are checking that quarantine requirements which will be effective until 23 September are observed.

‘Unity’ Movement Launched in Kazakhstan

LD1909165690 Moscow Television Service in Russian
1430 GMT 19 Sep 90

[Report by correspondent A. Nugmanova from the “Vremya” newscast]

[Text] After the Azat movement was set up—Azat means Freedom—the Unity [Yedinstvo] interethnic movement was created. Both movements enjoy labor collectives support. So what do they stand for?

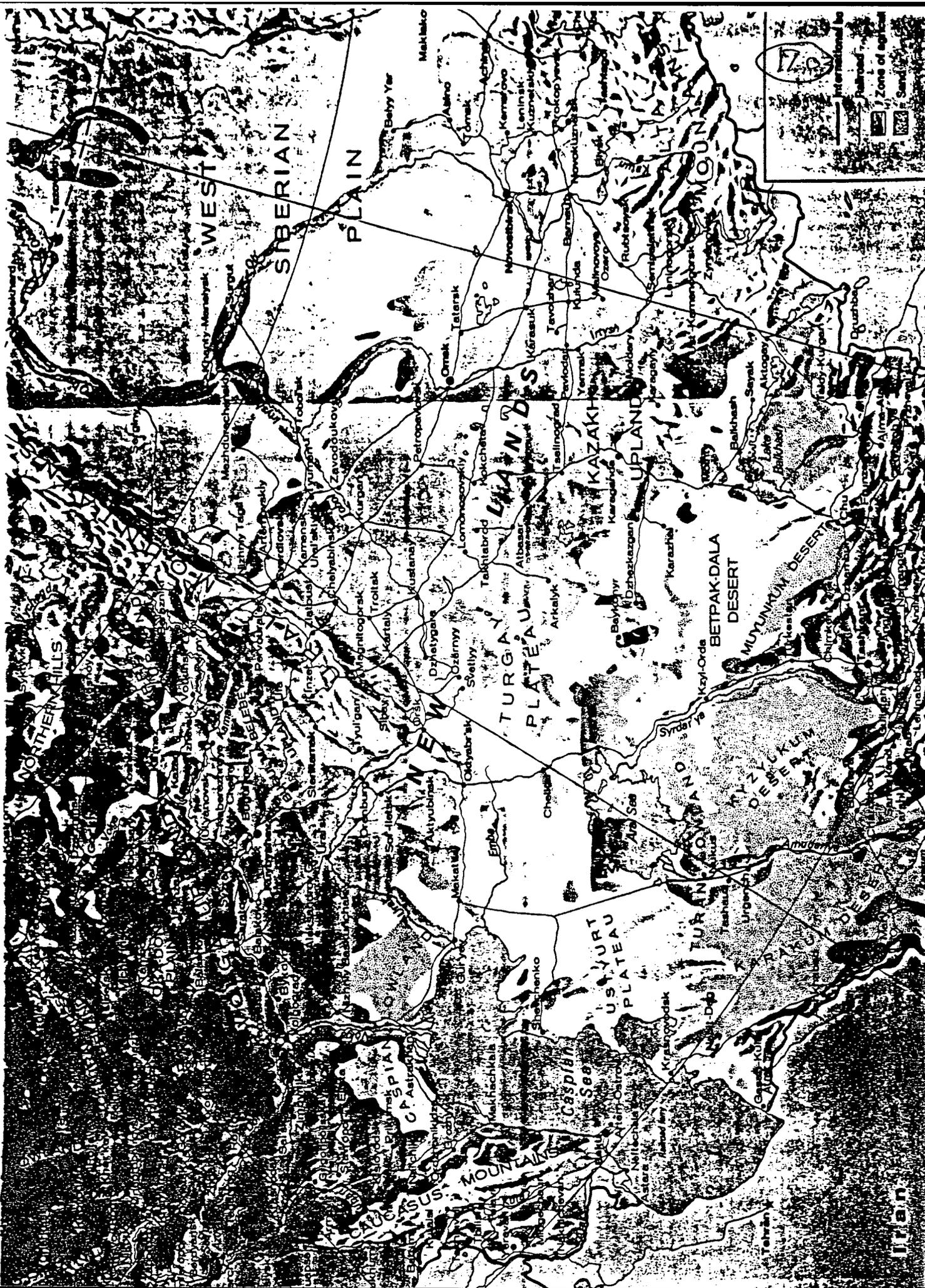
[Begin recording] [Nugmanova] The Azat and Unity hold views which differ in many ways. But yesterday they sat down at the negotiating table, and after some arguments, not without mutual reproaches, adopted a draft joint statement in which they deemed it necessary to announce their adherence to the principles of the universal declaration on human rights, legality, non-violence, and ideological tolerance. In a republic with more than 100 nationalities it is impermissible—I quote Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's president—to build some peoples' welfare at the expense of others.

[T. Koyshibekov of Azat] I would first like to mention that the Azat is an internationalist movement. The main issue for the Azat movement is perhaps the attainment of a true state sovereignty for our Kazakh republic.

[V.I. Kurilov of Unity] The only purpose of our movement is interethnic unity and prevention of extremism.

[E.V. Lanko of Unity] We want to achieve a psychological climate in the republic which would be conducive to mutual understanding.

[Kurilov] We have a number of disagreements because we do not share a number of ideas of the Azat movement. Specifically, we have differences on the issue of a law on languages. We will be striving, through parliamentary means and through deputies, for amendments to the law on languages to be adopted.



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International boundaries
Railroads
Zone of agriculture
Sand

NORTHERN HILLS
WEST SIBERIAN PLAIN

NORTHERN HILLS

URALS
TURAN PLATEAU
USTYURT PLATEAU
KAZAKH UPLAND

BETPAK-DALA DESERT

MUZHKUM DESERT

CASPIAN SEA
TURAN PLAIN
MOUNTAINS

IRAN