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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Germany (Russian Zone)

SUBJECT The Bacteriological Research Institute
on the Island of Riems

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Work at the Riems Institute

2. The Forschungsanstalt Insel Riems (virus and bacteriological research institute on the Baltic Sea island of Riems) was founded in 1909 by Professor Friedrich Löffler, discoverer of the diphtheria bacillus. In 1942, its name was changed to Reichsforschungsanstalt Insel Riems. In 1945, it was taken over by the Russians, who, ~~dismantled it~~, had it rebuilt and reequiped. It is now under the administrative authority of the German Economic Commission.

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3. The only war research done in Riems during the Hitler regime was a series of projects on HMD and rinderpest, described below. In 1942, a secret committee composed of reliable Nazi scientists and technicians in the Riems Institute was assigned to study possibilities of importing HMD into countries, particularly the United States, known to be unfamiliar with this disease because

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ARMY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FBI																		

No chosen to go to Riems in 1942.

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it does not exist there. [redacted] was not on this committee, but was kept informed on its work by some of the members. Professor Waldmann, director of the Institute, was a member, but rather delayed its work; he mainly complied with the Nazi request for research in order to obtain abundant equipment and material for his Institute. [redacted] The committee worked closely with officers and officials of the Heereswaffenamt, particularly with one Dr. Stantien, Berlin (whereabouts unknown). In spring 1943, the committee submitted the conclusion that any enemy country could be attacked with HMD virus; the virus could be dried, flown over enemy country, and dropped. This scheme was never practically applied because it required German air superiority.

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4. In the spring of 1944, ^{an} high SS officer ^{that} came to Riems and requested large supplies of dried HMD virus ~~to~~ be left behind the retreating German armies in Russia. When the Institute refused this request, the matter was taken to high authorities in Berlin, but the scheme was abandoned after the Institute proved that the project would have the boomerang effect of spreading the disease from Russia to Germany.

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5. ⁱⁿ ~~Between 1942 and 1944~~, the committee ^{was to do.} did research on rinderpest with an eye to introducing this disease into the United States as well as protecting Germany in case enemies should introduce it on a large scale into Germany. No practical results came from this project.

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Dismantling of the Institute

6. When on 2 May 1945 Marshal Rokossovsky's troops occupied Riems Island, they started to pilfer the Institute. They were informed a few days later that the Institute had been placed under the personal protection of Stalin. At that time the Institute was working mainly on the production of vaccine against HMD, Newcastle's disease, and human influenza, in close cooperation with the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institute for Biology. Between July and October 1945, the Institute was completely dismantled by two commissions - one army and one civilian. The army commission took away about 10,000 guinea pigs; three ultra centrifuges with 40,000 to 50,000 revolutions per minute, which served the purpose of throwing out small disease bearers; a quantity of chemical-physical apparatus, for instance, Tiselius apparatus for the study of the effect of electrical charges on virus substance; electrical "Dampfungswaagen"; low-temperature refrigerators; electrical refrigerators; special apparatus for the production of vaccines and serums; thermostats; water-bath equipment, etc. The dismantled equipment was loaded on large barges, shipped to Swinemünde and from there to Riga. [redacted]

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[redacted] the equipment was scheduled to go to the Soviet Military Veterinary Academy located 50 kilometers (direction unknown) from Moscow. During the dismantling by the army commission, Russian Major Ratner, a veterinary, took a two-month course in veterinary research with German scientists. The civilian commission took what was left after the dismantling by the army - chiefly equipment for the production of vaccines and serums. This, too, was shipped to Russia via Swinemünde/Riga, destined, members of the civilian commission said, for a veterinary institute on an island in the Lake Seliger. This institute had been destroyed by the Germans during the war and was scheduled to be rebuilt and reequipped, although informant believes that this plan was dropped, since Major Ratner is working as an HMD specialist in the Central Control Institute for Veterinary Vaccines in Moscow, along with a Professor Swinzow, who visited Riems in June 1948, and a former Lt. Col. Ostabenko. (A Col. Tsherbatych works at the Soviet Military Veterinary Academy.)

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7. When the dismantling was completed, the Russians invited the following Riems specialists to work in Russia:

a. Professor Otto Waldmann, now in Argentina, who had worked with the Institute since 1919 and was its director during the war;

b. Veterinary Georg Tschalkovsky, who was in charge of the cattle belonging to the Institute, *and who acted as interpreter*

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Restoration

8. Since 1945, the Russians have shown an ever-increasing interest in the Institute and have given very efficient support to the Germans in rebuilding it, providing coal and technical equipment and returning to it an experimental farm near Kowall on the mainland just opposite Riems Island. The Russians have ordered no specific work at the Institute and have not assumed in any way its scientific direction, although Russians come there continuously to collect information. Among the more notable Russian visitors is Professor *S. P. B.* Ishuzakov, Stalin Prize winner, from the Moscow Institute for Research on Brain Disease. He came twice in 1947 to obtain information on choriomeningitis.)

9. The Institute has done no research for war purposes, although it can be easily and quickly used for such work at any time. In three days it can produce enough dried M.D. virus ~~in chicken eggs or in beef tongues~~ to attack an enemy country by dropping the virus from the air. (The Russians eagerly collected information on this possibility. In mid-1947, Russian Col. Lyssov, Chief of the SMA Cattle Breeding Division, came to Riems, and asked why the Germans did not try to drop the virus on the United States during the war, adding that this would have constituted a proper answer to the indiscriminate bombing of German cities by American planes.)

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10. The Russians have also shown an interest in the production and spreading of ~~human pest~~. When the Russians first came to Riems in 1945, they maintained that during the war the Institute had done research on human ~~pest~~ with a view to spreading it in enemy countries. It was very hard to convince them that actually the Institute had never engaged in such research. The only bacteriological (not virus) research ever done *at Riems was* on swine erysipelas and brucellosis. (*after the war*)

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11. Their interest in the war potentialities of the Institute has been proven, but, informant believes, the Russians may also be concerned with its peacetime potentialities. The Germans first reestablished the laboratory for veterinary diagnosis, then took up again the production of vaccines, bacteriological research, and work on new vaccines - principally against swine erysipelas, in which the Russians showed much interest. By the end of June 1948 Riems again had a micro-biological research department working mainly on HMD, swine erysipelas, brucellosis, and dog distemper. It also had a department working on chemical aspects connected with its research, as well as a department for the production of vaccines - mainly against HMD and Newcastle's disease. Informant estimates roughly that the Institute had by that time regained half its former capacity. (None of the equipment provided for the resumption of work was the same as that dismantled in 1945.)

Staff

12. Between 1945 and 1948 the Riems Institute had a staff of about twenty scientists, some of whom were there for only brief periods. The permanent staff had sometimes changing personnel of about twelve scientists. The maximum number of Riems personnel, including technicians, machinists, aids, etc., was 140 prior to and during the war; it is smaller now. (Full staff again in 1949)
13. The present director of the Institute, appointed 1 November 1948, is Professor Heinz Roehrer, former head of its pathological department. He had been an NSDAP member since 1931; the fact that the Russians kept him at Riems and have now made him director is an indication of the urgency they feel for keeping the Institute functioning. Two other staff members dismissed in 1945 have been recalled: Dr. Hubert Möhlmann, former production specialist for HMD and Newcastle's disease vaccines, who had been jailed in a Neu-Brandenburg concentration camp, has been made head of the production department; Professor Gottfried Pyl is supposed to return to Riems shortly to resume his former position as head of the chemical department. Before working at Riems, Pyl had worked with IG Farben in Höchst; from 1947 he worked with the ASID firm in Dessau producing vaccines. Informant considers him the best scientific head of the Riems staff members now available to the Russians. Veterinary Georg Tschalkovsky continues to work at the Institute. He is the only SED member among the entire scientific staff.

14. Former Institute staff members are:

- a. Dr. Helmuth Ruska, formerly with the Berlin-Buch Research Institute;
- b. Dr. Gerhard Schramm of the KWI for Biology, hormone specialist at Riems in 1944, now working at the institute of bio-chemistry affiliated with Tübingen University;
- c. Dr. Hobahn, chemist and assistant to Professor Pyl in the chemical department, and Dr. Petermann, specialist on HMD type differentiation, working with Professor Waldmann in Argentina.
- d. Professor Richard Roemer is not working at the Institute; his connection with it is merely that of providing cattle from his cattle-raising institute in Dummerstorf near Rostock.

Research

15. [redacted] he has invented a hitherto unknown method which allows "quick differentiation of HMD virus types by complement fixation" (durch Komplementbindung). This method, he says, makes it possible to determine in a period of two hours any particular kind of virus causing HMD. This he says to be of utmost importance because counter measures against HMD depend entirely

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on the type of virus causing it. Other methods of HMD virus type determination require an average of five weeks which is such a long period that the disease would spread before the proper kind of vaccine could be found. Only with his methods, he claims, is it possible to fight HMD successfully from its very beginning. He has also succeeded in raising certain types of HMD virus in chicken eggs, a method so far unknown, and is applying this method at his present place of work, the Behring Works in Marburg/Lahn, a serological and vaccine research institute. He has ~~developed~~ developed a non-infectious vaccine against swine erysipelas; ~~the latter is peculiar in consisting of killed or dead vaccine not coming from a live culture.~~

16. In October 1945, when [redacted] other Riems Island scientists were invited by the Russians to work in Russia, he asked and received a 24-hour period in which to formulate his conditions for accepting the Russian offer. He purposely made conditions so rigid that the Russians would not agree to them; he requested, for instance, that he be put under the diplomatic protection of a European or overseas power while working in Russia and while Germany was unable to give diplomatic protection. In November 1945, MVD officers put additional pressure on him to accept the Russian offer, but the president of the Russian Zone Central Administration for Agriculture and Forestry intervened successfully with the Russians in favor of [redacted] staying in Germany.

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