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PUBLIC HEALTH
Russia Asks War On Smallpox

➤ **RUSSIA WANTS** the World Health Organization to undertake a crash program to eradicate smallpox in the world.

Russian delegates proposed their smallpox eradication program to WHO's governing body, the World Health Assembly, which opened its first meeting in the United States in Minneapolis, Minn., on May 26.

The Russians also proposed WHO undertake a five-to-seven-year program "of concrete measures in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy in medicine; a program of assistance to under-developed countries in the uses of radioisotopes in medicine; and the convening of an expert committee to study the effects of radiation on human heredity."

The Soviet smallpox eradication proposal, according to American observers, stems from two factors: the success the Russians have had in ridding their own country of smallpox and a concurrent desire to stave off reinfection; and the expense of both the

eradication and possible future action if reinfectd.

The Russians, these same observers explain, have become quite practical and business-minded about health and medicine. Their desire for worldwide eradication of smallpox is a result of their own experience and their own costs.

It is also understood that the Russians have been instrumental in getting Red China to initiate a smallpox eradication program.

The Russian proposal calls attention to the economics of smallpox. It points out that the cost of smallpox due to lost labor, deaths and control measures is equal to what it would cost the world to eradicate the disease.

Russia lists 17 countries in which the eradication program should be carried out. Neither Russia itself, nor the United States is on the list.

The Russian timetable, being submitted to the Assembly, calls for preparatory work and a search for the means of eradication to take place this year under the auspices of WHO. Between 1958 and 1960 sufficient vaccine should be produced and vaccinators trained. During 1959 and 1960, the Russians recommend, populations in the 17 countries should be vaccinated.

The Russian eradication program, if adopted, will not affect the Americas greatly, thanks to a program initiated by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, which also serves as the regional organization of WHO for the Americas.

In 1950, a smallpox eradication program, similar to that being now proposed by the Russians, was set in motion by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. This program, operating on a low budget and not as a crash program, has paid off handsomely.

There has not been a case of smallpox reported in North America, Central America or the Caribbean since 1954. Only five South American countries still have an appreciable amount of the disease and are busy working on the problem.

Science News Letter, June 7, 1958

Do You Know?

Today, one out of every three persons employed is a woman.

Zein is a protein obtained commercially by extraction from corn gluten.

By 1956, 94% of U. S. farm houses had electricity.

One-half cup of raw or cooked carrots supplies more than the daily requirement of vitamin A.

More than half the automobiles on the road have automatic transmissions and by 1965 this proportion may rise to 80%.

Estimates of astronomers have been that one titanic explosion such as a *supernova* can be expected in each galaxy once in several centuries.

