

September 25, 1961

Mr. G.A. Derbyshire
Space Science Board
National Academy of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear George:

By chance I had an opportunity to see Academician Sisakyan yesterday in the course of his tour following the conferences at Stowe, Vermont. We exchanged polite regrets concerning the poor attendance of American scientists at the exobiology discussion in Moscow last month and the reasons for this. I stressed the desirability of some further discussions along these lines, but after more careful preparation and with a minimum of two months notice after specific arrangements had been worked out. I indicated that for my part and in expectation of my colleagues that we could meet essentially anywhere and at any time that would be of useful effect provided that we could have this advanced notice. I now feel that it would not be advisable to join this kind of informal discussion to another large meeting, or to the COSPAR session as this would only exaggerate the organizational problems and the political implications of the meeting. In any case the majority of the people directly involved in this area would not be especially interested in COSPAR business otherwise. One suggestion that might be worth considering is to ask that the meeting be held elsewhere in Europe but at a time that would be conveniently apposed to the Planetary Astrophysics Colloquium in Liege, next July. Sisakyan seemed to be reasonably congenial to these proposals in principle, and I left stressing that the next move would be up to him to make a response to these suggestions. I will write to him in a few days to remind him of these conversations and again to ask for a definite response.

I also had a very good time with Igor Tamm, whom I've met before, and who is I think much more friendly to the spirit of international scientific cooperation. Tamm also suggests that such discussions be held on a very informal basis, but with definite planning and apart from any other organizational arrangements. Incidentally, the Pugwash series of conferences has been a great success for these reasons, while even COSPAR has become a quite political enterprise.

Sisakyan expressed an interest in seeing the volume Science in Space and I hope you can do the good turn of sending him one as I promised would be done.

I am calling a meeting of the exobiology committee to be held in the Faculty Room, Dean's Office, here on Saturday, October 28. This will be a technical session to review some of the now more explicit plans for biological experiments on the Mariner B and Voyager missions. The various people at NASA

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are quite anxious to have this kind of supporting advice, and are not yet quite prepared to take over the consultation work within their own framework, so I think we can kill two birds with one stone. I will be sending out formal invitations to the usual membership of Committee 14, and the ex officio members from the related committees within a couple of days. I leave it to you whether it will be particularly worth your own time and effort to attend. I plan to be in Washington on October 4 and will call you to find out if there is anything current that might be more conveniently discussed at closer hand.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics