

other group we must look for further modifications, as our knowledge of the subject increases, but I am convinced that the basis upon which it is founded is sound.

PAUL BARTSCH,
*Curator of Mollusks and
Cenozoic Invertebrates*

U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM

THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Homo hominis lupus est.—Old proverb.

The President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Dr. A. P. Karpinsky, the distinguished geologist, is leaving his post at the academy. This decision is the outcome of his unsuccessful protests against the recent forced decision of the academy to deprive of its membership four academicians, including such historians as S. F. Platonov and E. V. Tarle, whose scientific views have been pronounced by the authorities to be incompatible with their presence in the academy of a communistic state. It is noteworthy that at the same meeting of the academy several foreign scientific workers were elected as foreign members. It appears clear, in the circumstances, that the acceptance of membership of the Academy of U. S. S. R. must involve silent agreement with the basic principle underlying the attitude of the Soviet authorities toward science.—*Nature*, March 7, 1931, p. 346.

I VISITED Russia, Siberia and Russian Turkestan (Usbekistan) in 1927, and gave, in *Nature* of November 19 of that year, a brief account of the biological work as I observed it in the U. S. S. R. I was greatly impressed by the volume and variety of the work done, and the fact that all the scientific men I met were industriously cooperating to increase knowledge and education throughout the country. Even at that time it was declared that the professors holding over from pre-revolutionary times would be replaced by "Red" professors as soon as practicable; but although this appeared ominous, I hoped that the actual results would not be definitely unfavorable to science. My more or less optimistic view resulted from acquaintance with a number of young men and women in course of training in the universities, and presumably destined to do the research and academic teaching of the not distant future. They appeared to be on the whole sensible, enthusiastic young people, whose contacts had been broad enough to free them from excessive political dogmatism. I hoped that they would continue to be governed by the true spirit of science, and saw in them the best hope for the Russia of to-morrow.

The Academy of Sciences at Leningrad, combining the functions of the Royal Society and the British Museum, has been the great intellectual center of the country. In its museum are preserved innumerable

scientific treasures, excellently arranged. During the early days of the revolution it took all the efforts of Dr. Karpinsky and his daughter to prevent irreparable damage. As it was, a few bullets came through the windows, but no serious injury was done. When I was there, the academy appeared full of energetic and capable workers, who were glad to exhibit some of the latest results of their investigations. Dr. Karpinsky was presiding over a committee to consider the geological and physical aspects of the proposed railway between Usbekistan and Siberia (Turksib railway), which has since been successfully completed. I did not hear anything to suggest that the scientific men were not doing their very best to aid the country and develop its culture. The venerable Karpinsky, over eighty years of age, was as active as a young man.

Yet, in the midst of all this happy and fruitful activity, there was a note of alarm. It was as though one lived in a country of earthquakes, never knowing what the next hour might bring forth. Every one knew that it was possible to be arrested, usually in the small hours of the morning, and carried off to some place not designated. The brother of one of my best friends had disappeared in this fashion, and although the family found out what had become of him, they could only guess at the cause of his arrest. I believe he has now regained his liberty. I had in my pocket a little note-book, crammed with scientific information, and including addresses of people I had met and a sketch-map of the streets of Irkutsk. An official (not of the academy) who happened to see it was greatly alarmed. What would they do if they found that? Yet it contained nothing whatever of a political nature, and as a matter of fact no one asked to see what was in my pockets. At Tashkent we were asked to meet a lady who had been born in California, but had married a Russian and lived for many years in Turkestan. My wife being an old Californian, they wished to talk over old times. But when we sat down to the meal where this lady should have appeared, a note was brought, stating that she could not come, for reasons she would explain later. When we returned through Russia, we learned that we should cross the Volga about midnight. So my wife and I remained awake, and when we came to the great river got up and looked out of the window. We were about a third of the way across when a soldier with a gun appeared, and ordered us back to bed. This was done as a matter of routine; he did not know who we were.

I cite these various occurrences as typical of the existing state of mind. The government is afraid of the people; the people are afraid of the government. I spoke of this to an intelligent Russian. Yes, he

said, of course, but it has always been so in Russia. That is something to remember. The essential liberty and sense of security we enjoy in this country has never existed in Russia. Our race only attained these blessings through a long struggle lasting many centuries.

Scientific men, as such, have no cause to favor the capitalistic system as against the socialistic. On the contrary, the brotherhood of science is a great universal democracy in which free cooperation is essential for progress. The logic of events is forcing us more and more in the direction of socialistic activities, making us more and more responsible to one another. The socialization of agriculture with large scale production and the use of modern machinery is undoubtedly the only adequate way to feed Russia's millions. For my own part I can certainly say that I have a high regard for the Russian people, and fervently hope that they may win through to a condition of prosperity and happiness.

It seems to me that the government is defeating its own ends. Even those in its inner councils are playing a dangerous game, and may be thrown out, like Trotsky. It is very difficult in the nature of the case for the small group of political dictators to understand what people think of their activities. They may be entirely well-intentioned, but they too easily conceive themselves to be endowed with all wisdom. They follow a dogma which was developed long ago, under different conditions. There is no dictatorship of the proletariat, but only of a few members of that type over the millions of their fellows. Fortunately, there is a limiting factor in the lack of ability of this small council to keep its fingers on all that is going on in such a vast area. In many directions, favorable influences, developing locally, may be observed. But as long as the whole country is in effect subject to army discipline, is visualized by the leaders as at war, the growth of normal and peaceful socialism is to that degree hindered. Science can only prosper where there is freedom to investigate and state the results. It appears to be the duty of scientific men throughout the world to oppose the policy of making the Russian Academy, or the schools of Tennessee, subservient to a dogma. In so doing we do not thereby express any hostility to the dogmatists, or necessarily disagreement with their opinions, but simply the view that it is contrary to the spirit of science to be governed by *a priori* decisions, imposed in the interests of non-scientific groups.

Can we ever convince those whose policy we thus necessarily oppose? It may seem a hopeless task, yet I do not believe that expressions of opinion, prompted by no ill-will toward the country, can be wholly without influence. Times will change, as they

have before, and what was hardly hoped for will perhaps be attained. In any case, we can not otherwise than do our best.

T. D. A. COCKERELL

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

A CONFERENCE ON HEREDITY AS APPLIED TO MAN

THE following memorandum presented to the White House Conference on Child Health and Welfare and referred by the chairman, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, to the continuation committee of that body, is offered for publication in *SCIENCE* in the hope that biologists and others will use their influence in favor of a future conference on heredity in relation to man as suggested by the Minnesota group.

Representing a group of biologists of the University of Minnesota, I wish to record the conviction that too little attention has been paid to heredity in this conference. One has but to envisage a conference on farm stock, as contrasted with human stock, to see how great a part heredity would play in the discussions and recommendations of such a body. We believe that the knowledge of heredity already existing offers great possibilities for race improvement—quite as important, in the opinion of many authorities, as the environmental factors to which so much attention has been given. We are moved by the contrast between the very large expenditures of public funds, foundation endowments and private gifts, the enormous amount of social effort of all kinds, exerted on the environmental side, and the comparative neglect of the practical aspects of heredity as applied to man. We feel that heredity deserves far more consideration from philanthropic persons and societies, socially minded individuals, constructive statesmen, than it has ever received.

We are aware of the unsatisfactory present situation of ignorance, of prejudice, of unscientific propaganda. We attribute this situation largely to absence of an authoritative, united declaration on the part of experts in this field. We suggest that there be held, either under governmental or private auspices, a conference in which all phases of this fundamentally important subject may be investigated and discussed as fully and frankly as the environmental side has been at this conference. From such a conference we should hope for an authoritative program leading, as the generations progress, to the realization of what we believe should be the first cardinal declaration of a Magna Charta of Childhood: Every child is entitled to be well born.

In presenting this memorandum it is not our intention to criticize or detract from the work of this conference. We are concerned only with the effort to secure a future authoritative conference devoted to heredity as applied to man.

E. P. LYON,
Dean

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA,
THE MEDICAL SCHOOL