

COMMENTS

by Readers

Invitations to the 6th International Congress of Experimental Cytology to be held at Stockholm in 1947 carry the notice that it will not be open to German and Japanese scientists.

Those German and Japanese scientists that may have been accused of criminal actions in the past have been subjected to the legal procedures instituted by the allied nations in the occupied countries. Those that have been found guilty are subject to punishment like any other criminals and it is obvious that such men will not be able to attend the Congress.

We protest that the exclusion of scientists merely on the basis of their nationality is contrary to one of the fundamental tenets of the scientific creed. It belies the very name of the Congress and controverts its aims.

It is hoped that this tragic mistake, so similar to many that were made by scientists after the first world war, will not be allowed to stand. We beg that the restriction be lifted at once. (TH. DOBZHANSKY, SELIG HECHT, FRANZ SCHRADER, and G. G. SIMPSON, *Columbia University*.)

The holding of international conferences this year has agitated the question regarding the participation of scientists from the former Axis countries, particularly Germany. Scientists in the past generally have been able to remain aloof from the psychology of enmity and war. A change came with Hitlerism. Today, our hesitation at accepting Germans to our conferences emanates not from the effects of actual combat but from the deeds which were performed by the German Government for years before the war and which attained their vilest proportions during the war. Every German who survived without protest against the regime he lived under must accept responsibility, be it of a lesser or greater de-

gree, for the terrible fact that our present-day civilization has witnessed the official enactment of bestiality in a country we had learned to respect as enlightened.

I understand that some Germans are being invited to attend the conferences, the selection being limited to those who underwent physical suffering because of the stand they took against Naziism. Doubtless many endured mental suffering. We are sorry for them. We regret that there must be some who suffered persecution but, because of physical limitations of the several committees, are not on invited lists. We trust that, in time, the elimination of the perpetrators of Naziism and the delusions of the Nazi doctrine will gradually bring the German people back to a state of mind which will permit them to be respected again by the rest of the world.

Anyone approving of the decision taken by the International Congress of Experimental Cytology being held in Stockholm this summer, is invited to send a letter of confidence to the Congress for the stand which it has taken. (ROBERT CHAMBERS, *New York University*.)

In the issue of April 4 Sally Hughes-Schrader protests against the exclusion of "German and Japanese *colleagues*" from international scientific congresses "on such *nonscientific ground* as nationality" (italics mine). . . . No *international* congress should admit the subjects of a nation that discriminated against the Nobel Prize, the highest known international award, because of its international character; of a nation that denies Hughes-Schrader's sentence that "science transcends considerations of nationality, as of race, color, and creed." No *scientific* congress should admit the subjects of a nation that falsified scientific facts, and called murder scientific investigation . . . if Ger-

man or Japanese subjects beg to be admitted to international meetings, may they be given the opportunity to prove that they disapprove *in public* of the Nazi behavior, and those who did so will be welcomed as men and scientists. The participation of other German or Japanese individuals will do good neither to science nor to humanity. (F. L. HAHN, *Apart. Post. 9622, Mexico, D. F.*)

The processes of evolution have required very long periods of time. A renewed impression of their near infinitude has been received from reading a discussion of the dispersal of faunas over land bridges. Those bridges were available during only fractions of evolutionary time and certainly were ecologically restricted in contrast to the continents connected. As animals cannot migrate for long distances over territory lacking their ecological requirements, the land bridges cannot be regarded as having been highways suitable for all to travel throughout their existence.

Another great retarding factor, which apparently has not been taken into consideration, is the highly sedentary nature of animal populations. As a rule, they remain on the ancestral range. The movements of individuals are limited, many passing their entire lives in an area of a few acres or less. With attachment to the home range so dominant, it is evident that animal populations, as a whole, could not move, or even be forced to move, at more than a glacial rate. Eons, no less, would be required for far-flung migrations of fauna.

True, there is also a dispersive factor; barriers permitting, animals do extend their ranges. But along with revelation by modern studies of the essential stability of populations, it has also been shown that animals leaving the home range suffer very high mortality. The young, among which centrifugal wandering is often evident, suffer a high proportion of the entire mortality of their species. Although some of them succeed in establishing themselves, usually in vacancies in the hereditary domain, this occurrence does not controvert the impression that the occupation of new territory is normally a very gradual process and, therefore, that extensive transfer of faunas by land bridges must have been an infinitely slow process. (W. L. McATEE, 5750 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.)