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LETTERS

Scientific Ties and Human Rights

American scientists have been accused of "obstructing cooperation" with scientists of the Soviet Union and of "endeavoring to reduce [scientific] ties or stop them altogether." These charges appeared in a long article entitled "Scientific ties serve progress" which appeared in *Pravda* on 23 April 1979, over the signatures of five members of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., two of them vice presidents. This article followed two previous pronouncements in a similar vein, presumably emanating from official circles. They appear to have been instigated in response to a mounting tide of opposition among U.S. scientists and engineers to the actions of the Soviet authorities against so-called dissidents, many scientists among them, who have had the courage to support the cause of human rights. Increasing numbers of Americans have withdrawn from participation in exchanges and other collaborative efforts with the U.S.S.R.

According to the *Pravda* article, "there are attempts to pressure American scientists to organize collections of signatures on all kinds of petitions and appeals." We are among the 2400 signers of "petitions" and "appeals" circulated by the informal group Scientists for Orlov and Shcharansky (SOS) which commit us to withhold or drastically limit our personal cooperation in U.S.-Soviet scientific affairs. Four-hundred French and 100 Australian scientists have taken similar positions. The Soviet spokesmen have misconstrued the basis for our actions and have gravely underestimated the depth and extent of the disaffection of American scientists engendered by the oppressive actions of the Soviet authorities. The SOS petitions are a mere sampling of the attitudes and convictions prevalent among American scientists and engineers. The numbers of signatories could be increased greatly by a comprehensive solicitation, without "pressure" from our government or from any other quarter.

The authors of the *Pravda* article profess an abiding commitment to international cooperation in science for the welfare of all mankind. We applaud their stand and are genuinely pleased to share common ground with our Russian colleagues. We too are steadfast believers in the traditions of science as an endeavor that transcends national boundaries and political differences. Even before the first official agreement on scientific cooperation between our respective academies

of sciences was consummated in 1959, we eagerly welcomed the prospect of cooperation with our colleagues in the Soviet Union. Many of us were among the first U.S. citizens to cross the chasms of the Cold War.

In stark contrast to the professions of our Russian colleagues, the Soviet government has pursued policies that thwart cooperation and communication between our scientific communities. Anti-Semitism, as documented recently by eminent members of the American Mathematical Society, continues to poison the atmosphere of cooperation. The Soviet authorities have systematically imposed political restrictions on the selection of Russian scientists who are allowed to participate in international meetings and exchanges. It is common knowledge that the coveted privilege to attend scientific meetings abroad is under the control of the KGB. Russian scientists whose contributions have earned them worldwide recognition all too often are disqualified on political grounds. In their stead, persons with mediocre scientific credentials typically comprise a substantial fraction of the Soviet delegation. Our invitations to distinguished Russian scientists to deliver lectures or receive prestigious awards have repeatedly been interdicted by the Soviet authorities. Secret police escorts have become customary adjuncts to Soviet scientific delegations abroad. These practices have corrupted the very concept of scientific cooperation.

In spite of the policies enforced by the Soviet authorities, most of us were willing to enter into cooperative endeavors with our Russian colleagues, many of whom we hold in the highest regard. It was our abiding hope that through personal contacts the oppressive policies would somehow be ameliorated. This hope was dashed by the convictions and harsh sentences of Yuri Orlov and Anatoli Shcharansky in 1978 for the "crime" of advocating basic, inalienable human rights. Their names were thus added to the list, already long, of dissidents imprisoned or committed to psychiatric hospitals.

In a recent broadcast (19 May), noted Soviet radio commentator Valentin Zorin has castigated us for threatening disruption of scientific ties without "having a way of learning the true circumstances of the [Orlov and Shcharansky] cases." Indeed, the records of the court proceedings are not at our disposal. Does Zorin have access to them? If so, he should disclose them in fulfillment of the responsibilities of his profession. The secrecy surrounding the trials is disturbingly reminiscent of the infamous trials

of the Stalin era, trials that the Soviet government itself eventually exposed as shams.

Formal agreements on scientific cooperation are doomed to failure if leading scientists choose not to participate. If the Soviet government is genuinely eager to cultivate scientific ties and to engage the cooperation of scientists in the world at large, it must foster a climate free of political, ethnic, and racial prejudice and persecution.

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Research Subjects:

Rights and Regulations

It is stated in the article "Proposals for ethics boards stir debate" (News and Comment, 20 July, p. 285) that "In July, HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] will require compensation to subjects for injuries suffered in HEW grant research"; and further, "individual institutions and their IRB's [Institutional Review Boards] are to foot the bill." Let me say flatly that no consideration is being given to issuing final regulations requiring compensation to individuals injured in the course of HEW-supported research.

HEW has been considering the feasibility of requiring that compensation be provided for subjects injured in the course of HEW-supported research. However, no issuance of proposed rules (NPRM) is contemplated in the near future; and not until the publication of a NPRM and consideration of public comment on the notice, will HEW consider issuing final regulations. Further, every alternative mechanism that has been considered by HEW would provide federal funds for the operation of any compensation program. No institution or IRB would be required to "foot the bill."

At this time, the compensation proposals made by the HEW Secretary's Task Force on the Compensation of Injured Research Subjects (1) are being re-

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