
Mathematician Freed After 8 Years in Uruguay Prison

Dictatorial leaders may not understand the campaigns of moral suasion aimed at them from abroad, but they do take notice, and sometimes they respond. Fresh evidence of this appeared on 26 February when the government of Uruguay freed from prison a 70-year-old mathematician named José Luis Massera. Scientists all over the world had written letters of protest and visited Uruguay; Massera's release is counted as a major accomplishment for the human rights movement.

Massera was jailed and tortured in 1975 after the military takeover. Later he was sentenced to 20 years in prison for "attacking the Constitution and the morale of the armed forces." His crime apparently was to have been elected to congress in 1963 as a member of the Communist party.

An authority on differential equations, Massera won the sympathy and support of thousands of scientists, including 24 Nobel Prize winners. Many scientific groups also lent their support, including notably the International Campaign-Massera, headed by Canadian mathematician Israel Halperin. It helped persuade a United Nations Subcommittee on Human Rights to urge his release in a 1983 resolution.—ELIOT MARSHALL

NAS Moves to Counter Creationist Challenge

The National Academy of Sciences has put out a slick, handsomely illustrated booklet for science teachers that explains why evolution is a science and creationism is not.

Science and Creationism has been mailed out to all the school superintendents and public high school science department chairmen in the land. Additional mailings are planned to religious and other groups.

The publication stems from a decision 2 years ago by the NAS Council that the Academy "cannot remain silent" in the face of creationists' challenges to the "integrity and effectiveness" of the education system.

In the introduction to the booklet, NAS president Frank Press notes that "it is false . . . to think that the theory of evolution represents an irreconcilable conflict between religion and science." He also refutes the contention that scientists themselves are divided about evolution, pointing out that the only differences have to do with rates of change.

The Academy's new booklet puts the nation's most prestigious scientific organization in opposition to President Reagan, who in his 1980 campaign observed that evolution was "a scientific theory only," which, if taught in schools, should be balanced by the "Biblical theory."

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Morawetz to Direct Math Institute

Mathematician Cathleen Synge Morawetz has been appointed director of New York University's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. According to Courant Institute officials, this is the first time that a woman has been named to head a mathematics institute in this country.

Only about 8 percent of the Ph.D. mathematicians in the U.S. labor force are women. Morawetz, aged 50, is one of the few women of her generation to do mathematics research at all. In 1946, having obtained a master's degree in mathematics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she came to New York with her husband, who had gotten a job there. When she applied to NYU, her father, the well-known mathematician John Synge, used his connections to get her a job soldering connections for a computer. But when she arrived ready to work, the job had been taken by someone else. She was then offered another job editing a book in applied mathematics. From there, she went on to get a Ph.D. with one of the book's authors and, eventually, was offered an assistant professorship at the Courant Institute. She has been there ever since (*Science*, 12 October, 1979, p. 206).

Morawetz, whose research is in partial differential equations, will succeed Srinivasa Varadhan, who has been director of the Courant Institute since 1980.—GINA KOLATA

Edinburgh Sets Up Parapsychology Chair

The University of Edinburgh in Scotland is to create Britain's first chair of parapsychology with an endowment of \$750,000 from the will of the late novelist Arthur Koestler, who committed suicide with his wife last year while suffering from terminal leukemia.

Edinburgh was selected by Koestler's trustees after a heated debate in the British academic community about the scientific propriety of endorsing research in fields such as clairvoyance, telepathy, and levitation.

Koestler's request that the bulk of his estate be used to support research into such topics, which he at one point had described as "empirically established facts," was discussed at many other leading British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

In almost every case, however, it was eventually decided not to apply for the endowment, primarily on the grounds that it would throw doubt on the credibility of other research programs. One of the last to withdraw was the City University in London, where professor of electrical engineering Arthur Ellison, chairman of Britain's Society for Psychical Research, had suggested a broad program of multidisciplinary research into many aspects of paranormal psychology.

In the end, however, Edinburgh's only declared rival was the University of Wales in Cardiff. The university's chancellor, Prince Charles, lent his support to its bid for the chair, declaring that it would be "advancing our knowledge in a field that has been given scant attention."

The trustees' choice of Edinburgh was announced by John Beloff, himself a senior lecturer in psychology at the university, although he has said that he is not putting himself forward as a candidate for the chair. A friend of Koestler's, retired businessman Instone Bloomfield, has offered to increase the endowment by a further \$750,000 if whoever is eventually appointed to the chair agrees to carry out a program of research approved by an institution that he has created, called the Koestler Foundation.

—DAVID DICKSON