

Letters

The New Refuseniks

Scientists who are politically persecuted must command our special attention. Not only does scientific knowledge know no barriers, but scientific cooperation and collaboration through the free interchange of ideas and the free movement of scientists is the substrate upon which knowledge grows. In the Soviet Union, the creation of a new class of scientists—Refuseniks—awakened interest in the West, and pressure from the West may have helped secure exit visas for some of the hundreds of scientists who lost their jobs and scientific livelihoods when they applied to emigrate.

The population of the new class has grown substantially in the past 4 years. Whereas earlier Refuseniks were usually physical scientists, there are now growing numbers of biomedical scientists who are denied visas. As it cannot usually be claimed that they possess classified knowledge, visas are usually denied with no reason given. These scientists and physicians are peculiarly vulnerable to the scientific atrophy that threatens a persecuted scientist. They lose their colleagues, their journals, their access to libraries; their right to publish, collaborate, and travel to meetings; and their livelihood. And they lose their laboratories and their patients. Medicine and biology are not practiced with notebooks, blackboards, and books, but with men and microbes.

Some of these new Refuseniks now do what their physicist counterparts have done for years—hold regular scientific seminars, but it is a meager substitute for their vocation.

The following letter from some of the members of the Biology and Medicine Seminar appeals for help from colleagues in the West, particularly those attending the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) meeting this June in Moscow.

Dear colleagues,

For many years we are unsuccessfully trying to get permission to leave the USSR for reunification with our relatives in Israel. According to the Helsinki accord and Madrid

Conference protocol we have all legal rights to receive such a permission because nobody of us was ever acquainted with any classified information.

We are addressing you for your sympathy and help. We are sure that your appeal to Soviet Government, President and leadership of the USSR Academy of Sciences as well as to the President of the 16th FEBS Meeting to permit us to leave the country will be regarded with due attention and respect.

Writing you this letter we rely on your professional and human solidarity.

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(Medical Virology)

I. Irlin, M.D., Dr. Sci.

(Experimental Oncology)

A. Khachatryan, Dr. Sci.

(Protein Crystallography and Phase Transformation)

M. Tarshis, M.D., Dr. Sci.

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I. Uspenskiy, Ph.D.

(Medical Entomology and Parasitology)

We urge that those able to help our beleaguered colleagues, at the time of the FEBS meeting in Moscow, through private appeals to Soviet colleagues and authorities, or through petition from scientific professional societies, get in touch with one of the organizations concerned with helping these scientists.

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Plutonium Policy

The unwillingness of the Department of Energy (DOE) to forego the use of plutonium that is currently in its civilian energy research program for weapons purposes illustrates the dimensions of the Reagan Administration's nuclear arms build-up. This is strongly underscored by DOE's reluctance to give up

even the option to divert to weapons use the approximately 4 tons of British-origin plutonium, for which peaceful assurances have been given for 20 years.

The commitment not to divert civilian nuclear technology and materials to military uses is at the very heart of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Our nation should be greatly concerned about the adverse effects any action by the United States could have on the 1985 NPT Review Conference and on the long-term prospects for renewal of the NPT itself in 1995. Apparently, DOE sees no connection between U.S. example and the viability of the NPT. Fortunately, however, a growing number of concerned individuals, including scientists and organizations that represent them, are very aware of the connection and have expressed support for my legislation to prohibit such civil-to-military diversions by DOE.

This is a complicated and often confusing issue, yet Colin Norman (News and Comment, 27 Apr., p. 365) was able to explain it with great clarity and accuracy. *Science* is to be commended for its timely reporting of this important issue.

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Field Access

Kenneth Prewitt, in his editorial of 9 March (p. 1019) raises for discussion the important subject of field access. Few would quarrel with his observation that "the use of a political-bureaucratic process to control access to field sites" is "troubling." Clearly, such restrictions are onerous and dangerous to the health and well-being of science, no less than to the scientist. However, Prewitt's argument appears to be premised on reaching a consensus before and independent of any evaluation of the source or nature of the conflict. As such, his four "modest" recommendations are in fact just about as risky as the problem he sets out to resolve.

It is indeed the case that it is "too late in the history of world politics to detach science from national sovereignty." However, it is also too early to surrender to the draconian restrictions sovereignty increasingly places on scientific endeavor. The broad implications of Prewitt's proposals are that we should work within a consensual model to achieve some sort

of equilibrium between scientist and politician. In fact, his proposals serve to lessen the resolve of the scientific community and to encourage the acceptance at face value of the rights of sovereigns.

First, Prewitt refers to the universality of scientific standards, but then he asserts the "obligations" of the foreign scholar to the host country and states that the scholar should take up residence only if willing to comply with indigenous moral and legal codes. Prewitt does not mention that with the universality of scientific claims come a crop of the particularist demands of nations. Should Nazi doctrines of racial purity be viewed as "indigenous moral and legal codes" or just distortions of science? Should Soviet psychiatric practice be neither condemned nor examined by international agencies because to do so "insults or places in jeopardy segments of the local community"? Should Chinese Communist practices of birth control which entail (legal or otherwise) infanticide be ignored by foreign researchers because the "offending behavior is unrelated to the conduct of research"?

Second, Prewitt states that it is to the advantage of scientists to strengthen overseas centers and their quasi-official bureaucracies. Is this because of accumulated goodwill and foreknowledge of rules governing access? This proposal unrealistically presumes a set of local-level officialdom in the Third World unconnected and un beholden to the higher-level officialdom that calls the tune.

Third, Prewitt urges collaborative efforts by the various academies. Yet in an earlier statement (1) after visits to China, he made it quite clear that the level, style, and ideological requirements of many Third World academies do not conform with our notions of scholarship and science. Is it wise to urge such unnamed academies to advise those who write and implement the rules restricting field access? What may start as benign help in "negotiating arrangements for visiting investigators" could end in selection and discrimination against investigators from abroad who are suspected of being unfriendly or insufficiently enthusiastic about the wonders of the host country.

Prewitt's fourth point is a call for cross-national collaboration that would "ease problems of access." But Prewitt himself hints at the potential problem: Such international programs can become an entry fee for engaging in overseas research, a titling of wealthy nations by poorer nations having little to do with cross-national collaboration in any sense other than a transfer of funds as a price

of admission. In many situations, agencies such as the Ford and Rockefeller foundations have served to keep open the lifelines of scholarship in Third World nations where despotic regimes are the norm. The ability of such foundations to support scientific research in indigenous contexts often makes the difference. Provision should be made for the sort of safeguards against bureaucratization of fund transfers that one has come to expect.

Instead of appealing to sovereign power for comfort and relief, it might be more prudent, certainly wiser, to employ the historical model that has evolved in the West between religious and secular authority. This relationship has not always been harmonious; indeed, it has been largely contentious. The conflictual rather than consensual model has permitted the survival with dignity of religious forces beleaguered by the same benevolent sovereigns who in the past were willing to engage in "collaborative efforts" that would have rendered the autonomy of voluntary institutional life impossible, or at least highly improbable. If scientists need a model, let them derive it from the principled struggle of outsider religious groups to assert their claims against the sovereign, rather than the mandarin-like model of accommodation that begins with a sharing of norms and values and ends with the destruction of science as autonomous and universal. Gaining access at the price of losing voice is a poor bargain. It gives the sovereign a cheap victory and the scientist a costly defeat.

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References

1. K. Prewitt et al., *Report of the American Humanities and Social Science Planning Commission of the Social Science Research Council* (Social Science Research Council, New York, 1982).

I am pleased that Horowitz concurs with me about the pernicious effects of bureaucratically controlled research access, but regret that his commentary blurs important distinctions and introduces inaccuracies.

Horowitz implies that the effort to secure research access is a cozy and consensual process. He is wrong. The negotiations are tangled, frustrating, often unpleasant to the participants, and never free of conflict. In these negotiations, the principles of open research access need whatever troops they can muster.

Consequently, we should welcome help from academies such as the Brazilian Academy of Science, the newly formed Kenyan Academy of Science, and even the Chinese Academy of the Social Sciences. Officials of the latter, incidentally, have inveighed against restrictions imposed by state bureaucracies on Western researchers. If not always with success, they have acted with conviction and very often with courage.

Horowitz is also incorrect about the overseas centers. The Universities Service Center in Hong Kong, under the sponsorship of the American Council of Learned Societies, or the New Delhi Center of the American Institute of Indian Studies, are not "beholden" to higher-level officialdom in the host countries. Responsive to scholarly interests, these and other overseas centers are front-line organizations dedicated to preserving an open science.

Contrary to what Horowitz writes, my editorial does not "hint" that cross-national collaboration should be resisted as a required entry price for field access. It states this point as a clear and nonnegotiable principle. I also suggest that scientifically appropriate collaboration can have strategic as well as academic value. Horowitz's comment on this point leaves unclear whether there are any conditions under which he favors collaboration with foreign colleagues.

On the important issue of obligations to the host country, Horowitz is surely right to draw attention to social evils that no scholar should condone. Neither, however, should we condone unethical and unprofessional behavior by scholars. I do not forfeit my right, nor limit the right of others, to condemn racism, torture, or infanticide when I also expect scholars to respect their research subjects, to protect the anonymity of innocent and vulnerable persons, or to remain sensitive to the differing cultural values of other peoples.

In urging colleagues to oppose bureaucratically imposed restrictions on field access, I have not appealed "to sovereign power for comfort and relief." The appeal is directed to the international community of scientists. It is an invitation to climb down into the bureaucratic trenches, where the struggle for a free science, if it is to be successful, must be waged—country by country, discipline by discipline, project by project.

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