

LETTERS

Human Rights and the Arms Race

After a moratorium of 4 years, bilateral exchanges are being renewed with Soviet scientists. Many people in and out of the U.S.S.R. had become dependent on the forthright support for Andrei Sakharov that the moratorium represented and, at the very least, we owe it to them to think carefully how the new opportunity for communication should be used. What is the new message that we wish to send?

Sakharov's maltreatment personalized the endemic Soviet violation of human rights. Our support for Sakharov expressed our support as well for a multitude of oppressed individuals. We looked for a restitution of Sakharov's rights as a first sign of change. The message of the moratorium—and of countless pleas, petitions, letters and telegrams—had been to convey our repugnance at human rights violations. Apparently that message was ignorable.

Somehow, some way, we must get the Soviet leadership to recognize that their continued violation of human rights provides a *moral* basis to the West for the arms race. The U.S.S.R. must assess the total economic and political cost to their hemisphere. The integrated cost has to be painfully large. Correcting the situation is not a favor to us, it is a necessity for them. That is the message that must be got across.

What would it take for us to perceive the Soviets as allies? For them to see us as friends? Invasions by the Mongols, by Napoleon, and by Hitler have sensitized generations of Russians to external threats. For us, the arrogant suppression of human rights and of individual freedom in the Soviet sphere is loathsome. We are sickened by the iron grip on the Czech people, by the annihilation of Solidarity, by the imprisonment of the Helsinki Agreement monitors, by the silencing of Sakharov.

Driven on each side by the existing fear and mistrust, there is an epic game being played out—a tragicomedy, really—in which weapons are prepared for a battle that, should it occur, will end human life. A gulag sense of ethics coupled with nuclear missiles on the Soviet side drives the West in its arms build-up, which, in turn strengthens the position of the Soviet hard-liners.

The loop is not easy for the West to break. But the Soviets could break the loop unilaterally and at minimum risk—by new policies in human rights.

In the renewal of contacts, we must

get the Soviets to recognize that the real cost of their human rights violations is hundreds of billions of rubles and dollars each year. More than any alternative, progress in this area could increase mutual trust and open pathways other than armament negotiations to resolve our differences and together restructure our priorities.

In his speech on retiring from the presidency of the American Physical Society, Maurice Goldhaber said that, after the next war, the first thing the survivors—if any—would do would be to ensure that war never happen again. Goldhaber then asked, "Can't we have a virtual war? Can we not start now on ensuring peace?"

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Resources and Compromise

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., proposes in his editorial "The undesirability principle" (5 July, p. 9) that "... chemical companies advocating less regulation [be required to] detail the dangers to water supplies" and "Environmentalists advocating stringent precautions [be required to] state the cost to the consumer." Even allowing for some mischievous humor, the issue is presented as mere compromise between extremes.

Do we still believe that environment is infinitely divisible by compromise each time a new claim appears? Have we banished from science application of the basic principles of ecology? And, quite apart from the hard-won principles of science, what peculiar twist of logic makes legitimate, even if for humor, this type of perversion of the public's interests, so actively espoused by every politer? Why can we not assign in our own minds, in law, and in fact the cost of industrial activity to the industry itself, foregoing those services and things whose costs cannot be accommodated? Can anyone think for a moment that environmentalists, so extraordinarily effective in bringing a quiet revolution in the American democracy, have neglected to compute and state costs to consumers and to the public at large of virtually every commercial and governmental transgression of common sense? That, indeed, is where much of the progress has been.

The law usually lags behind the scientific and technical realities. At the moment the reality is that we are causing

the biotic impoverishment of the only planet we have at a rate that is certainly unprecedented in human history and possibly unprecedented in the planet's history. Our laws and regulations and international protocols are inadequate when viewed in the context of the problem. The scientific community may be able to provide leadership, but it will not be toward continuous compromise of residual resources. Although Koshland's purpose was thoroughly wholesome and constructive, his treatment does not help the advancement of science and human affairs on what must be one of the most important issues the scientific community could be addressing.

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Rachel Carson and devotees of preserving the environment such as George Woodwell have performed and are performing a signal and invaluable service to our society. No group no matter how highly motivated, however, can expect a blank check from society. My appeal was for information, not necessarily compromise. In some cases one set of proponents may be completely right and no compromise would be indicated. In other cases both positions have merit and compromise is a logical course of action, not a dirty word. We will save the environment by showing it is worth the cost, not by pretending that we consumers are not paying ultimately, in every case.—DANIEL E. KOSHLAND, JR.

WRITER'S WORKBENCH

I was pleased to see the favorable mention of AT&T's UNIX WRITER'S WORKBENCH software in the article by Joseph Raben (26 Apr., p. 434). It was unfortunate, however, that its development was attributed solely to me. Linda Cherry of AT&T Bell Laboratories developed the original programs that I augmented to create the WRITER'S WORKBENCH system. Her name should also have been mentioned.

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Erratum: The article "Polish universities face crackdown" by Mark Crawford (News and Comment, 12 July, p. 146) did not properly identify an underground journal and two universities that have resisted the clampdown on academic freedoms. The journal is *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. The proper names of the universities are Jagiellonian University in Krakow and Wrocław B. Beirut University in Wrocław.