

Letters

Call for Koryagin's Release

The healing professions, by definition, should deliver humane and compassionate care. In many of the world's nations, however, some health professionals use their skills and knowledge to violate internationally recognized human rights. For psychiatrists the potential for professional abuse is particularly troublesome.

In most countries, psychiatrists are vested with the legal authority to have persons suspected of being dangerous to themselves or to others involuntarily confined in psychiatric hospitals for observation and treatment. Occasionally, arbitrary abuse of such authority takes place in many countries, including our own. But abuse of psychiatry as a systematic means of political control is quite another matter. Since the turn of the century, the Soviet government has used involuntary psychiatric confinement as a punitive measure to silence and discredit political dissidents. Amnesty International estimates that at least 200 persons have been forcibly confined to Soviet psychiatric hospitals for political reasons since 1975 and that the real total is probably much higher.

For the few Soviet psychiatrists who have defiantly opposed the abuse of psychiatry in their country, government reprisals have been harsh. One psychiatrist, Anatoly Koryagin, received a sentence in June 1981 of 7 years hard labor followed by 5 years in internal exile for "anti-Soviet activities." The charges against him included his having corresponded with the British medical journal *Lancet*. During his trial, the journal published an article by Koryagin critical of the Soviet government's use of involuntary psychiatric confinement for political reasons (1).

Before his arrest, Koryagin served as chief psychiatric consultant to the unofficial Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes. Formed in 1977, the commission campaigned for the release of dissidents in psychiatric hospitals. During the group's 4-year existence, Koryagin and another psychiatrist, now living in exile, examined 55 dissidents who had been released

from psychiatric hospitals or who were in danger of being involuntarily confined. They concluded there was no medical justification for the forcible confinement or treatment of these people.

According to his family, Koryagin is now near death in Chistopol prison as a result of a series of hunger strikes. But he has continued his struggle for the politically repressed even from prison. In an open letter to psychiatrists worldwide smuggled out of prison, Koryagin writes, "I appeal to you, my colleagues, not for a moment to forget those who have stood up for the rights and freedoms people need, and now are condemned to spend years in the nightmarish world of psychiatric wards. . . . To remember them and to do everything possible for their release is our obligation."

Koryagin has fulfilled his duty to maintain the integrity of his profession with honor. In 1983, he received (in absentia) the AAAS Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award for his courageous defense of the principle that "medical knowledge and skills should under no circumstances be used for the purpose of suppressing political dissent."

Focusing international attention on imprisoned scientists has been successful in certain instances in obtaining their release. Koryagin has not been heard from since May 1984. He certainly carried out his professional obligations at great personal sacrifice. At the very least, we can individually and collectively appeal on his behalf (2).

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References

1. A. I. Koryagin, *Lancet* 1981-I, 821 (1981).
2. Send letters and telegrams to Mr. Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Secretary General, Communist Party of the Soviet Union, The Kremlin, Moscow, U.S.S.R.; Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Smolenskaya-Sennaya Ploshchad 32/34, Moscow 121200, U.S.S.R.; Captain Romanov (Director of Chistopol prison), uchr. UE-148/st-4, g. Chistopol, Tatarskaya A.S.S.R. 422950, U.S.S.R.

I was surprised to read that, according to Daniel L. Klayman, Artemisia was a "Turkish woman botanist" (Letters, 23 Aug., p. 706).

Recent migration does not alter the ethnicity of ancient inhabitants. In the narrow sense, "Turkish" covers the people now dominant in Turkey, who have called themselves Osmanlis (Ottomans). In the broader sense, it includes the Tataric group of the Sibiric branch of the Mongolians, as well as other groups stretching across Asia from Turkey to central Siberia.

But it is almost certain that the ancestors of the Carian subjects of Queen Artemisia II came from the Aegean islands. Moreover, during the dynasty (395 to 334 B.C.) established by her father Hecatomnus (395 to 377 B.C.), Caria was Hellenized considerably, especially under her brother-husband Mausolus, who died in 353 B.C. (1).

Artemisia herself, grieving for her remarkably beautiful husband, erected "the tomb of Mausolus, one of the Seven Wonders" (1), and declared a Greek literary contest. The prize went to Theopompus, who defeated such giants as Naucrises, Theodectes, and even his teacher, Isocrates (2). Valerius Maximus tells us that the queen mixed her brother-husband's ashes with water and drank the mixture (3). She died of grief a short time later.

Was Artemisia really Turkish?

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References

1. Strabo, *Geography*, XIV, 16.
2. A. Gellius, *Noctium Atticarum*, X, 18.
3. V. Maximus, *Factorum ac Dictorum Memorabilium*, IV, 6.

Genetic "Engineering"?

Ecologists R. K. Colwell, E. A. Norse, D. Pimentel, F. E. Sharples, and D. Simberloff (Letters, 12 July, p. 111) argue that the particular kinds of genetically engineered organisms "now contemplated are 'quite likely,' if inadequately regulated, to lead to some instances of ecological harm." The authors also provide us with several examples of past ecological catastrophes: explosions of turtledove populations, spread of the apple race of a fruit-fly pest, a Johnson grass-commercial sorghum hybrid becoming an "aggressive" weed, and the like. Although none of the examples de-