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Property of the state? Euler mathematical institute Director Ludwig Faddeev (inset) may lose deed to a haven for Western mathematicians.

Hard Times for Unique Russian Math Center

Outfitted with modern computers, swank furniture, and a deluxe heating system, the 6-year-old Euler International Mathematical Institute (EIMI) in St. Petersburg, Russia, has been an oasis of excellence in a land increasingly deserted by top mathematicians. But this oasis could soon dry up: EIMI, in the wake of a reorganiza-

tion, may lose its posh home.

The turmoil began in March, when EIMI Director Ludwig Faddeev announced plans to fold EIMI—which organizes fortnight-long conferences for top Western and Russian mathematicians—into the St. Petersburg branch of Moscow's Steklov Institute (POMI RAN). The move, Faddeev said, would help trim EIMI's budget, now about \$2000

a month, but it also appears to have run afoul of city politicians.

Faddeev could not be reached for comment. However, according to EIMI Deputy Director Sergei Khrushchev, St. Petersburg city officials question whether POMI RAN needs EIMI's building in addition to the one it rents downtown. Complicating the matter, says Khrushchev, is that the ownership transfer in 1988 of EIMI's building from the city to the institute was illegal at the time. The city "has a right to take it back," says Khrushchev.

The Euler's program is already feeling the cuts. A seminar scheduled for 1 to 15 May will last only a week because POMI RAN did not transfer enough money to Euler to run the conference, says Khrushchev. "The work of EIMI was possible only because it was protected from the outside world," says Khrushchev, who spent 8 years getting EIMI up and running. "A good institute will be completely ruined," he says.

NIH to Review Gene Therapy Program

The young field of gene therapy is about to face what could be its sternest scientific review to date. Harold Varmus, director of the National Institutes of Health, is launching a broad survey of NIH funding in this area, which he hopes will be completed by this autumn.

Varmus disclosed his plans on 1 May, when he told a group of advisers that he is creating a panel to scrutinize the science of gene therapy and advise NIH on which projects deserve high-priority support and which may not.

The review is to ensure that "NIH's investment in gene therapy is being used appropriately," Varmus says. "I hear lots of concern about the disconnect between the potential and the reality," he says. Too much money may be going into trials involving advanced lethal diseases such as brain cancer, says Varmus, who wonders what can be done for "more treatable" conditions. He hopes the review will probe ideas "that have not been explored effectively in the clinical arena," including gene delivery to the skin, salivary glands, and eyes.

The 14-member panel* will be co-chaired by Arno Motulsky, an ethicist at the University of Washington, Seattle, and Stuart Orkin, a Harvard University blood-disease researcher who directs the Center for Molecular Developmental Hematopoiesis at Boston's Children's Hospital. The panel's first meeting is scheduled for 15 May at NIH. The panel will work with alacrity, Motulsky says, because Varmus wants a report by December. The reason: Varmus wants to use the panel's recommendations to help shape NIH's 1997 budget request.

*Others are: Richard Axel of Columbia, David Botstein of Stanford, John Coffin of Tufts, Pamela Davis of Case Western Reserve, Eric Fearon of Yale, Uta Francke of Stanford, Haig Kazazian of University of Pennsylvania, Thomas Kelley of Johns Hopkins, Robert Lefkowitz of Duke, Bernard Moss and Thomas Waldmann of NIH, and Huda Zoghbi of Baylor.

Nature Appoints New Editor

Change is in the air at the British journal *Nature*. First the weekly announced that longtime editor John Maddox would retire in November; then a German publishing firm, Holtzbrink, bought Macmillan, *Nature's* publisher. Now the latest move: *Nature* has

tapped Philip Campbell, editor of *Physics World*, as Maddox's successor.

Campbell, 44, did his doctoral work at Leicester University, specializing in atmospheric physics. He joined *Nature* in 1979, becoming the journal's physical sciences editor 2 years later. In 1988 Campbell moved to the U.K. In-

stitute of Physics in Bristol to become editor of its new monthly magazine *Physics World*, which is similar to *Physics Today* in the United States. During his reign, *Physics World's* circulation nearly doubled to 25,000. Campbell is a Fellow of the Institute of Physics and of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Ecologists Deride Salvage Logging Plan

Legislation that would allow the timber industry to cull thousands of dead and dying trees from federal lands is drawing fire from many top ecologists, who claim the logging will harm ecosystems.

According to the Senate appropriations committee, increased "salvage" logging is necessary to "address the emergency situation in our nation's forests," as evidenced by a spate of wildfires last summer that destroyed millions of forest acres. To reduce the hazard, the Senate advises the Forest Service to boost the salvage harvest of dead wood by an unspecified amount. The House version, passed in March, is more demanding: It would require the Service to allow loggers to double their salvage take from 3 billion to 6 billion board feet in the next 2 years. The committees estimate the extra sales would net the government \$36 million. More salvage logging "will undoubtedly lead to healthier forests," says a House staffer.

Not true, argue a dozen top ecologists in a 28 April letter to President Clinton. The group, which includes Judith Meyer of the University of Georgia and Reed Noss of Oregon State, claims the provision "is not based on good science." Particularly onerous, they say, are "activities associated with excessive salvage operations"—road building and clear cutting, for instance—that would degrade sensitive ecosystems such as the Southern Appalachian mountains. An architect of the spotted owl plan, which calls for some salvage logging, shares their dim view. The legislation "has very little scientific justification," says University of Washington forest ecologist Jerry Franklin.

Critics are hoping the Senate version, which allows for flexibility in setting salvage quotas, will prevail in a House-Senate meeting later this month. "It's the lesser of a great evil," says Buzz Williams of the Chattooga River Watershed Coalition in Georgia.