

Letters

International Science

Continuing international political unrest now appears to threaten a most important facet of our modern civilization: the free exchange of science and scientists between the East and the West. Individual countries have for years placed restrictions on exchanges related to national security matters, but now it seems that the exchanges in basic sciences that we have been able to preserve may be curtailed. Two specific problems deserve the attention of all scientists who believe international science is one of the remaining keys that could open the door to world peace.

First we should consider the United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (Unesco). The U.S. government has announced that it will withdraw support from the organization within the year because of dissatisfaction with many facets of Unesco operations—fiscal, ideological, and managerial. Fortunately, there is a chance that the U.S. decision could be reversed (1), and many countries, including nations of both the Eastern and the Western blocs, are hoping that the United States will change its position. A Canadian official has stated (1), "As is well known, we share some of the U.S. misgivings about the activities and initiatives of the organization. But we believe that there can be a better possibility of setting it right from within rather than from the outside." Surely most scientists who have seen Unesco programs result in new and expanded opportunities for international scientific exchange will recognize the wisdom of this view and will also hope for a reversal of the U.S. decision. But it is not enough to hope. We should put on what pressure we can and write to our congressmen, scientific societies, and even the President.

Second, a more specific threat to international cooperation in the earth sciences has been suggested. The International Geological Congress, now in its second century of existence, will hold its 27th session in 1984. The meetings and excursions will be in the Soviet Union, with headquarters in Moscow. The congress could be an immense success and a great opportunity for Western geologists to have fruitful association with their

Soviet counterparts. Americans who attended the Sixth International Symposium of the International Association on the Genesis of Ore Deposits, held in the Soviet Union in September 1982, reported it to be a fine professional and sociological experience. They came away with a feeling that the good rapport developed (or renewed) with the Soviet geologists (and many ordinary citizens along the way) could only have inspired respect, friendship, and trust among those concerned.

Recently, however, some geologists (2) have declared their intention to stay away from the 1984 Moscow congress in protest against the recent Korean airline disaster and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This is, of course, their prerogative, but I sincerely hope that their decisions do not precipitate a ground swell of support for a boycott. Those who oppose a boycott should make their opinions known. We geologists have a unique opportunity this year again to help improve international relations in a personal way.

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References

1. M. G. Scully, *Chron. High. Educ.* 27, 1 (11 January 1984).
2. A. McGugan, *Geotimes* 28, 14 (1984); R. C. Shumaker, *ibid.*; W. S. Fyfe, *ibid.*

Animals and Research

The briefing by Jeffrey L. Fox (News and Comment, 13 Jan., p. 151) gives the impression of a resigned if not unconcerned reaction of Massachusetts scientists to the state prohibition on use of pound animals. On the contrary, this and other such moves on the part of antivivisectionist, "animal rights," and other antiscience groups constitutes one of the most blatant reactionary legal actions in recent history and is so recognized by scientists in Massachusetts.

That this travesty was brought about by an organization calling itself "Protect

Our Pets" is a real anachronism, since irresponsibility of pet owners is the sole cause of the horrendous problem of stray dogs and cats inundating the pounds and the cities they serve. It is in recognition of this irresponsibility that the majority of the states do allow the release of unwanted pound animals to responsible research and educational institutions for use to improve the health of both humans and animals.

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The present Animal Welfare Act (News and Comment, 3 Feb., p. 468) was carpentered by negotiation and compromise between the scientific community and other interested constituencies. I know. I was there.*

Given enough money for implementation, it works. Don't fix it.

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Sakharov Appeal

The following letter by our distinguished colleague Andrei Sakharov was presented to various delegations to the 35-nation Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, which convened in Stockholm on 17 January 1984.

Participants in this distinguished conference will doubtless devote significant attention to the question of human rights including the fate of prisoners of conscience, matters closely linked to international security.

At this time I am obliged to appeal to the Conference participants concerning a most urgent personal problem. In September 1982 my wife Elena Bonner submitted an application to travel abroad for medical treatment and for a visit with her mother, children and grandchildren. She is quite ill. In addition to her persistent eye disease, she has developed cardiac problems. She suffered an infarct in April 1983. Subsequent attacks in May, June and October damaged additional heart tissue. Her condition has become life-threatening.

Treatment for my wife in the Soviet Union where she has been subject to severe persecution, slander and KGB interference cannot be effective and could prove dangerous in our opinion. For all practical purposes, she has been deprived of medical care. Only a trip to receive medical treatment abroad can save her life, and mine as well, since her death would mean my death.

On November 10 I sent a letter to Soviet Head of State Yury Andropov asking him to