the burglars managed to cut the communication cables linking the remote laboratory to the rest of the world. They seemed to know what they were looking for because they ignored several laboratory buildings and headed straight for the tunnel and the vast, underground experiment hall. The entrance to the hall is protected with two metal doors and iron bars.

The high security was installed because the gallium has been under threat of confiscation by the government, apparently to provide some quick cash. Last year, the Ministry of Fuels and Power-Production Industries sold the gallium to the Institute of Rare Metals. Although removal of the metal was halted following protests by INR staff and SAGE's international collaborators (*Science*, 11 April, p. 193), the threat of confiscation still hangs over the lab. There have also been three earlier attempts to steal some of the gallium, as a result of which four people are now in prison.

To secure the gallium, its location in the experimental hall was disguised. The precautions also included a special system of passes: Entry into the hall is restricted to those on a special access list approved by the administration. The thieves did not know this and sent their driver hostage ahead to open the doors, but access was denied. Because the break-in took place on a weekend night, only two people were on duty in the hall—an engineer and a technician. They instantly realized what was happening and locked all the doors and turned off all the lights.

The thieves had come well prepared, however. "These guys turned out to be pretty smart," Bezrukov says. They managed to break open the iron bar and the first door, and then used a forklift truck to break down the second door. By this time, the engineer and the technician had escaped through a ventilation tunnel running parallel to the main tunnel and alerted the lab personnel. By the time staff members reached the hall, the thieves had forced open many of the doors in the hall, but had fled before reaching the one containing the gallium.

Criminal investigators working on the case are forbidden by law to discuss it, but Bezrukov believes the thieves may have had help from a lab employee because of their knowledge of the layout of the observatory, and he even speculates that the Ministry of Fuel may have been involved. "The battle for the gallium has never stopped. It was continuing all this year, and we are gradually losing it."

Bezrukov says that INR has now stepped up security even further. Staff members now have two-way radios, and other equipment has been installed which Bezrukov declines to describe for security reasons. Alongside this, he says, "we have another militiaman at the entrance ... the post costs us 10 million rubles a month [about $1700], and having funding shortages we cannot afford anything else."

–Andrey Allakhverdov and Vladimir Pokrovsky

Allakhverdov and Pokrovsky are writers in Moscow.

SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT

Editors Seek Ways to Cope With Fraud

LONDON—A new committee, set up by the editors of nine prominent medical journals, called last week for governments to tackle scientific misconduct and fraudulent publication in a more systematic way. "Cases are still exposed mostly by chance, and we worry about the scale of the problem," says Richard Smith, editor of the *British Medical Journal* and a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which is one of several organizations in Europe currently looking into ways to beef up mechanisms to deal with publication misconduct.

COPE, whose members include the editors of *The Lancet*, *Gut*, and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, invited more than 100 other editors here to discuss the scope of the problem and how to deal with evidence of misconduct in publications submitted to them for review. Editors related their experiences with incidents including the forging of signatures of patients and members of ethics committees that monitor research programs, plagiarism of research published in major Western journals for republication in Eastern European journals, publishing reports of patients who could be identified without their consent, and ignoring agreed inclusion and exclusion criteria for enrolling patients into a trial to bolster numbers. "Normal peer review can sometimes identify problems, but sorting through raw data to investigate them can be a miserable business," says Smith.

These incidents were described without revealing names because of worries about libel laws and so that the careers of whistle blowers who brought cases to light would not be jeopardized. The meeting backed calls by one of the legal experts on the committee, Ian Kennedy of University College London, for the development of a protocol for editors to help protect genuine whistle blowers. But a key initial goal is just to advertise the scope of the problem. COPE, says Smith, will publish a list of reported cases of misconduct each year to sensitize editors to the problems.

Shared concern. Guarding against fraud.

COPE's efforts are being matched by other initiatives in Europe. In Germany, the main granting agency, the DFG, has appointed a commission in the wake of allegations that a pair of researchers manipulated data while working at Berlin's Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the mid-1990s, and possibly at other laboratories before and afterward (*Science*, 15 August, p. 894). "It's an issue that has been dormant in some countries for too long," says DFG President Wolfgang Frühwald. The commission is expected to report its recommendations before the end of the year.

The Max Planck Society, Germany's premier research organization, is also carrying out a review of procedures it may adopt to help counter misconduct, and the results are also expected shortly. And at the most recent meeting of the European heads of research councils in Dublin last month, the problem of scientific misconduct was at the top of the agenda. The council heads are looking in particular at Danish efforts that have culminated in a new national committee on scientific dishonesty. Unlike the U.S. Office of Research Integrity, which can investigate misconduct claims only when they involve government funds, the Danish committee can work across the scientific spectrum. COPE is also interested in the U.S. and Danish efforts. "Editors can only go so far," says Kennedy. "Eventually you need an independent body to investigate claims fairly."

–Nigel Williams