

... Refuseniks

paper on the persecution of Argentinian scientists prepared by the AAAS's committee on scientific freedom and responsibility, describes cases of individuals who have been dismissed from their jobs and forbidden to practice science anywhere in the country; many have been arrested as terrorists (which may amount to criticizing government policies) or simply been abducted in broad daylight, never to be seen or heard from again by family or friends. There have also been accounts of research institutions that were suddenly closed—presumably because theoretical thought and scientific individualism are seen as characteristics capable of fostering leadership and subversion, the AAAS says.

The CSFR has developed a clearinghouse on persecuted foreign scientists, headed by Tom Johnston, which acts as a referral agency. "Upon receiving an inquiry or expression of concern about a particular scientist ... the AAAS human-rights coordinator collects and reviews additional information. ... If appropriate, the case is then referred to a clearinghouse contact," who is a representative of a professional scientific society affiliated with the AAAS, in the discipline of the persecuted scientist, the AAAS says. This contact "is requested to investigate further ... and if the claim has merit, to begin correspondence with government officials in the country in which the violation has occurred. ... In significant cases, the AAAS ... will also develop advocacy on behalf of the individual scientist."

Since its formation little more than a year ago, the clearinghouse has received more than 120 claims, most of which are now under investigation. Johnston says he feels the clearinghouse has been at least partially successful in the release and emigration of two individuals.

The NAS also has a committee on human rights which investigates such violations. It was responsible for prompting Handler's action on Shcharanskiy and has asked for the Czechoslovak Supreme Court to commute the sentences of two scientists as a result of what it considers to have been violations of their human rights.

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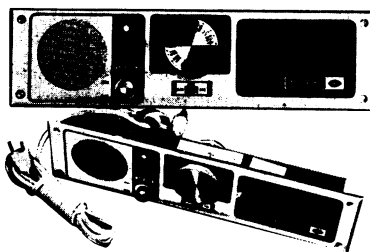
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