

The secret is to have no secrets

EARLIER this month, Anatolii Shcharanskii received a sentence of three years' imprisonment plus ten years' exile for divulging information officially classified by the Soviet authorities as "secret". According to the rumours routinely described as "reliable diplomatic sources", it would appear that much of this secret information was in fact a denial of secrecy. In his capacity as a human rights activist, Shcharanskii regularly brought to the notice of the foreign press details of Jewish scientists refused emigration visas on the grounds that they had been engaged in "secret" research.

The scientists, and Shcharanskii as their spokesman, fervently denied that their own work, or that of the institutes where they worked, was militarily sensitive. Nevertheless, to Soviet officialdom, it would appear that even to discuss matters of secrecy or otherwise is itself a breach of national security.

The "secrecy" of research is an argument frequently advanced by the Soviet authorities to explain why some Jewish scientist has not been allowed to emigrate to Israel. Since the notorious "education tax" on would-be emigrants was allowed to lapse some years ago, so that a departing scientist no longer had to repay the notional cost of his higher education, "secrecy" has been invoked so regularly as a barrier to emigration that it could appear to

the outside observer that virtually all Soviet research may be classified as "secret".

Indeed, some statements by the Soviet authorities seem to point in that direction. When Vladimir Slepak, a *refusnik* cyberneticist, protested that his work could not possibly be secret, since the Soviet Union was at least five years behind the USA, it was explained to him that "that precisely is the secret".

During the 1976 Revolution Day celebrations, Moscow Radio claimed that it was meaningless for western campaigners to claim that such-and-



"I hear she wants to emigrate."

such scientist had no access to secrets "since only we know what our secrets are"—and when no Western protests were forthcoming to what had seemed simply a routine propaganda broadcast, it was then intimated to Corresponding-Academician Veniamin Levich that the West had clearly concurred with the Soviet Union on this point!

Access to military secrets is, indeed, considered by all human rights legislation a valid impediment to emigration. Normally, however, a reasonable term is set, after which the "secrets" are assumed to be obsolete or generally known. Some five to seven years would appear standard in most countries. The Soviet Union, however, sets far higher limits. Recently, Irina Brailovskaya (a mathematician) was told that her term of secrecy was for 30 years, of which five had already expired, while Aleksandr Lerner, a cyberneticist, was informed that his was "for life".

Normally, however, would-be emigrants not only are not told of how long they must wait for security clearance; they do not even have any means of knowing, short of applying for a visa, whether or not they are eligible to emigrate at all. Since application to emigrate routinely results in dismissal from one's post, for those whose jobs are so secret that they themselves are unaware of the secrecy, request for a visa can result in several years expiating their "secret" knowledge in the jobless limbo of the *refusnik*.

Vera Rich

Tungus expert discovers biofields

ALEKSEI ZOLOTOV must surely be the supreme example of the heights of scientific attainment which the ordinary citizen of the Soviet Union can achieve. Originally, it would seem, merely an oil-driller, he was coopted, at some time during the mid 1960's, on to one of the geo/astrophysical expeditions to determine the origin of the Tunguska phenomenon. He has since become something of a Tunguska phenomenon himself.

Originally, Zolotov was merely an "expert" on local conditions and terrain. Gradually, however, he somehow became accepted as an expert on the phenomenon itself, propounding his theory that the mysterious body which caused such widespread devastation of the tundra was an extra-terrestrial space-craft which came to grief, disintegrating into a nuclear explosion.

Astrophysics, however, it would appear, is not Zolotov's sole interest. He has now ventured into biophysics, and, according to a recent TASS announcement, has postulated that, in addition to the "generally accepted" electromagnetic and gravitational fields,

there also exists a "biofield", research into which could "have an enormous influence on the development of science, in particular medicine".

In defence of his hypothesis, Zolotov claims that he can slow down the action of a chronometer "using the biofield of his hands". "Biofield", he says, is a random gift, like musical or mathematical talent; Zolotov himself, unfortunately, is only moderately gifted—otherwise he might be able to stop the chronometer entirely.

His talents, however, lie more in the realm of investigation. Already he claims to have observed that the biofield can affect a crystal oscillator. It is possible, he says, to photograph the "biofield", using the fact that light in such a field is dispersed. As a result of these investigations, he claims to have established, for example, that an "ailing thyroid gland" produces a biofield "in the shape of a dagger some 2 to 3 metres long". A healthy person sensitive to "biofields" can therefore, says Zolotov, restore normal functioning to the gland by influencing its biofield by his own.

None of the phenomena related are particularly new to investigators of the paranormal. The Kirlians were producing photographs, some two decades ago, which were claimed to show the energy fields of living organisms (and which, in the case of human subjects, showed "flares" at the traditional acupuncture points).

What is most remarkable about this latest claim of Zolotov is the support he regularly gets from TASS, first for his UFO/nuclear explanation of Tunguska, and now for his "biofield". Parapsychology, and its related phenomena, have always been a valid field of research in the Soviet Union, which has a vested atheistic interest in proving a physical basis for any phenomena which might otherwise be attributed to a nonmaterial "soul".

Nevertheless, one can only sympathise with Dr Peter Zolotov, Director of the Kirillin branch of the All-Union Geophysical Institute, where Zolotov officially works. Asked to comment on his subordinated work, Brodskii gave a non-committal answer. Zolotov's research he said, "seems to be interesting and promising".

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