

AS a doctor and researcher in medicine and bioelectronics who has always stressed the human mission of medical science and the necessity for international cooperation, I am appealing to you for moral support in my apparently hopeless endeavour to return to active and creative scientific work. For four years now I have been refused all opportunities to work scientifically and professionally in my country and for this reason I applied in 1972 to our Ministry of Health for permission to work abroad. After a year's delay, permission was refused. I have recently sent a new application to the Ministry of the Interior asking for a long term permit to work at research institutes in the United States or West Germany; in the event of this permit being withheld, I have applied to emigrate.

I have been led to this decision by bitter experience with Czechoslovak officialdom and employers, and by the realisation that, as a citizen who in 1968 supported the humanistic reform of socialism undertaken under the leadership of A. Dubcek, I stand no chance in my own country of making any contribution to society according to my skills.

Following the change in leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the change in party policy, all kinds of repressive measures were, as is generally known, instituted against supporters of the democratic reforms. I suffered harsh reprisals in 1970, when the Minister of Health, without stating any grounds, ordered my immediate dismissal from the post of Director of the Research Institute for Electronics and Modelling in Medicine, the institute which I founded and built up. Then an unprecedented check-up was made in the institute in order to gather evidence against me concerning its economic management. The intentions underlying this action were obvious, and I would be willing to publish the evidence should circumstances demand. At the same time officers of State Security carried out an extensive investigation of many staff members of the institute, and I myself was subjected to repeated interrogation.

Since 1970, after dismissal from the directorship, I have not been allowed to engage in research, experimental or teaching work of any kind, and since 1971 I have even been banned from clinical work. In 1972, on returning from a spell of sick leave, I was not allowed to resume work at my place of employment, although such an order was in contravention of valid Czechoslovak law. I was also banned from publishing anything at all. Scientific papers in the press had to be thrown out, and my name had to be deleted from collective works or was deleted by the censors. Nor can my name

appear in literary references.

By degrees I was expelled from all Czechoslovak professional societies, from membership of the editorial boards of scientific and popular scientific journals, from the Collegium of Medical Sciences, from the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Health and from all technical commissions, and I was banned from lecturing at Prague and Brno universities and at the Prague Institute for Further Education of Doctors and Pharmacists. I am officially excluded from participating not only in conferences abroad but also in medical conferences and meetings at home.

For a full four years I have tried to find a place in society in accordance

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*This is the text of an appeal addressed to the World Federation of Scientific Workers by Bohumil Peleska, a Czech scientist*

with my qualifications, I have paid dozens of visits to officials of the Communist Party, to political offices, and to government and public institutions, I have made dozens of proposals as to how I could be employed. All efforts have been in vain, and equally fruitless have been applications to employing organisations; they always cite orders from superior departmental and political bodies. No account was taken even of the fact that, in the course of twenty years of work in this field of research, I built up the Experimental Department of the Institute of Clinical and Experimental Surgery, that I founded and built up the Research Institute for Electronics and Modelling in Medicine, and that I was awarded by the President of the Republic in 1959 the Order of Merit for Services to Construction and in 1965 the Klement Gottwald State Prize for research, nor that I have published 150 scientific works.

The persecution culminated in 1974

when, in contravention of the Labour Code, I was dismissed from my employment under Article 46 on the grounds that I had committed a breach of the social order by my political attitude in 1968. Knowing that colleagues who had suffered dismissal under this Article were in financial straits and searching for jobs, I appealed against the dismissal, but my employers and the trade union refuse to rescind this illegal act, so that now I am not only barred from scientific and professional work—I am unemployed and have no prospects of being able to earn a living for my family, which includes three young children. That is how things are, although the Communist Party and the Czechoslovak government officially maintain that nobody can be made to suffer on account of their political views.

I have been subjected in recent years to a procedure which I consider to be not merely social discrimination but also a form of protracted and total spiritual and intellectual liquidation against which I have no defence at present. The feeling that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the Labour Code are inaccessible has convinced me that further efforts to find work in my profession would merely involve further loss of time and of the creative years of my life.

Having, for four years, been banned from scientific and professional activity, from publishing and teaching in the field of medicine and bioelectronics, having been illegally dismissed from my employment and having been repeatedly interrogated by State Security, I have lost the sense of legal and personal security; this has induced me to apply to the Czechoslovak authorities for a long term permit to work abroad, accompanied by my whole family, a step which I prefer to emigration. This demand is in accordance with the spirit of the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations, on ratifying which the Czechoslovak government also undertook to observe and implement it.

As my previous application was rejected, I am approaching you, not only as an administrative body but also as the conscience of the world community of scientific workers; I ask for moral support in my endeavour to return to scientific life and creative work. Through the widespread and unselfish cooperation among scientists the world over, the fruits of medical research are part of the common cultural wealth of all mankind. Thus no power on Earth has the right to curb, prevent or forbid free scientific cooperation in medicine, or to isolate scientific workers and treat them as serfs merely because they wanted a little more freedom, but not nearly as much as they are entitled to as human beings.