

## Censorship makes headlines in *Ogonyok*

In at least one crucial respect, *glasnost* has brought a change of policy on the censorship of journals such as *Nature*. The old practice of photocopying the journal ceased when the Soviet Union signed the International Copyright Convention two years ago. Then selected news articles from individual issues would be omitted from the Soviet version.

Until February this year, some copies of *Nature* received from Britain would be censored before reaching library shelves, in at least some institutes by removal of entire pages carrying offending articles. Brief inspection suggests that the censorship was not especially subtle; articles critical of the US Strategic Defense Initia-

five seem on some occasions to have been removed, for example. Much the same seems to have happened with the comparable journal *Science*, which is reproduced under licence in the Soviet Union.

Why and when the practice ceased is not especially clear. At some institutes, all copies of *Nature* appearing since February have been left intact, but photocopies of contents pages distributed by the Institute of Scientific Information of Philadelphia carried blacked-out entries as recently as April. Academician V. Goldanskii has brought the issue to the attention of a wider public in a letter printed in the widely read weekly magazine *Ogonyok* ("Little Flame"). Is he pushing at an open door? □

weekly general-interest magazine *Ogonyok*, which (among other things) serializes previously banned literature, but which published a protest by Academician V. Goldanskii at the Soviet practice (now apparently defunct) of censoring the content of journals such as *Nature*.

It is significant that the deputy editor of *Moscow News*, V.A. Buzhkin, should have acknowledged earlier this month that even his courageous editor will telephone some official at the Central Committee before running controversial matter. But the precaution is not always a safeguard; when *Moscow News* last month published an obituary of a Soviet emigré writer, there seems to have been a row between the editor, Mr Yakovlev, and Mr Igor Ligachev, number two in the Politburo after Mr Gorbachev himself.

Questions of the administration of science are now being discussed in the general press. Last month, for example, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published a protest at the academy's failure to decree that even institute directors should be freely elected by secret ballot (see *Nature* 329, 193; 1987). At about the same time, *Moscow News* on 5 October, referring to an earlier article asking why the Soviet Union derives so little benefit from its huge investment in research, concluded that matters would be improved if factory managers used market principles to commission research and development directly from research institutes of their choice, instead of having to go through the central bureaucracy. The previous week, the newspaper had given a graphic account of the circumstances (see p. 794) leading to the closure of the economics institute at Baku by the Minister of Higher Education. (The institute was shot through with nepotism in both the appointment of teachers and the award of degrees and diplomas.)

Despite this heady stuff, the academy's own science publications such as *Priroda* (which means "Nature"), *Science & Life* (with sales of more than 2 million copies a

month) and *Chemistry & Life* (more than 200,000 copies) have so far not been much changed. Moreover, while the general press is still tentatively exploring its new hunting ground (and the limits of its freedom), its coverage of professional issues is at best fitful.

This is *glasnost* in the narrow sense. Beyond journalism, the general lifting of restraint in private conversation may in the long run be more important. People say that colleagues still harbour some of their old caution in dealings with each other. It is understandable that many may find it easier to talk openly to foreigners, but this foreigner encountered only half-a-dozen people in three weeks who were evidently telling sugar-coated tales. One, explaining why *glasnost* had not affected his behaviour, said "I've always said what's on my mind, but that doesn't mean that I tell everything that's there".

Even so, the optimists believe that *glasnost* has now gone so far as to be irreversible. They rely on the principle of the Tree of Knowledge. Pessimists, many of whom are also optimists, note that the censors are still at their posts, ready to pick up their telephones at short notice.

It is relevant that many of the administrative controls on the freedom of Soviet citizens also remain in being. Internal passports must be shown repeatedly, Soviet citizens are arbitrarily prevented from entering the hotels set aside for foreigners. Leaving the country even briefly remains a major undertaking. Incoming mail is still censored. External communications are difficult and slow. Even in foreigners' hotels, the only English-language periodicals available are the British Communist Party newspaper *Morning Star* and its equivalents from other European countries.

*Glasnost*, meanwhile, has lifted the spirits of scientists in the Soviet Union. Many are childlike in their enthusiasm for a more open press. Few have yet learned that *glasnost* is also an invitation for them to speak out. □

## *Perestroika*

### Economists come in from the cold

THE question "What are you doing for *perestroika*?" may be a reporter's cop-out, but not the less useful on that account. Most researchers in the natural sciences reply by saying that they continue to work hard in their laboratories, believing that to be the best contribution they can make. Occasionally they go on to say what they hope *perestroika* will do for them (make it easier to buy a cooperative apartment, for example).

Although the intellectual community seems solidly supportive of the prospect of change, the new climate seems not yet to have reached the point at which more than a handful of researchers believe they can by persuasion improve the conditions under which they work.

But that is not true of economists. The changed climate has brought them out of the shadows in which they have been hidden since Lenin's New Economic Programme of the early 1920s. That was the period of emergency when entrepreneurs were allowed to make profits, sometimes with the help of Western capital.

Western economists are forever saying that their forecasts are unreliable because their assumptions are necessarily assumptions about human behaviour, in its nature unpredictable. They may be chastened to know that there are many in the Soviet Union who believe that the Soviet economy responds only slowly to stimulus because of a unique and admonitory influence on the behaviour of would-be risk-takers in the Soviet Union: when Stalin unwound Lenin's New Economic Programme, he arranged for many of those who had prospered to be shot.

But Soviet economists seem now prepared to take a chance. The best-known of the adventurers is Academician A.G. Aganbegyan (see p. 800), who seems well on the way to having a mathematical model of *perestroika*. Dr Andrei Belykh, of the University of Leningrad, while sharing the general enthusiasm for change, stresses that excitement about the prospect of change is not new in the Soviet Union.

Did not both the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras begin with promises of economic growth? He also notes that the first of Brezhnev's five-year plans (1965-70) was the only plan since the revolution to show an acceleration of the annual rate of economic growth, which otherwise has usually worked out at between 3.1 and 3.3 per cent. Surprisingly, he also refers to a paper by Stalin in the early 1950s ("The problems of Socialism in the USSR"), which tacitly acknowledged that prices must be some-