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Opinion

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

For many of us, reprints are costly, mailing them is expensive, and they never seem to arrive when we need them. But for most scientists around the world, they are the admission cards for the invisible colleges that tie together science and scientists everywhere. Scientists solicit them, hoard them, bootleg them, copy them, and trade them—in many ways as we did as children with baseball cards. In the circulation and exchange of reprints, in the receipt and sending of postcards and papers to and from our fellow scientists in far-off places, we affirm that a network of literary barter, transcendent of nationality, is essential for the work of science. Moreover, for colleagues who are threatened, isolated, or imprisoned, reprints can affirm our concern for their plight.

The National Academy of Sciences' Committee on Human Rights, in common with the many similar committees of scientific societies, seeks to reach out to the furthest outposts of that scientific network—to scientists imprisoned in apparent violation of their human rights. A detailed description of our work, the cases we have taken, and the ways we have pursued them appeared recently (*Science* 201: 502-506, 11 August 1978). We use this forum to appeal to readers of *BioScience* to renew their efforts in behalf of an imprisoned Soviet biologist, to help maintain his involvement in the world of science and his contact with his scientific colleagues.

Sergey A. Kovalev is a research biologist, an electrophysiologist, who has published more than 60 papers in mathematical biology and genetics. His work on myocardial tissue, the synaptic membrane, and cellular interaction is, according to reliable opinions from Soviet and American authorities, "pioneering," "solid," and "of high caliber." Kovalev was arrested by Soviet authorities on 27 December 1974. One year later he was tried on charges of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda for circulating an unofficial publication, *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*. He was sentenced to seven years' hard labor and three years' exile; he is now in his fourth year in a prison camp in Perm.

After his sentencing in 1975, there was a flurry of international protests in Kovalev's behalf. The protests and his own hunger strike led to his transfer from the prison camp at Perm to the Leningrad Prison Hospital, where he received needed medical care, including an operation. At that time Cornell University, Stanford University, and other institutions made available visiting lectureships, and interested appeals have been made in his behalf to ask that he be permitted to take up one of the positions. Unfortunately, his and other similar cases were soon eclipsed by more recent and well-publicized cases, especially those of Yuriy F. Orlov and Anatoliy B. Shchanskii, and he is now back in the prison camp at Perm.*

The Committee on Human Rights and other interested groups seek to find ways to maintain sustained support for Kovalev and other prisoners of conscience. In particular, we seek not only to engage Soviet authorities in discussions concerning the commutation of his sentence, but also to express directly to Kovalev our support, as concerned individuals and as scientists.

What better way to express our support and our concern for an imprisoned and beleaguered colleague than with the traditional expression of scientific communication—the written record of our work. Put Sergey Kovalev's address on your reprint list, for reprints, pre-prints, and off-prints in physiology, biology, and related fields. Let our colleague, 9,000 kilometers away in a prison camp, be a routine recipient of scientific information, the lifeblood of our work. Packages of scientific literature and similar communications should not contain any other material, although they may contain the usual scientific dedication or courtesies. Envelopes and packages containing reprints should be clearly marked "scientific literature" and should have a professional return address.

We can only hope that such papers will be delivered to Kovalev directly in keeping with Soviet law and prison administration. But even if they accumulate in a corner of the warden's office or are diverted by prison authorities, they will await, we may hope, delayed delivery upon Kovalev's eventual release. Whatever path they follow, word will pass: "You are not forgotten." We urge you to remember Kovalev. Send reprints to: Dr. Sergey A. Kovalev, UCHR 5110/1 VS 389/36, Moscow, USSR.

ROBERT W. KATES, *Chairman, Committee on Human Rights*
National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC 20418

*As we go to press, disturbing news has been received from very reliable sources on the continuing deterioration of Kovalev's health. Readers are urged to send letters asking Kovalev be given immediate medical attention and protesting his continuing imprisonment. Please address letters to Mr. Roman A. Rudenko, Procurator General of the USSR, Pushkinskaya ulitsa 15a, Moscow, K-19.