

Opportunities for the East

SIR—Further to the News article “Opportunities for the East” (*Nature* 345, 196; 1990), readers may be interested to know that the International Agency for Research on Cancer (WHO), based in Lyon, France, runs a fellowship programme for research training in cancer addressed to young postdoctoral scientists. This programme was initiated in 1966 and has already provided over 70 fellowships to Eastern European scientists, thus contributing to the maintenance of contact with the international scientific community and to the development of cancer research in the home country of the Fellows.

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Hungarian freedom

SIR—Steven Dickman writes (*Nature* 344, 615; 1990) that “The old Hungarian University became a Romanian one in 1920, when Transylvania was given to the Romanians as part of the peace of Trianon. But the Romanian faculty was forced to flee to Sibiu in 1940 when the Axis powers gave the area back to Hungary”. He omits to say that the original Hungarian faculty was forced to ‘flee’ to Szeged in 1920. In 1940, the original Hungarian University of the city (Kolozsvár in Hungarian, Cluj in Romanian) was permitted to come back. After the Second World War, according to the agreement overseen by the victorious four powers of Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States, it was stipulated that Romanian and Hungarian universities should coexist. “Until 1959 Romanian and Hungarian universities existed side by side, then they merged into a predominantly Romanian entity”, according to Dickman. This is not exactly what has happened. The truth is that the Hungarian faculty was suppressed on orders from Bucharest. An eminent professor at the Hungarian university committed suicide and in his farewell letter wrote that his act was a protest against the violation of liberty and the decree of suppression.

When the university was founded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, more than 80 per cent of the inhabitants of the city were Hungarian. This is evident from the tombstones in the city’s one cemetery. More than 80 per cent of those buried before 1920 were Hungarian. Many great Hungarian writers and musicians (Bartók and Ligeti, for example) were born in Transylvania.

We should also remember that the principle of the Austrian Empire was “*Divide et impera*” (“Divide and rule”). The Austrian emperor always listened favourably to the different ethnic groups of the empire.

Dickman states that there are now “30 per cent ethnic Hungarians, most of them housed in the huge blocks of flats characteristic of the Ceausescu era”. He does not say that the Hungarians were expelled from their lodgings, which were then destroyed by bulldozers, and their former inhabitants were forced to live in “the huge ugly blocks”.

Ceausescu was a terrorist who practised genocide and had a terrible hatred of Hungarians. It is this type of sentiment that caused the terrible tragedy in Tirgu Mures: the killing of unarmed Hungarian civilians, the wounding of more than 300 Hungarian civilians, the putting out of the eye of Suto, the well-known Hungarian writer, and other atrocities. Nothing similar occurred during more than 1,000 years of Hungarian rule.

The Hungarians of Transylvania are demanding only to be able to live freely without oppression and in harmony with the other ethnic groups.

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More on the Shroud

SIR—Regarding the procedure for obtaining samples from the Shroud of Turin for radiocarbon testing, M. S. Tite of the British Museum (*Nature* 332, 482; 7 April 1988) says, “all stages will be fully documented by video film and photography”. However, the official report of the test results (*Nature* 337, 612; 1989) says: “All these operations, *except* for the wrapping of the samples in foil and their placing in containers, were fully documented by video film and photography” (my italics).

The key word here is “*except*”; its presence raises serious questions. Did the custodians of the Shroud agree that “all stages” of the procedure would “be fully documented” as Tite indicates in his letter of 7 April? If so, why did they make and suddenly break that reasonable agreement? (Note: The sampling of the Shroud took place on 21 April — just two weeks after Tite’s reassuring letter appeared in *Nature*.) Why wasn’t the entire procedure documented on video film and made available to the public? Without full documentation how can one be certain that it was the Shroud — and not another cloth — that was carbon dated? At what point in the sampling and sealing procedure did filming end — and why was it ended?

As Tite was the independent overseer of the carbon dating test and the guarantor of its unequivocal reliability, he has an obligation to address these unanswered

questions. (That obligation would be very apparent had the Shroud been carbon dated to the first century.) And it should be noted that the man of the Shroud and the person(s) who imprinted his Christlike image are, as yet, unidentified — and not everyone is convinced that the Shroud is mediaeval as the results of carbon testing indicate.

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TITE REPLIES—I confirm that, as stated in the *Nature* article, the wrapping of the samples in foil and their placing in containers was not documented by video. This was because we were continuing to follow the blind testing procedures according to which only the Cardinal, Professor Gonella and myself were to know which containers held the Shroud samples.

This aspect of the procedure was, I admit, somewhat illogical, as by this time we were aware that, because of the unusual weave of the Shroud, blind testing was not feasible without unravelling the samples. However, I should emphasize that it was the Cardinal and myself who were guarantors of the samples and that the video film was intended as an *aide-mémoire* rather than being meant to provide definitive proof of the identity of the samples.

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HUGO’s finances

SIR—We are, of course, delighted that the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) has made a grant to HUGO of a substantial sum — \$1 million over four years. However, your report (*Nature* 345, 100; 1990) that this was HUGO’s “first funding of note” is simply not true and we would like to set the record straight.

Earlier this year, you yourselves noted (*Nature* 334, 5; 1990) that the Wellcome Trust (not Burroughs Wellcome) had made a three-year grant to HUGO, to cover the costs of its London office and its European activities. The Wellcome Trust’s award is for approximately £175,000 in the first year (with another £50,000 available for programme activities yet to be defined) and will, overall, be of about the same order of magnitude as the HHMI grant.

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