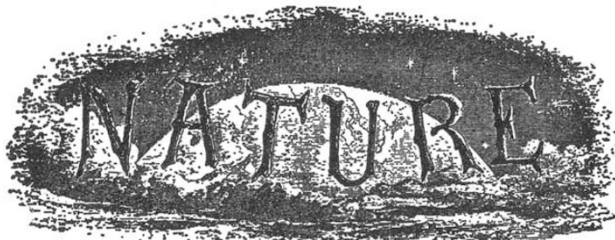


The weakest part of the Scranton Commission's report is that which deals with the university. It is all very well to ask that university faculties should acknowledge the need for qualitative changes to accommodate the much larger numbers of students now clamouring for university places—the essence of the difficulty with which faculties are confronted is that of reconciling flexibility and firmness. In the past few years, a great many universities have leant over backwards to give students what they ask for—meaningless courses on subjects such as Black studies, for example—and have in the process lost their self-respect. There is a point at which a university faculty should insist on its competence to teach only what it knows, and thus deny the Spookian view that a university should by definition be able to provide all young people with whatever they may want. The essence of the present conflict between the universities and their customers—the students—is that the interests of both sides are in genuine conflict. Whatever the effects of the Scranton Commission's report—and they are almost certain to be beneficial—there is no avoiding the tendency towards universities in which faculties and student bodies are increasingly isolated from each other. Whether in these circumstances universities will be as competent as in recent decades to provide students with a vocational training of great value to industry, commerce or government is less certain. In short, the changes in the function of the American university which are now in prospect may go much deeper than the Scranton Commission imagines.

100 Years Ago



SCIENTIFIC ADMINISTRATION

NO reflecting Englishman can contemplate the great events of the present time without desiring to extract from them such warnings and instruction as may be serviceable to his country in case she should be drawn into war. Accordingly the press teems with discussions on every branch of the military art. We leave these to others. In what respects the constitution, the discipline, the training, and the arming of one army are superior to those of the other, it is scarcely the function of this journal to point out. Taking the broad fact that the Prussian army has, up to the present point, proved itself superior on the whole to that of France, and indeed to any army that has ever existed—a fact that no unprejudiced person will deny—let us ascertain, if we can, whether there may not be recognised some one broad cause to account for so broad a fact.

From *Nature*, 2, 449, October 6, 1870.

OLD WORLD

SOVIET UNION

Arrests and Reinstatements

by our Soviet Correspondent

THE wave of protests by scientists and intellectuals against the limitation of academic freedom by the Soviet state continues. The latest to be arrested is the mathematical physicist, R. I. Pimenov, who, according to underground sources, was recently arrested in Leningrad and is awaiting prosecution under the criminal code of the Russian SFSR on a charge of disseminating "falsehoods derogatory to the Soviet State and social system".

Pimenov, who is 40 years of age, is well-known for his monograph on *Spaces of the Kinematic Type*, which has appeared in print both in the Soviet Union and in the USA. The facts behind the charges against him are not easy to ascertain, but certain rumours have linked his case with that of geneticist Zhores Medvedev, forcibly committed to a Kaluga mental hospital earlier this year for circulating privately produced (*samizdat*) essays criticizing state interference in science and the censorship of private mail.



Nikolai V. Timofeev-Resovskii.

Happier news, however, has been received of another member of what may be termed the "Medvedev circle". In August 1969, Medvedev's friend and colleague, Nikolai V. Timofeev-Resovskii, at the Obninsk Institute of Radiology was forced into premature retirement on a minimal pension. Timofeev-Resovskii has always been a somewhat "doubtful" character to the authorities, in spite of an excellent record in the Soviet cause in the revolution and civil war, since, during the '20's and '30's he was working in Germany and was trapped there by the war. In spite of the fact that he played an active part in anti-Nazi resistance work, and his own son fell a victim to the SS, Timofeev-Resovskii was accused of being a collaborator and a German spy and was imprisoned for several years. Following his release, he had worked for some time as head of the section of general genetics and radiobiology in Obninsk. Unfortunately, in 1968, certain well-wishers, without his knowledge, proposed his election to the Academy of