CORRESPONDENCE

Aharon Katzir Katchalsky

SIR,—We the undersigned were scientific colleagues and friends of Aharon Katzir Katchalsky. Your readers will know of his tragic death, in company with 25 others, at the hands of terrorists in the airport at Lod. We write not only to mourn the loss of an old friend and one of the greatest scientists to emerge from Israel, but also to express our horror at so indiscriminate and so futile a waste of rare human resources.

Aharon Katchalsky was vigorous in the pursuit of scientific research of a most distinguished kind, and also found time to play a leading part in all kinds of international organizations and activities to the extent that he seemed to be a citizen of the world rather than

of any one country. In both respects his loss is irreparable, and there is especial irony in the fact that this indiscriminate act of slaughter destroyed a man of deep humanity who was not only an eminent scientist but also happened to be particularly involved in furthering the cause of peace in the Middle East. It would not be proper or useful for us to propose remedies for a situation where such events can take place, but we would express our opinion that a continuation of the escalating spiral of retaliation and counter-retaliation is unlikely to be effective, but will merely multiply the number of innocent victims.

For all these reasons, we now pro-

pose that there should be established a Katchalsky Memorial Fellowship tenable at the Weizmann Institute. The ideal would be that scientists from all countries should be enabled to spend periods of up to a year in Israel on research or study in some way connected with the varied work for which Katchalsky was distinguished. We urge that our colleagues elsewhere should send expressions of their support for this scheme to the Editor of *Nature*, who—we are told—is discussing practical arrangements with the Weizmann Institute.

Yours faithfully,

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Obituary

Professor G. van Iterson

PROFESSOR GERRIT VAN ITERSON, Dutch botanist, technologist, and founder of applied research organizations in the Netherlands, died in Wassenaar on January 4, 1972, aged 93. For over 40 years, from September 1907 until August 1948, Professor van Iterson held the chair of Technical Botany in the Delft Institute of Technology, the same institute where, in 1901, he had majored in chemical technology and subsequently had been

invited by the famous microbiologist M. W. Beijerinck to become his assistant.

Working with Beijerinck, van Iterson acquired a considerable knowledge of biology and published a number of papers on denitrifying bacteria and on the aerobic decomposition of cellulose by microorganisms. In 1907 he presented his thesis *Mathematische und mikroskopisch-anatomische Studien über Blattstellungen, nebst Betrachtungen über den Schalenbau der Miliolinen* which far exceeded in size,

plan and contents everything normally offered as a thesis, and was the most convincing proof of the high scientific talents of the author. Beijerinck encouraged him to become a general botanist and, feeling the need for instruction to future technologists about industrial plants and their products, he asked the government to create a chair in microscopical anatomy at the Delft Technical Institute. Needless to say, van Iterson became the first occupant of this chair.

Van Iterson's new duties left him