

Germany will receive anything" from DFG. University researchers, whose work has been neglected by East Germany's former Communist government, will not be able to present high-quality proposals. Without asking DFG to lower its standards, Simon calls for moderation in administering the DFG plan.

Simon urges that other organizations consider their steps carefully before acting on reunification. Recently, Research Minister Heinz Riesenhuber has come under fire from his own party for not moving faster to unify East and West German institutions. But a piecemeal approach in which the nuggets were selected by the West and the rest "dumped at the feet of the academy" would be the "worst possibility", Simon admonishes.

It would be best if the Max Planck Society and GFEs, both of which are administered by the ministry, were to wait at least until July before proceeding with reunification plans, says Simon.

Wissenschaftsrat set up a commission earlier this year to assess the potential of East German research and will consider the commission report before it makes recommendations on a new structure for West and East German science in July.

Giving East Germany more time — possibly well beyond July, says Simon — will allow it to evaluate its own research institutions and begin to rationalize them. This would create less resentment, he says, than if "Big Brother" were to come in from the West and tell East German institutions how many people they have to let go.

Another advantage to a Wissenschaftsrat evaluation of East German science is that it gets the *Länder* involved. Until now, the *Länder*, usually major players in university policy, have been nearly silent about East German science.

Some East German Academy members are talking about breaking down the academy into a 'Leibniz Society' and a 'Helmholtz Society' for basic and applied research, respectively. But no one has emerged to take control of the academy in this critical phase. The Academy Presidium recently asked nine people if they would like to run for president of the academy. Seven declined immediately and the other two declined the next day. Three new candidates could not be found in time for the planned election in late April, so the election has had to be postponed.

Steven Dickman

A Scientists' Union of the USSR has been formed, together with republic and regional unions, but they are still taking shape and their influence is as yet limited. Some hopes for radical change were linked with the academy elections last month and they, as required by the amended statutes of the academy, were indeed more democratic than previously.

For the first time, there were no instructions of which candidates were approved or 'recommended' by higher-ups. There were six nominees for the post of president — two scientist members of the presidential council, Stanislav Shatalin and Yuri Osipyan, together with Academicians Guri Marchuk, Nikolai Basov, Zhores Alferov and Andrei Gaponov-Grekhov. But all of them except Marchuk, who has held the post since 1985, withdrew. Of the 247 Academicians who were present at the meeting, 195 voted for Marchuk and 43 against.

By contrast, there was no choice in the elections of the vice-presidents and of the chief scientific secretary. (On the proposal of the president, Academician Igor Makarov holds on to that post.) The election of academicians as secretaries of the academy's departments, as well as of other members of the praesidium, evoked little debate.

All the vice-presidents in charge of particular fields of research have retained their posts. They are Academicians Vladimir Kudryavtsov (social sciences), Yuri Osipyan (physics-mathematical sciences), Yevgeny Velikhov (information science and energy), Konstantin Frolov (machine-building, mechanics and control processes), Oleg Nefedov (chemical sciences), Rem Petrov (biological sciences), Nikolai Laverov (Earth sciences, also chairman of the USSR State Committee for Science and Technology, and, in this capacity, vice-chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers) and rector of Moscow State University Anatoly Logunov (organization of research-training centres and publishing).

Three other vice-presidents represent the major regional academic organizations — chairman of the Siberian department Valentin Koptuyg; the Ural department Gennady Mesyatz; and the Leningrad Research Centre, Zhores Alferov. (The Leningrad Centre, which comprises over 30 research institutions, has been given this status for the first time.)

The post of vice-president for the Far Eastern department of the USSR Academy of Sciences, where neither Academician Viktor Ilyichev (the former head of the department) nor the other two contenders won a majority vote, remains vacant. This question was not considered at the April meeting for lack of recommended candidates, but the situation there is considered bad.

Yuri Kanin/Novosti

SOVIET ACADEMY

Election brings little change

Moscow

THE leadership of the Soviet Academy of Sciences will remain substantially unchanged for the next five years following the elections of 27 April, when Dr Guri Marchuk was re-elected president.

This is at odds with the frequent criticism of the academy in the Soviet press and in the scientific community, demanding major changes in the organization and management of research.

It seems now generally recognized that soviet science, including academic science, is by and large in crisis. Poor equipment, insufficient funds for fundamental research, rigid centralization of resource distribution and research planning and the effects of monopolism and totalitarianism have put Soviet science at a serious disadvantage in many areas.

Yet there have been some improvements. For example, the budget of the academy has increased 2.3 times over the past four years. But as a percentage of the national income, even this does not compare with the investment in science by leading industrial countries.

The academy has begun the switch from the financing of institutes to that of specific research programmes and projects, while the introduction of a competitive grant system is under way, but has not yet taken shape.

By world standards, the social and material status of researchers is as low as

ever, restricting the influx of talented young people into science. And although Soviet scientists go abroad on business far more frequently — more than twice as often as in 1985 — there is an inadequate influx of foreign scientists into Soviet institutes and laboratories, whence present anxiety about the 'brain drain'.

In organization, structure and function, the Soviet academy differs substantially from those of Western countries. It is not an assembly of elite scientists, but a whole system of institutions, laboratories, experimental production units, publishing houses and even construction facilities. Every republic, except the Russian Federation, has an academy of its own.

The USSR Academy of Sciences unites them all, coordinating research in federal programmes and areas of research. The academy's praesidium, with its staff, is in essence, a ministry of science. At present, there are about 220,000 researchers at the academy's institutes and laboratories. Yet only Academicians (they number 306) and the Corresponding Members (567) are members of the academy. Only Academicians may be elected to the leadership, and only they have the right to vote in such elections. The proposal that this right be also given to the Corresponding Members was advanced at April's general meeting, but was not even put to the vote.

The academy's scientific public is nevertheless demanding radical change.