

## Anti-GMO activists' attacks on scientists echo Soviet persecution of geneticists

After the “Ask Me Anything” discussion on August 8, 2015, it's clear the recent actions by US Right to Know and activist groups are a drive to fight scientific literacy, and dissuade academics from entering the discussion. The libel, defamation and reputation harm we endure, along with veiled threats, stand to repel scientists from teaching science and participating in a public dialog.

Facts can be inconvenient to activist agendas, so eliminate or marginalize the teachers. I present a story that has eerie parallels to today's attacks on science and reason.

Nikolai Vavilov was a brilliant scientist and geneticist, years before genetics was even a discipline. His collections of seeds are among the world's greatest and his botanical tenets remain underpinnings of modern crop biology. Vavilov, being a scientist and witnessing living examples of evolution, held views consistent with the emerging concepts of genetics.

Coincident with as Vavilov's ascendance, a young scientist named T.D. Lysenko gained prominence. Lysenko rejected Mendelian genetics and evolution and pushed a concept that conditioned changes could be inherited. His hypotheses were seriously criticized by the wider scientific community. But Lysenko's ideas of nurture being more powerful than nature were consistent with communist philosophy. Stalin's government would dictate the rules of biology.

During the late 1930's, Soviet geneticists were arrested and tried. Many of them were murdered for their acceptance of Darwinian evolution. Among them would be Vavilov.

To stand with 40 other scientists preparing for a public reputation execution, is not to directly compare to Vavilov. The point is to compare where ideology violently overrules science. It is relevant again as we witness a new war of anti-scientific ideas, along with an orchestrated intimidation and harassment of public scientists, and even threats of violence.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Silencing Inconvenient Science – Vavilov](#)**