

# F.A.S. PUBLIC INTEREST REPORT

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## FULFILLING SAKHAROV'S PROPOSAL FOR A CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Andrei Sakharov's accomplishments will live for all time. His scientific work by itself would have brought him world-renown. His thinking through of the links between security and human rights, for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize, would also, by itself, have made him deservedly famous. But in addition, he practiced what he preached. He set a record for stubborn courage and resistance to tyranny, and so doing drew attention to his ideas and to the human rights problems themselves.

### Sakharov's Proposal

The world needs a suitable memorial for him. And in thinking through various possibilities, FAS was struck with an unfulfilled proposal of Andrei Sakharov's. In his 1975 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, he said that, of some of his proposals of a "general nature":

"First and foremost is the idea of setting up an international consultative committee for questions related to disarmament, human rights, and the protection of the environment, under the aegis of the United Nations. In my opinion a committee of this kind should have the right to exact replies from all governments to its inquiries and recommendations."

What we think he had in mind was something like an international version of the President's Science Advisory Committee. A limited number of very distinguished scientists and practitioners from diverse parts of fields in question—disarmament, human rights, and the environment generally—would be convened. (Certainly, Sakharov meant "environment" to include the areas of development, health, food and education which figured in his famous treatise on co-existence.)

The members convened would be people in Andrei Sakharov's tradition: men and women of proven accomplishment, who had shown a willingness to speak truth to power, and who had a transnational perspective.

Needless to say, a few tens of experts would not cover, between them, all relevant fields of science and human rights. But they would know who to call upon for the workshops or reports required to investigate specific topics. And they would be able, between them, to assess the merit of the conclusions advanced.

What would and could this group do that others are not? It has long been understood that issues of environment and world development are closely related to issues

of military spending since both sectors draw upon the same resources. But it was Andrei Sakharov's contribution, as the Nobel Committee put it, to emphasize that human rights were the "only sure foundation for a genuine and long-lasting system of international cooperation"—in short that human rights and military security were also connected. Accordingly, in Andrei Sakharov's political consciousness, what the Nobel Committee identified as his goals of "demilitarization, democratization of society in all countries and a more rapid pace of social progress" were all linked together.

This high level perspective is a legacy of Andrei Sakharov. A Sakharov Consultative Committee, formed of activists in the relevant fields who shared his global vision, could discuss the evolving issues from his perspective. Its approach to problems would not only be interdisciplinary, it would reflect, as well, a sense of the

*Continued on page 2*



*"Sakharov's love of truth and strong belief in the inviolability of the human being, his fight against violence and brutality, his courageous defense of the freedom of the spirit, his unselfishness and strong humanitarian convictions have turned him into the spokesman for the conscience of mankind, which the world so sorely needs today."*

— Citation from the Nobel Peace Prize Award

*Continued from page 1*

interrelatedness of the goals to be achieved. Working together, the participants would help one another achieve and maintain that integrated approach which the single mind of Andrei Sakharov was able to attain. From this committee would come, from time to time, pronouncements that kept alive Andrei Sakharov's pragmatic vision.

Because of their distinction, the members of the Consultative Committee would be able to call the world's attention to their conclusions. In this sense only would they be able to "exact replies" from governments to their inquiries.

Such an organization could, of course, associate itself with the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO). Whether it would want to be "under the aegis" of the United Nations in some further sense, we doubt. The meritocracy of science is at odds with the inevitable politicization of a United Nations.

As with many other bodies, we propose a fixed term of several years of service followed by a period off the Consultative Committee so that a corps of Committee graduates is built up to draw upon in future, and to keep new ideas flowing through the Committee.

The Committee, organized in this way, would, among other things, give a deserved new status to activists in science and society issues. At present, public interest scientists are viewed generally as a species of scientists-gone-public and they generally lack their own scientific societies and a sense of shared problems and shared ethical dilemmas. Over time, the graduates of this Consultative Committee would become, in effect, a kind of international academy of public interest scientists and human rights specialists who could become models for others.

### The Group Is Cost-Effective

We believe that a free floating group of this kind could, because of its distinction, its high purpose, and its cost-effectiveness be funded from independent philanthropic purposes for the limited sums it would require to fulfill its mandate. It would not, after all, be making grants to others. Instead, it would simply require funds to hold its meetings, convene its workshops, and fund its studies and reviews.

And as to selection, we believe that the Committee should, once begun, perpetuate itself through its own measures to elect new members to office.

But how to convene the initial body? One method would be to issue a call to organizations involved in the subjects at issue to nominate suitable candidates. Then a distinguished group of very senior scientists and statesmen, largely too old or busy to function on the group itself would make the initial choice. This would lend prestige to the initial group and call attention to its existence. FAS will be discussing the idea at a forthcoming January scientific forum in Moscow.

—Reviewed and Approved by the FAS Council

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## WHO WAS ANDREI SAKHAROV?

*Progress, Coexistence & Intellectual Freedom* was written by Andrei Sakharov when he was 47. It could not, of course, be published in the Soviet Union and so was distributed in what was called samizdat—typewritten copies were circulated privately. In retaliation, in the fall of 1968, Sakharov's security clearance was lifted and he returned to private life at the Lebedev Institute of Physics.

Sakharov had been exempted from military service during World War II, and thereafter, in 1948, began working under Igor Tamm on the hydrogen bomb. For this work he was elected, in 1953, to the Soviet Academy of Sciences and was, at 32 years of age, its youngest full member. He received Stalin and Lenin prizes and three Orders of Socialist Labor.

In 1957, he began to feel a sense of responsibility for radioactive contamination related to his work on atomic explosives. He wrote internal memoranda and lobbied Nikita Khrushchev in an effort to secure the agreement we know as the Atmospheric Test Ban.

Earlier, he had been active in the effort to free genetics and biology from the influence of Trofim Lysenko, whose false doctrines and Stalinist influence had kept Soviet biology captive.

### Human Rights in the Sixties

In the sixties, he turned to human rights, defending dissidents and warning against a return to Stalinism. In the seventies, he actually created a "Human Rights Committee" which was reputedly the first "free-standing" organization in the Soviet Union set up outside the control of the Communist Party. With three other human rights activists, Sakharov set up the Committee to give advice on human rights to others.

In the seventies, he began appealing to foreign leaders, signing documents and writing books (*Sakharov Speaks—1974; My Country and the World—1975; Alarm and Hope—1978*). It became possible, in this decade, to meet him. FAS's President met with him at his Dacha in 1975. It was precisely at this time that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan at the end of 1979 and, for his denunciation of this action, he was sent to internal exile in Gorki. During the next six years, he was heard from only through documents smuggled to the West by Elena Bonner and from the reports of his periodic hunger strikes for the right of his family to gain exit visas for either medical care or family reunification.

In 1986, he was telephoned by Mikhail Gorbachev, then only a year in office, and told he would be released. In that same week, the Soviet Union ended a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing and it seemed that his release was the result of a deal Gorbachev had cut with pro-nuclear testing opponents of Sakharov on the Politburo.

Back in Moscow, Sakharov was celebrated, at least by foreign dignitaries, and he continued to release statements on human rights, disarmament and related matters. In January, 1987, he and Gorbachev met in the Kremlin, in a meeting attended by no less than three FAS officials, and he called Gorbachev "The right man for this period."

In 1988, Sakharov was permitted to visit the West on the

insistence of the International Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity, on whose Board he sat and which could not hold an Executive Committee meeting in the US without him.

In 1989, elected to the new Soviet parliament, he became the inspiration of the liberal loyal opposition to Gorbachev. □



Andrei and Elena

### From Funeral Orations

"We came here to honor the memory of humanity's great man, a citizen not only of our own country, but of all the world. He was a real prophet in the ancient, true sense of the word, a man who urged his contemporaries to moral revival for the sake of the future."

—*People's Deputy Academician Dmitrii Likhachev*

"All the most important events of the Twentieth Century were surprisingly reflected in Sakharov's personal destiny. He took part in the development of nuclear weapons, because he believed that the world could be saved from a catastrophe only if the USSR had such weapons. And he campaigned with equal vigour and self-sacrifice for the banning of nuclear weapons, for a nuclear-free world, for disarmament, for freedom and human rights. This struggle will always be linked to Andrei Sakharov's name."—*USSR Academy of Sciences Vice President Yuri Osipyan*

"An outstanding scientist and public figure, a man of honesty and sincerity, has passed away.

"Everything that Andrei Dimitriyevich did was dictated by his conscience and by his deep humanistic convictions."

—*Obituary signed by M.S. Gorbachev*

## “PROGRESS, COEXISTENCE AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM” — SAKHAROV'S FIRST MAJOR WORK

*Twenty years ago, in 1968, Andrei Sakharov published Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom. It was a wide-ranging treatise on the human dilemma and what ought to be done about it. Coming as it did from the Soviet Union, then an intellectual desert for material of this kind, it stirred universal interest.*

*We reprint excerpts from it today not only for its interest to a generation that has not seen it. Even for those of us who read it at the time, it has much to say two decades later.*

*And, in particular, it serves as an injunction to scientists to review what they can do to further these goals. On page 6, we review FAS's work in light of Sakharov's ideas.*

### **The Division Of Mankind Threatens It With Destruction**

The division of mankind threatens it with destruction. Civilization is imperiled by: a universal thermonuclear war, catastrophic hunger for most of mankind, stupefaction from the narcotic of “mass culture,” and bureaucratized dogmatism, a spreading of mass myths that put entire peoples and continents under the power of cruel and treacherous demagogues, and destruction or denigration from the unforeseeable consequences of swift changes in conditions of life on our planet.

Only universal cooperation under conditions of intellectual freedom and the lofty moral ideas of socialism and labor, accompanied by the elimination of dogmatism and pressures of concealed interests of ruling classes, will preserve civilization.

Millions of people throughout the world are striving to put an end to poverty. They despise oppression, dogmatism, and demagoguery (and their more extreme manifestation—racism, Fascism, Stalinism, and Maoism). They believe in progress based on the use, under conditions of social justice and intellectual freedom, of all the positive experience accumulated by mankind.

### **The Threat Of Nuclear War**

Three technical aspects of thermonuclear weapons have made thermonuclear war a peril to the very existence of humanity. These aspects are: the enormous destructive power of a thermonuclear explosion, the relative cheapness of rocket-thermonuclear weapons, and the practical impossibility of an effective defense against a massive rocket-nuclear attack.

The third aspect of thermonuclear peril (along with the power and cheapness of warheads) is what we term the practical impossibility of preventing a massive rocket attack. This situation is well known to specialists.

Fortunately for the stability of the world, the difference between the technical-economic potentials of the Soviet Union and the United States is not so great that one of the sides could undertake a “preventive aggression” without an almost inevitable risk of a destructive retaliatory blow. This situation would not be changed by a broadening of the arms race through the development of antimissile defenses.

### **Vietnam And The Middle East**

In our opinion, certain changes must be made in the conduct of international affairs, systematically subordinating all concrete aims and local tasks to the basic task of actively preventing an aggravation of the international situation, of actively pursuing and expanding peaceful co-existence to the level of cooperation, of making policy in such a way that is immediate and long-range effects will in no way sharpen international tensions and will not create difficulties for either side that would strengthen the forces of reaction, militarism, nationalism, fascism, and revanchism.

International affairs must be completely permeated with scientific methodology and a democratic spirit, with a fearless weighing of all facts, views, and theories, with maximum publicity of ultimate and intermediate goals, and with a consistency of principles.

### **International Tensions And New Principles**

All peoples have the right to decide their own fate with a free expression of will. This right is guaranteed by international control over observance by all governments of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man.” International control presupposes the use of economic sanctions as well as the use of military forces of the United Nations in defense of “the rights of man.”

All military and military-economic forms of export of revolution and counterrevolution are illegal and are tantamount to aggression.

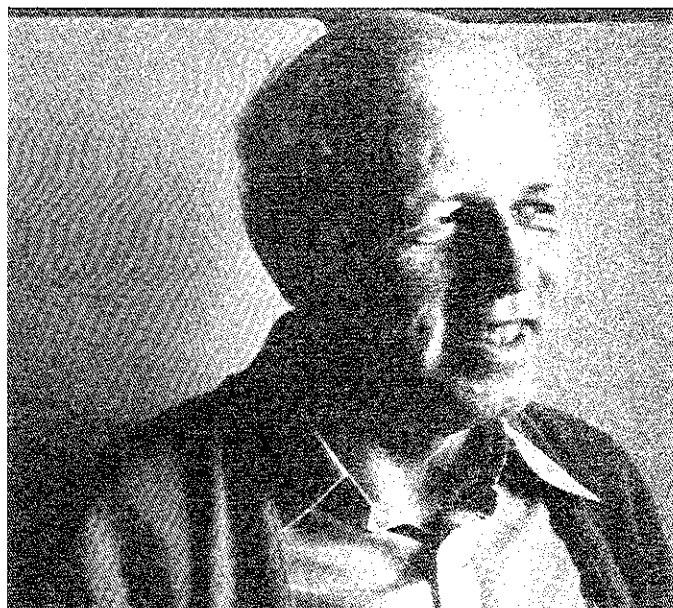
All countries strive toward mutual help in economic, cultural, and general-organizational problems with the aim of eliminating painlessly all domestic and international difficulties and preventing a sharpening of international tensions and a strengthening of the forces of reaction.

International policy does not aim at exploiting local, specific conditions to widen zones of influence and create difficulties for another country. The goal of international policy is to insure universal fulfillment of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man” and to prevent a sharpening of international tensions and a strengthening of militarist nationalist tendencies.

### **Hunger And Overpopulation**

The situation in India, Indonesia, in a number of countries in Latin America, and in a large number of other underdeveloped countries—the absence of technical-economic reserves, competent officials, and cultural skills, social backwardness, a high birthrate—all this systematically worsens the food balance and without doubt will continue to worsen in the coming years.

The answer would be a wide application of fertilizers, an improvement of irrigation systems, better farm technology, wider use of the resources of the oceans, and a gradual perfection of the production, already technically feasible, of synthetic foods, primarily amino acids. However, this is all fine for the rich nations. In the more backward countries, it is



apparent from an analysis of the situation and existing trends that an improvement cannot be achieved in the near future, before the expected date of tragedy, 1975-80.

The threat of hunger cannot be eliminated without the assistance of the developed countries, and this requires significant changes in their foreign and domestic policies.

At this time, the white citizens of the United States are unwilling to accept even minimum sacrifices to eliminate the unequal economic and cultural positions of the country's black citizens, who make up 10 per cent of the population.

It is necessary to change the psychology of the American citizens so that they will voluntarily and generously support their government and worldwide efforts to change the economy, technology, and level of living of billions of people. This, of course, would entail a serious decline in the United States rate of economic growth. The Americans should be willing to do this solely for the sake of lofty and distant goals, for the sake of preserving civilization and mankind on our planet.

Similar changes in the psychology of people and practical activities of governments must be achieved in the Soviet Union and other developed countries.

In the opinion of the author, a fifteen-year tax equal to 20 percent of national incomes must be imposed on developed nations. The imposition of such a tax would automatically lead to a significant reduction in expenditures for weapons. Such a common assistance would have an important effect—that of stabilizing and improving the situation in the most underdeveloped countries, restricting the influence of extremists of all types.

### **Pollution Of Environment**

We live in a swiftly changing world. Industrial and water-engineering projects, cutting of forests, plowing up of virgin lands, the use of poisonous chemicals—all this is changing the face of the earth, our "habitat."

Scientific study of all the interrelationships in nature and the consequences of our interference clearly lag behind the changes. Large amounts of harmful wastes of industry and transport are being dumped into the air and water, including

cancer inducing substances. Will the safe limit be passed everywhere, as has already happened in a number of places?

Carbon dioxide from the burning of coal is altering the heat-reflecting qualities of the atmosphere. Sooner or later, this will reach a dangerous level. But we do not know when. Poisonous chemicals used in agriculture are penetrating the body of man and animal directly and in more dangerous modified compounds, are causing serious damage to the brain, the nervous system, blood-forming organs, the liver, and other organs. Here, too, the safe limit can be easily crossed but the question has not been fully studied and it is difficult to control all these processes.

### **The Threat To Intellectual Freedom**

This is a threat to the independence and worth of the human personality, a threat to the meaning of human life.

Nothing threatens freedom of the personality and the meaning of life like war, poverty, terror. But there are also indirect and only slightly more remote dangers.

One of these is the stupefaction of man (the "gray mass," to use the cynical term of bourgeois prognosticators) by mass culture with its intentional or commercially motivated lowering of intellectual level and content, with its stress on entertainment or utilitarianism, and with its carefully protective censorship.

Another example is related to the question of education. A system of education under government control, separation of school and church, universal free education—all these are great achievements of social progress. But everything has a reverse side. In this case it is excessive standardization, extending to the teaching process itself, to the curriculum, especially in literature, history, civics, geography, and to the system of examinations.

Modern technology and mass psychology constantly suggest new possibilities of managing the norms of behavior, the strivings and convictions of masses of people. This involves not only management through information based on the theory of advertising and mass psychology, but also more technical methods that are widely discussed in the press abroad. Examples are biochemical control of the birthrate, biochemical control of psychic processes and electronic control of such processes.

It seems to me that we cannot completely ignore these new methods or prohibit the progress of science and technology, but we must be clearly aware of the awesome danger to basic human values and to the meaning of life that may be concealed in the misuse of technical and biochemical methods and the methods of mass psychology.

### **Peaceful Competition**

The prospects of socialism now depend on whether socialism can be made attractive, whether the moral attractiveness of the ideas of socialism and the glorification of labor, compared with the egotistical ideas of private ownership and the glorification of capital, will be the decisive factors that people will bear in mind when comparing socialism and capitalism, or whether people will remember mainly the limitations of intellectual freedom under socialism or, even worse, the fascistic regime of the cult [of personality]. □

## WHAT SAKHAROV'S STATEMENT MEANS TO FAS' AGENDA

With regard to the threat of nuclear war, Sakharov's first imperative, FAS was mobilized in 1945, even before he was. He was astonished to learn in 1987 that an FAS official had already been writing in support of an ABM Treaty in 1963—his first call for it had been in 1967. And his ideas, from that time, had been very parallel indeed to those of the American atomic scientists who founded our group.

His comments on international relations, drawn from the section entitled "Vietnam and the Middle East," again show a parallelism with the FAS program.

For example, his goal to "systematically" subordinate actions to "preventing an aggravation of the international situation" is FAS's mandate to work on regional conflicts such as that of the Cambodian civil war and the Western embargo on Vietnam. Here we are trying to avoid, as he put it, "sharpening" international tensions. And in Vietnam we are, as he would put it, "actively pursuing and expanding peaceful co-existence to the level of cooperation."

Where he writes of permeating international affairs with "scientific methodology and a democratic spirit," scientists can find a special role. Embued as they are with scientific methods and a democratic spirit, they are well positioned to spread this ideology in both words and deeds. And where Sakharov calls for "maximum publicity" to intermediate goals, public interest scientists are in a position to help by surfacing and analyzing the real attitudes and motives that underlie policy. This is certainly what we have been doing in our Latin American project and in our Indochina Project.

### International Tensions and New Principles

Andrei Sakharov was always interested in human rights and his call for universal observance by all governments of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man" is in that spirit. In a meeting with an FAS official in 1975, when asked for a statement, he dictated the comments excerpted on page 3 calling the "personal defense of concrete persons" very important. And he clearly approved FAS's subsequent campaign of 1976 to force the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the societies of AAAS to set up active human rights committees.

His call to end all "military and military-economic forms of expert of revolution and counterrevolution" as illegal and tantamount to aggression raises relevant new issues for us.

The United States, for example, is prone to pursue economic embargoes of countries which it determines are exporting revolution or just following repugnant lines. The US has been embargoing Cuba since about 1960, has had an embargo on Vietnam and Cambodia since 1975 and 1978 respectively, and had an economic embargo against Panama before its invasion last year. Of course, from its point of view, these were valid responses, among other things, to violations of Sakharov's injunction to these countries to forbear from exporting revolution. Obviously, none of these problems are simple.

But because the issue involves export of military force, as well as the application of economic pressures, FAS does have expertise to deal with it. And it does have much to do with

international tensions. This is something on which we could do more.

Sakharov's call for all countries to "strive toward mutual help in economic, cultural, and general-organizational problems" is definitely something on which FAS could work profitably since this represents an extension, really, of scientific exchange writ large.

### Hunger and Overpopulation

Sakharov's discussion of Hunger and Overpopulation reflects a common fear in the late sixties that famine would be seen widely a decade hence. Here we have done little.

Sakharov may be raising even more intractable problems when he calls on the US, and other developed nations, to change their psychology sufficiently to tax themselves to help the inhabitants in other countries. Can national psychologies be changed in this way? What would be required in the recipient countries to persuade the donor nations that the aid was being used sufficiently well to continue?

### Pollution of Environment

FAS should be working especially on environmental problems that require international cooperation. Among other things, the scientific community is going to have to develop ways of reaching and promulgating a consensus on what is to be done to prevent environmental disaster for the planet. In the alternative, the disasters will outrun the call by scientists for a solution. (Of course, FAS' editorial proposing a Sakharov Consultation Committee suggests one approach.)

### The Threat to Intellectual Freedom

While FAS has worked on problems of intellectual freedom, Sakharov was ahead of the Federation, even 20 years ago, in working on the problems of education and mass culture. This is something about which we should be thinking.

### Peaceful Competition

FAS has made a very good start, over more than two decades, in working on matters of peaceful coexistence with Soviet scientists, and Chinese scientists and, now, Vietnamese scientists. And we can easily continue to do so. □





## FAS & THE SAKHAROV HUNGER STRIKES

One of the most dramatic aspects of Andrei Sakharov's resistance to Soviet authority arose in three hunger strikes all of which, in varying degrees, mobilized world sentiment; FAS was involved in all three.

On May 9, 1975, small news reports in the West revealed that Andrei Sakharov had held a three day hunger strike to protest the refusal of Soviet authorities to permit his wife, Elena Bonner, to travel to Italy to undergo an eye operation.

The FAS Executive Committee promptly announced a decision to boycott an upcoming July disarmament conference which the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW) was going to hold in Moscow unless this situation was rectified. Soviet Embassy officials expressed their concern to FAS and, in the end, on July 18, the Soviet authorities granted the visa telling some WFSW members it was done for them.

When the FAS President called on Sakharov in Moscow on November 8, 1975, he was at first skeptical, and then thoughtful, to hear how our small boycott might have played an interesting role in the world-wide campaign to get Elena Bonner this exit visa. (Together, we reconstructed the timing by which the visa had been granted and were startled to see that it had been granted on the last day of the WFSW conference—one day after Bonner had been told her proposal was hopeless.

At the time of FAS's visit, Elena Bonner was on her visit to Italy for an eye operation and, on this trip, she went also to Oslo to receive the Nobel Peace Prize which the Soviet authorities would not let Andrei accept.

### Hunger Strike Threatened for Third Italian Visit

Three years later, on December 20, 1978, Andrei and Elena wrote us asking for support for another such visit of Elena to Italy. Recalling the "great support which the FAS and you personally demonstrated in this matter in 1975," he observed that a second Bonner visit to Italy, in 1977, had been possible but a third was being denied. The application having been made on February 20, the Sakharovs had been waiting for ten months when they wrote us.

Andrei said he was "distressed by the lack of any reaction at all by the western and scientific community" to this new stage of persecution against him which included a "blockade of telephone and postal communications" that had become "a total one."

He said that, two days before, he had alerted journalists that, in the absence of permission by January 3, 1979, he would "be forced to announce a hunger strike" as a sign of protest. He gave suggestions for action and even telephone numbers of relevant Soviet officials. In the end, the Soviet government gave in.

### Exiled to Gorky

Exiled to Gorky for protesting the Christmas week, 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, Sakharov still managed to smuggle out letters to us—which, it can now be revealed, were simply carried out of Gorky by Bonner. One said, "I know much

though of course not all, about the important work which FAS is conducting in my defense. I heard your speeches on the radio, in spite of the jamming. They pleased me very much. Thanks for 'adopting' me" (FAS had formally adopted Andrei Sakharov as an object of our continuing concern.)

Urging that FAS look upon his defense as a "part of the campaign for all repressed scientists in Russia," he said that it was "also important that you emphasize the similarity between my position on disarmament and the position of FAS."

A letter to us of February, 1981 revealed a new problem. Andrei's stepson Alexei Semenov had emigrated to Boston to join his sister Tanya and her husband Yefrem Yankelevich. Alexei's fiancée Elizaveta Alekseyeva had been refused permission to join him. Andrei wrote:

"There is no other reason for holding on to her except the unlawful one of using the situation to put pressure on me. But, indeed, this gives me a basis for asking those participating in my defense also to speak for her right to leave to get married.

### Second Hunger Strike: A Stepson's Marriage

Nine months later, FAS and a few other organizations and individuals received a personal announcement of Andrei's intention to hold a second hunger strike. His letter of October 9, 1981 led to a hunger strike that began on November 22 and lasted 17 days.

A few days after the strike began, despairing of generating enough attention in the West in time, FAS had telegraphed Andrei in Gorky asking him to give us more time and indicating that "attention had now been drawn to this problem." The KGB had let the telegram go through but Andrei had cabled back that "I can no longer believe in the kind of promises of the authorities not backed up by action! I ask you to understand and take this into account. With esteem and thanks."

This answer, on the eighth day of the hunger strike, along with some long-awaited news stories from Moscow produced constructive results. We were able, with some quiet telephone calls, to induce, among others, two former secretaries of state, at least one former president of the United States, one American winner of the Lenin Prize and a former Ambassador to the Soviet Union to call the Soviet Embassy and express concern. No doubt others were active as well.

Andrei had made his point. And, subsequently, Brezhnev permitted two further exit visas for Elena Bonner—one even involved a quiet visit to Boston.

By November, 1983, FAS officials had negotiated an end to a three-year boycott of the Soviet Union, begun when the Soviet authorities refused to permit FAS to travel to Moscow to complain about Andrei's exile. We had the visa to make our complaint and we were working with Soviet scientists on the problem of Star Wars which had arisen in March. On this visit we held a secret meeting with Elena Bonner in the US Embassy in Moscow.

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### Elena's Health Triggers Third Hunger Strike

A few months later, Andrei sent us a letter of January 13—one apparently not sent to others—warning that the KGB has “chosen Elena as a main victim” and that she was “practically denied medical help.” He called treatment in the academy’s hospital “useless and dangerous” and said that a trip abroad “may save her” and that she “absolutely must see her mother, children and grandchildren”—all of whom were, by then, in Boston.

He concluded that “I have less and less hope that this problem will be solved by ‘usual’ means. I’ve begun thinking of a hunger strike again, however horrible or monstrous it may sound. But is there any other way out?”

But Andrei had not planned on the reaction of his family in Boston. Fearing that publicity about his intentions would trigger a hunger strike that might otherwise never materialize, they delayed in transmitting the letter for a few months until its news value was minimal and even discouraged a reporter from writing on it. By the time, it was published in the New York Times on May 19, the hunger strike was on. (In a meeting in Moscow on February 11, 1987, after he had been freed from Gorky, Andrei Sakharov commented on this by recalling a famous aphorism once made about an action by Tallyrand “It was worse than a crime, it was a blunder.”)

The hunger strike was triggered when Soviet authorities discovered a message from Elena Bonner to US Embassy officials describing Andrei and Elena’s plan to link the hunger strike to Elena’s being given sanctuary in the US Embassy. They promptly exiled her to Gorky, and Andrei promptly started the hunger strike on May 2, 1984.

This hunger strike ended in victory but at a terrible cost to his health. The campaign in Sakharov’s defense was led by

his family in Boston, with many organizations and heads of state participating, and it went on for weeks. In the end Elena Bonner did travel to Boston for a six-fold heart bypass.

Andrei Sakharov used the weapon of a hunger strike only in defense of his family and, except in one case, only in defense of Elena Bonner and her right to receive medical care in the West. But the human aspects of this situation succeeded in capturing the attention and the concern of the West. And his successful defiance of the Kremlin’s policy of refusing exit visas for medical care abroad (and for emigration in the case of Alexei’s fiancée) added to his luster as an opponent of tyranny and a champion of human rights. □



Elena Bonner

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