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THE ANDREI SAKHAROV AFFAIR

The episode of the Andrei Sakharov hunger strike may, surprisingly, have strengthened, rather than weakened, the reputation and standing of this unique individual. The world moved from an understated concern about his well-being during the first week of the hunger strike to a massive, if quiet, response in the second week.

On December 9, FAS, and a few other individuals, received a personal announcement of Sakharov's intention to hold a hunger strike along with a letter dated Oct. 9.

It said that he and his wife Yelena Bonner, "having despaired to break through the KGB-built wall by any other means, are forced to begin hunger-strike demanding that our daughter-in-law Liza Alekseyeva be allowed to leave the USSR to join our son."

Sakharov had been emphasizing in all his correspondence for the last 18 months or so, the problem of securing the right to emigrate of "Liza" Alekseyeva. Ms. Alekseyeva was at first only the fiance of his stepson Alexei Semyonov. Semyonov, the son of Yelena Bonner, Academician Sakharov's second wife, studies at Brandeis University (not far from Yelena Bonner's daughter, Tanya Yankelevich, who lives in Newton, Mass.)

Mr. Semyonov had emigrated from the Soviet Union earlier and, in Massachusetts, had divorced his wife from whom he had been separated for some time. (Shortly after the divorce his first wife and son also emigrated.) During the subsequent struggle to secure the release of his fiance, he married her by proxy in Montana—one of the few U.S. states that permits it—in order to strengthen his claim to be part of a family requiring unification under, among other things, the Helsinki Accord.

Bureaucratic Resistance?

Not surprisingly, the Soviet authorities may have considered this too thin a case. But, from Andrei Sakharov's point of view, Ms. Alekseyeva's presence in Russia seemed a hostage being used against him. He repeatedly advised FAS and others that her defense by scientists was justified in logic because she was being used against him.

In his letter of October 9, he said that Liza had become "the hostage of my public activity" and that the authorities were "persecuting her, threatening her with arrest, attempting to deprive her of hope and drive her to despair."

He noted that the Soviet authorities did not acknowledge the validity of the proxy marriage although they could do so. [Article 32 of the Soviet Matrimonial Code accepts marriages between Soviet citizens and foreigners when contracted outside the USSR, if "the formal requirements established by law of the place of such contract are met and recognized as authentic (legal) in the

As of December 21, the Sakharovs are recovering from their hunger strike and Yelizaveta K. Alekseyeva has left the Soviet Union. Her success in securing the right to leave the Soviet Union is, obviously, due first and foremost to mother-in-law Yelena Bonner, and her stepfather, Andrei Sakharov, and to their joint extraordinary determination and courage. But many helped them in vindicating their desperate decision to engage in a hunger strike. These included Alexei Semyonov, who engaged in many press conferences, in support of his wife by proxy marriage; his sister Tanya Yankelevich who, among other things, traveled to Europe in search of support; West German and Norwegian officials and doubtless those from many other countries including the Vatican.

In the scientific community in America, there were such helping groups as: the (New York-based) Committee of Concerned Scientists (not to be confused with the *Union* of Concerned Scientists) which rounded up scientists, issued press releases and arranged demonstrations; active scientific supporters of Sakharov such as Sidney Drell and Paul Flory of Stanford (who agitated on the West Coast); the National Academy of Scientists (NAS); and, of course, our own Federation of American Scientists.

The story on this page conveys some of the relatable events as viewed from FAS which, in March 1980, "adopted" Andrei Sakharov and considers him a unique leader of that world-wide movement of atomic scientists of conscience who, in 1945, founded this organization. □

USSR."]

Sakharov considered Liza Alekseyeva's suffering to be "entirely caused by (her) nearness to me, their confidence in me when I insisted that Alyosha emigrate thinking that Liza would be able to join him later on." Noting that he was ready to take responsibility for his utterances in an open trial, he said he would not make contact with Soviet colleagues nor do scientific work while this "tragedy of my loved ones continues."

He recited his efforts (a message to Leonid Brezhnev of July, 1980 and May, 1981 which he presumed the KGB had stopped) and his repeated efforts to get the Soviet Academy to take action.

On November 16, in Moscow, Yelena Bonner held a press conference to announce the joint hunger strike. She has been his main link to the rest of the world, through her travels to Moscow where she has spent about half of her time.

The hunger strike began on November 22, with very little attention drawn to it here or in Western Europe—at least on the surface. November 22 was, however, the day on which Leonid Brezhnev was arriving in Bonn for a visit to the Federal Republic of Germany and there is reason to believe that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and other members of the Social Democratic Party did make their concern known. (Since this was, after all, the country to which Solzhenitsyn had been delivered when he was summarily sent out of the Soviet Union, they may well have made known a readiness to receive yet another distinguished emigrant.)

In the West, the references to the hunger strike received approximately two inches of coverage except for a New York Times article on a letter signed by a few dozen Nobel Prize winners, many of which had been rounded up by the FAS office. Accordingly, on November 25 FAS sent Andrei Sakharov this telegram:

> Attention has now been drawn to this problem. It may not be possible to secure results immediately. The Federation of American Scientists asks you to discontinue the hunger strike while your supporters work to help you achieve your goal. The world needs you. Do you have the right to risk yourself in this way?

The New York-based Committee of Concerned Scientists had held a "non-lunch" lunch to symbolize the hunger strike and, at it, Joel Leibowitz, former Chairman of the New York Academy of Sciences had sent a similar telegram. We, and no doubt he, were in some despair as to whether the hunger strike would work. Nature Magazine was editorializing, "It is possible that on this occasion their isolation has led them to misjudge the future." (Nov. 26, 1981) and even Sakharov's stepchildren were startled at the lack of media coverage.

By November 28, when an emigrant friend of the Bonner family arrived from Detroit to picket the White House on the 6th day of the hunger strike, FAS was not able—even on an exceptionally quiet Thanksgiving Saturday—to get even local coverage of this picturesque event despite calls to local radio stations and news media.

On Monday, however, we got word that Sakharov had responded to Jeremy J. Stone and Joel Leibowitz in a message that ended:

> 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.

The hunger strike having started on a Monday, this was the beginning of the second week of the strike and—coupled with the "event" of a message back from Sakharov—media people were beginning to listen. FAS began to have success, which rapidly escalated, in asking very highly placed former Government officials to weigh in with private messages, either to the Soviet Ambassador or to the Soviet Government.

Working on this through intermediaries, on Monday

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* Sakharov had been on hunger strikes in 1974 during President Nixon's visit to Moscow, demanding the release of V. Bukovsky and other prisoners of conscience, and also in 1975 over the issue of getting a visa for his wife to visit an eye doctor in Italy. [See FAS PIR September, 1975]

and Tuesday, FAS found more rapid and instant cooperation across a wider spectrum than it had ever found before on any issue. Sakharov is, of course, deeply loved on both left and right. Most important, only one adviser of one such former high official felt that the cause of the hunger strike was too personal to be worth protecting ("a family affair"). We doubt that the Soviet Embassy ever saw such a groundswell of influential concern over any individual complaint by a Soviet citizen in the postwar period.

On Tuesday, we discovered, almost by accident in offhand discussions with a Washington Post reporter, an interesting and powerful formula for motivating the media. We complained that the newspapers were in danger of going from one-inch stories to full page "obits," with nothing in between to alert their publics that a major story was brewing; would they not be culpable in retrospect of poor editorial judgment? After this was conveyed to the Washington Post and New York Times editors, each "queried" its Moscow correspondents for stories. Two days later both papers displayed front page stories (with pictures) on the Sakharov hunger strike. From then on, a reporter advised FAS accurately, the "story was assured."

Apparently the rules in Soviet prison camps are to force-feed persons on hunger strikes after twelve days; the Friday newspapers reported that, on the 13th day, true to its bureaucratic regulations, the Soviet authorities had hospitalized the Sakharovs.

Force Feeding Can Be Dangerous

On locating a rare American specialist on related fasts, FAS learned that the most dangerous period of the fast was coming out of it and that, if this period were not handled properly, it could cause "cardiac arrhythmia." Alarmed at the potential for either medical screwups in far-off Gorki—or about mischief in a country known for Byzantine maneuver—FAS sent cables both to Moscow and to Gorki authorities warning of the dangers, and noting our view that they would be held responsible if Sakharov were harmed. We urged that he be moved to the hospital for Academicians in Moscow where his colleagues could oversee his recovery.

It now appears that the medical doctors did not attempt force feeding but, instead, sought to induce both Sakharov and Bonner to begin eating by telling each that the other was dying, and so on. In retrospect it appears that, when it became evident that they would not give in, word was passed to give Ms. Alekseyeva the right to leave.*

So what is the result? Academician Sakharov, made desperate by isolation, managed to get world-wide support, even on an emigration case linked to him personally. Thus his voice continues to resonate from Gorki with even greater force than from Moscow, as other utterances have shown. And were he in future to feel desperately committed about some broader issue, it is possible that he would get a further renewal of this support—if not from high placed individuals, as in this case, then from groups who felt strongly about that world-wide problem which his future protest might involve. Under these circumstances, the Soviet authorities do seem to have incentives to restore him to some kind of normal life.

Whether this would be a return to Moscow or a release to the West, is unclear. We do believe that he would be willing to leave the Soviet Union now, if permitted, as a consequence of his intellectual confinement in Gorki.

Sakharov Has No Secrets

In this connection, it is worth noting that it has been a quarter of a century since Sakharov ceased to be a "secret" person in a weapons lab, as indicated by his being permitted to sign published Soviet scientific papers in the mid-fifties. And it has been 14 years since he lost his Soviet security clearance even as a consultant, over the publication of his treatise on co-existence. Accordingly, Soviet explanations of why he would not be permitted to leave have gotten steadily weaker. ("Although he can't help the Americans, of course, he might still help the Chinese!" or "Well, he still has his head on his shoulders and might invent something against us.") If these are the only current rationales, we may soon see Andrei Sakharov amongst us. This would be an enormous relief and not only because his safety would be assured. In addition, it would remove a serious current and potential obstacle to the improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations, and to arms control.

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

— *Constitution, UNESCO*

* As this is going to press, the cultural counselor of a small but very relevant and distinguished nation has called to report that, based on an FAS appeal to him (and a letter Sakharov sent to one of his country's citizens before the hunger strike began), his nation had taken the matter up at a high level with a fully informed and responsible Soviet representative. The Soviet representative had observed, at that time, that the Soviet Government was worried that proxy marriages might be used as a device in future if this precedent were permitted. This may well explain why Ms. Alekseyeva's right to leave was given in the form of a Soviet passport, with right to travel abroad, rather than as an emigrant's exit permit. From the point of view of the Soviet bureaucracy, she is not now leaving as part of an unreunited family but just as a Soviet citizen taking a Western vacation. (Ed. Note: Those who think this is a distinction without a motivating difference have never been to Russia! J.J.S.)

(Reprinted by permission of The Guardian Weekly)

Sakharov—the absent friend

The Soviet establishment last week issued an exit visa to the daughter-in-law of Andrei Sakharov, caving in before the challenge he and his wife set by going on hunger strike. The impact of the Sakharovs' action was not just a measure of their courage and humanity, but also of Andrei Sakharov's enormous international standing as a physicist. John Charap looks at his contribution to science.

LET ME start by giving the secret of the H-bomb. The mass of a helium atom is about one per cent less than the mass of four hydrogen atoms. Whether in the sum or in a thermonuclear weapon, or in the as yet unrealised controlled thermonuclear reactor, the source of energy is that one per cent mass defect. But of course it's not quite as simple as that. The perfection of thermonuclear weapons required the concerted and organised efforts of great teams of scientists and engineers, bringing to bear expertise in a wide range of technical problems as well as resolving fundamental questions of more general scientific interest. In the USSR the programme was directed by Igor Tamm: one of his ablest colleagues was his former graduate student at the Lebedev Institute of Physics, Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov.

When in 1954 the Soviet Union confounded those who criticised its research capabilities by exploding the first H-bomb there was little doubt that Sakharov's contribution to its development had been of paramount importance. The previous year he was elected to full membership of the Soviet Academy of Science (so had Tamm, 26 years his senior — Sakharov at 32 was the youngest full member ever elected). And he was awarded the Stalin prize and three times the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. So it was that he became known as the "father of the Russian H-bomb", a description which as he himself has written "reflects very inaccurately the real (and complex) situation of collective invention".

What did not become apparent until 1958, when the declassification of such work made it available to the scientific community was that already in 1950 he and Tamm had initiated a significant research programme on controlled thermonuclear reactions and had made substantial advances in the design of such reactors. Very similar research had been going on independently in the UK and the USA, but the Sakharov-Tamm ideas are still germane to the front-runners in the race to harness the power of thermonuclear fusion. The Joint European Torus project, the international experimental programme based at Culham Laboratory in Berkshire, was a "tokomak" reactor which is a direct descendent of Sakharov's conception. Perhaps it would be better to call him "father of the tokomak".

In fact Sakharov's interest in controlled fusion, with its glittering rewards of practically unlimited energy free from pollution and hazardous waste, led to other advances. As early as 1948 he proposed a kind of catalytic process for fusion which might be achieved without the need for the enormously high temperatures required by other approaches. This has not yet yielded any economocally viable programme, but in the long run might still be worth pursuing. And in 1951, Sakharov showed how to achieve extremely high magnetic fields by imploding a metal tube: such fields are of interest both in basic scientific research and also in practical applications.

Andrei Sakharov

But, of course, it is not for his work on controlled fusion that Sakharov's name is now in the news. He has explained: "My social and political views underwent a major evolution over the fifteen years from 1953 to 1968. In particular my role in the development of thermonuclear weapons from 1953 to 1962 and in the preparation and execution of thermonuclear tests, led to an increased awareness of the moral problems engendered by such activities. In the late 1950s I began a campaign to halt or to limit the testing of nuclear weapons." It is not hard to imagine how difficult that must have been. Nikita Khrushchev was asserting the strength of the USSR not only by banging his shoe on his desk at the UN but by detonating unimaginably powerful explosions — as much as 50 megatons — in the arctic wastes of Novaja Senilya.

The radioactive debris from such tests spread across the globe, and appalled those who were campaigning for a curb in nuclear weapons and their testing. At issue was the practicality of a test-ban treaty without "on-site" inspection. In 1963, the Moscow treaty was signed, and it is in part to Sakharov's persistent advice to his Government that we owe this partial ban on testing (in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water) would at least stop the fall-out whilst allowing for monitoring without on-site inspection. "Father of the test-ban treaty"?

What is clear is that as Sakharov's concerns broadened he came with increasing frequency into conflict with the Soviet authorities. In 1964 he spoke out against the still rampant "Lysenkoism" which had blighted Soviet genetics. In 1967 he joined a committee set up to protect the unique freshwater Lake Baikal from growing industrial pollution. And most significantly at about this time he began to make appeals for victims of repression.

The real turning point was in 1968 when he published in *Samizdat* an essay "Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom", which was also translated and published by the *New York Times* and immediately identified Sakharov as one of the most articulate and thoughtful commentators on these issues in the USSR.

Whereas his eminence as a scientist had hitherto permitted him

The Manchester Guardian
December 27, 1981

to express his concerns both publicly and through personal appeals to the highest authorities in the Soviet Union, he was now subjected to attacks in the press and as he put it "barred from secret work and excommunicated from many privileges of the Soviet establishment". Within a year in fact he had been sent back to the Lebedev Institute run by the Academy of Sciences.

Side-by-side with his continuing and increasingly outspoken actions in the defence of human rights and of victims of political oppression he continued to do significant scientific research. Two new themes emerged, one in particle physics and one in cosmology and general relativity. The idea that the protons and neutrons of atomic nuclei were not elementary, but made of more fundamental constituents called quarks, was only two years old in 1966, and still regarded with considerable scepticism by most particle physicists.

Sakharov (with Ya. B. Zeldovich) published a paper on the quark model in that year which contains a formula relating masses of certain particles to one another. In 1967 he first proposed a mechanism which could account for the very puzzling asymmetry of the universe as between matter and antimatter. And in the same year he wrote a paper in which he sought to explain the phenomenon of gravitation as arising from a sort of "elastic stiffness" of space-time related to the quantum fluctuations of the matter fields. These three papers sowed seeds which continue to grow.

Meanwhile, as he has written "The pressure on me, my family and friends increased in 1972, but as I came to learn more about the spreading repressions, I felt obliged to speak out in defence of some victims almost daily. In recent years I have continued to speak out as well on peace and disarmament, on freedom of contacts, movement, information and opinion, against capital punishment, on protection of the environment, and on nuclear power plants."

In 1975 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but was refused permission to travel to Stockholm to receive it "for reasons of security, because A. Sakharov is in possession of exceptionally important state and military secrets".

I met Sakharov the following year. It was at the biennial international high energy physics conference, held in 1976 in the delightful sunny city of Tbilisi, capital of Soviet Georgia. When the news that Sakharov had been allowed to attend became known there was a real sense of relief and of welcome — from all the participants, from East and West alike. In one of the plenary review talks reference was made to recent work in the quark model relating to the newly discovered "charmed" particles, and in particular to results from "a group in the States and a singular man in the Soviet Union" — Sakharov: there was a round of applause.

At the concluding banquet I found myself seated opposite Sakharov. He had seemed tired, tense, looking older than his years. As the evening went on and the excellent Georgian wine was followed by even better Georgian brandy he relaxed. It was clear that he and his wife were enjoying themselves and also that the Soviet scientists too were trying to convey their regard for them and their pleasure at their presence. Toasts, many toasts, were drunk. When it was my turn to propose one I explained the custom in Britain to drink to "absent friends". We did, and I cherish the memory. Later he gave me some reprints of papers he had just published, further developments of his ideas in general relativity. Even now he continues to work in this area and in particle physics and physics and cosmology.

As the world knows in January 1980 he was taken to the office of the Procurator General of the USSR and there informed of a decree of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet by which he was stripped of his honours; the thrice awarded title of Hero of Socialist Labour, the Lenin (formerly Stalin) Prize, the State Prize for Scientific Achievements. And in the names of Leonid Brezhnev and Praesidium Secretary Mikhail Georgadze he was banished to Gorky.

Against this extra-judicial administrative action he had no appeal. And in Gorky he would be cut off from his friends, associates and colleagues. Nonetheless he has against all the odds managed to sustain his activities as a founder of the Moscow Human Rights Committee, of the Helsinki Monitoring Group, as a keen supporter of Amnesty International — and as a scientist.

It is significant that in spite of the intensity of official pressures against him, he is still a full member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The Academy is unusual in many respects. It is one of the few institutions outside of the control of the Party and the State. Its basic structure and function is still much as it was before the revolution, a unique survival from the time of Peter the Great. Academicians have prestige, they draw a stipend, they have the right to work in the research institutes of the Academy. And, most unusual, when they deliberate their decisions are made by secret ballot.

Sakharov has been scathing in his criticisms of the Academy for their timidity and lack of independence in not speaking out against his banishment. But there is little doubt that his continued status as Academician must inhibit the severity of State action against him, if only marginally.

What is clear is that his banishment to Gorky deprives him of his rights to work as a scientist. When this has been argued by Western scientific organisations, it has been countered by official assurances that he is still able to pursue his research in Gorky. That he cannot attend conferences or meet with colleagues is discounted. That scientific books mailed to him are confiscated without explanation is ignored. That he is constantly shadowed by the KGB is brushed aside as irrelevant.

The issue on which he went on hunger strike was complex and blurred, because personal and individual, not public and general. Happily the Soviet Union felt able to concede and to permit Elizaveta Alekseeva to emigrate. There is no doubt in my mind that had the hunger-strike had a tragic conclusion the already strained communication and cooperation between Soviet scientists and their Western colleagues would have taken a turn for the worse. And although Sakharov has himself strenuously counselled against "linkage" of the human rights question with disarmament negotiations, I cannot believe that there would not also have been a damaging undermining of support for such negotiations as START amongst the public in general and scientists in particular.

Whether in Gorky or in Moscow, Sakharov will be a thorn in the flesh for the Soviet authorities. Would it not be to their advantage to allow him to return from his exile? The relief this would bring to the present source of tension would surely outweigh any disadvantages. It would be a conciliatory act such as only a strong and self-confident Government might consider.

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US/USSR hostages for peace

I am haunted by Bertrand Russell's warning of long ago: even if atom bombs were abolished nations would suddenly mass-produce them again in time of crisis. To meditate on this is to fear that nuclear weapons are an incurable human disease, unless somehow we can change the hearts and minds producing them.

Desiring such a change—and soberly aware of East/West differences—I wish to propose a massive student exchange program, some 200,000 strong, between the United States and the Soviet Union. My design has three thrusts: to promote Soviet/American cooperation, to change fear to friendship, and to insure both nations against nuclear attack through 200,000 carefully-chosen student "hostages."

The US/USSR Exchange Program outlined below (let's call it USSREX) is politically feasible; it is negotiable, inexpensive, and meets security requirements. Could it end the nuclear arms race?

As a test project, a complete Soviet university would be constructed in New York City, and an American university would be founded in Moscow. Assuming good results, USSREX universities would be built in 20 of the largest cities in each country: Washington, Leningrad, Houston, Odessa, Seattle, Vladivostok, and so on. Probably enclosed for security reasons, these residential schools would resemble—in curriculum, routine, and physical plant—the urban universities familiar to us. They would also incorporate major outreach activities working through neighboring schools and other institutions to build East/West trade, professional cooperation, and cultural understanding. An average campus might serve 5,000 exchange students.

Most of these USSREX volunteers would be graduate students and young professionals such as doctors, architects, scientists, artists, engineers, musicians, and the like. After a short preparatory training, each individual would serve in the opposite country one semester or more, receiving academic credit. Turnover schedules would be staggered to maintain a total permanent exchange population of 200,000.

In connection with professional pursuits, USSREX scholars would generate East/West joint projects of all kinds in the arts, science and commerce. Most professions being politically neutral (or nearly so), the potential for mutual benefit is enormous.

To allow freedom of interchange between participants and their hosts, USSREX must solve certain security problems. These are not overly difficult. Moscow handled 100,000 visitors to the Olympic Games without incident. The United States recently admitted some 200,000 Soviet Jews without fear that spies might be among them. Government guarantees to return possible defectors from the program might be necessary. Most other security worries could be solved in the simple tradition of foreign embassies everywhere: a strong wall or iron fence. Open campuses are preferable, but even the most guarded scholastic cloisters would still allow individuals to come and go. Public concert halls, theatres, galleries, and sports facilities could welcome large audiences into such a complex with complete security. Via media, a dramatic permanent change in public perceptions and attitudes would result.

While building East/West cooperation and understanding, USSREX scholars would also serve as "hostages" shielding their host cities from direct nuclear attack. Would either government in cold blood conspire to burn 100,000 of its brightest youth in order to surprise the other? To answer yes is to characterize these governments as so treacherous that no disarmament treaty could save us. To answer no is to support the hostage relationships argued here.

One reason for choosing as hostages young scholars and professionals is that such people have close family and social links to controlling power structures. Personal concern in governing circles for 200,000 sons, daughters, and friends held hostage would maximize the shielding effect.

Compared with the SALT treaties, and similar previous attempts, USSREX might be easy to negotiate. There would be no haggling over balance of firepower, no impasse on inspection, no obstruction due to military secrets. The military would hardly participate. USSREX would be organized, and perhaps negotiated, by scholars and working professionals.

Idealism aside, incentives to volunteers would include a challenging university environment, unusual study programs, scholarships, and the chance to travel. Also appropriate (since hostages would be contributing to the national defense) would be partial or full credit for military service.

The American half of USSREX would cost roughly $7 billion to construct, and $250 million annually to operate. This includes airfares, and assumes 75 percent of operating costs come from student tuition. Substituted for the MX missile, the cruise missile, and the B-1 bomber (*sans* overruns), USSREX would save approximately $200 billion, or $4,400 per taxpayer. One could campaign for this kind of deterrent on fiscal slogans alone.

Admittedly, Soviet/American differences will not vanish overnight. Bush wars may continue, word wars certainly. Nevertheless, strong precedents exist for the large-scale cooperation USSREX requires: the in-orbit docking of U.S. and Soviet spacecraft; the famous "wheat deals"; the Soviet car factories built by U.S. automakers. In 1979, 500 American corporations were trading in the Soviet Union, exporting $3.6 billion worth of goods. In World War II the Soviet and American people collaborated to destroy the Nazis. We should join now against a worse threat: the nuclear arms machine.

Is USSREX possible?

DAVID STEIN
New York, New York 10025

MANAS

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FOR IMPROVISERS OF PEACE

LAST fall ten Russians visited the Los Angeles area to talk about "peace-making." The delegation was one of three such groups which came to the United States, sponsored by the Committee for U.S.-U.S.S.R. Dialogue. Two other delegations went to Toledo, Ohio, and Austin, Texas. Kathleen Hendrix wrote a colorful report of the visit of the Los Angeles delegation (*Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 30, 1981), with quotation from three of the Russians, one a disarmament specialist, another a "youth" representative, the third a columnist on *Pravda*. Their hosts here were a couple living in West Los Angeles, and the Russians spent much of their time at the Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race, located at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, with also some sightseeing and visits to several other places, including the Hospitality House of the Los Angeles Catholic Workers, non-violent followers of Dorothy Day.

The well-reported conversations between Russians and Americans seemed determined attempts to be friendly, with occasional explosions of feeling. "Both our governments want to make us think of the other side as the enemy. We're happy to see each other as human beings," Rick Erhard of Hospitality House said. He went on: "We're trying to make our government more accountable. What movements are there within the Soviet Union to limit government spending on the military?" The Russians, as might be expected, said that their government had to prepare weapons to meet the threat of American arms. Some Los Angeles labor union people told the Russians that if they wanted to make contact with American labor they should stay away from the national leadership and talk to local people. Naturally enough, the Americans were proud of their "openness" and self-criticism. The *Pravda* writer commented: "With all the openness of your criticism, you end up with—openness. If I were cynical enough, I'd say maybe it's just a safety valve permitted by the military/industrial complex." A host said that some Americans would say the same thing and the Russian continued:

> You have your political freedom, but I have never heard political freedom described as the main freedom by the people of the South Bronx. Maybe our people cherish something different. I hear people here comment about all the crime, [saying] "this is the price we pay for our freedom." Well, maybe we too "pay a price" for our security—our jobs, our health service, our social well-being.

An American woman who had attended long sessions of talk with the Russians said:

> It's very clear to me now. Dissent is the center of the political system in our country. The state, and loyalty, is at the center of theirs. It's their way. It does not mean because we're ideologically apart that we have to annihilate each other.

Warmth and even some affection sprang up between the Russians and the Americans. The distance between them always resulted from talk about government policies. The Russians said their armaments were no more than response to our aggressive policy, that Americans were deceived about them. At one point, after a similar remark, an American called out: "You're presenting yourselves as the angels of the world. We don't believe it."

"Okay, I realize that," came the Russian's reply. And then, as the *Times* writer puts it, "looking genuinely stumped, any self-righteousness long-gone," he asked: "Okay. What can we do?"

After the visit was over, the Los Angeles hostess said of the younger Russian: "I felt so sad saying goodby. . . . I think we touched them. I think they'll both carry that back. He was going so far away—in every sense of the word. We came so close, but we're so far apart."

The reason for the "apartness" is easy to see. When the Russians explained how they had been chosen to make the visit—by a non-government agency, they said,—the Americans were skeptical.

> There were knowing remarks that everything is government approved; everything is, after all, the state; that everyone was handpicked, party-hacks, not ordinary citizens—those were the only people they ever let out.
>
> In spite of that distrust, however, the general attitude seemed to be, as was voiced more than once, so what if all ten were KGB agents? They were also human beings and that was what this was all about.

Yet any approach to questions of disarmament and peace led to common frustration. The Russians maintained that the American militarism was (except for housing) their only "problem," and that Americans had preconceived positions and would not listen. "You want us to be just like you," one of them exclaimed. In short, the Russians were firmly ideological in their stance, while the Americans, open, and often objecting to their own government's actions, felt powerless to change American policy—at any rate, soon.

The entire group—Americans and Russians—passed a

resolution calling on "the governments of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. to work toward mutual understanding and to reduce drastically their arsenals of nuclear weapons as well as their military budgets."

There doesn't seem to be much to add to the report of this week-long dialogue between Russians and Americans. They met, you could say, as individual human beings, yet with split identities—the Russians constrained by ideology, the Americans embarrassed by their own country's foreign policy and determined drive to place "improved" missiles on European sites immediately threatening to Soviet cities.

Whether the Russians' faith in their political leaders ("We truly believe our government is of and by the people and problems will be solved by them") is genuine or only personally expedient—or a combination of the two—is not something that Americans can easily decide, nor can they alter such feelings in people on the other side of the world. At issue, then, is the fundamental question of reliance on the nation-state for order, welfare, and security. It is obviously much more difficult for Russians to give up that reliance, or even to discuss its possible benefits and disadvantages, than it is for Americans. On the other hand, not very many Americans, as yet, are ready for unilateral disarmament, which would amount to rejecting the protective role of the nation-state.

Americans, however, are free to examine and weigh what that role, as presently conceived by the shapers of American policy, now means and will continue to mean, until enough of the people adopt a radically changed view of their society and its safety. In this sense the Americans have far more of the initiative for change than the Russians.

Consider, for example, Norman Cousins' editorial in the *Saturday Review* for last November, in which he discussed the content of the U.N. publication, *Nuclear Weapons: Report of the Secretary General* (Autumn Press, $12.95). He begins:

> The report leaves the reader convinced that the nuclear policies of the major powers are adding exponentially to their own national insecurity even as they undermine the general safety of the world's peoples. The nuclear explosives provide destruction power beyond any conceivable need. Even if only a fraction of the existing bombs are used, the effects would extend far beyond the belligerent nations. But the most useful single fact emerging from the report is that, despite all the billions spent on counter-weapons, no workable defense against surprise nuclear attack has yet been devised.
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> Most people have the impression that, if nuclear missiles were launched against the United States, our sophisticated defenses would be able to knock down a substantial number. The truth is that existing military technology cannot assure that a *single* attacking missile can be intercepted. We are spending hundreds of billions on something called "defense," but, in the final analysis, our defense strategy is based primarily not on hardware but on psychological factors. That is, the military assumes that the enemy's fear of retaliation will be great enough to provide effective restraint against any surprise attack. Such an assumption, however, presupposes a fundamental rationality in the calculations of an enemy. Would an Adolf Hitler hesitate to use any power at his disposal because of the fear of retaliation? Did the fear of retaliation prevent Hitler from bombing London?
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> If we are counting on an enemy to act rationally, we have to recognize that nothing is more irrational than what we ourselves are doing in building vast nuclear stockpiles beyond any theoretical need. Is there anything rational about spending $25 million every hour for military purposes while complaining about inflation or government expenditures? If we want a rational basis for survival, we shall have to look for it in the control of force and in the development of world institutions to deal with existing tensions and basic causes of war.

Mr. Cousins here invites us to believe more rationally, and everyone can see that rationality will be an essential factor in making a world without war. But what we are up against is a population—people everywhere—that is *used to* relying on the national government, with long-established habits of confidence and trust. Were that trust and those habits to be *suddenly* destroyed, chaos would result. It took centuries for Europeans (including the Americans, who came from Europe) to ween themselves of their faith in princes, and now we are confronted by the need to weaken if not abandon our faith in national government. We have of course heard this before. Nearly a hundred years ago the Western world was warned by Herbert Spencer—who was wrong about various things, but certainly right in saying:

> The great political superstition of the past was the divine rights of kings. The great political superstition of the present is the divine right of parliaments. The oil of anointing seems unawares to have dripped from the head of the one on to the heads of many, and given sacredness to them also and to their decrees. (*The Man Versus the State,* 1892.)

What improved faith can come next? What can take the place of our confidence in the nation-state? The visit of the Russians to America—for all its embarrassments and failures—seems a step in the right direction. We must learn faith *in one another.* Yet the bitter fact is that, in a world like ours, such faith is the tenderest of plants. It is subject to the familiar uncertainties of human nature, and can hardly be protected against the storms of political propaganda and the periodic chills of fear. In short, given these vulnerabilities, the building of faith in one another will take a long time. It is a faith that can grow only out of increasing awareness of our common humanity, certainly not from any vain hope of a common ideology.

How can that awareness be deliberately fostered and encouraged?

In the middle of the second world war the Princeton Institute scholar, David Mitrany, wrote a remarkable essay, *A Working Peace System;* published in England by Chatham House for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1943). In it he said things that seem useful guidelines for any move toward peace along the lines we have been suggesting. "Peace," Prof. Mitrany said, "will not be secured if we organize the world by what divides it." This means leaving the nation-states alone, not trying to *use* them as instruments for peace. They were established for quite another purpose—to isolate and consolidate separate political identities—and to seek power and dominance for this purpose. The institutions of the state are all grained with these intentions. Mitrany also said: "Society will develop by our living it, not by policing it."

The counsel, in effect, is this: Don't make a frontal attack on national sovereignty, which can only generate fierce opposition. Instead, do things which, over the years, will prove that sovereignty is of diminishing importance and gets in the way of a great many activities that the people of various countries need to pursue. How can this persuasion be spread? By making a beginning—by doing with the people of other nations whatever non-political things we can—provided they make obvious sense and need to

be done. Mitrany gives lots of illustrations of how this works and what has been accomplished. He would have us slowly do away with political frontiers and divisions by developing "a spreading web of international activities and agencies, in which and through which the interests and life of all the nations would be gradually integrated." This is not of course a new idea, and people working for international understanding have been applying it in various ways, but this general process needs wider recognition as the only way to put an end, eventually, to the immeasurably destructive power of the state.

People have faith in one another when there are bonds of neighborhood, kinship, past history, and day-to-day experience of each other. Governments know nothing of these bonds; governments deal in trade relations, contests of power, political maneuvers, and war-college speculations about the "worst possible" military attack to be expected. Why not admit that governments *cannot* make peace? It is alien to their life and livelihood. War, as Randolph Bourne wrote prophetically years ago, is the *health* of the state.

Does this mean that the intelligent man or woman will thereupon ridicule or denounce the patriotic feelings of others who are slow in reaching a similar disillusionment? Not at all. Parents don't denounce childhood. Nor do they demand a sudden maturity of adolescents. They do what they can by way of example to help the young to find their own way to maturity. So, too, with the gradual spread of faith in one another, regardless of nation or race. Useful self-reliance calls for personal iconoclasm, not manipulated alienation.

Suppose, for example, such meetings between Russians and Americans were held not only for the purpose of "getting acquainted," but in order to plan cooperative projects of benefit to both, but in no way a threat to the "national sovereignty" of either nation. To attack the idea of sovereignty head-on is indeed to give it too much importance—to strengthen it. Rather treat national sovereignty as irrelevant! As, some day, it must become.

Mitrany says:

> . . . when the need is so great and pressing, we must have the vision to break away from traditional legalistic ideas and try some new way that might take us without violence towards that goal. The beginnings cannot be anything but experimental; a new international system will need even more than national systems a wide freedom of continuous operation in the light of experience. It must care as much as possible for common needs that are evident, while presuming as little as possible upon a social unity which is still only latent and unrecognized.

Mitrany calls his approach "An argument for the functional development of international organization." It need not, in his view, involve formal national assent or constitution-making. He is all for ad hoc improvisation, to get human and practical relationships going in ways that will be a satisfaction to all.

> Let it be said, first, that the functional method as such is neither incompatible with a general constitutional framework nor precludes its coming into being. It only follows Burke's warning to the sheriffs of Bristol that "government is a practical thing" and that one should beware of elaborating constitutional forms "for the gratification of visionaries." In national states and federations the functional development is going ahead without much regard to, and sometimes in spite of, the old constitutional divisions. If in these cases the constitution is most conveniently left aside, may not the method prove workable internationally without any immediate and comprehensive constitutional framework? If, to cite Burke again, it is "always dangerous to meddle with foundations," it is doubly dangerous now. Our political problems are obscure, while the political passions of the time are blinding. One of the misfortunes of the League [of Nations] experiment was that a new institution was devised on what have proved outdated premises. . . . We know now even less about the dark historical forces which have been stirred up by the war, while in the meantime the problems of our common society have been distorted by fierce ideologies which we could not try to bring to an issue without provoking an irreconcilable conflict. Even if action were to be to some extent handicapped without a formal political framework, the fact is that no obvious sentiment exists, and none is likely to crystallize for some years, for a common constitutional bond. . . .
>
> As to the new ideologists, since we could not prevent them we must try to circumvent them, leaving it to the growth of new habits and interests to dilute them in time. Our aim must be to call forth to the highest possible degree the active forces and opportunities for cooperation, while touching as little as possible the latent or active points of difference and opposition. . . . The only sound sense of peaceful change is to do internationally what it does nationally: to make changes of frontiers unnecessary by making frontiers meaningless through the continuous development of common activities and interests across them.

One seldom encounters such plain common sense in works on political theory. The idea is to work cooperatively at specific projects "without confusing the popular mind in debates as to whether the flag is being hauled down from the Capitol." And if peoples learn to cooperate, "without running down every imaginable legal or political implication," they will "realize that the formalization of their practices is not a matter of speculation on possibilities but of ratification of actualities."

As for the progressive "dilution" of ideologies, we know that already, many of the intelligentsia of Russia, in particular the scientists, no longer take seriously the Soviet ideology, and in time this is bound to affect common folk. Meanwhile, in the United States, nationalism as a spontaneous emotion is steadily waning, with conscientious objection to war an increasingly likely response to proposed military adventures.

At another level, other profound changes are slowly taking place in the minds of people who have been driven by the times to think deeply about themselves and their responsibilities. Simone Weil, as long ago as 1934, set down reflections which were then solitary and private, but have since dawned on an increasing number. She wrote:

> Only fanatics are able to set no value on their own existence save to the extent that it serves a collective cause; to react against the subordination of the individual to the collectivity implies that one begins by refusing to subordinate one's own destiny to the course of history. In order to resolve upon undertaking such an effort of critical analysis, all one needs is to realize that it would enable him who did so to escape the contagion of folly and collective frenzy by reaffirming on his own account, over the head of the social idol, the original pact between the mind and the universe. (*Oppression and Liberty,* University of Massachusetts Press, 1973.)

This "pact," too, is in the minds of many. What is ecology, ultimately, but a formulation by conscious beings of what may be some of its terms?

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