

THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT: PROVIDING FOR PEACE

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The distinguished scientist, Edward Teller, has prepared for this Pacem in Terris V a commentary on the fate of Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents in the Soviet Union that relates — in every sense — to the basic concerns of the conference.

Peace is an issue that overrides all others in our world today. Beside it every other concern pales to insignificance. The history of the twentieth century has offered clear instruction on the importance of peace. The First World War killed the

infant processes of democracy and human rights in Russia and paved the way for Hitler and thereby for the Second World War, which destroyed freedom and self-government for many millions of people. Let no one believe that the price of war is limited to the physical destruction, widespread and horrible as this would be, in the nuclear age. While mankind clearly would survive even this holocaust, our fragile freedoms would probably not. There is no question but that peace is our most important goal. But how can peace be maintained? What endangers peace? What supports it?

The human rights movement, to my mind, is playing an important role in providing for peace both on a short- and a long-term basis. The activities connected with these efforts, particularly those being made at great sacrifice by the members of the Soviet human rights movement, deserve both our

close attention and our support.

One person whose statements have had a special interest for me is Andrei Sakharov. He is thirteen years my junior, a Russian born less than a thousand miles from my hometown to a family that, like my own, valued learning and music, courtesy and moral behavior. We both became theoretical physicists, applied our knowledge to the development of weapons, and consequently share a common misnomer, "the father of the hydrogen bomb," a description that in Sakharov's words, "reflects very inaccurately the real (and complex) situation of collective invention."

While there are further parallels in our lives, the circumstances under which we conducted our weapons research are so different as to make comparison impossible. In wartime Los Alamos, most of us had come directly from the free world of academia. Wartime work meant restrictions, great accomplishments, and real annoyances, yet our free way of life was not affected in a serious manner.

Sakharov entered the Soviet thermonuclear weapon research program in the summer of 1948. I cannot imagine the experience that he must have had at that time. Years later, he wrote about it in a very detached, factual manner: "In 1950 our research group became part of a special institute [in Turkestan]. . . . Until the summer of 1953, the chief of the atomic project was Beria, who ruled over slave-prisoners. Almost all the construction was done with their labor."

From the time Sakharov was twenty-one until he was twenty-four, he had been part of the wartime defense industry. As a graduate student in theoretical physics for the next three years, one would suspect he had little opportunity for analyzing the political affairs of his nation. He knew that Nobel Laureate Igor Tamm, his mentor, had joined the special institute with seeming willingness. I doubt that he knew at that time that Peter Kapitsa was placed under house arrest for refusing to work on the project.

While working hard on the complex problems of developing thermonuclear weapons for his homeland and, as he then saw it, "for the balance of power throughout the world," Sakharov slowly came to realize the "cynicism" and "caste system" that dominated his environment. He would have been less than human had he not hoped to change this situation through his own influence.

However, in 1961, by his account, he was first unmistakably confronted with the nature of the gov-

ernment which he had served. Together with several other atomic scientists, he was called to a conference with Nikita Khrushchev. "It turned out that we were to prepare for a series of tests that would bolster up the new policy of the U.S.S.R. on the German question [the Berlin Wall]."

Today, the Berlin Wall seems a somewhat average Soviet infraction in their ever-increasing history of violated human rights. Sakharov, who was never permitted to leave the country — not even for the second Atoms for Peace Conference in which other Soviet scientists presented his work on peaceful fusion applications — seems not to have been struck by the added restrictions on millions of Germans. His concern was that his nation was not living up to its contracted agreement — the test moratorium that was initiated three years earlier. At that moment, negotiations to formalize the agreement were going on in Vienna.

Sakharov reports that, sitting at the conference table, he "wrote a note to Khrushchev, saying 'To resume tests after a three-year moratorium would undermine the talks on banning tests and on disarmament,' " and passed it to Khrushchev. Sakharov got his response at the dinner table that night when Khrushchev made a speech. Sakharov described the gist of Khrushchev's comments as follows:

"Sakharov is a good scientist. But leave it to us, who are specialists in this tricky business, to make foreign policy. Only force — only the disorientation of the enemy. We can't say aloud that we are carrying out our policy from a position of strength, but that's the way it must be. I would be a slob, and not chairman of the Council of Ministers, if I listened to the like of Sakharov."

What must he have felt to discover that he had dedicated a major portion of his productive life to a government of such character?

The denouement came the following year with the Soviet test of further unnecessarily large nuclear explosives. Sakharov tried every means at his disposal to stop the tests, including the threat of resignation. But, in the end, he failed to have any effect. As he said years later:

"The feeling of impotence and fright that seized me on that day has remained in my memory ever since, and it has worked much change in me as I moved toward my present attitude."

Sakharov's present attitude encompasses both the long-term and the short-term activities that are necessary for peace. Beginning with his first major essay in 1968, Sakharov has pointed out consistently the relationship between human rights and lasting peace and security. In the 1975 Nobel Prize speech that he was not permitted to present in person, he said:

"I am convinced that international trust, mutual understanding, disarmament, and international security are inconceivable without an open society with freedom of information, freedom of conscience, the right to publish, and the right to travel and choose the country in which one wishes to live."

In an open letter written in 1983, Sakharov concluded:

"Genuine security is possible only when based on a stabilization of international relations, a repudiation of expansionist policies, the strengthening of international trust, openness and pluralization in the socialist societies, the observance of human rights throughout the world, the rapprochement — convergence — of the socialist and capitalist systems, and worldwide coordinated efforts to solve global problems."

What a wonderful world we should all enjoy if Sakharov's government should take his advice.

Sakharov's repeatedly stated point is that the West should never sit down at a negotiating table with the Soviets without bringing along the issue of the observation of human rights — already guaranteed by the United Nations Charter and by the Helsinki Accords — within the Soviet Union. Only in this manner can East and West hope to repair the cultural breach which began in the fourteenth century.

Such convergence, however, is not a matter of modifying two economic systems. The economic system in Sweden certainly resembles socialism in many respects, yet no one is confused as to whether Sweden belongs to the free or socialist world. Alexis de Tocqueville, in 1840, at a time when Marx had not begun his career, enumerated the differences ably:

"The Anglo-American . . . gives free scope to the

unguided exertions and common sense of the citizens; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm; the principal weapon of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude."

Regardless of Sakharov's understandable hopes, I do not believe that convergence can be accomplished in a decade. Many of our efforts must be looked upon as long-term investments. One of these that particularly deserves to be made is to support by all means at our disposal the incredibly courageous men and women of the Soviet Union human rights movement — Sakharov, Yuri Orlov, and especially Anatoly Shcharansky who, because he was so effective in uniting age-old enemies in the common struggle, is so apt to be destroyed.

The immediate efforts necessary for maintaining peace involve a more complex issue, military preparedness in the West. This may seem a bit distant from the issue of human rights, but the relationship is simple. Sakharov pointed it out in his 1975 Nobel Prize text when he discussed the problem of the democratic countries' fear of their totalitarian neighbors:

"Cooperation among the Western states, the socialist nations, and the developing countries is a vital necessity for peace, and it involves exchanges of scientific achievements, technology, trade, and mutual economic aid, particularly where food is concerned. But this cooperation must be based on mutual trust between open societies, or — to put it another way — with an open mind, on the basis of genuine equality and not on the basis of the democratic countries' fear of their totalitarian neighbors. If that were the case, cooperation would merely involve an attempt at ingratiating oneself with a formidable neighbor. But such a policy would merely postpone the evil day, soon to arrive anyway and, then, ten times worse. This is simply another version of Munich."

Cooperation is necessary for convergence, for only contact with freedom and the consequent internal pressure that it builds will accomplish peaceful change in the Soviet Union. However, the cooperation must be between nations that need not live in fear.

Sakharov worked intensively and with great ingenuity on Soviet nuclear weapons for a period of eighteen years. Although he no longer was privy

to the developments after 1968, his grasp of the technical aspects of weaponry is excellent. However, Sakharov is offering advice that many in the West do not want to hear:

"A second group of problems in the field of nuclear weapons... concerns the talks on nuclear disarmament. For these talks to be successful the West should have something that it can give up. The case of the 'Euromissiles' once again demonstrates how difficult it is to negotiate from a position of weakness. Only very recently has the U.S.S.R. apparently ceased to insist on its unsubstantiated thesis that a rough nuclear parity now exists and therefore everything should be left as it is...."

"One... must not consider powerful Soviet missiles, with mobile launchers and several warheads, as being equal to the now-existing Pershing I, the British and French missiles, or the bombs on short-range bombers — as the Soviet side sometimes attempts to do for purposes of propaganda. No less important a problem is that of the powerful silo-based missiles. At present the U.S.S.R. has a great advantage in this area. Perhaps talks about the limitation and reduction of these most destructive missiles could become easier if the United States were to have MX missiles...."

"While the U.S.S.R. is the leader in this field [of missiles] there is very little chance of its easily relinquishing that lead. If it is necessary to spend a few billion dollars on MX missiles to alter this situation, then perhaps this is what the West must do...."

According to this Soviet weapons expert, who is, as he claims, "one of the few independent participants in this discussion in the U.S.S.R.," the West must rearm both conventionally and with nuclear weapons if it hopes to maintain peace for a sufficient period to establish human rights and the possibility of reliable disarmament agreements with the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, a totally opposite Communist concept — that weapons create war, and, therefore, war can be avoided only by disposing of weapons — is popular in the West today. This idea has a long history, having been first formally presented by the Soviets at disarmament talks in 1927. The talks were not going well because the Soviets denied any relationship between disarmament and collective security measures, arbitration agreements, guarantees, inspection, or enforcement.

However, the Soviets proposed complete disarmament (without any assurances) of all nations' land and sea forces, explaining:

"... the existence of armaments and the tendency they show to growth by their very nature inevitably lead to armed conflicts between nations, diverting the workers and peasants from peaceful productive labor and bringing in its train countless disasters...."

When propaganda contains a half-truth, it is particularly difficult to combat. The first portion of the statement is clearly nonsense. People, not weapons, determine the onset of armed conflicts. However, the second part of the statement has validity.

Every reasonable person must deplore expenditures on military arms. Yet, one of the tragedies of the human condition at this point in evolution is that physical power still determines the course of history. Not only must one have military forces, but as the recent use of toxin weapons demonstrates, one must also have the technical capacity to retaliate in order to avoid suffering their use. So long as any people impose their will by brute strength, counter-strength is necessary if workers, peasants, or anyone else are to be able to enjoy the results of their "peaceful productive labor."

Sakharov puts it this way:

"I realize that in attempting not to lag behind a potential enemy in any way, we condemn ourselves to an arms race that is tragic in a world with so many critical problems admitting of no delay. But the main danger is slipping into an all-out nuclear war. If the probability of such an outcome could be reduced at the cost of another ten or fifteen years of the arms race, then perhaps that price must be paid while, at the same time, diplomatic, economic, ideological, political, cultural, and social efforts are made to prevent a war."

The prices that Sakharov is willing to pay for peace are vastly greater than those he suggests are necessary for the West to pay. The questions he asks, however, "Will the West's politicians be able to carry out such a restructuring? Will the press, the public, and our fellow scientists help them (and not hinder them as is frequently now the case)?", are far from answered. The nuclear freeze movement in the West is unfortunate evidence of this. The success of a freeze would make permanent the cur-

rent inferiority in NATO armaments even in the improbable case that the Soviets would observe it.

The freeze movement must be redirected if peace is to be maintained. As Sakharov says, "People both in the socialist and the Western countries have a passionate inward aspiration for peace. This is an extremely important factor, but, I repeat, itself alone does not exclude the possibility of a tragic outcome." The freeze would permanently establish missile inferiority, but an even greater danger exists. A freeze would make it almost impossible for the West to provide economically feasible defense against missiles.

Sakharov was removed from Soviet weapons research in 1968. In 1983, he wrote: "The creation of an effective defense against missiles... seems highly doubtful to me." A few years ago I shared his opinion. Today, I am convinced that defensive weapons are not only possible, but that there are even several types of defense that are very likely to be successful. The Soviets have been working on defensive weapons for more than fifteen years. The current upgraded ABM system that surrounds Moscow is very likely to be only the tiniest tip of an iceberg. In the current balance of terror, the terror is certain, the balance is not. Should the threat of retaliation also be invalidated by Soviet defenses, could we resist any demands the Soviets make on us, much less moderate the oppression of the Soviet peoples: Russians, the sorely tried minorities, and those living in the colonies of that empire, like the Poles?

I suspect that the enthusiasm for a nuclear freeze has a source that is rarely mentioned, that it is a misguided if basically sound response to our policy of Mutually Assured Destruction. For more than two decades, our safety has been dependent on our threatening millions of other people with destruction. No matter that we have enabled them to overmatch our threat. No matter that the other government that controls the weapons brutally coerces its own people. The concept of absorbing the first aggressive strike with the lives of millions of our fellow citizens at stake, and then, after that loss is suffered, inflicting further horror upon other innocent victims — all this cannot and should not be attractive to any civilized person. Unfortunately, most of the freeze supporters do not know (or do

not accept) the fact that after appropriate preparation deterrence can be based on protection as effectively as on retaliation.

During the hydrogen bomb controversy in the late nineteen-forties, the opponents first claimed, as they claim now in regard to the Strategic Defense Initiative, that if the United States did not undertake this work, neither would the Russians. In 1950, when President Harry Truman gave the go-ahead for the American project, the Russians had engaged Sakharov in that work for eighteen months. The evidence, some of it in the open Soviet literature, suggests to me that the new generation of Soviet weapons researchers have been working on innovative concepts for defense for several years. Many American scientists choose to ignore this fact.

The opponents of the hydrogen bomb claimed that if the Soviet Union did proceed and obtained the hydrogen bomb first, we could easily catch up. These same opponents, vocal then, vocal now, and vocal through the intervening years, have claimed American superiority unless the Soviet Union announced, and perhaps even demonstrated, the contrary. They honor Sakharov for his courage and sacrifice, but they disregard the factual information that he is offering them at such superhuman cost.

Sakharov is not alone in his efforts for human rights and peace. In many of his messages to the West he reminds us of several of his friends whose lives are endangered because of their efforts on behalf of peace and freedom. Some, like Sakharov, will live in history so long as free people can speak. Anatoly Shcharansky, sentenced in 1978 to thirteen years of forced labor, committed a sin even greater than Sakharov's. He unified various groups that had been traditional enemies, for example, the Ukrainians and the Jews, to fight for the rights that they had been denied. Therefore, it is particularly important to the Soviets that Shcharansky be broken for his attempt to enforce human rights.

If we fail to work for the extension of human rights in the socialist countries, we only lengthen the time during which the price of war may be exacted from us all. The cost of peace is not small. It includes stamina, courage, sacrifice, and careful thought. Let us honor those people who, never having enjoyed human rights, have shown these qualities so that all people may live in peace.