

THE BEST HOMAGE TO SAKHAROV IS TO LISTEN TO HIM

Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, the Soviet Union's leading dissident and the 1975 winner of Nobel Peace Prize currently is in the United States on his first trip outside the Soviet Union. One of this century's great humanists, Sakharov gave up the life of wealth and privilege bestowed on him by the Soviet government for his role in the creation the Soviet nuclear weapons (he often is described as the "father" of the Soviet hydrogen bomb) and single-handedly took on the most powerful totalitarian state in the world. He has survived the ordeal — daily harassment, six years of internal exile, hunger strikes, and brutal force-feeding by the Soviet secret police. Sakharov's visit means that the Free World finally will have a chance to repay the debt it owes him for his defense of human liberty and dignity.

But celebrating Sakharov the hero the West must not ignore Sakharov the dissident. His struggle for radical changes in the Soviet system continues and needs continued Western help. Among the causes for which Sakharov needs support are:

Release of all Soviet political prisoners. Counting only those whose names are known in the West, the Soviet Union holds 200 political prisoners. Sakharov insists that all political prisoners be released. Significantly, he asks for their public "rehabilitation." This means that they must not merely be pardoned, but must receive government apologies for unlawful incarceration.¹

Elimination of the Criminal Code articles used to punish dissent. To make the current reform irreversible the Criminal Codes of the Soviet republics must be revised to remove the articles used to persecute political and religious dissidents. The Criminal Code of the Russian Republic, for example, makes a crime of "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation" (Article 70), "defamation of the Soviet social and state order" (Article 190-1), and unauthorized religious activity (Articles 142 and 227).

Making the Soviet Union an "open society." Sakharov argues that the most important condition for promoting "international trust" and security is making the Soviet Union an "open society" in accordance with the many international obligations the Soviet Union has

¹ A.D. Sakharov, "Inevitability of restructuring." In Yu.N. Afanasiev, ed., *There is no other way* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1988). All quotes are taken from that article.

assumed, including the 1975 Helsinki Accords. These include: freedom of conscience; freedom to receive and impart information; freedom to choose place of residence inside the Soviet Union; freedom to go abroad and return.

Freedom of emigration. An "important guarantee of peace," says Sakharov, would be for Moscow to allow unrestricted emigration, not just for the purpose of "family re-unification," as it is now. Every citizen must have the right to choose whatever social or economic order he or she deems most suitable.

Investigating the KGB. Sakharov calls for an investigation of the KGB's connection with international terrorism ("terrorist international") in the 1960s and 1970s. Such an investigation should be "detailed" and conducted in the "spirit of *glasnost* [openness]."

Unilateral Soviet troop reductions. Sakharov argues that the length of military conscription, obligatory for all Soviet males, should be reduced from two years to one year. Fewer Soviet troops, he says, would produce a corresponding cut in "all kinds" of weapons. Such a move will "open a route" to a "balanced" reduction in both conventional and nuclear weapons, will help settlement of regional conflicts and, of course, will free "huge material means so necessary for *perestroika* — restructuring."

Unlinking strategic arms reductions negotiations and SDI. Sakharov continues to criticize America's Strategic Defense Initiative. In his view, it will make arms control more complicated. This position undoubtedly contributed to the Soviet government's decision to allow Sakharov to travel abroad; killing SDI remains the absolute priority of Soviet arms control and propaganda policies. Yet while opposing SDI, he rejects the current Soviet position of linking U.S. concessions on SDI to reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. These agreements, argues Sakharov, should be concluded "regardless of the U.S. position on the SDI or any other condition."

In the best tradition of Russian intelligentsia, Sakharov is a very modest man, who does not like to draw attention to his own suffering, while struggling to protect others. But the U.S. and the rest of the Free World should not forget the crimes of those who tortured him during his almost six years in Gorky, where he was exiled, stripped of all his awards and honors, after he protested the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In that "closed" city, deprived of virtually all contacts with the outside world, he was beaten and force-fed during the two long hunger strikes he undertook to assure his daughter-in-law could emigrate and his wife could receive medical care in the West. His apartment and his car were vandalized repeatedly and his manuscripts stolen and never returned. Unlike other countries, most recently Argentina, the Soviet Union has yet to find and punish its own torturers. Without assuring that those responsible for torture and deaths of Soviet dissidents be brought to justice, *perestroika* (restructuring) will remain on paper only.

Almost invariably, whenever Moscow embarks on reforms from above, many in the West tend to accept desired change as real, Soviet declarations as facts, and Soviet words as deeds. While the West should not exaggerate its ability to influence Soviet domestic developments, it certainly should not demand from the Soviet Union less than what the Soviet people expect from their government. Sakharov states, as always loud and clear, what these expectations are.

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