

## Mother Russia by Rachel Douglas

### Behind the release of Sakharov

*The Soviet military and the secret police "spring" the dissident physicist for their own purposes.*

**T**he release of Academician Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, from their seven years of exile in the city of Gorky was no great victory for "human rights" lobbying on his behalf. The Soviet secret police let them return at a moment when it was most useful, if not indispensable, for the Gorbachov regime's battles with the West.

Gorbachov's phone call to Sakharov, when the Communist Party chief invited the scientist to return to "patriotic work" at the Academy of Sciences, was not window-dressing. Nor was the two-hour visit paid Sakharov by Guri A. Marchuk, former chief of the Novosibirsk science complex and former deputy prime minister, now president of the Academy. Sakharov is expected to take a leading role in Soviet science, which is vital to the military-dictated mobilization of the Soviet war economy.

Caught flatfooted by the U.S. refusal to surrender the Strategic Defense Initiative at the Reykjavik summit in November and by the subsequent assault on the "Kissingerian" National Security Council apparatus, which had been Moscow's best hope for delivering such a surrender, the Soviet military has resolved to step up the pace of its own mobilization.

But before any concrete scientific work is launched, Sakharov has already been put into action as a quasi-independent mouthpiece for Gorbachov. In interviews to American TV networks, broadcast Sunday, Dec. 28, Sakharov endorsed a Soviet pullout from Afghanistan—about which Gorbachov and the Soviet military were

launching trial balloons that very week.

Most of all, Sakharov attacked the Strategic Defense Initiative. Arguments to which the world has been subjected for three and a half years, from the mouths of Soviet establishment scientists such as Yevgeni Velikhov and Roald Sagdeyev, were suddenly invested with the solemn authority of the great "dissident," Sakharov.

ABC News asked Sakharov, whether he had been released in order to speak out against the SDI. He replied that "no conditions" were imposed, but added: "I can say the following about the Strategic Defense Initiative. I think that . . . [the SDI] will always be impossible from the military strategic point of view, since any strong opponent with a sufficiently high level of technology can always overcome the technical achievements of the other side at all stages."

A spokesman for the Washington based Andrei Sakharov Institute, which has worked on behalf of Sakharov's freedom and his ideas, called his release a "go signal" for all those groups in the West that oppose the SDI. The Soviets fear the potential, he said, for Western technological breakthrough through a mobilization for the SDI. In this, the regime has Sakharov's backing: "Sakharov is being a patriot. It would be impossible for him to adopt an approach that would mean American strategic superiority, which is what SDI competition would eventually mean."

The Sakharov Institute plans to hold an anti-SDI conference in Europe

next fall, jointly with the Soviet emigré Vladimir Bukovsky and the Resistance International. It is hoped, the spokesman said, that Andrei Sakharov will attend.

In West Germany, the anti-SDI scientist Hans-Peter Duerr, director of the Max Planck Institute for Physics and Astrophysics, announced Dec. 29, that he would meet Gorbachov in Moscow in February, to discuss all aspects of anti-SDI activities and Duerr's pet project: a World Peace Initiative. Here, too, Sakharov may go into action, since Duerr has already proposed in a letter to Gorbachov, that the famous physicist be allowed to collaborate in this effort, as a member of the Committee of Soviet Scientists for Peace, against the Nuclear Threat.

For anybody familiar with the method and practice of the Russian secret police from time immemorial, in the infiltration, cultivation, creation, and control of "dissent," Sakharov's release and behavior is hardly mysterious. One of the most striking aspects of Sakharov's career as a "dissident" was the fact that in his first foray against official policy—a 1967 article on the role of the intelligentsia and the threat of nuclear war, which was rejected for publication by *Literaturnaya Gazeta*—his co-author was KGB operative and journalist Ernst Henry (a.k.a. Semyon Rostovsky), at that time detailed to the "liberal" wing of the Moscow intellectual scene.

Thus a dissident career was launched. Not that Sakharov ever had to take any direct orders from the KGB, which spent much time and effort harassing and torturing him and his family. But this assured his elevation to a modern Russian saint, and the value of his future readmission to society at an opportune moment, which turned out to be December 1986, was pre-rigged.