

EIR Books

Andrei Sakharov: portrait of a resistance fighter

by Robert Primack

Alone Together

by Elena Bonner

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1986

270 pages, hardbound, \$17.95

My Country and the World

by Andrei Sakharov

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1976

128 pages, hardbound

At a time when freedom movements are springing up throughout the world, particularly in the East, what could be more relevant than the story of a leader of that fight within the Soviet Union itself? The fact that he was also one of the greatest scientific minds of the 20th century, and certainly the most famous scientist of modern Russia, merely indicates the enormity of the task that he undertook. This man was Andrei Sakharov, and he and his wife Elena Bonner paint a haunting, and inspiring, picture of their fight for freedom.

The picture of Sakharov carried globally by satellite handing several letters to Soviet President Gorbachov opposing Article 6 of the Constitution, which guarantees the supremacy of the Communist Party in all Soviet institutions, was a vivid demonstration of his moral authority. Two days later Andrei Sakharov, a man that many have heard of, but

few know, was dead. That was why I picked up these two books, the only ones I could find in the local bookstore and library.

Bonner's book *Alone Together* is a harrowing account of the outrages and abuses that the Soviet state bureaucracy and legal system could inflict upon its citizens. Without question, without the support that first he and then they received from the West, Sakharov and his wife would have been dead long ago. However, the horrors that Bonner documents, interwoven with her own personal experiences, document a 20-year period of torture directed at Sakharov and anyone associated with him. While Sakharov had been overtly harassed by the authorities since 1973, he had been morally troubled by the military and destructive use of his scientific work since the early 1950s; but he was not sent into internal exile until 1980 when he was picked up on the street, taken to the procurator's office, read a statement by the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet, depriving him of all awards and honors, and taken directly to exile in Gorky.

Elena Bonner was the daughter of Gevork Alikhanov, First Secretary of the Armenian Bolshevik Party and head of the personnel department of the Comintern, who was purged in 1937 and executed. Her mother Ruth Grigorievna Bonner, a party member, was also arrested in 1937, but not executed. Bonner joined the Russian Army in 1940 as a nurse and was badly wounded in 1941. When she recovered, she was reassigned and rose to the rank of lieutenant. After the war, in spite of serious eye problems caused by her battle wounds, Bonner completed medical school by 1953. She free-lanced as a writer and joined the Communist Party in

1965, but resigned after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In the meantime, she met Andrei Sakharov.

Almost immediately, Bonner became blamed for the "Sakharov Problem." She was accused of everything from taking his money, starving him to death by supporting his hunger strikes, and of being a Zionist and a CIA agent. In 1984, Bonner was tried, convicted, and exiled internally under Article 190-1 of the Russian Criminal Code for "slandering the Soviet social and state system." The trial, as reported in her book, was a mockery of justice. The courtroom had about 85 attendees—all KGB. Her husband was not allowed to testify or attend, and she was accused of slandering the Russian prison system. The prosecution harped on two quotes they attributed to her, both in their indictment and the trial: "Soviet newspapers have nothing, but lies" and "I think they are killing us." They were.

It is worthwhile to look through the kaleidoscope Bonner presents of family experiences: constant surveillance, the inability to freely communicate (letters were changed or never arrived; there was no home phone and the pay phones didn't work; the KGB put its jamming device right in the apartment, etc.). Family members were forced into hospitalization when they didn't want it and denied medical care when they most needed it. When Sakharov underwent hunger strikes to force the Soviets to permit his wife and others to travel abroad for much-needed medical attention, he was brutally subjected to forced feeding, injections, and isolation. Bonner documents the couple's efforts to defend the human rights of individual scientists, Jews, Pentecostals, and others who were being denied the right to emigrate, work according to their conscience, or have the freedom to worship.

Contrary to what many believe, Sakharov is not Jewish. And contrary to what many have been led to believe, he is also not a KGB agent, nor a pacifist. He is most definitely a Russian: His family was friendly with the Tolstoys, and he traces his genealogy back through several generations of rural Russian priests. However, he grew up in a large Moscow apartment where his father, a physics teacher who wrote textbooks and popular science books, played Chopin, Grieg, and Beethoven on the piano. As a child, Sakharov could recite Pushkin's poems by heart and Schiller's "The Glove."

During World War II, Sakharov worked in an armaments factory and developed several procedures which improved the production time and quality of product. This he considered to be his first "original scientific work." After the war he became a graduate student at Lebedev Physical Institute, where his adviser and collaborator was physicist Igor Tamm. In Moscow and later at a special research center, he, Tamm, and others developed the Soviet atomic bomb, the principles of thermonuclear explosions, and built the first hydrogen bomb. Sakharov also led the work in 1950 on the construction of magnetoplosive generators in formulating the principles of a controlled thermonuclear reaction based on magnet-

ically controlled plasma which became known as the tokamak fusion device, and in 1960 he proposed the use of pulsed lasers to heat deuterium and produce useful energy. Up to his recent, unexpected death, he wrote published and unpublished works on cosmology, asymmetry, curved space, and other scientific frontiers.

As one reads *My Country and the World*, one clearly sees that Sakharov was for a strong Western alliance, a strong NATO, led by the United States with a reunified Germany, as the premier solution to the problems of a troubled world and the only solution to the myriad problems destroying his own country. Sakharov was also always personally troubled by the moral dilemma that his scientific discoveries were being used for destructive purposes. In 1968, when he published his first book, *Thoughts on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*, he was stripped of his security clearance. He stated that he hoped that he was helping to "establish military equilibrium" when he was building the atomic and hydrogen bombs. But later he developed an extreme distrust of military leadership and their possible willingness to launch a first strike, believing that MIRVed weapons and ABM systems might create the conditions to make such a first strike advantageous.

Sakharov was a warrior for human rights both globally and in his own country. He attacked Lysenko and his work, both because it was destroying the Soviet biological sciences and because decent scientists were being harassed. He hated the way African students were subjected to "barbarous race hatred." He despised the new *nomenklatura*, the Communist Party that was becoming the privileged bureaucracy of a two-tiered society. Sakharov attacked the political use of psychiatry, and though he fought for religious toleration, he felt that Russian Orthodoxy and Islam were becoming appendages of the state.

Sakharov on Kissinger

However, it is in the political realm, that one sees the true independence of Sakharov's thinking. Sakharov supported the initial Jackson-Vanik trade bill to force Soviet concessions on emigration, at a time when in 1975, the Republicans and notably Henry Kissinger opposed it, because Kissinger insisted the same ends could be accomplished through his inevitable "secret negotiations," an argument that has resurfaced since last year's massacre at Tiananmen Square. Kissinger's détente, he said, was "in reality constituting a plot behind the backs of peoples." Later, when Kissinger tried to amend the bill so that it only dealt with Jewish emigration, Sakharov again condemned Kissinger's methods, saying that "that would enable the Soviets to support traditional anti-Semitism and utilize it against the democratic movement." He continued, that "for Soviet Germans, ethnic humiliation has become a common experience. Virtually every family has lost nine or more members who perished during resettlement, on reservations, or in labor camps. It is

impossible for them to maintain their national culture and even their language is half-forgotten. At school or work they constantly hear the epithet 'fascists.' . . . Up to now emigration by Soviet Germans to West Germany has received little support from abroad."

Sakharov also specified that he thought "the division of Germany is a tragic (and I hope temporary) phenomenon."

Sakharov was clearly no liberal, and came down solidly on the side of a strong Western anti-Communist stance: "The thoughtless, frivolous pursuit of leftist liberal fuddishness is fraught with great dangers. On the international level, one danger is the loss of Western unity and a clear understanding of the ever constant global threat posed by the totalitarian nations."

The illegal execution of the Rosenbergs

by Robert Fow

Fatal Error: The Miscarriage of Justice That Sealed the Rosenbergs' Fate

by Joseph H. Sharlitt

MacMillan, New York, 1989

110 pages, hardbound, \$24.95

Faced with the irrational vindictiveness of the U.S. judiciary in the LaRouche cases, one may be well instructed by this account of a world-famous case, where "conspiracy to commit espionage" was charged.

In March 1951, during the height of the McCarthy anti-Communist witchhunt, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were tried and convicted of "conspiracy to commit espionage" and given a death sentence by Judge Irving Kaufman. In June 1953, after a long appeals process up to the Supreme Court, the Rosenbergs were executed. The conviction and sentence were based on the testimony of Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg's brother, David Greenglass, a thief and self-proclaimed spy who testified that he stole secrets of the atom bomb, which he passed to the Soviets under the direction of Julius Rosenberg. Greenglass, who was arrested first, cooperated with the FBI and received only a 15-year sentence; his wife Ruth, who was also involved, was never even indicted. The conviction, said the opinion of the appeals court written by Judge Jerome Frank, could not be upheld if the Greenglass testimony were not believed. This book, while ignoring the issues of the

Rosenbergs' guilt or innocence, draws out the legal arguments showing that the Rosenbergs were definitely executed illegally.

In Chapter 11, author Joseph Sharlitt says, "Judge Kaufman's reasons for ordering execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are explicit. 'I consider your crime worse than murder . . . your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb . . . caused . . . the Communist aggression in Korea . . . millions more may pay the price of your treason. . . .'"

"But the significance of what Greenglass betrayed through [the Rosenbergs], in comparison with what the Soviets had already learned from a far more rewarding source, Klaus Fuchs, makes Judge Kaufman's sentence a repudiation of hard facts. Those facts were available when [Kaufman passed sentence]. He was never given them. Foremost among them are two: It was Klaus Fuchs and not David Greenglass who gave the Soviets major secrets of the bomb; and Klaus Fuchs—whose betrayal of the West was catastrophic in comparison with Greenglass's transgressions—was sentenced to imprisonment of 14 years.

"As every scientist who ever commented on Fuchs had agreed, Fuchs's betrayal had monumental significance. It shortened the U.S. monopoly in atomic weaponry to four years. It gave the Soviets the ultimate weapon at the beginning of the Cold War. And as highly knowledgeable Americans have commented, it was an act of Olympian perfidy, felt across the world and for many years. The Joint Committee on Atomic Energy report states: 'It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Fuchs alone has influenced the safety of more people and accomplished greater damage than any other spy not only in the history of the United States but in the history of nations.'

"No David Greenglass could approach the scientific comprehension required to do what Fuchs had done. By far the most important secret that [Fuchs] passed on was the monumental step toward the bomb achieved when the Americans developed the gaseous diffusion process for isolating uranium-235, the explosive used in the bomb.

"If Fuchs had not betrayed the gaseous diffusion process and perhaps a good deal more (for Fuchs was never confined to gaseous diffusion in his roamings over the secrets of the Manhattan District, could meander almost at will over the entire atomic bomb project, collect precious scientific data, and give it away), the Soviets would not have paid much attention to David Greenglass. There is, indeed, evidence that Fuchs provided the Soviets with the concept of a lens mold used in the plutonium bomb dropped on Nagasaki—developed by the scientists at Los Alamos—which was simply confirmed by Greenglass's subsequent sketches, drawn with the crudeness of a machinist who knew little or nothing about implosion or any other triggering device. In proper perspective, Fuchs was—for the Soviets—the Nobel of