



ADDRESS AT A GATHERING
dedicated to the memory of
ANDREI DMITRIEVICH
SAKHAROV

by Frantisek Janousch (Moscow, 14.12.2009)

Don't fear your enemies – the worst they can do is kill you.
Don't fear your friends – the worst they can do is betray you.
Fear those who are indifferent – they do not kill and do not betray,
but just with their silent consent millions of Jews were incinerated in the
concentration camps,
they left Raoul Wallenberg to rot in a Soviet prison, and may force Andrei
Sakharov to spend the remainder of his life in exile in Gorky.

(Written by me in May 1981, in imitation of a text from a book by Bruno Jasiński
"The Conspiracy of the Indifferent", published in the 1930s.)

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this gathering. To give a brief account of what Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov meant for our life, and in particular for my life, is impossible. But I shall try to grasp the ungraspable.

I was completing my studies at the Leningrad State University Physics Faculty when, at the end of 1953, I learnt from the newspaper "Pravda" that a certain Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, born 1921, had been elected directly as an academician, bypassing the obligatory "correspondent member" level. Not only that, they had elected him in the field of theoretical physics. In those days I was still managing at least to leaf through all the Soviet physics journals, and my memory then was still excellent — but I had never once encountered the surname Sakharov in the journals. For what reason had they elected him, let alone at the early age of 32? Our idol Igor Yevgenievich Tamm, whose textbook we were all studying, had only become "immortal" when he was almost twice the age of academician Sakharov and after he had been "sitting it out" as a correspondent member for almost twenty years!

The internet was not in existence at that time, and I asked my greatly respected teacher academician Vladimir Alexandrovich Fok why. "For secret work", he replied. "How could you elect a person as an academician without knowing of his scientific achievement?" I insisted. "I was able to look at his papers in the First department, and I voted for his election without hesitation, said Fok with a cunning smile and with that our conversation ended.

It's a small world! Just a decade later I learned that one of the first, if one can call it that, political protests of Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov was to demand the publication of an article by my teacher academician Fok "Against ignorant criticism of modern theories of physics" (1952), which I, still a student, was reading, in the early days of the so-called Leningrad "samizdat".

By degrees, I discovered that Andrei Dmitrievich had been elected for the idea of the tokamak and for the development of the hydrogen bomb. I had to wait another couple of decades to find out more exactly why.

I remember what difficulty I had in preparing for the ceremonial lecture at the University of Oslo on 21 May 1981, on Sakharov's sixtieth birthday, when he was awarded an honorary doctorate. I had to present him as a scientist and as a person. Even at that time it was still very difficult to discover the details of his scientific achievements.

What an "enfant terrible" Andrei Dmitrievich had been for the Soviet academy I learned from Professor Shafarevich in a tent in the Pamirs. He told me in detail the story of the fracas that had become a legend in the history of the USSR Academy of Sciences (1964), with the election, or more precisely non-election, of a certain Nuzhdin, a Lysenko man, as a correspondent member. There were very likely no bugging devices in the tent where Igor Rostislavovich told me this, pitched some five thousand meters above sea level and Igor Rotislavovich could tell me all the details without any worries. Sakharov's speech was supported by Tamm, then already an academician, and it was denounced by the president of the Academy, and of course by Lysenko himself. In the secret ballot, only 22 academicians cast their vote for the Lysenko man Nuzhdin and, in response to Andrei Sakharov's appeal, 126 against!

Since then, I have paid great attention to any mention of the surname of Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov. I remember his interview with the journalist Ernst Henry, and then, in the summer of 1968, the Sakharov "Reflections", which even in the atmosphere of the Prague spring could be compared to thunder from a clear sky.

After the crushing of the Prague spring by Soviet tanks, I had other concerns. However, my article on Czechoslovak-Soviet relations in physics, which I wrote and published in 1967 in the Czechoslovak physics journal, was due to be published in translation in September 1968 (a month after the occupation of Czechoslovakia) in the West German journal "Die Physikalische Blätter". After a sleepless night, I decided not to refuse publication, but added to it a small postscript in which for the first time in print, I supported the ideas of Andrei Sakharov. I will take the liberty of quoting:

Physicists "bear a special intellectual responsibility for the overweening arrogance of power, demonstrated shamelessly to the whole world in the past by the Hitler regime. The present behaviour of the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, in relation to small and helpless countries, such as for example Vietnam and Czechoslovakia, bears all the hallmarks of this phenomenon. In this context, I would like to make my Soviet colleagues aware of the fact that they are in no way exonerated from moral responsibility for what has happened. We follow their public statements and attitudes very closely: after all they are a component part of that joint responsibility for our future which is borne by the intellectuals of the whole world. In any case, the courageous words of the Soviet academician Sakharov will serve as a sufficient basis for our maintaining good relations with our Soviet colleagues".

This article was the first time I publicly referred to the name of A. D. Sakharov ...

The so-called normalisation in Czechoslovakia brought with it new problems. I was expelled from the nuclear research institute; I became unemployed for some years. For many months I tried in vain to obtain work in my specialist field in my own country. Then I again addressed myself by letter to several Soviet academics, among them Ginzburg, Leontovich and Sakharov. The letters were sent registered.

This is the start of an astonishing story. After two or three weeks, I received a letter from the Academy of Sciences Physical Institute — FIAN:

It read as follows:

Dear Comrade Janouch!

You apparently forgot to put the letter in the envelope, which I received empty.

10.01.1971

Yours sincerely

A. Sakharov,

Member of the Committee for the Rights of Man

Please note that in this letter from FIAN he signs himself not as academician, nor as senior scientist, but as a "Member of the Committee for the Rights of Man".

I replied to academician Sakharov that I had of course put the letter in the envelope, and that I am sending him a new copy and will continue sending it until he confirms receipt.

Soon afterwards, two letters arrived from Moscow. The first was from academician Leontovich who was considering with his colleagues various possibilities for helping me. The second was from Andrei Dmitrievich:

Dear Frantisek Janouch!

I received your letter of 15 January 1971 together with the copy of the first letter. Forgive me for not replying at once, but I have recently been very busy..

I have learnt that Leontovich is taking certain steps to help you... If your situation does not improve, then write to me again. We shall start to consider further steps.

10.03.1971

Yours sincerely

Andrei Sakharov

In September 1973 when I had already been unemployed for almost three years, I supported in the Times newspaper the proposal to award Sakharov the Nobel peace prize. I wanted in some way to react to that scurrilous and slanderous campaign which was unleashed in the Soviet press against Andrei Dmitrievich in the autumn of 1973. In my letter, I drew for the first time a parallel between the worlds in which Nils Bohr and Andrei Sakharov lived. I then sent the letter by telex from Prague: the authorities were not yet "morally" prepared for such insolence on the part of an unemployed physicist. The Times printed my article without delay, and many other Western newspapers reprinted it or commented on it. I ended my article in the Times with the words:

The thoughts of academician Sakharov, his deeply human messages and appeals to humanity are vitally important with regard to our civilisation. For this reason, I consider the proposal to award Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov the Nobel peace prize absolutely correct and I support it.

Prague, 16 September 1973.

F. Janouch, Prague

From that time, Andrei Sakharov became a firm part of my life, and always remained so.

When I went away to Sweden in 1974 and when they deprived me of my Czech nationality, it became possible for me to travel to the Pugwash conference in Kyoto dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Hiroshima. I suggested to Sakharov that he address this respected forum of scientists directly through me. Andrei Dmitrievich agreed, and I read out his message to the considerable surprise and annoyance of the official Soviet delegation.

Later, in 1977, I invited Sakharov to take part in the scientific programme of the major Biennale della Dissenzo in Venice. Andrei Dmitrievich sent very warm greetings and wished us great success in our work.

At the same time, in Venice, I received from him a very important article: "Atomic energy and the freedom of the West".

The point is that all my "pronuclear" lectures in the West ended in dissatisfaction on the part of the "green" parts of the audience: "You are a supporter of nuclear energy. Now academician Sakharov is a genuine dissident. He is against nuclear energy for sure."

What was to be done? It was necessary to send the "genuine" dissident Sakharov a very urgent request, using of course "our" dissident post, and not the USSR post. After a couple of months, I received the article with the above title. I have to say that up to the present day, 30 years later, this article troubles the minds of short-sighted western politicians and their "green" allies. Only in the last year and a half have I distributed it among all the participants of the European forum on nuclear energy (Prague, 28-29 May 2008) and as a new year greeting (2009) to all members of the European Parliament (nearly fifteen hundred copies).

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When A. D. Sakharov received the Nobel peace prize, owing to a fortuitous chain of events I was one of the first to telephone him from Copenhagen, and on 10 December I became one of the small number of personal guests of A. D. Sakharov at the Nobel ceremony in Oslo. There I became personally acquainted with Yelena Georgievna and during the Nobel ceremonies became her "privy counsellor on the delicate problems of modern nuclear physics", as she confesses in the preface which she and Andrei Dmitrievich wrote many years later for the Russian edition of my book "No, I have no regrets".

I must recall one more important episode in our contacts: I received some sort of fees for the publication of the Sakharov articles. I suggested to A. D. Sakharov that part of "his money" be used to help the children of Czech political prisoners who had been sent to prison or lost their jobs as a result of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. For a number of years, via the Charter 77 fund, which I founded in Stockholm, several dozen Czechoslovak families began to receive envelopes from Sweden with hard currency certificates and the following note in Russian:

On behalf of Professor Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov, Full Member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, three times hero of the USSR, several times recipient of the Order of Lenin and USSR state prizes, and also of the Nobel peace price.

To this day, many Czechs and Slovaks still remember the Sakharov money transfers from Stockholm.

Then they exiled Andrei Dmitrievich to Gorky. I gave lectures about him at many universities, for instance at the very prominent CERN physics laboratory in Geneva and even at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. My Chinese colleagues had prepared a surprise for me: my Sakharov lecture was printed in Chinese in the journal "Dialectics". The only place where I was unable to arrange a Sakharov anniversary lecture was Stockholm. Incensed, I then wrote a letter to the permanent secretary of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, the minister of education and to three directors of physics faculties in Stockholm. In my letter, I described the predicament of Academician Sakharov and reminded the neutral Swedish academics that it was their moral duty not to forget Sakharov. As an epigraph to my letter, I quoted the words of Bruno Jasieński, shown above. Bruno Jasieński and my reference to Wallenberg had their effect, and in May 1981 a ceremonial Sakharov seminar was also arranged in Stockholm.

It was important that the Soviet authorities should feel that Andrei Dmitrievich was not forgotten in exile in Gorky. A few months after the end of the Moscow Olympics, when it became clear that the Soviet authorities were intending to "forget" Sakharov in Gorky, I wrote the following letter to Western colleagues, which was published in the leading scientific journals of the world: *Physics Today*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and *Nature*. I wrote:

The Olympic Games have ended. Also at an end are hopes that Academician Andrei Sakharov will be allowed to return to Moscow from exile in Gorky. Sakharov has already been in this exile for more than nine months. He is not allowed to take part in seminars, or attend lectures; he has no access to scientific information, so important for his research. Relatives bring him books and journals from Moscow, and this takes weeks and even months. Since January, his colleagues from the Lebedev institute have only been able to visit him three times.

In spite of this, he has written three scientific papers, English translations of which have been published in the USA, at Stanford University: "Estimation of the quark-gluon binding constant", "Cosmo-

logical models of the universe with reversal of the arrow of time” and “A mass formula for mesons and baryons”.

It seems to me that the time has come when the scientific community of the whole world must intensify its efforts to help our distinguished colleague. From Sakharov’s last communication, it is clear that what he lacks most of all is information about what is happening in physics.

It should not require any effort for physicists to overcome this information barrier. Let theoretical institutes, laboratories and groups around the world start to send Sakharov their preprints, lectures and reports. Send them registered, with “recorded delivery” in red, to the following address:

Professor Andrei Sakharov, Prospekt Gagarina 214, kv. 3, Shcherbinka 2, Gorky, USSR.

Do not be hesitant in requiring your local post office to investigate in the event that the red card with Andrei Sakharov’s signature does not come back to you within about one month. Your local post office is obliged, in accordance with the international postal agreement, to carry out an investigation, and in the event that there is no proof that the mail was delivered to the addressee, to pay you monetary compensation.

This measure, carried out on a world-wide scale, will not only provide Andrei Sakharov with essential scientific information, but will also bring him substantial moral support. It will also be important for the Soviet authorities: they will have to admit that the matter of Andrei Sakharov is by no means forgotten by the world scientific community..

František Janouch, Research Institute for Physics, Stockholm, Sweden

My appeal was successful: hundreds, maybe thousands of western colleagues began to send their reprints to the town of Gorky. Some wrote to me that they had received a postcard from Sakharov or even a greeting on the postal confirmation of receipt. Andrei Dmitrievich later told me that there had been “many” preprints.

Only after 1987, when I ceased to be “persona non grata”, and after 17 years was again able to visit the USSR, Andrei Sakharov and I finally met, and in 1987–89 we saw one another many times.

I spoke to Andrei Dmitrievich for the last time on 24 November 1989, by telephone. I had booked a call to him for half past nine in the evening, Stockholm time. While waiting for the call, I learned that there was a “revolution” in Prague: the entire leadership of the Czechoslovak communist party had resigned. My wife and I opened the champagne to celebrate this event, and when, finally, they connected me to Moscow, virtually the whole conversation with Andrei Dmitrievich was about the recent events in Czechoslovakia.

It turned out that Sakharov did not yet know about the recent “tremendous” (as he put it) events. He was overjoyed and wanted to hear all the details. Indeed, I almost forgot why I had telephoned him, but Sakharov himself suddenly remembered about this: “yes, I promised to write a foreword to your book. At the Foreign Literature publishers, they wanted me to dictate the foreword to them on a tape recorder, but I would prefer to write it with my own hand. The foreword will be short, I have a great deal of work at present in preparation for the session of the Congress of People’s Deputies. I shall write it immediately after the end of the congress...”

For a long time I thought that the Sakharov foreword to my book had remained unwritten. Only on 10 February did I discover that Yelena Georgievna had found in a file containing a Russian translation of

my book “No, I have no regrets” a draft of Andrei Dmitrievich’s foreword. It was difficult for me to contain my emotion: mine was probably the last book read by Andrei Dmitrievich, and his foreword one of the last, if not the very last, text written by him.

On the morning of 14 December 1989, the new prime minister of Czechoslovakia Marian Chalfa received George Soros, Karl Schwarzenberg and myself in Prague. I informed the prime minister of the activities of the Charter 77 fund in Stockholm and told him that we intended to transfer its activity to Czechoslovakia and asked him to facilitate this.

We went directly from the prime minister to the Prague hotel “Inter-continental” for the inaugural session of the Czechoslovak subsidiary of the “Charter 77” fund. I made the proposal that Andrei Sakharov be made one of the honorary trustees of this organisation...

“Academician Sakharov passed away last night”, one of those present told me.

For a few minutes, I was not able to concentrate and continue to conduct this meeting. The news, catching me in the heat of the “velvet revolution” in Prague, was so cruel and senseless that I could not believe that it was true.

When I, finally, recovered myself somewhat, I was overcome by a feeling of deep sadness that now I would never be able to tell Andrei Dmitrievich about my impressions from revolutionary Prague...

* * *

“Andrei Sakharov is no longer with us. To assess his significance — as a politician, as a man and as a scientist — is not easy. The legacy that he has left us is truly colossal. Years, probably, will pass before we are in a position fully to comprehend the phenomenon of Sakharov. As a physicist, he had extraordinary scientific talent, intuition and originality. Sakharov the politician was courageous, uncompromising and far-seeing, and stubborn. His stubbornness was often a source of incomprehension, astonishment and even censure. In his great human heart there was room for all those who were insulted, who were prosecuted, denounced, sent to prisons, mercilessly beaten, or sent into exile. He always found time, and a kindly word, and if there was need also money to provide support, and also courageous speeches in defence of prisoners of conscience.

The untimely departure from life of Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov left in us who knew him a feeling of profound grief and irretrievable loss. His moral authority, his crystal purity (as Nikita Khrushchev once said of him), his integrity, his courage, which helped him defend his views and fight for them will be much missed in that critical situation in which the USSR now finds itself. Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov was the conscience not only of the Soviet Union, but also of all humanity.”

To these words of mine, written in 1990 for the anthology “He lived among us...”, I have nothing to add — I could sign my name under them even today, twenty years later.

Thank you for your attention!

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