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FOR DISPLAY (PP. 1-2)

This week 35 nations met to review the 1975 Helsinki accord which deals in part with scientific cooperation. JOHN CHARAP writes an open letter to a Soviet colleague at the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna, near Moscow

KRASNYI ARKHIV

DEAR VOLODYA,

It's some time since last I wrote to you, and even longer since last I had a letter from you. I want to try once again to find a way to revive our attempt to set up some sort of a scheme for visitors from Dubna to London, but I think it is important that I tell you frankly what I feel are the problems and difficulties that may prevent it from coming to fruition.

Much has happened in the last four years since we first discussed this during my visit to Dubna: it is no longer so easy to be optimistic about scientific collaboration and exchange between our countries, and I cannot in my own mind separate my very warm personal regard for you and my wish to see you again in London as a guest in my laboratory from the broader issues of the rights and freedoms — and responsibilities — of scientists. Let me try to explain.

One weekend during my stay in Dubna I went to visit a young astrophysicist in Moscow. He had worked at the Lebedev Institute, but had been dismissed from his job as a scientist and could only find work privately, teaching English, doing some translation, etc. You will probably have guessed what was his situation: he had applied for a visa to emigrate to Israel.

As I was to learn happens in most of such cases, he had been excluded from your scientific community as a consequence. It is not a crime to wish to leave one's country: it is a right, proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which your country like mine has signed: "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

My young friend had committed no crime, nor have the other "refuseniks" who wait year after year for permission to leave. Yet it is as though they had some contagious disease, for they are cut off from any contact with their erstwhile scientific colleagues. You must surely know of the seminars held by them in private apartments, brave efforts to keep themselves active as scientists. There is nothing illegal about those meetings. Yet I know of only one Soviet scientist not himself a refusenik who has ever attended one, and he was Andrei Sakharov.

Four years ago when I was in Dubna I recall the slogans and exhortations to support the Helsinki agreements which were given such prominence in the USSR. I'm sure that you and I agreed that the emphasis placed on scientific exchange and cooperation was very welcome. After all, scientists were among the first to take

advantage of the post-Stalin thaw to build real bridges of cooperation and friendship between our countries, and the sense of community and common purpose in science has more than just rhetorical meaning.

Scientific cooperation requires freedom to travel, to meet other scientists, to communicate, to read their papers and to have one's own papers published and disseminated. It seems to me quite obvious that alongside such provisions there should be the other agreements on human rights. How can it be objectionable if individuals seek to monitor the way that international agreements are in fact fulfilled? Was it a crime to set up informal groups to report on cases where they were not?

I was not surprised that fellow scientists like Yuri Orlov were amongst those to found the Helsinki Watch Group in Moscow in 1976. Nor should you have been surprised at the shock and sense of outrage expressed by scientists in the West when he and others were arrested the next year and sentenced for those actions.

Why were so few voices of protest heard from within the Soviet Union? It is painful to me that I find it so hard to ask that question: why should I try so hard not to embarrass you? I hope our friendship permits me to ask it. Do you know what has happened to Orlov since his arrest? He is desperately ill, and has been again punished with six months in the

"cooler cell" at the labour camp. It is an affront to the Helsinki agreements that he should be in gaol at all: but how do you justify that the three scientific papers he has written since his arrest have been confiscated, or that the scientific papers sent to him by colleagues in the West have never reached him? Let me give you his address: 618810 Perm Region, Chusovskot, Vsevolok Station, Establishment VS 389/37.

Perhaps you or some of my other friends at Dubna could send him some scientific papers. It is not illegal for you to do so.

This January we were again outraged, this time by the exile to Gorki of Andrei Sakharov. You know his work as well as I do. I regret that

In the Western press he is usually described as the father of the Soviet H-bomb. But particle physicists like you and me know also the important and exciting work he continues to do on the quark model and on the theory of the early universe. You will also understand how difficult it must be for him to work where he is cut off from his colleagues and his books.

Scientists here in the West are often unaware of how difficult it is for someone to have access to a research establishment or university building in the USSR; but you will know that Sakharov is not permitted access to any of the scientific libraries. Gorki. His address is: Gorki, Sherbinka-2, Gagarin Street, 214, Apt 3.

He would also welcome prints and papers.

In your library at Dubna you can read journals like Nature and Physics Today; I hope that you have seen articles in them which report the world-wide reaction to the imprisonment of Orlov, of computer scientist Anat Shcharansky, the exile of Sakharov and the continuing refusal of visas to scores of scientists who are not political dissidents, but simply wish to live elsewhere. Or those pages missing from your library copies?

Did you know that 8,000 scientists have pledged themselves not to visit the Soviet Union nor to welcome Soviet scientists to their laboratories to protest at the treatment of Sakharov, Orlov, Shcharansky? Did you know

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that 250 Fellows of the Royal Society signed a statement (published in the Times on November 4) to protest the treatment of Jewish "refuseniks." These are not "cold-warriors," these are scientists who have worked long and hard to improve relations between our countries. But silence is complicity and human rights are my concern, and yours too.

You probably know what happened last summer at Madison, Wisconsin. The concluding paper at the High Energy Physics Conference there was to have been given by Lev Okun. He had a visa, airline tickets, hotel reservations. Yet he was not allowed to board the plane at Moscow.

Why? The Helsinki agreements make frequent

reference to facilitating participation by scientists in conferences, etc. And the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics as well as its parent body, the International Conference of Scientific Unions, have argued that countries which restrict their scientists from attending such meetings should not be chosen to host them. Do you think the 1984 conference should be held in the Soviet Union?

I didn't really mean to go on at such length and on so many issues. But I hope you understand a little better why it was that when I wrote to you last just after Sakharov's exile I said "I am sad that in present circumstances I consider it would not be appropriate to try to get . . . an extension" to the offer I held from our Science Research Council of funds to pay for visitors from Dubna to London.

Let me remind you that I received the offer of the grant from the SRC in the summer of 1977 and that for two years I tried to reach agreement on who should be allowed to come. I know that permission to travel abroad is a much-prized reward in the Soviet Union; maybe the difficulty was that I didn't leave the choice entirely up to you.

And when we did agree a list of suggestions I was told "the visits of our senior physicists . . . have been so tightly scheduled . . . that unfortunately we are unable to propose any names for visiting your College."

Tell me Volodya, who makes it so difficult for us scientists to work together? I would still like to invite you to come here. I have heard indirectly that your colleague Viktor may be visiting London next August, and I would suggest that you come some time after his visit. Our term begins in October and my students would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you some of the things I have written about.

I must make one further imposition on our friendship. Because I believe that it is shameful that the issues about which I have written should be discussed only in privacy, I have taken the liberty of publishing this letter in a London newspaper. There is nothing to fear: it would have been read before it reached you anyway.

My most sincere good wishes.

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