



American Academy of Arts and Sciences

165 Allandale Street

Jamaica Plain Station, Boston, Massachusetts 02130

Telephone 617 522-2400

September 14, 1973

Dr. Mstislav V. Keldysh, President
Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.
Leninsky Prospekt 14
Moscow V-71, U.S.S.R.

Dear Academician Keldysh:

I am writing as President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on behalf of its elected Council with regard to the reports of pressure being brought to bear against Soviet scientists and writers who have been publicly critical of some aspects of Soviet policy, reports which you probably realize have been very disturbing to the American intellectual community. Virtually all scientists and scholars in the United States have been pleased and heartened by the substantial improvement in the relationship between our two countries in recent years and the many prospects for increased scientific, cultural, scholarly and technological exchanges. Through such programs as the Pugwash Conferences, members of the Academy have contributed to the establishment of this new relationship, and they wish to see it broadened still further. The Pugwash Conferences, which provided the first opportunity for Soviet and American scientific cooperation, have become a model for exchanging views, increasing understanding, and initiating cooperative programs. From these experiences we believe that our two scientific communities have come to stand for many of the same basic human ideals and that a strong platform has been constructed from which many more cooperative ventures in the interest of human progress in the future can be launched.

I write to you because the reports of recent events make us fearful that these constructive results achieved so laboriously after many years are being put in jeopardy. Although members of the American intellectual community strongly support the current détente and international cooperation, they have a fundamental commitment to the freedom of scientific inquiry. This freedom includes the right of scholars to express their views without reprisals from their home governments or restrictions on their freedom to travel for scholarly purposes. As long as the present situation continues, American scientists and scholars cannot help but feel that their involvement in Soviet-American programs implies acquiescence in the harassment of some of their friends and colleagues in the U.S.S.R. Even if the form of scientific and scholarly cooperation remains, it could become nothing more than a hollow shell if many talented and productive scholars are unwilling to participate in such exchanges.

Dr. Mstislav V. Keldysh, President
Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.
September 14, 1973
Page 2

Therefore, I feel that it is important that I tell you that very many American scientists and scholars are profoundly disturbed about the public reports of the treatment of two distinguished Soviet intellectuals, Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, both Foreign Honorary Members of the American Academy, and the pressure being brought to bear on them and on those who share, or even merely refrain from public condemnation of, their views. We hope that on reflection you will be willing to use the great prestige of the Soviet Academy to persuade the authorities in your government that any harassment of Academician Sakharov and others could jeopardize the recent trend towards détente as well as the implementation of Secretary Brezhnev's proposals for scientific cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union which were received with such enthusiasm by American scientists.

Indeed, we harbor the hope that the attack on Sakharov signed by forty Academicians was a product of haste and pressure from other circles and not a true reflection of the principles that must guide Soviet science if it is to continue its imaginative and constructive course. We realize that in a legal sense this is an internal affair of the Soviet Union, and we wish to avoid either the appearance or the fact of interfering in your internal affairs. But a growing détente that depends so much on an increasing commitment to cooperation and joint programs of research and technological development requires greater understanding and respect among our scientists and technologists. It is here that the actions to which I refer are taking a heavy toll and the advances made over the last decade are eroding. Thus we would be remiss if we failed to make you aware of the seriousness with which the U.S. intellectual community views these recent events, and to point out that no amount of official goodwill can compensate for the disillusionment of the scientists and scholars on whom the implementation of these official agreements depends.

In closing, let me recall that many times in recent years American intellectuals have been vigorous in urging restraint and moderation upon their government in areas where they felt that peace and international cooperation were jeopardized by its policies. I and my colleagues urge you also to use your great influence to protect those conditions which make it possible for the scientists of our two countries to work together for the common goals of mankind.

Sincerely,

Harvey Brooks

Harvey Brooks
President
American Academy of Arts and Sciences

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