

## The International Sakharov Conference --- Luncheon Speakers

### Elena Bonner, Tatiana Yankelevich, Edward Kline

**Elena Bonner** – *Bonner served as a nurse in World War II. After graduating from the First Leningrad Medical Institute, she worked as a pediatrician, a district doctor, and a free-lance author and editor. She married Sakharov on January 7, 1972, and she shared his life and thoughts until his death in December 1989. In 1993, Yale University awarded Bonner the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws as a “defender of human rights, democrat, patriot, formidable practitioner of the art of ethical politics, scourge of the oppressor and shield of the oppressed.” Two of her books have been published in English: Alone Together (Alfred Knopf, 1986) and Mothers and Daughters (Alfred Knopf, 1992).*

I would like to thank the Davis Center for organizing this conference dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of Sakharov's *Reflections on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*. I thank the Sakharov Foundation for its financial support, and thank the American Academy of Arts and Sciences for its hospitality. I'd like to recall another anniversary: 20 years ago, in November 1988, when Sakharov traveled abroad for the first time, his first speech was delivered in this very hall.

Luncheon speakers should follow two strict rules.

First, they should be brief since the audience is hungry and wants to eat. If people have already been fed, the speech should be brief since blood rushes from the head to the stomach after eating and the audience easily falls asleep.

The second rule that luncheon speakers must keep in mind is that everything intelligent and on topic will be said during the working sessions, so they are permitted to take free flight.

My flight will take off with some recollections. Once, early in our acquaintance, Sakharov asked me what I thought about his Treatise (*Traktat*) -- that's what he called *Reflections*. But I didn't really have an opinion, I had read it, like everyone else in our circle. It was boring. Everything seemed to be correct. Nuclear war is bad. Coexistence (you have to have it, such an unbending word) is good. You have to fight hunger. Energy is important. Limiting the birth rate is also probably a good thing. The environment is in awful shape. Convergence -- that was something incomprehensible. It seemed okay. But only the part about freedom touched my inner feelings, in particular the epigraph:

*Only he is worthy of life and freedom  
Who does battle for them each day.*

I thought to myself, Sakharov is an academician, but he's like Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya<sup>1</sup> (she had this very epigraph in her diary) -- most likely, he's a good man. So it was the epigraph that I mentioned to Sakharov.

Our first serious conversation about *Reflections* took place in 1975, when Sakharov wrote *My Country and the World*. But at the time, I could not formulate coherently why his treatise was off-putting for me. I understood only much later, after Andrei Dmitrievich died, what was "off-putting" was the language.

What I am about to say may not be easy to comprehend for someone whose native language is not Russian. There are two pronouns, WE and THEY. If I say indignantly, for example, about events in the Caucasus, "Think what are THEY doing, and WE are going along with!" then any of my fellow citizens will understand that THEY means the authorities, and WE means ordinary people, or as they are called more and more often today, the ELECTORATE -- an unpleasant word, which turns living human beings into objects of bureaucratic statistics.

In addition to our use of WE and THEY, we can speak of THEIR language and OUR language. The Treatise was written in THEIR language. Sakharov, when he wrote the Treatise, was already imbued with human concerns, but he still did not know OUR language, the people's language. And he came to this slowly, and with difficulty. But he did come. Many of the essay writers of the 1960s traveled this same path. The Treatise written in THEIR language -- the language of the government -- turned out to be the peak reached by the generation of the 1960s, not because it was so profound, but due to many circumstances which favored this rather brief essay. *Reflections* descended from the upper spheres, the author by the lights of those times was nearly a god, and the essay reached readers almost simultaneously with Soviet tanks entering Prague. The 1960s generation faded away, and the era of the dissidents began. Even the fact that the essay was written in THEIR language added to its popularity.

Sakharov's favorite ideas from the Treatise were Intellectual Freedom, Nuclear Energy, and Convergence. Well, nothing needs to be said about freedom. Some people need it. Some don't -- they have "bread and circuses". As in the past, there isn't enough bread for everybody, but there are plenty of circuses. The more of them, the worse they become. Things are bad with energy. There will be a substantive discussion at the conference by specialists about this. I will only remind you that in 1977, Sakharov wrote an article

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<sup>1</sup> Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, an 18-year-old Russian partisan, was captured, tortured and hanged by the German invaders in November 1941. She became a national heroine when a *Pravda* reporter published her story.

"Nuclear Energy and the Freedom of the West". The title speaks for itself. For 31 years, Western countries were going to convene a meeting to discuss the subject. Now it seems they are finally convening, after they have become completely dependent on imported oil and gas and, as a consequence, the freedom of the democratic countries of the West hangs by a thread. This energy dependence is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the world's current financial crisis.

In 1988, Sakharov wrote an article "Pluralism Is Convergence," published in *XXth Century and Peace*, No. 1, 1989, and it was also in 1989 that they finally got up the nerve to publish *Reflections* in the USSR. Sakharov wrote a one-page preface for this first publication of his famous essay in his motherland. Sakharov wrote:

"I now regard this work as eclectic and pretentious... Nevertheless, the basic thoughts remain dear to me. This essay contains in concise form a thesis which seems very important to me about the coming together of the socialist and capitalist systems, accompanied by democratization, demilitarization, and social, scientific and technical progress as the only alternative to the destruction of humankind."

Did this coming together -- convergence -- succeed? I ask myself that question, as many do. And looking at what I see today in America, and comparing it to what is going on at home in Russia, I reply, NOT YET!

The U.S. election campaign saga, which differs in style from the Moscow kind, is just as non-transparent and not really democratic taking into account the many millions of dollars spent on it. Russia's health care system has collapsed. In the U.S., half the population doesn't have medical insurance. The level of education in the U.S. is falling and education is growing more and more expensive. In Russia, education, which used to be free, has deteriorated and become costly. In Russia, they rob you, and no one trusts anyone. In the U.S., everything relied on trust, and above all, on trust in the banks. But in a flash, the banks collapsed, and it turned out they had been lying to their customers for years. Yesterday on television, we saw a repentant Greenspan. It was a bitter scene. You get the impression that convergence is complete. In fact, it has become "the opposite" -- it has united not everything that was best, but everything that was worst from the two social systems.

Is Sakharov needed today? This question is often asked of me by all kinds of curious correspondents -- and I can't answer it. Just as the poet cannot answer the question he asks himself: "But who are we and where did we come from/ When from all those years/ Only hearsay remains/ And we have departed this life."

As for an answer to the title of today's conference, "Russia Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" I can only affirm that Russia was, Russia is, and Russia will be. But what kind of country it will be, I don't know.

**Tatiana Yankelevich** – *Director of the Sakharov Program on Human Rights at Harvard University's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. As a result of KGB pressure, Yankelevich emigrated to the United States in 1977, campaigning here and in Europe on behalf of her step-father, Andrei Sakharov, until his release from exile in Gorky in December 1986. She was Assistant Director of the Andrei Sakharov Archives and Human Rights Center at Brandeis University until she and the Sakharov Archives moved to Harvard in August 2004.*

First of all I'd like to express my appreciation to the people who worked diligently to arrange this conference in an effective and civilized manner. These individuals usually function behind the scenes, but I'm truly thankful to them and would like to name them: Nancy Roth Remington, an extremely well-organized and thoughtful person of extraordinary foresight who kept me as much on schedule as possible and continually reminded me of all the important concerns that needed to be kept in mind. There was also the lovely Emily Van Wyck, a calm, composed, and very efficient administrative assistant. I am truly grateful to three Harvard students -- Laura, Olga, and Micah -- who are helping out at the conference.

I'm tremendously appreciative of Dick Wilson and Ed Kline. These are two people whose intellectual guidance and pragmatic sense and sheer will, especially in the case of Dick Wilson, and positive thinking in the case of Ed Kline, have made this conference what it is.

On the institutional level, I would like to thank Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies; Harvard's Department of Physics and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. And special thanks to the Andrei Sakharov Foundation and USAID for their financial support of this conference and for their continuing interest in the Sakharov Program on Human Rights.

I lack the wit of Elena Bonner, although I am her daughter. So I'm going to start with a witticism borrowed from Vladimir Voinovich, a good friend of many years, who, back in 1993, at the International Sakharov Tribunal in Lisbon, Portugal, said something along these lines. For some reason, he never heard people say "I'm a friend of Brezhnev" or "I'm a friend of Andropov." But he had heard many people say "I'm a friend of Sakharov." And these people may not even have known Sakharov personally, but they feel they are, or feel they wish to be, friends of Sakharov. I believe that for the two days of this conference, we have had a gathering a people who are or wish to be friends of

Sakharov. And I hope this feeling will continue for all of us when we go our separate ways after this conference.

I also want to follow up on something my mother said. She mentioned Sakharov's talk in this auditorium in November 1988, one of the very rare occurrences when she stayed behind in Moscow and did not accompany Sakharov. It was the first time that Sakharov had been allowed out of the Soviet Union, his first trip abroad. I won't speculate why she was advised not to travel with him.

It was I who greeted Sakharov at Logan Airport, and I remember my 13-year-old daughter saying her grandfather "I wish I knew you better." The very first press conference that Sakharov gave on his trip was in the auditorium where this conference is taking place, and I had the honor to be the translator, along with Suzanne Miller who is present here today.

This place gives me a sense of continuity. Yet, I'm acutely aware that there has been little continuity of traditions and values over the last twenty years in my native country Russia, or in my new country the United States of America. That is sad for me.

One more anniversary I want to mention is that today is the fifth anniversary of the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, which led to his highly controversial trial and conviction. His case raises my concern for Russia and the path it has taken in recent years.

Now, acting on the assumption that we are friends here, I want to share with you some of my possibly disjointed thoughts about Sakharov and Russia, and where it's all going. I have just seventeen minutes remaining to do so.

As I have mentioned, time is "out of joint," as Hamlet said, and the established fabric of civil order is crumbling. In times like these, our attention is drawn to unique human personalities, to individuals whose greatness transcends their time on earth. I think that Andrei Sakharov was such a personality, such a phenomenon.

As my mother noted yesterday, there was much continuity in Sakharov's ideas on convergence and other public issues from 1968 until his passing in 1989, but his thinking was not static. Sakharov further developed the concepts of *Reflections* in his 1975 Nobel Peace lecture "Peace, Progress and Human Rights." He believed that those three goals are indissolubly linked; it is impossible to achieve one of them if the other two are slighted. Many speakers at this conference have spoken about this.

I want to remind you that the first time the Russian people saw Sakharov on their television screens was in June 1989 after he had been elected to the first Congress of People's Deputies. People abroad, were able to see him two years earlier when he emerged from Gorky exile in December 1986 and Western television stations almost tore him apart to get interviews with him. It was amazing how soon after Sakharov appeared on Russian television, he won the trust of so many viewers, something which heads of state, international organizations, and a majority of public figures fail to accomplish. This is what I believe Tim Colton meant when he spoke about a "non-constituted leader." I believe Sakharov was such a leader.

At the first Congress of People's Deputies in June 1989, Sakharov appealed for an end to the Communist Party's dictatorship and a radical transformation of the Soviet system. Only a few days before his death that December, he completed a draft for a Constitution of the Union of Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia. In the photograph here in the corner of this room, you can see some of the people who flooded the Luzhniki Stadium grounds during Sakharov's funeral service. Tens of thousands of people came and stood in the freezing rain to hear the eulogies of Sakharov and bid him farewell. Many carried signs calling for abolition of the Communist Party's monopoly of power. Three months later the Congress of People's Deputies ended the dictatorship of the Communist Party by repealing Article 6 of the Soviet Constitution.

Sakharov had earlier been slandered and reviled in the USSR's mass media. He had received some 6,000 letters from Soviet citizens attacking him, asking why he hated his people so much, why he wanted another war. True, some of the letters were dictated by the KGB, but many of them were not. Despite the disinformation campaign directed against him by the authorities, Sakharov was able to win the people's trust very quickly when he returned from exile.

There were three distinct periods in Sakharov's life. First, there was the period when he concentrated on nuclear physics and became "the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb." After he was fired from his work on weapons following publication of *Reflections* in 1968, he became dissident number one, and then, during the last three years of his life, he became the Public Tribune, the People's Deputy who personified the democratic aspirations of the country. But in reality, even though there were three seemingly disjointed periods, throughout his entire life, he remained a scientist. I want to quote my mother. Once she was told, "Your husband is a famous dissident." "No," she said, "my husband is not a dissident. He is a physicist." He did important work in both theoretical and applied physics, and it was his scientist's sense of responsibility for the consequences of his work that drove him to define his position on political and social issues and to act on his conclusions.

It was not easy for Sakharov to abandon the standard views of a Soviet scientist, to become a strong, uncompromising critic of his own society, and to develop the concept of a new world order in which human rights would play a key role.

I am often asked what kind of person Sakharov was. He was devoid of self-aggrandizement, of pretense, of any complexes of grandeur or of inferiority that often plague extraordinary persons. He knew his worth, and never indulged in false modesty. Some people thought him timid, that he did not properly understand his role in the world. But that wasn't true. He wasn't arrogant, but he understood his significance very well. And that was why he acutely felt both his right and his responsibility to address heads of state. Some people would ask sarcastically, what makes Sakharov think he has the right to criticize our leaders and heads of state? He felt that responsibility, and that responsibility is what gave him the higher mandate that was mentioned yesterday. He addressed heads of state and international organizations with his ideas, demands, warnings, and as he said, "I have tried to be worthy of my destiny."

He tried to explain to the Soviet leaders that infringement of civil liberties and the decline of the economy would sooner or later bring stagnation. Instead of heeding the voice of reason, the authorities kept attacking him and created a martyr, or "dissident number one." I would like to quote Berthold Brecht, "Woe to the country that needs heroes." I would also like to quote Sergei Kovalev, Sakharov's comrade-in-arms and close friend. On the day of Sakharov's funeral, he said, "A long while ago, a man with a sour mind labeled Sakharov a simpleton, and unbeknownst to himself, unwittingly spoke the truth. Sakharov's entire life was marked by complete, overwhelming, and unheard of simplicity. His mind worked profoundly and clearly. He spoke his mind, and acted in accordance with his thoughts and words. It was that simple."

Now I will add a few words to what has been said here about Sakharov's last major statement "The Inevitability of Perestroika." It was a comprehensive statement, setting forth his views on major issues. It refutes the common opinion of those who believe that he was unrealistic in his expectations and hopes. Sakharov did not anticipate an easy, swift transition to democracy and to a market economy. He recognized, and I quote, "serious, economic, psychological and organizational difficulties and obstacles are inevitable." He was, however, "convinced of the absolute historical necessity of perestroika.... It's like war. Victory is a must."

I ask myself: Did we win? Who won? What was won? Are Sakharov and his legacy a meaningful part of civic consciousness? Does Russia understand that it needs Sakharov or his ideas today? Many of his hopes were realized in Russia, at least temporarily.

Russia was well on the road to freedom, democracy, human rights, and a market economy, and people hoped that the gains were irreversible.

Although some changes seem to be irreversible, some have already been taken away, and still others seem vulnerable. Unfortunately, Russia is not as firmly on the democratic path as Sakharov thought it would be by this date, and his legacy in Russia is mixed at best. I am sad to see that maybe Russia doesn't need Sakharov after all. Polls show Stalin's popularity is on the rise. It seems to me that indifference, or perhaps cynicism prevails among the intelligentsia, resulting in impotence, and that leads to a dead end. Maybe when this becomes clear, people may remember Sakharov.

I know some people still do. When I recall the faces of the young scientists who gathered to demand that Sakharov be put on the Soviet Academy of Sciences's ballot at a 1989 rally outside the Academy's headquarters, I know these people exist. But I wonder what they are thinking and doing today. I'm not calling on them to risk their lives. I hope they and the people who have joined them in the recent "marches of dissent" do not have to risk their lives or suffer unfair penalties for expressing their sense of civic responsibility and having their say on civic issues.

I will leave you with Sakharov's often repeated affirmation, to which I fully subscribe, that his belief in the hidden strength of the human spirit gave him hope, even when events in his country and the world alarmed him.

Thank you very much.

We are fortunate that the most private individual here has agreed to say a few words. He was a rare friend of Andrei Sakharov, who was actively involved in everything having to do with Sakharov's defense. He met Sakharov for the first time in 1987, after Sakharov was released from exile. It is Ed Kline, and I'm really happy that he has agreed to speak.

**Edward Kline** – *Retired chairman of Kline Brothers Company Department Stores. He is president of The Andrei Sakharov Foundation and of Chekhov Publishing Corporation. He is author of Moskovsky komitet prav chelovek, Moscow, 2004.*

First of all I'd like to thank Tanya, not for her introduction, although it's nice to hear kind words, but for organizing this conference which has, in my opinion, been a great success. I would also like to thank Professor Wilson, who first suggested convening this conference and who arranged this wonderful place for the conference. I thank the personnel of the Davis Center and all who helped to organize and administer this conference for a job well done.

Most of all, I would like to thank Andrei Sakharov. Because it's he and his name that have brought so many distinguished people here and made the excellent quality of this conference possible.

Instead of quoting Sakharov, I will quote my friend, Valery Chalidze, who introduced me to Sakharov *in absentia*, when we were co-editors of *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*. He said, "Quiet diplomacy works on occasion, but silence never works."

The message we should carry away from the Panel we have just heard is that Russian-American relations are in bad shape. We're not going to have a nuclear war, but it seems to me totally unnecessary for Russia and America to engage in the confrontation that is now going on, and there are many reasons why we should restore the cooperation that Ambassador Matlock, Ambassador Miller, Vladimir Pechatnov, and Svetlana Savranskaya spoke about today. I hope that the persons here who have influence on American policy will speak out and urge a prompt re-examination of our policies involving Russia, taking due regard for American and Russian interests and the mutual benefits which would result from a more cooperative relationship.

I thank all the people who spoke, but a few made extraordinary efforts to participate. One was Vladimir Pechatnov, who cancelled a class to pick up his visa at the very last moment, flew to Boston yesterday from Geneva, and will return tomorrow to Moscow. It was important that the current Russian position on relations with America be represented, and Vladimir did that very ably. I'd like to thank Professor Goldman, who was in New York on Tuesday, on Thursday flew to Colorado, returned to Cambridge last night at about 1:00 AM, and chaired the first session today.

I'd also like to thank all the participants, all the guests who gave meaning and breadth to the conference. I think it was successful in deepening our understanding of Sakharov's legacy, and I'm very proud that the Sakharov Foundation took part in it.