

Foreword

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This volume, which is the sixth volume in the *Annals* to originate from the Moscow Sunday Refusnik Seminar, brings to a happy end a unique chapter in the history of the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. This chapter began with the publication in 1980 of volume 337, entitled *Third International Conference on Collective Phenomena*. I quote from my Foreword to that volume:

In December 1978, I participated, together with two other American, seven French, one British, and about thirty Russian scientists, in a most unusual conference in Moscow. Five other American scientists who wished to participate had their visas to the Soviet Union revoked ten days before the meeting. Some Russian scientists living outside Moscow were similarly prevented from attending; other Russians who participated did so in the face of threats and warnings from the Soviet authorities. . . .

The conference was an extension of the Moscow Sunday Seminar, which is no ordinary seminar. Indeed, it is often referred to by Soviet authorities as the Nonexistent Seminar; the present conference was, likewise, flatly stated by the official newspaper *Trud* to be a nonexistent Western fabrication.

The conference described above “took place in a very warm atmosphere in the rather small living room of the apartment of ‘refusniks’ Viktor and Irina Brailovsky on Vernadskova Prospect.”

The next publication, volume 373 of the *Annals*, entitled *Fourth International Conference on Collective Phenomena*, appeared in 1981. I quote again from the Foreword:

The Fourth International Conference on Collective Phenomena took place, like the preceding ones, not in a well-appointed academic lecture hall but in a cramped living room in a Moscow apartment under the discomforting surveillance of the KGB. Yet the room, indeed, the whole apartment, was full to overflowing with both local and foreign scientists, and the papers presented, as can be seen in this volume, were of high quality and interest. . . .

Unfortunately, the situation has worsened since the April 1980 conference. Viktor Brailovsky, the organizer and conference chairman, was arrested in November of that year and subsequently convicted of “defaming the Soviet Union.” He was sentenced to five years of exile. The charges against him were based on his role in the publication of a short-lived unofficial magazine *Jews in the USSR*. The seminar itself, being “legal” by Soviet law, was not officially cited against him. There are, however, strong reasons to believe that the Seminar was, indeed, a cause of Dr. Brailovsky’s problems. The Seminar has since been forcibly prevented from taking place on many occasions and its future is uncertain. There have also been other arrests of many dissident and some refusnik scientists.

Volume 410, the next publication in the series, was published in 1983. It is dedicated to Victor Brailovsky. This was during the worst time in the situation of the *refusniks* as seen from the following quotes from that Foreword:

There are, at present, several hundred (perhaps many more) *refusnik* scientists in the Soviet Union: biologists, chemists, computer scientists, economists, mathematicians, physicists, *etc.* They live in a kind of limbo which is sometimes quite close to hell. Almost all of them have either been demoted to low-level jobs or lost their scientific positions altogether. Some of them have even had their degrees removed retroactively, just for applying to leave the country. A number of them are in labor camps or exile. In all cases they are cut off from the normal scientific interactions essential to a productive scientific life. The claim Soviet authorities sometimes make, that all who wished to emigrate have done so, is patently false. . . .

. . . The present volume . . . consists of papers by both *refusnik* and Western scientists that might have been presented at the conference or a seminar. . . .

The last note in this volume is the errata to a paper by Yuri Orlov published in the proceedings of the previous conference. Orlov never saw galleys of his paper—in fact, he never saw the translation.

The series continued with volumes 452 and 491. Volume 491 appeared in 1987 and is dedicated to Yacov Al'pert. The Foreword there reads as follows:

This is the fifth volume of papers by persecuted scientists from the Soviet Union and by Western colleagues concerned with their fate published by the New York Academy of Sciences. As such, they constitute not only a valuable contribution to science, but also a unique chronicle of courage and a cry for help. It is sincerely hoped that the Soviet authorities will heed this cry and permit a humane resolution to the plight of these brave scientists. Time is rapidly running out. Immediate action is required. . . .

After the arrest of Brailovsky, there was a time when the authorities would not permit even this scientific communication among the *refusniks*. The *refusniks*, however, did not give up. It was a vital matter to them—scientific survival. Yacov Al'pert, a most distinguished scientist in the field of space plasma physics, managed to reestablish the seminar in his house in 1981, and continued to host it for five years. This required great courage on the part of him and his wife Svetlana. This seminar stayed at the Al'pert's house until March 1986 and this volume is dedicated to them.

During this period, there were 114 sessions of the Seminar and 143 lectures were given: 78 on physics, 44 on mathematics, 18 on biology and medicine, and 3 on chemistry. These seminars were attended by 126 scientists from France, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, the United States of America, and Venezuela. Many scientists came especially for the seminar.

Since March, the seminar has been meeting at the houses of Alex Ioffe, Mark Freidlin, and Viktor Brailovsky. The seminar continues to invite participation by Western scientists. Such support is very important to the *refusniks* both for scientific and human reasons. In addition to meeting scientific contracts, they need to feel that they are not totally abandoned. They live on their hopes of someday soon being able to emigrate and resume normal scientific activity.

Now, for the happy ending, read the Preface by Yuri Chernyak, which follows.