



CELEBRATING SAKHAROV

1921-2021

May 6, 2021

Press-release

Exhibition for Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov opened at Vilnius City Hall

An exhibition dedicated to human rights activist, talented physicist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov was opened at Vilnius City Hall today. This marks the beginning of Sakharov's 100th anniversary cycle. The events are organized by the Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development at Vytautas Magnus University.

He listened to his Nobel speech while in Vilnius

American journalist David Satter recalls: "As far as I knew Sakharov, he not only spoke publicly about the cases of political repression, but also appeared outside the door of the courthouse where the dissident cases were conducted, thus expressing his support for them."

Andrei Sakharov also appeared at the courthouse in Vilnius in 1975, precisely on the days when he was to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. Soviet authorities did not allow him to leave the USSR, so he entrusted his wife, Yelena Bonner, to receive the Prize and read his acceptance speech. When mentioning political prisoners in his speech, Yelena Bonner read many Lithuanian surnames, including Antanas Terleckas, Nijolė Sadūnaitė, Petras Paulaitis, Liudvikas Simutis, Viktoras Petkus and others. Thanks to Sakharov, the whole world heard these names, and he listened to the ceremony on the radio while in Vilnius.

"Andrei Sakharov not only consistently raised the issues of the autonomy and independence of small countries and the equality of all nations at the international level, but also personally fought for the release of Lithuanian political prisoners and supported efforts to restore Lithuania's independence," explains Vytautas Magnus University lecturer Dr. Dainius Genys.

David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament, stated: "In February 1989, on the occasion of the award of the first Sakharov prize, the then President of the European Parliament, Lord Plumb, explained the meaning of the newly created prize and of its name. The award, he said, is intended to pay tribute to those individuals who defend freedom of thought and, for the European Parliament, Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov embodies this fight. The same holds true today, in the year of his centenary."

The exhibition contains film excerpts and original "samizdat"

The basis of the exhibition at Vilnius City Hall was created by the Sakharov Center in Moscow, translated into English by Cathy Fitzpatrick, significantly supplemented by the Sakharov Prize awarding European Parliament and the Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development in Kaunas. The exhibition is supported by the German and Norwegian embassies.

Are Peace, Progress and Human Rights Indivisible?

Tenth International Sakharov Conference, May 13, 2021 - Vilnius, Lithuania



CELEBRATING SAKHAROV

1921-2021

In the exhibition "Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov – Person of his Era", visitors will see photos from Sakharov's life, books published by him and about him, as well as a small cinema with short films: excerpts from Joseph Pasternak's film about Sakharov, a clip from dissident interviews by French journalist Nicolas Miletitch and Ukrainian filmmaker Lesya Kharchenko, an interview with Sakharov's granddaughter Marina Sakharov-Liberman and four films created in honor of the Sakharov centenary by the European Parliament.

While visiting Vilnius City Hall, guests will be able to see several personal objects of A. Sakharov, the original self-publishing works the so-called "samizdat", the means for creating the "samizdat", as well as learn how it was transported to the West.

The significance of Sakharov is recognized till this day

Many remember the scientist who fought for human freedoms in the Soviet Union. "For us, Sakharov was a moral figure, the conscience of the Soviet Union. No one called him Sakharov, only Andrei Dmitrievich. A man with such a wonderful mind and every opportunity to be in the nomenclature of the Soviet Union, but he refused it all only because he was guided by his conscience," notes the director of the Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development, prof. Robert van Voren.

Edward Lucas, a publicist and contributor to The Economist, said: "Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov has set an example by resisting the temptation to give up. His struggle made it clear that the Russian people were also prisoners of communism. <...> Because of his unparalleled intellectual achievements, Sakharov could not be written off as a hippie or failure. He opposed the Soviet citadel of lies and cruelty from within, from the very heart of a respected academic institution. Of course, the KGB could have silenced him, but they could not have crushed him, just as he would not have been able to forbid us to admire him."

"Sakharov defended us, Soviet political prisoners. All of us. He called on the civilized world to seek the liberation of all of us democrats, nationalists, religious activists. For this he was, in principle, punished without trial. Andrei Sakharov was a bright, wise and very modest man, " said Semyon Gluzman, a former dissident in Ukraine.

The following events have been organized and are set to take place during the month of May in Vilnius: the screening of two Sakharov films, an international conference addressed by various scholars including Sakharov's granddaughter and stepdaughter, a birthday concert by Ukrainian pianist Alexei Botvinov, and an exhibition of cartoons. All events except the concert are free and can be registered www.sacharovosimtmetis.lt

Are Peace, Progress and Human Rights Indivisible?

Tenth International Sakharov Conference, May 13, 2021 - Vilnius, Lithuania