

**RESEARCH REPORT
IREX STG**

Grantee: Alexander Griбанov

Grant Year: 2002

The short-term Travel Grant from IREX was designed as a preliminary step for the large project that we call “*Recovering Andrei Sakharov’s Legacy: the Search for Unpublished Documents.*” The goal of this large project is to locate materials written by Andrei Sakharov which are still housed in previously closed Russian scientific institutions, and to publish these materials for Russian- and English-speaking audiences.

We proposed a joint project targeting Andrei Sakharov materials stored at the *Vserossiiskii nauchno-issledovatel’skii Institut Eksperimental’noi Fiziki (VNIIEF)* [All-Russia Scientific Research Institute of Experimental Physics], located in Sarov, Russia. Andrei Sakharov was a monumental figure in the world of physics, often called the “father of the Soviet H-bomb,” who later became a champion of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1975). We requested the funding for this project from the American Physics Institute.

The purpose of this collaborative project is to identify, preserve, and make accessible to the public materials related to the work of Andrei Sakharov that still exist in Soviet-era repositories. We believe our project is extremely timely. The recent publication of hitherto unknown documents written by Sakharov during his years at VNIIEF in Sarov, Russia (called Arzamas-16 during the Soviet era) indicates that this previously high-security scientific institution is now ready to half-open its archives to the public. In collaboration with the Andrei Sakharov Archives in Moscow, the Brandeis University Andrei Sakharov Archives proposes to locate additional materials authored by Sakharov still housed at VNIIEF, to preserve these materials, and to make them accessible to a wide audience either through publication or digitization. It is also possible that our collaboration will make possible the translation of these documents into English.

During my trip to Moscow (Russia) and Riga (Latvia) I worked with several colleagues with two purposes in mind. First, we intend to build pressure in order to make VNIIEF grant us access to their archival holdings. Two letters were mailed to the VNIIEF directorship. The first letter provoked a negative response. Now we wait for the next

letter to be answered. Second purpose was to compile in advance the preliminary list of documents and records to be checked in the VNIIEF archives.

Our concern with the second purpose is understandable since we try to access one of the most secret installations in Russia. The situation, at least, should be considered delicate. We do not want to trigger a defensive reaction. On the contrary our idea is to compile a wish list of documents avoiding as much as possible the materials related to nuclear weapons and the technologies of their production.

In Moscow and Riga I organized a couple of workshops with local colleagues involved in archival studies and research. We looked into parallel archival personal collections in the national Academy of Science Archives. We established two lines of selection for the wish list. One class of documents in the wish-list could be established on the basis of rubrics accepted in the archival practices of the Academy of Sciences: personal correspondence, correspondence with the other members of the Academy, reference letters, private papers, non-technical notes, etc. Another approach would be to compile a wish list on the basis of possible subjects. Among the subjects we discussed were: Modern Civilization, Ecology, High Energy Physics, Baryons, International relations, Job offers, Obituaries and condolences, Nuclear Particles Physics. We agreed to work more on this list.

We agreed that at the first stage of the project our efforts will be focused mainly on convincing the leadership of VNIIEF to grant us access to their archival holdings. We also agreed to keep these and other relevant topics in the discussion through e-mail and phone communications.

At the moment we work on improving our communications and cooperation methods. Real results might be coming only when we get our hands on archival holdings at Arzamas-16. We hope our grant application will get a positive answer in October 2002 and then we would start to try the approaches discussed during my trip to Moscow and Riga.