

APR10-2009-020076

Abstract for an Invited Paper  
for the APR10 Meeting of  
the American Physical Society

**Andrei Sakharov Prize Talk: Guerrilla Tactics for Human Rights: the Paradigm of Scientists for Sakharov, Orlov and Sharansky (SOS)**

MORRIS (MOISHE) PRIPSTEIN, Physics Division, National Science Foundation

In response to the seriously deteriorating plight of dissident scientist colleagues in the former Soviet Union in the late 1970s, a small group of physicists at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (LBL) came together to plot out a new course of action on behalf of their beleaguered colleagues. A guiding principle was to engage individual scientists to act collectively in unorthodox efforts to publicly “encourage” the Soviet authorities to cease their human rights violations. While the focus was to be on the three scientists in the eventual name of the group, “Scientists for Sakharov, Orlov and Sharansky (SOS),” it was also meant to be a lightning rod for the more general concern of the plight of all dissident scientists. Examples of such actions included an unprecedented moratorium on scientific cooperation with the Soviet Union, a “Hostages for Elena Bonner” initiative where Western scientists volunteered to serve as good-faith witnesses in the Soviet Union for the temporary release of Sakharov’s wife for medical treatment in the West, and picketing of embassies and of selected scientists at scientific conferences. Within two years from this small beginning in Berkeley and with no staff whatsoever, the effort grew into an international movement to promote the human rights of scientists, comprising more than 8,000 scientists from 44 countries. As co-founder and chairperson of SOS, I will discuss the evolution of the group’s operational principles and actions as well as various reactions to its initiatives, and some possible lessons learned.