

cent years" and that financial help to them would therefore "represent political support for nascent democracy." The main point of our letter was that such a portrayal of Soviet scientists is totally false. In the pre-Gorbachev years they were a privileged and politically passive group. Courageous individuals who stood up for their principles were rare exceptions and found little following in the scientific community.

Alexander I. Akhiezer and Shulim Kogan say nothing that would contradict this assessment, and the examples they provide only illustrate our point. On the subject of privileges, we should hardly feel sorry for academicians who "had to order a car" with a driver from the Academy of Sciences garage, could get rice from the director of the canteen when there was none available from the academy distributor, or had a salary of 850 rubles per month (close to former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's official salary¹ of 900). We might add that most of the 50 000 rank-and-file scientists working in academy institutes enjoyed, in addition to prestige and higher-than-average salaries (before the late 1980s), a rather relaxed life style with no teaching responsibilities and few other duties.

On the issue of responsibility, it is important to realize that the stability of the Soviet regime was in large measure based on the passive support of the population. In many ways this is similar to the situation of the Nazi regime in Germany, and in both cases scientists contributed their share of support. In addition, the aggressive posture of the Soviet regime was enormously strengthened by the weapons developed with the help of scientists (Soviet patriots, as Akhiezer points out). It is therefore hard to deny the responsibility of the scientists for the past and present state of the country. Incidentally, the portrayal of Andrei Sakharov as someone "who was proud that his efforts promoted the creation of thermonuclear weapons for his country" is absolutely incorrect. On the contrary, Sakharov's transformation into a political dissident actually began when he realized that the power he had helped to release had gone into the wrong hands.²

Responsibility should not be interpreted as "condemnation" (as in the letter by Kogan). A typical Soviet scientist was not a villain; he simply kept his mouth shut, to avoid risking his job, promotion or a foreign trip. But there is a long way from this behavior to a "fight against totalitari-

anism." We believe that recognition of the past would be a healthy step in the development of interaction between FSU and Western scientists.

On the issue of financial aid, we agree (as we did in our letter) that Western physicists should help their colleagues at this time of crisis. In fact, the debate over whether or not the aid should be given is at present largely academic, because a massive amount of aid is now being distributed by the APS and the Soros fund. [See PHYSICS TODAY, January 1993, page 63, and October 1993, page 113.] Both Akhiezer and Kogan insist that this aid should be viewed as a profitable investment rather than as charity. The truth, however, is that although there are many world-class physicists in the FSU, world physics is now in the midst of an overproduction crisis. In particular, many talented young physicists in the US cannot find jobs and are forced to leave physics. The massive aid from the West is not likely to continue for very long, and given the economic realities, it is obvious that the present armies of physicists in Russia and Ukraine cannot be sustained by the budgets of those countries. The next few years could be used to restructure the scientific establishment there so that it becomes much smaller and, hopefully, more democratic. Most of the physicists would then have to move to education or industry. At this time, however, many top administrative positions are held by the same "old guard" (especially in Ukraine), and physicists continue to be produced on a massive scale.

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2. A. Sakharov, *Memoirs*, Knopf, New York (1990).

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Biographer Seeks Tales of Bohm's Effect

I am researching and writing a biography of the late physicist David Bohm and would appreciate hearing from any colleagues or friends who could provide information or anecdotes about the incidents of Bohm's life.

I would also be interested to learn

of those whose work has been influenced by Bohm's research or teachings or who may have specific comments on Bohm's work.

I can be reached on Internet at ad454@freenet.carleton.ca or at 90 Fentiman Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 0T8, Canada.

F. DAVID PEAT

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Ottawa, Ontario, Canada ■

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Arthur T. Bent, Treasurer