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PROFESSOR Veniamin Levich was dismissed from his post at Moscow University in 1972 as a result of his application for a visa to emigrate to Israel. He had done definitive work in a number of fields including electrochemistry and physicochemical hydrodynamics. A number of Soviet scientists working in related fields were invited to attend a conference in Oxford to celebrate his 60th birthday. All declined. Extensive extracts from a letter explaining the Soviet attitude, and from a reply from Sir Derek Barton, Chairman of the Conference Committee, and Professor D. B. Spalding, Conference Organiser, appear below

Dear Colleagues,—Over the past few months many of us have received invitations to an international conference in mid-July on "Physical Chemistry and Hydrodynamics" organised in connection with the 60th birthday of Professor V. G. Levich, corresponding-member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. For a number of reasons that are outlined below we had not intended to reply to the invitations. However, since our silence could have been misunderstood and misinterpreted, we decided to explain our attitude in this letter. . . .

You will agree that it is most unusual for a scientific conference marking the 60th birthday of a Soviet scientist, a corresponding-member of our Academy of Sciences, to have been organised and to be held in another country, without any prior consultation or agreement with organisations representing Soviet science. There is no denying that there are many major scientists in our country whose work has received universal recognition in the world. A number of them have won the Nobel Prize. But none, to our knowledge, has won such attention as Professor V. G. Levich. That leads us to believe that in this case it was not Professor Levich's scientific services that prompted this attention. Scientific services alone would not warrant it. Therefore, there must be some other reason. Apparently, it is because over the past few years Professor Levich has been busy besmirching his country, clearly to the detriment of his scientific work.

Dear Colleagues,—We have been gratified by the interest which you have shown in the Levich Conference. Other Soviet scientists have written in answer to the invitations; some have been friendly, and others less so; but none have set out their views at such length. Your courtesy is much appreciated. . . .

. . . We remark with pleasure that recognition of Professor Levich's contributions to science is not something which divides us.

Concerning paragraph 3 [2 above], we do agree that the holding of this conference in Oxford rather than Moscow is somewhat unusual. Had the USSR Academy of Sciences announced that it intended to celebrate the occasion suitably, the Oxford Conference might not have been convened. Were there any such intentions? Our enquiries revealed none.

We do not know how to compare the attention accorded to the Levich Conference with those celebrations which other scientists have enjoyed; but it is gratifying to the Conference secretariat to know that their publicising efforts have been successful. Our own belief is that the popularity of the conference has much to do with the high importance of physico-chemical hydrodynamics. This subject is, for many scientists, inevitably

We cannot, naturally, exclude the possibility that many of the participants in the conference, and perhaps its organisers as well, honestly think there has been prejudice in Professor Levich's treatment by the leaders of his Institute, of the Academy of Sciences and perhaps also other bodies in our country. Maybe that prompted them to take such an unusual step in what they regard as support or defence of Professor Levich. But even if that were the case, it would be interesting to know their source of information.

Why, when inviting us to the conference, did nobody ask for our opinion? Why was it decided to accept implicitly the information received from Professor Levich, while the views of those who worked with him and who could provide a more objective assessment were ignored? We, consequently, feel justified in concluding that our point of view does not interest the organisers of the conference, that they are not interested in the truth of the matter, and that the entire Levich affair is merely a peg on which to hang efforts to set the scientific world in the West against the Soviet Union.

This conclusion is inescapable. It is confirmed by the wide circle of persons invited to the conference. Hundreds of people in our country, and maybe even more, have received invitations. Never before, not even when jubilees of the most outstanding Western scientists were marked, did that happen. What is sig-

linked strongly with the work of Levich.

Your paragraph 4 questions the sources of information, and the motives, of the organisers and sponsors of the conference. Our information sources are too numerous to list comprehensively; so examples must suffice. The way in which its Soviet distributors excised Levich's name from an article by Professor Parbury Schmidt (see appendix) is documentary proof of a kind. We have seen the letter from Academician Frumkin relieving Professor Levich from his position, solely because he had exerted his legal right to apply for an exit visa. We have corresponded and held discussions with numerous Soviet scientists, officials and ordinary citizens. . . .

When, we ask you, was Professor Levich last permitted to conduct a seminar in his Institute? When will that permission next be given?

Concerning motives, it is necessary to be blunt: your "inescapable conclusion" is ludicrous; "to set the scientific world in the West against the Soviet Union" is as remote from our intentions as it is beyond our powers. We earnestly ask you to give weight to an alternative possibility, namely that the motives of the sponsors and organisers are commensurate, in probity and good sense, with their scientific attainments and with the

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nificant is that many of the recipients of invitations never had anything to do with the theme of the conference, let alone the field of research in which Professor Levich works or science in general. So what does all this mean?

. . . We feel that the whole affair of marking Professor Levich's birthday can do nothing but harm to international cooperation. If the organisers of the conference sincerely desire to strengthen international cooperation, we cannot but ask—with whom? With those who, like Professor Levich, believe for one reason or another that they have been unfairly treated and have become openly hostile to our country, or with the vast majority of scientists who really represent Soviet science and are deeply loyal to our country?

We firmly believe that in deciding to convene this conference its organisers were concerned not with promoting international cooperation between scientists, but with using Professor Levich's 60th birthday to set public opinion against our country. . . .

YA. KOLOTYRKIN, K. GORBUNOVA, B. KABANOV, V. LOSEV, N. D. TOMASHOV, N. SHUMILOVA, V. DMITRENKO, N. LIDORENKO, S. KARPACHOV, J. MATULIS, D. V. SOKOLSKY, J. STRADINS, Y. DELIMARSKY.

dignity of their offices. Please consider well their names; then ask yourselves again: can your inescapable conclusion be correct? We would assure you that if any scientist of the standing of Levich, in any other country of the world, were treated in the same way, our involvement would be exactly the same.

In paragraph 5, you express uncertainty as to whether the effect of the conference on international cooperation in science will be good or bad; and you ask with whom cooperation is intended by us. The answer to the second question is: we hope to cooperate with *you*, and with your colleagues in the USSR; that is why we sent you invitations, and that is why the conference publicity has been kept entirely free from words which might embarrass you.

As to the effect of the conference on relations between Western and Soviet scientists, this depends greatly upon you. We have made plain our equal concern for science and for freedom of movement in all countries. We have disclaimed all provocative intent; and, incidentally, we have provided your government, if it wished to take it, with an opportunity gracefully to extricate itself from an awkward situation. . . .

Yours sincerely,
DEREK BARTON, BRIAN SPALDING