

Belarus bangs up Bandazhevsky

Lukashenko persecutes whistleblower in favour of business as usual

We reported in Radioactive Times. Vol.4 No 2 *New Israeli study backs up gagged Belarusian researcher* that Professor Yury Bandazhevsky, ex-Rector of the Gomel State Medical Institute, and his colleagues had found a wide range of health effects which correlated with variations in radiation levels both in the environment and in the bodies of the students they were examining. This, we said, was robust and unequivocal evidence that radiation is the cause of the region's long-term health problems.

We reported that Pr. Bandazhevsky had fallen foul of the regime of President Lukashenko, who wants to play down the effects of the fallout, and that Dr Alan Flowers of Kingston University in the UK was colluding with Lukashenko's line.

The latest news (July 2001) is that a military court, against whose verdict there is no appeal, has found Pr. Bandazhevsky guilty of a trumped-up charge of taking bribes from students (none of whom has testified against him) and has been sentenced to 8 years' hard labour. **Are you pleased about this, Dr. Flowers?**

Below we reproduce an article from the Ukrainian Archives and News.

A leading Belarussian scientist who tried to highlight the disastrous effects of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster on the health of the country's children has been sentenced to eight years in a labour camp" wrote Peter Conradi of The Sunday Times July 22 2001.

Yuri Bandazhevsky, has been in trouble for at least two years now with the Belarussian authorities - and they, gradually, with the rest of the world's. His arrest by the Belarussian police in his run for freedom at the Ukrainian border with a false passport smacked of a set-up that would have been rejected as a Harry Palmer movie script. The man on centre-stage in this drama, however, was stung with a sentence of 8 years hard labour, confiscation of all possessions, and a ban from practice for an additional 5 years. Now do forgive me saying this, but not alot of people know that. This story is about regression and not about progress. It is about the same style of old-guard Soviet manoeuvring and abuse of human rights, but with one subtle extra sting in the tail. The silence in the West has become the license for the East to continue. The Post-Soviet Belarussian government freely accepts this gift.

The trouble started two years ago. Yuri Bandazhevsky was stopped in Gomel in the middle of the night of July 13, 1999 by a police detachment. The legal base of his arrest was " for the emergency measures to fight terrorism and other crimes especially of a dangerous or violent nature " which is usually used only to stop violent suspects and terrorists. In violation of article 9 (2) of the International Convention of civil and political laws (ICCPR) to which Belarus adhered and requires that " Whoever be stopped must be informed at the time of his arrest of the reasons of his arrest and must quickly be informed of the loads which weigh heavily upon him ". Bandazhevsky and this script did not match up. The authorities went on to accuse him formally on August 5, 1999. This final accusation was according to another article - 169 (3) of the code of criminality of Belarus - where he is said to have received backhand payments from parents of students for places at his institute of research. This alleged behaviour is punishable with a sentence of between 5 and 15 years in prison and the confiscation of personal possessions. Hence Bandazhevsky's 8 years

hard labour, confiscation of possessions, and a ban from practising for a further 5 years.

Yuri Bandazhevsky was and still is a prisoner of conscience. For two years Amnesty International have been concerned for his status and health. Not only a doctor and medical researcher, Yuri Bandazhevsky was a former red Army Major. Virtually all males in Soviet society served in the military. However, if anyone could tell you of the effects of previous Soviet nuclear testing in the surrounding regions Bandazhevsky could be a distinct point of call. If anyone could then further comment on the additional and cumulative effects of Chernobyl radiation - then Bandazhevsky would become the man to silence.

Doctors, nurses and other health workers can be subjected to a range of repressive measures for a variety of reasons. In a 36 page Amnesty International UK Medical Group Newsletter the following points highlight some of the reasons why health workers can be singled out as problematic:

- their real or perceived peaceful or violent political activities against the government;
- their activities in human rights groups;
- their professional activities or criticisms of government health policy;
- their alleged membership or support of banned political or social organisations;
- their ethnicity, nationality or gender;
- their provision of treatment to sick or injured members of illegal or armed opposition figures

The forms of pressure asserted against health professionals range from the overt and physically dangerous such as death threats or threats against family members, abduction and disappearance, killing, and torture through to denial of promotion, transfer to undesirable locations, and dismissal. In some cases, doctors or nurses face continuing harassment in the conduct of their professional activity through the presence of police or military officers in the clinic or hospital and their refusal to respect the confidentiality of the medical consultation. Yuri Bandazhevsky was kept under constant observation since his initial arrest, two years ago.

Amnesty International calls on governments to accord to those working in the health sector the same rights as those due to all citizens and in particular to respect the requirements for ethical behaviour on the part of health professionals. The organisation is calling on governments to account for those health professionals who have "disappeared" and for the release of those who are prisoners of conscience. It also calls on professional bodies and non-governmental organisations to maintain and expand campaigning to protect health professionals at risk.

The true horror of this particular story goes like this. Yuri Bandazhevsky has been known to the world for nearly 2 years for the wrong reasons, and the Belarussian government has been able to carry out this misrepresentation of justice because the West has been keen to play down it's [sic] own nuclear disorders and potential severe risks.

The relevant Ukrainian Archives and News page is no longer active on the