

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: A DIALOGUE ON HUMAN RIGHTS: AMERICA'S POLICY MAKERS AND THE SOVIET DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS, 1956-1976

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Through the 1950s and 1960s, American news correspondents working in Moscow had come to befriend many of the Soviet dissidents. This friendship was realized in the American press, where there was an explosion of news coverage on the dissidents. Through this news coverage, American interest groups and politicians became interested in the plight of the Soviet dissidents and began to demand that their government make human rights an essential part of its foreign policy. American politicians challenged the Nixon administration's policy of détente by seeking to link trade with the Soviet Union to its human rights practices. By 1976, the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe were established to monitor the Soviet government's compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. This represented the first time Soviet dissidents and American politicians directly communicated on issues related to human rights.

A DIALOGUE ON HUMAN RIGHTS:
AMERICA'S POLICY MAKERS AND THE SOVIET DISSIDENT MOVEMENTS,
1956-1976

by

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INTRODUCTION: FORGING A DIALOGUE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In May 1976 the two most important bodies charged with monitoring the Soviet Union's compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act were established. These were the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group, a Moscow-based non-governmental organization run by a small group of academic-minded acquaintances, and from the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the US Helsinki Commission. This was a congressionally mandated committee charged with monitoring the Soviet Union's compliance with regard to the Helsinki Final Act. The existence of these groups marked the first time in history where there was a direct line of communication about human rights between dissidents in the Soviet Union and policy makers in the American Congress. The US Helsinki Commission gave the dissidents a forum in the West, since it was the task of the Commission to recommend policy to the rest of Congress and the President given the reports and testimony it often received from the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group. For Soviet dissidents, this dialogue with the West on human rights was a major victory. They finally had the attention of a powerful and receptive audience in the West that could potentially negotiate with the Soviet Union on their behalf. This dialogue with the West also led the Soviet dissident movement to become even more dependent on the West for its own survival, as what was essentially a homegrown dissident movement became increasingly reliant on the help of America and Americans. This growing dependence on the help of Americans for the survival of the dissident movement was mirrored by an increase in the relevance of the concept of human rights in American foreign policy, a notion that by 1976 came to dominate the

political discourse in the United States with regard to relations with the Soviet Union. The establishment of this direct line of communication after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act was also important because it was the culmination of a two decade long departure from an atmosphere where both American policy makers and the Soviet dissidents were not at all interested in reaching out to one another. In the past, the Soviet dissidents had rarely considered reaching out to the West, just as many American policy makers had by and large been disinterested in the plight of the Soviet dissidents.

For many Soviet dissidents, the idea of reaching out to the West was initially seen as unnecessary, if not treasonous. Many initially felt that dissatisfaction with the regime was something that was not the business of outsiders. This was a sentiment clearly expressed by Ludmilla Alexeyeva, a prominent member of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union, who recoiled on learning that one of her colleagues was publishing literature abroad, also known at the time as *tamizdat*. Alexeyeva recalled in her memoirs writing, that “It was one thing to tell the truth at home. It was something else to tell it to outsiders, many of whom were genuine enemies of our country.”¹ Initially, many Soviet dissidents genuinely believed that the Soviet government was interested in their demands, and therefore did not see any need to enlist the aid of foreigners, as was later the case. Several scholars in fact have suggested that this initial disinterest in reaching out to the West stemmed from both a lack of contact with foreigners as well as a Russian political tradition of deals struck behind closed doors and societal problems rarely discussed in an open public forum.²

¹ Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 113.

² Richard N. Dean, “Contacts with the West: The Dissidents’ View of Western Support for the Human Rights Movement in the Soviet Union” *Universal Human Rights* 2, no. 1 (Jan. – March, 1980): 49-

Just as the Soviet dissidents were initially reluctant to receive help from the West; many American policy makers were similarly disinterested in helping the dissidents. Between the 1950s and 1970s, it was generally the attitude of the US State Department that the US could do little to affect the situation faced by dissidents and ethnic minorities persecuted in the Soviet Union. Frederick G. Dutton, the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, indicated in a 1962 letter that, “It is very difficult for our Government to contribute to the direct solution of the problems of minorities in a territory where a foreign sovereign government exercises full control.” It was further believed that intervention on behalf these groups would make matters far worse for them by further alienating them from Soviet society, and that the best approach was for non-governmental organizations to raise the issue.³ This attitude remained the official position of the US Government through the early and mid 1970s, where it became a main feature of President Richard M. Nixon’s, and his National Security Adviser (later Secretary of State), Dr. Henry Kissinger’s, policy of détente with the Soviet Union. Through détente, both President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger wished to utilize their working relationship with the Soviet leadership to promote stable relations through fostering trade as well as acknowledging the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Soviet government and its institutions. It was believed by the Nixon administration that such an understanding and working relationship with the Soviets would work towards America’s advantage, especially with regard toward promoting American interests elsewhere in the world, such

50; Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2009), 88-90; Zhores A. Medvedev, *The Medvedev Papers: Fruitful Meetings Between Scientists of the World: and, Secrecy of Correspondence is Guaranteed by Law* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martins, 1971), 298.

³ Letter from the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Dutton) to Senator Kenneth B. Keating, July 11, 1962 in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. V: Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1998), 211 (hereafter *FRUS*, with appropriate year, volume, and page number).

as in Vietnam and the Middle East. Attention to controversial issues, such as human rights, would only bring harm to the working relationship with the Soviet Union and therefore such issues were best handled out of the public sphere, behind closed doors and through quiet diplomacy.

The subsequent rapprochement between the Soviet Union's dissident movement and American policy makers was started with a dialogue that actually began first between Soviet dissidents and American foreign news correspondents based in Moscow. Much like the Soviet dissidents, foreign news correspondents working in the Soviet Union had their freedom of speech and movement severely restricted by the Soviet government, which controlled what it was the correspondent could and could not report. Therefore, many American journalists in Moscow felt alienated and repressed in many of the same ways Soviet dissidents did. The catalyst for the rapprochement between the journalists and the dissidents was the 1966 trial of Soviet writers Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavskii, which drew unprecedented Western media attention to the situation faced by the Soviet dissidents. According to both historians and the dissidents themselves, the Sinyavskii–Daniel trial was the moment where the Soviet dissident movement evolved from a small group of friends and into a movement with powerful political connections in the West by reaching out to Western journalists for help.⁴ These contacts between Western journalists and the Moscow-based dissident movement allowed the West to become aware of the relatively small human rights movement in the Soviet Union, while offering the dissidents a receptive audience with political leverage over the Soviet government. The

⁴ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 131; Paul Goldberg, *The Final Act: The Dramatic, Revealing Story of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1998), 28; Barbara Walker, "Moscow Human Rights Defenders Look West: Attitudes Toward U.S. Journalists in the 1960s and 1970s," *Kritika* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 913; Phillip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 77.

close personal and professional relationships nurtured between Western journalists and the dissidents resulted in a flood of news coverage on the dissident movement in the West. This exposure caught the attention of the American public and American policy makers who were drawn to stories of these freedom fighters going up against the Soviet government. Many politicians also found the issues of human rights and dissent much easier to articulate and discuss before voters than the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente, which many critics felt was apologetic towards the Soviet Union with regard to human rights. A real relationship developed between American politicians who were seeking to help Soviet dissidents achieve the same rights Americans enjoyed at home, while bolstering their own political agenda by trumpeting the dissident issue. All the while, the Soviet dissidents were eager to have these advocates abroad lobbying on their behalf.

The evolution of this dialogue on human rights was formalized through American legislative efforts and changes in the way the dissident community in the Soviet Union organized itself and eventually made sustained contact with the West their exclusive goal. Soviet dissidents became focused on maintaining their contacts with the West, through authoring *samizdat*, or internally self-published, pamphlets such as *Khronika tekushchikh sobyitiy*, or the *Chronicle of Current Events* and the press releases and documents issued by the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group. On the American side, the formalization of a human rights agenda resulted in legislative actions such as the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 Trade Act, and the formation of the US Helsinki Commission in 1976. Both pieces of legislation were opposed by the Nixon, and later Ford administrations, because they challenged détente and they sought to force the American Government to take a stand with regard to human rights. Both the Jackson Amendment

and the US Helsinki Commission were widely supported by the dissident movement in the Soviet Union, which believed that both pieces of legislation would shore up their position *viz a viz* Soviet authorities.

The 1975 Helsinki Accords and the push for the creation of Helsinki monitoring groups in the Soviet Union and in the United States completed the formalization of this dialogue on human rights. The Moscow Helsinki Watch Group authored reports on human rights violations in the Soviet Union that were then sent to the United States and debated and made public by the US Helsinki Commission. By 1976, the Soviet dissident movement had completely embraced the idea of reaching out to the West for political support, just as on the American political scene, the policy of *détente* was challenged and replaced by a more idealistic foreign policy championed by the new President Jimmy Carter, emphasizing human rights.

This dialogue between the Soviet dissidents and American policy makers would not have been possible had there not been an expansion in the number of information channels between the Soviet Union and the United States during the two decades leading up to 1976. This growth was made possible by changes in technology and culture that allowed for greater interaction and communication between those in the Soviet Union and those in the West. This was particularly true for American news correspondents who witnessed a gradual increase in their ability to communicate and report from the Soviet Union in spite of the strict controls the Soviet government had placed on them. The aim of these controls was to eliminate the ability of Western journalists to influence the thoughts and views of Soviet citizens, as well as to report “State secrets” to the outside

world. The Soviet government had been able to limit unfavorable news coverage of itself in the West by practicing a campaign of intimidation, surveillance, censorship, and expulsion of foreign journalists working there. In particular, during the 1950s and early 1960s, all outgoing press cables were censored heavily by *Glavlit*,⁵ which would not let pass any news story that it perceived to be disparaging toward the Soviet Union. These conditions frustrated many American journalists working out of Moscow by making it virtually impossible for them to report fairly on events occurring there. Even after *Glavlit* stopped censoring foreign journalists in 1961, the Soviet government continued to intimidate American journalists, typically through physical force or the threat of expulsion. As a result of this intimidation there were still only sixteen Western journalists reporting from the Soviet Union in the early 1960s.

The human rights movement itself grew out of the elite intellectual social circles of Moscow during the so-called thaw. It began in 1956 after Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in his so-called "Secret Speech." These Russians became known as the "thaw generation," a cohort who grew up a generation after those who carried out the Russian Revolution. Their young lives were shaped by shared events, such as the beginning and end of the Second World War, the death of Stalin, and Khrushchev's 1956 Secret Speech. This generation of Russians reexamined their most recent history in the light of the more liberal political climate that followed Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin. As Alexeyeva noted of those years, "Such a limited enlarging of the boundaries of what was permitted, along with a refusal by the authorities to engage in mass terror, turned out to be sufficient for irreversible changes in the minds of people and

⁵ *Glavnoe Upravlenie po Delam Literaturny i Izdatelstvo*, which translates to: Main Directory for Literary and Publishing Affairs.

in public life.”⁶ Another important aspect of the thaw was that it allowed more Westerners to travel to the Soviet Union. Encounters between Westerners and Soviet young people led to irreversible changes in Soviet society, giving intellectually curious young Russians the ability to compare his or her own life with that of the foreigners they happened to meet. Many urban Russians began to make their own depiction of life in the West by imitating the jazz music and dress of the Westerners they happened to encounter. The West, the idea of the West, and Westerners therefore began to have a major impact on Soviet culture.

Much like the Soviet dissidents, the American news correspondents based in Moscow faced very similar restrictions on their freedom of speech and movement, and as a result many of the dissidents and the journalists made fast friends when they finally began working together. Their rapprochement was however slow, due to cultural barriers between the two and the fear among both the dissidents and the journalists concerning the authorities’ reaction to their friendship. This relationship was often personal, and it was symbiotic because it benefited the journalists by giving them a better story to write home about, while it was advantageous for the dissidents because it allowed them to get their message out in the West. As a result of this relationship, news coverage on the Soviet dissidents exploded during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. Historian Edward Bailey Hodgman even noted that with regard to *The New York Times*, stories related to Soviet dissidents increased five-fold between the years 1968 and 1971.⁷

⁶ Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 7.

⁷ Edward Bailey Hodgman, “Détente and Dissidents: Human Rights in U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1968-1980” (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 2003), 127-128.

The journalists played a vital role in providing Westerners and Western Governments with information on the Soviet Union. This was especially since American journalists were able to befriend and socialize among ordinary Russians in a way that US representatives could not, given the strict rules on fraternization extended to Western diplomatic staff.⁸ Therefore, for many Westerners and Western politicians, news provided to the correspondents working in the Soviet Union by dissidents made up a great deal of the public's overall impression of what life was like in the Soviet Union. Peter Osnos, a correspondent for *The Washington Post*, even alleged that this relationship led to there being a disproportionate focus by American journalists on the relatively marginal dissident movement in the Soviet Union, a movement that had at most only a few hundred participants, but received lopsided attention by the American press in comparison to other issues in the Soviet Union. Osnos further alleged that this uneven coverage distorted America's impression of what was going on in the Soviet Union, given the bias of the American correspondents covering the Moscow bureaus. To this affect Osnos wrote that the "Dissidents in the Soviet Union say what most Americans want – and expect – to hear about the evils of communism. Excessive dependence on them, however, creates a picture of that complex country as oversimplified."⁹

This oversimplification of the complex dissident movement in the Soviet Union affected American politicians just as it did the American public, resulting in a dramatic shift away from détente, and instead towards a foreign policy which was aimed at demonstrating America's support for the dissident movement. During the 1970s, as the issue of human rights in the Soviet Union became more prevalent in the press, American

⁸ Peter Osnos, "Soviet Dissidents and the American Press," *Columbia Journalism Review* 16, issue 4 (Nov. and Dec., 1977): 32-36, 33.

⁹ Osnos, 36.

politicians could not help but be challenged from an interested public which began to press their elected representatives to respond to the situation in the Soviet Union. In particular this was with regard to the fight for the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union. The growing interest regarding human rights in the United States occurred just as there was a general rise in the notion of social justice, given the contemporaneous Civil Rights and the Anti-War movements. It was also no coincidence that many of the same participants in the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements were also interested in the issue of human rights in the Soviet Union, particularly American Jews who empathized with Soviet Jews. Given this growth in public interest, as well as in news coverage, American interest groups demanded that their politicians turn their attention to the human rights practices of the Soviet government. Many members of Congress were receptive to this pressure because they either expressed similar concerns themselves or were interested in furthering their own political careers by tapping into the public's concern over the issue. Two American politicians in particular, Democratic Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington State and Republican Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey, weighed heavily into the political debate over human rights in the Soviet Union. Senator Jackson was the leading force behind the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. This legislation sought to make President Nixon's 1972 promise of Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status and other economic incentives toward the Soviet Union contingent on the Soviet government agreeing to allow its Jewish minority the right to emigrate unencumbered. Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick, was passionate in her desire to help the Soviet dissidents, and was a main supporter of the US Helsinki Commission.

The legislation that resulted from this concern for the Soviet dissidents had mixed success. While the Jackson-Vanik Amendment may have been well intended and produced some initial results, it ultimately led the Soviet Union to restrict emigration further. Similarly, the creation of the US Helsinki Commission succeeded in giving many Soviet dissidents some sense of hope and an outlet in seeking help in mediating their situation. But the US Helsinki Commission lacked the ability to force the Soviet Union to comply with the Helsinki Final Act, and despite all the efforts of its creators to help the Soviet dissidents, the situation for the dissidents behind the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group had actually worsened by 1977, as many were arrested. It is clear that as this dialogue on human rights expanded, the Soviet dissident movement became increasingly dependent on the West. Overall this human rights rhetoric succeeded in accomplishing the limited short-term objectives of both the American policy makers and the Soviet dissidents. American policy makers used the dissident issue to their advantage, especially given the fact that President Nixon was opposed to this new human rights rhetoric because he believed it would ultimately hurt relations between the US and the Soviet Union. Alignment with the West also allowed for the temporary protection of some Soviet dissidents, as many of them became international celebrities given the attention they received. US policy makers ultimately proved powerless to save as the Soviet authorities cracked down on dissidents, particularly in the mid-1970s. This growth in contact and communication permitted the spread of concepts such as human rights between East and West, while also making it possible for human rights to become an acceptable feature of America's foreign policy, just as the dissident movement became increasingly dependent on America's support.

* * *

There is little existing scholarship addressing the relationship between the Soviet dissident movement and American policymakers as a dialogue between the two. Many works focus either exclusively on the American political and foreign policy perspective, or on the history of the Soviet dissident movement. Two recent exceptions are dissertations by Sarah Snyder written at Georgetown University in 2006 and by Edward Bailey Hodgman at the University of Rochester in 2003. Both authors stress that the increased emphasis on human rights issues in American policy towards the Soviet Union during the 1970s was a direct result of a dialogue with the dissident movement.¹⁰ Snyder and Hodgman also focus more on the shifting contours within the American political landscape as opposed to the dissident movement, making both works a better resource for the study of American foreign policy than to the study of the dissidents. Another recent work is a journal article written by historian Barbra Walker published in *Kritika* in 2008 and entitled “Moscow Human Rights Defenders Look West: Attitudes Toward US Journalists in the 1960s and 1970s.”¹¹ Here Walker emphasized the nature of Western journalists as a medium of communication between Moscow’s dissidents and the West, and the dramatic impact this had on the dissident movement as it evolved. Her focus was exclusively on the dissident movement and the relationship it had with the American journalists.

Most of the historical literature on the dissident movement written prior to the last decade was authored by individuals intimately involved with the dissident movement

¹⁰ Sarah Snyder, “The Helsinki Process, American Foreign Policy, and the End of the Cold War” (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2006); Hodgman.

¹¹ Barbara Walker, “Moscow Human Rights Defenders Look West: Attitudes Toward U.S. Journalists in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Kritika* 9, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 905-927.

already. Despite their understandable bias, several of these works are still useful if they are analyzed more as primary sources. One is the book authored by dissident and historian Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post Stalin Era*.¹² This volume has become a classic in the field, often cited by many other researchers interested in the topic of Soviet dissent. It is a memoir of Alexeyeva's experience growing up in the Soviet Union and her intellectual journey toward becoming a dissident. Alexeyeva also wrote a comprehensive historical narrative of the dissident movement, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*. Written by Alexeyeva in the early 1980s, after she had been exiled to the United States, it received funding from the US Department of State.¹³ Here Alexeyeva discussed the diversity of the dissident movements in the Soviet Union by drawing on both her personal impressions of the movements, as well as her research with *samizdat* texts that were preserved in archives in the United States. Alexeyeva broke the dissident movements into multiple groups, in part including the movements for self-determination, the movements for emigration, the movements for religious liberty, the movement for human rights, and the Russian national movement.¹⁴

Just as Alexeyeva was writing her versions of the dissident movement in the 1980s, several other American writers also became interested in the subject. The essential work on the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group is *The Final Act: The Dramatic, Revealing Story of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group*, written by Paul Goldberg, an acquaintance of several members of the dissident movement and the co-author of *The*

¹² Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*.

¹³ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 302-303.

¹⁴ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*.

Thaw Generation with Alexeyeva.¹⁵ Like Barbara Walker, Goldberg placed a similar emphasis on the relationship between the journalists and dissidents in the Soviet Union, arguing that such a relationship was essential for allowing the dissident movement to evolve. Goldberg's emphasis on the importance of Western journalists laid the foundations for the argument that the dissident movement had become increasingly dependent on the help of the Americans. Unfortunately, Goldberg's account also suffers from the same bias as others written during the 1980s. The author was too close to the dissident movement itself to criticize the close relationship between the dissidents and the West. In a very similar manner as Paul Goldberg, historian Joshua Rubenstein wrote extensively on the dissident movement during the 1980s, authoring *The Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights*.¹⁶ But the volume was more about the evolution of the dissident movement within the Soviet historical context, and much less about the movement's contact with the West and Western journalists and policy makers.

This thesis will cover a period beginning roughly in the mid-1950s after Khrushchev's "secret speech" denouncing Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Union, and ending in 1976 with the creation of the two Helsinki monitoring groups, as well as the election of Jimmy Carter as President of the United States. It will concentrate on the methods and motives behind the rapprochement between the Soviet dissidents and American journalists and politicians by analyzing statements made by them found in newspapers, memoirs, congressional sources, *samizdat* publications, and press releases. The use of such sources will illuminate the changing contours within both

¹⁵ Goldberg, *The Final Act*.

¹⁶ Joshua Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights*, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

the American and Soviet sides, and it will explore the shifting attitudes each side held for the other in a manner delivered chronologically over the course of three chapters.

The first chapter sets the stage for the rapprochement between the Soviet dissidents and American politicians. It begins by exploring the roots of the Soviet dissident movement as well as the diversity of the dissidents, since not all of them were intellectuals or Jewish, but many belonged instead to other minority national or religious groups. The second section discusses the thaw and how the Soviet Union gradually opened itself up to Western influence, though in a very restricted way. One of the aims of the thaw under Khrushchev was actually to promote the Soviet Union's image abroad as a world power by allowing a few more foreigners in and by sponsoring events such as the 1957 World Youth Festival in Moscow. Khrushchev's cultural diplomacy with the West was aimed at repairing the Soviet Union's reputation after Stalin. Despite the Soviet government's acceptance of more foreigners and foreign journalists, the working conditions faced by these journalists remained repressive under Khrushchev. Many were subjected to the strict censorship of *Glavlit*, as well as the physical intimidation of the KGB. The first chapter concludes with an examination of how both the dissidents and the American news correspondents based in the Soviet Union built a relationship with one another, founded in part on their shared pariah status. This rapprochement between Western journalists and the Soviet dissident occurred in the wake of the 1966 Sinyavskii and Daniel trial in Moscow, which was widely covered in the West. As noted above, it has been viewed as the moment when the Soviet dissidents initiated their own foreign policy by reaching out to Western Governments and politicians through the use of American journalists.

The second chapter focuses on how this dialogue began to work, especially as American interest groups and politicians became concerned about the dissidents in the Soviet Union. In particular, American politicians were most concerned about the status of Soviet Jews, many of who were unable to emigrate from the Soviet Union because of the Soviet government's restrictive emigration policy. Therefore, the first half of the second chapter examines the dialogue between American and Soviet movements aimed at allowing Soviet Jews to emigrate, while the second half discusses how American policy makers viewed the issue and then reacted. Most importantly, the issue of Jewish emigration posed a direct challenge to President Nixon's détente policy, as many opponents to the policy used the issue of Jewish emigration as a means of discrediting détente.

The third chapter analyzes the impact of the Helsinki Final Act and how that declaration led to the formalization of a dialogue on human rights between the Soviet dissidents and American policy makers. The first half discusses the creation of the Helsinki Final Act and how human rights were ultimately incorporated into the agreement. The second half looks at the creation of both the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group and the US Helsinki Commission, and how both organizations attempted to hold the Soviet Union accountable to the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. A brief epilogue follows, addressing the new US emphasis on human rights under President Jimmy Carter and the reaction of the Soviet Union's dissidents these policies. It also considers some of the legacies of this US / dissident dialogue on human rights.

CHAPTER I

THE THAW AND THE WEST: WESTERN JOURNALISTS AS THE MEDIUM FOR DISSENT

This chapter is about the cultural inspiration of the West for Soviet society and the reliability and relative security of Westerners as a medium of communication between the dissidents and the outside world. The West, in particular America, Americans, and American culture, was always influential for the dissidents, providing inspiration for a movement with genuine roots in Russian political culture and history. As the dissident movement emerged from the intellectual milieu of Moscow during the Khrushchev thaw, the West was instrumental in inspiring and perpetuating this movement from the start. The very intellectuals who would provide the backbone to the intellectual dissident and later human rights movement were those most inspired by Western cultural currents and by Westerners who traveled to the Soviet Union during the thaw. The beacon of the West fascinated the intellectually curious university-educated professional class in Moscow, reinforcing the neophyte dissident movement, and becoming even more influential following the freezing of the thaw under Brezhnev. By then, the West was the most reliable and powerful medium of communication for the dissident movement and its ideas as the government sought to shut it up.

For the United States initially, Soviet culture and the issue of dissidence was a matter of little importance. Prior to the Presidency of Richard Nixon, there were nonetheless some stirrings of Western interest in Soviet dissent, especially with regard to literature. This was especially true of Boris Pasternak's Nobel Prize winning *Dr. Zhivago*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and the

writings of Iosef Brodskii.¹⁷ This Western interest in dissent could have only been made possible by the so-called Khrushchev thaw, where Soviet citizens had more room to criticize the current regime as well as make contact with Westerners. Their ability to travel within the Soviet Union was much expanded under Khrushchev. It was only then by the late 1960s that American policy makers and Soviet dissidents could begin to take an interest in one another as a result of an increased journalistic concern in dissident issues that followed the 1966 trial of Andrei Sinyavskii and Yuli Daniel, two prominent Moscow writers and intellectuals within the emerging dissident community. The contacts the dissidents made with Western journalists during this trial began what historians have called a dissident “foreign policy” in reaching out to the West.¹⁸

Before the rise of Western journalistic interest in the Soviet Union can be discussed, it is necessary to take some time outlining the Soviet dissident movement in general, along with American involvement and travel in the Soviet Union. Such a discussion will illuminate the importance of the West, and in particular Americans in the dissident movement, and how unsurprisingly the dissident movement never could have taken off without such a steady stream of Western contacts and their ideas.

The Thaw Generation and the Spectrum of Dissent

For many the birth of the dissident movement was Khrushchev’s “secret speech” before the 20th Party Congress in 1956 where he outlined the crimes committed by Stalin and blamed the misfortune of the previous two decades on his leadership. According to

¹⁷ Senator Thomas J. Dodd in Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Aspects of Intellectual Ferment in the Soviet Union*, report prepared by Sergius Yakobson and Robert V. Allen, 89th Cong., 2d sess., 1966, Senate Doc. 130, IV-VI (hereafter *Aspects of Intellectual Ferment in the Soviet Union*).

¹⁸ Edward Bailey Hodgman, “Détente and Dissidents: Human Rights in the U.S.—Soviet Relations, 1968-1980,” Ph.D. diss., (University of Rochester, 2003), 93.

historian Vladislav Zubok, the shock of the “secret speech” was just as important for many idealistic and educated Russians as the beginning of the Second World War. “A world of certainties came to an end, now that core beliefs and commonly accepted wisdom had turned to dust.”¹⁹ For these Russians, the whole Soviet project suddenly lost the foundations upon which it had rested; what had once been sacred was no longer. Many intellectuals began searching for a form of collective catharsis to move away from the past, a catharsis that found itself most readily expressed in literature, as was the Russian tradition. As dissident Ludmilla Alexeyeva wrote in her memoirs, “Such a limited enlarging of the boundaries of what was permitted, along with a refusal by the authorities to engage in mass terror, turned out to be sufficient for irreversible changes in the minds of people and in public life.”²⁰ These changes even affected those who already expressed doubts about the system, such as scientist Yuri Orlov. He used the opportunity to reveal to the public what he had long thought, writing:

Khrushchev’s report on the atrocities of the Stalinist epoch was read at closed Party meetings and shattered even those who, like me, were already anti-Stalinists. [...] What should I do? There came that moment for which I had, in effect, been preparing my whole life—a life of tensely scrutinizing this strange, murderous, self-devouring society. I must state openly everything I thought about.²¹

Therefore a new era emerged where many Soviet citizens, especially those young and educated, took the opportunity to push back against the system, finding their creative impulses suffocating under the Soviet State’s control over the media and art. Even a 1957 US State Department report on the dissident issue in the Soviet Union stated that at the time virtually all prominent artists, writers, composers, and scholars sought greater

¹⁹ Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 61.

²⁰ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 7.

²¹ Yuri Orlov, *Dangerous Thoughts: Memoirs of a Russian Life*. Trans. Thomas P. Whitney. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991 118.

freedom of expression from the Soviet state, making them the most open to dissident currents.²²

Generationally speaking, the young Russians most open to considering dissent spent their formative years during the Second World War and post-war era. They have been referred to as the “thaw generation,” borrowing from Alexeyeva’s memoir, which described her experience growing up during this time. For the “thaw generation,” their young lives were defined by many important moments in their youth, including the beginning and end of the Second World War, the death of Stalin, and Khrushchev’s Secret Speech. This was also the most educated generation in Soviet history, attending and graduating from university in record numbers following the war.²³ The Secret Speech and the process of de-Stalinization begun by Khrushchev produced irreversible changes in Soviet society and the psyche of Soviet citizens, with Alexeyeva writing, “To us, the thaw was the time to search for an alternative system of beliefs. Our new beliefs would be truly ours; having gone through Stalinism once, we could not stand for another “progressive” doctrine being imposed on us from above.”²⁴ This generation viewed the opportunity following the end of the Second World War, the death of Stalin, and Khrushchev’s “secret speech” as their moment to make their impact on Soviet society, to make it live up to their ideals.

In these early days, the dissident movement was far from organized or large. Organization into any kind of civic group had been impossible under Stalin. People did not trust each other enough so that normal social gatherings were very difficult. No one

²² IR-7631 Dec. 10, 1957: Dissidence in the USSR, Record Group 59 General Records of the Department of State, National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD), 5-6 (hereafter NARA, with appropriate Record Group (RG), and collection specific identifying information).

²³ Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 23-24.

²⁴ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 4.

knew where another's true convictions laid. And there were very few public spaces where individuals could meet, since restaurants, cafés, and other public meeting spaces were few and far between.²⁵ Despite these hindrances, the slightly liberalized atmosphere following Stalin's death and Khrushchev's 1956 speech made it possible for many young intellectuals to associate more freely within informal groups. These informal groups of Soviet intellectuals planted the seeds of the dissident movement and became known as *kompaniya*. According to Alexeyeva, they were unique to the dissident experience of the 1950s and 1960s, with nothing like them having ever existed before, except perhaps the *kruzhki*, or circles of Russian intelligentsia during the 1840s.²⁶ These *kompaniya* consisted of young intellectuals in their twenties and thirties. They included members of various professional disciplines such as scientists, artists, physicians, university professors, lawyers, and students. Alexeyeva wrote of the *kompaniya*, that "Every night, we gathered in cramped apartments to recite poetry, read "unofficial" prose, and swap stories that, taken together, yielded a realistic picture of what was going on in our country."²⁷ The *kompaniya* therefore provided social gatherings where lifelong friendships and relationships were forged, building mutual trust and becoming comfortable and intimate in their reflections on Soviet society.²⁸ The *kompaniya* had sprung up as a social institution because they were needed. Alexeyeva wrote, "Our generation had a psychological, spiritual, perhaps even a physiological need to discover our country, our history, and ourselves."²⁹ Therefore it was within these *kompaniya* that Russians

²⁵ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 48.

²⁶ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 83; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 48.

²⁷ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 4.

²⁸ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 83; Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 269-270; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 47-51.

²⁹ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 83.

reexamined their recent past by looking back at the works of Western and Russian philosophers and even the collected works of Lenin, Marx and other Communists.³⁰ This reexamination of the past was expressed primarily in the artistic and literary environments and resulted in the first wave of literature critical of the Soviet system. It emerged in the 1950s in the works authored by Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn and others that challenged the regime's interpretation of history. Poetry was also very popular within the *kompaniya* and often critical of the regime. These literary texts were produced by these intellectuals, and were often typed up and read aloud during meetings and handed to members of other *kompaniya*. These clandestinely written texts became known as *samizdat*, or "self-publication." *Samizdat* was often written using typewriters with several carbon copies, requiring a lot of painstaking work. This was a model that characterized the spread of information for all dissident movements within the Soviet Union, given the government's strict control over the dissemination of information and prohibition on the spread of texts critical of the regime.

The presence of the *kompaniya* strongly influenced the intellectual and educated cadres of Soviet society, fueling the intellectual dissident movement that would be making the most of their contacts with the West over the next two decades. Dissent in the Soviet Union though was much broader than intellectual debates between the artists and the university educated since the thaw affected all elements of Soviet society. The US State Department recognized this diversity, hopefully concluding in a 1957 analysis that "Conditions exist in the Soviet Union which give rise to a certain degree of dissidence in virtually every segment of the population outside the top leadership itself," and that this dissidence came in many shades, ranging "from simple grumbling about

³⁰ Walker, 908.

living conditions to complete and conscience rejection of the entire Soviet system.”³¹

Dissidence in the Soviet Union therefore really cannot be described as a monolithic movement, but more accurately as a series of movements, since its diversity mirrored that of Soviet society as a whole. In the post-Stalin era there were three major categories of such dissent, nationalist, religious, and intellectual, none of which were exclusive. Many movements overlapped these distinctions.³²

Despite the concentration of scholarly literature on the intellectual dissidents and artists, it was those dissident groups that advocated national and religious self determination that experienced the broadest basis of support. But such movements found less success in working together, since their political and ideological goals often conflicted. These groups were also unsuccessful in coming together due to the Soviet state’s strict control of the media, which prevented them from learning about the similar political aims and methods held by others.³³ Despite their differences, these nationalist and religiously based forms of dissent, like intellectual dissent, became possible only with the death of Stalin and the thaw. The thaw gave these groups greater space in which to breathe and seek political concessions. Among the most vocal groups advocating their national and religious self-determination were those that experienced the most repression under Stalin and within Soviet society. With regard to religion, many faiths were repressed in the officially atheist Communist state. Groups seeking religious self-determination therefore were quite diverse, ranging from the omnipresent Russian

³¹ IR-7631 Dec. 10, 1957: Dissidence in the USSR, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, NARA, 6.

³² Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 3-9; Central Intelligence Agency, “The Spectrum of Soviet Dissent,” May 1977, 1, Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, available: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/>

³³ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 8.

Orthodox faithful, to religions with far fewer adherents such as the Baptists, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists. There were also the Jews, who experienced discrimination on both ethnic and religious grounds, as well as Muslim and Buddhist groups who were repressed. These religious faiths, much like the nationalists, already had a firm sense of social cohesion stemming from a shared religious faith and culture. This strong sense of identity endowed these groups with the social cohesion to rally around and push back against the Soviet government.

Distinctions regarding religion and nationality were not always clear in Soviet society since religion was often one of several markers of a cultural or ethnic identity. The most prominent example was the situation faced by the Soviet Jews, who were identified in both religious and ethnic terms, since "Jewish" was considered a separate national group according to Soviet policy. The Jews underwent distinct treatment in Soviet society, experiencing much hostility and discrimination following the Second World War. During the war, millions of Soviet Jews perished because of the Holocaust, and in spite of this many retained a relatively prominent role in Soviet society in the post-war period. Many Russians though came to blame the war on the Jews, reasoning if it had not been for them the Germans would not have invaded. Many other Russians also viewed the Russian Revolution unfavorably, were similarly convinced that it was the Jews who were behind the Revolution. Many Jews experienced this persistent anti-Semitism and accusations of "cosmopolitanism" and "Zionism" in the years immediately following the war, closing many opportunities for them within Soviet society, while barring them access to many government positions and institutional advancement. As

early as 1947, Jewish writers were accused of slandering the Soviet state, as many witnessed their cultural institutions degraded and derided by the Soviet government.³⁴

Given this public shunning many Jews were especially predisposed to dissident currents. This predisposition to dissidence is also attributed to the connections many Jews had abroad, as well as a large urban and educated population, many of who participated in and socialized amongst the intellectuals in the *kompaniya*. The plight of the Soviet Jews is intimately related to the birth of the dissident movement, with civically minded Russians, such as Ludmilla Alexeyeva and others, coming to the defense of their Jewish colleagues and friends in the face of mounting anti-Semitism. In fact, it is in defense of one of her Jewish university-mates, Stella Dvorkis, a woman Alexeyeva never met, that her career as a champion for human rights and social justice was launched.³⁵ Alexeyeva was also among the members of the Russian population who had friends who were Jewish. She witnessed the toll anti-Semitism was taking on her friends, in particular her best friend from university, Marina Rosenzweig, whose Jewish friends were imprisoned by the NKVD for supposed participation in the Doctor's Plot to kill Stalin.³⁶

The hopelessness of the situation faced by many Soviet Jews, led some to advocate in favor of emigrating from the Soviet Union. This desire for emigration was closely tied to the attraction of Zionism. Many European Jews had sought to immigrate to Israel in order to escape persecution at home and to have the freedom to practice their own religion. For the Soviet Jews who survived the Holocaust, the ability to immigrate to Israel was much restricted. Beyond the usual Soviet restrictions, the emigration of

³⁴ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 179; Petrus Buwalda, *They Did Not Dwell Alone: Jewish Emigration from the Soviet Union, 1967-1990* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 18.

³⁵ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 45-46.

³⁶ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 67.

Jews was discouraged because the Soviets were fearful of offending their Arab allies in the Middle East. Most Jews did not consider emigration to be an option during the 1950s and 1960s anyway. Many were secular and many thought that Soviet society could change itself from within. This attitude changed after the Six Days War, where many Soviet Jews found their sense of Jewish identity reawakened by Israel's victory and the increased repression they experienced at the hands of the Soviet regime in its wake.

Whereas the Jews came to eventually advocate in favor of emigration, other nationalities sought to find greater autonomy for themselves within the Soviet Union, such as the Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Georgians, and Armenians, while others sought justice for the crimes committed against them by Stalin. Most notably, those groups that sought social justice were the Meskhi Turks, Chechens, and in particular the Crimean Tatars. These ethnic groups were described by Alexeyeva as being the "the outcasts of outcasts" because they were deported by Stalin at the end of the Second World War, and were they were the first groups to organize and protest to the authorities.³⁷ This was particularly true of the Crimean Tatars, who were targeted by Stalin in 1944 for deportation from their homeland on the Crimean Peninsula to Central Asia under the charge of having collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. Thousands of Crimean Tatars perished during the deportation and the first few brutal years of settlement in Central Asia, where they were treated as prison laborers under the special settlement regime. Their position improved after the death of Stalin and following the Twentieth Party Congress where the Crimean Tatars were granted the right to leave the special settlement camps, but not the right to return to their homeland. This sense of injustice sparked the formation of the Crimean Tatar national movement, led by

³⁷ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 7.

former Communist Party leaders, government figures, and war veterans.³⁸ It took until 1957 for the movement to reach what historian Gulnara Bekirova described as a “mass character,” through the use of petitions and delegations aimed at organizing the Crimean Tatars and making their plight known to the authorities. The first such petition was organized in July 1957, attracting 6,000 signatures. Later petitions gathered more signatures, eventually enough to secure the occasional meeting with a high ranking Communist Party official, meetings which produced little or no tangible results. Through the early 1960s these petitions grew in size, with a March 1961 petition sent to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union having over 18,000 signatures.³⁹ By 1961 the Soviet authorities began to crackdown on Crimean Tatar political activity, bringing the first activists to trial in October of that year.⁴⁰ Activists by late 1961 and early 1962 experimented with the formation of the “Union of the Crimean Tatar Youth,” whose goal was to teach young Tatars their national language and discuss the problems associated with a return to their homeland. Its membership was also arrested and tried, and other similar attempts at official organization were squashed by the authorities.⁴¹ With these arrests the Crimean Tatar movement entered what historian Timothy Waters called the “dissident phase.” No longer was the movement led by Red Army veterans and the former party functionaries, but by the generation of Crimean Tatars who were young during their expulsion and radicalized through the

³⁸ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 139.

³⁹ Gulnara Bekirova, “Crimean Tatar National Movement in the 50-60’s.: Formation, First Victories, and Disappointments,” Center of Information and Documentation of Crimean Tatars, 2002, available: <http://www.cidct.org.ua/en/studii/13-14/7.html> (22 November 2010), 2-3.

⁴⁰ J. Otto Pohl, “Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing of the Crimean Tatars and Their Struggle for Rehabilitation, 1944-1985,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 60, no. 1/2 (Mar., 2004): 47.

⁴¹ Bekirova, 5.

experience.⁴² They no longer viewed their deportation as a “mistake,” like their predecessors did. Instead for these activists their deportation was a “crime,” and they deployed the language of “racism” and “genocide” in describing their experience. Whereas the activists of the 1950s were polite in their fight for rehabilitation, this new generation demanded it, unafraid to fight a system they viewed as unjust.⁴³ This generation of Crimean Tatars was drawn from the same generation of intellectuals who were pioneering the intellectual dissident movement.

For the Crimean Tatar national movement, as well as the Soviet Union’s intellectual and Jewish dissident movements, their timeline’s closely mirrored one another’s. Protests began as unorganized and spontaneous but became increasingly sophisticated, employing the creation of *samizdat* texts, and an unorganized leadership. The Crimean Tatar national movement is but one prominent example of many similar movements that emerged during the thaw, demonstrating the diversity of dissidence in the Soviet Union. Notably, the Crimean Tatar movement, like that of the intellectuals, the Jews and others, remained relatively free of violence and its motives and procedures, such as open letter writing and petitioning, were identical to those used by other activist groups in the Soviet Union. The Soviet government’s strict control of the media prevented these groups from communicating with one another.⁴⁴ Therefore *samizdat* texts were the most important source of information, and it became clear, in particular to the intellectual dissident movement, that these *samizdat* texts could really gain some traction if sent abroad. Therefore, the introduction of foreigners into the homes of Soviet dissidents, and their interest, became vitally important to the dissident movement, and

⁴² Pohl, “Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing,” 48.

⁴³ Pohl, “Stalin’s Ethnic Cleansing,” 48.

⁴⁴ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 8.

this opening to the world became possible only during the thaw and Khrushchev's cultural diplomacy with the West.

The Soviet Union Opens to the West

Instrumental to the thaw was the gradual opening of the Soviet Union to the outside world, allowing foreigners greater access to the Soviet Union, as well as giving Soviet citizens the ability to travel abroad. Prior to the thaw, the Soviet Union was guided by a desire to minimize foreign contact as much as possible. This policy was based on Soviet anxiety over the possibility of capitalist encirclement and contamination, a phenomenon that historian Terry Martin referred to as "Soviet xenophobia." This differed from traditional Russian xenophobia in that it was not based on racial or ethnic distinctions, but upon the ideological hatred of a foreigner's capitalist government, permeating all sectors of Soviet society, even the dissidents themselves. Alexeyeva mentions her xenophobic attitudes in reference to learning about her friend Yuli Daniel's publishing books in the West, writing that "learning that Yulik, a person I admired, would allow foreigners to publish his work was shocking enough. It was one thing to tell the truth at home. It was something else to tell it to outsiders, many of whom were genuine enemies of our country."⁴⁵ This xenophobia and isolationism imbued the relations of the Soviet Union with the outside world, especially with regard to the West, greatly impairing relations.⁴⁶ It was Stalin in particular who feared the contamination of Western values and capitalism. He severely restricted the ability of foreigners to travel in the Soviet Union as well as the access Soviet citizens themselves had to the outside

⁴⁵ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 113.

⁴⁶ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 313.

world. Despite these restrictions, there was no time when relations between the Soviet Union and the outside world were completely cut off, even during some of the most isolating periods, such as the late Stalin years. Between 1948 and 1953, most of the contact between the noncommunist world and the Soviet Union were between Soviet delegations and foreign communists or fellow-travelers, or between visiting groups which were composed mainly of such persons, and Soviet communist party or government agencies.⁴⁷ Americans and other Westerners therefore had very little exposure to Russia and the Soviet Union, just as Russians similarly lacked such exposure to American culture.

This lack of exposure to the outside world in no way prevented young Russians from seeking to learn more about the West and Western culture. In particular, young educated children of the elite, who already had the most access to such foreign contacts, were most interested in learning about the West. During these late Stalin years many urban youths sought a cultural style of their own, and were heavily influenced by the few American and German films that were released in the Soviet Union, especially after 1956. These youths sought to imitate the Americans and Westerners they saw by wearing similar clothing and listening to contraband American music, particularly jazz. One Russian musician, Julie Whitney, the Russian wife of American journalist Thomas Whitney, described being punished in her youth for her interest in American jazz. Despite her punishment she contended that jazz music fascinated many Russians, writing that they “want the more modern fox trots, rhumbas, sambas, tangoes and fast waltzes. And one way or another, they get them. They listen to foreign radio stations and

⁴⁷ Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960.

Russians who go outside Russia bring back records.” She even added, “In Soviet motion pictures the composers manage to sneak in a little jazz sometimes, nominally as anti-American propaganda, but actually because the audiences like it.”⁴⁸ While many Russians had a tacit interest in jazz, a select minority idealized American culture, viewing as trophies American jazz records or any Western products. These youths in particular dressed in a way resembling American zoot-suiters, with men wearing broad-shouldered jackets and large brightly-colored ties, while women wore extravagant hairdos and heavy makeup. These young people developed their own counter-culture, running against the Soviet cannon where young people were supposed to dress conservatively and frugally, and young women without any makeup. These young people would become known as *stiliagi*, or “style apers.” American journalist Chalmers M. Roberts described these *stiliagi* and those who had taken favorably towards American culture in a 1955 article in *The Washington Post*, writing:

There is a new Soviet man—he may be seen in all the major cities wearing a light gabardine type topcoat, eating in restaurants, enjoying opera and ballet, and living in the newer and roomier apartment buildings. [...] The new Soviet man’s wife uses lipstick, paints her fingernails or has them painted in a beauty parlor, wears nylon stockings. Their children, too, are better dressed. The parents also like American-style jazz, and in Moscow have a television set.⁴⁹

Such young Soviets later become the advocates of Western-style openness and liberalization in Soviet society, as Zubok argued.⁵⁰

Western music and style witnessed an awakening under Khrushchev whose policies permitted an increase in cultural relations with the West, albeit in order to demonstrate the superiority of the Soviet system, both culturally and politically.

⁴⁸ Julie Whitney, “Soviet’s Jumping Despite Jazz Ban,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 11, 1953, pg 14.

⁴⁹ Chalmers M. Roberts, “New Type Soviet Citizen Adopts American Habits,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, Oct 25, 1955, pg 1.

⁵⁰ Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 40-41, 44.

Khrushchev, unlike Stalin and his cohorts, was unafraid of approaching Westerners and the West, boldly inviting himself and his entourage to a Fourth of July barbeque at the American Embassy in 1955, meeting, greeting and mingling with the guests there.⁵¹ The opening of the Soviet Union to the outside world began in 1955, allowing foreigners greater access to the Soviet Union, as well as allowing Soviet citizens increased capacity to travel abroad especially after the 1957 World Youth Congress in Moscow. The goal of Khrushchev's cultural diplomacy was to present a new image of the Soviet Union and to offset the dominant Cold War image of Russian militarism. It emphasized Great Russian culture such as the ballet, music, art, and literature, as well as Russian advances in the sciences and was all part of what scholar Frederick C. Barghoorn has referred to as "Soviet Cultural Diplomacy." Its goal was to "project to all men an image of the Soviet way of life calculated to facilitate Soviet foreign policy objectives."⁵² Another goal of Khrushchev's cultural exchanges was to blind Americans and foreign visitors to the problems of the Soviet Union. Therefore Soviet officials sought to ingratiate foreigners, Barghoorn stating, "the Kremlin can see to it that hospitality is lavished upon visiting American Congressmen, businessmen, or scientists, and, to a considerable degree, it can control even the physical environment in which the occasionally vodka-happy but more often merely uninformed visitors pass their travel time."⁵³ Such contacts though became increasingly difficult to monitor and control, with many Russians having an interest and curiosity in American and Western culture that often was not reciprocated. These contacts and attempts at propaganda and counter-propaganda went both ways, as

⁵¹ Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents: Reporting on Russia from the Revolution to Glasnost* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1988), 151.

⁵² Barghoorn, v; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 88.

⁵³ Barghoorn, 268-269.

demonstrated by the dueling Soviet exhibition in New York and the American exhibition in Moscow in 1959. The American exhibition in Moscow attracted far greater numbers than the Soviet exhibition in New York, drawing 2.7 million visitors during its six week run. Many Russians scoffed at the material culture on display, but nonetheless it left an impression on those young members of the intelligentsia curious about life in the West.⁵⁴

These changes first began with citizens of the other People's Democracies in Eastern Europe in 1955, with the Khrushchev regime allowing both tourism and the sale of foreign language books and newspapers. In fact, by 1957 close to half a million Soviet citizens had traveled to places such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, China, and East Germany.⁵⁵ This opening up of the Soviet Union first to fellow People's Democracies quickly expanded to non-communist countries, as long as potential travelers could be approved for an exit visa, which usually meant undergoing an extensive background investigation and winning the approval of one's place of work or study. Such exit visas were administered by a special "exit" section at the communist party headquarters, as well as the KGB, both of which sought to ensure that a candidate for travel had impeccable "moral and political" credentials.⁵⁶ Similarly, some Americans began traveling to the Soviet Union, with Moscow, Leningrad, and Rostov becoming open to the West and repairing and restoring their tourist infrastructure in order to attract foreign tourists.⁵⁷

This opening to the West inspired many Russian intellectuals, with Vladimir Bukovsky, a neuro-physicist and later human rights activist, even noting in his memoir

⁵⁴ Susan E. Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom? Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow," *Kritika* vol. 9, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 857-861.

⁵⁵ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 90.

⁵⁶ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 91.

⁵⁷ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 93.

the opening was equal in importance to Khrushchev's exposure of Stalin.⁵⁸ For Russians, their perceptions of the West and Westerners were colored by the intense isolation from the rest of the world they experienced under Stalin, and even the post-Stalin era. Therefore, as Barbara Walker pointed out, Westerners stuck out, and drew intense interest from Muscovites.⁵⁹ This was especially true with regard to the World Youth Festival hosted in Moscow, which began on July 28, 1957, and was envisioned as a propaganda gain for the Soviet Union. The festival attracted youth the world over to Moscow, but in reality it demonstrated the backwardness of the Soviets in comparison to the rest of the world, as well as opened the minds of Soviet youth to the possibilities that existed beyond home. The Moscow World Youth Festival was the greatest single influx of foreigners into the city since the Second World War, necessitating the mobilization of much of the city in support of the festival. As Zubok pointed out, the fair made obvious the backwardness of Soviet society with regard to the economy and the infrastructure that had to be updated and modified for the event. Especially apparent was the scarcity of hotels, advertising, clothing, fast-food outlets, and shopping, all of which many foreigners were accustomed and expected to have access to.⁶⁰

In all some 34,000 foreign guests from 130 countries arrived in Moscow for the World Youth Festival. Such a large volume of foreigners overwhelmed the Soviet police state, with many young Russians sharing with Western visitors their fears of the Soviet police, with too many contacts being made between Soviet youths and the Westerners for the Soviet security apparatus to monitor. Some of the Russians making contact with foreigners included Alik Ginsberg, a future human rights activist. Ginsberg had a large

⁵⁸ Vladimir Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter* (New York: Viking, 1979), 139.

⁵⁹ Walker, 903.

⁶⁰ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 102.

appetite for American print literature, and acquired many foreign magazines and papers throughout the course of the festival.⁶¹ The festival also gave other young Russians the space to experiment and express themselves in ways that were against the Soviet grain. Jazz, western clothing and Western art all broke free and were viewed as mainstream during the duration of the festival.⁶² Another Vladimir Bukovsky even stated that “the World Youth Festival in 1957, then the American exhibition in 1958—[were] the first swallows of the West in our entire Soviet history. All this talk about ‘putrefying capitalism’ became ridiculous.”⁶³ For many Soviet dissidents, the Youth Festival proved to be another monumental event in their youth, since it brought the outside world to their door step, and was the first time many young Russians began having extensive contacts with foreign nationals, contacts that grew and solidified into real relationships and friendships.

Introduction of Foreign News Correspondents in the USSR

Of these relationships with foreign nationals, perhaps none were as important as that between the dissident intellectuals and foreign news correspondents, a relationship that was officially banned by the Soviet government, but would nonetheless be successful in transmitting the activities of the Soviet dissident movement to the world. Like Soviet intellectuals, many foreign news correspondents faced similar restrictions on their freedom of communication, given the Soviet government’s strict control over what could and could not be reported abroad. According to CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr, this control was there to protect the “image of monolithic unity and steady progress” the

⁶¹ Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 107.

⁶² Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 106.

⁶³ Bukovsky, 139.

Soviet Union projected abroad.⁶⁴ Prior to the death of Stalin, journalistic access to the Soviet Union was nearly impossible since foreign journalists were viewed as agents of the ruling class of their homelands.⁶⁵ After the end of the Second World War, Stalin intensified the restrictions placed on foreign news journalists, since the Kremlin sought to control information available to foreign correspondents, eliminate unfavorable stories, and effectively reduce the number of foreign correspondents in the Soviet Union, especially Americans. The Soviet government achieved these goals by practicing a campaign of intimidation, surveillance, censorship, and expulsion, which confined the access of a news correspondent in the Soviet Union. At the end of the war over a dozen American correspondents were reporting from the Soviet Union, representing about ten news organizations. Stalin's policies forced this number to dwindle to four by 1949.⁶⁶ These regulations persisted through March 1961, when Khrushchev officially ended censorship, since the program became impossible to enforce, given technological advancements as well as the explosion in foreigners traveling to the Soviet Union. Despite the end of censorship, the Soviet government's policies of intimidation against foreign correspondents continued, making the Moscow bureau the most frustrating assignment a journalist could receive.⁶⁷

During the Stalin and early Khrushchev years, the greatest tool the Soviet government held regarding the information a foreign correspondent could send abroad was control over their visa. Soviet visa restrictions made it difficult for American news

⁶⁴ Daniel Schorr, "Focus on the Kremlin's Secrecy Obsession" *The New York Times Magazine* (17 August 1958): 32.

⁶⁵ Barghoorn, 103.

⁶⁶ These four were: Henry Shapiro of United Press, Eddy Gilmore and Thomas Whitney of the Associated Press, and Harrison Salisbury of *The New York Times*. Bassow, 124-125.

⁶⁷ Bassow, 121-124.

outlets to get a correspondent in Moscow. *The New York Times* for instance did not have a Moscow bureau for over a year and a half in the late 1940s, since it was impossible for the paper to come up with a candidate the Soviet visa granters found suitable. It took until the managing editor of the paper, Edwin L. James, wrote an “open letter” to Stalin before journalist Harrison E. Salisbury was granted a visa to the Soviet Union.⁶⁸

Journalists who eventually made it to Moscow would have to struggle between preserving their journalistic credentials on the one hand and preventing themselves from becoming Kremlin tools on the other, since careless and overly critical reporting often meant the expulsion of the offending journalist, and sometimes even the entire news bureau he represented. One such incident occurred in October 1958 where the entire CBS Moscow bureau was closed due to the network’s broadcasting of a drama on the death of Stalin in which Khrushchev was portrayed as a conspirator in a plot to oust him.⁶⁹ CBS was accused of a litany of infractions in its portrayal of the Soviet Union. Just a few months prior to the airing of the drama, their Moscow correspondent Daniel Schorr was refused reentry into the Soviet Union because he had taped a Russian student exclaiming that close to ninety per cent of his fellow students disagreed with the Soviet Union’s intervention in Hungary in 1956.⁷⁰ This risk of expulsion therefore hampered the ability of journalists to report fairly and openly from the Soviet Union, forcing many of them into self censorship.

These restrictions on foreign news correspondents were part of the general clamping down by Stalin’s regime following the end of the Second World War. The

⁶⁸ Harrison E. Salisbury, *American in Russia*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 4-6.

⁶⁹ Vincent J. Burke, “Soviet CBS Ouster Criticized,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, Oct 9, 1958, C26.

⁷⁰ “USSR Deaf to CBS Newsmen’s Continued Knocking at Iron Curtain,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, July 2, 1958, C19.

foreign press was targeted in particular with the goal of reducing their numbers and ability to report on the true happenings in the Soviet Union. The most frustrating regulation put in place by Stalin for foreign correspondents was the establishment of *Glavlit*⁷¹ (Main Directory for Literary and Publishing Affairs) which assumed responsibility over censoring foreign news dispatches from the Foreign Ministry Press Department in February 1946. Unlike before, correspondents could no longer see who was handling their press cables, let alone negotiate with the censor, a process carried out in complete secrecy and anonymity.⁷² The Soviet censor for *Glavlit* resided in Moscow's Central Telegraph Office on Gorki Street, the only point through which foreign correspondents could submit their cables. There, the censor assiduously checked every word a journalist included in a dispatch, searching for unfavorable information that he would scratch out, providing no explanation of the deletions, or an appeal process. Their deletions were often arbitrary and depended on the attitude of the censor himself, a process that frustrated many American journalists who were often unable to send a simple dispatch, and their editors, who would ask for projects not feasible under the censorship regime of *Glavlit*.⁷³ Entire news stories would disappear, succumbing to the censor. In one instance, journalist Drew Middleton of *The New York Times* got the chance to interview Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov in Odessa, authoring a long account concerning the interview. But when Middleton's press cable returned from the censor's office it consisted of a single line: "Marshal Zhukov was in Odessa today and spoke to correspondents."⁷⁴ Other journalists were more privy to the arbitrary nature of the

⁷¹ *Glavnoe Upravlenie po Delam Literaturny i Izdatelstvo*

⁷² Bassow, 123.

⁷³ Bassow, 192-194.

⁷⁴ Bassow, 126.

censoring process, with Irving R. Levine of NBC, writing that in one case a newspaper columnist described a Soviet home as having “every nook and cranny” utilized for living space, only to have this report returned to him with the word “cranny” crossed out, but “nook” remaining.⁷⁵ Despite the inconsistency, there was a general pattern to the types of stories that failed to pass the censor at the central telegraph. As Daniel Schorr pointed out in an article in *The New York Times Magazine*, stories which failed to clear the censor typically included indications of internal unrest or discontent, suggestions of disharmony among members of the Communist bloc, speculation on antagonisms and disunity amongst the Soviet leadership, military information, unflattering personal references to Soviet leaders, references to the secret police, the camps and other security organs, and references to censorship itself.⁷⁶ Generally for these journalists, the prospect of censorship and the frustration the process entailed colored a correspondent’s attitude toward the Soviet state. This allowed many journalists to view the Soviet Union in a negative light, often leading them to make harsh characterizations and assertions about life in the Soviet Union.⁷⁷

Journalists found ways, whenever they could, to circumvent the censorship of *Glavlit*. Sometimes simply the use of idiomatic language was enough to pass the censors. Levine cited in one case, while covering the Soviet leadership’s commemoration of the October Revolution, that he was able to bypass the censors when he wrote, “Fireworks lit up the sky over the Kremlin, and inside the Soviet leaders were equally lit up.”⁷⁸ Not every journalist could get away passing their true perceptions through coded and

⁷⁵ Irving R. Levine, *Main Street, U.S.S.R.* (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 196.

⁷⁶ Schorr, 29.

⁷⁷ Levine, 196.

⁷⁸ Levine, 194.

idiomatic language, some journalists had to resort to passing information through on tapped phones, at least until the lines were cut. Levine even quoted in one case journalists discussing basketball as a coded language in order to cover up a conversation on internal politics in the Soviet leadership.⁷⁹ Another popular method was to send information through the diplomatic pouch, though it was technically forbidden by the American Embassy.⁸⁰ As technology improved, and as more foreigners began to travel to the Soviet Union, journalists began to employ them in their bid to send information abroad, just as dissidents used these travelers to send their texts abroad. These foreign tourists, who often times volunteered their services in carrying items abroad, were frequently referred to as “pigeons,” and this became a popular medium of communication for many journalists as long as the censorship regime of *Glavlit* persisted.⁸¹

In line with Khrushchev’s opening of the Soviet Union to the West during the mid-1950s, more journalists were granted access to the Soviet Union, just as Khrushchev himself began to openly approach journalists and socialize with them, unafraid to speak his mind when he needed to. This all began when Khrushchev unexpectedly approached the American embassy during their Fourth of July picnic in 1955, greeting the American Ambassador’s wife and meeting the American journalists attending.⁸² Khrushchev’s policy of cultural diplomacy toward the West made it easier for Western journalists to enter the Soviet Union, resulting in a rise from the four American journalists in 1949 to sixteen by the mid 1960s.⁸³ The growing tide of visitors, as well as the exciting pace of change in the Soviet Union, with the launch of *Sputnik*, touring of American musical

⁷⁹ Levine, 200-201.

⁸⁰ Bassow, 127.

⁸¹ Bassow, 181-182.

⁸² Bassow, 151-153.

⁸³ Bassow, 198.

performers, the “kitchen debate” between Khrushchev and Vice President Nixon, the World Youth Festival, and many more, all changed the nature of reporting from Moscow, and taxed the policing abilities of the *Glavlit*.⁸⁴ The flow of information from the Soviet Union was also becoming increasingly difficult to control, through a growth in foreign travel and changes in technology. For instance it took a while for Soviet authorities to uncover the loophole posed by movie newsreels, which became increasingly popular during the late 1950s with Irving Levine and Daniel Schorr becoming the first two TV network correspondents to report from Moscow.⁸⁵ The ability of the Kremlin to censor what was reported from the Soviet Union became increasingly difficult and its methods obsolete, since the censorship system allowed for such loopholes. Khrushchev and the leadership caught on to the trend and in March 1961 summoned all the foreign correspondents to the Foreign Ministry where the head of the Press Department, Mikhail K. Kharlamov, announced an end to censorship and to *Glavlit*.⁸⁶

The end to censorship did not necessarily mean that foreign reporters were free to report whatever they wanted, since the Kremlin made sure it still possessed other tools of intimidation and enforcement meant to hold reporters accountable if they happened to report “incorrect rumors,” as Kharlamov put it.⁸⁷ The Soviet government kept reporters under surveillance as it did before the end of *Glavlit*’s censorship, and it still possessed the power to revoke visas and expel reporters. Whitman Bassow wrote of his own expulsion as *Newsweek*’s Moscow bureau chief, the first American reporter expelled after the termination of censorship in August 1962. Bassow wrote that his expulsion was on

⁸⁴ Bassow, 181.

⁸⁵ Bassow, 156.

⁸⁶ Bassow, 201-202.

⁸⁷ Bassow, 203.

account of a feature he had written on Soviet humor that had offended the regime. The joke Bassow published in his article was provided to him by Feliks Soloviev, the KGB agent tasked with following him, and who Bassow believed provided the joke to him as a pretext to try and get Bassow expelled from the country.⁸⁸ Therefore correspondents remained apprehensive, taking time to get used to reporting without the censor's watchful gaze, with many reporters remaining skeptical and untrusting of the Soviet regime. It took a while for this mindset to change, but new stories emerged when correspondents loosened up and began to report on the darker side of Soviet life, such as corruption, alcoholism, the black market, and the housing shortage.⁸⁹ They could also begin to cover the ferment within the Soviet art and intellectual world, concerning changes in the arts, the cinema, and literature. This was especially the case after Soviet author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn published his famous novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, which correspondents covered heavily along with other stories concerning de-Stalinization.⁹⁰

The Khrushchev years were according to Bassow, “ten years of dramatic change in the status of foreign correspondents working in the USSR.” Despite these dramatic changes, Bassow also pointed out that in the four years following the termination of censorship, six correspondents, including himself, were expelled from the Soviet Union.⁹¹ Being a foreign news journalist was risky business, with the only safe bet kowtowing to the authorities and translating excerpts from TASS, *Pravda*, or *Krasnaya zvezda*, as some

⁸⁸ The joke Bassow wrote went: “A little boy asks his grandmother about Lenin. / ‘Ah, he was a great and good man.’ / ‘What kind of man was Stalin?’ / ‘Sometimes he was good and sometimes he was very bad.’ / ‘And Grandma, what kind of man is Khrushchev?’ / ‘When he dies, we’ll find out.’” Bassow, 216-217.

⁸⁹ Bassow, 204.

⁹⁰ Bassow, 208-209.

⁹¹ Bassow, 230.

journalists invariably were forced to do. The Soviets continued to intimidate foreign news correspondents, as Hedrick Smith, a reporter for *The New York Times* described:

The Russians have other ways [than censorship] of dealing with reporters who poke into things they prefer left uncovered. The most common is to constantly hound, scold, reprimand them for their dispatches, usually in private but sometimes publicly in the press. Occasionally, tires are punctured or reporters are beaten up by police goons to deter them from making unauthorized contacts.

The KGB was especially ruthless in its intimidation of foreigners. Many correspondents in fact knew who their assigned KGB agent was, occasionally meeting them for lunch or dinner. Whitman Bassow knew his KGB agent on a first name basis, Feliks Soloviev, who planted the joke Bassow later published and which forced his expulsion from the Soviet Union. Another popular KGB trap was to goad the typically single male journalist into a scandal by setting up a situation where the foreign correspondent would be tempted by a Russian woman, and then later blackmail the journalist over the encounter. Bassow described one such occurrence while taking the midnight express between Moscow and Leningrad, and his unusual encounter with a Russian girl with the name, Karolina, who attempted to seduce the married Bassow as part of a KGB trap to embarrass and discredit the journalist.⁹²

Foreigners also continued to be segregated from Soviet society, residing in compounds resembling prisons and specially designed to house foreigners, as *The Washington Post* correspondent Anatole Shub described, “These ghettos are surrounded by high wire fences and patrolled 24 hours a day by KGB men in blue police uniforms. Anyone who enters or leaves must pass at least one police booth, equipped with special telephones. Russians ‘unlicensed’ to deal with foreigners are stopped and questioned. At

⁹² Bassow, 190-191.

night, the compound court yards are floodlit.”⁹³ Concentrating foreigners in such compounds made it easier for the KGB to continue its surveillance, watching foreign correspondents and any Russians who may come to visit with them. This policy also had the side affect of completely isolating foreigners from the local population, impairing their ability to understand them. Dissident Andrei Amalrik noted this phenomenon in his March 25, 1971 essay on “Foreign Correspondents in Moscow.” There Amalrik criticized the manner in which correspondents were isolated from Soviet society, writing, “In general, a man isolated from the local population has far less understanding of what is going on in the country.”⁹⁴

This covering up, intimidation, and censorship ultimately obscured the reality that was the Soviet Union, which according to Hedrick Smith hid from public view the vices of Russian life, or as Smith wrote, “the awkward truths that do not square with Communist propaganda.”⁹⁵ This was especially true with regard to the fear of foreigners that gripped the Russian population, many unwilling to even sit near them on the metro, or talk with them on the street. This fear became especially acute after the June 1945 decree forbidding the giving up of “state secrets,” with secrets often being broadly interpreted. This ban frightened many Russians from approaching foreigners, fearing their own personal safety. It also made it near impossible for journalists to gather material for their dispatches that consisted of anything other than official government bulletins. This fear of foreigners was so pervasive that Walter Cronkite, who worked as United Press’s (UP) Moscow correspondent in 1948, reported how a Russian man came

⁹³ Anatole Shub, *The New Russian Tragedy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), 27.

⁹⁴ Andrei Amalrik, “Foreign Correspondents in Moscow” in *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* Hilary Sternberg, ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 94.

⁹⁵ Hedrick Smith, *The Russians* (New York: Quadrangle/ The New York Times Book Co., 1976), 15.

to his aid after slipping in the ice. Upon discovering Cronkite was not a Russian, this man quickly checked the scene for witnesses and ran off, without saying another word to the baffled Cronkite.⁹⁶ For Cronkite and other journalists, this kind of reaction by the local population made working in the Soviet Union near impossible, prompting Cronkite himself to leave after only a few short months on the job. Therefore, this xenophobic attitude and fear that enveloped Soviet society permitted a censorship that just as destructive as that of *Glavlit* for the journalists: the self-censorship of ordinary Russian people.

For American journalists, the Russians they typically dealt with represented what Hedrick Smith, a correspondent for *The New York Times*, called “official Russians.” These “official Russians” were according to Smith, “an entire veneer of people, running into the thousands [...] created by the Soviet system for dealing with foreigners.” These “official Russians” were not merely government officials, but were also the Soviet Union’s journalists, specialists, translators, Intourist guides, foreign trade organization executives, Party scientists, and Party administrators, people found in every Soviet institution, and used to and specially trained in dealing with foreigners.⁹⁷ As Smith continued, “These ‘official Russians’ who have a license, in effect, to deal with foreigners have the task of projecting *Pravda*’s Russia, the Russia of scientific success, socialist workers’ democracy, and the modern welfare state.”⁹⁸ Correspondents who were not versed in Russian history, culture, or language were stuck dealing only with these “official Russians,” as Hedrick explained, and these correspondents were unable to step outside and explore the wider Soviet Union. They were reliant on the help of the

⁹⁶ Bassow, 119.

⁹⁷ Smith, 14.

⁹⁸ Smith, 14.

few correspondents who really did possess that area knowledge, or solely the official government dispatches handed to them. These correspondents Amalrik alleged were reduced to work as “Soviet interpreters,” who simply translated or related the “official view” from the contents of *Pravda* or *Krasnaya zvezda*, and then obtained from his chauffeur or domestic help the opinion of the ‘man on the street’.⁹⁹ NBC News correspondent John Chancellor confessed to his ignorance while in Moscow, later writing that, “Probably half the American correspondents in the last twenty-five years did not have enough training in [the] language, culture, and history of the Russian people. I am an example of it.”¹⁰⁰

For journalists like Whitman Bassow, Hedrick Smith, and Peter Osnos of *The Washington Post*, the greatest gift for a foreign news correspondent was the ability to speak Russian. Bassow wrote, “The Russian language opens doors to Soviet society and to news; ignorance keeps those doors shut.” For Bassow, the rewards of knowing Russian went beyond just learning the news and doing the job, but he felt a certain personal enrichment in learning about life through real Russians, writing that, “The most important journalistic reward was to be able to meet Russians and learn about their lives and dreams.”¹⁰¹ These contacts gave Bassow insight into aspects of Soviet culture and life that a lack of language skills and cultural preparedness would have precluded. Bassow provided one of the stories revealed to him by luck of his Russian language knowledge:

Alexander was an architect, working for Moscow’s municipal government. A Jew, he rarely talked about his personal problems, but one night over herring, potatoes, and vodka at his kitchen table, together with two other Jewish friends,

⁹⁹ Amalrik, “Foreign Correspondents in Moscow,” 94-95.

¹⁰⁰ John Chancellor quoted in Bassow, 149.

¹⁰¹ Bassow, 223-224.

he finally revealed his bitterness at the anti-Semitism he had experienced. He was being blocked for promotion because he was Jewish, although he was a member of the Communist Party and a decorated war veteran. His friends had similar complaints. Without the Russian language I would have known nothing about this or much about how the system worked.¹⁰²

For Hedrick Smith and other correspondents in the field, it took a special kind of Russian to have the curiosity and bravery to meet with foreign correspondents, given the constant KGB presence, and the deeply imbedded mistrust of foreigners in Soviet culture. Smith wrote that given the restrictions correspondents faced, and those faced by the Russian people that “by and large those [Russians] with whom foreigners tend to mix are *special people*, almost all unusual in some way. And this obviously affects and colors an outsider’s view of Russia.”¹⁰³ These *special people* Smith, Bassow and other Russian speaking correspondents came into contact with beginning in the early and mid-1960s were the pioneers of the dissident and human rights movement. These were the most cosmopolitan and open minded Russians, already at odds with the regime with less to fear, and it was them who satisfied the correspondent’s need for a view of a different kind of Russia. As Andrei Amalrik wrote in his April 1970 article on the role of foreign correspondents in Moscow, “It is clear that the whole world could have learned about this [the human rights] movement only from the information of Western correspondents in Moscow (and in the USSR, from foreign radio broadcasts), for neither TASS nor any other Soviet organ would ever have publicized it.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Bassow, 224.

¹⁰³ Italics my own emphasis. Smith, 14.

¹⁰⁴ Amalrik, “Foreign Correspondents in Moscow,” 93-94.

The Meeting of the Journalists and Dissidents

Foreign correspondents in the Soviet Union, like dissident intellectuals, found themselves in remarkably similar situation, with both being on the receiving end of the authorities' crackdown on their freedom of expression, as well as their ability to access and communicate with the outside world. Both correspondents and intellectual dissidents expressed a firm belief in the freedom of speech and the freedom of information, since of course in the Western tradition it is the media's role to present and distribute information, and in the Soviet tradition, the intellectual dissidents sought the ability to communicate their thoughts freely. Therefore through personal relationships that were established beginning in the early and mid 1960s, the foreign press in the Soviet Union came to the aid of the Soviet Union's intellectual dissidents in serving as their medium of communication with the outside world. Since *samizdat* could not be published at home, foreign correspondents became the pigeons, taking these forbidden political, scientific, artistic, and literary documents out of the Soviet Union for publication abroad. Once published abroad these works became known as *tamizdat*, meaning, "published over there." The dissident connection to Western journalists should not be underestimated since it was the foreign news correspondents who brought the dissident's message, and more generally, their existence to the outside world. This relationship between foreign news correspondents and the Soviet dissidents was the result of a long process, with the full fledged relationship between the two groups emerging during the media coverage of the 1966 trial of Soviet writers Andrei Sinyavskii and Yuli Daniel. The arrests of

Sinyavskii and Daniel also marked the beginning of the systematic government crackdown on the intellectual counterculture and the end to the Khrushchev's thaw.¹⁰⁵

During Khrushchev's premiership there had been sporadic arrests of those accused of perpetrating "anti-Soviet activities" despite official de-Stalinization. These arrests were widespread, but subject to the erratic way in which the regime combated dissent. The irregularity of these arrests and the inconsistent execution of the Soviet law portended the confusing pace of de-Stalinization, as well as the inability of the Kremlin to decide what exactly de-Stalinization meant. Khrushchev's vacillation compounded by several significant blunders such as the Cuban missile crisis, the inability to raise living standards, and general dissatisfaction with his agricultural policy all became fodder for hardliners looking for a reason to remove him from power. Therefore, when the opportunity arose while Khrushchev was away on vacation in Abkhazia, hardliners aligned with the party apparatus, the KGB, and the military, deposed the Soviet leader in October 1964. They replaced him with Leonid Brezhnev as First Secretary and Alexei Kosygin as Premier. This new Soviet leadership secretly admired Stalin, with Brezhnev's rise to power foretelling the creeping re-Stalinization and glorification of his reign.¹⁰⁶ Brezhnev's regime, unlike Khrushchev's, cracked down forcefully on the counterculture activities of the dissident movement, and began to recede from the outside world, much like Stalin. As journalist Anatole Shub wrote of the comparison between Khrushchev and Brezhnev:

Khrushchev had the peasant good sense to venture out, to travel widely at home and abroad, to elicit, even provoke contrary opinions from uninhibited foreigners. Nearly all men who deposed him (Shelepin may be an exception) seem to be stay-

¹⁰⁵ Walker, 913-914.

¹⁰⁶ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 257-259.

at-homers by choice. [...] Nearly half of the Politburo members and alternates have never spent as much as a month in the West in all their lives.¹⁰⁷

The new regime therefore was a turn backward, seeking to derail the changes made during the previous decade, in particular by cracking down on the intellectuals and the growing role of their underground culture. The turning point for the incipient intellectual and dissident movement came with the arrests of Andrei Sinyavskii and Yuli Daniel in October 1965. These arrests were clearly meant to warn other such intellectuals of the danger posed to them by criticizing the regime and falling off the party line, particularly of submitting materials to Westerners for publication abroad, as both Sinyavskii and Daniel did.¹⁰⁸

Andrei Sinyavskii and in particular Yuli Daniel, were prominent members of Moscow *kompaniia* and were widely known in the intellectual community with hundreds and perhaps thousands having been personally acquainted with the two. Both men were authors of short stories and poetry, much of which was critical of the Soviet regime and of the dominance of socialist realism, so both men sought a publisher abroad for their works, writing under the pseudonyms of Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak. Both writers were accused of sending literature critical of the Soviet Union abroad for publication and were arrested and charged under article 70 of the Soviet Constitution for instigating “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.” They were, according to dissident historian Ludmilla Alexeyeva, the first writers or poets in the Soviet Union to face criminal charges based on the content of their work, since there were no prominent trials of Soviet writers since the reign of Stalin.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Shub, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 259-261.

¹⁰⁹ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 131.

The arrests of Sinyavskii and Daniel signaled to Soviet intellectuals that the thaw was freezing up and that a “re-Stalinization” was on its way in. Their September 1965 arrest got the attention of many others within the intellectual milieu, whose sense of collective injustice compelled them to action. In particular, many intellectuals criticized their arrests on constitutional grounds. They reasoned it was time to act, and make the Soviet government aware that the authorities were not following the letter of the law. This was especially the case with Alexander Esenin-Volpin, a logician and mathematician, also considered the father of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union, given his firm belief that Soviet authorities were compelled to strictly follow the Constitution, which guaranteed Soviet citizens the right to freedom of speech and demonstration, rights denied in practice.¹¹⁰ Esenin-Volpin arranged for the first political demonstration to take place on December 5, 1965, the birthday of the Soviet Constitution, demanding that *glasnost*, or openness, to be applied in the upcoming trial of both Sinyavskii and Daniel, so that the family and friends of the imprisoned men may attend the trial. On the appointed day, Esenin-Volpin, along with a group of twenty or so like-minded intellectuals and students, descend upon Pushkin Square and unfurled banners calling for “Glasnost in the Trial of Sinyavskii and Daniel,” and “Honor the Soviet Constitution.” Their protest lasted but a moment, since the police and KGB were well aware of their attempted demonstration and moved in to suppress it immediately. The protest that began at Pushkin Square on December 5, 1965, has been commented upon by many scholars and dissidents as the moment which marked when the intellectual

¹¹⁰ Benjamin Nathans, “The Dictatorship of Reason: Alexander Vol’pin and the Idea of Rights Under ‘Developed Socialism’” *Slavic Review* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2007) : 630-663.

community in Moscow developed from just circles of *kompaniia* and intellectually minded friends into political activists.¹¹¹

The demonstrators at Pushkin Square were successful in keeping their banners unfurled long enough for a reporter from *The New York Times* to snap a photo and have it published on the front page of the paper two weeks later, on December 18, 1965.¹¹² The dissident movement officially made news in America, with Alexeyeva writing:

It seemed that the editors of Western newspapers didn't know quite what to make of the December 5 Glasnost Meeting. Two weeks later, presumably after they realized that their reporters had witnessed antigovernment stirrings at the heart of a police state, the story got prominent play. On December 18, the Glasnost Meeting was on page 1 of *The New York Times*. Our existence was noticed and acknowledged.

Soon thereafter Alexeyeva wrote that she noticed the names of prominent international thinkers and philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, Günter Grass, Norman Mailer, and many more being read on shortwave radio stations, all petitioning for Sinyavskii's and Daniel's release.¹¹³ The February 1966 trial of Sinyavskii and Daniel was the first high-profile dissident trial to draw such western media attention.¹¹⁴ According to historians and the dissidents, the trial was a turning point in the history of dissent in the Soviet Union because it marked the moment when the dissident movement became politicized, evolving from a small group of friends to a movement with powerful connections in the West.¹¹⁵ Whitman Bassow wrote of the trial:

That day in February 1965 was a landmark, signaling the beginning of turmoil and convulsion in Soviet society that spawned a decade of dissent and dissidents. Although only a relatively small number of individuals became involved, their

¹¹¹ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 119-124; Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 263.

¹¹² Peter Grose, "Noted Poet Detained in Moscow Protest," *The New York Times*, Dec 18, 1965, pg 1.

¹¹³ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 127.

¹¹⁴ Bassow, 233-234; Boobbyer, 77; Walker, 913-914.

¹¹⁵ Boobbyer, 77; Goldberg, 28; Walker, 913.

appearance as a highly visible and vocal group was to affect profoundly the professional and personal lives of the American correspondents.¹¹⁶

The trial therefore marked for the foreign news correspondents the beginning of an era where they would become increasingly involved in the dissident movement, with many, though not all, risking their own personal safety to make contact with dissidents and make their stories known.

Initially though these contacts were overlaid with an air of mistrust. As indicated earlier, years of isolation from the West colored many Russians' perception of outsiders, making it difficult for them to trust foreigners. Historian Barbara Walker noted that many Russians felt a sense of superiority when they compared themselves to Westerners. This was based on the perceived inability of Westerners to take full advantage of their freedoms when compared to those of a Soviet citizen.¹¹⁷ Ludmilla Alexeyeva conveyed this bifurcated attitude between distrust and an innate curiosity better than anyone else in her memoirs. At one point she wrote about her own battle repressing her initial xenophobic reaction upon learning that her friend Yuli Daniel was sending his works abroad to be published. She wrote of her reaction in this particular circumstance, "That was Soviet xenophobia, the remnants of teachings about 'the progressive forces,' 'the forces of reaction,' 'class struggle,' and other such things that had been crammed into my mind since childhood. By the mid-1960s, I had learned to recognize those thoughts, and each time they cropped up I did my best to combat them."¹¹⁸ Alexeyeva's reactions to westerners continued to be flavored with mistrust, as she expressed in reaction to her first

¹¹⁶ Bassow, 234.

¹¹⁷ Walker, 908-911.

¹¹⁸ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 113-114.

encounters with the foreign news correspondents covering the Sinyavskii and Daniel trial:

After all the spectators had entered the courthouse, the reporters edged towards us. It was an awkward overture made by one pack to another, with a third watching. When I sensed a reporter or an operative near me, I quieted down and turned away. I didn't want to be overheard, and I didn't want to be quoted in a Western newspaper. [...] I remember thinking: We are here because our friends are on trial. It's our problem; it's our grief. For reporters, this is just a political thriller. I don't want my life to be the subject of someone's curiosity.

Besides expressing much discomfort and distance with regard to the foreign press, Alexeyeva also indicated some attraction and curiosity with regard to these foreigners, writing, "After getting the cold shoulder, the journalists walked away, but I continued to glance at them with distrust and curiosity. Shivering, red nosed, and wearing silly, warm-weather shoes, they huddled together exchanging quips I couldn't understand."¹¹⁹ This initial distance was eventually bridged, as the dissidents gave into their curiosity and met with the journalists, in some cases forging life long bonds and friendships, with Alexeyeva eventually inviting these reporters over to a *pel'meni* shop for some food.¹²⁰

Western journalists were similarly anxious to meet the Russians, as they were often friendlier than the bureaucratic or cultural figures they dealt with on a normal basis. It was very difficult therefore for reporters to learn much about Russia and the Russians from Smith's "official Russians," so when journalists finally had the opportunity, they jumped on to the chance to speak with the dissidents, and the other Russians. As Peter Osnos exclaimed, "now at last there were people who would talk, who would invite the outsiders to share unforgettable evenings around crowded tables, sharing information and

¹¹⁹ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 130-131.

¹²⁰ Alexeyeva quoted in Walker, 914.

insights into life in the USSR.”¹²¹ These unforgettable evenings around crowded tables allowed many journalists to build not just professional relationships with the dissidents, but strong personal bonds as well, ones that often extended to their friends and their families. Alexeyeva, who was initially suspicious of the foreigners eventually changed her opinion and indicated in an interview with Walker, that “I simply came to my own conclusion that Americans help, and not only journalists, but diplomats, lawyers, tourists. Americans expressed greater interest in us and sympathy than the other Europeans.”¹²²

This relationship between American journalists and dissidents came to serve the needs of both groups, resulting in an explosion of press coverage on all issues related to Soviet dissidents between the late 1960s and early to mid 1970s. Historian Edward Bailey Hodgman noted that with regard to *The New York Times*, stories concerning Soviet human rights activists increased five-fold between 1968 and 1971.¹²³ Peter Osnos alleged that this explosion of press coverage could be attributed to the fact that for a reporter, the story of a human rights activist pitted against the Soviet state sold more papers than dry foreign-policy analysis or stories on subjects like health, housing, or agricultural policy.¹²⁴ This was especially true since the journalist, according to Walker, often identified politically with the dissidents since they both advocated the need for openness and free speech.¹²⁵ Similarly the dissidents realized they needed the foreign press. Soviet scientist, father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, and later outspoken proponent of peaceful coexistence and human rights in the Soviet Union, Andrei Sakharov, stated of the necessity of the outside world:

¹²¹ Osnos, 34.

¹²² Alexeyeva quoted in Walker, 916.

¹²³ Hodgman, 127-128.

¹²⁴ Osnos, 34.

¹²⁵ Walker, 914-915.

We could not know whether there is some kind of cooperation between our country and the outside world. If no signals about our unhappy situation are sent out, then there cannot be . . . then even the possibility, which might exist, could not be utilized, because we wouldn't know what it was that needed to be changed or how to change it.¹²⁶

The West became essential for the dissident movement, and as it evolved the movement became more sophisticated in making their information available to the Western press.

As soon as they began to organize, first into aid organizations for their imprisoned friends but later into genuine underground networks of activists, the dissidents began to produce statements tailor made for the foreign press publication. In the months immediately after the Sinyavskii and Daniel Trial, and their sentencing to a Soviet labor camp, their friends remained organized and developed ways through which they could support the families of those imprisoned through an informal “Red Cross” for Soviet political prisoners. This organization offered the families of political prisoners, food, clothing, and information concerning other such prisoners.¹²⁷ This organization of the human rights movement began in Moscow, coming from the remnants of the *kompanii*, which was greatly damaged after the trial of Sinyavskii and Daniel. It included many dynamic and diverse personalities, all with their own agendas, but united in their disappointment in the system. By April 1968, following the prominent trial of four human rights activists for distributing transcripts of the Daniel and Sinyavskii Trial along with other subversive literature, Natasha Gorbanevskaya, a poet and professional editor, along with a small group of activists began publishing *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy*, or

¹²⁶ Sakharov, *Sakharov Speaks*, edited by Harrison E. Salisbury (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 173.

¹²⁷ Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 264.

the *Chronicle of Current Events*.¹²⁸ *Khronika* served as the human rights movement's principle news source, recording all kinds of arrests and cases where individual's human rights were violated. Its editors typed multiple copies, and passed them around between networks of related dissidents. According to Hodgman, *Khonika* served as a "reflection of the varied activities of dissidents all over the Soviet Union, and unified the expressions of underground opinion."¹²⁹ It was a form of *samizdat* where all dissident movements found a space to discuss their grievances. Anything from the grievances of intellectuals being locked up, to those of the Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans, Jews, and Russian Orthodox followers found their own place in the pages of *Khonika*. According to Alexeyeva, the success of those movements striving for national and religious rights became increasingly tied to the success of the human rights movement, where intellectuals gathered together and printed in *Khonika* the *samizdat* of each of these groups. Alexeyeva concluded that, "in such a heterogeneous society as the USSR, [...] only the human rights movement can play a linking role for all other movements."¹³⁰ This was since the human rights movement was the concerted effort of a select group of Soviet intellectuals to bring together the various strains of dissent, uniting them under the universal values of human rights.

Another reason for the importance of the *Khronika* was that it was viewed by dissidents as a means of appealing to the West, as evidenced by the many open letters published to "people of conscience" or "the world community." Therefore many issues of *Khonika* were taken to the West in the hand luggage of travelers, journalists and

¹²⁸ The activists were: Dobrovolskii, Galanskov, Ginzburg, and Lashkova. Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 206; Hodgman, 95.

¹²⁹ Hodgman, 104.

¹³⁰ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 9.

diplomats. In particular London School of Economics political science Professor Peter Reddaway, brought back with him issues of *Khonika* and published them in his 1972 book *Uncensored Russia*, which was one of the first works to discuss the dissident movement in great detail.¹³¹ The dissidents quickly learned that they could use their foreign press contacts to express their views to the outside world, reaching a large sympathetic and powerful audience. Whitman Bassow explained, “The AP and UPI, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the networks began to receive the *Chronicle [of Current Events]*. Phones almost never stopped ringing as mysterious and often unknown voices would ask for an immediate meeting to pass on ‘important information.’”¹³² The dissidents also began offering news conferences to announce important information, inviting the foreign press to attend, and often traveling long distances to meet with reporters on crowded street corners.¹³³ This was especially the case in 1968, after the much publicized trial of dissident Aleksandr Ginzburg, in which his wife, Ludmilla, asked Western journalists to appear at her apartment to attend a late night news conference.¹³⁴ Therefore, this relationship between the Western news correspondents and the dissidents was a symbiotic one, with both groups benefiting from each other’s contact. The correspondent wanted to know Russians and get a good news story, and the dissident wanted to tell the world what he thought and make his name known internationally so that the authorities would be kept in check.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Peter Reddaway, ed., *Uncensored Russia: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972).

¹³² Bassow, 235.

¹³³ Osnos, 34.

¹³⁴ Bassow, 236-237.

¹³⁵ Osnos, 34.

The coziness of this relationship did however generate some criticism. In particular Peter Osnos became critical of the rapport between the dissidents and the foreign press. Osnos alleged that the coziness of this relationship conflated the importance of the dissidents, and was an instance where journalists began making the news instead of reporting it. Osnos wrote, “Westerners find it difficult to be completely objective or critical about dissidents because we are instinctively sympathetic to their views, even when we don’t fully understand them. Since the Soviet Union is considered our country’s most formidable adversary, opposition expressed to its negative features finds ready approval here.”¹³⁶ Therefore, for Osnos, the Moscow correspondents were overplaying their hand, focusing too much on the dissident movement and blowing it out of proportion.

This focus on the dissident movement within the Western press had its affects back home, with the American public and the American policy makers who were reading and watching these news stories with intense interest. These stories about the dissidents played well in America, and they fulfilled the desire of many Americans to read about the outmanned and outgunned freedom fighters going up against America’s prime adversary in the Cold War. Figures like Andrei Sakharov, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Boris Pasternak, Roy and Zhores Medvedev all becoming household names. The fight for national rights also played well in America. This can easily be said of ethnic Lithuanian and Latvian nationals in America, who increasingly learned of and sympathized with the situation faced by their ethnic brethren abroad. Most prominently though, the Soviet Jews found allies in the United States, looking for ways to allow them the right to emigrate, with stories on the so-called *refusniks*, or Jews denied exit visas, being

¹³⁶ Osnos, 32.

prominently played in the American press. It is therefore no surprise that shortly thereafter, Congress and American policy makers began to take notice of the dissident movement. This was particularly after the publication of the transcripts of the Sinyavskii and Daniel Trial in the West, with Congress launching its own inquiry into the Soviet treatment of the dissident movement.¹³⁷ The justification for such a venture was given by Senator Thomas J. Dodd, who argued the existence of a link between international security and the Soviet Union's treatment of its own citizens. Senator Dodd stated:

In this [intellectual dissent] lies the best hope for the peaceful evolution of the totalitarian Communist society into a more open society which will, by this very token, be more responsive to popular needs and the popular will, less conspiratorial and less prone to engage in subversion and aggression abroad. With such a society the free world would have no difficulty in achieving that degree of basic understanding essential for peaceful coexistence.¹³⁸

Therefore as early as the mid-1960s, just as Western journalists and the dissident movement began their own rapprochement in Moscow, Congress began advocating on the behalf of human rights in the Soviet Union, and the dissidents began to benefit from their new and powerful ally.

¹³⁷ Max Hayward, *On Trial: The Soviet State versus "Abram Tertz" and "Nikolai Arzhak"* (New York: Harper Row, 1966).

¹³⁸ Thomas J. Dodd in Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Aspects of Intellectual Ferment in the Soviet Union*, V.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CONNECTION: DISSIDENTS, INTEREST GROUPS, AND THE AMERICAN CONGRESS

“The key to the rescue of our people lies now in the hands of the United States of America.”¹³⁹

From the relationship between Western journalists and the Soviet dissidents themselves, this chapter turns to the relationship of the American people and American policy makers to the dissident movement. For the vast majority of Americans and American policy makers, their knowledge of issues concerning the Soviet Union came from their reading American newspapers and watching and listening to broadcast news. Therefore the sympathetic relationship between American foreign news journalists and Soviet dissidents received ample press coverage. Stories of oppression experienced by Soviet intellectuals, religious groups, and ethnic minorities had the direct result of prompting the interest of many in the United States, particularly anyone who felt they had ethnic kin in the Soviet Union, most notably Jews, but also Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and others. The plight of the Soviet Jews seemed to have gained the most interest due to the powerful and vocal Jewish minority in the United States and their consternation at the refusal of the Soviet government to allow the Jews the right to leave the Soviet Union, and immigrate to Israel or the United States. It was this issue that came to define American’s perception of the dissident movement most strongly. Concern over the fate of the Soviet Jews was so acute during the late 1960s and early 1970s that a historian of the dissident movement has concluded that for the US the issue of human

¹³⁹ Memorandum to President Nixon on the Situation of Soviet Jewry, from Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union, in *News Bulletin on Soviet Jewry*, May 1973, in Edward R. Drachman, ed. *Challenging the Kremlin: The Soviet Jewish Movement for Freedom, 1967-1990* (New York: Paragon House, 1992), 424.

rights in the Soviet Union was synonymous with the Jewish issue.¹⁴⁰ By the early 1970s, advertisements, editorial letters and news pieces on Jewish emigration regularly appeared in *The New York Times*, and in 1971 developments regarding the Jewish issue constituted close to 80 percent of news stories on dissidents.¹⁴¹

Jewish activists in the United States followed the situation in the Soviet Union carefully through their close reading of the *samizdat* publications of Soviet Jewish dissidents and trips made there themselves. There were several different American-Jewish organizations that actively demanded the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate freely, differing in their approaches but quite influential in their effort to lobby Congress and the American public to take action. The National Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (NJCSJ) lobbied members of Congress and the Soviet leadership, waging public education campaigns in the American press and organizing vigils at the Soviet embassies and consulates.¹⁴² This contrasted with the approach of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) and the Jewish Defense League (JDL), whose methods were more confrontational. The most radical members of these groups even threatened Soviet diplomats in 1970 and 1971 in order to draw attention to the issue.¹⁴³

The widespread publication of news stories concerning Soviet Jews, combined with the intense concern of interest groups working on behalf of them, compelled Congress to find some way to act on the issue of Soviet Jews. The activism of this movement in America influenced many members of Congress, out of either their own concern for the plight of Soviet Jews, their concern for supporting issues important to

¹⁴⁰ Goldberg, *The Final Act*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Hodgman, 128.

¹⁴² "Archive of the American Soviet Jewry Movement," *American Jewish Historical Society*, <http://ajhs.org/aasjm/ArchiveofASJM.shtml> (accessed 12 December 2011).

¹⁴³ Hodgman, 113.

their base constituencies, or their own political self-promotion. Some members of Congress used the issue of Jewish emigration as a means of criticizing the policy of détente, promoted by President Richard Nixon, and his National Security Advisor (later Secretary of State) Henry Kissinger, which favored quiet diplomacy and the trade carrot in order to encourage the gradual liberalization of the Soviet Union as opposed to direct confrontation on these issues.

The issue of human rights in the Soviet Union was raised during an era of Congressional assertiveness at the expense of a Presidency troubled by the Watergate scandal, and was therefore very much tied to American domestic politics. Many in Congress touted the human rights issue to play toward their constituents and rebuke the Nixon administration for its perceived cold heartedness and apathy toward the issue of human rights in the Soviet Union as a result of détente. This “dissident-card” afforded Congress the opportunity to assert itself against the Nixon administration, to take a moral stand, to satisfy their constituents, and to make clear Congress’s anti-Communist credentials.¹⁴⁴ Hearings on the Jewish issue began as early as 1971, and soon thereafter talk of actual legislative action followed. The issue of Jewish emigration evolved to encompass support for all forms of dissidents and dissenters in the Soviet Union, and culminated in a general assault on détente headlined by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 Trade Act, which barred the Soviet Union and any other non-market economy from receiving Most-Favored Nation (MFN) trade status if its human rights record was

¹⁴⁴ Paula Stern, *Water’s Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979), xi.

found lacking.¹⁴⁵ This legislation contradicted the Nixon administration's emphasis on quiet diplomacy and détente with regard to the Soviet Union, and it pitted different factions of American policy makers against one another. The faction most opposed to détente, and the Senator most well known for his fight on behalf of the Soviet Jews was the influential Washington State Democratic Senator, Henry "Scoop" Jackson, who along with his backers in Congress, pursued policies that forced the Soviet regime to relent on Jewish emigration. On the other side were Nixon and Kissinger, who argued that quiet diplomacy was the most effective means of resolving the Jewish issue, as the open confrontation preferred by Jackson would only force the Soviets to retreat on the issue. As argued by historian Paula Stern, the raucous debate between Kissinger and Senator Jackson and his colleagues demonstrated the complete failure of the notion of the "water's edge," where debates on foreign policy were supposed to remain at home in order to present an united front to America's adversaries abroad. Therefore the debate over the human rights movement and America's involvement in Jewish emigration was subjugated to divisions within America's own domestic politics, affecting the dissident movements in the Soviet Union.

The Rapprochement of the American and Soviet Jewish Movements

The United States there has long had a history of activism and interest by an ethnic group in their own ethnic kin abroad since the United States is a nation made up of immigrants. Therefore American Jewish interest in the plight of the Soviet Jews was no

¹⁴⁵ Most-Favored Nation status, or MFN, means that trade relations between those states would be subject to low tariffs and high import quotas equivalent to other nations given the same MFN designation. William Korey, "Jackson-Vanik: Its Origin and Impact as Russia Nears 'Graduation'" *The Harriman Review* 14, nos. 1-2 (November 2002), 3.

exception. During the heyday of emigration from Eastern Europe to the United States, between 1875 and 1914, 2.4 million Jews came to America, of whom 1.5 million emigrated from Tsarist Russia.¹⁴⁶ For many activists in the American movement to aid Soviet Jews, these immigrants were their ancestors, giving some what they felt was a personal connection to events going on in the Soviet Union. An activist and later historian of the movement, Stuart Altshuler, recalled how he felt this personal connection from remembering his grandmother's stories of life growing up in a Ukrainian shtetl and his great-grandparents' deaths early in the twentieth century during the pogroms.¹⁴⁷ This personal connection, in conjunction with what has been described as a guilt complex among American Jews for not helping during the Holocaust, inspired many American Jews to action upon learning about the modern tragedy faced by Soviet Jews.¹⁴⁸

This American-Jewish movement emerged during an era where all over the Western world, one's attachment to ethnic identity was on the rise. This included movements among the Basques in France and Spain, as well as the Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland. According to the William Orbach, American and Soviet Jews were not left out of this "ethnic wave," with many Jews boldly demonstrating their interest and concern for their history, culture, and their brethren abroad.¹⁴⁹ For Jews in the United States and the Soviet Union, the single most important event in awakening Jewish identity and pride was Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Days War, which propped-up Jewish confidence all over the world, and inspired Jews to take up an interest in their own

¹⁴⁶ Henry L. Feingold, *"Silent No More": Saving the Jews of Russia, The American Jewish Effort, 1967-1989* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 2.

¹⁴⁷ Stuart Altshuler, *From Exodus to Freedom: A History of the Soviet Jewish Movement* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2005), xi-xii.

¹⁴⁸ William W. Orbach, *The American Movement to Aid Soviet Jews* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 5.

¹⁴⁹ Orbach, 4-5.

culture, history, and identity. In the Soviet Union these feelings resulted in the movement for Jewish emigration to Israel, while in America, this sense of pride acted with the social forces propelling the Civil Rights movement and attention to social justice and human rights to compel American Jewish groups to take up the cause of Jewish emigration.

The Soviet Jewish movement for emigration

The Soviet Union has had a history of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic policies. The Jews were viewed by Stalin as having too many connections abroad to be trusted, an attitude which grew during the post-war years.¹⁵⁰ The Soviet government reacted to Israel's 1967 victory in the Six Days War by stepping up its campaign against Soviet Jews. This meant suppressing Jewish identity while severing diplomatic relations with Israel, resulting in a complete halt to the slow flow of Jewish emigration. In the words of political scientist Peter Reddaway, this escalation of Soviet anti-Semitism in the wake of the Six Days War, "tipped the balance," meaning that many Soviet Jews, sensing that their situation could hardly get any worse, moved towards activism and became involved in the dissident movement.¹⁵¹ Between 1967 and 1968, there was an evolution in the democratic dissident movement in the Soviet Union, in which between sixty and seventy percent were Jews themselves, or married to Jews.¹⁵² Many Soviet Jews found their sense of Jewish identity awakened by Israel's victory in the Six Days War and by the increased repression they experienced at the hands of the Soviets based on their Jewish

¹⁵⁰ Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire, A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 7.

¹⁵¹ Reddaway, 298.

¹⁵² Orbach, 43.

identity. Similarly, some of these Jewish dissidents took to heart the failure of Alexander Dubček's experiment with "socialism with a human face" in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and shifted to a Zionist approach. They reasoned that there was no way to change Soviet culture and Socialism. These Jews recognized that their future no longer belonged in the Soviet Union, and therefore sought to leave. For some this reawakening had been indeed inspired by a religious reawakening, but as Ludmilla Alexeyeva argued, the roots of the Jewish movement for emigration laid less in Jewish nationalism than it did in socioeconomics. For those Jews who faced official discrimination in the Soviet Union and the inability to express themselves freely, emigration meant the ability to further oneself economically, and the opportunity to pursue the scientific, artistic, and professional passions they were denied in the Soviet Union.¹⁵³ Therefore most Soviet Jews concluded that the best means for them to achieve the future they desired for themselves and their children laid abroad, and not in the Soviet Union.

Prior to 1967, there were very few instances where Soviet Jews had won the right to emigrate. For instance, Stalin had allowed some Jews to ability to leave in order to be reunited with their families, but these were generally older people. In total, between 1960 and 1970 it is estimated that about 4,000 Soviet Jews had been given permission to emigrate, and after the Six Days War there was little or no emigration at all. Any Jew who sought to leave 1967 was refused an exit visa, and became known as a *refusnik*, since they were refused a visa and were forced to remain in the Soviet Union often at a reduced social status, as engineers became repairmen or researchers guards.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 180.

¹⁵⁴ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 180.

The Soviet government's rigidity on the issue of Jewish emigration had less to do with anti-Semitism than it did with the perceived ideological and geopolitical problems free emigration posed for the Soviet government. It was believed by many Soviet officials that permitting free emigration would lead to a degree of social liberalization that could prove destabilizing to the Soviet government. This position was related best by the Soviet Ambassador to Washington, Ambassador Dobrynin who wrote in his memoirs that, "In the closed society of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin was afraid of emigration in general (irrespective of nationality or religion) lest an escape hatch from the happy land of socialism seem to offer a degree of liberalization that might destabilize the domestic situation."¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the Soviet government was much less concerned about ethnic issues when it came to Jewish emigration than they were about the political signal it would have demonstrated to other disaffected groups. Another reason the Soviets offered to prohibit free emigration came from ideology. The Soviets had reasoned that they had created a "utopia," and in turn anyone who wished to leave their "utopia" would naturally be viewed as a traitor.¹⁵⁶ This was especially the case with regard to the Jews, as many had already been considered disloyal given their perceived cosmopolitanism and connections with outsiders. Similarly, Jewish emigration was a threat to the Soviets because their desire to leave signaled that there was ethnic discrimination, a phenomenon the state did not want to acknowledge, since discrimination was supposed to have been absent from the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁷ There was also the concern posed by the idea of a "brain drain" and leaking of military and state

¹⁵⁵ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995), 268.

¹⁵⁶ Dobrynin, 267.

¹⁵⁷ Buwalda, xv.

secrets through the emigration of the Soviet Jews, as many Jews had been prominent academics, researchers, and scientists, many of which were in contact with sensitive information or equipment.¹⁵⁸ Another major factor preventing the Soviets from allowing the Jews to emigrate was the tenuous relationship between the Arab states and the Soviet Union. The Soviets needed their Arab allies as a counterweight to America's interests in the Middle East, particularly with regard to Israel and to energy. Therefore, the Soviets under no circumstances wanted to offend their Arab allies by contributing to the growth of Israel's population and to its military. The free emigration of Jews had to be opposed by the Soviet government, because the price of allowing it proved to be too much.

The act of becoming a *refusnik* made life much worse for many Soviet Jews, having to work menial jobs and live off of reduced wages, while losing their apartments and facing discrimination by the authorities. The next question many *refusniks* faced was whether to go public with their emigration problems by placing their names on the petitions and lists passed along to foreign diplomats, or to sign a collective letter, or even to participate in public demonstration.¹⁵⁹ The earliest *refusnik* activists expressed their dissatisfaction through the use of letters, and petitions much in the same manner other disaffected groups, such as the Crimean Tatars, and the human rights activists, expressed their frustration with the system before them (see Chapter 1). Like these other groups, the *refusniks* reached out to the human rights activists involved in writing and publishing *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy*, or the *Chronicle of Current Events*. At first though many *refusniks* attempted to keep their distance from the human rights activists, fearing that if they participated their prospects for being issued an exit visa would decrease. As

¹⁵⁸ Buwalda, 51.

¹⁵⁹ Buwalda, 63.

Alexeyeva pointed out, this opinion changed once Yulius Telesin, a vocal human rights activist, applied for emigration and was issued a visa in quick order to the astonishment of the *refusniks*.¹⁶⁰ Jewish activists learned from Telesin that their best bet at leaving came from making noise and becoming vocal about their discontent to the point that the Soviets would deport them. Many *refusniks* also ended up coming to this conclusion having recognized that their future in the Soviet Union looked grim. Many had already lost their jobs and their homes, and so reckoned they had nothing else left to lose in going public in their discontent with the regime, and reach out to the West for help.¹⁶¹

The American Movement to aid Soviet Jews

Israel's victory in the Six Days War proved to be just as much a seminal event for American Jews as it was for Soviet Jews. The wave of American Jewish activism that followed the war was not instantaneous, but rather the result of an evolutionary process that had its roots in the Civil Rights movement of which many young Jews were participants. The movement to aid Soviet Jews emerged just as the Civil Rights movement began to recede and the era of non-violent student activism was drawing to a close.¹⁶² Many activist-minded Jews took up the issue of the Soviet Jews as they became disenchanted with the growth of black militancy in the Civil Rights movement.¹⁶³ The decade of Civil Rights marches and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations also echoed a rise in moral consciousness in the United States, a phenomenon that spurred many American Jews to view the events in the Soviet Union through a moral lens. For instance as Orbach

¹⁶⁰ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 186-187.

¹⁶¹ Buwalda, 64.

¹⁶² Orbach, 4; Feingold, 55.

¹⁶³ Orbach, 4, 24.

observed, about half the members of the youthful and anti-establishment Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) were also participants in the anti-war movement, bringing their activist tactics and sense of moral consciousness with them between both movements.¹⁶⁴ In particular the young and outspoken founder of the SSSJ, Jacob Birnbaum, lent his experience in the Civil Rights movement to his activism on behalf of the Soviet Jewish issue. Birnbaum argued in one of his earliest pamphlets that, “Many young Jews forget that if injustice cannot be condoned in Selma, USA, neither must it be overlooked in Kiev, USSR. Though there are no gas chambers in the Soviet Union, our people there—the surviving remnants of Hitler’s massacres—are being destroyed in their innermost humanity.”¹⁶⁵ Birnbaum in this passage connected the activism of the Civil Rights movement, the plight of Soviet Jews, and American Jewish guilt over the Holocaust.

Ties between the movement to liberate Soviet Jews and the Civil Rights movement ran both ways, with prominent Civil Rights and related non-Jewish figures, expressing their concern for the Soviet Jews. For instance, participating in the first ever Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews held on October 21, 1963 was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who personally expressed concern for the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁶ In a similar vein, Civil Rights activist Bayard Rustin argued that the discrimination faced by Soviet Jews was analogous to the experience of African Americans in the United States, and therefore African American Civil Rights activists should lend their support to the Soviet Jews, as it would give the Civil Rights movement an air of universality in its struggle for social justice. Rustin stated, “Just as the white

¹⁶⁴ Orbach, 4.

¹⁶⁵ “Save Soviet Jewry: A Call to Action,” summer program handbook issued by the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry in conjunction with the New York Youth Conference on Soviet Jewry, 1965 in Orbach, 5, see footnote 11.

¹⁶⁶ Orbach, 19-20.

abolitionists fought for the liberation of black slaves before the Civil War, people in the United States, Jewish and non-Jewish, white and black, should fight for the liberation of Jews in the Soviet Union.” Rustin continued to argue that given the history of racial discrimination in America, African Americans “have gained a certain moral authority which can be effectively used to assist other oppressed groups in their own struggle for liberation.”¹⁶⁷ Rustin’s statements, as well as the activism of many young people spoke to the rise of social consciousness in America, a sentiment which fueled the moral outrage and the desire to come to the aid of the Soviet Jews.

Another factor that led to Jewish-American concern over the situation faced by the Soviet Jews was the changing meaning of the Holocaust with regard to American-Jewish identity in the 1960s.¹⁶⁸ Jacob Birnbaum alluded to American Jewish guilt over inaction during the Holocaust in one of the organization’s earliest handbooks. “Most of us are too young to bear any responsibility for the dearth of protest during the Nazi era. But *our* time has its own mighty challenge and it is up to *us* to make a full response.”¹⁶⁹ In spite of Birnbaum’s depiction of the situation faced by many Soviet Jews, the reality was far from that of the Holocaust and any comparison between the two would be incorrect. Birnbaum’s invocation of the Holocaust was important because his rhetoric roused many American Jews to action, since many believed that their support for the Soviet Jews would assuage any guilt they may have felt over the Holocaust. Birnbaum, along with other Jews from Columbia University, held the first rally on behalf of Soviet Jews at the Soviet Union’s United Nations Mission on May 1, 1964. One thousand protesters showed up to the demonstration, many bearing placards reading, “Let Them

¹⁶⁷ Bayard Rustin Speech in Drachman, 406-408.

¹⁶⁸ Feingold, 54-55.

¹⁶⁹ Italics in original. “Save Soviet Jewry: A Call to Action,” in Orbach, 5, see footnote 11.

Live or Leave.”¹⁷⁰ This first show of activism on behalf of the Soviet Jews in the United States predated the Six Days War and the more radical imposition of restrictions on Jewish emigration that followed.

Prior to Birnbaum’s efforts, the issue of the treatment of Soviet Jews had already started to get the attention of America’s policy makers. As early as the mid 1950s, President Eisenhower had raised the issue with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev during a meeting at Camp David. President Kennedy was also well aware of the Jewish problem in the Soviet Union, having been briefed on it by prominent Jewish politicians such as Senators Jacob Javits of New York and Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut, as well as Supreme Court Justice Arthur J. Goldberg. The State Department believed that the US Government could do little in reaction to the persecution Jews faced in the Soviet Union. In fact, officials within the State Department believed that intervention on behalf of the Soviet Jews would make matters worse for them, by further alienating them from Soviet society. The Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, Frederick G. Dutton, articulated this view in a 1962 reply to a letter of inquiry by Senator Kenneth B. Keating of Massachusetts. Dutton wrote:

It is very difficult for our Government to contribute to the direct solution of the problems of minorities in a territory where a foreign sovereign government exercises full control. Further, and more importantly, it is doubtful if further protestations would be helpful to the Jews in the Soviet Union. The Soviet government has accused Soviet Jews of being under the influence of foreign governments, including the United States. Further intervention concerning the problems of the Jewish minority in the U.S.S.R. might well redound to the disadvantage of Soviet Jewry.

¹⁷⁰ Altshuler, 27.

Dutton further argued that it was best for private individuals and organizations to call attention to the Jewish issue in the Soviet Union, not the US Government, believing that world public opinion would be the best deterrent to future abuse. Dutton added:

The force of world opinion has become an important factor to discourage certain governments from pursuing policies which result in the persecution of their own nationals on religious and other grounds. The United States naturally looks with favor on activities by organizations and private individuals which effectively bring such persecution to the notice of world opinion.¹⁷¹

The State Department remained consistent in this view throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with diplomat Walter J. Stoessel iterating in a 1967 letter to Ambassador Malcolm Toon:

We believe that the activities of private organizations and individuals are the best means for keeping world public attention focused on this [Jewish] problem, thereby persuading the Soviets that it is in their interests to relax their restrictive policies. The most effective way that Americans can make their feelings on this subject known to the Soviet authorities is to raise their voice individually and in groups against Soviet religious and racial discrimination.¹⁷²

Stoessel's position, like that of Dutton, set the tone for official US Government policy with regard to the Soviet government's human rights conduct well into the 1970s. The State Department's wariness of government to government dialog on the issue, as well as support of non-governmental organizations in raising the issue, provided the framework for the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente which emphasized similar policies. President Richard Nixon's most trusted foreign policy confidant, Henry Kissinger, like Dutton and Stoessel before him, believed that direct interference in the sovereign affairs of the Soviet Union would only make the situation worse for the Soviet Union's Jews.

¹⁷¹ Letter From the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations (Dutton) to Senator Kenneth B. Keating, July 11, 1962 in *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. V, 211.

¹⁷² Memorandum Walter J. Stoessel to Malcolm Toon, March 13, 1967. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State: Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Soviet Union Affairs, Bilateral Political Relations, Records Relating to Soviet Jewry, 1964-1973. Jewish Matters: 1964-1973 to Staff Study on Soviet Jewry, 1970-1971.

The quiet diplomacy advocated for by the State Department left the door open for the advocacy efforts by the American movement to aid Soviet Jews. This movement was far from cohesive, and was in fact quite diverse, as it reflected the fractured nature of America's Jewish population during the 1960s and 1970s. Many historians of the movement have divided the different advocacy groups between so-called "establishment" and "non-establishment" or "grassroots" organizations.¹⁷³ Historian William Orbach goes further, by dividing these organizations into four main groups: Zionist, defense, religious, and coordinating.¹⁷⁴ In general the establishment groups represented the interests of older entrenched Jewish activists and groups, and were adherents of quiet diplomacy, fearing that activism would result in negative repercussions for the Soviet Jews.¹⁷⁵ The establishment position grew out of the October 12, 1963 Conference on the Status of Soviet Jewry, and led to the formation of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ).¹⁷⁶ The American Jewish establishment generally remained on the sidelines of the movement to aid Soviet Jewry, as it maintained its support for quiet diplomacy until the early 1970s, when the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) was persuaded to support the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.¹⁷⁷

In contrast to the establishment groups, which were generally older and favored quiet diplomacy, the non-establishment groups were younger and activist. Their membership consisted primarily of university students, many of whom were veterans of or inspired by the activities of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. Jacob Birnbaum's SSSJ was the most active organization of these organizations. Birnbaum

¹⁷³ See Buwalda, Altshuler, Feingold, and Orbach for example.

¹⁷⁴ Orbach, 7.

¹⁷⁵ Buwalda, 93.

¹⁷⁶ Feingold, 56.

¹⁷⁷ Buwalda, 39.

generally believed in the legitimacy of quiet diplomacy but thought it was essential for public demonstrations to take place, arguing that doing so would “increase our efforts to mobilize a tidal wave of public opinion” and show the US Government “that we really do care deeply for our cause.”¹⁷⁸ The activist work of the SSSJ was considered relatively moderate in comparison to the radical actions undertaken by Rabbi Meir David Kahane’s Jewish Defense League (JDL), which split from the SSSJ in 1967.¹⁷⁹ The JDL was responsible for carrying out violent demonstrations, among the most well-known included an assault on Aeroflot’s New York office and an attack on the Soviet Union’s mission to the United Nations. Its radical activities were designed to persuade the public to take action on behalf of Soviet Jews. In an inflammatory March 26, 1970 advertisement taken out by the JDL in *The New York Times*, the group accused the American Jewish establishment of complicity during the Holocaust for its silence, and indicated to the world that it would stop at nothing to make known its message. The advertisement read in part, “We, by our silence, doom the Soviet Jew. We, by our apathy, shed this blood. We reject respectability. We will do what must be done. We wish to shake the world and spotlight the Jewish problem so that the United States government will be forced to demand justice for people if the Soviets want Western friendship.”¹⁸⁰ The JDL espoused confrontation and was not afraid to commit violence in the name of saving the Soviet Jews, believing in the dire need to draw attention to the issue. Unlike the establishment NCSJ, the SSSJ and JDL made it their mission to sway public world public opinion to take action to save the Soviet Union’s Jews. The older

¹⁷⁸ Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, “Save Soviet Jewry” Program Handbook 2, 1966, 5, 7 in Orbach, 27.

¹⁷⁹ Buwalda, 39.

¹⁸⁰ Jewish Defense League, “The Shame of American Jewry!,” in *The New York Times*, 26 March 1970, 34.

establishment groups were clearly influenced and believed in the restraint preached by the State Department and later the Nixon administration. The youthful SSSJ and JDL embodied the anti-establishment mood and radical striving for social justice that characterized the generation of young people coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s. These young people were also afraid of repeating the mistakes of their parent's generation, who in their view through apathy, allowed the Holocaust to take place. Participation in the movement to liberate the Soviet Jews thus satisfied the desire of the generation coming of age to atone for inactivity during the Holocaust, while channeling the mood of their generation to a new cause of social justice.

In part the participation of interest groups in the movement to aid the Soviet Jews was made possible by the explosion of information channels between the Soviet Union and the United States through the 1960s. Initially, due to the censorship practiced on foreign journalists by *Glavlit* (see Chapter 1), these information channels were quite limited, as Dutch diplomat, and later historian, Petrus Buwalda observed in writing that, "In the beginning there was a lack of knowledge in the West about Soviet Jews and a lack of contact with them. No one knew how many wanted to emigrate."¹⁸¹ The growth in the relationship between foreign news correspondents in the Soviet Union and dissidents also helped fuel the activist sentiment of the American Jews by publicizing their stories. These stories had the positive affect of deterring abuses taken on Jews by the Soviet government, as was indicated by news correspondent Robert Kaiser. Therefore it became helpful for Soviet Jews to have as many Western contacts as possible and to be known in the West.¹⁸² Kaiser wrote, "In Moscow the Jewish activists have extensive contact with

¹⁸¹ Buwalda, 40.

¹⁸² Buwalda, 37.

western correspondents, who report official actions against Jews, a factor which has obviously deterred the KGB in many instances.”¹⁸³ It also seemed that major newspapers such as *The New York Times* consciously chose to run more stories related to dissident activities in the Soviet Union, given the growth in the number of news pieces on the issue. According to historian Edward Bailey Hodgman, between 1968 and 1971 the annual number of news stories, editorials, and advertisements concerning Soviet dissidents published by *The New York Times* increased from 84 in 1968 to 430 in 1971. Similarly in 1972 there were 359 such articles, leading Hodgman to conclude that for the years 1971 and 1972 there was on average an item published about every day, with multiple items often appearing in the same issue of the paper.¹⁸⁴ In part this increased interest in dissident issues may be attributed to the fact that beginning in 1964 Harrison Salisbury, a former longtime correspondent in Moscow and Russia enthusiast, became the managing editor of *The New York Times*. So not only were those interested in dissident issues writing more stories, but newspaper editors were consciously publishing them in greater numbers, resulting in the plight of Soviet Jews and dissidents in general, becoming well-known and followed in the West.

One of the main sources of information on dissident issues for the press was *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy*, which Western journalists often consulted and published anecdotes from back home.¹⁸⁵ Many of *Khronika's* articles described the pervasive anti-Semitism faced by Soviet Jews when dealing with the Soviet authorities. In particular, the influential story of Boris Kochubievsky, one of the first *refusniks* subjected to blatant Soviet anti-Semitism, was published in *The New York Times* by journalist Henry Kamm,

¹⁸³ Robert G. Kaiser, *Russia: The People and the Power* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), 455.

¹⁸⁴ Hodgman, 120-121.

¹⁸⁵ Hodgman, 114.

and was taken directly from *Khronika*. The publication of Kochubievsky's story in the West placed a human face on the anti-Semitism faced by Soviet Jews, subsequently spurring many American Jews to action.¹⁸⁶ Kochubievsky was an unlikely candidate to become an activist and one of the first *refusniks*. Despite his Jewish heritage, and his father's murder at Babi Yar during the Holocaust, Kochubievsky had been a loyal Soviet citizen, even marrying a Ukrainian KGB agent. He came to prominence when he refused to go along with a declaration at the factory he worked in condemning Israel for its 1967 victory in the Six Days War, since he recognized the declaration's anti-Semitic undertones. This action earned Kochubievsky the distrust of his fellow workers, who pressured him to resign from his job. Thereafter Kochubievsky became a critic of Soviet anti-Semitism, and became famous for going to Babi Yar in February 1968 to insist that the Soviet authorities recognize the uniquely Jewish character of the tragedy that occurred there during the Second World War.¹⁸⁷ Kochubievsky had become so dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the Soviet Union that he and his wife applied for permission to emigrate. The Soviets initially denied their application, but later that year the authorities changed their mind and decided to issue the Kochubievskys exit visas. On the day the Kochubievskys were supposed to leave, their apartment was searched and their exit visas were revoked, and Kochubievsky was arrested for "anti-Soviet slander." Kochubievsky was then sentenced to three years forced labor in May 1968, shortly after his story first appeared in *The New York Times*.¹⁸⁸ Upon receiving word on

¹⁸⁶ Hodgman, 125; Orbach, 45; Henry Kamm, "Soviet is said to Arrest a Jew Who Seeks to Emigrate to Israel," *The New York Times*, 10 April 1969, p. 8; "Delo Borisa Kochubievskogo," *Khronika tekushchikh sobytyy* 6 (28 February 1969) available: <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/chr/index.htm>.

¹⁸⁷ "Delo Borisa Kochubievskogo"

¹⁸⁸ Orbach, 44-45.

Kochubievsky in the West, those involved in the movement to aid the Soviet Jews held vigils in his support across the country with the backing of Amnesty International.

Popular support for the movement only grew by the press's interest in these cases of anti-Semitism, as was again the case after the publication of a letter written by twenty-six Lithuanian Jews complaining about conditions in the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁹ This letter was originally written in February 1968, but was published both by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* eight months later. The letter discussed the rising tide of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, as expressed particularly in the Soviet press following Israel's victory in the Six Days War. The document also outlined the discrimination Jews faced in higher education and in obtaining professional jobs, as well as the destruction of Jewish cemeteries outside Vilnius and elsewhere.¹⁹⁰ This letter was initially smuggled out of the Soviet Union and later translated and made public by Professor Nathan Glazer of the University of California and Chairman of the Academic Committee on Soviet Jewry. The publication of such information, which came directly from Soviet Jews, inspired the Jewish community in the United States to action by painting a picture of desperation faced by Soviet Jews.

Ultimately the bleakness of the situation became fully apparent in 1970 with the arrest of the Leningrad hijackers. Vladimir Bukovsky, a non-Jewish dissident, along with Edward Kuznetsov and about a dozen other mostly Jewish plotters from Leningrad and Riga, planned to hijack an Aeroflot plane enroute to Priozersk from Leningrad, and reroute it to Finland. Most of the conspirators were Jews who had been refused exit visas, and they saw the radical move as their best hope of leaving the Soviet Union and drawing

¹⁸⁹ Reddaway, 299.

¹⁹⁰ Irving Spiegel, "Lithuanian Jews Seek Emigration," *The New York Times*, 30 Oct 1968, p 4.

international attention to the issue. Their plot was however poorly prepared, with only one conspirator, Mark Dymshits, actually having experience as a pilot.¹⁹¹ Just before their plans came to completion, the KGB arrested the plotters, and close to 200 other Jews who supposedly had some kind of connection with the plot, accusing them as terrorists.¹⁹² The Soviet authorities likely had known about the conspiracy for a long time, but waited until the moment was right to proceed with the arrests.¹⁹³ The Soviet government intended to use the attempted hijacking as a means of highlighting the antisocial aspects of the dissident and Jewish movements, and use the trial against the plotters as a means of publicly discrediting them. The Soviets held a series of show trials for the plotters behind closed doors, drawing death sentences for Kuznetsov and Dymshits, and hefty prison terms for the others.

The severity of the sentences in the case of the Leningrad hijackers shocked the world and resulted in a public relations disaster for the Soviet Union, as its tactics were universally condemned in the West. In the West, the act of hijacking itself was not condoned, but in this case, the hijackers were portrayed by the American press as freedom fighters seeking to escape totalitarianism. The press played up the fact that many of these hijackers were Jews denied exit visas, seeking to escape the Soviet Union for political purposes.¹⁹⁴ Therefore when the Soviet Union leveled death sentences against two of the hijackers, and other harsh sentences against the rest, the Western world appealed to the Soviet government for clemency. These requests for clemency included a Congressional Resolution along with official diplomatic statements from 24 separate

¹⁹¹ Feingold, 80.

¹⁹² Feingold, 80.

¹⁹³ "A Soviet Hijacking Trial Involving Jews Is Foreseen," *The New York Times*, Nov 13, 1970, 8.

¹⁹⁴ Bernard Gwertzman, "Soviet DooMS Two Jews In Plane Hijacking Plot: Nine, Including Two Not Jewish, Given Camp Terms," *The New York Times*, December 25, 1970, p. 1.

governments and many non-governmental organizations.¹⁹⁵ Congressional Resolution No. 501: Concerning the Continued Injustices Suffered by Jewish Citizens of the Soviet Union highlighted the concern the American Congress had taken over the anti-Semitism faced by Soviet Jews, calling on the Soviet government to commute the death sentences and extend equitable justice toward its Jewish citizens.¹⁹⁶ For some in Congress, the harsh sentences of the hijackers ushered in memories of the Holocaust, with Senator Robert Dole of Kansas stating when offering the resolution:

The world once sat by and ignored a national policy of intimidation and harassment and murder, eventually genocide, for political convenience. And it soon learned that the bell that tolled for every 6 million European Jews tolled for every man. The lesson came high, and it brought unmistakably to the attention of all humanity a moral obligation as old as time—that we are, for better or for worse, our brother's keeper.¹⁹⁷

Like Senator Dole, Senator Jacob Javitts of New York added that the strength of Western public opinion may influence the Soviet Union, writing, “I think that the Soviet Union and its people should be informed how millions of Americans react to this kind of situation.”¹⁹⁸ The debate over the resolution indicated that American politicians were becoming receptive to Jewish concerns within the Soviet Union out of their own sense of moral duty, as well as in some cases out of political expediency. While Congress passed the resolution, the State Department remained silent, sticking with the notion that American government interference may in fact hurt the defendants. Despite the State Department's silence, the Soviet regime caved in to the pressures it faced from the

¹⁹⁵ Feingold. 81.

¹⁹⁶ *Congressional Resolution 501: Concerning the Continued Injustices Suffered by Jewish Citizens of the Soviet Union*, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 116 (Dec. 29, 1970): 43884.

¹⁹⁷ Senator Robert Dole of Kansas, *Ibid.*: 43884.

¹⁹⁸ Senator Jacob Javitts of New York, *Ibid.*: 43885.

American Congress and other influential Westerners. It granted clemency to the hijackers scarcely two weeks after it had handed down its original draconian sentences.¹⁹⁹

The case of the attempted Leningrad hijacking did the most to focus Western attention onto issues affecting Soviet Jews. Many activists and policy makers in the West took note of the success outside pressure had in convincing the Soviet Union to ultimately grant clemency. Similarly the Soviet Jewish movement was emboldened by the events surrounding the Leningrad hijacking, recognizing the success Western pressure had in convincing the Soviets to change their tactics.²⁰⁰ By the early 1970s the Soviet Jewish movement for emigration was the loudest and most successful protest movement in the Soviet Union. To a large extent this was made possible by the support for the movement in the West and its publicity in the American press. Therefore the issue of Jewish emigration and the treatment of Soviet Jews became a game of public relations between the Soviets and the West, a game the Soviets consistently misplayed. The Soviets retreated in the face of Western public opinion because they needed the support of the West. Economic stagnation began to register in the Soviet Union by the late-1960s and early 1970s, and both the Soviets and the Nixon administration sought rapprochement through trade, with the Soviets seeking to export more to the United States, obtain Most-Favored Nation (MFN) status, and qualify for export loans from the Export-Import Bank. The Soviet government recognized in the case of the Leningrad hijackers that their strict control over their citizens could only go so far until it jeopardized relations with the West and the economic carrot offered by détente. Not only did the Soviet government recognize this so-called “linkage” between foreign trade and

¹⁹⁹ Feingold, 82.

²⁰⁰ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 183.

public opinion on human rights, but some American policy makers took note as well. They crafted policy that linked human rights and Jewish emigration to trade, notably through the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 Trade Bill.

Détente and the Jackson-Vanik Amendment: Congress vs. the White House

Despite the popularity of the movement to aid Soviet Jews, and its constant presence in the press, the White House and many in the Nixon administration preferred not to alter their policy of détente in order to come to their rescue. Instead the administration opted to maintain official silence on the issue and deal with it through quiet diplomacy. For the Nixon administration the policy of détente called for an easing of Cold War tensions in part by promoting trade and promising credit guarantees with the Soviet Union, most notably through the 1972 Trade Agreement. This emphasis on trade and easing Cold War tensions meant that divisive issues such as human rights and the free emigration of the Soviet Jews were ignored. It was not that the Nixon administration did not care about the plight of the Soviet Jews. But they believed public discussion of the issue would sour the already tenuous relationship between the two superpowers and potentially make the Soviet Union even more dangerous for its Jewish population. Nixon's foreign policy priorities consisted of winding down the war in Vietnam and stabilizing the political situation in the Middle East, two areas the administration needed Soviet cooperation on. The Nixon administration full heartedly believed in continuing State Department policies which emphasized that support for Soviet Jews lay outside the purview of the American government, but in private organizations, or as the Deputy

Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Richard Davies suggested, perhaps the United Nations.²⁰¹

For the White House, the experiences of the Jews and other dissidents in the Soviet Union were reprehensible, but for President Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, it was not in the interests of the American government to overreact with regard to issues such as human rights. President Nixon famously commented that, “great nations consult their interests, not their emotions,” a principle to which Kissinger agreed.²⁰² Kissinger, who was famous for his reliance on *realpolitik*, made his view of the irrelevance of the Jewish issue with regard to détente abundantly clear, going as far as to comment to the President that “the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union is not an objective of American foreign policy... and if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union, it is not an American concern. Maybe a humanitarian concern.”²⁰³ Despite these controversial remarks, Kissinger, a German Jew himself, admitted he was sympathetic to the plight of the Soviet Jews, but reasoned that in foreign policy “moral issues become transmuted into operational ones” and overt methods with regard to the Jewish question proved to be counterproductive when compared to quiet diplomacy.²⁰⁴ Both Nixon and Kissinger feared that emphasis on human rights would sour relations between the United States and Soviet Union, making the world all the more dangerous. President Nixon responded to Kissinger’s quip about the Soviets throwing

²⁰¹ Stern, 13-14.

²⁰² Richard M. Nixon, Memorandum of Conversation, March 8, 1974. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum. Digitized Memoranda of Presidential Conversations, available: <http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/memcons/1552667.pdf> (hereafter referred to as Ford Presidential Library, followed by URL).

²⁰³ Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to President Nixon, March 1, 1973. Nixon Library, Nixon Tapes: March 1973, available: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/tapes/tape866/tape866.php>.

²⁰⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1982), 989.

the Jews into the gas chambers by responding that, “We can’t blow up the world because of it.”²⁰⁵

Nixon himself has been alleged to harbor anti-Semitic feelings, and it is possible that this may have colored his attitude with regard to the Jewish issue in the Soviet Union. But as scholar Paula Stern has suggested, President Nixon was in fact sympathetic to the experience of the Soviet Jews, and sought to help them, as long as doing so did not fundamentally damage détente. As Stern pointed out, Vice-President Nixon in 1959 was the first American official to begin the practice of presenting the Soviet leadership lists of Soviet citizens whose status concerned the American Government. Similarly, candidate Nixon in September 1968 addressed the American Conference on Soviet Jewry (ACSJ), stating that he deplored the discriminatory measures imposed on Soviet Jews, and that he would “hope and trust that humanitarians throughout the world will continue vigorously to protest these restrictions and deprivations of human rights.”²⁰⁶ Moreover, as Ambassador Dobrynin suggested, Nixon was opportunistic, and he often resorted to unfair demagoguery and political games to advance his own political ambitions over those of his rivals, a strategy the President played with regard to the Soviet Jewish issue.²⁰⁷

Humanitarian issues were therefore of secondary importance to the White House, with the administration concerned that emphasis on such issues would hinder what little goodwill existed between the Americans and the Soviets, and would hamper Soviet cooperation on more important issues, such as Vietnam, Berlin, or nuclear deterrence.

²⁰⁵ Richard Nixon, Nixon Library, Nixon Tapes: March 1973, available: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/tapes/tape866/tape866.php>.

²⁰⁶ Stern, 13.

²⁰⁷ Dobrynin, 196.

Nixon and Kissinger, as the architects of détente, viewed a slow and gradual change in the internal politics of the Soviet Union as preferable to aggression and a renewed arms race, with President Nixon stating that:

It would be easy for me to say we'll have nothing to do with them [the Soviets] until they change their internal system. But then we would have a massive arms race. Even that would be okay if it would work—but it won't. If a change comes it will come gradually—it may take a century. They at least let Solzhenitsyn and his family out—earlier the punishment was liquidation.²⁰⁸

Nixon's policy of détente reaffirmed preexisting State Department policies that deemphasized overt government to government communications regarding human rights concerns and the Jewish issue, and instead favored quiet diplomacy. Much as before, the Nixon administration felt it was in the best national interest to refrain from direct confrontation on the issue, preferring to talk privately with the Soviets on human rights concerns, through back-door or quiet diplomacy. This was especially since the President opined that public discussion would force the Soviets not to back down on the issue, as he indicated in a closed-door meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. "My view is we accomplish more—our conversations with the Russians are tough, frankly; that is why we get along—by doing it privately. Publicly they will slam the door."²⁰⁹ Quiet diplomacy meant keeping communications concerning human rights and the Jewish question through a secure and confidential Presidential Channel that existed between Nixon and Kissinger and Ambassador Dobrynin and Moscow. The key to quiet diplomacy was keeping it concealed, believing, as Kissinger stated that "[we] calculated that the Soviets could alter practices within their domestic jurisdiction more easily if they

²⁰⁸ Richard Nixon, Cabinet Meeting, Feb 21, 1974. Ford Presidential Library, available: <http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/document/memcons/1552663.pdf>.

²⁰⁹ President Richard Nixon, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, 1 March 1973. Ford Presidential Library, available: <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/memcons/1552563.pdf>

were not overtly challenged.”²¹⁰ Kissinger emphasized that quiet diplomacy had been working in this regard, guaranteeing a hundred-fold increase in Jewish emigration between 1968 and 1973 (roughly Nixon’s first term in office), as well as securing the protection of prominent dissidents, such as Alexandr Solzhenitsyn.²¹¹

The hallmark of détente and the Nixon administration’s Soviet policy was the 1972 Moscow Summit and subsequent Trade Agreement with the Soviet Union, which guaranteed MFN trade status, along with trade credits, and promises of increased trade relations between the two superpowers. It was thought by the Nixon administration that such an agreement would serve as the cornerstone of Nixon’s détente policy by moderating hostilities between the two superpowers and proving to deter the threat of nuclear war. It was also thought by Kissinger that such a trade carrot would entice further Soviet cooperation. “We believed, however, that Soviet restraint would be more solidly based if reinforced by positive inducements, including East-West trade.” Kissinger went on to explain that in reality MFN was a misnomer, since the deal would have treated the Soviets on an equal basis with over a hundred other nations covered by similar agreements, and that this guaranteed “status of equality, rather than economic boon,” which was the principal reason the Soviets were interested in it.²¹²

The good will between East and West generated by the 1972 Moscow Summit was short-lived, since the issue of Jewish emigration soon took center stage. Within a few months of the summit, Soviet officials promulgated the so-called education or diploma tax to be levied on Jews seeking to emigrate from the Soviet Union. The purpose of this tax was ostensibly to reimburse the Soviet government the value of an

²¹⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 249

²¹¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 249, 986.

²¹² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 986; Stern, 28.

emigrant's state paid-for education, which amounted to a large sum few could afford. In effect this policy put a total halt to the flow of Jewish emigration. As Ambassador Dobrynin later revealed, the idea of the education tax did not come from Brezhnev, or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko. Instead it originated from the Soviet Ministry of Education and was the idea of the Kremlin's chief ideologist and a fierce opponent of Jewish emigration, Mikhail Suslov, who conveniently was left in Moscow while Brezhnev and Gromyko were on vacation that summer.²¹³ The promulgation of the diploma tax dumfounded the Nixon administration as well as some of those in the Soviet government. It allowed for détente's critics to argue that the administration's Soviet policy was not working and that it instead enabled the Soviet Union to continue abusing the rights of its citizens. In Kissinger's words, the education tax had let "the genie out of the bottle."²¹⁴ The announcement of the diploma tax could not have come at a more awkward time, making news just as Congress was reviewing the 1972 Trade Reform Bill and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), both of which originated from the Moscow Summit. The diploma tax drove Nixon's critics to act, and in the words of the Dobrynin, it "only helped to stir up the debate in the United States" for the proposition of linking the emigration of Soviet Jews directly to trade privileges, as it was assumed by many Americans that the Soviets wished to stall Jewish emigration altogether, and therefore it was necessary to take action.²¹⁵

The diploma tax proved to be a winning issue for the policy makers most critical of détente. Criticism of the White House's approach on the Jewish issue and human rights stemmed mostly from criticism of Nixon's détente policy, which was challenged

²¹³ Dobrynin, 268.

²¹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 250.

²¹⁵ Buwalda, 95; Dobrynin, 269.

by both Republicans and Democrats. Scholars have noted that those opposed to détente consisted of three main groups: defense focused anti-Soviet and anti-Communist right-wingers, liberal anti-Communists who were mostly concerned with human rights, and Jewish groups.²¹⁶ Nixon's most vocal and opportunistic critic was Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, a Democrat from Washington State, who used the issue of the tax as a means of lambasting détente and rallying his Jewish supporters. Jackson, much like others in Congress, stuck with the issue of Jewish emigration in part because he recognized its potential in unifying the opposition to détente by bringing together its opponents on both the political Right and Left. Jackson himself was just as opportunistic as President Nixon. This was particularly after Jackson's unsuccessful 1972 bid for the Democratic Presidential nomination, where he realized the importance of the Jewish vote if he were to run in 1976. Opposition to détente and support for the Soviet Jews therefore became a vital part of Senator Jackson's 1976 Presidential ambitions, as Kissinger criticized Jackson by writing that "Sometimes it was hard to avoid the impression the [Jackson] was as interested in the symbolism of confrontation as in the result."²¹⁷

The idea of linking the emigration of Soviet Jews to the flow of trade originated from Senator Jackson's aid Richard Pearle, and before him the idea had circulated among some Jewish academics.²¹⁸ The proposal was to make trade credits and MFN trade status contingent on free emigration. The amendment to the 1972 Trade Bill was authored in broad language aimed at any non-market (Communist) economy that wished to stymie emigration, but its target was specifically the Soviet Union. Jackson by the end of September 1972 offered his proposed amendment to Congress, where it received broad

²¹⁶ Dobrynin, 266.

²¹⁷ Buwalda, 97; Dobrynin, 269; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 254; Stern, xiv-xv and 20-21.

²¹⁸ Stern, 10, 23-24.

support from others opposed to détente.²¹⁹ Not only did Jackson's amendment receive the support of many in Congress, but it convinced the skeptical Jewish establishment, one that had seen some success in quiet diplomacy, to get behind Jackson's plan. Jackson announced his proposed amendment at an emergency gathering of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) that was called in order to deal with the crisis stemming from the education tax. Jackson convinced the skeptical audience that hanging signs in front of synagogues reading "Free Soviet Jewry," and holding candlelight vigils would no longer be enough, telling the gathering that, "The time has come to place our highest human values ahead of the trade dollar by firm and immediate action that the Russians can understand. You want to know what you can do? I'll give you some marching orders. Get behind my amendment. And let's stand firm."²²⁰ Jackson's marching orders convinced the Jewish establishment to get behind his bill, and become supporters of the amendment and legislative action on the issue.

The Nixon administration was adamantly opposed to Jackson's amendment, recognizing it as a restriction on the President's executive authority and an assault on his détente policy. Kissinger admitted that he originally saw some merit to the idea, as it forced the Soviets to back down on the education tax, but as Jackson continued to press it after its initial success, Kissinger opposed it.²²¹ Kissinger also questioned Jackson's tactics, viewing his amendment as detrimental to the reliability of the United States as a negotiating partner, since the amendment's conditions were never discussed, nor part of the domestic political discourse, during the negotiations over the 1972 Trade Agreement

²¹⁹ Stern, 35-36; Buwalda, 95-96.

²²⁰ Joseph Albright, "The Pact of Two Henrys," *The New York Times Magazine* (5 January 1975) : 16-34, 20; quoted in Stern, 32.

²²¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 986.

with the Soviet Union. To this affect Kissinger stated in a 1973 speech address on the issue, “The demand that Moscow modify its domestic policy as a precondition for MFN or détente was never made while we were negotiating; now it is inserted after both sides have carefully shaped an overall mosaic. Thus it raises questions about our entire bilateral relationship.”²²² Others in the administration openly argued that the Jackson amendment posed a great danger to Soviet Jews. This included Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush, who stated that Jackson’s amendment could “bring about anti-Semitism in Russia and cut down on emigration” since the Jews were already targeted for having too many foreign connections and were seen as an insidious and untrustworthy presence in Soviet society.²²³

Shortly after the amendment was reintroduced to Congress following the recess for the 1972 election, Nixon dispatched the Secretary of the Treasury, George Shultz, to Moscow to discuss the amendment’s implications with Brezhnev. Schultz indicated to the Soviet leader that under Jackson’s proposed legislation trade and credit guarantees would become dependent on liberalized emigration policies.²²⁴ Within a week Brezhnev contacted Ambassador Dobrynin and instructed him to pass onto President Nixon a confidential note that the Soviets would no longer levy the education tax. Brezhnev also provided Dobrynin with statistics the Ambassador could give to the President indicating that emigration had increased between 1971 and 1973.²²⁵ The Soviets changed their policies because they were interested in trade with the United States, and they recognized

²²² Address by Secretary Kissinger, October 8, 1973, *FRUS, 1969-1976*, Vol. XXXVIII, Part 1 – Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973-1976 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2012), 88; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 987.

²²³ “U.S. Said to Sway Soviets on Exits,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 1973, p. 4.

²²⁴ Buwalda, 98.

²²⁵ Dobrynin, 269.

the danger posed to détente by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Brezhnev did so through the confidential Presidential channel between him and Dobrynin, and Dobrynin and the President, to keep the issue as quiet as possible, since the Soviets did not want to look as if they were caving into Western pressure when they quietly informed the President that the diploma tax would fade away.²²⁶

News of the Soviets' change of heart on the diploma tax made itself quickly known and despite Soviet reassurances that they would allow for greater Jewish emigration, these promises were insufficient in convincing Senator Jackson and his allies to let up on the amendment. In fact, despite the law no longer being enforced, it remained on the books and emigration remained difficult for Soviet Jews. The Soviets also added to the problem through a series of public relations blunders that played into Jackson's hands. These included the arbitrary arrest and harassment of several prominent dissidents such as Andrei Amalrik, Andrei Sakharov, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.²²⁷ American Jewish organizations along with other human rights related groups insisted that the Jackson amendment was necessary to guard against a future Soviet backslide.²²⁸ Similarly the Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union, an organization which consisted of recent Jewish emigrants to Israel, argued in a letter written to President Nixon that the suspension of the education tax left Soviet Jews in a "more critical position" than they were in before, and that further action, such as that called for by the Jackson amendment, was necessary to guard against future Soviet abuses.²²⁹

²²⁶ Buwalda, 96.

²²⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 988.

²²⁸ Buwalda, 98, Stern 69.

²²⁹ Memorandum to President Nixon on the Situation of Soviet Jewry, from Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union, in *News Bulletin on Soviet Jewry*, May 1973, in Drachman, 425.

The Soviet government's concession on the education tax emboldened Senator Jackson. He reasoned that the pressure generated by his amendment had had a positive effect, and that the Soviets' supposed moderation on the emigration issue was "a fraud." Jackson therefore argued that he needed to reintroduce the amendment in the next congressional session, and attach it to the President's Trade Reform Act, with Jackson declaring, "I say that we are going to put the Jackson amendment on the statue books but in the hope that it won't apply to the Soviet Union because they will be in compliance with the free emigration provision."²³⁰ In spite of the administration's opposition, Jackson obtained seventy-six Senate co-sponsors for his amendment as soon as he reintroduced it.²³¹ This so-called human rights card played by Jackson easily gained him support. It appealed to American politicians because it was much easier for the public to digest debates on human rights related issues compared to those on trade or disarmament, finding support from across the American political spectrum. Also it was politically dangerous not to be supportive of the rights of Jews to leave the Soviet Union. Therefore Jackson had a winning issue that acquired the support of many in Congress despite the President's opposition. This initiative came from a Congress seeking to assert itself in foreign policy matters after the Vietnam War. Then the Watergate scandal broke in 1973 and severely hampered the administration's effectiveness in combating the amendment thereafter.²³²

²³⁰ "U.S. Said to Sway Soviets on Exits," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1973, p. 4; "Remarks by Senator Henry M. Jackson of the East-West Trade and Freedom of Emigration, National Press Club," of item placed in the Congressional Record, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 119 (March 29, 1973): 10175; Stern, 69.

²³¹ In fact when President Nixon reintroduced his Trade Reform Bill before Congress on April 10, 1973, he included a provision stating "I do not believe a policy of denying MFN treatment to Soviet exports is a proper or even effective way of dealing with this problem." Press Release, the White House, April 10, 1973, p. 8 quoted in Stern, 69.

²³² Snyder, 101.

As the debate over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment raged in Washington, those in America with close ties to the dissident movement, as well the dissidents themselves, came out in support of the legislation since they were generally not satisfied with the Nixon administration's tepid response on the Jewish issue, which they blamed on détente and the President's over reliance on quiet diplomacy. In a letter to President Nixon, the Israel-based Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union went so far as to exclaim that "the key to the rescue of our people lies now in the hands of the United States of America."²³³ The Action Committee for Newcomers believed that the Nixon administration had taken the wrong approach by trying to broker trade relations with the Soviets without their first making vital human rights concessions. In their view, the Soviets were becoming dependent on Western economic aid through trade, and the United States should take advantage of the situation and demand humanitarian concessions in return for such aid. The Action Committee of Newcomers wrote approvingly of the confrontational approach adopted by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in their memorandum to the President, writing:

It is quite clear that the USSR will relent only under extraordinary pressure and only if she is convinced that this is the lesser evil, or that she has no alternative. Today, the USA has all the possibilities of exerting such pressure. The help of the West, and mainly the US is, today, a matter of life and the continued existence of the Soviet regime. The Soviet leadership that brought the national economy to the brink of catastrophe [*sic.*] know this and will be ready to grant concessions if they know that the demand for such concessions is a firm and unavoidable condition for the receipt of aid. Senator Jackson's amendment to the Trade Bill is an effective instrument to this end.²³⁴

²³³ Memorandum to President Nixon on the Situation of Soviet Jewry, from Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union, in *News Bulletin on Soviet Jewry*, May 1973, in Drachman, 424.

²³⁴ The memorandum stated, "Mr. President, we have no doubt of the sincerity of your wish to help Soviet Jews, but we are deeply worried that you have chosen quiet diplomacy as the only means toward this end." Memorandum to President Nixon on the Situation of Soviet Jewry, from Action Committee of Newcomers from the Soviet Union, in *News Bulletin on Soviet Jewry*, May 1973, in Drachman, 424-425.

Much like the approach advocated by the Action Committee for Newcomers, Dr. Lev Dobriansky, head of the Captive Nations Network Incorporated, argued before the Senate Committee on Finance, that the US should use its economic strength to extract concessions from the Soviet Union through a “poltrade policy,” similar to that of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Without such an approach Dobriansky argued that granting MFN and credit guarantees to the Soviet Union would be appeasement, and such détente would “not contribute to the interest of world peace,” as World War II demonstrated.²³⁵

Chairman Stanley Lowell, and Executive Director Jerry Goodman, of the NCSJ were also critics of the administration’s reliance on quiet diplomacy and their view that passage of the Jackson amendment would make the situation worse for Soviet Jews. The leaders of the NCSJ argued that such assertions by the administration, and in particular by Dr. Kissinger, “could prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy” and “an open invitation to make his [Secretary Kissinger’s] prediction a reality,” endangering the welfare of the Soviet Jews.²³⁶ Lowell and Goodman continued to critique quiet diplomacy by stating that, “If quiet diplomacy is to be the answer, we are left in a position whereby we are completely dependent upon the Soviet Union and its own subjective method or response to determine how it will expand or contract the numbers of individuals allowed to leave the Soviet Union.”²³⁷ Therefore, for the NCSJ the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was necessary because it opened up the issue of Jewish emigration to discussion by Congress,

²³⁵ Lev Dobriansky, Congress, Senate, Committee on Finance, *Trade Reform Act of 1973, Hearings Before the Committee on Finance on HR 10710: An Act to Promote the Development of an Open, Nondiscriminatory and Fair World Economic System, To Stimulate the Economic Growth of the United States, and For Other Purposes. Part 5: Public Witnesses*, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 4 April, 1974, 1759-63 (hereafter referred to as *Trade Reform Act of 1973*, followed by appropriate part and page number).

²³⁶ Stanley Lowell, Congress, Senate, Committee on Finance, *Trade Reform Act of 1973, Part 5: Public Witnesses*, 2251.

²³⁷ Prepared Statement of Stanley Lowell, Chairman, National Conference on Soviet Jewry on Title IV of the Trade Reform Act, *Trade Reform Act of 1973, Part 5: Public Witnesses*, 2244.

something that would not have occurred otherwise. The leaders of the NCSJ believed this debate over the Jackson amendment before Congress placed the Soviets in check, because it forced the administration to pursue a human rights agenda in its Soviet policy that it otherwise would not have. Lowell and Goodman testified that without the amendment, the issue of Jewish emigration “would not be on the agenda for discussion by the Secretary of State, and it is only because there is such an amendment pending in the Congress of the United States that the Secretary of State has the ability to even discuss this issue with the Soviets.”²³⁸

Just as activists in the United States who had ties with dissident groups in the Soviet Union were making their case in favor of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, activists in the Soviet Union were coming up with similar arguments in support of the amendment. They were actively reaching out to the US Congress for their support. In particular, *refusniks* David Azbel, Vitaly Rubin, and Vladimir Galatsky, issued their own direct plea to the American Senate while on hunger strike in Moscow, writing:

In our view, those who, in the name of the global and til now vague goals, are prepared to absolve the Soviet government and consider that human rights regarding emigration are being fulfilled, are committing a tragic mistake. The battle is only beginning and its first results can only encourage, but not set one at rest. That is why we are turning to you at a time when we are staging a hunger strike as an extreme way of making the Soviet government respect our human and civil rights.²³⁹

For the *refusniks*, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was important because it offered the opportunity for the Jewish issue to be brought to the attention of the American Congress and American policy makers so that it could no longer be ignored. Soviet nuclear physicist turned dissident Andrei Sakharov similarly weighed into the controversy

²³⁸ Stanley Lowell, *Trade Reform Act of 1973, Part 5: Public Witnesses*, 2245.

²³⁹ Appendix D.—Message to U.S. Senators From Moscow Jews on Hunger Strike, *Trade Reform Act of 1973, Part 5: Public Witnesses*, 2255-56.

surrounding the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, offering his own endorsement of the legislation. As for the administration's commitment to human rights Sakharov famously asserted international security could only be achieved through an open and democratic society. "A country that does not respect the rights of its own people will not respect the rights of its neighbors."²⁴⁰ Sakharov was an outspoken supporter of the legislation, making public his support for the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in an open letter to the US Congress dated September 14, 1973. Sakharov took aim at those most critical of the Jackson amendment, especially those who critics of the amendment who believed that the legislation would result in outbursts of Soviet anti-Semitism.

Here you have total confusion, either deliberate or based on ignorance, about the USSR. It is as if the emigration issue affected only Jews. As if the situation of those Jews who have vainly sought to emigrate to Israel were not already tragic enough and would become more hopeless if it were to depend on the democratic attitudes and on the humanity of the OVIR. As if the techniques of "quiet diplomacy" could help anyone, beyond a few individuals in Moscow and some other cities.²⁴¹

Sakharov continued to warn of mass reprisals against the Soviet Jews if the world were to cast a blind eye on their plight. Unlike before, where discussion concerning human rights had remained shuttered behind closed doors, diplomacy was now taking place on the public stage, through open letters to Congress, Congressional hearings, opinion pieces in public newspapers, and demonstrations. This public dialogue in the view of the Soviet dissidents and their American supporters forced the Soviet government to take actions benefiting the Jews.

Despite widespread support for the Jackson amendment by the Soviet dissidents, Secretary of State Kissinger believed that the dissidents were an unreliable source for

²⁴⁰ Andrei D. Sakharov, "Progress, Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom," in *Sakharov Speaks*, Harrison E. Salisbury, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 55-114.

²⁴¹ Sakharov, "A Letter to the Congress of the United States," in *Sakharov Speaks*, 214.

information. He argued that the fact that the dissidents had been the ones suffering and were naturally the most resentful of the White House's slow but steady progress on human rights issues.

What they [the dissidents] sought, with extraordinary courage and fortitude, was to change the political and moral character of the Soviet system. The rigorous standards that had impelled them to court suffering and harassment made them resentful of the gradualism inherent in diplomatic methods. And this is why the "men on the firing line" were not the best witnesses to design American strategy.²⁴²

There were others in the Soviet Union who agreed with Kissinger's impression that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was bad for the Soviet Jews and dissidents. The most notable critic was Roy Medvedev, who much like the Nixon administration, believed that the American Government's emphasis on the Jackson-Vanik Amendment would push the Soviets into a corner resulting in more violence and discrimination against the Soviet Jews. Roy Medvedev wrote in reaction to Sakharov's letter supporting the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, that "Outside pressure can play a negative as well as a positive role: it can deter our organs of power from certain actions in some cases, and in other cases, on the contrary, it can provoke those or other undesirable actions and in that way only impede the process of democratization of Soviet society." Medvedev continued to argue that the Soviet government was in the process of drafting a new constitution and that it was his hope that the Soviet government would liberalize its emigration approach on its own without outside intervention.²⁴³

Despite the White House's forceful arguments against the amendment, the House of Representative passed the first version of the legislation in December 1973, with a

²⁴² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 989.

²⁴³ Roy Medvedev, "The Problem of Democratization and the Problem of Détente," excerpts in *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, No. 5-6, November-December 1973, pp. 6-7, in Drachman, 430.

vote of 319 to 80.²⁴⁴ The amendment was then attached to the final 1974 Trade Act which cleared the Senate unanimously, with an 88 to 0 vote a year later. The omnibus 1974 Trade Act, with the Jackson amendment attached was reluctantly signed by President Gerald Ford into law on January 3, 1975. Dissidents in the Soviet Union and their allies in America hailed the Jackson-Vanik Amendment as a step toward the right direction, with Andrei Sakharov calling the amendment a “principled and deeply humane” action.²⁴⁵ Ohio Congressman and House co-sponsor of the amendment, Charles Vanik, asserted on the House floor that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment would go down in American history as the first piece of legislation requiring humanitarian considerations while seeking to achieve goals of economic exchange.²⁴⁶

The Nixon and later Ford administrations continued to struggle against the Jackson Amendment. President Nixon’s position in negotiating with Congress deteriorated as soon as the Watergate scandal broke. After Nixon resigned on August 8, 1974, President Gerald Ford picked up right where the former President had left off, assuring Brezhnev that he would pursue the same foreign policy agenda Nixon had.²⁴⁷ The Ford administration attempted to negotiate between Senator Jackson and the Soviets, seeking to find a compromise all sides could agree on so as to keep the original 1972 trade agreement on the table. According to the administration, Jackson kept ratcheting up his conditions in negotiating the terms of the amendment. One particularly difficult issue involved quotas on the annual number of Jewish emigrants, with Jackson initially

²⁴⁴ Hodgman, 179; Snyder, 101.

²⁴⁵ Andrei D. Sakharov, *Memoirs*. Richard Lourie, trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 394.

²⁴⁶ Congress, House, Representative Vanik of Ohio, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (20 December 1974) : 41805.

²⁴⁷ Letter From President Ford to Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev, August 9, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, August 1974 – December 1976 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2012), 7-8.

pushing for at least 100,000 emigrants per annum, a number the Soviets could not agree to, and one Kissinger agreed was unrealistic. There was indeed evidence less Jews were seeking to emigrate given conflict in the Middle East. Dobrynin later informed Kissinger that the Soviets would not object to allowing 50,000 Jewish emigrants per year, but would not sign anything official as not to show publicly they were conceding to American pressure on an issue that affected their own sovereignty. In response to the deal, Jackson initially pushed for a quota of 75,000, but eventually conceded to 60,000, a figure the Soviets still found troublesome.²⁴⁸ The administration resisted an outright quota and wished instead to guarantee MFN if the Soviet met three conditions: no limit to applications, no refusals except for security reasons, and there would be no prosecution of applicants.²⁴⁹ Jackson rejected these conditions, arguing that the Soviets were untrustworthy and there were in excess of 130,000 Jews seeking to emigrate. In order to push the idea of a quota forward, Senator Jackson released during a press conference confidential letters he exchanged with the administration which contained details of the negotiations and references to a quota of 60,000 Jews per annum.²⁵⁰ Jackson stated:

We have agreed with President Ford that a minimum standard of initial compliance will be the issuance of 60,000 visas per annum. I wish to emphasize that this figure is not a quota. It is my judgment that, if the agreement is implemented in good faith, the actual number will exceed 60,000 per annum since there is abundant evidence of a current backlog in excess of 130,000, and the agreement calls for the number to rise to correspond to the number of applicants.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ Draft Note from Secretary of State (Kissinger) to President Ford, August 14, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 38-39; Buwalda, 102-103.

²⁴⁹ Gerald Ford, Memorandum of Conversation, November 24, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 368.

²⁵⁰ Letter From Secretary of State Kissinger to Senator Henry M. Jackson, October 18, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 166-168; Letter from Senator Henry M. Jackson to Secretary of State Kissinger, October 18, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 168-169.

²⁵¹ See Footnote 8 in Memorandum of Conversation, October 18, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 165.

Jackson's move incensed both the administration and the Soviets. The administration was upset because the Senator had compromised the fragile negotiation process they had with the Soviet leadership. The Soviets were similarly angry because they did not want to be portrayed as willing to give up their sovereignty and concede on the issue.

Scarcely a week after Senator Jackson's leak, Brezhnev made his frustration over the revelation of the idea of an emigration quota known to Kissinger in Moscow:

You know that the Soviet Union has not given an obligation in terms of numbers. We have said we would not erect barriers; we are not. [...] I have official proof on this from our Minister of Internal Affairs. This is as of this October. Even if I were to allow all who want to leave, I see that only 14,000 want to go. This document also says that there are 1,815 applications pending. Even if I add those figures, I still get 15,000 whereas Jackson cites 60,000. Where am I to get those applicants?²⁵²

Brezhnev proceeded to express his dissatisfaction with the inability of President Ford to put his house in order and reprimanded Kissinger for allowing Jackson's behavior. In response to Brezhnev's criticism, Kissinger explained that he agreed with the General Secretary's analysis of the emigration situation, and then proceeded to explain that the Jackson issue was a byproduct of the American political process, and that he himself felt just as offended by Senator Jackson's actions as the General Secretary. Kissinger then informed Brezhnev that, "almost anything Senator Jackson does to the Soviet Union he has done to me. He doesn't only claim he has defeated the Soviet Union; he claims he has defeated me."²⁵³

In spite of Jackson's actions and the intricate workings of the American political process Brezhnev made it clear that he was disappointed with the inability of the

²⁵² Memorandum of Conversation, October 24, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 181.

²⁵³ Memorandum of Conversation, October 24, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 181, 189

Americans to live up to their part of the original 1972 agreement. Brezhnev informed Kissinger that from the Soviet perspective it was unfair for the Soviet Union to be granted MFN with special conditions attached, while China and several other countries received MFN unconditionally. Brezhnev stated to Kissinger that such treatment was insulting and that if the Soviets were offered MFN with the Jackson amendment attached, then there would be no agreement at all. Brezhnev further stated, “Let me say frankly that we cannot accept that “gift.” We see it as a discriminatory practice that we cannot agree to. I wish to emphasize that!”²⁵⁴ To add muscle to Brezhnev’s threat was the fact that the economic situation for the Soviet Union had changed by the mid-1970s. During the First Moscow Summit in 1972, the Soviets were in a period of economic stagnation, but by 1974 the energy crisis, which began a year earlier with the Arab Oil Embargo, had forced oil prices to jump 300 percent. Rising Soviet income from oil exports made MFN status with the United States less of an economic priority.²⁵⁵ Therefore rising oil prices on top of an American Congress consumed with attaching a human rights package to the original 1972 agreement, gave the Soviets ample reason to back away from the deal if Congress passed the Trade Reform Act with the Jackson-Vanik Amendment attached. News that the Trade Reform Act with the amendment attached had cleared the Senate in December 1974 nonetheless came as “an unpleasant surprise for the leaders of the Soviet Union.” The Soviet leaders had thought it unimaginable that public opinion could affect American policy in such a way, incorrectly believing that the American President acted as a “supreme ruler.”²⁵⁶ Brezhnev quickly wrote to President Ford on Christmas Day

²⁵⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, October 24, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 180.

²⁵⁵ Buwalda, 111-112.

²⁵⁶ Dobrynin, 337.

1974, expressing his disappointment with the direction the debate had taken in the American Congress. Brezhnev wrote to Ford that it was unacceptable for the Americans to add terms onto an agreement after it had been negotiated and agreed to by both sides. This was especially true with regard to terms which interfered with the sovereignty of the Soviet Union; an issue which Brezhnev wrote was “of no concern either for American legislators or anyone else.” Brezhnev added that he could just have easily put in place restrictions which would block Soviet trade with America until racial discrimination was eliminated there, or until the millions of unemployed Americans were employed. Brezhnev finished by indicating that the trade legislation accepted by the US Congress was highly objectionable, and that the 1972 trade deal would no longer be on the table, and the Soviets Government would be relieved of its obligations if the Trade Reform Act were to become law. Brezhnev further warned that this conclusion would bring severe harm to trade and economic relations between the two superpowers.²⁵⁷ Despite Brezhnev’s warning, President Ford reluctantly signed the omnibus 1974 Trade Act, with the Jackson-Vanik Amendment attached, into law on January 3, 1975. The Soviets quickly responded by suspending Lend-Lease payments and dropping their end of the 1972 trade agreement.

Despite the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and its perceived success in making human rights the center of American policy with regard to the Soviet Union, the number of Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union had dropped from 35,000 in 1973 to 13,000 in 1975, much as Dr. Kissinger had forewarned.²⁵⁸ Kissinger even remarked that prior to Senator Jackson’s efforts at promoting Jewish emigration, quiet

²⁵⁷ Letter From Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev to President Ford, December 25, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 405-407.

²⁵⁸ Hodgman, 184, 242.

conversations in 1971 and 1972 between the administration and the Soviet government resulted in a dramatic increase in the rate of emigration from 400 to 35,000. After Jackson went public and brought the debate out into the open, the rate of emigration slowed.²⁵⁹ The Jackson-Vanik Amendment had pushed the Soviets into a corner. It was perceived as an offense to Soviet sovereignty, since the amendment sought to legislate on events occurring within the Soviet Union. The ultimate response of the Soviets was to repudiate the 1972 trade agreement, damaging the Nixon and Ford administration's policy of détente.

After the affair over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, some Soviet dissidents openly questioned whether American legislators had overreached in passing the legislation.²⁶⁰ Once talk of trade and trade credits were taken off the table, the situation deteriorated for Soviet Jews. The legacy of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment is debatable. One view holds that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, despite its noble aims, ultimately proved to be counterproductive and had little diplomatic effectiveness. Another view contends that the legacy of the amendment was to bring the discussion of human rights in the Soviet Union front and center. A later meeting between Ambassador Dobrynin and Senator Jackson suggests a further political aspect. In his memoirs, Dobrynin records a meeting with Jackson the summer after the amendment had passed, at which point the Senator had expressed his very frank and personal views on Soviet–American relations. During this meeting, Jackson revealed to Dobrynin the mistakes he made in negotiating the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Dobrynin wrote that during this meeting, Senator Jackson had expressed that, “Leaders of Congress, including himself, had developed a

²⁵⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, December 19, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 389.

²⁶⁰ Dobrynin, 338; Feingold, 145.

false impression that Moscow would eventually concede on Soviet emigration if they kept pressing. Eventually, their mistake became obvious, but by then the matter had become so clouded by emotion that it was too late to compromise.”²⁶¹ Furthermore Jackson told Dobrynin that his opposition to détente and intransigence regarding Soviet-Jewish emigration was largely dictated by partisan politics. Dobrynin was surprised by the Senator’s candor, and remarked in his memoirs of this meeting, that “As we parted, [Jackson] asked me to tell Brezhnev that he was not and never would be guided by hostility toward the Soviet Union. He said he supported the improvement of Soviet-American relations, yet as a member of the opposition, he sometimes had to criticize the administration as a matter of tactics rather than strategy.”²⁶² At least by Dobrynin’s account, through Jackson’s own admission, the politics behind the Jackson-Vanik Amendment were dictated by the Senator’s political agenda and hubris, and the Senator himself recognized that the amendment had been a ghastly over extension of power.

Despite the overall failure of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to increase emigration from the Soviet Union, the legislation nonetheless brought the issue of human rights to the forefront of the American public’s perception of détente. The amendment was the first instance in American history, as Congressman Vanik noted, where the notion of human rights dictated American policy.²⁶³ The amendment also emboldened Congress and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union to further action, and it served as a precedent for Congressional involvement in human rights policy abroad. In the United States, this public debate over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment combined with

²⁶¹ Italics my own. Dobrynin, 338.

²⁶² Dobrynin, 339.

²⁶³ Congress, House, Representative Vanik of Ohio, 73rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* (20 December 1974) : 41805.

an escalation of news coverage concerning the Soviet dissident movement, prepared the American public and American policy makers to become bold supporters of the Soviet human rights movement. This emboldened attitude of the American Congress with regard to human rights was happening just as the Soviet dissidents came to the realization that their new friends in the American Congress allowed them to become increasingly assertive and confident in the way they reached out to the West and fought for their rights in the Soviet Union. The level of commitment to human rights increased dramatically on both sides following the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and this proved to be especially the case after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act by the Soviet Union, the first international agreement which made clear the relationship between human rights and international security.

CHAPTER III

THE HELSINKI PROCESS: THE FORMATION OF THE MOSCOW HELSINKI WATCH GROUP & THE US HELSINKI COMMISSION

In the same year the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was debated before the US Congress, representatives of thirty-five European and North American countries, including the US and the USSR, were putting the final touches on a document that would have significant ramifications on human rights policy as well as other fields of East-West relations, the Helsinki Final Act. The Final Act was the concluding declaration of the nearly three-year long Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), a forum where the United States, Canada, and all thirty-three European states, with the exception of Albania, met to discuss and debate the major issues affecting East-West relations. The Conference concluded with a three-day summit in Helsinki, Finland, where its Final Act, a non-binding declaration of principles was affirmed.²⁶⁴ For this reason, the Conference and the Final Act have been characterized by historians as the “high-water mark” of détente, if not “détente’s very symbol.”²⁶⁵ Therefore, this third and final chapter will focus on the creation of the Helsinki Final Act and the role this

²⁶⁴ The Helsinki Final Act has also been widely referred to as the “Helsinki Accords” and the “Helsinki Declaration.” Here I chose to refer to it as the “Final Act” for the sake of consistency. It must also be noted that many sources use the acronym “CSCE” to refer either to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe or the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. To clarify the distinction for the reader, the *Conference* on Security and Cooperation in Europe refers to the international body of thirty-five European and North American states that created the Helsinki Final Act. The *Commission* on Security and Cooperation in Europe refers to the American Congressional commission delegated the task of assessing compliance with the Helsinki Final Act. For the purpose of clarity for the reader, the acronym CSCE will only be used when referring to the “Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe,” the “Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,” will be referred to as the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

²⁶⁵ John J. Maresca, *To Helsinki: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1973-1975* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), xi.

document had in inspiring human rights activists in Moscow to reach out to and be fully embraced by American policy makers.

The Helsinki Final Act was the result of several long years of negotiations that at times seemed as if they would never end, given the fact that all thirty-five participants had an equal voice. It was the Soviets who came up with the initial idea to hold a European Security Conference, ostensibly as a means superseding the NATO alliance and obtaining Western recognition of the Soviet Union's post-World War II borders. The Western representatives initially resisted participating in the Conference, but eventually agreed to the idea. They recognized the Conference as a forum in which to push for the normalization of relations, a quadripartite agreement on Berlin, Mutual and Balance Force Reductions (MBFR), and even the freer movement of peoples, information, and personal contacts between East and West.²⁶⁶ American and other Western delegates therefore successfully used the CSCE to push their own agenda and even convinced the Soviet Union to acknowledge provisions on basic human rights in return for the political concessions on borders and sovereignty sought by the Soviets.

The Final Act itself consisted of ten articles divided into three groups, or "baskets." These three "baskets" contained political, economic, and humanitarian objectives that reaffirmed the rights of sovereignty while encouraging the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.²⁶⁷ Basket III specifically called for the fundamental understanding and implementation of basic human rights principles, while Baskets I and II referred to

²⁶⁶ Maresca, 4.

²⁶⁷ Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe Final Act, Helsinki, 1975, *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39501?download=true> (accessed: 8 July 2012).

questions relating to security in Europe, and cooperation in the fields of economics, science, technology, and the environment, respectively. These principles embodied in the text of the declaration, along with the Soviet Union's acceptance, made the Helsinki Final Act the most authoritative statement on human rights in the Soviet Union, and a powerful encouragement to the Soviet dissident movement to reach out to the West. Even Henry Kissinger, a critic of the inclusion of Basket III in the Final Act, later in life acknowledged its importance in inspiring Vaclav Havel to establish Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, and Lech Walesa to fight for human rights in Poland, both of which were instrumental in bringing about the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.²⁶⁸ Scholar John J. Maresca even pointed out that the most important aspect of the Basket III and the human rights principles found in the Final Act was that it was even included at all.²⁶⁹ The inclusion of human rights in the Helsinki Final Act was evidence of the rising importance of human rights in foreign policy, especially in the wake of the fight over Jewish emigration as was demonstrated during the debate over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Basket III also reflected a major change in America's acceptance of human rights in its relationship with Moscow. A little over three years earlier Nixon's 1972 trip to Moscow had concluded with the Soviet-American Statement of Principles which contained no mention of human rights.

Any reading of the text of the Helsinki Final Act plainly demonstrated that the Soviet Union affirmed that it would abide by the human rights principles found in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both of which included the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief. Since Soviet

²⁶⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 639.

²⁶⁹ John J. Maresca, *To Helsinki: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1973-1975* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), 154-155.

dissidents believed that their fundamental freedoms and rights were non-existent in the Soviet Union, the Final Act gave them documentation upon which to argue that they were entitled to those rights, as well as to the rule of law. In the Soviet Union, this belief in the rule of law based on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act was best exemplified by the formation of the Helsinki Watch Groups, first in Moscow, but later elsewhere in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The founders of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group were many of the same activists who had previously written for *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy*. They now reached out to other like-minded dissidents and those in the West by publishing and distributing statements and accounts of instances where the Soviet government failed to live up to its human rights obligations according to the Final Act.

The formation of these Helsinki Watch Groups would not have been possible had there not been a powerful and receptive audience to read their documents and publications in the West. Debate over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment had primed the Congress, journalists, and the American public to pay further attention to human rights. But to the dismay of activists in both the East and West, the Helsinki Accords lacked any kind of enforcement mechanism, since the declaration did not have the legal status of a treaty or an international agreement. Therefore, just as the Helsinki Watch Groups in the Soviet Union took it upon themselves to monitor compliance, activist policy makers in the US Congress devised of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the US Helsinki Commission, to monitor and report on compliance with regard to the Helsinki Final Act. Even though the Commission was tasked with reviewing compliance in connection with all three Baskets of the Final Act, it concentrated on Basket III and Eastern Europe. The US Helsinki Commission proved to be decisive in

allowing the dissidents a forum in the West to be heard, since it was the Commission's task to recommend policy to the rest of Congress given the reports it drafted, which were often based on the documents and testimony it received from the members of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group. This full exposure of the Soviet dissidents to the American Congress could not have been possible without the inroads that were already made by the American journalists who chose to cover the dissidents and make their story known to the American public, as well as the proponents of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which made the American public fully aware of the issue as it became an ever more important facet of America's foreign policy. For the dissidents, the use of the Americans also became an essential part of their strategy for pursuing social justice and the rule of law in the Soviet Union.

Human Rights and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

When the idea to hold a European Security Conference was first proposed, the inclusion of human rights and text concerning the freer movement of peoples and ideas was far from the top of the agenda. In fact the initial proposal to hold a European Security Conference came from Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov in 1954, who sought to use the forum to promote Soviet interests, such as an affirmation from the West on the inviolability of the Soviet Union's post-World War II borders and to drive a wedge between the NATO allies. In part the Soviet's insistence on holding a conference was to force the Americans and other NATO powers to acknowledge the Soviet Union's annexation of the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, along with other border changes made by Stalin following the Second World War. Despite Soviet persistence,

the Americans and NATO consistently rejected the idea of a European Security Conference throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1969 the Soviets again formally proposed a Security Conference with the West, but broadened the original scope of the Conference and recommended that it include a framework for future East-West economic and technological interchange. The NATO powers were again skeptical of the Soviet's plans. But they decided to hold talks on organizing a conference if the Soviets would first agree to Western concessions, such as a Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin and Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks. President Nixon's National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, was skeptical of the utility of the European Security Conference, believing that such a meeting could turn out to be a "propaganda circus" that would potentially "open up differences among NATO allies."²⁷⁰ Given these concerns over the Soviet agenda for the CSCE and the Soviet eagerness to begin the Conference, Kissinger reasoned that it was in America's best interests to stall for time. Kissinger indicated in his memoirs that the American strategy with concern to the CSCE "was to create no obstacles to progress but to do little to accelerate it either," in the recognition that the longer it took for the Conference to begin, the more likely the Soviets may bend on issues of interest to the West.²⁷¹ The passage of time served Western interests by draining the Conference of its original rationale of consolidating Soviet power. Kissinger indicated to Nixon prior to the President's May 1972 trip to Moscow, that when meeting with Brezhnev the President should insist that CSCE only deal with the principles of

²⁷⁰ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, May 21, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, October 1971 – May 1972 (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), 969.

²⁷¹ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Apr. 4, 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXIX, European Security (Washington, DC: GPO, 2008), 5; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 637-38.

relations among European states, including: “1) sovereign equality, political independence, and territorial integrity; 2) non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs; and 3) the right of people in each country to shape their own destiny.” Kissinger also indicated that CSCE could also incorporate discussions on restraints on the movement of armed forces, as well as cultural, economic and technological cooperation.²⁷² To the delight of the administration, the Soviets consented to such terms, and informal preparatory talks on the CSCE were agreed to begin in November 1972.

Original discussions on the Conference did not include any mention of human rights. The closest any such discussion came to human rights concerned only an increase in economic and technological exchanges as well as an aspiration for “increased tourism.”²⁷³ The desire to add discussion on the “freer movement of peoples, ideas, and information” to the Conference’s agenda came from NATO and American diplomats who saw the tactical and propaganda advantage in pressing those issues on the Soviets. Some diplomats even believed that there might be some Soviet concession on the issue if the West remained firm on its inclusion. Several members of the US National Security Council staff even wanted to see NATO delegates urge the Warsaw Pact nations to agree to “end radio jamming; relax exit restrictions on their nationals; permit freer circulation of books, magazines, and periodicals; and allow foreign journalists normal working conditions.”²⁷⁴ The National Security Council staff did recognize the difficulty posed in pressing such conditions on the Soviets, even acknowledging that many in the West

²⁷² Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, May 21, 1972. *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XIV, Soviet Union, 970-971.

²⁷³ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Oct. 2, 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXIX, European Security, 13.

²⁷⁴ Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff, undated, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXIX, European Security, 213-214.

would likely prefer to pursue “easier issues,” recognizing the diplomatic difficulty in pressing the Soviets on their human rights treatment, since many diplomats viewed only minor improvements in relations as possible.²⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the US State Department began to emphasize to the Soviets that they would only move forward on the CSCE if its agenda included issues related to the freer movement of peoples, ideas, and information, so that the Conference would not degenerate into a propaganda spectacle.²⁷⁶

After it was announced that informal preparatory talks on the European Security Conference would begin in November 1972, the National Security Council began debating which direction the Conference should take. It was accepted that the CSCE was more of a symbolic occurrence than one that would result in any practical agreements, and that the best chance the West had in extracting concessions from the Soviets would be if it were to emphasize issues related to the freer movement of peoples and ideas. This emphasis on the idea of “freer movement” was believed by some to be the best way to lessen the propaganda risks of the Conference, and perhaps use it to promote Western interests.²⁷⁷ Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a member of the National Security Council believed that the strategy of emphasizing “freer movement” could potentially result in an American propaganda win against the Soviets, as the Soviets would ultimately fail to live up to those standards. Sonnenfeldt wrote to Kissinger in a 1972 memorandum:

The underlying Western philosophy which we have subscribed to and promoted is that “liberalization” of the Eastern bloc is the only road to the reconciliation of Europe and that liberalization flourishes when exposed to the nourishing influence of Western societies. There is something to this theory. But we are not likely to

²⁷⁵ Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff, undated, 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXIX, European Security, 213-214.

²⁷⁶ Telegram From Secretary of State Rogers to the Department of State, May 27, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXXIX, European Security, 296.

²⁷⁷ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), undated, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXXIX, European Security, 334.

trick the USSR into opening its doors to a free flow of people, in or out, or to an inundation of Western literature and broadcasts. [...] In fact, the Western approach is cynical. No one expects to achieve much, but in pursuing the issues the East is to be exposed as the obstacle to European “cooperation.” In sum, *this takes on the character of psychological warfare and the issue, therefore, is whether the state of East-West relations justifies such an approach.*²⁷⁸

Sonnenfeldt was not completely cynical, and he did feel that real progress could be achieved with regard to human rights, adding “[W]e can achieve some very limited practical improvement in freer movement—which might be feasible in light of the loosening up in Eastern Europe—but not if our aim is polemics.”²⁷⁹ Sonnenfeldt therefore felt that the only way progress could be made was for the West to be sincere in its negotiations, and to pursue issues regarding freer movement with an authentic interest in promoting the liberalization of the Soviet block.

Informal preparatory talks for the CSCE began in Helsinki on November 22, 1972, and it concluded with a draft document known informally as the “Blue Book,” or the “Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations.” The Blue Book outlined the practical arrangements and the agenda for the Conference and it set in place the Conference’s three main themes, each of which were later referred to as “baskets.” The third theme proposed to cooperate in humanitarian and other fields, and authorized the Conference to discuss issues “conducive to creating better conditions for increased cultural and educational exchanges, for broader dissemination of information, for contacts between people, and for the solution of humanitarian problems.”²⁸⁰ In addition,

²⁷⁸ Emphasis in original. Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), undated, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXXIX, European Security, 337.

²⁷⁹ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), undated, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXXIX, European Security, 337.

²⁸⁰ Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations, 1973. *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, <http://www.osce.org/mc/40213> (Accessed: July 8, 2012).

the document asserted that the Conference would address issues which would improve access to human contacts across borders, the freedom of information exchange, and international cooperation regarding culture and education. These terms laid the foundation for the CSCE's emphasis on human rights, which Secretary of State William Rogers acknowledged were of "paramount importance [. . .] there are few words that are so filled with meaning, so venerated by the people everywhere, as the words 'human rights and fundamental freedoms.'"²⁸¹ Secretary Rogers not only embraced the provisions of the Blue Book which dealt with human rights, but he also warned his fellow foreign ministers gathered in Helsinki not to back down from the issue and to keep its premise intact in the final declaration that was to emerge from the Conference. Rogers stated that, "Section III [Basket III] could turn out to be a sad footnote in future history books unless the Committee finds concrete ways to embody the concepts contained therein so that the everyday lives of people are favourably [*sic.*] affected."²⁸² Rogers concluded that the lowering of barriers to the movement of peoples and ideas in a way that encouraged human contacts would be essential for building mutual respect and understanding between East and West, stressing that the goal of the CSCE should be a European continent where "no nation feels threatened, a continent open to the free flow of people and ideas, and a continent enriched rather than divided by political and cultural diversity."²⁸³

This emphasis by Secretary Rogers on human rights from early on in the CSCE process contrasted with the rest of the administration's position on the issue, as noted in

²⁸¹ William Rogers, Speech, 5 July 1973 in Kvass, et al. *Human Rights, European Politics, and the Helsinki Accord: Stage I Helsinki, 1973*, Vol. I, (Buffalo, NY: William S. Hein & Co., Inc., 1981), 228-229.

²⁸² William Rogers, Speech, 5 July 1973 in Kvass, et al., 228-229.

²⁸³ William Rogers, Speech, 5 July 1973 in Kvass, et al., 231.

Chapter 2. The administration's support for détente and quiet diplomacy had led it to refrain from pressuring the Soviets openly on issues related to the freer movement of people and human rights. This was especially with regard to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and the public battle between the administration and Senator Henry Jackson over whether to include language in the 1974 Trade Act linking Most-Favored Nation (MFN) trade status, trade credits, and debt guarantees for the Soviet Union to that nation's treatment of its Jewish citizens. Notably, there was also no mention of human rights or the freer movement of peoples in the Soviet-American Statement of Principles, which was the final result of the May 1972 summit between Nixon and Brezhnev in Moscow, worrying America's European allies who felt perhaps that not mentioning "freer movement" was undercutting their bargaining position.²⁸⁴ The Statement of Principles addressed only issues of sovereignty and non-interference, assuring respect for each other's governmental system.

The administration's change of heart on human rights may have originated from the American failure in Vietnam and the fall of Saigon in 1975. America's failure in the Vietnam War left enduring scars on the nation's self-confidence, and in return, according to John Maresca, America's foreign policy makers sought to reaffirm its relationship with their allies by building upon issues of mutual interest, such as human rights.²⁸⁵ In any case, America's NATO allies were much more vocal in their support for the inclusion of human rights in the CSCE, making Basket III a bigger part of the CSCE negotiations than Kissinger would have liked. When Kissinger was challenged on Basket III and the

²⁸⁴ Memorandum From Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), July 5, 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, Vol. XXXIX, European Security, 310.

²⁸⁵ Maresca, 121

troubled negotiations between the East and West by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Kissinger responded that the Americans were trying to stay out of those issues, leaving it up to Gromyko to sort them out with America's allies. Kissinger even stated that, "Basket III—it's too intellectual for me. There is a French text and there is a Russian text, so it's between you and the French. [...] We're staying out of it."²⁸⁶ Kissinger was no advocate of Basket III or of the CSCE in general. In a meeting with President Ford, Kissinger informed the President that the only reason language on "freedom of movement" and "human contacts" were included in the CSCE negotiations was because of the insistence of the European powers and the political Left. While giving a status report on the CSCE to Ford, Kissinger stated that "The big hang-up is on freedom of movement. It is meaningless—it is just a grandstand play to the left. We are going along with it."²⁸⁷ In part the CSCE was able to get away with discussing human rights just because Kissinger had little regard for the Conference. Believing that it would not amount to very much he did not find it worth his time to block its inclusion in the final version of the text.

The administration also was facing pressure to change its strategy with regard to human rights because American public opinion had come out in favor of adding human rights to America's foreign policy. This was especially so in the wake of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which prepared the American public to support the inclusion of human rights as part of the CSCE because the public debate had made the issue of human rights so well known. The popularity of human rights with the public demonstrated to America's foreign policy makers that human rights would have to be taken into account

²⁸⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, Feb 16, 1975, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 476.

²⁸⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Aug 15, 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVI, Soviet Union, 46.

in order to gain the public's support for a foreign policy initiative.²⁸⁸ The administration was already receiving warning signs that the American public would be reluctant to support its foreign policy approach if it did not take human rights into account.²⁸⁹ In the eight months between President Ford's reluctant signature of the 1974 Trade Act, which included the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and the President's trip to Helsinki to sign the Final Act, the most important test of the President's human rights approach was his refusal to meet with the exiled Soviet writer and critic of détente, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Solzhenitsyn, who was arrested and deported from the Soviet Union in February 1974, arrived in America a few months later and became an instant celebrity and a vocal critic of the President's détente policy and especially the CSCE. Solzhenitsyn was outspoken in his support for open confrontation with the Soviet Union, believing that the Soviet regime was inherently evil and that it could not be dealt with as if it were any other normal country. Solzhenitsyn further viewed the White House's détente policy as an example of the West's moral weakness, claiming that détente was akin to appeasement and that the whole policy ran counter to the liberal and democratic spirit of America, believing that détente and the CSCE would go down in history as another Munich-like moment of appeasement.²⁹⁰ Solzhenitsyn stated of the CSCE in a speech given before the AFL-CIO Conference in Washington on June 30, 1975 that:

The European negotiators of the 35 countries for two years now have painfully been negotiating and their nerves were stretched to the breaking point and they finally gave in. A few women from the Communist countries can now marry

²⁸⁸ Maresca, 121

²⁸⁹ Maresca, 34; "Jerry, Don't Go," *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 July 1975, p. 14.

²⁹⁰ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "America: You Must Think About the World," 30 June 1975 in *Détente: Prospects for Democracy and Dictatorship*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1980), 44-50.

foreigners. And a few newspapermen are now going to be permitted to travel a little more than before. They give 1/1,000th of what natural law should provide. Matters which people should be able to do even before such negotiations are undertaken. And already there is joy. And here in the West we hear many voices, saying 'Look, they're making concessions; it's time to sign.' [...] What sort of agreement would this be? The proposed agreement is the funeral of Eastern Europe. It means that Western Europe would finally, once and for all, sign away Eastern Europe, stating that it is perfectly willing to see Eastern Europe be crushed and overwhelmed once and for all, but please don't bother us.²⁹¹

Solzhenitsyn's rousing speech at the AFL-CIO, with its and caustic criticism of détente and the CSCE, was well attended. Sitting behind Solzhenitsyn were many powerful members of Congress, especially on the American political right, as well as a few members of the Ford administration, such as Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, all of who were aware that the purpose of the event was to undermine the President's foreign policy.²⁹² On July 2nd, two days after Solzhenitsyn's speech, Republican Senators Strom Thurmond and Jesse Helms contacted President Ford's counselor and requested that the President meet with Solzhenitsyn before the writer was scheduled to depart Washington three days later.²⁹³ President Ford declined the Senators' offer, citing scheduling difficulties. In fact, the President was supposed to be in Ohio on July 3rd and July 4th was a holiday. According to Henry Kissinger, President Ford sensed that the meeting was an attempt by the Republican Party's right-wing to embarrass the President on his foreign policy since Solzhenitsyn was such a vocal critic of détente and of the CSCE.²⁹⁴ Despite appeals from the Secretary of Defense and Ford's White House Chief of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld, to meet with Solzhenitsyn, the President recognized that to have met with the author just a few weeks prior to his trip to Helsinki to sign the Final Act would have

²⁹¹ Solzhenitsyn, "America: You Must Think About the World," in *Détente*, 43.

²⁹² Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 649.

²⁹³ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 649.

²⁹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 649.

totally undercut the administration's message and policies. Kissinger reaffirmed this argument in a State Department news conference a few days after the incident, remarking that he respected the author, but added that, "From the point of view of foreign policy the symbolic affect of [Solzhenitsyn meeting with senior officials] can be disadvantageous – which has nothing to do with a respect either for the man or for his message."²⁹⁵ The meeting would also have offended Brezhnev, with who the State Department had pleaded for the release of Solzhenitsyn to the West on compassionate grounds, promising not to exploit the author's presence in the US. Although Kissinger acknowledged having given Gerald Ford a copy of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* early in his presidency, he feared that relations with the Soviet Union would suffer unduly if the administration looked too supportive of the author.²⁹⁶

Many members of Congress and the press criticized the President for his actions. They viewed the President's trip to Helsinki after his snub of Solzhenitsyn as evidence of the administration's lack of interest in human rights. Public opinion polls demonstrated a drop in the President's popularity after the President's rebuff of Solzhenitsyn. A Gallup Poll taken just before the incident showed a fifty-one percent approval rating, while a Harris Poll a week later reflected a ten percent drop.²⁹⁷ Many Americans simply did not know about the inclusion of human rights in the Final Act, or perceived Basket III as less important than the other provisions in the Final Act which ostensibly benefited the Soviet Union. Therefore it is not surprising that the public's reaction to the CSCE was

²⁹⁵ Press Conference, Milwaukee, 16 July 1975, in *State Department Bulletin*, Vol. 73, No. 1884, 4 August 1975, 181, reprinted in Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 650.

²⁹⁶ Telephone Communication: Henry Kissinger to Ziegler, February 14, 1974. United States Department of State Freedom of Information Act Reading Room, available: <http://foia.state.gov/documents/Kissinger/0000C415.pdf> (accessed: 14 January 2011); Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 648.

²⁹⁷ "Jerry, Don't Go," *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 July 1975, p. 14.

overwhelmingly negative. Editorials widely condemned the Final Act and implored President Ford not to sign it. *The Wall Street Journal* even ran an editorial entitled “Jerry, Don’t Go,” where it made the case that the Final Act gave the Soviets too much in return for very little. The article also associated the President’s failure to meet with Solzhenitsyn and his acquiescence to the Soviet Union in Helsinki as evidence that Ford had become “chief apologist” to the Soviets.²⁹⁸ Many in the West focused their criticism of the Final Act on the compromises the document made with the Soviets, specifically the “inviolability of borders.” This was the case made especially by those critics with ethnic ties to the “captive nations.” They viewed the Final Act as a concession to the Soviets which implicitly ended America’s longstanding support for the Baltic nations and the Ukrainians. As Kissinger noted in his memoirs, every side of the political spectrum had their own complaints about the Final Act. Conservatives, like Ronald Reagan and Henry Jackson, wanted ideological combat without compromise. They feared that any summit with the Soviets would “confuse the democracies.” Liberals argued that the Final Act paid insufficient attention to human rights.²⁹⁹

Negotiations concerning the Final Act lasted twenty-two months after beginning in the summer of 1973. Initially, a final agreement seemed to have been in the works in May 1974, but the Watergate scandal, as well as leadership changes in Europe delayed the completion of the agreement for over a year. The Soviets fought against the inclusion of human rights to the agenda of the CSCE throughout the negotiations, but they ultimately reasoned that Basket III could ultimately be watered down, if they succeeded in pushing through language which asserted that the principles of sovereignty and non-

²⁹⁸ “Jerry, Don’t Go,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 July 1975, p. 14.

²⁹⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 647.

intervention in internal affairs were as valid as those points endorsing human rights. Therefore, for the Soviets, the language which asserted the primacy of sovereignty made any stipulations on human rights moot since they were unenforceable. The Soviets also consistently believed that they were the ones who had won in the negotiations, since the West ultimately acknowledged the Soviet Union's borders and sovereignty. Given the intricacies of political infighting among the thirty-five participants, each of them possessing an equal voice, deliberations over the exact wording of the declaration were painstakingly tedious. In many cases negotiations came to a complete standstill as diplomats engaged in bitter debates over the exact phrasing and translation of a string of words or expression, such as the benefit of "equal applicability" versus "equal validity."³⁰⁰

In spite of these handicaps, the CSCE wrapped up its work in the summer of 1975. The resulting document was not legally binding but nonetheless one that the Soviet Union agreed to uphold in spite of its explicit provisions on human rights. General Secretary Brezhnev gave his agreement to the Final Act on July 31, 1975. "We proceed from the assumption that all countries represented at the Conference will translate into life the understandings that have been reached. As regards to the Soviet Union, this is exactly what it will do."³⁰¹ Meanwhile, for the West, the text of the Helsinki Final Act represented the linkage between human rights and international security. To this effect, the Final Act stated that, "The participating States recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an

³⁰⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 641.

³⁰¹ Leonid I. Brezhnev, "Speech at the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe" in A. L. Adamishin, et al., eds. *From Helsinki to Belgrade: The Soviet Union and the Implementation of the Final Act of the European Conference, Documents and Material* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 31.

essential factor for the peace, justice and wellbeing necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States.”³⁰²

President Ford acknowledged the Final Act’s attention to human rights during his speech in Helsinki, stating, while looking directly at Brezhnev:

To my country these [Basket III principles] are not clichés or empty phrases. We take this work and these words very seriously. We will spare no effort to ease tensions and to solve problems between us. But it is important that you realize the deep devotion of the American people and their Government to human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus to the pledges that this Conference has made regarding the freer movement of people, ideas, information.³⁰³

Despite Ford’s words, and the assurances Brezhnev had given that he would support the terms of the Final Act, the Soviet Union failed to comply. The only means of measuring compliance was up to Soviet human rights activists themselves, as well as members of the American Congress and other policy makers who were determined not to allow the Helsinki Final Act’s promises on human rights “turn out to be a sad footnote in future history books.”³⁰⁴

The Helsinki Final Act and Compliance

Since the Final Act lacked any formal enforcement it was up to activists and policy makers to ensure that each signatory nation lived up to the pledges made in the declaration. There were provisions for review meetings to be held periodically, such as one in Belgrade in 1977 and Madrid in November 1980, but this did not necessarily mean that signatories of the Helsinki Final Act were held accountable if they violated the

³⁰² Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe Final Act, Helsinki, 1975, *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39501?download=true> (accessed: 8 July 2012).

³⁰³ Address by US President Gerald R Ford to the third stage of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Helsinki, 30 July to 1 August 1975, *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, <http://www.osce.org/documents/16090> (accessed Sept. 2, 2012).

³⁰⁴ William Rogers, Speech, 5 July 1973 in Kvass, et al., 228-229.

agreement. Therefore enforcement, or at least monitoring the implementation of the Final Act, was up to the dissidents themselves in the Soviet Union as well as activists and the American Congress, all of whom formed institutions charged with monitoring compliance. Dissidents in the Soviet Union, most notably Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Yuri Orlov, were among the first activists to read the text of the Helsinki Accords and believe that it was possible to form a monitoring commission that would report on and publicize the Soviet government's failure to live up to the principles of human rights it had affirmed in the Final Act. At the same time the Soviet dissidents established what became known as the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group (MHWG), politicians in the United States undertook the formation of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the US Helsinki Commission. The role of the Commission was to research compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and make official recommendations based on its findings that US policy makers would take into account when crafting policy.

The simultaneous creation of such parallel bodies represented the maturation of a dialogue on human rights between the dissidents in the Soviet Union and American policy makers. Scarcely two years before Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick of New Jersey introduced her idea for the US Helsinki Commission; Congress was debating the merits of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Similar to the debate concerning the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, the US Helsinki Commission gave Soviet dissidents the opportunity to testify before the US Congress and make their stories known, becoming a vital tool for the dissidents behind the MHWG in Moscow. To help the US Congress in their deliberations on human rights issues in the Soviet Union, the MHWG published a digest

of infractions on human rights taking place on the Soviet Union, a publication much like *Khronika tekushchikh sobyiy* which came before it, and whose text often became the basis for the research by the US Helsinki Commission. For the Soviet dissidents, the relationship between the MHWG and the US Helsinki Commission became their most powerful connection with the West, offering them the best chance for a genuine change in Soviet policy, just as the Commission viewed itself as the best means of affecting a change in Soviet human rights policy.

Unlike earlier treaties and international agreement, the complete text of the Helsinki Final Act was published in all the Soviet newspapers, an unprecedented move, since traditionally the text of international agreements were only distributed to specialists and never made their way into the popular press. The Soviet government was proud of the document, boasting that the Final Act was a political victory, given its language on the permanence of its borders and sovereignty. But for the Soviet citizens who read the text of the Final Act its promises on “freer of movement,” “human rights,” and “fundamental freedoms” stood in complete contradiction to the reality of everyday life. Activist Ludmilla Alexeyeva noted that the Helsinki Final Act was full of empty guarantees, stating, “I had glanced over the thirty-thousand word document, found the section on human rights, then stopped reading. The section contained some nice promises, but such promises had long ago ceased to impress me.”³⁰⁵

While Alexeyeva found the Final Act as full of empty promises and ineffectual in the long-term struggle for human rights, her colleague and fellow dissident, Yuri Orlov, saw the Final Act as the perfect opportunity to press the Soviet government on the question of human rights. For Orlov, the Final Act was significant because it explicitly

³⁰⁵ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 280.

linked the notion of international security to human rights by making the case that the way a society dealt with the outside world was a reflection of the way it treated its own citizens. According to this logic Orlov believed that the only way to provide international security in a nuclear age was to ensure that the Soviet Union recognized basic human rights, and this could only be accomplished through the West's acceptance and support for the human rights movement there.³⁰⁶ Orlov therefore believed that the Soviet human rights movement had the opportunity to press the outside world into monitoring the Soviet performance on human rights because the Final Act offered human rights guarantees as part of a package alongside assurances on international peace and cooperation.³⁰⁷ For Orlov the West had to become an active participant in the human rights struggle for the sake of international security. Convincing the West was an uphill battle for Orlov given the apprehensiveness Western governments had felt in becoming involved in the Soviet human rights movement. Orlov expressed his frustration over the West's inaction by commenting:

I can't understand why the Western governments don't protest the persecution of human rights activists. Can't they understand that human rights abuses in the USSR present a danger to the West? Haven't they learned any lessons after making a deal with a dictator in Munich in 1939 [*sic.*]? Can't they understand that Soviet dissidents are their natural allies? We have the same ideology, and it's not that we have borrowed it from them; we've come to it on our own.³⁰⁸

Orlov presumed that the West knew the Soviet Union would fail to live up to their promised human rights standards and that the purpose of forming a Helsinki Watch Group would be to "change this 'Munich' approach of the West" that had dominated

³⁰⁶ Orlov, 195.

³⁰⁷ Orlov quoted in Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 280.

³⁰⁸ Orlov quoted in Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 280.

détente.³⁰⁹ He was not alone in believing it was possible to pressure the West into taking action against the Soviet Union on the basis of the Helsinki Accords. Andrei Amalrik argued for the creation of academic “seminars” in both the East and the West that would monitor each nation’s compliance with the Final Act. Amalrik felt that such an international network would prove difficult for the KGB to breakup since it would be intimately tied with similar bodies in the West.³¹⁰ Soviet Jewish activist Natan Shcharansky urged Orlov and Amalrik to proceed, “Let us appeal to the foreign public [...] to form committees for monitoring human rights on the basis of the Final Act. [...] If they do that and it becomes the norm in the West, then after a while we can create the same sort of committee at home with less risk of persecution.”³¹¹ Under the leadership of Yuri Orlov, fellow dissidents Amalrik, Shcharansky, Alexeyeva, and seven other prominent Moscow activists came together to officially organize the MHWG.

The MHWG, which was known officially as the “Public Group to Assist the Implementation of the Helsinki Accord in the USSR,” presented itself as trying to help the Soviet Union in implementing the Final Act. Orlov’s vision for the group was admittedly idealistic. He imagined that outside nations would help play a mediating role between the Soviet state and people, envisioning the participation of citizens from all signatory countries pressuring their governments to abide by the principles expounded by the Final Act.³¹² The mission of the MHWG was to prepare reports on cases of human rights abuse, or any other infraction of the Helsinki Final Act, and distribute them to the Soviet government and the governments of the thirty-four other signatories to the Final

³⁰⁹ Orlov, 194.

³¹⁰ Goldberg, *The Final Act*, 36-37.

³¹¹ Orlov, 188.

³¹² Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, *The Moscow Helsinki Monitors: Their Vision, Their Achievement, The Price They Paid, May 12, 1976- May 12, 1986* (New York: The U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee, 1986), 2.

Act. As Alexeyeva put it, this documentation of Soviet violations of the Final Act “would use the governments of the West to force our own government into dialogue with us.”³¹³ The idea behind the MHWG was not unique, since it had been tried before. For instance, the MHWG included many of the very same activists who had been participants in the dissident movement since the 1966 trial of Andrei Sinyavskii and Yuli Daniel. These were also the same people who had written *Khronika tekushchikh sobytiy*, which similarly attempted to reach out to the West in order to change Soviet policy. According to Alexeyeva though, the main difference between the MHWG and efforts that came before was the fact that the Helsinki Final Act gave the dissidents a new focus, one which made it possible for politicians in the West to understand what the dissidents wanted.³¹⁴

According to historian Joshua Rubenstein, this new post-Helsinki focus which meant reaching out to the West and using the text of the Helsinki Final Act as a means of protesting Soviet policy, allowed for the various strains of dissent within the Soviet Union to come together and fight for a common cause under the universalistic emblem of “human rights.”³¹⁵ The dissident movement’s Helsinki connection pushed dissidents of all types, whether they were intellectuals, Jewish, Crimean Tatar, Seventh Day Adventist, or any others, to put forward a common political program advertised under the internationally palatable framework of human rights. In an unprecedented fashion, the MHWG united the disparate nationalist and religious dissident voices under what Rubenstein termed the “common vocabulary” of human rights.³¹⁶ This blanket term of

³¹³ “Ob obrazovanii obshchestvennoi gruppi sodeistviia vipolneniiu khelsinkskikh soglashenii v SSSR” in D. I. Zybaryev and G. B. Kuzovkin eds. *Dokumenti Moskovskoi Khelsinkskoi Gruppi, 1976-1982* (Moskva: Moskovskaya Khelsinskaya Gruppy, 2006), 23; Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 281.

³¹⁴ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 283.

³¹⁵ Rubenstein, 228.

³¹⁶ Rubenstein, 228.

human rights gave the MHWG the ability to tackle a wide variety of issues that it argued concerned human rights. Such issues included the fate of imprisoned Crimean Tatar activist Mustafa Dzhemilev, the KGB's examination of activists' mail, the treatment of psychological prisoners, the persecution of Pentecostal religious groups, and Jewish emigration. The ability of the MHWG to engage in these issues was also made possible by the loose structure of the organization. It accentuated the universal nature of their human rights agenda while making it difficult for the Soviet authorities to arrest all its members. The MHWG, in the words of Alexeyeva, "lacked structure," meaning there was no voting, no application to join, no procedures, and no need to reach a consensus on every issue.³¹⁷ The documents the group created also never required a consensus. Obliging every member of the group to agree and vote on a document and its language would have slowed down the entire process and hampered the group's mission of publishing as many documents as possible. Therefore only those members who signed a particular document were responsible for its content. Each document written by the MHWG was scholarly in nature and addressed a specific article in the Final Act that was violated. Orlov noted that each document was "scrupulously accurate, deliberately academic, even pedantic in tone, and focused precisely on specific violations of the Helsinki Accords."³¹⁸ Such an approach did not require the group to put forth its own set of political beliefs, since its members argued that it merely sought to report violations of human rights in the Soviet Union regardless of their origins. For example many of the

³¹⁷ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 281.

³¹⁸ Orlov, 196.

reports produced by the group dealt with the persecution of religious groups notwithstanding the fact that many of the group's members were not religious.³¹⁹

The MHWG could not be a success unless its efforts received attention from Western policy makers. In spite of what was perceived as an overall failing of the Helsinki Final Act in coaxing the Soviet Union to shift course on human rights, dissident Andrei Amalrik argued that the one success of the Final Act in the Soviet Union was the formation of the MHWG, which drew the attention of the West to violations of human rights in the Soviet Union. As Amalrik wrote in his assessment of the Final Act a year after its passage,

The successful work of this group [MHWG] and its sympathizers could gradually force the USSR to fulfill the obligations it undertook. Therefore the attitudes of the Soviet authorities and the West to this group will be an indication of how seriously each takes Helsinki. It is in the West's own interests to help this group, as well as the Movement for Human Rights in the USSR in their struggle to democratize the Soviet system and to turn it into a more open and less aggressive society.³²⁰

For Amalrik and the other members of the MHWG, their success was in fact limited by the receptiveness of the West to their struggle. Like Orlov, Amalrik confessed his frustration with the West's reluctance to take action on human rights, writing that the West "fusses over the USSR continually, as over a spoiled child," adding that the West "is afraid to 'offend' Soviet leaders even slightly, saying that they will 'become obstinate', 'become worse', and so on. Sometimes the West loses any kind of moral yardstick."³²¹

For the dissidents, their most loyal, if not occasionally fickle allies remained the Western news correspondents. They made it possible for them to get their message out,

³¹⁹ Fitzpatrick, 7.

³²⁰ Andrei Amalrik, "One Year After Helsinki," in *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*, 121.

³²¹ Andrei Amalrik, "One Year After Helsinki," in *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*, 124.

especially once the American embassy had banned its diplomatic personnel from maintaining personal relationships with the locals. The MHWG aggressively encouraged the participation of foreign news journalists in their movement by artfully arranging the public release of their documents and information through staging elaborate press conferences with members of the Western media. These news conferences were held as often as once a week and came staffed with interpreters, and plenty of onion-skin copies of MHWG's documents and statements for the Western press.³²² Alexeyeva concluded that the MHWG and issues related to human rights in the USSR must have been receiving constant coverage in the West judging from the attendance at their press conferences.³²³ Not only was the West paying attention to the issues faced by Soviet dissidents, but many of MHWG press conferences were broadcast back to the Soviet Bloc countries by Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, and the Voice of America as a means of spreading the news of the group's existence and actions.³²⁴

Western journalists were not only professionally involved in the lives of the dissidents, but many were often their personal friends as well. George Krimsky of the Associate Press (AP) was mentioned by Andrei Sakharov as being one of the few journalists with whom he had developed a personal relationship.³²⁵ Similarly many other journalists reported being invited to stay with Russian dissidents in their summer dachas. Such friendship was not uncommon between the dissidents and the American press. They were naturally attracted to each other based on their shared desire for the freedom of movement and the freedom of speech. Similarly the Western press and the Soviet

³²² Osnos, 34.

³²³ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 284.

³²⁴ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 284.

³²⁵ Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 459.

dissidents formed a symbiotic relationship, where foreign news correspondents sought out the dissident's stories as great material to report back home, while the dissidents sought out the foreign press as a medium through which to send their message abroad and to evade arrest (see Chapter 1). It was therefore not at all uncommon for American correspondents to receive threats very similar to those the dissidents did, in some cases being subjected to random arrest and harassment. It was during a trip by Krinsky and his family to Sakharov's dacha that the police had burst in and dragged Krinsky to the police station under the pretext that the AP journalist had entered a zone excluded to foreigners.³²⁶ Similarly, journalist Emil Sveilis, who opened the first United Press International bureau in Leningrad, recounted how he once left to meet a dissident friend, parking his Zhiguli car near two militiamen on duty at the hotel Astoria where he was to meet his contact. After his meeting, Sveilis drove off in his Zhiguli, only to notice that the steering wheel was not turning correctly. He pulled over to discover his front tires had been replaced by completely bald ones screwed on by a single bolt, meaning as soon as he would have turned, he would have lost his tires and likely driven into one of Leningrad's canals.³²⁷ Krinsky's and Sveilis's stories are far from unique among foreign news correspondents working in Moscow who befriended the dissidents and made them a major subject in their news reports. Given these close relationships, the Soviet authorities monitored the correspondents closely and suspected many of them of having ties to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These suspicions focused particularly on Krymski, Christopher Wren of *The New York Times*, and *Newsweek's* Alfred Friendly.³²⁸ Despite the allegations and the repeated threats, many Western journalists continued their

³²⁶ Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 459-60.

³²⁷ Bassow, 276-277.

³²⁸ Bassow, 267-268.

friendship with the members of the MHWG. Many journalists had come to believe that they were involved in much the same fight as the dissidents and that they were performing a worthy cause by making the West aware of them.

Besides providing friendship and a receptive audience to the dissidents, the journalists also provided them with access to American politicians and policy makers. It was Christopher Wren who made it possible for Valentine Turchin, a member of the MHWG and the head of the Moscow Chapter of Amnesty International, to first meet Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick, the Congresswoman behind the idea for the US Helsinki Commission.³²⁹ Fenwick, a first-term Congresswoman from New Jersey, was the least senior participant of a nineteen member US Congressional delegation led by House Speaker Carl Albert that traveled to Yugoslavia, Romania, and the Soviet Union in August 1975, just after President Ford had signed the Helsinki Final Act. The Congresswoman was most interested in meeting genuine Russians, and her enthusiasm for doing so could hardly be contained by the more seasoned members of the delegation. During a reception at the American Embassy, Fenwick discussed the dissidents with Wren, who was friends with many of them. Wren agreed to take the Congresswoman the next day to a meeting he had planned with Turchin. In an experience Fenwick later remarked as being out of “a spy movie,” Wren drove the Congresswoman to Turchin’s modest Moscow apartment.³³⁰ Also attending this meeting between Turchin, Wren, and Fenwick was Yuri Orlov, who used the occasion to raise the prospect of cooperation between the Soviet human rights movement and US policy makers on the basis of Basket

³²⁹ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 283.

³³⁰ Amy Schapiro, *Millicent Fenwick: Her Way* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 168-169.

III of the Helsinki Final Act.³³¹ Orlov also presented Fenwick with a document entitled “An Appeal to the United States Congressmen.” It discussed the conditions experienced by political prisoners. It included fifteen demands, some of which asked for the abolition of forced labor camps, torture, and restrictions on mail.

Besides meeting with Turchin and Orlov, Fenwick also held an audience with many other dissidents during her short stay in the Soviet Union, many of whom traveled to meet with the Congresswoman at her Moscow hotel. Fenwick explained:

We would meet them [the dissidents] at night at hotels in Moscow and Leningrad [...] I would ask them, ‘How do you dare to come see us here?’ ‘Don’t you understand?’ they would say. ‘That’s our only hope. We’ve seen you. Now the KGB knows you’ve seen us.’ I felt, my God, it’s like being in the Atlantic in the middle of a terrible storm, and seeing people go by in rafts, and we are trying to pick them up, but can’t. But at least we have our searchlights on them.³³²

In particular Fenwick was deeply moved by the story of Lilia Roitburd, a *refusnik* with an “ashen face” and “tiny ravaged eyes.” Roitburd, between tears, confided to the Congresswoman about the plight of her family following her husband’s application for an exit visa to Israel, a story Fenwick acknowledged brought her to tears and gave her nightmares years later.³³³ Meeting with these dissidents left a lasting impression on the Congresswoman, who on her last day in Moscow met with Brezhnev, and asked the Soviet leader to look into specific cases of human rights abuse. The Soviet leader later commented that Fenwick was “obsessed” about the issue.³³⁴

Shortly after returning to Washington from her trip to the Soviet Union, Fenwick introduced her idea of a Helsinki monitoring commission in H.R. 9466, a bill that would authorize the creation of the US Helsinki Commission to monitor compliance with the

³³¹ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 283.

³³² Millicent Fenwick quoted in Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 283.

³³³ Schapiro, 170.

³³⁴ Schapiro, 168.

Final Act. Fenwick, like many others, was concerned that the Final Act conceded too much to the Soviets, and reasoned that a commission tasked with monitoring compliance with the Final Act could help hold the Soviet government accountable. Fenwick envisioned that her Helsinki monitoring commission would consist of six members from the House, six from the Senate, and three members of the executive branch, one each from the Commerce, State, and Defense Departments. The Commission would undertake the investigation of allegations of human rights abuses and publish periodic reports on compliance, as well as respond to Congressional requests for information. Fenwick imagined that a record which documented violations of the Helsinki Final Act would be necessary so Congress would have documentation at hand before making decisions concerning trade, international copyright laws, or any other similar agreements with the Soviet Union or any other signatories of the Helsinki Final Act.³³⁵

Fenwick's motivation for advocating the creation of the US Helsinki Commission stemmed from her sense of moral outrage at the treatment of the Soviet dissidents she encountered. Fenwick stated of her experience in Moscow that, "I went to Russia with a delegation from the House of Representatives and, for me, a somewhat distant and theoretical exercise in international diplomacy became a dramatically present and personal issue."³³⁶ Fenwick was not alone in coming to the conclusion that the United States could do more to safeguard and protect the dissidents. Representative Joshua Eilberg of Pennsylvania, after returning from a similar trip to the Soviet Union in June 1975, argued that the United States should come to the aid of the dissidents, dismissing

³³⁵ Representative Millicent Fenwick, Congress, House, Subcommittee on International Political and Military Affairs of the Committee of International Relations, *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 94th Cong., 1st sess. : 12.

³³⁶ Millicent Fenwick, *Speaking Up* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 161.

the Administration's détente policy as detrimental to relations with the Soviet Union and the dissidents. Eilberg stated that because of what he heard from speaking with the dissidents, "[I]t is my firm belief that persons who claim we are hurting the cause of the people who are trying to leave Russia by publicly supporting them as a group or individually are wrong. Everything we do, including putting restrictions in the trade bill is an asset to their cause."³³⁷ In a similar fashion to Congressman Eilberg, Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman of New York projected the way she believed a changed American policy would benefit the Soviet dissidents, particularly in allowing the *refusniks* the right to emigrate. Holtzman stated, "I am convinced [...] that if there is to be any freedom of emigration in the Soviet Union, and if those who have sought to emigrate are to be protected from cruel penalties, it can only come about through United States pressure. [...] In fact we were told time and time by Soviet citizens that without continued American pressure the situation is very grim."³³⁸ Overall this group of congressmen who traveled to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1975 concluded from their meetings with the dissidents that they most of all wanted Western attention, and not to be forgotten by the West.³³⁹

These trips to the Soviet Union to meet with the dissidents, much like the debate over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, made Congress increasingly active in matters relating to human rights. For many of these politicians, the story of the dissidents was simple and compelling, filling the role of the noble freedom fighters going up against the

³³⁷ Joshua Eilberg in RG 59 General Records of the Department of State: Office of the Deputy Secretary. Office of the Coordinator for Human Rights. Human Rights Subject Files, 1975. Box 1: Human Rights – Advisory Committee on Voluntary to Human Rights – General Folder: Human Rights – Congressional: Statement of Joshua Eilberg on Trip to Russia, 5 June 1975, NARA.

³³⁸ Elizabeth Holtzman in *Ibid.*

³³⁹ Summary of Press Conference of Congressman Eilberg and other members of the subcommittee on immigration and their visit to the Soviet Union, Rayburn Building, June 5, 1975 in *Ibid.*

evil Soviet Empire. The story of the plight of the dissidents in the Soviet Union had just as much appeal for America's politicians as it did for America's journalists. Many congressmen bought into the dissident's rhetoric and campaigned on their behalf in America, raising the issue especially during the 1976 election, where candidates running for both Congress and the Presidency criticized the incumbent Ford's Soviet policy. In particular, Democratic Presidential candidate, Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia, capitalized on the unpopularity of the President's Soviet policy by going so far as to dispatch campaign advisor Eleanor Holmes Norton to Moscow to meet with Andrei Sakharov and other dissidents in order to learn their situation and demonstrate the Governor's dedication to promoting a foreign policy based on human rights.³⁴⁰

Fenwick's, and many others, sense of moral outrage in coming to the aid of the Soviet dissidents drew the ire of Secretary of State Kissinger. He took the view that Fenwick's proposed commission would further damage Soviet relations based on its insistence on human rights. Kissinger also believed that the US Helsinki Commission represented an unprecedented intrusion of Congress into the executive branch's autonomy over foreign affairs. As a result of Kissinger's position, many in the State Department refused to participate in Fenwick's Commission, lobbying Congress not to pass the legislation.³⁴¹ Despite Kissinger's criticism, President Ford was receptive to the idea of the US Helsinki Commission, conceding years later in an interview with Fenwick's biographer, Amy Schapiro, that the idea had some merit. Ford told Schapiro, "Having signed the accord I felt it was absolutely essential to proceed with the review process. If we were going to implement the Helsinki Accords we were going to have to

³⁴⁰ American Embassy Moscow to Secretary of State, October 1976. RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, P-Reels 1976, NARA.

³⁴¹ Goldberg, *The Final Act*, 59-61.

monitor it.”³⁴² President Ford therefore quietly, and with a small audience in attendance, signed the bill authorizing the creation of the Commission on June 3, 1976. Ford’s quiet approval of the legislation was done so as not to draw attention to the fact that the administration had consistently opposed the Commission.³⁴³ Without coincidence, Congress passed the legislation authorizing the creation of the US Helsinki Commission the same day in May 1976 Fenwick informed her colleagues in the House that the MHWG had been formed to carry out the function of reporting violations of the Helsinki Final Act.

The human rights movement in the Soviet Union hailed the achievement of Congresswoman Fenwick in establishing the US Helsinki Commission. The founding of the Commission came as a pleasant surprise to Yuri Orlov, who saw it as an incredible coincidence that an American Congresswoman he had met the previous summer had formed a monitoring commission with similar aims as Orlov’s MHWG.³⁴⁴ In September 1976, Orlov wrote a letter to Fenwick, informing the Congresswoman that the MHWG would send their findings and reports directly to her commission for review.³⁴⁵ Despite the hard work of the US Helsinki Commission, Alexeyeva conceded that it would ultimately be futile in forcing the Soviet Union into real change. “Save for a novel commission started by an eccentric congresswoman, the West seemed unlikely to respond to the pleas of the Helsinki group.”³⁴⁶ When Alexeyeva was forced into exile in the United States in 1977, she could not help but comment how ignorant people in Washington were of the dissident movement. “The words ‘dissident’ and ‘refusnik’ were

³⁴² President Gerald Ford, 30 August 2001, quoted in Schapiro, 175.

³⁴³ Schapiro, 175.

³⁴⁴ Goldberg, *The Final Act*, 63.

³⁴⁵ Goldberg, *The Final Act*, 63-64.

³⁴⁶ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 284.

being used interchangeably, and some otherwise knowledgeable people naturally assumed that most dissidents were Jewish and that the human rights movement was an offshoot of the Jewish movement.”³⁴⁷ Despite the greatest of intentions in founding the US Helsinki Commission, many American policy makers still lacked an adequate understanding of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union.

³⁴⁷ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 302.

CONCLUSION & EPILOGUE

By the late 1970s the Soviet human rights movement seemed to have become very much dependent on its relationship with the United States, as actions taken in America were often reflected one way or another on the dissident movement.³⁴⁸ The US Helsinki Commission laid the groundwork for further American involvement and interest in the dissident movement that nonetheless proved to be ineffective. This was especially the case after the election of Jimmy Carter as President in November 1976, who ran against the Nixon/Ford-Kissinger policy of détente by championing human rights as the most essential component of America's new foreign policy. Carter's support for human rights was made clear in his January 20, 1977 inaugural address by stating:

Because we are free, we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. Our moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights. We do not seek to intimidate, but it is clear that a world which others can dominate with impunity would be inhospitable to decency and a threat to the well-being of all people.³⁴⁹

Despite Carter's commitment to human rights, his rhetoric was bound by the tough reality on the ground, and his administration proved unable to intervene on behalf of the dissident movement when it needed direct American assistance.

Initially many of the dissidents welcomed Carter's challenge to détente. Alexeyeva discussed how this change in American policy towards a human rights focus was first made possible by the passage of Fenwick's Helsinki monitoring Commission and then cemented by Carter's election, writing that with the election of a new American President, "Our most optimistic projections now seemed within reach: it appeared likely

³⁴⁸ Hodgman, 335.

³⁴⁹ Jimmy Carter's Inaugural Address, 20 January 1977, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=6575> (accessed: 28 October 2012).

that the new US foreign policy would include insistence that the Soviets live up to the promises made in Helsinki. The alliance of Western politicians and Soviet dissidents was starting to emerge.”³⁵⁰ But 1977 proved to be a challenging year for the dissident movement, despite the new American President. In early January, the KGB raided the apartments of several of the MHWG’s members, including Orlov’s. A few days later on January 8, 1977, a bomb exploded in the Moscow Metro, killing several people, an act of terrorism the Soviet government blamed on the dissident movement.³⁵¹ Given the harrowing situation faced by the Soviet dissidents at the beginning of 1977, Andrei Sakharov composed a letter to President Carter, appealing for his help and urging the President to be steadfast in his resolve to support human rights in the Soviet Union. The President responded to Sakharov two weeks later, thanking him for his letter and reiterating the commitment to human rights he had made during his inaugural address. Sakharov was impressed with the new President’s dedication to human rights and his strong sense of morality, commenting that it was “striking” that “the head of a great power had announced an unambiguous commitment to the international defense of human rights.”³⁵² But Sakharov further believed that the President’s inconsistent policies proved fatal for the Soviet dissidents. In particular, Sakharov criticized the President’s slow response to crises, and lack of following through with regard to human rights cases. Sakharov argued that this inconsistency allowed Soviet leaders to believe that Carter was “manageable,” permitting the Soviets to take advantage of any opportunity to arrest and repress the dissidents.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation*, 288-289.

³⁵¹ Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 462-463.

³⁵² Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 464-465.

³⁵³ Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 464-465, 470.

In spite of America's commitment towards human rights in the Soviet Union, through President Carter and the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and US Helsinki Commission that preceded his election, the dissident movement was thoroughly crushed by the early 1980s. Orlov, followed by all the other members of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group were arrested one after the other. In fact a letter Orlov received from Congressman Dante Fascel, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations as well as the US Helsinki Commission, was cited as evidence that the human rights movement was taking its marching orders from the American Government, with the Soviets alleging a conspiracy involving the MHWG and the US Helsinki Commission.³⁵⁴ Many of the dissidents, such as Orlov, Alexeyeva, and Sakharov, ended up abroad with their citizenship taken away. In October 1977 a new Constitution came into effect in the Soviet Union, which contained numerous references to the very democratic rights the dissidents were striving for such as the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly among other democratic rights.³⁵⁵ Much like Basket III of the Helsinki Final Act, the democratic provisions of the 1977 Constitution were treated insincerely by the Soviet government. The delineation of these democratic rights nevertheless gave the Soviet dissidents more confidence to challenge the Soviet government to live up to the rule of its own law.

In several respects, this dialogue on human rights may not have been much of a dialogue at all since American politicians could not in reality help the dissidents despite their best of intentions. The drive of American policy makers to come to the help of the

³⁵⁴ Resolution of the Secretariat of the CC CPSU, "On Measures for the Curtailment of the Criminal Activities of Orlov, Ginsburg, Rudenko and Ventslova," January 20, 1977, *The National Security Archive: The Moscow Helsinki Watch Group 30th Anniversary – From the Secret Files*, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB191/KGB%2001-20-1977.pdf> (accessed 1 Dec. 2012). (hereafter *NSA*, with web page title and link); Orlov, 219.

³⁵⁵ Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, October 1977.

Soviet dissidents really was motivated both by idealism and the political opportunism that supporting human rights represented. This was particularly appealing in the American domestic political environment that followed the raucous nature of the 1960s and 1970s, which included the Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements, the Vietnam War, and the Watergate scandal. In this environment the noble support for human rights in the Soviet Union made sense. In addition some elected officials used the dissident issue for the purpose of advancing their own political agenda by challenging détente.

Given the polemical temptations posed by the issue of human rights for American foreign policy, it seemed that this dialogue forged between the Moscow dissident movement and American politicians proved damaging to the dissidents. This was especially true since the Soviet government was able to capitalize on the increasing closeness between the movement and the West to push forward with the mass arrest and exile of the Soviet human rights leaders. Despite these arrests, the human rights rhetoric used by both the West and the dissidents did succeed in accomplishing the limited short-term objectives of both groups. American policy makers succeeded in being reelected or in satisfying their moral sense in helping the Soviet dissidents, while forcing the Soviets to accede to some minor concessions. Similarly, the Soviet human rights activists became international celebrities, with a captive audience in the West. The Soviet human rights movement also succeeded in consolidating several different strains of dissent under the umbrella of human rights, creating a new political network where none existed before. This alignment with the West also allowed for the temporary protection of some Soviet dissidents from KGB arrest and seizure, but it did not save the movement, since the American government was in fact powerless to force regime change in the Soviet

Union, or to prevent the Soviet government from crushing the movement, when it was challenged during Carter's Presidency.

The dialogue on human rights launched by American news journalists in Moscow conflated a rather small group of dissident into something much larger, ultimately resulting in the destruction of the Soviet human rights movement. This process began with the American journalists in the late 1960s, for whom the dissident movement satisfied their and the broader American public's desire to find a moral cause to fight for during the Cold War. *Washington Post* correspondent Peter Osnos summed up this perspective best in writing that the “[d]issidents in the Soviet Union say what most Americans want – and expect – to hear about the evils of communism. Excessive dependence on them, however, creates a picture of that complex country as oversimplified in a way as Soviet reports about the United States being a land of a little more than poverty, violence, corruption, and racism.”³⁵⁶ This close relationship between the Western journalists and the Soviet dissidents was also cited by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CC CPSU) as justification for arresting the dissidents in January 1977:

According to our data, accredited Moscow correspondents from the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, England, France and Italy are persistently encouraging the leaders of the anti-Soviet movement to use such methods as “addresses” to the governments of various countries, containing vile slander of Soviet life, “press conferences,” and open protests against the projects of the Soviet Union in their anti-Soviet activities.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Osnos, 36.

³⁵⁷ Resolution of the Secretariat of the CC CPSU, “On Measures for the Curtailment of the Criminal Activities of Orlov, Ginsburg, Rudenko and Ventslova,” January 20, 1977, *NSA: The Moscow Helsinki Watch Group 30th Anniversary – From the Secret Files*, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB191/KGB%2001-20-1977.pdf> (accessed 1 Dec. 2012).

The dissident movement truly was then, as Andrei Sakharov wrote, “a moral and not a pragmatic undertaking,” that for many American policy makers satisfied their need for a more moral and just foreign policy that was lacking in détente.³⁵⁸

In spite of all these arrests in the late 1970s, the Soviet human rights movement laid the groundwork for reforms which would take hold a decade later. After the unsuccessful and short reigns of Brezhnev’s successors, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, the Soviet leadership chose the much younger Mikhail Gorbachev to lead the nation. Gorbachev, and others who came to power in the late 1980s, hailed from the Alexeyeva’s “thaw generation,” much like many of the dissidents. These leaders were touched by the same events which defined the lives of the dissidents, such as the beginning and end of the Second World War, the death of Stalin, and Khrushchev’s Secret Speech.³⁵⁹ Alexeyeva optimistically opined in 1987 while working for Radio Liberty that, “Gorbachev defines ‘*perestroika*’ as the ‘acceleration of socio-economic development.’ Not only this general formula, but the specific measures in the socio-economic sphere are measures taken from the arsenal of liberals and social-democrats.”³⁶⁰ Gorbachev’s program of *perestroika* therefore encompassed some of the very rights the human rights movement had been fighting for, though only a decade later.

³⁵⁸ Sakharov, *Memoirs*, 386.

³⁵⁹ Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*, 23-24.

³⁶⁰ Lyudmila Alexeyeva, and Yuri Orlov, ed. “Documents and People, ‘What Gorbachev took from samizdat,’” *NSA: The Alexeyeva File – Soviet, American, and Russian Documents on the Human Rights Legend*, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/402660-33-gorbachev-samizdat.html> (accessed: 1 Dec. 2012).

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