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THE DISSIDENTS V. MOSCOW

Whenever a Soviet dissident picks up his telephone, he can be sure that the KGB has either bugged it or disconnected it. So it was last week that in a tiny Moscow apartment, a tall, stooped man of 55 bundled himself into his worn overcoat and ratty fur hat, walked down seven flights of stairs and made his way through a noontime snowstorm to a public phone booth. It was by now a familiar routine for Andrei Sakharov, foremost builder of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, winner of the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize and leader of the Russian human rights movement. On that day, a friend had brought a report of yet another arrest, and it was Sakharov's self-imposed duty to inform Western journalists, who would tell the world.

In a tremulous voice, Sakharov spoke of the imprisonment of his close friend and collaborator, Physicist Yuri Orlov, 52. A diminutive man with a shock of red hair, Orlov is chief of the unofficial eleven-member Helsinki monitoring committee, which keeps close watch on Soviet compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki agreement. A member of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, he had devoted himself in the past year to organizing the Helsinki group in Moscow and other cities.

Orlov's arrest was part of an intense human and political drama that involved the Soviet Union, other European Communist countries and parties, the U.S., the Western press and countless known as well as obscure subjects of Communist rule. Each of the participants was sometimes an instigator, sometimes a pawn.

The Kremlin had been startled and angered by a series of sharp Carter Administration criticisms of Soviet and Czechoslovak treatment of dissidents. The State Department warned Moscow that continual harassment of Andrei Sakharov conflicted with "accepted international standards of human rights." This was followed by a more moderate statement of support from Jimmy Carter. The Russians evidently decided that they could not ignore comments that they regarded as provocative, and that seemed to signal a new and tougher approach to Soviet-American relations. As if to test the U.S. resolve, the KGB arrested Dissident Alexander Ginzburg in a telephone booth. Hours later the Kremlin ordered the expulsion of George Krimsky, a Russian-speaking American reporter for the Associated Press who had been zealous in covering dissident activities. In swift retaliation, the U.S. State Department deported a Washington-based Tass correspondent (TIME, Feb. 14). This brought a response with a touch of Soviet surrealism worthy of Orwell or even Lewis Carroll. The Russians denounced the U.S. for failure to adhere to the provisions of the Helsinki agreement.

Ginzburg's arrest again prompted Carter to issue a statement of regret. The Russians next picked up Orlov—whether in response to Carter or simply because of Orlov's activities is not clear.

The KGB also raided the apartment of Mykola Rudenko, head of the Helsinki group's Kiev chapter. The agents trashed the contents of Rudenko's flat and stripped his wife naked to humiliate her. Rudenko and Oleska Tykhy, a committee member from the city of Donetsk, were then hauled off to Ukrainian prisons.

Commenting on last week's arrests,

Sakharov told TIME Moscow Bureau Chief Marsh Clark that he attributed the wave of repression to a Soviet attempt to "blackmail" Carter into silence on the human rights issue. Soviet Exile Andrei Amalrik told TIME Correspondent David Aikman in Holland that "the Soviet Union wants to see how tough Carter is."

The situation is somewhat more complicated. The dissidents have indeed become a significant issue between Moscow and Washington, at the very moment that both sides are trying to get arms-control efforts back on the track. But the Russians are also beset by other serious problems at home and abroad. The Soviet and East European economies are strained, Soviet influence in the Middle East continues to decline, and the "victory" of pro-Russian forces in Angola is proving a mixed blessing, because it has led to a new American concern about Soviet expansionism. Besides, a specter is haunting Europe—the specter of Euro-Communism, which proclaims itself independent of Moscow and professes all kinds of liberal and even democratic heresies.

On top of all that, the dissident movement is turning from an embarrassment into a potentially serious problem. It exists not only in the Soviet Union but all over Eastern Europe, where it is not simply a protest against Communist totalitarian practices but a nationalistic protest against Soviet colonial rule.

In Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland and even some of the less volatile satellites, the Russians and their local rulers are being forced to put out brushfires of discontent. The East Europeans are issuing declarations of support for sympathizers abroad and criticizing their regimes on economic, political and moral grounds. Moscow thus faces its most serious troubles in Eastern Europe since 1968 (though now not nearly as severe), when the outbreak of "liberalism" in Czechoslovakia was put down by Soviet invasion.

Who are the dissidents? In Russia, there are only a handful, mostly intellectuals, writers and professionals who have achieved some success and even distinction. In the vast Soviet Union, with its 257 million population, Sakharov estimates that between 2,000 and 10,000 dissidents are "prisoners of conscience"; it is impossible to say how many others are still free. They are despised or regarded with suspicion or indifference by most of the population. Their significance does not lie in their numbers, but in the fact that they were driven to protest in the first place—and that their rulers are not sure how to cope with them. The world knows that the Soviet

Union is a police state; what is surprising is not that dissidents are repressed but that they have as much relative freedom as they do.

They are jailed, confined in mental institutions, harassed in a dozen ways, ranging from merely annoying to brutal. But Soviet dissidents call press conferences, circulate forbidden books and manuscripts, bombard Washington, Paris and the Vatican with their protests. As soon as one of their number is arrested, wives, children and friends set up a clamor. Sakharov is almost a tourist attraction in Moscow, and regularly receives foreign newsmen. None of this would have been conceivable under Stalin.

Why do the Soviets tolerate the dissidents to the extent that they do? "What alternative do the authorities have?" says one prominent critic, Anatoli Shchransky. "To take more direct measures against us would be to return to the days of Stalin and that they don't want. They are interested in Western opinion and in detente and in good economic relations, and most of the present leaders are the very men who survived Stalin. World opinion is what keeps us going, what keeps us alive." Mass terror was ended after Stalin's death, but no one doubts that if the dissident movement were ever to become a serious threat to Communist rule, the Kremlin would crack down with full force.

Part of the Soviet dilemma stems from the Helsinki agreement, which many at first regarded as a victory for Moscow because it supposedly established the "inviolability" of existing frontiers, thus legitimizing the Soviet takeover of the Baltic states and the status quo in Eastern Europe. The agreement also contained broad humanitarian declarations in favor of the right of people to leave and enter countries on family visits, access to foreign publications, international youth meetings, and the improvement of working conditions for journalists abroad. Moscow presumably saw nothing too threatening in those principles. After all, far more specific rights are guaranteed in the Soviet-constitution, such as freedom of worship, of the press and of assembly—and those rights have been flouted for 60 years in the U.S.S.R.

But libertarians in the U.S.S.R. and other Communist countries were taking Helsinki seriously—or acting as if they were. According to a tale that has been repeated with local variations in virtually every Communist country in Europe, a grandmother goes to the police station in Pinsk and requests permission to visit her sister in The Bronx. The policeman just shakes his head. The old lady then pulls out of her string shopping bag the tattered pages from Pravda reproducing the text of the Helsinki agreement. "It says here, young man, on page 3, section A—Contacts and Regular Meetings on the Basis of Family Ties—that I can go, and it's signed by Comrade Brezhnev!" Replies the policeman: "Babushka, this is Pinsk, not Helsinki."

Still, a limited number of trips abroad have been won by just such

determined effrontery. On a larger scale, would-be reformers in the Soviet Union and East Europe have used the Communist governments' ratification of Helsinki as a lever to press for liberalization on many fronts, such as censorship and immigration—with scant success. The Kremlin and the other East bloc regimes have no intention of permitting the free flow of ideas and people that Helsinki calls for.

Embarrassingly for Moscow, under the terms of the Helsinki agreement, the Soviets must submit next summer to a review in Belgrade of their observance of its provisions. Sitting in judgment will be not a little group of Russian dissidents but representatives of the 34 other nations who signed the accord. Moscow and the other East European capitals are apparently trying to put down the current wave of dissent before the meeting.

The Soviet leaders could have chosen to crack down on any number of the U.S.S.R.'s many dissenting groups—religious, political or ethnic—against which criminal cases are always in preparation. But the activities of the Helsinki monitoring committee—one of many such self-appointed groups that have sprung up around the world—pose a serious political threat.

There is an inherent contradiction between some of the freedom promulgated at Helsinki and the cast of the Soviet legal system. Dissidents are often tried under catch-all laws against "the dissemination of anti-Soviet propaganda." This charge has been used to apply to the lending of a book about John F. Kennedy as well as to a demonstration against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in Red Square. The crime of "hooliganism" can also be defined in any number of useful ways, and a guilty charge can result in a prison term of one to five years. How severely these handy laws are applied depends on the prevailing political climate.

At the same time, the Soviets deny they have any political prisoners. Those charged under the "anti-Soviet propaganda" laws are often described in the press as layabouts, drunks, dope fiends and common criminals, especially if the case has been publicized in the Western press. Last week Poet Alexander Ginzburg, whose arrest Carter deplored at his press conference, was not only accused of possessing subversive literature but was also characterized by Tass as a sponger and an inveterate profiteer in stolen icons. The agency also declared that large sums of foreign money had been found in his apartment. Before his arrest Ginzburg charged that plainclothesmen had planted some foreign currency behind the toilet, then produced it as evidence later.

Since the dissidents' heyday in the early 1960s, the government policy of selective terror has sent many troublemakers to prison camps and KGB-run lunatic asylums. The latter are particularly fearsome. Two longtime "patients" who are now in the West have described the treatment. Vladimir Bukovsky told of the "roll-up": wet canvas is wrapped tight around the victim and then allowed to dry, causing excruciating pain. Leonid Plyushch told TIME Correspondent Sandy Burton in Paris last week about the treatment of prisoners who go on hunger strikes. They are force-fed with boiling liquids that are poured into their gullets. The tube is often jammed into the mouth by breaking the patient's teeth.

In his moving plea to Jimmy Carter last month, Sakharov detailed the plight of 15 political prisoners in the Soviet Union. Some, like Valentyn Moroz, the Ukrainian historian, have become causes célèbres. Others were more obscure; for example, Pyotr Ruban, a craftsman, was sentenced to eight years in a work camp and five more in exile for having carved out of wood a Bicentennial book cover honoring America's 200th birthday. In his talks with Correspondent Clark in the past two crisis-ridden weeks, Sakharov expressed his fears for his close friend, Biologist Sergei Kovalev, who is at present serving a seven-year sentence and who will die of cancer unless an

operation can be arranged outside the camps. Sakharov has twice written to the Minister of the Interior and has received no reply. As for Alexander Ginzburg and Mykola Rudenko, Sakharov is afraid they will die in prison, since both are very ill.

The pattern of persecution is usually inconsistent and unpredictable — largely because of sheer bureaucratic inefficiency. Those who are not put away are openly harassed in their homes and on the street. Foreign newsmen are a constant target. KGB hoods slash their tires or damage their brakes. Political killings have become rare in the Soviet Union, but the KGB is still suspected of employing thugs to dispose of troublesome artists and intellectuals. Last year Poet Konstantin Bogatyrev was mugged on a Moscow street. As he lay dying of a skull fracture in a hospital, KGB agents burst in and told doctors to "fix him so he will come out an idiot." When the physicians refused, the agents threatened them.

Another—and much less brutal —method by which the Soviets attempt to stifle dissidents is to throw them out of the country. In 1974, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the most famous and impassioned of all the dissidents, was summarily deported. Eloquent spokesmen like Andrei Sinyavsky, Joseph Brodsky, Pavel Litvinov and Andrei Amalrik felt compelled to leave the U.S.S.R. after spending long years in camps or in internal exile. The single greatest gain in personal freedom was also a loss. The emigration of 125,000 Jews since 1970 has left the dissident movement bereft of some of its strongest activists.

Always militating against a cohesive movement has been the lack of a common cause among widely disparate groups. A few dissidents, like Historian Roy Medvedev, are outspoken democratic socialists who believe that the Communist system is susceptible to democratization. Dissidents among the national minorities, notably the Ukrainians, seek cultural autonomy and an end to discrimination and repression by the Russian majority. Religious groups, especially persecuted Protestant sects such as the Initiative Baptists and Pentecostals, are struggling for freedom of worship.

To some extent Helsinki has succeeded in bringing together some of the various strands of dissidence. Before his arrest, Yuri Orlov told Correspondent Clark that "for the first time we have united in the Helsinki monitoring committee all kinds of dissidents and we have achieved some degree of coordination. Helsinki gives us a banner under which we can all stand."

Although dissidents are under police surveillance, they try to work as openly as possible. They keep in touch by meeting in each other's apartments and sending messages by hand. Activists travel frequently to different cities. They are in constant communication with fellow dissidents now in exile—for example, Valery Chalidze, the editor of *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the U.S.S.R.*, a newsletter that prints reports of the movement's activities. Foreign journalists in Russia are also a priceless link to the West.

Says Sakharov: "We can inform our country only by informing the West." Most news about dissidents—and, indeed, about all facets of Soviet society

published in the press abroad—is quickly picked up and broadcast to the Soviet Union in Russian by Radio Liberty, the BBC and other foreign shortwave radio stations. Orlov has estimated that about one-fourth of the urban Soviet population listens to foreign broadcasts. Leonid Brezhnev declares that the broadcasts "poison the atmosphere," but he has made no move to step up jamming. Radio communication, in fact, can often be more efficient than the network of the secret police. Recalled one of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Jewish "refuseniks," who have been denied permission to leave the country: "When I was detained after the sit-in at the Supreme Soviet, the Minister of the Interior said to me, 'I heard on the BBC that some of you people were beaten up but I have no information about it yet in my office.'"

Russia's isolated expressions of dissent seem like mere burgeonings compared with the recent growth of libertarian movements in Eastern Europe. Rooted in nationalism and democratic traditions, dissent may vary in intensity from country to country but the aspirations for justice and human rights remain the same.

Last week Milovan Djilas, once a powerful leader of the Yugoslav Communist Party, appealed to West European parties to persuade the government of Josip Broz Tito to respect human rights. Djilas, who was a wartime partisan leader with Tito, pointed out that there are 600 political prisoners in Yugoslavia—proportionately more than in the U.S.S.R., which has an estimated 10,000. He also communicated his sympathy with Soviet and Czechoslovak dissidents. Similar messages of support shot back and forth across East Europe's borders.

The exception was Bulgaria, where the government of Todor Zhivkov keeps a virtually airtight seal on dissent. From equally repressive Rumania came an eloquent expression of solidarity with all Eastern Europeans under "Russian occupation." The author was Novelist Paul Goma, the Rumanian Solzhenitsyn, who has written a searing account of his country's concentration camps. In Hungary, where citizens enjoy more personal freedom than in any other East bloc country, intellectuals remained fearful of rocking the fragile boat steered by Party Chief Janos Kadar since the 1956 revolution.

Still, 34 intellectuals broke the seemingly placid surface last week with a message for Playwright Pavel Kohout, who is being harassed by Czechoslovak authorities. It read: "The defense of human rights is a common concern of all Eastern Europe." In other East bloc countries, human rights activists were demonstrating that this was indeed the case:

— Czechoslovakia. After a brief lull the official Czechoslovak press resumed its ferocious attacks on the nearly 500 signers of Charter 77, a manifesto calling for compliance with the Helsinki human rights accord. The charter had provoked the alarm and fury of the regime because its adherents include the country's foremost writers and intellectuals, plus ousted leaders of the liberal regime of Alexander Dubcek. Last week the charter was endorsed by Dubcek himself, who has been working for the forestry office in Bratislava since he was deposed by the Russian invaders in 1968.

Playwright Vaclav Havel, Journalist Jiri Lederer and Writer Frantisek Pavlicek, who are prominent chartists, awaited trial in Prague. Police meanwhile swooped down on signers and took away their identity cards, making it impossible for them to use the post office. Others found that their children had been barred from colleges and universities. Chartists continued to refuse government offers to let them emigrate, electing to remain with their countrymen in spite of the risk. When one activist was arrested, another had already been designated to take his place. The goal of the charter movement, says one of its founders, Philosopher Jan Patocka, is "a certain moral dignity." The resumption of the crackdown seemed connected with the arrival of a delegation from Moscow, headed by Ivan Kapitonov, a powerful secretary of the Central Committee and professional troubleshooter.

> East Germany. Once the most obedient of peoples in the Soviet bloc, the East Germans have begun to manifest discontent with life in the most prosperous and at the same time one of the most oppressive countries in Communist Europe. Much to the dismay of Party Boss Erich Honecker, some 200,000 people have applied to live in West Germany. Although many of the applicants have lost their jobs and apartments, tradesmen, workers and professional people still persist in trying to get out.

In a stunning clampdown six weeks ago, the government imprisoned at least 50 people for supporting a petition to reconsider the forced exile of the popular East German balladeer Wolf Biermann. Physicist Robert Havemann, who was in a Nazi prison with Honecker, has been under house arrest since late last year for criticizing the regime. A host of dissident artists, writers and students have been arrested or beaten up by goons hired by the security police. Following the Soviet style, the police have lately taken to putting dissidents into insane asylums. Last week Honecker called for a closer connection between the Soviet KGB and the East German security police because forces of "reaction" were trying to cause conflicts.

> Poland. Volatile Poles continued to pressure the government over aftereffects of the food strikes and riots of last June. At that time, workers tore up railway tracks near Warsaw, set fire to Communist Party headquarters in Radom and brought the nation to a five-hour standstill until a panicked government rescinded a rise in food prices. When hundreds of workers were arrested, 20 prominent intellectuals, including Novelist Jerzy Andrzejewski, formed a Workers' Defense Committee to mobilize public support for the workers, who had been viciously beaten by the police.

The workers' cause was championed by the Roman Catholic Church and notably by its revered Primate, Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski. By combining intellectuals, workers and churchmen, the defense movement could become a classic counter-revolutionary force. Still, the Poles' fear of provoking a Soviet invasion is a strong restraining influence. This month the defense movement scored a triumph: Party Chief Edward Gierek yielded to public pressure and promised to recommend clemency for all workers convicted of rioting.

Events are anxiously watched by the French, Italian and Spanish Communist parties, which profess to favor a thoroughgoing democratic pathway to power. But they can hardly claim democratic credentials unless they are unreservedly outspoken about repression in Communist countries.

("They have yet to show proof of their alleged democratic spirit," says Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky.) On the other hand, going too far in condemning Moscow and other Communist capitals could make them seem traitors to the Communist cause. Early this month, Italian Party Chief Enrico Berlinguer, addressing 3,000 workers in Milan, stressed "our criticism of certain 'authoritarian features' in the political regimes of some countries in Eastern Europe."

The Italian comrades, like the French and Spanish, are seemingly prepared to stand up for the Soviet dissidents' right to speak, but not necessarily for what they say. Sakharov is an irritant to the Italian party's smooth, libertarian approach. The party is hesitant to attack him openly because of his eminent stature, but his messages to Jimmy Carter inviting U.S. participation in the human rights campaign are deemed lamentably anti-Soviet in character.

Still, Euro-Communism's top three parties are scheduled to convene in Madrid in the coming weeks, and the Spanish Communists are prepared to press for "an elaborate and strong declaration on the problem of dissent in Eastern Europe."

The Soviets are righting back by arguing that the dissidents are only a handful of troublemakers who are cleverly using the Western press to draw attention to themselves and are in turn being used by Western governments to stir up trouble in Communist countries. Last week Pravda accused the West of dangling dissidents "on the fishing rod of bourgeois propaganda" so as to distract "the masses from the deep crisis in the capitalist system."

The Russians are also trying to show that the U.S. itself is guilty of offenses against human rights. Unfortunately, the propagandists have not had to invent many of their charges. Racial discrimination and the Watergate scandal alone provide plenty of ammunition —despite the vast difference between an established policy of repression and a skein of individual abuses; every such event is grist for the Soviet newspapers.

Last week, for example, Pravda reported that police in New Haven, Conn., had organized round-the-clock telephone bugging of the citizenry. This was based on a story in a New Haven paper saying that from 1966 to 1971 local police had tapped the phones of more than 100 people. At the University of California at Berkeley last week, Assistant Professor of Sociology Harry Edwards told TIME'S Mike Weiss about a curious hour-long phone call from a Soviet newspaper editor in Moscow. He had heard that Edwards, a black activist, had been denied tenure and was accusing the university of racism. Said Edwards: He "simply called to let me know they were aware of the situation at Berkeley, that they were concerned about it as a human rights issue, and that the Soviet academic community was very much interested in it. The thrust of the conversation was that they're going to run a series of articles about my situation at Berkeley."

To compare Russia's pervasive totalitarian system with the abridgments of freedom that occur in the U.S. is, of course, nonsense. Few people understand this better than the Russian dissenters, especially Andrei Sakharov. But he is not as shrill in condemning his country's masters as is Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Sakharov's true genius is compassion, and that

includes understanding his fellow Russians. Sakharov told Clark:

"The problem is that in order to achieve the good life here, one necessarily develops a certain conformist mentality. For most people, there is no opportunity to compare the system here with systems outside. The material side of life has improved here and people know it. So humans work, live and exist here, not knowing of any other kind of life. On the surface, this might appear to be harmonious, but this life has many tragedies. We speak today about the problem of freedom of choice for people to live where they want to live, especially Jews. This problem is not new, but until quite recently, people in the West did not realize the extent of the problem. Now there are people with deep convictions, and a sense of deep righteousness, whose main objective is to inform the world about conditions in the Soviet Union.

I don't know of any other country in the world where such a number of people would take part in a nonviolent fight to defend their ideals. Everyone wants to have a job, be married, have children, be happy, but dissidents must be prepared to see their lives destroyed and those dear to them hurt. When I look at my situation and my family's situation and that of my country, I realize that things are getting steadily worse. But, for myself, I cannot consider emigration or even leaving this country provisionally. When people who are very close to me are persecuted, it creates an almost unbearable situation for me personally." Unlike Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov does not talk of apocalyptic confrontation between the U.S. and Russia. He favors arms reduction and détente—but on better terms. "I do not believe that the West utilizes fully the opportunities provided by détente in assuring the success of the human rights movement, not because the West doesn't care, but because there is a lack of solidarity. There is not enough pressure put on the Soviet Union, which doesn't understand polite talk."

But just how much pressure can the

U.S. apply? That is the immensely delicate question before the U.S. The Carter Administration seems to be moving away from Kissinger's "quiet diplomacy"—and there is a marked, similar trend throughout the NATO alliance. But it is not clear how far Carter and Co. feel they can go. There is some risk that by responding to each offensive Soviet act, the State Department will, in fact, let itself be remote-controlled by Moscow or the dissidents, however idealistic their motivation. Says a high-ranking Western diplomat in Moscow: "On the one hand, dissidents are undoubtedly helped by Washington's statements. Do they make Moscow more lenient? No, but they make it more difficult for the Soviets to bash Sakharov or send everyone to Siberia." On the other hand, it is difficult to link foreign policy and morality, because the Russians are proud, sensitive, somewhat paranoid and cannot be pushed too far. The diplomat continues: "Is it not immoral to jettison disarmament?" This is not likely to happen. Carter seems determined not to let human rights protests interfere with arms control; for its part, Moscow seems to want progress on SALT, and needs trade and technology from the U.S. as well. But it is at least conceivable that if the U.S. pushed too hard on human rights, and if Moscow felt that things were moving out of control in Eastern Europe, a SALT agreement would be at least delayed, under pressure from Moscow's own hardliners.

Says Dimitri Simes, director of Soviet Policy Studies at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, himself a Soviet Jew who left Russia in 1973: "A cautious effort to make the Soviet Union a more tolerant and civilized society is both moral and practical. At the same time, we have to know the limits of our power." In sum, the U.S. cannot and should not hope to change the Soviet system; such a hope or intention could only be highly dangerous. But the U.S. may, by speaking out for its own principles, make Soviet and other Communist authorities more accountable to the world's conscience (such as it is) and gradually enlarge the area of human freedom. That, as Andrei Sakharov and the other dissidents know, is difficult enough—and not a negligible goal.

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