

SOVIET DISSIDENTS AND THE WESTERN WORLD

*Lea Sellers**

This article attempts to demonstrate the effect of Western pressures on the dissident movement within the USSR. Although the movement comprises many different forms of dissent — religious, national, economic, political and cultural — we are here primarily concerned with the political and cultural challenges to the Marxist-Leninist philosophy as it operates in the Soviet Union and the ways in which the West most actively encourages or discourages these challenges. Our aim is to assess the opinions of the three most prominent Soviet dissidents, Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sakharov and Roy Medvedev, on the role of the West in the internal liberalization of the Soviet system. Their particular opinions are chosen because they represent three differing views within the broad spectrum of the dissident movement; they have all written extensively on the subject; and, unlike Western leaders, they are more exclusively concerned with intellectual freedom and the prospects for change in the USSR. If the problem were approached from a Western point of view, there would inevitably be a lack of focus on the specific problem of democratization, because other factors — strategic, economic and political — are involved in relations with the Soviet Union. The dissidents themselves are in a better position to judge, albeit subjectively, the effect of Western policies on the democratic movement, since they are directly affected by measures carried out by the Soviet leadership as a result of Western pressures and policies. There is an assumption that Western attitudes toward the Soviet Union do have some effect on Soviet domestic policy, and this study intends to show whether and how the West is helping or hindering the democratic cause, from the dissidents' point of view.

US Policy

It is, however, relevant to discuss the prevalent — and often conflicting — views in the US (as the most important among the Western

*Lea Sellers (MA '76) worked at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. She is currently a Research Assistant at the International Press Institute there.

countries) on detente and democratization. Senator Henry Jackson, who proposed the Trade Reform Bill amendment whereby the Soviets would have to allow freer emigration in return for most favored nation status from the US, insisted on attaching conditions for internal reform to economic concessions. He received much support for his proposal but was ultimately proved misguided in his calculation when the Soviets refused to accept the condition and rejected the entire trade agreement. While Jackson believed that Soviet society must be liberalized before there could be any lasting economic or defense agreements between Moscow and Washington, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger firmly believed that cooperation and agreements with the Soviets were valid in themselves and were the best way to loosen up Soviet society in the long run.¹

On the basis of the principles of international law, Kissinger was right to be wary of demanding political concessions in exchange for economic benefits, as this would, in effect, constitute an interference in the domestic affairs of another nation — a move that would contravene the Charter of the United Nations.² Both President Nixon and Secretary Kissinger were conscious of this problem and warned that detente could be adversely affected by US intervention in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Nixon, pointing out that “we would not welcome the intervention of other countries in our domestic affairs, and we cannot expect them to be cooperative when we seek to intervene directly in theirs,” emphasized that the first responsibility of the US was the prevention of war rather than the transformation of other societies.³ On the other hand, as Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, among others, would argue, an important part of the UN Charter is the international concern for fundamental freedoms and human rights for all,⁴ and just as countries have boycotted Rhodesia and South Africa on account of their domestic policies, so an economic embargo against the Soviet Union would be justified. But there is evidently much more at stake with a military superpower like the USSR than there is with South Africa, and Nixon’s emphasis on the prevention of

1. Leslie H. Gelb, “Sen Jackson Uses ‘Pull’ to Get Kissinger to ‘Push’ Harder on Russia,” *International Herald Tribune*, June 10, 1974

2. Article 2(7) of the UN Charter reads in part:

“Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.”

3. “Nixon Cautions on Interference in Soviet Affairs,” *International Herald Tribune*, June 6, 1974.

4. Article 1(3) of the Charter says that the purposes of the UN are:

“To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.”

war is at least a plausible reason for encouraging detente without extracting promises of liberalization, as far as the US government is concerned. In a nuclear world, the primary concern of influential governments must be with peace and security, while ideological warfare and human rights take second place.

Since the Soviet involvement in a war by proxy in Angola and the denunciations of critics (among them Solzhenitsyn) who equate detente with appeasement, President Ford has adopted the new phrase "peace with strength," which appears to imply a hardening of the US position with regard to the Soviet Union. This change of emphasis must also be considered in the context of the 1976 presidential election where both major candidates for the Republican nomination (President Ford and Ronald Reagan) strived to outdo each other in taking a strong stand on foreign policy issues. Another important factor influencing the change toward a tougher policy under President Ford is the alteration in the American military position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union from one of clear strategic superiority to one of rough equivalence. This alteration has generated a certain amount of fear and prompted accusations that the policy of detente only benefits the Soviets, both militarily and economically, by providing them with sophisticated Western technologies while the US gains nothing. But the policymakers see no reasonable alternative to detente, believing that the construction of a more stable relationship between the two superpowers is preferable to a state of constant confrontation. Detente was intended to be a relaxation of this tension, and has, to some extent, succeeded, particularly in the agreements on the limitation of strategic arms (SALT). In a recent interview, however, Secretary Kissinger was careful to point out that the policy of detente "is not based on the proposition that the Soviets are to be trusted," but was rather aimed at preventing Soviet expansionism.⁵ The US leadership seems aware of the problem of overlooking much that is distasteful in Soviet society while pursuing greater cooperation, but is in no position to radically alter this policy.

The Russian Tradition or the Theory of Convergency?

Thus it can be seen that internal liberalization in the Soviet Union is not the primary goal of US policy, though the effects of its policy may inadvertently influence the dissident cause. There are two major schools of thought on liberalization in the USSR and how the West can foster it: one contends that the Russians are authoritarian by nature and that therefore no amount of Western concern can help to democratize the regime and society, while the other contends that all

5. "We are Determined to Resist Expansion," Interview with Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State in U.S. News and World Report, March 15, 1976.

advanced industrial societies will gradually "converge," in which case the Soviet Union will become more like the Western democracies since a highly-structured society inevitably needs to accommodate initiative and autonomy at lower levels. If this second contention is true, then trade and increased contacts with the West can only encourage such a development.

Hedrick Smith (the *New York Times* correspondent and author of the recently published book, *The Russians*) comes out in favor of the former view. He asserts that there is no causal relationship between contacts with the West and internal reform and cites examples from Russian history to prove his point. He describes periods when the Tsars acquired Western technology and expertise, and finds, particularly in the cases of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, that internal reforms did not accompany a pro-Western foreign policy.⁶ Although too much importance must not be attached to the idea, there are remarkable similarities and continuities between the present and old regimes, particularly in regard to authoritarian and repressive practices. The Tsarist secret police have been replaced by the KGB, religious fervor and homage to the Tsar have given way to communist ideology and the glorification of Politburo members, the censorship of writers and other artists is as prevalent today as it was in the last century, and underground authors still have their works illegally published in the West. There are numerous other parallels with the Tsarist regime, but perhaps the most fundamental is the fact that the Soviet state is just as centralized, hierarchical, xenophobic and repressive as was the Russian state before 1917, if for very different reasons.

The theory of convergence, on the other hand, argues that the authoritarian trend is purely a characteristic of traditional societies and the Soviet Union will outgrow such a constraining system if it is to develop further. But there is no evidence to suggest that all developing industrial nations will automatically follow the Western democratic pattern. On the contrary, it appears that there are various national patterns of development, and Smith rightly points out that the Soviet system is alien to the Western; it neither experienced a period of Renaissance and Reformation, nor the emergence of constitutional democracy. So although the West has had a major impact on Russia and the Soviet Union, both culturally and economically, it has in no way transformed the political system and is unlikely to do so through trade alone. Furthermore, according to Smith, the Soviet Union "only turned to the West for new technology as an alternative to having to liberalize its own economy."⁷ In this case, trade agreements with the

6.Hedrick Smith, *The Russians*, (New York, Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1976), p. 505

7.Ibid., p. 503.

West harm democracy in the Soviet Union. But although trade alone might not affect internal affairs, detente in all its broader aspects cannot be dismissed as an insignificant factor in changing the Soviet system. The possibility of change cannot be eliminated purely on the basis of a country's history. The authoritarian tradition is deeply embedded in the USSR but there have been periods of reform and change in Russia, notably in the early 1860s, and the West then, as now, had an important role to play in the liberal movement.

The Dissident Movement

Most writers on detente have adopted either the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine which favors cooperation for the sake of stability and peace, or the Jackson point of view which insists upon conditions in return for agreements, on the assumption that the Russians cannot be trusted to reform their own society simply through greater contacts with the West. More important is the question of how the leaders of the dissident movement inside the Soviet Union believe the West should behave in order to aid their cause. They are (or were until the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn in 1974) on the inside looking out, and regard the attitudes and opinions of the West in very personal terms. None of them sees the Western democracies as ideal societies, nor are they under any illusion that the West could be a panacea for Soviet evils, but all believe that, by acting in a certain way, Western policy-makers, organizations, and intellectuals, can and do have some influence on Soviet leaders.

The West might consciously or unconsciously help the dissident movement not only on the official level, but more importantly through public opinion expressed in the media, through international organizations such as the UN Commission on Human Rights or Amnesty International, through publishers of suppressed Soviet works and through the support of prominent intellectuals and opinion leaders. Through public statements, petitions, protests and demonstrations, these non-governmental groups exert some moral pressure upon the Soviet leaders (and probably saved Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov and Zhores Medvedev from worse fates than those already inflicted upon them) but they do not have the stature of heads of state and have not as yet brought about anything more than piecemeal changes. One of the major problems of Soviet society — one which exacerbates its static character — is the lack of any institutionalized form of interest articulation, apart from the small degree of feedback to newspaper editors, for example, but this can only contain criticism of the implementation of policies and minor policy matters as it is forbidden to criticize the state or its ideology. Therefore, the various sections of the democratic movement representing religious, national,

or managerial, groups are necessarily branded as illegal and anti-Soviet since they present a direct challenge to the very basis of the system. The primary demand of the movement then becomes a call for intellectual and political freedom which, unless there is another revolution (and none of the major dissidents supports this idea), can only be granted from above. Having little or no power themselves, the dissidents turn to the West as the only possibility for pressuring their leaders and articulating their own interests abroad.

The democratic movement in the Soviet Union developed as a result of the destalinization campaign initiated by Khrushchev in his dramatic exposure of Stalin's crimes at the XXth Party Congress in 1956. The gradual relaxation of censorship and release of political prisoners fostered a flourishing of Soviet literature and art. Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was actually published in a Soviet journal with the approval of Khrushchev. The thaw gave rise to literary gatherings, poetry readings and freer publication, but inevitably politics became inextricably bound up with greater artistic freedom, since political freedom is a prerequisite for intellectual liberty. The relaxation of control was never by any means complete, and the Party maintained strict control over publishing, the use of typewriters, and the movements of writers. By the mid-1960s, the authorities again began to tighten their grip with judicial and police sanctions, and in 1966, the brief flourishing of intellectual revolt within semi-legal limits was finally stamped upon by the symbolic event of the trial of two writers, Sinyavsky and Daniel, accused of "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation" for having published works in the West. Their trial was seen as a facade of legality and rather than fulfilling the intention of repression by "legal" means, it only served to set off a chain reaction of protests, demonstrations and petitions, which were in turn followed by further arrests and more rigged trials. Rather than destroying the new developments in the arts and intellectual thought, the new measures forced the movement underground, and the late 1960s saw the birth and growth of the unofficial press, *samizdat*, which was set up in order that censored material could be circulated, usually by hand in typewritten form, among sympathizers.

Following the pattern of the liberal start to Alexander II's reign after the despotic Nicholas I, the inspiration for the development of the democratic movement came from the regime, but once it had gained its own momentum, the authorities felt compelled to clamp down. Their efforts were too weak and too late to stem the tide of liberal thought. The movement became increasingly politicized and began to embrace other dissident sectors of society, such as religious and

national minorities, which were also oppressed by the state for non-conformism. Many outraged people, from engineers, doctors, and physicists to students and factory workers, lent their support to the cause of individual freedom as word of unfair trials and persecution spread among the people. The movement became increasingly threatening to the authorities as a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the regime in the name of the Soviet Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The leaders were accused of failing to abide by their own laws in the areas of civil liberties, national and religious freedom. In 1969, an Action Group appealed to the UN Human Rights Commission over political persecution in the USSR. The move was a sign of the frustration of the dissident intellectuals who recognized the futility of appeals to their own leaders in the name of socialist legality. Hence, the dissident movement began to attract more attention in the West, and news from abroad invariably filtered back to the Soviet Union through foreign broadcasts and the underground press, which became increasingly valuable means of communication for the movement both within the Soviet Union and abroad.

The cultural opposition never became an organized, coherent protest movement. It was unified only in so far as all factions called for the recognition of human rights and some respect for legality, but it remained weak and ineffective against the power of the regime. Issues involved in the movement ranged from the invasion of Czechoslovakia to the expulsion of the Crimean Tartars from their homeland, and ideological opinion in the movement included "Genuine Marxism-Leninism" on the extreme left, "Liberal Ideology" in the center, and "Christian Ideology" on the right.⁸ These labels are loosely represented by Roy Medvedev, Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, respectively. According to Andrei Amalrik, writing in 1968, the number of adherents to the movement was small, comprising only "several dozen active participants and several hundred who sympathize with the movement,"⁹ with academics providing most of the support. He blamed middle class specialists for their mediocrity, impotence and "bureaucratic" attitude. Their passivity therefore posed no threat to the equally inactive regime which could survive almost indefinitely by providing the minimum of concessions and minor measures of repression. The lower classes, he argued, were psychologically incapable of forming a viable protest movement against the regime, so the democratic movement was destined to remain small, weak and

8. These phrases are used by Andrei Amalrik in *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1970), but it is generally accepted among both Western and Soviet writers that opinion in the democratic movement ranges from left to right.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

ineffective because it lacked a mass base. Amalrik predicted that the decrepitude of the bureaucratic regime would cause its own disintegration, but saw the most likely impetus for the downfall of the present leadership in a long, protracted war with China. Amalrik's vision of a static society and stagnant regime surviving by maintaining a careful balance between blatant repression and liberalization, is a fairly accurate description of the present state of Soviet domestic life today.

Since the days of Stalin's terror tactics and the brutal elimination of all dissident thinkers, the Soviet rulers have certainly become more lenient in their treatment of dissidents, but not necessarily any less effective in silencing opposition. From punishment in the form of exile to labor camps, arrest and imprisonment, the tendency now is to silence dissidents through more subtle means — constant harassment by the KGB, confinement to psychiatric hospitals and economic deterrents, such as dismissal from employment, which usually means blacklisting for life since the state is the only employer. Because of such intense pressure, many dissidents have given up the struggle, or prefer not to voice their opinions because it is easier to accept a quiet, conformist life than to live in constant fear for one's self and one's family. Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov, and Medvedev are less vulnerable to these tactics because they have acquired some stature at home and abroad, and are therefore still able to speak out on behalf of the democratic movement. For example, Solzhenitsyn became so troublesome to the regime that they finally expelled him—a move which would not invite as much adverse opinion from abroad as forced labor or death, but would, at the same time, rid Soviet society of a "corrupting" element.

Views of the Dissidents — Solzhenitsyn

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, an impressive novelist and historian, has also become known as something of a religious mystic and moral absolutist. Although he has attracted an enormous amount of attention and support in the West for his attacks against the Soviet regime, much of what he says about the ideal society is surprisingly more reminiscent of Tolstoian pastoralism than of any form of Western liberalism.

In 1945, at the end of the war, Solzhenitsyn was arrested and sentenced without trial to a labor camp. He was released and rehabilitated in 1957 after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, and his first novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, about life in a prison camp, was published in the Soviet literary journal *Novy Mir*. However, his later works were proscribed because they were too critical of the regime, and from 1963 onward, Solzhenitsyn pursued a relentless struggle with the Kremlin over censorship, resulting in his

expulsion from the Writers' Union in November, 1969. In 1970, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (though he was unable to go to Stockholm to receive the prize) and in February, 1974, he was finally expelled from the Soviet Union, against his will. He now lives in Vermont, his effectiveness as a vocal critic of the Soviet system considerably diminished.

As he is primarily a novelist, Solzhenitsyn paid less attention to the question of detente and democratization at first, and was more exclusively concerned with Soviet society and the freedom of the arts. He attracted attention in the West for his violent attacks against the authorities and with the publication of his famous books, *The First Circle*, *Cancer Ward*, and the *Gulag Archipelago*. His works achieved great popularity, causing a sensation in the West as a vehement attack on the Soviet system from the inside that depicted the realities of Soviet prison camps and police repression. Hence, he became an heroic figure, almost a demi-god in the eyes of many Western intellectuals who sympathized with the dissident movement in the Soviet Union. When he was expelled in 1974, however, the revelation of his extraordinarily archaic Russophile philosophy, and his venomous criticism of the West as well as of the Soviet Union, led to some disillusionment with the literary hero and martyr. Previously, his philosophical and social ideas had been expressed only sketchily and were certainly masked by his literary prowess and strong moral stand against constant KGB harrassment.

His famous *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, publicized in March, 1974, made these views explicit for the first time. The appeal is mainly concerned with spiritual and moral decay in the Soviet Union and a program for the future is proposed. Solzhenitsyn called on the Soviet leaders to abandon communist ideology and disband the Soviet Union, making Russia a separate national state. He predicted, like Amalrik, a disastrous war with China and a collapse of civilization in Russia and the West if radical changes were not made. These radical changes included freedom of the arts and of religion, and an end to the sham of ideological rhetoric and lies, secret trials, and psychiatric violence. He adopted a patriotic, religious and even utopian tone in expressing a genuine concern for the future of Russia which, he argued, could only be saved from a disastrous fate if communism was ousted and replaced by an ethical set of principles. But he did not completely reject the authoritarian structure of the Soviet state and saw it as an inescapable part of Russian psychology and tradition, explaining that:

It is not authoritarianism itself that is intolerable, but the ideological lies that are daily foisted on us. Not so much authoritarianism as arbitrariness and illegality. . . .¹⁰

Instead of democracy and a multiparty system, for which Russia was not prepared, he advocated an ethical form of authoritarianism.

Solzhenitsyn rejects both Marxism and Western bourgeois industrialism, proposing a revival of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian nationalism; he rejects modern technology and urbanization in preference for a return to village community life. These views have surprised many in the West who were under the impression that all dissidents, being anti-Soviet, must necessarily be democratic, "progressive," and pro-Western. He has also sharply criticized the United States for its weakness and loss of nerve (particularly over Vietnam and Angola), which he blames on the lack of a developed national consciousness. In his criticism of the West in general, he virtually promotes a return to the Cold War, asserting that Soviet diplomacy has only succeeded because of the "catastrophic weakening" and disunity of the Western world.

On the subject of detente, Solzhenitsyn asserts that it solves nothing unless backed by adequate guarantees; and although his generation, he says, once worshipped the West, he now attacks it furiously for not upholding its stand against the Soviet Union. In a 1973 *New York Times* article, he said:

Such an attitude is governed by the spirit of Munich, the spirit of complaisance and concession, and by the cowardly self-deception of comfortable societies and people.¹¹

More recently, in a BBC interview, he again stunned Western leaders when he accused them of capitulating to the Soviet Union, failing to defend democracy and of placing pragmatic considerations above moral ones. He said that the spirit of detente had only served to strengthen totalitarianism because of Western weakness and lack of unity. Before he was exiled in 1974, he had maintained some faith in the West, but "now a repetition of the angry campaign which got me out of prison is practically impossible" because "Moscow now takes infinitely less note of the West."¹²

In general, Solzhenitsyn is firmly convinced that Western attitudes and opinions do affect the internal life of the Soviet Union, but as

10. Alexander I. Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, (New York: Index on Censorship Harper & Row, 1974), p. 53.

11. A. Solzhenitsyn, "Peace and Violence," *New York Times*, September 15, 1973.

12. See Roger Berthoud and Bernard Levin articles in *The Times*, March 2, 1976 and "Swing to Liberty," in *The Economist*, March 6, 1976.

long as the West remains disunited and self-critical, it can only be detrimental to the democratic movement in the USSR. He sees the problems in the West, particularly in the US, Britain, and France, as caused by the decline of religion and the obsession with the self, with competition and with material things, rather than concern for society and the spiritual. John Dunlop summarizes Solzhenitsyn's attitude to detente thus:

By employing the weapon of publicity, the West can positively affect the internal situation in Russia. And any improvement there means less danger abroad. In helping oppressed Soviet citizens, the West is, therefore, defacto helping itself. On the other hand, by ignoring the suppression of human rights in the USSR, the West is, Munich-like, courting disaster.¹³

In his speech to the AFL-CIO in June, 1975, Solzhenitsyn was highly critical of detente and the false illusions created by Soviet-American exchanges, while people continued to be brutally repressed in the the Soviet Union. For a true detente, he argued, there were three basic requirements: disarmament, a firm foundation of exchanges rather than merely "smiles" and "verbal concessions" and an end to ideological warfare.¹⁴ He encouraged the West not to sit back and accept the illusions of detente, but to "interfere more and more. Interfere as much as you can. We beg you to come and interfere."¹⁵

Solzhenitsyn takes a fundamentally moralist view of the world, condemning pragmatism and compromise. He remains strongly attached to his mother country and blames the West for strengthening the Soviet dictatorship. He has placed the onus of responsibility on the West, particularly the US, for defending fundamental human rights and freedoms, and now claims that Western leaders have lost sight of these essentially moral goals in favour of more immediate, strategic considerations. Attacking the West for its materialism, decadence, and moral decline, he calls on it to strengthen itself and not to give in to the Soviets. His sense of morality and concern for human rights is perhaps admirable, as are his own uncompromising principles, but his suggestion that the US should give priority to these questions is unrealistic in a nuclear world, while his plans for the future of Soviet society are retrogressive and unlikely to receive much popular support either here or in the USSR. His views on detente have already earned the disapproval of many in the West, notably Secretary Kissinger, who sees no real alternative to the policy of detente and believes Solzhenitsyn's

13. John B. Dunlop, "Solzhenitsyn in Exile," *Survey*, Summer 1975, p. 146.

14. "Speech by Alexander Solzhenitsyn to the AFL-CIO," *Survey*, Summer 1975, p. 127.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

proposals for an aggressive US policy would only serve to increase tension in the world.¹⁶

Sakharov

Andrei Sakharov, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1975, takes a less extreme, and possibly more realistic, view than Solzhenitsyn. His proposals for reform are more moderate, more specific, more progressive, and less couched in moral and religious terms than those of the exiled writer, although he is still something of an idealist. If Solzhenitsyn can be classed as a Russophile, then Sakharov is an internationalist, and criticizes the former for his support of Orthodoxy, for his lack of concern about Soviet nationalities other than the Russian and the Ukrainian, and for his advocacy of an authoritarian system.¹⁷

As he was one of the physicists involved in the production of the Soviet H-Bomb in 1950, Sakharov was first concerned with the consequences and effects of nuclear weapons in world politics. But he gradually became concerned with morality at home as well as in the world at large, and began to press for reforms and the granting of individual freedoms in the Soviet Union. His political activities increased throughout the 1960's and in 1966 he joined with twenty-four others in calling on the Party not to revert to Stalinist ways after the fall of Khrushchev. In 1968, at the height of the movement for liberalization and reform, he produced his major essay, *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom*. The essay was published in the West and widely circulated among the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union, in *samizdat* form. The main concern of the essay was the promotion of US-Soviet detente. Sakharov called for cooperation and genuine coexistence between the US and the USSR, believing that the world's major problems such as hunger, the threat of nuclear war, pollution and dictatorship, could be solved if the two superpowers would pool their resources. He still argued from a socialist standpoint, but stressed the need for morality and intellectual freedom within the system of socialism. Expressing a belief in the theory of convergence, Sakharov recognized that the Soviet Union had to liberalize internally before it could make further progress. Some necessary reforms were freedom of thought, free access to information, an end to the violation of human rights, to censorship, to political prisoners, and a reform of the economic system. Although he showed some concern for internal democratization at this stage, his primary goal was still international cooperation. Hence, liberalization was only a means to an end. His vision of the future foresaw the development of a multiparty system in the USSR and a strengthening of democracy as a first move; the second

16. Dunlop, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-152.

17. Andrei D. Sakharov, "Sakharov's Reply to Solzhenitsyn," *War/Peace Report*, October 1974, pp. 3-6.

stage envisaged persistent demands for social progress and peaceful coexistence in the capitalist countries; in the third stage, the US and the Soviet Union would join together and save the poorer half of the world, and finally, “. . . the socialist convergence will reduce differences in social structure, promote intellectual freedom, science and economic progress, and lead to the creation of a world government.”¹⁸

After this essay appeared, Sakharov was dismissed from the nuclear weapons program and given a relatively menial job. He continued to sign petitions for the release of imprisoned intellectuals and to attend their trials. In March 1970, together with Turchin, a physicist, and Roy Medvedev, he sent a letter to the Soviet leaders calling for a gradual democratization of the Soviet system. They drew attention to various issues: the problems of the economy, the need for a freer exchange of information, the drawbacks of the stultifying bureaucracy, and the nature of Soviet foreign policy. The signatories claimed that only liberalization carried out by the Party could solve all these problems.

As Sakharov's ideas on morality became more specific, so his concern with individuals with genuine grievances against the state became paramount over his former concern with world peace and international cooperation. As he concentrated on real cases of repression at home, he also became more realistic and less lofty than he appeared to be in *Progress*. In November, 1970, he and two other physicists, Tverdokhlebov and Chalidze, formed the Human Rights Committee which aimed to guarantee human rights in the Soviet Union on the basis of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the UN in 1948). As a result of this move, Sakharov became a kind of patron of dissidents, whether Crimean Tartars deprived of their homeland or writers whose works were suppressed.

He continued to petition the government for liberalization and in 1973, the regime's hostile attitude towards him was finally publicized. (Hitherto, he had been immune from open criticism because of his important work on the H-Bomb). Owing to increased pressure from the authorities, he turned to the West for assistance. By granting interviews to foreign correspondents, he began appealing directly to world opinion. In an interview with a Swedish radio correspondent, Olle Stenholm, in 1973, he revealed his failing confidence in Soviet society and particularly in its ability to change itself. But he seemed undecided on the role of outside forces in promoting such change:

18. "Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom," Andrei D. Sakharov, *Sakharov Speaks*, (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 109.

We have a very poor understanding of what the foreign world is doing. Possible the foreign world will soon accept our rules of the game. That would be very bad And if we speak of the West, then it is difficult each time to tell whether they want to help us or whether, on the contrary, there is some kind of capitulation, a game involving the internal interests of the people of the West in which we merely play the role of small change.¹⁹

Evidently, he was very skeptical at this stage about the role the West could, or was willing to, play in the liberalization of Soviet society, and he was also sceptical about socialism in general. He declared that reconstructing the whole state would be unthinkable and maintained that he was a liberal and a "gradualist" rather than a communist and a revolutionist.

In an interview with Western correspondents in August, 1973, Sakharov expressed concern that rapprochement, or detente, with the US, which he had always advocated, might now take place without being linked to the democratization of Soviet society, a prospect he regarded with dismay:

Rapprochement without democratization, rapprochement in which the West in effect accepts the Soviet Union rules of the game...would be dangerous in the sense that it could not really solve any of the world's problems and would simply mean capitulating in the face of real or exaggerated Soviet power It would mean cultivation and encouragement of a closed country.²⁰

Sakharov's most recent book, *My Country and the World* (1975), is mainly concerned with the problems of detente and democratization. It differs from the earlier essay in that it is addressed to a Western audience rather than to the Soviet leaders, implying again a recognition of the futility of direct appeals to Soviet authorities. Sakharov begins with a survey of Soviet domestic problems, and then continues with a criticism of the Soviet government and an assessment of detente. Whereas his first essay on *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* promoted detente, the second essay criticizes the results, praising the Jackson Amendment and criticizing the Western European countries and Japan for supplying the USSR with credits after the latter had rejected the US trade agreement. He claims that the lack of unity and solidarity in the West allowed the Soviets to get the credits they wanted without granting embarrassing concessions. Like Solzhenitsyn, he too is concerned with the weakening of democratic governments and the lack of concern for individual freedoms in the world. He feels that leftist liberal intellectuals in the

19. "Interview with Swedish Radio Correspondent, Olle Stenholm," in *Ibid.*, p. 171.

20. "Interview with Western Correspondents," in *Ibid.*, p. 204.

West are under false illusions and warns against the "dangers of totalitarianism with the socialist, so-called progressive, path of development."²¹ He also warns against pacifist appeals for unilateral disarmament since "such disarmament could lead to a disturbance of the international equilibrium — weakening the Western position vis-a-vis the totalitarian threat — and could induce stepped up expansion by the socialist nations."²² In this respect, he is more in touch with reality than is Solzhenitsyn, who simply calls for "disarmament," and more in line with US policy-makers.

As a last appeal to the Western intelligentsia, Sakharov expresses hope that it will "more vigorously defend human rights in our nation and the other socialist nations: the right to the free choice of one's country of residence; the rights of the ethnic minorities . . . the rights of persecuted religious groups; the right to defense on the part of prisoners of conscience."²³ He refers to the international support which allowed the dancers, Valery and Galina Panov, to emigrate to Israel in 1974. Not only were there demonstrations and boycotts of the Bolshoi ballet tour, but also, he says, "the public statements by Prime Minister Harold Wilson played a decisive role, bringing the protests up into those quarters not usually reached by noise from the street."²⁴ In his conclusion, he calls for many internal reforms in the Soviet Union such as economic changes, the freedom to strike, amnesty for political prisoners, and a multiparty system. Addressing the West, he appeals for Western unity on matters of defense, economics and politics, with the US as leader, and a broadening of the powers of the United Nations. He encourages increased pressure from the West over human rights:

A concern for greater openness in the socialist countries — for the freedom to exchange people and information — must be one of the central tasks of the coordinated policy of the Western countries . . . Not only individuals but governments and international organizations must be concerned with defending human rights.²⁵

Hence, Sakharov, at first more interested in promoting superpower rapprochement and collaboration, became increasingly concerned with human rights and freedoms in Soviet society. He asserts that Western intellectuals, governments, and international organizations, can influence the Soviet government by displaying unity and solidarity, and by firmly defending human rights in socialist countries. For him,

21. Andrei D. Sakharov, *My Country and the World* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p. 92.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 98. The example indicates a specificity Solzhenitsyn lacks.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

detente must be conditional, and he opposes agreements between the leaders of the two superpowers at the expense of the democratic movement. His aim is to focus attention on the internal movement as an essential part of detente. By concentrating purely on trade and cooperation while ignoring other aspects, he says, the West is simply allowing the Soviet Union to strengthen itself and to avoid resolving internal problems.

Medvedev

Roy Medvedev, the historian and author of *Let History Judge* (1971) and *On Socialist Democracy* (1975), differs from both Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov in that he proposes change within the existing Marxist framework. The main problem with the present regime, in Medvedev's view, lies in the leadership; if there were changes in this area — a replacement of the old guard with younger, more dynamic and capable communists — the whole system would loosen up. While Solzhenitsyn represents the right wing of the dissident movement, Medvedev undoubtedly represents the left. He supports the regime in principle though not in practice, and is critical of the immoral and provocative behaviour of some dissidents, including Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov.

Like so many others in the Soviet Union, Medvedev was motivated into dissident thinking by the adverse effects of Stalinism. In 1938, when Roy and his twin brother Zhores were thirteen, they witnessed the arrest by the secret police of their father, an apparently upright communist, who later died in a camp. Both brothers are known for their dissident activities and have published works in the West. When Zhores, an eminent scientist, was admitted to a psychiatric hospital in 1970 and then forcibly detained, Roy aroused international and domestic opinion to petition the Soviet leaders for his release. Eventually, probably due to this pressure, Zhores was allowed to go home, but when he later went to study in London, his passport was taken from him and he is now refused re-entry into the Soviet Union.

Roy has been rather more cautious than his brother, and as a "non-dogmatic socialist" lies somewhere on the ill-defined borders between officialdom and dissidence. He was a member of the Communist party for eight years, but was expelled in 1969 for a statement warning against the rehabilitation of Stalin. He is careful not to challenge the Marxist-Leninist basis of the regime, only its "dogmatism", and he is not openly attacked in the Soviet press. *Let History Judge* was a critique of Stalinism, which he regarded as a deviation from the true path to socialism. The present regime, in his view, is still suffering from the after-effects of Stalinism and is hampered by a rigid bureaucracy and addiction to rhetoric.

He believes that Western opinion can be beneficial to the dissident movement, but that it is by no means decisive. He argues that East-West agreements themselves cannot lead to any political or economic reforms within the Soviet Union, and may even help to preserve the bureaucratic methods of the regime, but, he warns,

. . . [a] Western refusal to reach such agreements or a boycott on cooperation with the Soviet Union could create an even worse situation of isolation as well as inadmissible pressure. This would play into the hands of the most reactionary elements in the Soviet leadership.²⁶

Citing the cases of South Africa and Spain, he says that sanctions do not necessarily bring about internal change or liberalization, but sometimes only serve to harden and preserve existing reactionary regimes. He is always willing to admit that publicity about the dissidents abroad is helpful and can do no harm, but he believes that Western politicians have other priorities and cannot be relied upon to assist the democratic movement. He criticizes them for presenting unacceptable ultimatums, such as the Jackson Amendment, to the Soviet leaders, as these are bound to fail, but suggests that they could aim at extracting milder concessions such as "the free sale of or subscription to foreign newspapers, greater freedom of personal movement, freedom to leave and re-enter the country, freedom of movement for foreign correspondents,²⁷" all conditions provided for in the Helsinki Agreement of 1975. His attitude toward the role of the West sometimes seems ambivalent, because while he recognizes the advantages in the expression of Western opinion, and indeed used the Western media to protest both his brother's imprisonment in a psychiatric hospital and Solzhenitsyn's forced exile from the country, he remains fundamentally opposed to interference and manipulation by capitalist countries. He therefore advocates action by international organizations, such as the Red Cross, which could protest vigorously against the violation of human rights and remain non-partisan.

Medvedev has a positive program for reforming Soviet society, while preserving the socialist system and public ownership of the major means of production. He believes that a change in personnel at management levels is one of the most pressing tasks ahead and claims that "there are many very talented, clear-thinking and rational Marxists who could splendidly take charge of various aspects of social and political life.²⁸ He proposes an expansion of the freedom of the press, freedom of association, including political organizations,

26. Roy A. Medvedev, "Grass Roots Showing Through the Soviet Monolith," *The Guardian*, May 14, 1975.

27. Roy A. Medvedev, "How I Would Run the Soviet Union," *Observer Review*, 15 June, 1975.

28. *Ibid.*

freedom of speech (all of which are guaranteed in theory by the Soviet Constitution), and some degree of private enterprise. These measures, he asserts, will pose no threat to socialism nor to the Communist Party, which is strong enough to tolerate some competition and would benefit from it. The answer to the problem of liberalization, for Medvedev, lies within the Soviet Union and does not involve a basic systemic change. His appeal is to non-dogmatic Marxist opinion inside the USSR, rather than to the West.²⁹

Like Solzhenitsyn, he is against the "hollow dogma" and the rigidities of Soviet ideology, which he believes are disastrous for the economic, intellectual and moral development of Soviet society. He therefore proposes gradual democratization instigated by a changed leadership and the development of a progressive Marxism-Leninism, flexible and responsive to change if it is to survive in the modern world. He argues that democratization has now become an "objective necessity" and is implicit in Marxist theory. In line with the theory of convergence, he sees democratization as a necessary corollary of modernization. Furthermore, although increasing international economic interdependence means that the Soviet Union cannot afford to ignore world opinion, he hopes that the leaders will promote changes as a result of internal rather than external pressures.

Medvedev asserts:

In general, the opportunities for pressure on the Soviet Union . . . should not be overestimated. Not only because the Soviet partners in the talks will reasonably protest against interference in Soviet domestic affairs, but we generally doubt very much that the majority of Western leaders are really seriously concerned with problems of political and human rights in the USSR . . .³⁰

The dissidents ought, therefore, to appeal to leftist rather than to rightist leaders abroad (although he himself has made use of the capitalist media).

Essentially, Medvedev is a pragmatic optimist who believes that the Soviet state will gradually evolve into a more democratic system while remaining Marxist. He dismisses Solzhenitsyn's proposals as reactionary and unrealistic and although at first he agreed with Sakharov on most issues, he now differs with him over the role of the West. Even as a Marxist, Medvedev propounds the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine on this matter — long-term cooperation as a means of liberalizing Soviet society — but he expects the impetus for reform to come from changes in the Soviet leadership rather than from outside pressures. Therefore, while not altogether discounting Western influence, Medvedev believes it is only of marginal significance in the long run.

29. *Ibid.*, Medvedev desires "a new image of socialism."

30. Roy A. Medvedev, "The Problems of Democratization and the Problem of Detente," in

Conclusion

All three of the leading dissidents have been motivated by the effects of Stalinism to change the Soviet system, and although each offers a different solution, they are essentially responsive to the same problem — the absolute power of the Communist Party and the repression of all free thought. They all call for the recognition of the basic freedoms guaranteed by Soviet law, particularly the release of political prisoners and the tolerance of various different ideologies and beliefs. They all agree on the fundamental need for reform but differ on how it should or can be brought about. Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov believe that pressure on the leadership could come from the West, but are disillusioned with the present state of Western democracies, while Medvedev is dubious about seeking help from capitalist countries in any event. The major problem for Western leaders is to strike a balance between overall good relations with the USSR and the simultaneous encouragement of democratization without hardening the attitudes of the Soviet leaders. It is generally admitted that the last few years have seen a tightening of Soviet control at home despite, or perhaps because of, detente, but it is to be hoped that this is a short-term trend which will be counteracted by world opinion on human rights and pressures on the Soviet leaders to grant further concessions in return for detente, which the Soviets still value extremely highly.

Solzhenitsyn believes that the Soviet Union is not ready for democracy but historical tradition cannot be taken as a compelling reason for the continuation of an authoritarian regime, nor for the dismissal of the possibility of change. Sakharov and Medvedev promote an evolutionary path to a more democratic system, believing that this process will be encouraged by modernization and economic progress, as well as by Western pressures and international concern for human rights.

As in the last century, so today Western publishers and public opinion leaders aid the democratic cause by drawing attention to the problems of the dissidents, by motivating leaders to take a stand against the Soviet Union on the suppression of human rights, and by giving expression to dissident ideas which cannot find free expression at home. There is evidence that world opinion can have a decisive effect in shaping the policies of Soviet leaders. If the West can work together with the democratic movement, however small and divided, there is some hope that the Soviet leadership will be forced to grant some internal concessions; but at the same time, leaders of Western governments must guard against outright interference in the domestic affairs of another nation, and must consider strategic, political and

economic matters as well as human rights. Public opinion and international organizations have no such restrictions but do not carry the weight of governments in pressuring the Soviet leaders.