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Tentative book title:

To the Success of Our Hopeless Cause: A History of the Soviet Dissident Movement

Part Four:

FROM THE OTHER SHORE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND SOVIET DISSIDENTS

Dear Colleagues,

My apologies for submitting such a long excerpt from my book ms. and my thanks in advance for your comments and critique. This pair of chapters represents the most explicitly transnational part of my book; the rest is focused more internally on the intellectual and political history of rights-based dissent in the Soviet Union after Stalin.

I look forward very much to our discussion on April 12.

Best,

Ben Nathans

CHAPTER 8: OMBUDSMAN OF THE WORLD

Does the Soviet dissident movement belong to the broader history of youth protest that enveloped much of the industrialized world in the 1960s? This notion has tempted historians of ideas and international relations alike. From Paris and Berlin to Prague and Moscow (and in one version, in Berkeley and Beijing as well), it has been argued that a new generation of “sophisticated rebels” developed an “international language of dissent,” a “lingua franca of protest,” an “international dissident culture,” leading in 1968 to a “global disruption.”¹

¹ H. Stuart Hughes, *Sophisticated Rebels: The Political Culture of European Dissent, 1968-1987* (Cambridge, 1990), makes a relatively restrained case for a shared culture of protest that was “sophisticated in the sense of recognizing realistic limits and frequently defying conventional

For Soviet dissidents, something more than a shared language or a set of transnational family resemblances was at work. There were actual conversations and mutual influences, carried out via texts smuggled into and out of the USSR, arduous long-distance phone calls, and face-to-face meetings in the kitchens of Moscow apartments. But these conversations were not conducted with the Mario Savio and Daniel Cohn-Bendits and Rudi Dutschkes of the world, or with other student protesters in the aforementioned cities (with the partial exception of Prague). Rather, as I propose in the following pair of chapters, the dissident movement in the Soviet Union found its most engaging interlocutors in what were then relatively unknown western non-governmental organizations (NGOs).² Even at the non-governmental level, a common language across East and West was by no means a given; it had to be elaborated in fits and starts over the course of the decade *after* 1968, with only imperfect results. Insofar as a shared transnational language emerged, moreover, it was not one of youthful rebellion, anti-militarism, civil

classification as right or left” (p. 13). The most recent interpretation of this apparently transnational political culture is by Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, 2011), especially pp. 171-242. Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, 2003) offers thought-provoking but empirically unsustainable arguments regarding a language and culture of dissent shared by student radicals in the west and their alleged counterparts in the Soviet Union and China (see especially pp. 3, 94, and 164). Suri’s argument about the political effects of an expanding post-war university population does not hold for the Soviet case, where in any event the majority of dissidents were well beyond their university years. His reading of Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (and his use of Solzhenitsyn as representative of the Soviet dissident movement as a whole) is egregiously wide of the mark: that novella neither “singled out Stalin for criticism” (it never mentions Stalin) nor offered a “condemnation of the communist political project” (Suri, 105), which, needless to say, would have torpedoed its publication, not to mention Khrushchev’s personal approval thereof. Suri’s central claim that a “social crisis of the nation-state” (211) helped usher in détente, that the latter “grew from a common urge for stability among leaders under attack at home” (2) simply doesn’t work for Brezhnev’s Soviet Union, where the move toward détente was driven by the desire for geopolitical, technological, and economic gains and where détente *itself* was associated with heightened risk of ideological contamination from the West, and thus the possibility of social unrest.

² These included professional organizations of western scientists, mathematicians, writers, and psychiatrists. On their mobilization on behalf of Soviet dissident colleagues, see Charles Rhéaume, *Sakharov: Science, morale et politique* (Laval [Canada], 2004). In contrast to Suri, Rhéaume’s work suggests that Sakharov and other dissidents had less in common with Berkeley students in the 1960s than with their politically engaged (physics) professors in the 1970s.

disobedience, or self-actualization, but the “thin” lingua franca of universal human rights and the rule of law.³

Among the various NGOs that took an interest in the burgeoning protests and political trials in the USSR during the era of developed socialism, none would come to play as direct a role in the Soviet dissident movement as Amnesty International. Founded in London in 1961 by the attorney Peter Benenson, Amnesty introduced itself to the world as a “movement composed of peoples of all nationalities, politics, religions and social views who are determined to work together in defense of freedom of the mind.”⁴ To give that lofty goal a human face, Amnesty focused its efforts on securing the release of specific individuals jailed solely for their opinions or beliefs, people it called “prisoners of conscience,” provided that they had not advocated or used violence. “Pressure of opinion a hundred years ago,” Benenson announced on the pages of the London *Observer*, “brought about the emancipation of the slaves. It is now for man to insist upon the same freedom for his mind as he has won for his body.”⁵ To anchor their campaign, Benenson and his fellow activists, many of them lawyers and writers, invoked Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the preeminent international rights document of the post-war era. Article 18 announced the universal right to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion,” including the right to manifest one’s belief “alone or in community with others and in public or private.” Article 19, on freedom of opinion and expression, declared the universal right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of

³ On human rights language as “thin description,” see Kenneth Cmiel, “The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States,” *Journal of American History* vol. 86, no. 3 (Dec. 1999), pp. 1248-9.

⁴ Amnesty, *First Annual Report, 1961-62* (London, 1962), p. 1. On the pre-history of Amnesty’s founding and Benenson’s early motives, see Tom Buchanan, “‘The Truth Will Set You Free’: The Making of Amnesty International,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Oct., 2002), pp. 575-97. For recent histories of Amnesty, see Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International* (Ithaca, 2006), and Jonathan Power, *Like Water on Stone: The Story of Amnesty International* (Boston, 2001).

⁵ Peter Benenson, “The Forgotten Prisoners,” *The Observer* (28 May 1961).

frontiers.”⁶ Both were updated, internationalized versions of classic civil liberties articulated in the national contexts of the American and French revolutions.

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1948, the Universal Declaration was an aspirational document that lacked the force of law, let alone actual mechanisms of enforcement. It did not strengthen the document’s claim to universality when, having taken vigorous part in the drafting and editing process, the USSR abruptly abstained from the final vote, reflecting Stalin’s dawning realization that the Declaration could become a tool for foreign interference in Soviet internal affairs. It was not a supra-national entity like the United Nations that concerned the Soviet dictator. After all, Stalin had once famously mocked another such entity with the quip, “The Pope! How many divisions has *he* got?”⁷ It was not paranoia but prescience that led Stalin to grasp that the Declaration could be deployed against the USSR by great powers such as the United States and Great Britain, Moscow’s emerging Cold War rivals. What neither Stalin nor anyone else seems to have intuited at the time, however, was that the Declaration - and its various elaborations over the course of the ensuing quarter-century - might be mobilized most effectively by divisionless organizations like Amnesty International, or indeed by Soviet citizens themselves.

Notwithstanding its self-description as a movement composed of “peoples of all nationalities and religions,” for much of its early history Amnesty’s membership consisted almost exclusively of individuals from English-speaking countries and the Western half of Europe. Its annual dispatch of thousands of Christmas cards to prisoners of conscience around the world unintentionally exposed the gap between universal aspirations and an assumed Christian sensibility.⁸ And yet, in its adoption of prisoners whose cases it sought to publicize,

⁶ Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting and Intent* (Philadelphia, 1999), p. 333.

⁷ Quoted, possibly apocryphally, in Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (London, 1949 [1948]) vol. 1, p. 121.

⁸ See for example Amnesty International, *Second Annual Report, 1st June 1962 - 31st May 1963* (London, 1963), p. 12.

Amnesty went to extraordinary lengths to maintain not just the appearance but the practice of universalism and non-partisanship. Guided by the geography of the Cold War, according to which the globe was partitioned into first, second, and third worlds, Benenson and his fellow activists scrupulously sought out prisoners of conscience in equal proportion from capitalist, communist, and developing countries - a goal more easily articulated than met. At the grass-roots level, each local group of Amnesty volunteers was required to work simultaneously on behalf of three prisoners, one from each category, and never on behalf of a prisoner from their own country. "There are other organizations," Amnesty noted, "that are working within some more limited ideological framework for aid to those of their own particular persuasion. Our strength is that in such matters we take no sides at all."⁹ With its peculiar blend of engagement and detachment, Amnesty practiced, indeed institutionalized, a deliberately distanced empathy, a novel brand of kindness that could come *only* from strangers. As the historian Lynn Hunt has argued, the eighteenth-century sentimental novel taught its readers to widen their circle of empathy and thereby helped set the stage for the revolutionary declarations of rights that followed. In the second half of the twentieth century, Amnesty taught its members to cultivate multiple, transnational circles of empathy and to keep them in check against each other so as not to become too close to any of them.¹⁰ "We are beginning to become what we wish to be," the organization's chairman, Lionel Elvin, reported to members in 1963: "the Ombudsman of the imprisoned conscience everywhere."¹¹

Working at a distance posed special challenges, beginning with how to obtain reliable and timely information about individuals held in prisons thousands of miles away, often guarded by fiercely secretive governments. In a series of three inaugural conferences held in London and Oxford, Amnesty attempted to assess "the state of personal freedom in the ideological regions of the world" - capitalist, communist, and ex-colonial.¹² At the second conference, in June 1962,

⁹ Amnesty International, *Second Annual Report*, p. 3.

¹⁰ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York, 2007), pp. 35-69.

¹¹ Amnesty International, *Second Annual Report*, p.1.

¹² Amnesty International, *Second Annual Report*, p.11.

participants noted with cautious optimism that the Marxist-Leninist countries, whose billion inhabitants constituted roughly a third of the world's population, had recently begun to expand their links to the West, and that under Khrushchev, "the Russians do want a friendly picture of themselves in our eyes now that there is more interchange." "We are not sentimental," announced Elvin, "in thinking Marxists will change to our way of thinking overnight" - the unspoken implication being that, if given sufficient time, they might do so.¹³

However friendly the picture, the realities behind it were less encouraging. Lawyers and writers from the Soviet bloc - the assumed counterparts of Amnesty's members in Britain and elsewhere - had uniformly declined invitations to take part in the conference. Communist countries, observed the scholar and attorney Leonard Schapiro, "insist on their right to criticize the administration of justice in the West, and so they should," yet they resented even the slightest critique of their own courts. "Since the Russian public is denied that right," Schapiro continued, the West had not just a right but "a duty to criticize" Soviet miscarriages of justice.

Criticism, however, needed to be informed. As Benenson - like Schapiro the offspring of Jewish immigrants from tsarist Russia¹⁴ - noted in his closing remarks, the first challenge facing Amnesty was precisely a dearth of information. It was difficult even to obtain names of individual prisoners of conscience behind the Iron Curtain, let alone to reliably estimate their total number. An internal 1963 Amnesty report on prisoners of conscience by country put the Soviet Union in second place globally (tied with Iraq and East Germany) at 12,000 - well behind the front-runner, Cuba, where there were said to be 75,000. These were at best educated guesses. A few years later, still frustrated by the inability to gain reliable data, internal Amnesty

¹³ Amnesty International, *Personal Freedom in the Marxist-Leninist Countries. Report of Conference, June 16th 1962* (London, n.d.), pp. 1-3.

¹⁴ On Peter Benenson's Russian-Jewish ancestors, see his mother's memoir: Flora Solomon (née Benenson) and Barry Litvinoff, *A Woman's Way* (New York, 1984), pp. 15-58. Peter Benenson converted to Catholicism at age 37, several years before founding Amnesty. His maternal aunt, Manya Harari, was a prominent translator from Russian, including works by Andrei Amalrik, Evgeniia Ginzburg, Pavel Litvinov, Boris Pasternak, Andrei Sinyavsky (his fiction as well as the transcript of his trial), and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

documents put the number of Soviet prisoners of conscience at “between 5,000 and several hundred thousand.”¹⁵ Not a single participant in the 1962 conference named a specific prisoner or current judicial case in the USSR. If Khrushchev’s revelations of Stalin’s crimes had caused Soviet citizens to question the party line, the conference concluded, then “so far the dissenters have been obliged to keep their thoughts to themselves.”¹⁶

As the preceding chapters have shown, that was rapidly ceasing to be the case. Small islands of “other-thinking” (*inakomyслие*) were forming across the Soviet Union, some of them linked by emerging networks of samizdat and idioms of opposition ranging from neo-Leninism to evangelical Christianity. But such developments were scarcely visible within the Soviet Union itself, let alone from Amnesty’s headquarters at Crane Court in the heart of London. In this respect Amnesty was in good company. Most western observers, accustomed to regarding the USSR as the archetypal totalitarian state, were as yet largely unaware of public manifestations of discontent inside the Soviet Union. A classified 1964 CIA assessment of “dissident youth” around the world, for example, while claiming that “Soviet youth are disillusioned with the political regime,” contrasted their passivity with the vigorous protests by their counterparts in much of the rest of the developed world. Only “in the long run,” the report concluded, would the Soviets “have to deal with their own young people.”¹⁷

¹⁵ The first set of estimates dates from 1963: see International Institute for Social History (Amsterdam), Amnesty International Archive, International Executive Committee (EUR 46) [henceforth IISH AI-IEC], microfilm reel 243, “Agenda of the second meeting of the International Executive of AI,” London, 30 Nov. to 1 Dec. 1963, frame 16. For the second estimate, see International Institute for Social History, Amnesty International Archive, Index Documents on the USSR (EUR 46) [henceforth IISH AI-Index], Folder 438, “Report on political prisoners in USSR” (not later than 1969), p. 1.

¹⁶ Amnesty International, *Personal Freedom in the Marxist-Leninist Countries. Report of Conference, June 16th 1962* (London, n.d.), pp. 1-3, 5-6, 10, 27. Schapiro’s remarks at the conference are paraphrased in this document rather than reported verbatim.

¹⁷ “Dissident Youth: The Dynamics of Protest” (Dec. 1, 1964), accessed on August 8, 2012 via the CIA Electronic Reading Room at http://www.foia.cia.gov/docs/DOC_0000575981/DOC_0000575981.pdf.

In 1963, Amnesty applied to the Soviet government for permission to send an observer to one of a series of well publicized trials involving alleged economic crimes, in which a conspicuously high proportion of the defendants were Jewish. No reply was received. Nor was it clear whether Amnesty even had the necessary funds to send an observer, or for that matter whether it was the defendants' conscience that had led to their imprisonment.¹⁸ Not until October 1965 did Amnesty formally adopt its first Soviet prisoner of conscience, a student named Evgenii Belov whose case was made known by four British students for whom Belov had served as interpreter during their visit to Moscow earlier that year. Following his contact with the four foreigners, Belov - an enthusiastic communist by their account - had apparently sent letters to Party officials criticizing aspects of the Soviet government, after which he was diagnosed with acute schizophrenia and confined in a psychiatric hospital. The case resonated in Britain in no small measure because it arose shortly after the publication of the novel *Ward 7* by the Soviet writer Valerii Tarsis, one of the earliest exposés of Soviet punitive psychiatry to reach the West.¹⁹

Far better known than either Tarsis or Belov, of course, was the case of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, whose arrest in September 1965 and subsequent trial on charges of anti-Soviet slander we have had occasion to explore in depth. It would be difficult to imagine a case more perfectly tailored to Amnesty's purposes. Here were two writers sentenced to years of hard labor for ideas expressed in works of fiction. The precipitating event - publication of those works abroad - seemed to fall precisely under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on the free flow of information across borders. Indeed, some of the arrested writers' Soviet supporters explicitly invoked Article 19 in their defense, apparently unaware that their

¹⁸ IISH AI-IEC, microfilm reel 243, "Agenda of the second meeting of the International Executive of AI, London, 30 Nov. to 1 Dec. 1963," frame 20. See also Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1966-67* (London, 1967), section on USSR [no pagination].

¹⁹ On the Belov case: Amnesty International, *Annual Report, June 1, 1965 - May 31, 1966* (London, 1966), p.14; IISH AI-Index, Folder 437, "Writers in Prison in the USSR," p. 2, and Folder 446, "Situation Paper on the USSR," p. 1. See also Valerii Tarsis, *Ward 7: An Autobiographical Novel* (London, 1965).

government had not endorsed the Declaration.²⁰ No allegations of mental illness had arisen to cloud the issue of freedom of conscience. Furthermore, the defendants had not only maintained their innocence but had done so, at least in Sinyavsky's case, by invoking the autonomous and apolitical nature of the literary text - a line of reasoning very close to Amnesty's commitment to "freedom of the mind" and, needless to say, a bourgeois heresy in the Soviet setting. Yet after exploring the two cases in the hope of averting a trial, Amnesty decided against formally adopting either writer as a prisoner of conscience. "It was unfortunate," the organization explained shortly after the sentencing, "that these cases were widely exploited for Cold War purposes." Having positioned itself as hovering above politics and ideologies, Amnesty could not afford to subscribe to the notion that any publicity on behalf of prisoners of conscience - especially "the kind of Cold War publicity which surrounds the names of Sinyavsky and Daniel" - was beneficial, whether for the prisoners or for Amnesty itself.²¹

The conspicuous rise of human rights advocacy in the 1970s, in which public 'naming and shaming' became an indispensable tactic, makes it easy to forget how uncertain the role of publicity was during Amnesty's first decade. Today Amnesty focuses almost exclusively on how, rather than whether, to maximize public attention to rights violations, while governments - or at least those governments which make it their business to monitor the state of human rights in other countries - weigh the risks and benefits of behind-the-scenes diplomacy vs. open criticism. The evolution of Amnesty's engagement with Soviet dissidents sheds a good deal of light on the origins of this informal division of labor. To understand that process, one needs to revisit an era when NGOs themselves had to assess the risks and benefits of publicity, if only because no other entities - neither sovereign states nor the United Nations - had yet gotten into the business of

²⁰ Aleksandr Ginzburg, ed. *Belaia kniga po delu A. Siniavskogo i Iu. Danielia*, pp. 79 and 87.

²¹ *Annual Report, June 1, 1965 - May 31, 1966*, p.14; IISH AI-Index, Folder 437, "Writers in Prison in the USSR," p. 1. Individual Amnesty members did however write to Soviet officials urging Sinyavsky and Daniel to be treated with clemency: see Sinyavsky's file from the office of the Soviet procuracy, in the Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiiskoi federatsii (henceforth GARF), f. 8131 (1965), op. 31, d. 99561, ll. 60-65.

systematically monitoring human rights practices, let alone speaking out forcefully on behalf of international norms.²²

Most of Amnesty's earliest tactics - letters from small groups of private citizens to officials of foreign countries where alleged human rights violations had taken place, letters offering moral support to prisoners of conscience, sending observers to political trials - did not involve public exposure of alleged violations or of their victims. Indeed, internal memoranda captured the organization's uncertainty over whether "Amnesty intervention could further endanger prisoners" in certain countries, especially in the communist bloc. As late as 1968, Amnesty's International Executive Committee, the body responsible for setting the organization's global policies, registered "strong doubts" about whether extensive publicity regarding prisoners of conscience "can do any good in Soviet cases." On the contrary, it might trigger retribution against prisoners' families and friends or against prisoners themselves.²³

Whatever the Committee's doubts, for much of the 1960s the question whether to publicize the plight of prisoners in the USSR was mostly moot: apart from a handful of cases, there was a near total information blackout regarding convicted individuals. Requests for permission to send observers to "political" trials, one of Amnesty's standard fact-finding techniques in other parts of the world, were met with silence or a terse message from Soviet embassies that the requests "were without foundation."²⁴ When a Norwegian lawyer and

²² Ramesh Thakur, "Human Rights: Amnesty International and the United Nations," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 31, no. 2 (May, 1994), pp. 143-60, argues that the United Nations, as a genuinely global organization, is structurally suited to generate and legitimate international norms, while Amnesty, as a Western NGO, is structurally suited to monitoring of compliance with those norms.

²³ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 243, "International Executive Committee meeting, February 17/18, 1968," frames 330 and 387. As regards Communist China, Amnesty had concluded a year earlier that "intervention could jeopardize a prisoner's chance of release." See Amnesty's on-line history of itself at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/who-we-are/history> (accessed on May 17, 2012).

²⁴ Amnesty, *Annual Report 1967-68* (London, 1968), p. 7. In October 1968, Peter Archer, a British Member of Parliament and Amnesty supporter, applied for permission to attend the trial of Larissa Daniel and the other Red Square demonstrators, but was refused a visa by the Soviet Embassy in London. A year later, Amnesty's Swedish section applied for permission to send an observer to the trial of Ivan Yakhimovich (arrested and confined in a psychiatric hospital for

Amnesty member, Ingjald Orbeck Sørheim, arrived in Moscow in January 1968 on a tourist visa and announced his intention to attend the “Trial of the Four” - Aleksandr Ginzburg, Iurii Galanskov, Vera Lashkova, and Aleksandr Dobrovolskii, all accused of creating and distributing “anti-Soviet” texts - he was barred from entering the courtroom, along with dozens of the defendants’ supporters.²⁵ No local group of Amnesty volunteers had “ever succeeded in receiving a reply to their cards” addressed to Soviet prisoners; these were usually stamped *inconnu* or *adresse inexacte* and returned to the senders. Nor had Soviet authorities demonstrated any willingness to provide information about prisoners in response to hundreds of letters from local Amnesty groups or from the organization’s London leadership.²⁶

Moscow’s silence in response to inquiries from Amnesty activists should not be taken as a sign of special hostility toward the organization itself. True, the Russian-language letterhead used by the Amnesty leadership for letters to Soviet officials, with its prominently displayed epigram from Voltaire - “I despise your ideas but am prepared to die for the sake of your right to express them” - displayed what can only be called an egregious tone-deafness vis-à-vis its audience.²⁷ But Amnesty’s work during the 1960s on behalf of imprisoned leftists, and the potential of certain Western NGOs to mobilize grass-roots support for individuals and causes favored by the USSR, did not go unnoticed. A 1968 article in *Pravda* praised Amnesty as an “authoritative international organization” working to stop the arrest and torture of communists by

 protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia), to which they received no response. An internal Amnesty report on the Soviet Union noted in 1973 that “it has not been possible for an Amnesty observer to attend a single trial in the Soviet Union [...]. Applications to attend trials, even by foreign journalists, are considered by the authorities as an intervention in their internal affairs.” IISH AI-Index, Folder 446, “Situation Paper on the USSR, Nov. 1973,” p. 6.

²⁵ Amnesty, *Annual Report 1967-68* (London, 1968), p. 7.

²⁶ IISH AI-Index, Folder 446, “Situation Paper on the USSR, Nov. 1973,” pp. 5-6.

²⁷ For a sample form letter, together with instructions on how to address Soviet officials, see IISH AI-Index, Folder 433, pp. 1-3. The incongruity, in the Soviet setting, of Voltaire’s famous dictum is best captured in the Russian version: Ненавижу Ваши идеи, но готов умереть, чтобы Вы имели право выразить их.

the “fascist” junta in Greece.²⁸ The first Soviet handbook on international NGOs, while classifying Amnesty as “an international bourgeois organization,” described its goals as “promoting guarantees of free speech and religion in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and “assisting in the liberation of individuals imprisoned for their political or religious convictions.” It took note of Amnesty’s work on behalf of the Spanish communist Julián Grimau, sentenced to death in 1963 by Franco’s courts, as well as the president of the African National Congress (and Nobel Peace Prize laureate), Albert Luthuli, whom the apartheid government in South Africa placed under house arrest in 1964.²⁹

But along with these admirable activities, the handbook warned, Amnesty “often adopted reactionary positions under the flag of objectivity.” On the whole, the dramatic growth of international NGOs - the handbook listed over 400 of them - was taken as a sign that socialism, with its emphasis on participation by the masses in international relations, was eclipsing the forces of imperialism. In response, the handbook argued, capitalist governments were desperately trying to turn NGOs into weapons of the Cold War:

In contemporary capitalist society, along with democratic organizations which bring together the most progressive ranks of various social groups [...], there appear mass organizations composed of representatives of various categories of the population which are under the influence of the ideology of the ruling classes. The appearance of these kinds of organizations is linked to the effort by the dominant classes of capitalist society to exploit the growth in mass activism for their own interests and to confine it within a certain framework [...]. As a result, many international NGOs [...] de facto carry out the directives of bourgeois parties and are kept on retainer by the Western powers and various monopolies. Regular subsidies from these sources constitute the basic means of [the NGOs’] financing, although the overwhelming majority of such organizations seek to highlight their alleged independence from the ruling bosses of the capitalist world and to underscore in every possible way their “apolitical” nature.³⁰

²⁸ S. S. Smirnov, “Moguchii golos solidarnosti,” *Pravda* (July 17, 1968), p. 4. Smirnov was Chairman of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with Greek Democrats and a member of Moscow branch of the Union of Writers. He had chaired the session that demanded expulsion of Boris Pasternak from the Soviet Union. My thanks to Alexander Griбанov for this information.

²⁹ A. S. Beliakov, ed., *Mezhdunarodnye nepravitel’stvennye organizatsiia. Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 23-4. The handbook was compiled by researchers at the Institute for World Economy and Foreign Relations (IMEMO), part of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

Its Leninist fairy-tale language notwithstanding, there was more than a little truth to this passage. In 1967, an investigation by *Ramparts* magazine revealed that a wide range of allegedly “non-governmental” organizations, from the Congress for Cultural Freedom to Radio Free Europe, had for years been receiving covert financial support from the CIA, even as they trumpeted their independence from American foreign policy. As historians have subsequently discovered, the CIA secretly coordinated additional Cold War funding from such representatives of the “ruling bosses” as the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.³¹

Across the ocean and at roughly the same time, Amnesty faced a similar scandal of its own. In 1966 it was revealed that Peter Benenson, Amnesty’s founder, as well as Robert Swann, its Secretary General, had not only received, but knowingly received covert British government funds to support Amnesty’s work on behalf of political detainees in the former colony of Rhodesia (today’s Zimbabwe). That colony’s white minority, determined to avoid majority rule, had unilaterally declared independence a year before, to the great displeasure of Great Britain. It did not help when the International Commission of Jurists, another NGO which Benenson had helped found in the 1950s - and which for several years shared office space in London with Amnesty - was found to have (unknowingly) received covert CIA funding via its American affiliate. To make matters even worse, the head of the International Commission of Jurists at the time, the Irish statesman Seán MacBride, was also chairman of Amnesty’s International Executive Committee.³² The ombudsman of the world now appeared entangled in the politics of

³¹ On the Congress for Cultural Freedom, see Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe* (Princeton, 2001), pp. 213-40; on Radio Free Europe, see A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford, 2010); on covert CIA funding for foreign propaganda purposes more broadly, see Frances Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London, 1999).

³² Benenson proceeded to publicly accuse the British secret service of having infiltrated Amnesty with a half-dozen or more agents, and announced his intention - never carried out - of founding a new organization to combat state subversion of NGOs. See Tom Buchanan, “Amnesty International in Crisis, 1966-7,” *Twentieth-Century British History* vol. 15, no. 3 (2004), pp. 267-89; Howard B. Tolley, Jr., *The International Commission of Jurists: Global Advocates for Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 1994), pp. 125-27. The ICJ, with headquarters in Geneva, was covertly funded by the CIA via its U.S. affiliate, the American Fund for Free Jurists, which had

neo-colonialism and the Cold War.

In the wake of the covert funding scandal, the United States government mandated a firewall between the CIA and non-governmental organizations, apart from Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which continued to receive covert CIA funding for their broadcasts to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. What details of the covert funding scandal or of its aftermath became known in Moscow, and when, remains unclear.³³ But two things appear certain. First, Amnesty emerged from the entire episode with a heightened sensitivity to issues of non-partisanship and a good deal of confusion as to what kind of working relationship it ought to have with the world's sovereign states. Financial ties were clearly out of the question. But what about other kinds of relationships? Prisoners of conscience, after all, were almost always prisoners of states, and only states could make the decision to release them. Amnesty had been founded on the proposition that not just states but ordinary men and women could help realize the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. What, if any, forms of dialogue or perhaps even cooperation could take place between an NGO such as Amnesty and an authoritarian, secretive state such as the USSR? Second, despite its professions of ideological neutrality and its record of engagement on behalf of persecuted communists, Soviet authorities now had good reason to doubt Amnesty's impartiality. To the official Soviet mindset, professions of non-partisanship - like Voltaire's declaration - only fueled suspicion of masked purposes, especially given that the map of Amnesty's membership bore a disturbing resemblance to the map of the

been set up by Allen Dulles and John J. McCloy as a counterweight to the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a Soviet-bloc organization. By no means all of the relevant information about Amnesty International emerged during the 1966-7 crisis. As Buchanan shows, both Benenson and Swann themselves had previously worked for the British intelligence services (Benenson during World War Two); in addition, Benenson received covert assistance from the Foreign Office's Information Research Department when he established Amnesty and continued to do so for several years thereafter.

³³ Unspecified allegations that Amnesty received covert funding from Western intelligence services were a staple of Soviet discussions of the organization, both in the mass media and in secret memoranda from the KGB to the Central Committee. The earliest specific mention of the 1967 funding scandal that I have been able to find, however, dates from a 1980 article in *Izvestiia*, discussed later in this chapter.

NATO alliance. Small wonder, then, that Amnesty's letters to the Soviet government went unanswered - for now.³⁴

* * *

In the midst of Amnesty's covert funding scandal, an unexpected document from behind the Iron Curtain arrived at the organization's London headquarters. Compiled by a group calling itself the "Council of Prisoners' Relatives," it contained the names of 200 imprisoned Soviet Baptists. The prisoners and their families belonged to a group who in 1961 had broken from the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, the state-authorized organization designed to represent and, more to the point, exercise control over the USSR's various Baptist communities, whose members numbered in the hundreds of thousands.³⁵ That control had tightened as a result of Khrushchev's anti-religious campaigns, whose chief architect was L. F. Ilichev, the head of the Central Committee's Department of Agitation and Propaganda and, as we have seen, Aleksandr Volpin's onetime nemesis. Ilichev's campaign against baptism of children, performance of religious rituals outside designated churches (thereby excluding rituals at home), and missionary work, sowed widespread tension between religious believers and the state organizations that supervised their activities. In one of the earliest non-literary uses of samizdat,

³⁴ They did not, however, go unnoticed. For examples of letters from local Amnesty adoption groups in England, Holland, Sweden, and Australia, preserved in the Soviet procuracy's case files on various dissidents, see GARF f.8131, op.36, d.5459 (Leonid Pliushch); op.31, d.99561 (Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel); op.36, d.2752 (Lev Kvachevskii and Evgenii Shashenkov). In none of the examples I examined did the case files include comments on or responses to the letters. On occasion, local Amnesty groups who sent letters to the families of political prisoners did receive responses. My thanks to Prof. Peter Reddaway for this information.

³⁵ They did not, however, go unnoticed. For examples of letters from local Amnesty adoption groups in England, Holland, Sweden, and Australia, preserved in the Soviet procuracy's case files on various dissidents, see GARF f.8131, op.36, d.5459 (Leonid Pliushch); op.31, d.99561 (Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel); op.36, d.2752 (Lev Kvachevskii and Evgenii Shashenkov). In none of the examples I examined did the case files include comments on or responses to the letters.

an “Initiative Group” of Baptist resisters, formed in August 1961, circulated a series of petitions addressed to Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders, criticizing the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists for its role in the anti-religious campaign and requesting permission to convene a congress of independent Baptists.³⁶ When the “Initiative Group” announced soon thereafter its intention to form a separate evangelical organization, hundreds of participants were arrested.³⁷

Five years elapsed before the list of imprisoned Baptists arrived - unintentionally - at Amnesty’s headquarters. Most of the information, according to Amnesty’s internal assessment, was “too old to be used” by the time it was received in 1966.³⁸ In the same year, copies of a letter sent by imprisoned Ukrainians to Soviet Procurator-General Roman Rudenko, protesting policies of Russification and demanding that Ukraine be allowed to exercise its constitutional right to peacefully secede from the Soviet Union, reached the West (including Amnesty) with a similar time-lag of roughly five years following the protesters’ trial in Lviv.³⁹

Thanks to the dramatic growth of samizdat in the 1960s and the Soviet Union’s increasingly porous borders, the number of such documents was increasing even as the time it took them to reach the West was beginning to shrink. A second petition concerning a new round of arrests of dissenting Baptists in 1964, for example, took just over two years to arrive in London. Staff members marveled at the breadth and depth of detail: included were each prisoner's name, date of birth, place of residence, date of arrest, the article of the penal code under which he or she was charged, the length of the sentence, and the number of his or her

³⁶ *Arkhiv samizdata* vol. 14, doc. 770, “Dokumenty Initsiativnoi gruppy i Orgkomiteta po sozyvu vsesoiuznogo s’ezda Evangel’skikh khristian-baptistov (1961-66 gg.)”

³⁷ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War Two* (Scottsdale [Pennsylvania], 1981), pp. 139-41.

³⁸ IISH AI-Index, Folder 437, p. 35; Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1966-67* (London, 1967), section on USSR (no pagination).

³⁹ AI-USA Record Group II, Series 5, Box 9, F.22, Doc. 1. Although the Lviv trial was held in May 1961, the prisoners’ petition may have been sent as late as 1964. It was published, with accompanying documents, in Ivan Maistrenko, ed., *Ukrainski iurysty pid sudom KGB* (Suchasnist Publishers: Munich, 1968).

dependants.⁴⁰ “A document of this kind is almost unprecedented,” Amnesty reported to its members. “It is something of a mystery how those who collected the information, which covers an area stretching from Belorussia to Central Asia, were able to do so.”⁴¹ It was indeed a mystery - if one imagined the Soviet Union in the 1960s as an Orwellian dystopia whose population had been terrorized into silence by the regime’s extraordinarily violent social engineering. With hindsight, however, what seems to have made the Baptists’ gathering of information possible, though still extremely risky, was something altogether familiar: ties of family and kinship, including the metaphorical family of evangelical “brothers and sisters” that was repeatedly invoked in the dissenting Baptists’ appeals.⁴² The more enduring puzzle in this case lies elsewhere, at the level not of local but of global information networks: how the dissenting Baptists’ early appeals wound up in Amnesty’s headquarters in London, given that neither party was aware of the other’s existence at the time. None of the Baptists’ petitions had been addressed to entities outside the Soviet Union.⁴³ They may have been smuggled out of the USSR by tourists or diplomats; among those who helped bring samizdat texts out of the USSR during the 1960s were Peter Benenson’s aunt, the translator Manya Harari. Whatever the channel, the arrival of information about imprisoned Baptists made it possible for the first time for Amnesty to adopt, on the basis of reasonably systematic data, nearly a hundred prisoners of conscience inside the Soviet Union.

A transnational network involves more than the mechanics of cross-border transmission of information. Even as the flow of data helps forge an emerging network, the network itself - the identities of its participants and their growing awareness of each other as producers and

⁴⁰ The original text is in *Arkhiv samizdata* vol. 14, document 779, pp. 1-10.

⁴¹ *Annual Report, 1967-68*, p. 16.

⁴² note the ubiquitous language of kinship in the dissident Baptist documents: “Council of Prisoners’ Relatives,” “Bratskii listok,” etc.

⁴³ As an internal Amnesty report noted several years later, “Baptists outside the USSR have remained silent about the imprisonment of their dissident brethren, fearing perhaps for the future of the contacts they have with the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists.” IISH AI-Index, Folder 437, “Confidential report from Research Department, 9 Nov. 1971,” p. 36.

consumers of information - inevitably molds the content of what is being transmitted. If human rights, as the historian Kenneth Cmiel argued, are fundamentally a politics of the information age and of transnational information flows,⁴⁴ then the unplanned journeys of documents from behind the Iron Curtain presaged a qualitatively new relationship between Amnesty - at the time, a little-known Western human rights NGO with global aspirations - and Soviet citizens attempting to assert local rights in a local setting. For years, Amnesty had been stymied by its inability to deploy in the USSR its usual methods for gathering data on prisoners of conscience. The Soviet press was all but useless. Repeated appeals to Soviet officials went answered. Attempts to send observers to “political” trials, let alone fact-finding missions to prisons, labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals, proved again and again to be non-starters.⁴⁵ In the late 1960s, however, facts began finding their way to Amnesty. And Amnesty, in turn, began to adopt Soviet cases based on information selected and arranged by Soviet prisoners themselves, or by local activists working on their behalf.

As we have seen in previous chapters, those who became known as dissidents were not the first to publicly invoke rights enshrined in the Soviet constitution, to make use of samizdat, or to organize petition campaigns and public demonstrations on behalf of victims of state repression. The “Initiative Group” of breakaway Baptists had appealed to Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution, on the separation of church and state, years before Volpin’s 1965 “glasnost’ meeting” and long before the founding of the “Initiative Group in Defense of Civil Rights” in

⁴⁴ Kenneth Cmiel, “The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States,” *Journal of American History* Vol. 86, No. 3, The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue (Dec., 1999), p. 1236.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of contemporary techniques of information-gathering used by human rights NGOs (including Amnesty International), see David Weissbrodt and James McCarthy, “Fact-Finding by International Nongovernmental Human Rights Organizations,” *Virginia Journal of International Law* vol. 22 (1981-82), pp. 1-91, which notes (p. 9) that during the period 1971-78 Amnesty established 111 inquiry missions and 76 trial observer missions. None of them, it should be noted, dealt with the USSR. Amnesty’s relations with the Soviet Union’s East Bloc allies were, if anything, even chillier: see, for example, Anja Mihr, *Amnesty International in der DDR: Der Einsatz für Menschenrechte im Visier der Stasi* (Berlin, 2002), especially pp. 311-14.

1969. More than a hundred thousand exiled Crimean Tatars, also organized into “Initiative Groups,” had signed petitions in the late 1950s asserting their right to return to their homes, nearly a decade before several hundred intellectuals in Moscow and other major cities signed their first petition on behalf of arrested civil rights activists. Crimean Tatars also produced an “Informational Bulletin” in the mid-1960s that predated the dissident *Chronicle of Current Events*.⁴⁶

Yet it was the metropolitan dissidents who, beginning in the mid-1960s, captured Western attention and from whose comparatively thinner ranks iconic individuals emerged. When it came to crafting and exporting the narrative of internal resistance to the Soviet behemoth, it was they, not their predecessors, who prevailed. The earliest documents from arrested Baptists and Ukrainians were gradually eclipsed by texts fashioned by rights activists, whose breadth of coverage, frequency of reporting, and geographical location (Moscow) helped elevate them to positions of unprecedented visibility.

It was not just that more and more samizdat was seeping out of the USSR. Increasingly, metropolitan dissidents were selecting and organizing the many trickles of data on the repressive activities of the Soviet state into a coherent stream before directing that stream westward. The debut of the samizdat *Chronicle of Current Events (Khronika tekushchikh sobytii)* in 1968 marked the beginning of what would become the de facto newsletter of the dissident movement, covering protests, collective petitions, apartment searches, arrests, trials, sentencing, the condition of prisoners in labor camps and psychiatric hospitals, and - not least - the constantly expanding bibliography of samizdat itself. The *Chronicle* did all this under extraordinarily risky conditions, with what proved to be a high degree of accuracy and in something relatively close to real time. During the first five years of its existence, the *Chronicle* appeared roughly every two months, providing readers at home and abroad with the first - and for the time being, the only - organized account of rights violations across the Soviet Union.

⁴⁶ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, pp. 140 and 147.

What had begun as trickles of data into Amnesty's offices swelled, over the course of just a few years, into a more or less continuous stream. Prior to 1968, as internal Amnesty documents noted, "the central difficulty of work in this area [was] lack of information": "[we] had nothing substantive on the Soviet Union." By 1970, Amnesty officials were noting "the tremendous improvement in the flow of information" from the USSR.⁴⁷ So great was Amnesty's regard for (and reliance on) the *Chronicle of Current Events* that in 1969 it took the controversial decision to translate and publish over a thousand copies of each successive issue as it arrived in the London office - the only known instance in which Amnesty published work produced by individuals outside the organization.⁴⁸ By 1975, Amnesty was confronting "an increasing problem of too much information (samizdat) reaching the International Secretariat from the Soviet Union," straining its capacity to translate and distribute incoming texts to the hundreds of local Amnesty groups that had adopted individual Soviet prisoners of conscience.⁴⁹ Indeed, the flood of communication from the dissident movement helped catalyze the professionalization of Amnesty's growing research department, which in 1970 added the Soviet specialist Hilary Sternberg to its ranks, and in 1971 established a working group in London to collect and translate documents arriving from the USSR.⁵⁰ In 1974, representatives of local Amnesty groups from

⁴⁷ IISH, AI-Index, Folder 446, "Situation Paper on the USSR, Nov. 1973.," p. 2; Folder 455, "Report #2 on meeting of USSR coordination groups, London, 14/15 June 1975," p. 3; AI-USA Record Group II, Series 5, Box 9, F.23, "Prisoners of Conscience in Eastern Europe: A Report published to mark the centenary of Lenin's birth (April 22, 1870)."

⁴⁸ The *Annual Report 1970-71* (London, 1971), p. 70, described the *Chronicle* as "Amnesty's main source of information on Soviet prisoners of conscience and new arrests [...]. This is the first time Amnesty has published material of this kind—i.e. material which is distributed outside the organization, and which has not been compiled by Amnesty observers as a result of their own enquiries. The circumstances, however, are exceptional and during the *Chronicle's* three-year history it has been possible to check its authenticity against a number of other sources—Soviet press reports, Western press reports and information from travelers to the USSR. These checks have revealed a high level of accuracy and reliability; no single event has been significantly misreported, and only authentic documents have been either mentioned or summarized."

⁴⁹ IISH AI-Index, "Report on meeting of USSR coordination groups, London, 14/15 June 1975," Folder 455, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁰ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 243, "Development of research on the USSR. 21-22 March 1970," p. 708; Amnesty International, *Annual Report for 1971-72* (London, 1972), p. 43.

various countries held their first meeting to coordinate efforts on behalf of prisoners in the Soviet Union.⁵¹ Gatherings of the “USSR Coordination Groups” henceforth became an annual event. By 1982, 630 local Amnesty groups in eleven countries were working on behalf of some 500 Soviet prisoners of conscience (up from 185 prisoners in 1968):

<u>Country</u>	<u>Number of local Amnesty Groups whose adoptees included Soviet prisoners of conscience</u>
Austria	30
Belgium	24
Canada	15
Denmark	26
Finland	3
France	105
West Germany	220
Netherlands	67
Norway	35
Switzerland	25
USA	80
TOTAL	630

According to Amnesty officials, this represented “an upper limit for the balance of [our] work as a whole and for the capacity of the research team.”⁵²

The *Chronicle* regularly reported, inter alia, on rights violations involving Baptists, Ukrainians, Tatars, Jews, and ethnic Germans, providing them a degree of visibility they were unable to achieve on their own. Moreover, as Amnesty’s list of adopted Soviet prisoners of conscience expanded, those jailed or exiled for religious activities (as opposed to the “politicals”)

⁵¹ AI-USA Record Group IV, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 11 (Soviet Coordination Group), F. 9, Document 1, p. 1.

⁵² Data for 1968: AI-IEC, Microfilm 243, p. 386, “Currently adopted prisoners as of August 1968.” Data for 1982: AI-USA Record Group IV, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 11, F. 12, Document 1, “Minutes of international meeting (Paris, March 20-21, 1982) of USSR Coordination Groups,” p. 4; Record Group II, Series 2, Box 11, F. 15, Document 1, “International Meeting of USSR Coordinators, 1982 March 20-21,” pp. 1-8. “The balance of our work as a whole” refers to Amnesty’s commitment to proportionality in its advocacy on behalf of prisoners in the capitalist, communist, and developing worlds. For most of the 1970s, the Soviet Union was at or near the top of the list of countries with the most adopted prisoners of conscience.

continued to constitute roughly half the total. When it came to highlighting individual cases of persecution, however, Amnesty's leaders, like the Western media generally, displayed an unselfconscious preference for articulate, urbane intellectuals who spoke in the universalist idiom of human rights - which is to say, for people more or less like themselves. When Amnesty launched its "Postcards for Prisoners" program in 1965 - one of a series of increasingly ambitious international publicity campaigns - the USSR was represented by the mathematician Aleksandr Volpin. Over the course of the next five years, the postcard campaign took up the cause of Vladimir Bukovsky and Iurii Galanskov (both expellees from Moscow State University) as well as Major-General Petro Grigorenko - all activists for civil and human rights. By comparison, two Baptists were the object of postcard campaigns: Aida Skripnikova (whom we met in Chapter 3) and the preacher Georgii Vins, who described the encounter of evangelical Christians with the Soviet state as a contest "between God's servants and Satan."⁵³ For its 1968 "Prisoner of the Year" campaign, Amnesty set itself the task of selecting three iconic prisoners of conscience, one each from the capitalist, socialist, and developing worlds. This was no easy task, even within each of the three zones, let alone when trying to balance them against each other. The pragmatists on Amnesty's International Executive Committee argued for choosing individuals based on the likelihood of their being released; others asserted that longevity of imprisonment should be the deciding factor. In the USSR, the Committee noted,

there are very many candidates one could have presented from various categories of prisoner of conscience, e.g., imprisoned writers, Ukrainian nationalist intellectuals, dissident Baptists and so on. The [Aleksandr] Ginzburg case is a good one, as it provides a link with Sinyavsky and Daniel; it is also representative of many other similar ones.⁵⁴

Ginzburg, of course, had distinguished himself as editor of the samizdat poetry journal *Sintaksis* and the sensational *White Book* of documents from the Sinyavsky and Daniel trial. If the ability to stand for a large number of analogous cases had been the deciding factor, however, an

⁵³ AI-USA, Record Group II, Series 5, Box 9, F.23, "Monthly Newsletter from AI: Postcards for Prisoners Campaign" (issues from April and June 1971); Arkhiv samizdata vol. 14, doc. 770.

⁵⁴ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 243, p. 330, "International Executive Committee meeting, February 17/18, 1968."

imprisoned Baptist would surely have been chosen, given that more than half of Amnesty's adopted Soviet prisoners that year were evangelical Christians.

When considering the existence of a subtle "selection bias" in an organization dedicated to a set of ostensibly universal rights, it is well to recall that Amnesty faced daunting hurdles in gathering and evaluating evidence of abuses on an increasingly global scale. Evidence of preferences in its relationship with various dissident sub-communities in the Soviet Union should be seen against the background of the organization's strenuous efforts to maintain balance across the divides of the Cold War. In fact, a moral as well as a utilitarian case could be made for heightened attention to those who were not only victims of rights abuses, but who themselves actively defended the rights of others, or what Hannah Arendt called "the right to have rights," just as many legal systems impose more severe punishment for assaulting a police officer than a civilian.⁵⁵

But neither in public nor behind closed doors did Amnesty make that case. Rather, it was beleaguered Soviet dissidents who, by highlighting (unsurprisingly) their own cosmopolitan, secular idiom of struggle for civil liberties, exerted an unspoken pull on the perceptions and priorities of what was rapidly becoming the most influential global human rights NGO of the Cold War era.⁵⁶ Dissident texts invoked the Soviet Constitution and Criminal Code as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements - precisely the genre of documents Amnesty had been citing in its appeals. Baptist documents, by contrast, established their authority with biblical quotations and references to divine commandments: "It is

⁵⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1958 [1951]), pp. 290-302.

⁵⁶ To be sure, Amnesty was hardly alone in this respect. Many Western journalists similarly gravitated, in varying degrees, to the dissidents' version of Soviet reality - "the only live story in town," as one put it. Quoted by Whitman Bassow, *The Moscow Correspondents: Reporting on Russia from the Revolution to Glasnost* (New York, 1988), p. 243. For a more critical view, see Peter Osnos, "Soviet Dissidents and the American Press," *Columbia Journalism Review*, vol. 16 (November 1977), pp. 32-37, and Leon Aron, "The Moscow Interlude. Covering the Soviet Union for the American Elite Press: 1970-1980. A Study in the Sociology of Newsmaking" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation: Columbia University, 1986), Chapter Nine - "Sources: The Dissidents," pp. 255-68.

time to act for the Lord, for they have violated Your law” (Psalm 119:126) and “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).⁵⁷ Ukrainian nationalists, for their part, even when armed with impeccable legal arguments (Soviet as well as international) for linguistic and cultural autonomy, could not entirely free themselves, in the eyes of many Western observers, from the darker legacies of ethnic nationalism and the undeniably political nature of the demand for secession.

Dissident narratives also reinforced the individualizing instinct that governed virtually all of Amnesty’s public campaigns, with their emphasis on personalizing, or “putting a face” on, human rights issues. That instinct drew upon the Enlightenment conviction that individual agency, or sovereignty over the self, was the sine qua non of human dignity.⁵⁸ Although Baptists and Ukrainian nationalists were a substantial presence among Amnesty’s adopted prisoners of conscience - thanks in no small part to their links to Moscow-based dissidents - at the end of the day they stood for discrete collectives based largely on ties of kinship and ethnicity, while the dissidents appeared as individuals brought together purely by elective affinities - again subtly mirroring their counterparts in Amnesty International.⁵⁹ The fact that Baptists and Ukrainian

⁵⁷ In the Russian Orthodox Bible, the first quotation is found in Psalm 118. These are among the dozens of biblical quotations found, for example, in the dissenting Baptists’ public appeals from the first half of the 1960s. See *Arkhib samizdata* vol. 14, documents 673, 770 and 771. It is worth noting that on the cover of every issue of the *Chronicle of Current Events* stood Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on the right “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” On the cover of every issue of the *Bulletin of the Council of Relatives of Imprisoned Evangelical Christian Baptists in the USSR* stood verse 13:3 from the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Remember the prisoners, as though you were in prison with them...”

⁵⁸ Kant: Die Menschenwürde liegt in der Freiheit, in der Autonomie (Human dignity is grounded in freedom, in autonomy).

⁵⁹ These distinctions are not absolute: Soviet Baptists were open to newcomers and united by faith, although in practice they tended to be organized in extended family units. The metropolitan dissidents, while highly individualized and brought together primarily by commitment to certain ideas, were sometimes linked by ties of marriage and family. Thus for example in addition to the married couples Bonner/Sakharov, Bogoraz/Marchenko, and Volpin/Kristi, Pavel Litvinov’s wife Maia was the daughter of Raisa Orlova and Lev Kopelev; Valery Chalidze was married to Pavel Litvinov’s cousin Vera Litvinova; Petr Yakir’s daughter Irina was married to Yuli Kim; the sisters Tatiana, Zoia, Kseniia, Ekaterina and Maria

nationalists defined themselves as groups did not sit comfortably with Amnesty's assumption that individual figures - such as those selected as "Prisoner of the Year" - generated the most potent publicity. Imprisoned Baptists, as an internal Amnesty report noted, "nearly all have a similar background," making them easier to categorize for adoption but more difficult to deploy as fully fleshed-out icons of persecution. In a kind of self-reinforcing logic, it was concluded that letter-writing campaigns were "more or less meaningless in the case of less publicly known prisoners such as the majority of the dissident Baptists."⁶⁰

* * *

Alongside its moral solidarity with prisoners of conscience around the world, Amnesty kept a pragmatic eye on power, that is, on the governments that controlled the fates of those prisoners. For most of the 1960s, as we have seen, efforts to communicate directly with Soviet authorities had come to naught: invitations to Soviet jurists to attend conferences sponsored by Amnesty had failed to elicit a response, as had the overwhelming majority of letters from Amnesty's many adoption groups inquiring about this or that prisoner. The first to break through the wall of silence was Seán MacBride, since 1965 the chairman of Amnesty's International Executive Committee. Born in Paris to exiled Irish republicans, MacBride had, among Amnesty's leaders, unique credentials with which to approach the Kremlin. The British

Velikanova were married to, respectively, the dissidents Konstantin Babitskii, Nikolai Iarnykh, Sergei Miuge, Aleksandr Daniel (son of Yuli Daniel and Larisa Bogoraz; Ekaterina Velikanova subsequently married the Leningrad dissident Arsenii Roginskii), and Andrei Grigorenko (son of Petro Grigorenko). This led one wit to dub the mother of the Velikanova sisters, Nataliia Aleksandrovna Vinavera, the "mother-in-law of Russian democracy" - somewhat unfairly, since the sisters were dissidents in their own right. See Sergei Miuge, *Ulybka fortuny: avtobiograficheskie nabroski* (Jersey City, 1982), p. CHECK [on-line text: <http://lib.rus.ec/b/256707/read>].

⁶⁰ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 243, "Development of research on the USSR. 21-22 March 1970," p. 708; AI-USA Record Group IV, Series 1, Subseries 3, Box 11, F. 9, Document 3, "Notes from April 20-21, 1974 meeting of national sections on the USSR."

government had executed his father for participating in the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin and imprisoned Seán MacBride three times for revolutionary activities during the 1920s. After serving as chief of staff for the Irish Republican Army (and defense attorney for several of its arrested leaders), MacBride rose to become independent Ireland's minister of external affairs in 1948. A leading figure in the post-war international peace and disarmament movements, he was a frequent visitor to the foreign ministries of communist countries, where he also worked to build bridges between associations of lawyers across the Iron Curtain.⁶¹

In the early 1970s, MacBride visited the USSR several times in his capacity as chairman of the International Peace Bureau (an NGO) in order to help plan the World Congress of Peace Forces, to be held in Moscow in October 1973. This connection allowed him to initiate a conversation about Amnesty's activities, first with Mikhail Smirnovskii, the Soviet ambassador to the United Kingdom, and then with officials in Moscow. Soviet authorities arranged for MacBride to deal directly with what they considered to be Amnesty's closest NGO equivalent in the USSR, the Association of Soviet Lawyers. The Association was only nominally "non-governmental," its membership and activities, like those of all "public" organizations in the Soviet Union, controlled by the Communist Party. As we have seen, this was not all that different from how Soviet officials viewed Amnesty and many other Western NGOs, whether because of the history of covert funding by Western intelligence services, or because Soviet officials instinctively projected certain of their own local arrangements onto groups operating abroad. In the Cold War battle for hearts and minds, Moscow and Washington had created and/or funded numerous "front" organizations, essentially fake NGOs (or GNGOs, as they are archly referred to today - Governmental Non-Governmental Organizations). In the Soviet case this was an old game, going back to the front organizations fashioned by Moscow in the West during the 1930s.

⁶¹ Tolley, *International Commission of Jurists*, pp. 100-102 and 120.

For Amnesty, the talks in Moscow had several purposes, as captured in a 1973 “Situation Paper” on the USSR: “to give Soviet authorities an understanding of Amnesty’s work throughout the world; to pursue possibilities of cooperation on an international level and in areas of mutual interest, such as South Vietnam and Indonesia; and to openly discuss political imprisonment in the USSR.”⁶² Motives on the Soviet side are more difficult to discern, not least because of limited access to the relevant archives. In the international battle for “world public opinion” that Moscow viewed as central to the era of “peaceful coexistence” (just as Washington regarded the “struggle for hearts and minds” as vital to the “Cold War”), Amnesty’s significance was on the rise. As we have seen, Soviet media had on occasion praised Amnesty’s activities when they cast a critical light on Moscow’s opponents - especially when those opponents were clients of the United States such as Iran and South Vietnam. But most Soviet press coverage of Amnesty in the years leading up to MacBride’s overture had been unfailingly vitriolic. *Literaturnaia gazeta* had branded the organization “subversive and hostile to the Soviet Union.”⁶³ The Ukrainian edition of *Pravda* accused Amnesty of occupying a “leading position among organizations that conduct anti-Soviet propaganda,” “disseminating falsified materials [a veiled reference to the *Chronicle of Current Events*] in capitalist countries,” and being “closely allied with the secret services of the USA and England.”⁶⁴ In response to Amnesty’s claims regarding the forced confinement of Soviet dissidents in psychiatric hospitals, *Izvestiia* attacked the “notorious” and “unscrupulous” organization as a “malignant slanderer concerned with one thing alone: to depict the mentally sick person as a great ‘fighter for an idea.’ It is not given to every film star in the West to receive such ‘publicity’.”⁶⁵

Soviet media thus conveyed the impression of an organization with considerable power to manipulate Western public opinion - an impression consistent with the way Amnesty was soon to

⁶² IISH AI-Index, Folder 446, “Situation Paper on the USSR, Nov. 1973,” p. 7.

⁶³ M. Maksimov, “Posle prozreniia,” *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Sept. 12, 1973), p. 9.

⁶⁴ “Wrong Address, Gentlemen,” *Pravda Ukrainy* (Nov. 1, 1970), reprinted in the *Digest of the Soviet Ukrainian Press* (December 1970).

⁶⁵ K. Briantsev, *Izvestiia* (25 Oct. 1971). **CHECK 23 Oct. as per Reddaway’s suggestion.**

be described in internal discussions at the highest levels of the Soviet government and Communist Party.⁶⁶ It is plausible, therefore, that Soviet leaders - including KGB head Yuri Andropov and foreign minister Andrei Gromyko - regarded MacBride's initiative as a chance to steer Amnesty's powers of publicity in a direction more favorable, or at least less damaging, to Soviet interests. The recent increase in Amnesty's knowledge of and attention to the plight of prisoners of conscience in the USSR may well have added a sense of urgency. Particularly damaging was the widespread publicity given to dissidents who were subjected to confinement in psychiatric hospitals and to psychotropic drugs, feeding Orwellian images of thought-control and, by 1973, triggering calls for an international investigation into alleged Soviet abuses.⁶⁷

Whether it was with an eye toward softening Western criticism or shaming authoritarian clients of the United States, or simply a recognition that Seán MacBride was the Kremlin's best hope within Amnesty's leadership (the sole former revolutionary and former prisoner of a capitalist, or any, government), Soviet authorities sent a series of signals in 1973 indicating an unprecedented willingness to talk. In addition to asking MacBride, in his capacity as head of the International Peace Bureau, to serve as deputy chairman of the World Congress for Peace Forces, Soviet sponsors invited representatives from Amnesty to take part in sessions at the Congress dealing with human rights - the first time Amnesty had been permitted to send staff members to the Soviet Union in their official capacity, as opposed to visiting as tourists. Furthermore, meetings were arranged with prominent Soviet jurists such as Arkadii Poltorak (former secretary

⁶⁶ Document this by reference to *Vlast' i dissidenty*, or refer to later section of the chapter where this claim is substantiated

⁶⁷ Sidney Bloch and Peter Reddaway, *Psychiatric Terror: How Soviet Psychiatry is Used to Suppress Dissent* (New York, 1977), pp. 303-20. At the same time - though it is not clear whether Soviet leaders were aware of it - Amnesty officials were debating whether to include the Soviet Union among the targets of their largest global action to date: the Campaign Against Torture. For glimpses of the internal debate, see IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 244, pp. 178-79 and 1522; IISH AI-Index, Folder 446, "Situation Paper on the USSR, Nov. 1973." In its first comprehensive global report on torture, Amnesty's treatment of the USSR focused on the use of psychiatry against dissidents and the use of hunger as a weapon against camp inmates. See Amnesty International, *Report on Torture* (New York, 1975 [London, 1973]), pp. 187-91.

of the Soviet delegation to the Nuremberg Trials), Igor Blishchenko (a leading specialist on international law at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Samuil Zivs (an expert on law in “imperialist” countries and vice-president of the Association of Soviet lawyers). A confidential report by Nigel Rodley, Amnesty’s legal officer, captured the heady sense of a historic new phase in Amnesty’s relationship with the USSR: “What happened basically was that bilateral negotiations took place between the Soviets and Amnesty. These negotiations were conducted by lawyers.”⁶⁸ Whether they qualified as “negotiations” was of course in the eye of the beholder, given the vast asymmetries of power and resources. This was not just David versus Goliath; this was an unarmed David versus Goliath. Nonetheless, a face-to-face meeting with Soviet officials was precisely what a lawyer and statesman - and man of the Left - such as MacBride had long sought in dealing with Moscow: diplomacy rather than denunciation, sober calculation of complementary interests rather than Cold War confrontation. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Rodley struck a conciliatory note: “Because the human rights problems here have been exploited for Cold War purposes in the West, it became necessary to try to establish an atmosphere of good faith and objectivity.” MacBride went even further:

There’s no doubt that a number of things are done here which do not conform with the norms we would expect in the West. Accordingly, the first task must be the correct and accurate assessment of all the relevant facts [...]. I think there has been a good deal of exaggeration in the foreign press reports in regard to the extent, if any, to which psychiatric hospitals are being used in dealing with political prisoners.⁶⁹

Such reports were to be found not just in the press, however: Amnesty itself, using information compiled by Vladimir Bukovsky and other dissidents, had repeatedly drawn attention to the political abuse of psychiatry in the USSR. And despite Amnesty’s claims that there were

⁶⁸ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 244, pp. 763-4, “Report from Nigel Rodley on visit to Moscow - 24-29 August 1973.”

⁶⁹ Christopher Wren, “Amnesty Group in Private Soviet Talks,” *New York Times* (Nov. 2, 1973), p.A2.

thousands or even tens of thousands of prisoners of conscience languishing in Soviet camps, MacBride announced in Moscow that “we do not feel that we have any realistic assessment.”⁷⁰

As the *New York Times* noted, MacBride’s skepticism about accusations of Soviet use of punitive psychiatry was “not entirely shared by others close to Amnesty International.” That was an understatement. MacBride’s public questioning of Amnesty’s own claims added fuel to long-smoldering tensions within the organization between those sympathetic and those hostile to the Soviet Union, and perhaps more profoundly, between those who favored direct and discreet negotiations with states (even, or especially, with unsavory ones) and those who preferred various mechanisms of public diplomacy - including public shaming.

The controversy within Amnesty over MacBride’s back-channel to the Soviet government unfolded within what was already a highly charged Cold War environment. But a new factor was about to raise the stakes dramatically. On September 10, Amnesty’s International Secretariat in London received a telephone call from Moscow from Andrei Tverdokhlebov, a young theoretical physicist. The son of a former Soviet diplomat and deputy minister of culture, Tverdokhlebov had become active in the dissident movement in the late 1960s, signing open letters in defense of Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, the Leningrad hijackers, the theologian Anatolii Levitin-Krasnov, and others. In 1970 he had been one of the co-founders, along with fellow physicists Sakharov and Valery Chalidze, of the Human Rights Committee [*dealt with in a previous chapter*], which within a year had formed an affiliation with the International League for the Rights of Man (in New York) as well as René Cassin’s Institut international des droits de l’homme (in Strasbourg).⁷¹ In 1971 Tverdokhlebov had also attempted to establish a charitable organization via the Soviet affiliate of the Red Cross, with the goal of collecting and distributing private

⁷⁰ Ibid. Strictly speaking, MacBride’s statement was accurate. Amnesty’s estimates of the number of Soviet prisoners of conscience had ranged quite widely over the past decade. An Amnesty-sponsored publication in 1969 had noted that “Neither Soviet nor world public opinion has any real conception of the size of the problem.” Peter Reddaway, “The Soviet Treatment of Dissenters and the Growth of a Civil Rights Movement,” in Christopher Hill, ed. *Rights and Wrongs: Some Essays on Human Rights* (Baltimore, 1969), p. 80.

⁷¹ See *Dokumenty komiteta prav cheloveka* (New York, 1972), pp. 123, 238.

donations in support of the families of political prisoners, who in addition to the loss of the imprisoned relative's income often themselves faced discrimination in employment and education.⁷²

Although quashed by Soviet Red Cross officials, Tverdokhlebov's proposal offers an early glimpse into the motives that subsequently inspired his interest in Amnesty International. As someone close to Andrei Sakharov and Elena Bonner - he served as witness at their civil marriage ceremony - and therefore to one of the gathering points of dissident life in Moscow, Tverdokhlebov was intimately familiar with the plight of families of political prisoners, many of whom came for help to the Sakharov-Bonner apartment on Chkalov Street (where, a few buildings away, Tverdokhlebov also lived).⁷³ In 1971, he conceived of a more dignified and reliable way to assist them, a more "civilized" (*kul'turnyi*) form of philanthropy. In contrast to "charity, given to the one who stretches out his hand," civilized philanthropy would render assistance "to those who are not in a position to take care of themselves and who do not make a career out of their neediness." There were, Tverdokhlebov maintained, a "small but substantial number of altruists" who would be prepared to come to the aid of families of political prisoners "if there were an authoritative and trustworthy" organization such as the Red Cross to coordinate that aid.⁷⁴ "People want to be sure," he wrote, "that their help is put to use according to their

⁷² For Tverdokhlebov's proposal and the response to it by the Red Cross of the Russian Soviet Republic, see Valerii Chalidze, ed., *Andrei Tverdokhlebov - v zashchitu prav cheloveka* (New York, Izdatel'stvo "Khronika": 1975), pp. 81-84.

⁷³ Sakharov, *Memoirs*, p. 359.

⁷⁴ Small dissident networks had been informally assisting the families of political prisoners ever since the 1966 trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel. Altruism on a larger scale began to materialize shortly after Tverdokhlebov's appeal: when Sakharov was awarded the 1974 Prix mondial Cino Del Duca for humanitarian service, he and Bonner used the prize money to establish a fund for the children of Soviet political prisoners. In the same year, the exiled Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn used the considerable hard-currency royalties from *The Gulag Archipelago* to establish the Russian Social Fund to Aid Political Prisoners and Their Families. See Sakharov, *Memoirs*, p. 414, and Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (New York, 1984), p. 874. On the broader culture of altruism within the dissident movement and its historical resonances, see Barbara Walker, "Pollution and Purification in the Moscow Human Rights Networks of the 1960s and 1970s," *Slavic Review* vol. 68, no. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 376-95.

wishes.”

Rendering assistance to families of political prisoners was central to Tverdokhlebov’s proposal. But so were the anticipated effects of non-state actors engaging in public philanthropy:

Material aid [...] always demands a certain tact, even when it comes from relatives and close friends. At the same time, those who render assistance would like to see its direct consequences, without that degree of estrangement that occurs, for example, between an individual member of the Red Cross who contributes his annual 20 kopeks, and the aid delivered to impoverished populations in other countries. The need for the kind of philanthropic organization that could satisfy these somewhat contradictory demands strikes me as self-evident. It represents a necessary node in the web that connects people in society, a node that could fill the gap between such human forms of mutual aid as assistance from the state and assistance from friends and family.⁷⁵

Such nodes, Tverdokhlebov noted, had existed in imperial Russia. Indeed, beginning in the 1870s, organizations such as the Political Red Cross, founded by Vera Figner and other revolutionaries, had funneled aid to comrades languishing in tsarist jails. Various incarnations of “the Cross,” as it was known, had continued to operate under the watchful eye of the Soviet state until they were shut down in 1938.⁷⁶

There was, to be sure, little chance of resurrecting the Political Red Cross in Brezhnev’s Soviet Union, where as in most countries there were officially no “political” prisoners and where, even if their existence had been acknowledged, the type of independent civic association imagined by Tverdokhlebov could hardly exist.⁷⁷ But if a return to historical precedents from the pre-revolutionary (and early Soviet) era was impossible, contemporary practices outside the USSR offered a different model. In the early 1970s, Tverdokhlebov had established contact with Amnesty - not with the organization’s headquarters in London, but with the Dutch national section and local Group 11 in New York City, both of which had taken a particular interest in

⁷⁵ Tverdokhlebov, “Zaiavlenie s predlozheniem o sozdanii blagotvoritel’noi komissii v Prezidium Tsentral’nogo komiteta obshchestva Krasnogo Kresta RSFSR,” June 6, 1971, in *Andrei Tverdokhlebov - v zashchitu prav cheloveka*, pp. 81-82.

⁷⁶ Maria Cristina Galmarini, “Defending the Rights of Gulag Prisoners: The Story of the Political Red Cross, 1918-1938,” *Russian Review*, vol. 71, no. 1 (January 2012), pp. 6-29.

⁷⁷ On the absence of the concept of “political prisoner” in Soviet law, see Valerii Chalidze, “Zapiska o poniatii ‘politizakliuchennyi’ [1971],” *Dokumenty Komiteta prav cheloveka*, pp. 239-42.

Soviet prisoners of conscience. At his request, members of the “Madison Avenue Group” (as Group 11 was informally known) had supplied him with a wide range of Amnesty publications, including annual newsletters and the US-edition of the *Handbook for Groups*.⁷⁸ In 1973 Tverdokhlebov and the engineer Vladimir Arkhangelskii, having become “voracious consumers” of Amnesty materials, began to circulate translated excerpts, along with other human rights-related texts, in a samizdat periodical called, simply, “Amnesty International.”⁷⁹ The translation and flow of data were now two-way: Amnesty published the *Chronicle of Current Events* in English, while Tverdokhlebov circulated type-written collections (at least three separate volumes during 1973) of Amnesty documents in Russian.⁸⁰ This volume of traffic evidently was too much for the KGB’s Fifth Directorate, which Andropov had established in 1967 specifically to “combat ideological expansion directed from abroad” and to serve as “a reliable shield against it.”⁸¹ Already under investigation for his ties to both the *Chronicle* and the Human Rights Committee, Tverdokhlebov was confronted on the night of August 27, 1973 by security police who searched his apartment, seizing thousands of documents, including the archive of the Human Rights Committee and voluminous materials from Amnesty, the United Nations, and various organizations devoted to international law.⁸²

⁷⁸ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” Transcript of telephone conversation with A. Tverdokhlebov, 10pm London time, 5 Sept. 1973”; letter from Andrew Blane to Ivan [Morris, professor of Japanese literature at Columbia University and Chair of Amnesty International in the United States], 31 Jan. 1974, p. 1. Group 11’s unofficial name came from the address of its chair, Yadja Zeltman - 1326 Madison Avenue. The Leningrad engineer Ernst Orlovskii also requested and received Amnesty materials, in his case from the Dutch national section.

⁷⁹ Interview with Yadja Zeltman, October 9, 2012.

⁸⁰ For the tables of contents of the first three Russian-language samizdat collections of Amnesty materials, see *Andrei Tverdokhlebov - v zashchitu prav cheloveka*, pp. 115-17. [NB: the KGB counted four issues - see *Vlast i dissidenty*, p. 42 (doc. #6)]

⁸¹ The quotations are attributed to Andropov by Filipp Bobkov, whom Andropov appointed head of the Fifth Directorate in 1969. See Bobkov, *KGB i vlast’* (Moscow, 1995), pp. 193-4.

⁸² In an increasingly common ritual among Soviet rights activists, several days later Tverdokhlebov circulated in samizdat a brief description of the search and a list of seized items, thereby violating the KGB’s unspoken monopoly over the public image of its activities. See *Arkhiv samizdata* vol. 25, document 1478 (Sept. 4, 1973 [CHECK]).

Two weeks later, Tverdokhlebov was in telephone communication with Amnesty officials, this time in London, via his fellow physicist Leonid Rigerman, who had recently emigrated to the West. Despite, or perhaps because of, the KGB's search and seizure, Tverdokhlebov and three colleagues - Arkhangelskii, Ilya Korneev [*profession?*], and the mathematician Vladimir Albrecht - had decided to form a new organization called Group 73 (Gruppa-73), modeled on Amnesty International. Or rather, modeled on what they imagined Amnesty International to be: a network of individuals working globally to provide a "civilized" form of material and legal assistance to political prisoners and their families.⁸³ Arkhangelskii submitted an application to the Moscow City Council, requesting permission to set up a bank account to accept voluntary donations. The KGB, armed with intelligence regarding Tverdokhlebov's broader intentions, had instructed City Council bureaucrats to deny official recognition to Group 73 and to demand information about its relationship to Amnesty.⁸⁴ After relating this news by telephone to Amnesty's London staff on September 10, Tverdokhlebov dictated a message to be conveyed to Amnesty's Sixth International Council, due to convene shortly in Vienna. Five days later, on September 15, hundreds of Amnesty delegates from 24 countries who attended the Council meeting at Albert Schweitzer Haus listened to the following words from Moscow:

⁸³ Group-73's charter invoked "international experience in helping prisoners and their families, and in particular the experience of Amnesty International, which sets as its goal the provision of assistance to prisoners of conscience and political prisoners." Tverdokhlebov et al., "Printsipy Gruppy-73," *Arkhiv samizdata* vol. 25, document 1486. The KGB search of his apartment was not the only factor that influenced the timing of Tverdokhlebov's initiative. As he explained to Amnesty officials in London, the campaign unleashed in August 1973 in the Soviet press, condemning Sakharov as an "enemy of détente," reminded Tverdokhlebov of the media campaign around the Doctors' Plot, as did Elena Bonner's expulsion that same month from the medical institute with which she had been affiliated. Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," "Transcript of telephone conversation with A. Tverdokhlebov, 10pm London time, 5 Sept. 1973." On the 1973 press campaign against Sakharov, see his *Memoirs*, pp. 385-91.

⁸⁴ Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," "Otchet Arkhangel'skogo sovetu uchreditelei 'Gruppy-73', 1 sentiabria 1973 g."

Greetings to the International Council of Amnesty International. Since childhood we have been accustomed to hearing such phrases as “political action of the masses,” “the active foreign policy of the government and party,” “the struggle for social rights and the social reconstruction of society,” “the scientific and technological revolution” - and these are the things we imagined the world was preoccupied with. As for words like “conscience,” “dignity,” “conviction” - we are accustomed to apply them exclusively to the exertions and strivings of individual human beings. For who can help one to value such words, and to preserve their value, other than oneself and those to whom one is closest? At first we were astonished, and could not grasp, that in fact total strangers can help, people who live in the most distant countries, in conditions utterly different from one’s own, in other cultures. It is this above all that we value in your example and your activity, insofar as we are in a position to judge them. Please accept our best wishes.⁸⁵

The members of Group 73 were conveying more than just their astonishment at the kindness of strangers, the novel form of distanced empathy practiced by Amnesty. For them, Amnesty’s language - the language of universal human rights in action - had the effect of defamiliarizing certain well-worn words by pulling them out of the private sphere and investing them with public, indeed global significance. Or rather, re-investing them: like many Soviet citizens, members of Group 73 had grown numb to official Soviet rhetoric, including the Communist Party’s claim to be “The Mind, Honor, and Conscience of the Era,” a phrase ubiquitously displayed in gigantic letters from the rooftops of buildings as well as on mass-produced postcards and calendars. The post-Stalin era was marked by a general retreat of moral and ethical values to the realm of the personal.⁸⁶ Amnesty’s novelty - and part of its appeal to Tverdokhlebov and other dissidents - thus lay precisely in its extension of the seemingly private, apolitical ethics of friendship and family to complete strangers, to the arena normally managed by the impersonal and overtly political party-state.⁸⁷ For the members of Group 73, not just Amnesty’s aspirations

⁸⁵ AI-USA, Record Group II: Executive Director Files, 1967-1997, Series 5: National Section Memos, box 9, folder 23, document 3. I have retranslated the text into English in order to more closely conform to the Russian original, which circulated in samizdat. See *Arkhiv samizdata* vol. 25, document 1487.

⁸⁶ On the retreat of ethical values, see Benjamin Nathans, “The Disenchantment of Socialism: Soviet Dissidents, Human Rights, and the New Global Morality,” in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *A Morality for the World? The Politics of Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia: Penn Press, 2013), forthcoming.

⁸⁷ In its charter, Group 73 described itself as “non-governmental, non-political association.” *Arkhiv samizdata*, vol. 25, document 1486.

but its existence as a form of organizational life appeared to offer that “necessary node in the web that connects people” - a global civil society in embryo.

But not civil society in the usual sense. One of the richest and most interesting articulations of what Amnesty signified for Soviet dissidents came from Valentin Turchin, a computer scientist at the Institute of Applied Mathematics of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Trained as a theoretical physicist, Turchin - like Aleksandr Volpin and many other intellectuals of their generation - became fascinated by cybernetics and the possibility of scientific precision in the analysis and management of social phenomena. Turchin was the creator of REFAL (Recursive Functions Algorithmic Language), the USSR’s preeminent programming language in the field of artificial intelligence. He was also known among colleagues as the compiler of the book *Jokes Physicists Tell*.⁸⁸ In the late 1960s he began to sign petitions in support of arrested dissidents and circulated a widely-read samizdat essay called *The Inertia of Fear*, which attempted to situate the Soviet Union in the long arc of the evolution of human societies.

The Inertia of Fear went through several iterations - one of which was captured by the KGB after Turchin’s son dropped it out of a window inside a briefcase during a search of the family’s apartment - before being published abroad as a book.⁸⁹ In Turchin’s book, Amnesty is cast as nothing less than a harbinger of a possible future global order:

Marxism-Leninism preaches in theory, and puts into practice, an extreme politicization of all aspects of social life. It sees everywhere (and where it does not see, it plants!) the struggle of economic interests and the struggle for political power. What the world needs now is the opposite approach - the *depoliticization* of the most important aspects of life. The success of Amnesty International, its growing membership and influence, show that more and more people on planet earth are beginning to understand this. The fundamental idea of Amnesty International is to depoliticize our understanding of individual civil and political rights, of the impermissibility of torture and other forms of inhuman treatment of human beings. From time immemorial these issues have been classified as political. Amnesty International is shifting them to the sphere of universal morality.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ V. F. Turchin, *Fiziki shutiat* (Moscow, Mir: 1966); Sakharov, *Memoirs*, p. 300.

⁸⁹ On the KGB search, see Sakharov, *Memoirs*, p. 449.

⁹⁰ Turchin, *Inertsiia strakha*, p. 288 (emphasis in original).

Strikingly, it was Amnesty, not the Western democracies, that Turchin regarded as the ideal model of social organization. Human communities, he argued, develop ever more refined instruments of cybernetic control, from physical violence to economic necessity to spiritual culture. The Soviet Union, stuck in its (post-Stalin) steady-state form of totalitarianism, would be best served not by developing a multi-party democracy, but by expanding the Communist Party into a pluralist, inclusive network. The highest form of ties among human beings, which Turchin called valence bonds (by analogy with the bonds between atoms), are personal and individualized, fostered in small groups based on mutual understanding, trust, friendship, and creativity. Such bonds were in the process of being realized, tentatively and under extraordinarily difficult conditions, in the small circles or *kompaniia* that constituted the dissident movement.⁹¹ Turchin also saw them - or imagined them - in the local groups that comprised Amnesty's transnational network of activists. Valence bonds were "the most human mode of social intercourse," the one in which "what is properly human unfolds to the full." The West's multi-party, adversarial political system, in which all manner of decisions were made by majority rule, had simply replaced one form of coercion (fighting) with another (voting). "Voting does not solve problems" because voting is merely "a kind of weapon," whereas valence communities are a "tool." "The kind of work that must be done to solve complex social problems," Turchin wrote, "can only be done among a small group of people" linked by valence bonds.⁹²

It was precisely this kind of forward-looking social organization, both practically and ethically minded, that in Turchin's view Amnesty represented. By "refraining from the *struggle for power* and everything associated with it," Amnesty was detaching the problem of individual

⁹¹ One of the best descriptions of the intense adult friendships of the *kompaniia* in the 1960s can be found in the memoirs of Ludmila Alexeyeva, a leading figure in the Democratic Movement and the author of the first comprehensive history of Soviet dissent. Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993 [1990]), pp. 84ff.

⁹² Turchin, *Inertsiia strakha*, pp. 195, 202.

rights from any particular type of government or ideology, and therefore transforming rights into a purely moral issue. “This,” Turchin concluded, “is one of the most promising developments of our time”:

Amnesty International [...] scrupulously refrains from expressing any political preferences. Of course this does not mean that a member of Amnesty should not *have* political preferences. It is clear to everyone that the people working for Amnesty sympathize with political regimes which more or less respect human rights, and are indignant toward regimes which crudely trample on those rights. But in their work within that organization, they ignore those sympathies and antipathies. Such, it seems, is the only road to the integration of humanity.⁹³

The integration of humanity required individuals to govern their emotions - a version of Norbert Elias’s civilizing process. Such, it seems, was the path from Moscow toward what we can recognize as distanced empathy.

* * *

On October 6, 1973, less than a month after sending their greetings to Amnesty delegates assembled in Vienna, the four members of Group-73 - Tverdokhlebov, Vladimir Albrecht, Vladimir Arkhangelsky and Ilya Korneyev - plus Turchin, the mathematicians Nikolai Beloozerov and Boris Landa, the biologist Sergei Kovalev, the physicist Yuri Orlov, the Leningrad engineer Ernst Orlovsky, and the Russian orthodox priest Sergei Zheludkov applied for registration as a national section of Amnesty International.⁹⁴ Unlike the unprecedented and mysterious arrival from behind the Iron Curtain of data concerning imprisoned Soviet Baptists, the news that a group of Soviet citizens wished to establish their own section of Amnesty International did not come without warning. Indeed, there is scattered evidence that the Madison

⁹³ Turchin, *Inertsiiia strakha*, pp. 288-9.

⁹⁴ For the Oct. 6, 1973 application to join Amnesty, see Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” “Zaiavlenie [6 October 1973].” Identical copies can be found in IISH AI-IEC Microfilm 244, pp. 1955-57 and *Arkhiv samizdata*, vol. 28, document 1501.

Avenue Group had encouraged the application against the wishes of the London leadership.⁹⁵ And unlike the Baptist data, the application from Moscow reached Amnesty's headquarters in London not after several years, but - thanks to the telephone - in a matter of minutes, and in a manner that left no doubt as to its intended recipient.

The timing could hardly have been worse for Seán MacBride, whose carefully cultivated back-channel to Soviet authorities seemed to augur a future dialogue with the socialist world. There had already been one close call: the search of Tverdokhlebov's apartment on August 27, during which large quantities of Amnesty materials were seized, had taken place precisely (and perhaps not accidentally) in the midst of, and just a few miles from, MacBride and Rodley's "bilateral negotiations" with Soviet jurists. How would it look now to suddenly announce the formation of a Moscow chapter of Amnesty - especially one composed of dissidents, including Tverdokhlebov, with his ties to the Kremlin's public enemy number one, Andrei Sakharov? The London leadership had already privately expressed concerns that any unauthorized Soviet Amnesty group would be subject to severe persecution by the state, as had happened with a short-lived Amnesty chapter in South Korea. Amnesty's goal, after all, was to reduce, not add to, the number of prisoners of conscience in the world. If, conversely, Soviet authorities were given a say in the establishment of an Amnesty group, would they not seek to fashion another Potemkin NGO, tightly controlling its activities to suit their own purposes and thereby subverting Amnesty's mission?⁹⁶

The Madison Avenue Group did not share these concerns. On the contrary, its members encouraged Tverdokhlebov to meet with MacBride while the latter was in Moscow for the World Congress of Peace Forces in late October, regarding such a meeting as "an opportunity for direct,

⁹⁵ Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," "Letter from Jane Ward of AI International Secretariat Research Department to Yadjia Zeltman, 16 Aug. 1973."

⁹⁶ For these and other concerns, see Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," "Letter from Jane Ward of AI International Secretariat Research Department to Yadjia Zeltman, 16 Aug. 1973." On a version of the latter scenario in the post-Soviet setting, see Julie Hemment, "Nashi, Youth Voluntarism, and Potemkin NGOs: Making Sense of Civil Society in Post-Soviet Russia," *Slavic Review* vol. 71, no. 2 (Summer 2012), pp. 234-60.

personal contact” between the London leadership and Soviet citizens who were interested in forming an Amnesty chapter.⁹⁷ This was precisely the kind of contact the KGB feared would be fostered by the Congress and which it was determined to prevent.⁹⁸ In Amnesty’s case, there was no need for preventive measures: reluctant to jeopardize his ongoing conversations with Soviet officials, MacBride refused to receive Tverdokhlebov when the latter appeared at his hotel.⁹⁹ Coming on the heels of his public skepticism regarding claims of Soviet psychiatric abuse, this rebuff unleashed a firestorm inside Amnesty, including calls for MacBride’s resignation. His supporters, in turn, suggested that such calls came from CIA moles within the organization.¹⁰⁰ As if that were not enough, when Amnesty’s Secretary-General, Martin Ennals, arrived at work in Amnesty’s London headquarters on October 31, he found on his desk a press release from Valery Chalidze - now head of the émigré Khronika Press in New York - featuring a copy of Tverdokhlebov et al.’s application under the headline “11 Moscow Intellectuals Found USSR National Section of Amnesty International.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Kline Archive, Blane to Morris, Jan. 31, 1974, p. 4.

⁹⁸ In an October 21, 1973 memorandum to the Central Committee, KGB head Yuri Andropov wrote: “The Committee for State Security realizes that the irresponsible demagogic statements and provocations of foreign delegates to the Congress may evoke increased activity on the part of antisocial and hostile elements among Soviet citizens. Consequently, it intends to take steps to contain the harmful influence of foreigners. At the same time, Soviet citizens known for their antisocial and hostile orientation are being kept under close surveillance in order to prevent possible undesirable excesses on their part.” Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, eds., *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov* (New Haven, 2005), Doc. 66, pp. 170-71.

⁹⁹ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Andrew Blane to Ivan Morris, Jan. 31, 1974, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ On calls for MacBride’s resignation: see Kline Papers, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement: General,” 31 Dec. 1973 letter from Ruitenber to Zeltman. Herbart Ruitenber was secretary of Amnesty’s Dutch section; Yadja Zeltman was chair of the Madison Avenue Group. Copies of this letter went to Peter Reddaway, a professor of Soviet politics at the London School of Economics and one of Amnesty’s most forceful (and knowledgeable) critics of Soviet policies, as well as Leonid Rigerman. On the spreading of rumors that Reddaway and others were CIA moles: personal email to the author from Peter Reddaway, March 12, 2011.

¹⁰¹ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Jane Ward to Peter Reddaway, 31 Oct. 1973, p. 1. In fact, one of the eleven applicants, Ernst Orlovskii, lived in Leningrad.

Ennals and the London leadership were “very disturbed.”¹⁰² Only the International Executive Committee, led by MacBride, could authorize the creation of a national section, and it was therefore difficult to view Chalidze’s gesture as anything other than a crude attempt to force Amnesty’s hand. A scathing response to Chalidze from Leonid Rigerman - the émigré physicist who coordinated telephone communications between Tverdokhlebov and Amnesty’s London office - offers a glimpse of the fallout:

[The press release] naturally was the cause of extraordinary surprise and irritation among the Amnesty leadership. Particular irritation was caused by your decision to publish the text of the Soviet group’s statement. That statement was addressed to Amnesty’s International Secretariat. It was sent through private channels [...]. Amnesty’s leaders are now seriously asking themselves whether the Soviet group wishes to function as a national section of Amnesty or is merely trying to use Amnesty’s name for cheap publicity. For my part, I am asking myself, do you understand that the ease of publication in the West does not in any way mean that everything should absolutely and immediately be published? Do you understand that your friends in Russia write letters and statements to various western organizations not merely to boost your authority as the preeminent [émigré] source of information, but primarily in order to establish genuine, fruitful connections with those organizations? Do you understand that the association of those who are still there [in the Soviet Union] with Amnesty or similar organizations can save them from reprisals (just as, by the way, your association with the International League for the Rights of Man may have saved you), while association with you or with Khronika Press is hardly likely to save anybody? On the contrary, that kind of association probably worsens their situation. Statements and appeals from Mister Chalidze to the governments of the world aren’t going to save anybody from reprisals. The fact that you are in Russia or are an émigré from Russia does not in any way give you the right to act with that characteristically Russian presumptuousness.¹⁰³

Rigerman’s fury aside, Amnesty’s predicament hardly stemmed from “Russian presumptuousness” (*rossiiskaia bestseremonnost’*), since it was in fact Edward Kline, a member

¹⁰² Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Jane Ward to Peter Reddaway, 31 Oct. 1973, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Leonid Rigerman to Valerii Chalidze, Nov. 6, 1973, pp. 1-5. Rigerman, it should be noted, was a strong advocate of Amnesty accepting Group 73’s application. Part of his fury stemmed from the fact that he himself had provided a copy of Group 73’s statement to Chalidze, and was therefore himself under (false) suspicion by the London leadership for having authorized its publication. Rigerman’s complicated personal relations with Chalidze were also likely a factor, insofar as they emerge in the postscript to his letter (copies of which were sent to Edward Kline and Peter Reddaway): “I would be extremely grateful if you would henceforth refrain from using curse words in your letters. Otherwise it will be difficult for me to carry out your request that I preserve your letters for history. After all, our descendants might think that I was intentionally blackening your shining historical image” (p. 5).

of Amnesty's Madison Avenue Group, co-founder of Khronika Press, and friend and benefactor of Soviet dissidents, who had initiated the press release - not Chalidze.¹⁰⁴ More importantly, news of the application from Moscow for affiliation with Amnesty was spreading via the same unruly world of samizdat that had already opened countless unauthorized windows onto the USSR - and that had so dramatically transformed Amnesty's advocacy on behalf of Soviet prisoners of conscience.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, the application to become an Amnesty chapter differed little from the thousands of "open letters" that, notwithstanding their particular addressee (a certain Soviet leader, a branch of the Soviet government, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, etc.) had circulated in unregulated fashion within the Soviet Union and spilled across its borders. Sooner or later, with or without Chalidze's involvement, news of the Moscow group's initiative would have become public, thereby requiring a response from the Amnesty leadership.¹⁰⁶

Amnesty now faced an awkward set of options: to recognize the Moscow chapter might give the appearance of succumbing to manipulation and could torpedo MacBride's delicate diplomatic initiative. To refuse recognition would compromise Amnesty's carefully tended reputation for universalism and non-partisanship, as well as risk alienating the Soviet dissident community. But these were essentially tactical issues. On a deeper level, the Moscow initiative forced Amnesty to confront the contradiction between the dissidents' soaring hopes for Amnesty as the seed of a future global community, and the organization's own doubts as to whether its modus operandi - the real, existing one - could be exported to a country like the Soviet Union, and by implication, to the non-democratic majority of the world's states.

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication from Edward Kline to the author, Sept. 28, 2012.

¹⁰⁵ On samizdat's similarity to "unstandardized, spontaneously disseminated, unfixed" oral culture, see Ann Komaromi, "Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon," *Poetics Today* vol. 29, no. 4 (Winter 2008), p. 634.

¹⁰⁶ In his Nov. 6, 1973 letter to Chalidze, Rigerman wrote (p. 2) that "as far as I am aware, the application did not circulate in samizdat." Perhaps not by November, but almost certainly thereafter, since it was subsequently published in *Arkhiv samizdata* (vol. 28, document 1501).

CHAPTER 9: THE ADOPTEES COME KNOCKING

There had never been an Amnesty group anywhere in the socialist world.¹⁰⁷ The Moscow group's application arrived as Amnesty confronted mounting accusations that it was not a genuinely international movement defending universal concerns but a Western organization serving Western (i.e., Cold War and/or neo-colonial) interests. As early as 1969, Amnesty's annual report had expressed the need to "strengthen [our] links in countries where so far we have failed to gain a footing."¹⁰⁸ Indeed, despite its global ambitions (and the universalist ideology of human rights that inspired them), in the early 1970s Amnesty remained an almost exclusively First World organization. The oft-invoked equilibrium among the three global zones (capitalist, socialist, and developing) had been more or less achieved, at least symbolically, when it came to adopted prisoners. But the same could hardly be said of the 1,817 local groups that undertook the day-to-day work of advocacy on their behalf, of which 1,801 were in First World countries.¹⁰⁹ Outside the West, those who became involved in Amnesty's work were overwhelmingly on the receiving end, "adopted" - to use Amnesty's vaguely parental metaphor - by Westerners for whom human rights were less a means of self-defense than an instrument of global moral improvement.¹¹⁰ In 1972, Amnesty's Long-Range Planning Committee had concluded that "to

¹⁰⁷ By the late 1960s, however, there were a handful of individual members from socialist countries, including the Leningrad engineer Ernst Orlovskii and the Moscow biologist Zhores Medvedev.

¹⁰⁸ *Annual Report, 1968-69* (London, 1969), p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Data are from 1977, when 95 percent of Amnesty's members came from Western countries. See Kline Archive, Folder "Amnesty International Historical Documents," Background paper for working party #2, AI-USA Annual Meeting, March 1977: "Perception vs. Effectiveness: How AI is viewed by the non-western world," pp. 1-5.

¹¹⁰ On the distinction between self-defense and moral intervention, see Jan Eckel, "Utopie der Moral, Kalkül der Macht: Menschenrechte in der globalen Politik seit 1945," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 49 (2009), p. 426.

become a truly international organization we will have to pursue a true international objective in terms of future National Section development.” In the past, the committee noted, “the growth of National Sections took place in a more or less haphazard way.” Henceforth it would need to be governed by a systematic policy. The formation of chapters in countries with authoritarian governments would require especially close attention: “No premature steps should be taken in this direction without a carefully considered development plan.”¹¹¹

The Moscow initiative, and the fact that it immediately became public, rendered such planning moot. Amnesty was now forced to respond to what everyone regarded as a potential game-changer involving one of the world’s two superpowers, a colossal state which regularly sat near the top of Amnesty’s list of countries with the most prisoners of conscience. While it would be tempting to cast the ensuing debate as pitting the impossibly well-named Madison Avenue Group against Amnesty’s more cautious European leadership, the evidence does not line up so neatly. Among the strongest proponents of embracing the Moscow group’s formal affiliation with Amnesty were the British sovietologist Peter Reddaway and the leaders of the Dutch and Austrian national sections. Rather, the debate was driven by diverging assessments of the Soviet government’s likely response to the establishment of an Amnesty group in the USSR, by contrasting visions of whether Amnesty’s model of citizen engagement in human rights advocacy was in fact exportable to non-democratic countries, and more broadly, by disagreements over where and by what means Amnesty ought to invest its moral capital.

Three basic positions emerged in the flurry of confidential letters and memoranda during the months following the Moscow group’s application to become Amnesty’s Soviet national section. The first, represented by Secretary-General Martin Ennals and Dirk Börner of Amnesty’s Hamburg group, rested on the hope that Amnesty might be able to have its cake and eat it too, recognizing the Moscow group and carefully guiding its human rights activities while

¹¹¹ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 244, pp. 96-117, “Amnesty International - Five Years Hence: Report and Recommendation by the Long-Range Planning Committee, May 31, 1972.”

continuing to seek common ground with the Kremlin. The second, represented by Seán MacBride, chairman of the International Executive Committee, and Lothar Belck, the committee's Swiss treasurer, insisted that the cake could either be had or eaten, but not both, and advocated cultivating ties with the Soviet government as the best route by which to advance Amnesty's agenda in the USSR and globally. The third, articulated most forcefully by Peter Reddaway together with the Madison Avenue Group, agreed with the second as regards the cake, but dismissed the possibility of cooperation with Soviet authorities, preferring instead to throw Amnesty's full support to Tverdokhlebov and his fellow applicants.

The arguments of the various camps cast into sharp relief Amnesty's perceived options for engagement with Soviet dissidents and the Soviet government. As Börner put it in a letter to Ennals and the International Executive Committee, the Soviet government "has two rather different interests in [Amnesty's] work, which for this present purpose let us call, 'foreign affairs' and 'home affairs'." The USSR valued Amnesty's incisive documentation of human rights violations by right-wing regimes such as those in Chile, South Africa, and South Vietnam, as well as the international credibility fostered by Amnesty's participation in the World Congress of Peace Forces. Indeed, according to Börner, it valued that credibility enough to have shown, of late, an unusual willingness to discuss, despite a high level of suspicion, Amnesty's concerns regarding prisoners of conscience inside the Soviet Union. Referring to conversations with representatives of the Association of Soviet Lawyers, Börner wrote:

For the first time we were told that four of our cases would actually be reviewed. Let us not kid ourselves: this is very, very little. Yet this happened while and in spite of the fact that we were in Moscow to talk to and presumably recognize the group of people from the dissenting community as an Amnesty group. This seems to indicate the importance the government attaches to [being on]"speaking terms" with Amnesty. This may give us the possibility in the future to push more in "home affairs" whenever they talk to us about "foreign affairs."¹¹²

¹¹² IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 244, letter from Dirk Börner to Martin Ennals and the IEC, 13 Aug. 1974, p. 1510. Börner's English was excellent but not native; I have therefore lightly edited the English text.

In a June 1974 meeting in Moscow with the jurist Igor Blishchenko, Amnesty officials discussed the possibility of designating a contact organization (presumably the Association of Soviet Lawyers) that would henceforth field inquiries from Amnesty groups abroad, explain the legal background of individual cases and, where appropriate, conduct inquiries. Blishchenko promised to provide information on Soviet prison regulations, including guidelines for contacting prisoners and sending care-packages. In return, he asked that Amnesty work with Soviet organizations in its campaigns against human rights abuses in Latin America and South Africa, and that a Soviet observer be invited to the next international meeting of Amnesty representatives - another unprecedented move from the Soviet side.¹¹³

At that same meeting, however, Blishchenko made it clear that the Association of Soviet Lawyers would be “in an impossible position” if Amnesty were “to maintain formal ties with dissidents,” which is to say, with Tverdokhlebov and others who had applied for affiliation with Amnesty. For MacBride and Reddaway alike, it was clear that Amnesty faced a stark choice: the possible forms of cooperation dangled by Blishchenko and other Soviet officials were intended as a quid pro quo in return for Amnesty’s rejection of the Moscow group’s request for affiliation. For MacBride and his allies on the International Executive Committee, it was a deal worth making, convinced as they were that accepting Tverdokhlebov’s application would jeopardize not only Amnesty’s emerging dialogue with the Soviet government but its reputation as an apolitical organization. There was more than a little irony in the latter concern. Soviet rights-defenders, after all, had long insisted with equal vehemence on the apolitical nature of *their* activism, and often expressed frustration at being perceived by their Cold War sympathizers in the West - not to mention by the KGB - as an “anti-Soviet” movement.

MacBride’s ally Lothar Belck put the case against recognition in terms very close to *Realpolitik*:

¹¹³ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 244, letter from Lothar Belck to Eric Baker, 20 June 1974, pp. 1332-33.

We face the question whether we want to receive the support of the Soviet government and its approved organizations in general human rights issues such as CAT [the Campaign Against Torture], or whether we want to work with a group which lives in isolation in its own country. It is my opinion that the Soviet government would see this matter as an either/or proposition, even if we may feel differently about it. Hence, the price that would, very likely, be exacted from us for recognition of this particular group would be the loss of Soviet cooperation in general issues. A negative Soviet attitude in concerns advanced by AI may carry over into other international organizations where the Soviet influence is strong. This, plus the improbability that we would ever develop a broad popular basis for AI in the Soviet Union, make me feel that we should decline the request for recognition.¹¹⁴

MacBride went even further: Amnesty groups simply could not function in countries “where democratic institutions and civil liberties are either weak or non-existent.”¹¹⁵ Vulnerable to manipulation by the state or by forces hostile to the state (e.g., dissidents), such groups would be unable to maintain the ideological neutrality central to Amnesty’s work. The Kremlin might tolerate Soviet citizens writing letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience in capitalist countries, but it could hardly be expected to do so when those prisoners were in communist countries, especially those allied with the USSR. Human rights might be universally applicable, but Amnesty’s model of human rights activism via distanced empathy was apparently a luxury only citizens of democratic societies could afford.

The Madison Avenue Group took issue with nearly every facet of the argument against recognition. “If Amnesty is not to be solely a West European [and] American organization,” the group’s chair, Yadja Zeltman, wrote, “it must find ways to operate within the framework of different social and political systems and in different environments.” Gaining an affiliate group in the USSR would offer “an opportunity for the growth of Amnesty not only in the number of countries represented, but also in effectiveness and reputation.”¹¹⁶ Peter Reddaway, Amnesty’s leading authority on Soviet affairs, similarly took aim at the anti-recognition argument. For all

¹¹⁴ IISH AI-IEC, Microfilm 244, p.1513, Letter from Lothar Belck to Martin Ennals and the IEC, 24 July 1974.

¹¹⁵ MacBride’s position summarized in Blane’s Jan. 1974 letter to Ivan Morris, p. 5; note the paucity in the various Amnesty archives of documents by MacBride himself.

¹¹⁶ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Zeltman to Herbart Ruitenbergh, Secretary of Amnesty’s Dutch Section, Dec. 21, 1973, p. 2.

its apparent *Realpolitik*, he wrote in a blunt letter to the Amnesty leadership (including MacBride and Belck), that argument was “naive” and “barren.” True, in contrast to the Stalin era, when even the rumor of affiliation with a foreign organization could lead to a person’s summary execution or sentencing to decades in the camps, the current Soviet leadership had so far taken no decisive action - possibly waiting to see how Amnesty itself would react to Tverdokhlebov’s request for affiliation. But this, in Reddaway’s view, by no means meant that the Kremlin was ready to negotiate:

It is conceivable, if unlikely, that a few desirable things can be achieved [...]. But the danger to be carefully avoided is any entering by AI into a bargaining relationship. In such a game the Soviet authorities would hold much the stronger cards, and they have the experience and skill to outwit AI decisively. In all probability they would pretend to negotiate in good faith, would extract real concessions from AI, would, after long delays, fail to deliver their side of the bargain, and then would skillfully maneuver for a long time to avoid paying the price.¹¹⁷

For Soviet authorities, Reddaway believed, prisoners of conscience were essentially non-negotiable. Any concessions on their behalf would come strictly as a result of “unpleasant pressures (publicity, etc.)” or requests from “people whose friendliness they want,” such as MacBride. Recognition of an Amnesty group in Moscow would be an effective form of such pressure and would, according to Reddaway - and contrary to fears expressed by Ennals and others - only strengthen the personal safety of its members: “if they are recognized [publicly but not provocatively], it is unlikely that *any* of them will be arrested in the foreseeable future (or at most only one or two of them).”¹¹⁸ Indeed, Irmgard Hutter, head of the Austrian national section of Amnesty, argued that *not* recognizing Tverdokhlebov et al. “might endanger their safety” by implying that their motives were not apolitical, and in any event would damage Amnesty’s

¹¹⁷ AI-USA, Record Group II: Executive Director Files, 1967-1997, Series 5: National Section Memos, Box 9, F. 23, Document 5, letter from Peter Reddaway to Martin Ennals and fifteen other Amnesty leaders, Dec. 27, 1973, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Emphasis in original.

“moral authority” among dissidents in the Soviet Union and other East-bloc countries.¹¹⁹

Moral authority, or to put it somewhat differently, the accumulation and investment of moral capital, was essential to Amnesty’s work, and it was here, according to supporters of recognition, that a Soviet affiliate could offer the most valuable dividends. MacBride and Belck might be correct in assuming that an Amnesty group in Moscow would have no access to the Soviet press and therefore to Soviet public opinion. But it would, in the view of its supporters, have “tremendous access to the international press for which it would be envied by many other AI groups.” Referring to a well-known British peace activist and co-founder of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, a woman who had been imprisoned multiple times in the United Kingdom, Börner (the head of Amnesty’s Hamburg group) noted:

The British government will certainly not be impressed by any protest against Pat Arrowsmith’s imprisonment printed in *Pravda*, but it would be truly embarrassed if this [were to come] from a dissident group and printed in the [London] *Times*. In fact such a group could possibly do more than ten groups in Germany.¹²⁰

Others agreed: “A USSR section would be very good for the moral position of Amnesty”; “Arrest of a member of the Soviet section for defending prisoners in Spain or in Greece will be very good

¹¹⁹ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Irmgard Hutter to Amnesty’s International Executive Committee, 7 Jan. 1974. The Soviet biologist Zhores Medvedev, who may have been the first Soviet citizen to join Amnesty as an individual member (in 1969, four years before he was stripped of his Soviet citizenship), remarked to Reddaway that the dissidents would regard a rejection of Group 73’s application as “deplorable cowardice” on Amnesty’s part. Ibid., letter from Reddaway to Martin Ennals, 7 Feb. 1974. There was ample precedent for Medvedev’s claim, given the combustible mix of admiration, dependency, and disenchantment exhibited by many dissidents vis-à-vis their putative Western allies. In a 17 Sept. 1973 letter to the London-based journal *New Scientist*, Tverdokhlebov had expressed his bitter disappointment at the lack of solidarity on the part of Western scientists, and in particular psychiatrists, who had failed to respond to evidence of Soviet psychiatric abuse of dissident scientists: “Unfortunately we are compelled to recognize yet again the correctness of Soviet propaganda when it claims that in the West ‘man is wolf to man’.” The letter is in Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General.”

¹²⁰ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Dirk Börner to Martin Ennals and the International Executive Committee 13 Aug. 1974. Arrowsmith was imprisoned for, among other things, distributing leaflets at a British army base, urging soldiers to quit the army or refuse to serve in Northern Ireland.

publicity for Amnesty.”¹²¹ An affiliate in Moscow thus represented not just a presence in the epicenter of the socialist world, but a new and powerful form of moral leverage outside that world.

Having begun in the summer of 1973, the exploratory talks between Amnesty (represented by Seán MacBride) and the Association of Soviet Lawyers (represented by Samuil Zivs) continued at the World Congress of Peace Forces (October 1973), at Amnesty conferences in Paris (December 1973) and Geneva (March 1974), at a meeting in Moscow (July 1974), and at an international conference of lawyers in Algiers (April 1975). Lists of adopted prisoners in the USSR were handed to Soviet representatives for comment; those representatives in turn provided Amnesty officials with a copy of Soviet regulations for prison and labor camp conditions. Amnesty informed Zivs and others that it was preparing a report on the treatment of Soviet prisoners of conscience and that they would be given an opportunity to comment on the report before it was published. The Soviet side stressed that penal conditions in the USSR met and exceeded the “Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners” adopted by the United Nations in 1955, and warned Amnesty that Turchin, Tverdokhlebov and their associates were trying to “start an opposition movement under the label of Amnesty.”¹²² Plans were made for future consultation in areas of mutual interest.¹²³

In July 1974, Amnesty leaders Martin Ennals, Thomas Hammarberg, and Dirk Börner, after meeting with Soviet officials, gathered the next day in Turchin’s Moscow apartment to discuss the still-unresolved issue of recognition. Also present at that gathering, in addition to

¹²¹ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” letter from Herbart Ruitenbergh to Yajda Zeltman, 31 Dec. 1973, p. 2; letter from Leonid Rigerman to Peter Reddaway 29 Aug. 1973, p. 2.

¹²² Amnesty International, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR: Their Treatment and Conditions* (London, 1975), pp. 5; IISH, AI-IEC Microfilm 244, p. 1334, letter from Lothar Belck to Martin Ennals, 20 May 1974. Belck refers to discussions with “our Russian Friend,” who in all probability was Zivs. See Zivs’ reference to various meetings with Amnesty officials in Samuil Zivs, *The Anatomy of Lies* (Moscow, 1984), p. 6.

¹²³ Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1973-74* (London, 1974), p. 68.

Turchin, were Andrei Tverdokhlebov and Yuri Orlov, with Tatiana Litvinova (daughter of former Commissar of Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov and his British wife Ivy Lowe, and the aunt of dissident physicist Pavel Litvinov and mother-in-law of Valery Chalidze) acting as translator. Orlov recounts the conversation as follows:

Our guests delivered arguments against giving Soviet members of Amnesty the status of a “[national] section.” It was difficult, they said, to deal with a totalitarian country; we might run up against provocations by the KGB. It would make more sense for Tverdokhlebov, they advised, to devote himself to some activity more effective than Amnesty, “if you wish to overthrow this system.” “We are not setting ourselves any such goal,” I remarked to the ceiling, just in case. After many hours of negotiating they agreed to a compromise: Amnesty would register us as a “group” - the lowest status, which did not give us the right to send delegates to international congresses of Amnesty International. I could see that they didn’t want trouble from us. It’s also possible that, bewitched by the Soviet political game, Amnesty’s leadership had decided not to complicate its relations with the Soviets by establishing excessively close ties with dissidents.¹²⁴

For Orlov and the other Russians, it was hard to know which was worse: the naiveté of Amnesty’s representatives, seemingly unaware that Turchin’s apartment was bugged and that in any event Soviet dissidents adhered to strictly legal forms of activity, or their condescension in purporting to explain to their dissident interlocutors what it would be like to deal with a totalitarian state. Relegated to perceived second-class status as a “group,” Orlov and others were left to wonder just how “international” Amnesty really was. The encounter felt a long way from that depoliticized global civil society Turchin had imagined.

As Orlov correctly intuited, Amnesty - with Martin Ennals in charge - was still attempting to have its cake and eat it too. At the highest levels of the Soviet government, however, there appears to have been little interest in cooperation. Whatever feelers had been extended by Zivs and others - acting on instructions from above - were almost certainly, as Reddaway had argued, designed to dissuade (or at least delay) Amnesty from formally recognizing the Moscow applicants as an affiliate. It was not merely that Amnesty - which KGB chairman Yuri Andropov referred to as a “‘non-governmental’ organization,” using quotation marks - was regarded as an

¹²⁴ Orlov, *Opasnye mysli*, p. 156.

agent of Western imperialism.¹²⁵ Rather, as Andropov and Soviet procurator Roman Rudenko stated in an April 1975 memorandum to the Central Committee, by applying for affiliation with Amnesty International, Tverdokhlebov and others “have set out to legalize, and as far as possible to establish immunity for, the anti-Soviet activity of a cohort of renegades in our country.”¹²⁶ In a striking (mis)interpretation of its mission, or perhaps its name, Andropov and Rudenko (the USSR’s highest legal official) cast Amnesty as seeking a kind of extraterritorial status for its members around the world, not unlike the legal immunities established by 19th-century European colonial powers on behalf of their citizens in China, Japan, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. Nor was this an isolated instance: when Thomas Hammarberg, head of Amnesty’s Swedish section, met that same month with an officer from the Soviet embassy in Stockholm (at the latter’s request), he was similarly told that Tverdokhlebov et al. “only wanted Amnesty membership as a guarantee against arrest.” The *New York Times* quoted an anonymous Soviet source several days later as claiming that the authorities “feel the dissidents are using Amnesty as a sort of shield.”¹²⁷ To Soviet authorities, the kindness of strangers looked like a stealthy form of neo-colonial interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state.

From a purely legal perspective, of course, this was a rather fanciful view of Amnesty’s modus operandi. The organization had never offered, or even claimed to be able to offer, anything like immunity, much less transnational immunity, for its members or adopted prisoners. But its name could give the impression - as some of Amnesty’s early supporters worried - that adopted prisoners were in fact guilty, or that states were being asked to formally overturn their

¹²⁵ Rubenstein and Gribanov, *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov*, Doc. 51 (Andropov to Central Committee, March 13, 1973), p. 141.

¹²⁶ RGANI f. 89, op. 37, d. 11, l. 1. The original reads: “ставят своей целью легализовать и, по возможности, сделать безнаказанной антисоветскую деятельность группы отщепенцев в нашей стране.”

¹²⁷ IISH AI-Index, Folder 455, Clayton Yeo [Research Department, Amnesty International], “Recent Events in the USSR,” p. 2; Christopher Wren, “Soviet Dissidents Fear Crackdown,” *New York Times* (April 20, 1975). The charge appears again in David K. Shipler, “A Small Chapter of Amnesty International, Begun in a Moscow Apartment, Survives its First Anxious Year,” *New York Times* (7 Sept. 1975), p. A1.

convictions.¹²⁸ And on a more pragmatic level, Amnesty's would-be members in Moscow as well as their supporters abroad certainly hoped that official recognition by the organization's headquarters in London would help protect them from arrest, on the theory that the Soviet regime would be reluctant to stir up the negative publicity that arrest or persecution would entail. As for charges of violating state sovereignty, Amnesty officials insisted that

The principle of non-intervention in matters essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of states is a rule of law binding on *states* who are the creators and addressees of international law [...]. It is a principle aimed at regulating the conduct of governments in their mutual relations, not the conduct of individuals lawfully expressing concern for their fellow human beings.¹²⁹

Gathering and publishing information, Amnesty further insisted, did not even qualify as intervention, regardless of whether it was undertaken by a state or by an NGO like itself. Amnesty and the Kremlin now appeared headed for a collision.

* * *

Seán MacBride's resignation from the chairmanship of Amnesty's International Executive Committee in September 1974 - one month before he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for decades of work on behalf of global disarmament and human rights - triggered a more public and more confrontational turn in Amnesty's relations with the Soviet government.¹³⁰ In September 1974, almost exactly a year after Tverdokhlebov et al.'s application to become affiliated with Amnesty, the International Executive Committee formally granted recognition - not as a national section, but as a local group, in accordance with the agreement reached in Valentin Turchin's apartment two months earlier. The Moscow group elected Turchin as chair

¹²⁸ Buchanan, "'The Truth Will Set You Free,'" p. 589.

¹²⁹ Kline Archive, Folder "Amnesty International - 1970s," "AI and the charge of interference in the internal affairs of states," 20 May 1976, p. 1. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁰ On the circumstances of MacBride's Nobel Prize, see Elizabeth Keane, *An Irish Statesman and Revolutionary: The Nationalist and Internationalist Politics of Seán MacBride* (New York, 2006), pp. 187-91.

and Tverdokhlebov as secretary, and was promptly assigned adoption cases from Spain, Yugoslavia and Sri Lanka. The Soviet government immediately started blocking the group's incoming mail (mostly from London), but did little to stop members from advocating on behalf of their adopted prisoners. It was here that predictions of the Moscow chapter's heightened moral leverage appeared to be confirmed - in spades. Its Spanish adoptee, the imprisoned playwright and critic Alfonso Sastre, was released shortly after the Moscow chapter sent letters to Franco and presented a petition to a Spanish representative in Moscow. In response to the group's inquiry about its Sri Lankan prisoner (an ethnic Tamil calling for greater cultural autonomy), that country's ambassador personally invited Turchin for tea at the embassy - on the mistaken assumption that the Moscow Amnesty group was a typical Soviet 'public' organization operating de facto on orders from the Kremlin. Even after Turchin explained that that was not the case, the ambassador, not wishing to take chances, arranged for the prisoner's release.¹³¹

Spain was soon replaced by Uruguay on the Moscow group's adoption list. Here the surviving documentation offers a valuable glimpse into how quickly Turchin et al. learned to assimilate Amnesty's language - as well as to attract a who's who of Soviet dissidents to Amnesty's cause. In a petition to Juan María Bordaberry, Uruguay's president, 40 signatories - including Petro Grigorenko, Yuri Orlov, Andrei Amalrik, Larisa Bogoraz, and Aleksandr Ginzburg, and Vitalii Rubin (all former prisoners of conscience) as well as Andrei Sakharov, Elena Bonner, and the refuseniks Vladimir Slepak and Aleksandr Lunts - expressed their dismay at reports of torture in Uruguay:

¹³¹ Amnesty International, *Annual Report, 1974-75* (London, 1975), pp. 119-20; Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," letter from Masha [Vorobiev, of AI-USA] to Clayton Yeo, Nov. 11, 1975, p. 1; David K. Shipler, "A Small Chapter of Amnesty International, Begun in a Moscow Apartment, Survives Its First Anxious Year," *New York Times* (7 Sept. 1975), p. A1; private communication from Yadja Zeltman, Oct. 9, 2012. Sastre's release, it should be noted, came after broad international protests; in this as in many other cases, it was virtually impossible to gauge the specific effect of Amnesty's intervention. The fate of the Moscow group's Yugoslavian adoptee, a woman arrested for inciting ethnic nationalism, is unknown.

No one should be subjected to degrading treatment and torture. Every human being should have the right to express his opinions and to move about freely. Only if people of all the world's countries, all nationalities and political convictions will support each other in the struggle for the observance of these great principles can humanity count on a better future. We ask you, Mr. President, to consider this petition as evidence of our deep respect and friendly feelings for the people of your country.¹³²

It would be difficult to deny the authority - not to say pathos - of a letter protesting human rights violations in one country by individuals who positioned themselves not as global ombudsmen but as victims of analogous violations in their own country. A press release from Amnesty's London headquarters left no doubt as to the petition's moral capital:

The Uruguayan government and media have repeatedly denounced Amnesty [...] as "communist inspired" - a charge which Amnesty has rejected, pointing to its record of unceasing work for prisoners of conscience in all parts of the world, including the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The fact that so many prominent Soviet citizens who have fought for human rights in the USSR, often at considerable risk to themselves, have signed this petition to President Bordaberry underlines the universal humanitarian concern about the torture of detainees in Uruguay. It also makes nonsense of any claims by the government of Uruguay that Amnesty's campaign is "communist motivated."¹³³

As Amnesty's leaders learned, however, the Moscow group was also capable of spending its moral capital in unanticipated ways. While the existence of an Amnesty affiliate in the USSR was a potent symbol of the organization's newfound reach beyond the capitalist West, criticism of Amnesty's lack of presence in the second and third worlds had in the meantime expanded beyond the issue of membership. In 1973, the Dutch national section submitted a memorandum to the International Executive Committee entitled "Is Amnesty Impartial Enough?," arguing that the dearth of members outside the West was due in part to the fact that Amnesty worked exclusively for civil and political rights, neglecting the social and economic rights that were central to socialist and developing countries.¹³⁴ It was a position that would soon be captured by

¹³² Kline Archive, Folder "Amnesty International Moscow Group," petition to the President of Uruguay from Moscow AI members and other Soviet citizens protesting torture, 23 March 1976.

¹³³ Kline Archive, Folder "Amnesty International Moscow Group," Amnesty press release, 10 May 1976.

¹³⁴ Huib Leeuwenberg, "Is Amnesty Impartial Enough?," *International Council Meeting* 12-14 (Sept. 1975), Appendix.

the oft-quoted phrase, “Human rights begin with breakfast.”¹³⁵ By working exclusively on behalf of the kinds of rights celebrated by capitalist countries, the organization was de facto forfeiting its claim to non-partisanship (a charge that continues to resonate in the world of human rights activism today¹³⁶). Seán MacBride had anticipated the Dutch position, arguing in 1969 that “Amnesty must remain committed [...] not to a policy of Western liberalism, parliamentary democracy, or national liberation, but to human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration. It is important that Amnesty is recognized as a body which is not aligned with any philosophy.”¹³⁷

The Dutch memorandum urged that Amnesty members from second and third world countries be asked to give their opinions on the subject of impartiality. Valentin Turchin was happy to oblige. In a blistering samizdat essay released in 1975 (and published in tamizdat) under the title “What is Impartiality?,” he informed his fellow Amnesty members in the West that Soviet-bloc countries cynically offered limited social and economic rights “to the degree that is necessary for the functioning of the state machinery” and in order to distract from the absence of genuine civil and political rights, to which they paid lip-service only because such rights were “currently in fashion.” In the West, well-anchored individual liberties had made possible the advances in science and technology that enabled the material well-being of large populations. Later, those advances had been imported to non-Western countries, in particular the Soviet Union, allowing rulers to satisfy the basic material needs of their populations without granting civil and political freedoms to individuals. This “totalitarian approach” to modernization dehumanized society and led to an “evolutionary dead-end.” There were indeed, as the Dutch

¹³⁵ The phrase has been attributed to former Senegalese president Léopold Senghor. For an example of its invocation in Amnesty’s internal deliberations, see Kline Archive, Folder “Amnesty International Historical Documents,” Background paper for working party #2, AI-USA Annual Meeting, March 1977: “Perception vs. effectiveness: how AI is viewed by the non-western world,” p. 3.

¹³⁶ For a recent account of the ongoing debate, see Aryeh Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement: A History* (Princeton, 2012), pp. 59-92.

¹³⁷ Amnesty, *Annual Report 1968-69*, p. 3.

Amnesty members claimed, two contrasting Eastern and Western approaches to human rights, two “intellectual platforms.” What would it mean, Turchin asked, to be impartial in this context?

Should Amnesty International refrain from choosing between these two conceptions and declare them equal? That would indicate an absence not of partiality but of thought and principle. Impartiality in an international organization does not mean that every human being on the planet shares its ideas and principles. No such ideas and principles exist. It means merely the equal application of principles to all countries, communities, and people.¹³⁸

Soviet ideology, Turchin noted, denied the value and even the possibility of impartiality in matters of social life, regarding it as a form of deception or self-deception. Western liberal thought, by contrast, celebrated the capacity of the human mind “to observe itself as if from an external position, to scrutinize its own system of thought, value, and aspirations from the perspective of a broader metasystem.”¹³⁹ For Turchin, as we have seen, Amnesty itself represented, in embryo but on a global scale, precisely such a metasystem.

One suspects that this was not quite what the Dutch authors of the memorandum expected when they asked non-Westerners to weigh in on whether Amnesty was sufficiently impartial. Even in their private correspondence - let alone in public pronouncements - Amnesty members rarely displayed such uninhibited criticism of a government or political system. Yet here again an aura of moral authority hovered around the words of Soviet dissidents, words that were smuggled out of the USSR at considerable risk to their authors. It was one thing for Amnesty to defend such individuals - that of course was the organization’s *raison d’être*. It was quite another to have them as members. And still another to do both at once.

Within a year of Turchin’s circulating his essay, Amnesty’s London-based Research Department, the nerve center of the organization, produced a trenchant report which, in somewhat cooler language, directly echoed Turchin’s central argument:

¹³⁸ Turchin, “Chto takoe bespristrastnost’?,” *Materialy samizdata* no. 276 (23 Jan. 1976) document 2401, p. 4. The second sentence reads in the original: это было бы безыдейностью и беспринципностью, а не беспристрастностью. The English version appeared as “What is Impartiality?,” *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR* no. 19 (1976), pp. 29-37.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

Impartiality and Balance. These two words [...] are frequently used in the context of AI research work, but their meanings and their implications have never been defined. By “impartiality” we assume that the organization means that we should work “irrespective of political consideration,” as is stated in Article 1 (a) of the AI statute. Article 2 (a) of the same statute, however, instructs the movement to “at all times maintain an overall balance between its activities in relation to countries adhering to the different world political ideologies and groupings.” This is presumably what is meant by balance. Evidently, these two articles of the AI statute are to a certain extent contradictory.¹⁴⁰

As the report went on to note, Amnesty had traditionally placed greater emphasis on balance, as reflected in the stipulation that every local group should work on behalf of three adopted prisoners of conscience, one from each of the world’s main ideological zones. “Our attempts to adhere to the concept of balance,” it concluded, “may, ironically, have damaged our impartiality.”

Within months of Amnesty’s recognizing the Moscow group, the KGB arrested members Sergei Kovalev and Andrei Tverdokhlebov and briefly detained Mikola Rudenko (a Ukrainian writer and war veteran based in Kiev, unrelated to Soviet Chief Procurator Roman Rudenko). Turchin was fired from his job and blacklisted, thus putting him at risk of imminent arrest on charges of parasitism (unemployment). As with many arrests of dissidents, the boilerplate charge of “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” shed little light on which specific actions by Kovalev and Tverdokhlebov had, in the eyes of the security police, crossed the line. Many of the individuals in the Moscow Amnesty group engaged in multiple forms of human rights activism in the USSR, while maintaining that in their capacity as Amnesty members they abided by Amnesty’s rule against advocating for prisoners of conscience in their own country.¹⁴¹ To the

¹⁴⁰ IISH AI-Index, Folder 424, Memorandum from the Research Department to the International Executive Committee, 16 Aug. 1976, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ Kovalev, for example, was one of the editors of the clandestine *Chronicle of Current Events*; both he and Tverdokhlebov vigorously defended Sakharov against ongoing harassment by the Soviet government. If membership in Amnesty International was indeed a factor in the decision to arrest Kovalev, Rudenko, and Tverdokhlebov, then it is possible - as Iurii Orlov suggests in his memoirs - that the *timing* of those arrests was linked to Seán MacBride’s departure from Amnesty’s International Executive Committee in the fall of 1974. See Orlov, *Dangerous Thoughts* (New York, 1991), p. 168. This passage does not appear in the subsequent Russian edition of Orlov’s memoirs: *Opasnye mysli* (Moscow, 1996).

Soviet regime such nuances were of course beside the point. As Andropov and Chief Procurator Rudenko put it in a memorandum to the Central Committee on the eve of Tverdokhlebov's arrest, "[this action] will provoke a loud anti-Soviet campaign abroad. However, the costs of curtailing his hostile activities will undoubtedly be lower than [allowing] the continuation of his criminal behavior."¹⁴²

With MacBride's resignation and the arrest of three of its Soviet members, Amnesty's back-channel to the Soviet government evaporated. Requests by the London leadership for permission to send an observer to their trials went unanswered.¹⁴³ When Amnesty, as promised, sent a draft copy of its report on prisoners of conscience in the USSR to the Association of Soviet Lawyers, seeking "comments on the accuracy or interpretation of the facts in the report" prior to publication, Lev Smirnov, president of the Association and chairman of the Soviet Supreme Court, replied with a single sentence:

In connection with your letter dated April 15th [1975] and the so-called "Report of Conditions of Detention of Prisoners of Conscience," we would like to acknowledge that we are not eager to discuss about what you call a book and that is vulgar falsification and defamation on Soviet reality and socialist legitimacy.¹⁴⁴

Amnesty published *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR: Their Treatment and Conditions* in November 1975, with editions in English, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese (Hong Kong), and Japanese. It was Amnesty's first, and until the 1980s the only such country-specific analysis. Laying out statute by statute how Soviet law enabled the prosecution of non-

¹⁴² RGANI f. 89, op. 37, d. 11, l. 3, "Zapiska no. 878-A predsedatelia KGB pri SM SSSR Iu. V. Andropova i General'nogo prokurora SSSR R. A. Rudenko v TsK KPSS 'O privilechenii k ugolovnoi otvetstvennosti Tverdokhlebova A. N.'," Dec. 10-12, 1975. The memorandum, which dates from between his arrest and trial, goes on to recommend that Tverdokhlebov be deprived of his right to reside in Moscow and "exiled to one of the distance regions of our country." Clearer evidence of political influence over Soviet courts would be difficult to find.

¹⁴³ AI-USA, Record Group IV, Series 1, Subseries 3: Robert Maurer Files, Box 11, F. 8, Press release, 11 Dec. 1975.

¹⁴⁴ Amnesty International, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR*, pp. 5, 148. Smirnov's letter was written (and published by Amnesty) in English. I have corrected several spelling errors for purposes of readability. The final phrase may have been meant to read "socialist legality" rather than "socialist legitimacy."

violent expression, the report analyzed the inconsistencies between Soviet law and international norms and covenants, including those ratified by the USSR, and above all, the horrendous conditions in which prisoners of conscience were forced to live (along with other prisoners). Much of the exposé's evidence - including photographs of prisoners and camps - derived from samizdat and other dissident sources.

An enormous publicity campaign helped bring *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR* to the attention of the world. Its back-channel to the Soviet government having collapsed, Amnesty was now fully committed to the strategy of public 'naming and shaming.' Press conferences were held in multiple European cities, to which local physicians, psychiatrists, lawyers, church leaders, and dieticians were invited (the latter to testify regarding substandard prison and camp rations). Local Amnesty groups were encouraged to "arrange for distribution of prisoners' rations, or prisoners' cabbage soup, in a public place or at any kind of public meeting." Simultaneous vigils - "to emphasize again the international character of our campaign and thus attract the interest of the mass media all the more" - were held outside Soviet embassies, trade offices, and Aeroflot offices. At some embassies, Amnesty members planned for TV stations to film the delivery of cakes with candles on November 7 (the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution). Only when embassy staff accepted the cakes would they notice that the candles were ringed with barbed wire (Amnesty's emblem), a scene meant to be captured and broadcast on television. Actors were invited to publicly perform dialogues between Soviet dissidents and their interrogators, prosecutors, or KGB-appointed psychiatrists, based on samizdat transcripts smuggled to the West.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ IISH AI-Index, Folder 455, Report on meeting of USSR coordination groups, London, 14/15 June 1975, pp. 5-8. Amnesty member Beth Goldring assembled and distributed a short play for public performance, called "Madness," consisting of excerpts from samizdat interrogation transcripts. AI-USA Record Group V, Series V.1, Box 264, F. 18, "Madness - A Documentary." Subsequently better known, and more widely performed, was Tom Stoppard's 1978 play "Every Good Boy Deserves Favor," based on the life of Vladimir Bukovsky.

Lev Smirnov's reluctance to critique the manuscript of Amnesty's report may well have reflected his own biography. Having served as judge at the trial of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel a decade earlier, he could hardly have forgotten the experience of presiding over an international public relations disaster. But his reluctance to publicly contest Amnesty's claims captured the larger conundrum in which the Soviet Union found itself - a conundrum that would lead to uncharacteristic flip-flopping over the next decade. No organization and no government had ever documented, much less published with such fanfare in over half a dozen languages, such sober and detailed data on the fate of arrested dissidents in the Soviet Union. Two years earlier, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* had sent shockwaves across the West with its revelations about the vast network of concentration camps inside the Soviet Union. To be sure, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR* was no match for Solzhenitsyn's fierce account of the fate of millions of Soviet citizens swept into Stalin's punitive machinery. But Amnesty's report was about conditions *now*, in the era of détente between the USSR and the West. Prior to Seán MacBride's back-channel, as we have seen, the standard Kremlin response to Amnesty members' enquiries about prisoners of conscience in the USSR had been not to respond at all. After all, Khrushchev had already declared at the Twenty-First Party Congress in 1959 that, following the liquidation of Stalin's personality cult, "There are no political prisoners in Soviet prisons today."¹⁴⁶ On the rare occasions when Amnesty had been mentioned in the Soviet press, it was usually to attack the organization's motives (the perennial charge of covert funding by western intelligence agencies) rather than to address the substance of its criticism.¹⁴⁷

Publicly responding to *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR* - even to statistics which they knew were false or exaggerated - put Soviet officials at risk of entering into an unwelcome

¹⁴⁶ *Pravda* no. 28 (Jan. 28, 1959), p. ?? . In fact, political arrests spiked precisely during the two years preceding this statement. In 1957 and 1958, 2,380 Soviet citizens were sentenced for "anti-Soviet" activity under Article 58-10. The total number of political prisoners, including those already in jails, camps, or exile, was of course considerably higher. See Robert Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union* (Cambridge [UK], 2013), pp. 108-34.

¹⁴⁷ See for example "'Geroi' bez oreola," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (5 Sept. 1973) and "Posle prozreniia," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (12 Sept. 1973).

debate. Other countries such as China or Singapore might deflect charges of human rights violations by denying their universality and by invoking cultural differences. In contrast to the “Asian values” critique of human rights as an ideology of Western individualism, however, the Kremlin had always insisted that the West’s human rights ideals not only applied to the Soviet Union, but found their most genuine fulfillment precisely there.¹⁴⁸ That same logic helps explain the extraordinary sensitivity of Soviet officials to Amnesty’s (and others’) criticism of the USSR’s human rights record.

While Lev Smirnov declined to engage Amnesty’s report, First Deputy Minister of Justice Aleksandr Sukharev gave a lengthy interview to the Soviet journal *New Times*, under the headline (in the English-language edition) “Human Rights in the Soviet Union: Putting the Record Straight.” Despite his insistence that “we don’t need to justify ourselves before anyone about anything,” Sukharev’s comments were clearly part of a campaign to deflect public criticism of the USSR’s human rights record. “Our country,” he declared, “long ago reached a level in the matter of tangible guarantees and defense of human rights that the average citizen in the so-called ‘free world’ can only dream of.” “The very concept of ‘political prisoner,’” he assured readers, echoing Khrushchev, “does not exist in our country.”¹⁴⁹

One of those readers was Andrei Amalrik, who immediately responded in a samizdat essay that combined, as he put it, “delight and disgust”:

¹⁴⁸ See Benjamin Nathans, “Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era,” in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge [UK], 2011), pp. 166-90. The “Asian values” argument was expressed most famously in the 1993 Bangkok Declaration. For an overview, see Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2010), pp. 112-44.

¹⁴⁹ Viktor Gushchin, “Human Rights in the Soviet Union: Putting the Record Straight,” *New Times* 1 (Jan. 1976), pp. 18-23. The Russian edition of the interview appeared under a less neutral headline: “Concerning Several Bad-Faith Enthusiasts for the Rights of the Soviet Person.” See “O nekotorykh nedobrosovestnykh revniteliakh prav sovetskogo cheloveka,” *Novoe vremia* 1 (Jan. 1976), pp.18-22. Sukharev was correct in the narrow sense that Soviet jurisprudence did not employ the term “political prisoner” (*politicheskii zakliuchennyi*). But the term was sufficiently embedded in vernacular usage as to have acquired an abbreviated form: *politizek*. In 1974, Gabriel Superfin and other prisoners in the Perm 35 labor camp petitioned for official recognition as political prisoners [CHECK Arkhiv samizdata source].

Delight, inasmuch as the very fact of this long-winded attempt to justify Soviet penal policy indicates just how sensitive the Soviet government is to the reaction of world public opinion to violations of human rights in the USSR and, consequently, just how much public opinion could achieve here. Disgust, because almost all of Mr. Sukharev's assertions are lies, and lies are always unpleasant to read.¹⁵⁰

According to Sukharev, Soviet citizens could not be prosecuted for their political or religious beliefs, only for their actions. "Views," he noted, "are not within the realm of jurisprudence." To this Amalrik countered, "Once an unorthodox thought has been expressed, whether printed, written down or spoken, it is regarded as an indictable act." Furthermore, thousands of Soviet citizens had been prosecuted not for their own verbal acts, but for reading or possessing those of others, despite the fact that "there is no published list of books which it is forbidden to possess."¹⁵¹

A week later, Smirnov's colleague Samuil Zivs offered his own public response to Amnesty's report. In a letter published in the West German *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Zivs, who had met multiple times with Amnesty representatives over the previous years, ridiculed the report for relying on "invention and speculation" to cover up its "lack of information concerning the actual state of affairs" in Soviet prisons. Particularly galling to Zivs was the report's estimate that there were "at least 10,000 political and religious prisoners in the USSR today."¹⁵² He similarly mocked the report's claim that there was no known case in which a political trial in the Soviet Union had ended in an acquittal. "The fact that the authors of the 'report' lack information," Zivs noted, "in no way shows that in this very narrow category of trials there have been no acquittals, no withdrawal of charges before trial, or no reversal of the verdict after

¹⁵⁰ A. Amalrik, "Est' li politzakliuchennye v SSSR?" (6 Jan. 1976), *Materialy samizdata* vol. 23 (1976), no. 2547. Republished in Amalrik, *SSSR i zapad v odnoi lodke* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange Ltd.: 1978), pp. 120-126. I have used the translation by Hilary Sternberg in Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?* [expanded and revised edition] (New York, 1981), pp. 135-6.

¹⁵¹ Amalrik, *ibid.* In the 1950s, the Soviet playwright Leonid Zorin recorded in his notebook an aphorism attributed to the 18th-century German scientist George Christoph Lichtenberg: "The first book that must be banned is the catalogue of banned books." See Zorin, *Zelenye tetrady* (Moscow, 1999), p. 31.

¹⁵² Amnesty, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR*, p. 53.

appeal.”¹⁵³ Incredibly, however, as Amnesty noted in its response to Zivs’ letter, “Dr. Zivs offered no substantive information to challenge our findings on these matters.”¹⁵⁴ Indeed, both Sukharev and Zivs showed themselves to be exceptionally ham-fisted practitioners of public diplomacy, criticizing their opponents’ alleged lack of evidence but failing to provide even an iota of their own. They were, in effect, trapped by the Soviet Union’s own propaganda. Having insisted for years that there was not a single political or religious prisoner in the USSR, they were in a poor position to counter Amnesty’s estimate of “at least 10,000” such prisoners - which, with hindsight, seems considerably higher than the actual number - with a more realistic, let alone evidence-based figure. The Kremlin’s fortress mentality, which kept the total number not just of political but of *all* prisoners shrouded in secrecy - possibly even to authorities like Sukharev - poorly prepared its officials for the art of public relations. Even in the United Nations’ General Assembly, where the USSR generally found a sympathetic audience, a Soviet delegate could only rail against Amnesty for “poisoning détente” and engaging in “slandorous accusations” against the socialist countries, without addressing the specific allegations of *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR*.¹⁵⁵ In the era of ‘peaceful coexistence,’ when vast nuclear arsenals on both sides raised the incentive to seek non-military forms of competition, public relations had become a crucial arena of global struggle. On the topic of human rights, the Kremlin was losing.

Yuri Andropov and Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko sensed the damage done by Amnesty’s work and the USSR’s failure to counteract its effects. In a June 1977 memorandum to the Central Committee, they described Amnesty’s report as “slandorous” and announced their plan for a more aggressive policy by the KGB to “monitor [Amnesty’s] activities,” to “interrupt its anti-Soviet actions” and to prevent its members from entering the territory of the USSR. They

¹⁵³ Dr. Samuil Siws [Zivs], “Spekulationen über UdSSR,” *Frankfurter Rundschau* (Jan. 12, 1976), p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Kline Archive, Folder “Amnesty International Historical Documents,” undated letter from Thomas Hammarberg.

¹⁵⁵ “Soviet, at U.N., Attacks Human Rights Groups,” *New York Times* (3 May 1977), p. A2. The delegate’s threat to cancel Amnesty’s consultative status at the U.N. was never carried out.

also recommended that Soviet institutions and public organizations adopt “the tactic of completely ignoring [Amnesty] in the course of their contacts with foreign non-governmental circles.” This command to hold fire applied to the media as well:

It seems expedient to refrain from publishing in the Soviet press any material about the activities of Amnesty International, in order not to give the opponent an opportunity to draw us into an undesirable discussion.¹⁵⁶

The memorandum did not urge cutting off all communication with Amnesty. Recognizing that the organization’s members included “prominent liberal activists in the West,” Andropov and Gromyko kept the door open for possible contacts with individuals on a case by case basis, taking into account “real opportunities to exert favorable influence - on them and, more broadly, on Amnesty’s activities.” But such communication was to be strictly private. Apart from the awarding of the 1976 Lenin Peace Prize to Seán MacBride (who by then was no longer part of Amnesty’s leadership), there is no evidence of any further communication between an Amnesty official and the Soviet government.

Andropov’s and Gromyko’s gag-order did not last long. Within months of their 1977 memorandum, Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, catapulting the organization onto the world stage and cementing its reputation as the largest and most influential human rights organization of the post-war era. In its award presentation, the Norwegian Nobel Committee not only quoted Solzhenitsyn but leveled a thinly-veiled rebuke against the Soviet-bloc countries for claiming that the act of calling attention to human rights violations in another country constituted interference in that country’s domestic affairs. “I cannot believe,” intoned committee chair Aase Lionæs, “that a ruse of this nature aimed at glossing over injustices perpetrated in one’s own country will be countenanced by international opinion today.”¹⁵⁷ While

¹⁵⁶ RGANI f. 89, op. 25, d. 51, ll. 2-4, Zapiska no. 1180-A predsedatelia KGB pri SM SSSR Iu. V. Andropova i ministra inostrannykh del SSSR A. A. Gromyko v TsK KPSS “O meropriiatiakh v sviazi s anti-sovetskimi ustremleniiami v deiatel’nosti ‘Mezhdunarodnoi amnistii,’” June 7, 1977.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1977/press.html (accessed Aug. 11, 2012).

it is impossible to measure the moral capital that flowed to Amnesty from the Nobel award, the effect on its finances was unmistakable: having gradually expanded since 1970, the organization's budget doubled in size during the year after the award, reflecting a surge in membership, especially in the United States, which had lagged behind Europe. The following year's budget witnessed another jump, of nearly fifty percent.¹⁵⁸

In the Kremlin's eyes, Amnesty's dramatically expanding resources were yet another sign of covert financing by the CIA and the British secret service, a long-standing contention for which Moscow never produced a shred of evidence apart from the revelations dating from the 1966-67 British funding scandal.¹⁵⁹ For Amnesty, heightened visibility (and bigger budgets) enabled a robust expansion of its work. Thanks to the post-1975 Helsinki process and the KGB's ruthless crackdown on Helsinki Watch Groups inside the Soviet Union, as well as president Jimmy Carter's effort, starting in 1977, to make human rights a guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy, international attention to the Soviet dissident movement had never been greater. Amnesty responded with a variety of new tactics. Dozens of professional organizations in Western countries, including psychiatric associations and labor unions, were mobilized to send protests to their Soviet counterparts.¹⁶⁰ Inspired by the divestment campaign against apartheid in South Africa, American Amnesty groups lobbied major U.S. corporations that had signed trade agreements with the Soviet Union - including Caterpillar Tractor, IBM, International Harvester, Occidental Petroleum, and Pepsico - to "make inquiries to their Soviet contacts" regarding adopted prisoners.¹⁶¹ Amnesty publicly critiqued the USSR's new (1977) constitution for

¹⁵⁸ For data on budgeted expenditures from 1961 to 1979, see Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1979* (London, 1979), p. 182.

¹⁵⁹ Nor has anyone else. A recent analysis by an Oxford historian of Amnesty's founding concludes that "there is no archival evidence to support the widely-held view in the communist world that Amnesty was a 'front' organization for western political interests." Buchanan, "'The Truth will Set you Free,'" p. 588, note 49.

¹⁶⁰ Amnesty International, *Annual Report, 1978* (London 1978), pp. 242-44.

¹⁶¹ AI-USA Record Group V, Series V.1, Box 264, F. 17, letter dated Nov. 29, 1978, sent to all AI-USA groups that had adopted Soviet prisoners.

deviating from principles the Kremlin had endorsed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other international agreements.¹⁶² A second, expanded edition of *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR* was published in 1980. While Amnesty, in line with its commitment to impartiality, declined to take a position on the boycott of the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow, it briefly considered (and then dropped as too flamboyant) a plan to organize a thousand Western spectators at the games who would visit one or more psychiatric hospitals in Moscow en masse and, “using ridicule as a weapon, declare themselves ‘mad’ for the day.”¹⁶³

The crescendo of protests over Soviet human rights violations was enough to cause Yuri Andropov to change his mind about the silence imposed in 1977 on the Soviet media regarding Amnesty’s activities. In July 1980, together with deputy minister of foreign affairs Georgii Kornienko, Andropov sent a memorandum to the Central Committee outlining a new - or rather, a return to an old - approach. Even as it described the policy of “completely ignoring” Amnesty as “fully justified,” the memorandum noted that “between 1978 and 1980 Amnesty has taken a series of hostile actions abroad.” Most recently, according to Andropov and Kornienko, the organization had provided materials to help the Carter administration apply political pressure on the Soviet Union in advance of the November 1980 international conference in Madrid to monitor compliance with the Helsinki Accords. The memorandum also reported (incorrectly) that Amnesty had endorsed the boycott of the Olympic games. In light of this upsurge of hostile activity, it concluded,

It seems expedient to instruct the editors of the newspaper *Izvestiia*, with the participation of the Academy of Sciences’ Institute of State and Law, and in cooperation with the KGB and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to prepare and publish a series of exposés with the

¹⁶² For example, Amnesty noted that while the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights forbade discrimination based on “race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,” the new Soviet Constitution omitted “political and other opinion” from the list. Amnesty International, *Annual Report, 1978* (London, 1978), pp. 237-39.

¹⁶³ AI-USA Record Group V, Series V.1, Box 264, F. 17, Minutes from Feb. 24-25, 1979 USSR Coordinators’ meeting: “Olympic Games Strategy.”

goal of compromising the above-mentioned organization vis-à-vis the publics of socialist and capitalist countries.¹⁶⁴

Izvestiia promptly obliged with a string of articles attacking Amnesty as a “troubadour of ‘psychological warfare’.”¹⁶⁵ Under headlines such as “Tearing off the Masks,” “Impartiality with a Secret Compartment,” and “Handmaiden of Secret Services,” its journalists rehashed the usual charges of Amnesty’s covert financing by the CIA and its adoption of various criminals (including war criminals) under the guise of “prisoners of conscience.” Evidently guided by the principle that the best defense is a good offense, one reporter traveled to Amnesty’s London headquarters and returned with the pronouncement that Clayton Yeo, director of Amnesty’s research department, was “an experienced collaborator with the American special services,” while Martin Ennals, the outgoing Secretary General, “maintained and maintains rather close ties with the SIS [British Secret Intelligence Service].” As for the new Secretary General, Thomas Hammarberg, *Izvestiia* demanded: “In what way is he different from his predecessor?”¹⁶⁶ Amnesty’s lack of impartiality was further demonstrated by its refusal to adopt Irish Republican Army prisoners languishing in British jails - never mind the fact that they failed to meet Amnesty’s criterion of not having practiced or advocated violence. Rather than directly rebut Amnesty’s claims, the USSR’s state-run media focused on impugning the organization’s motives or demonstrating that in the West there were prisoners of conscience as well as mentally healthy individuals confined in psychiatric hospitals, about whom Amnesty remained studiously silent.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ RGANI f. 89, op. 25, d. 52.2, ll. 35-6, Zapiska no. 1493-A predsdatelia KGB SSSR Iu. V. Andropova i zam. ministra inostranykh del G. M. Kornienko v TsK KPSS “O meropriiatiakh v otnoshenii organizatsii ‘Mezhdunarodnaia amnistiia’,” 24 July 1980.

¹⁶⁵ V. Barsov and M. Mikhailov, “Kogo zashchishchaete, gospoda! Ob odnom iz filialov imperialisticheskikh sekretnykh sluzhb,” *Izvestiia* 200 (25 Aug. 1980), p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ K. Kirillov, “‘Amnistiia’ - sluzhanka spetssluzhb,” *Izvestiia* 67 (20 March 1981), p. 5. For similar articles, see V. Barsov and M. Mikhailov, “Maski sorvany,” *Izvestiia* 201 (26 Aug. 1980), p. 5; and V. Skosyrev, “Za kulisami diversii: bespristrastnost’ s dvoimym dnom,” *Izvestiia* 64 (17 Mar. 1981), p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ The latter point was developed at length in Kirillov, “‘Amnistiia’ - sluzhanka spetssluzhb,” who insisted that Amnesty knew about cases of psychiatric imprisonment in Italy but did nothing about them.

Readers could be forgiven for viewing such statements as governed by the logic of ‘two wrongs make a right,’ and thus a tacit admission of analogous practices in the Soviet Union.

It was left to none other than Samuil Zivs, formerly the point man on the Soviet end of MacBride’s back-channel, to produce the most sustained and widely disseminated Soviet attack on Amnesty and its leading officials. The rebuttal began with a slender book entitled *Human Rights: Continuing the Discussion*, in English (1980) followed by Russian, French, German, and Spanish editions (1981), all published in Moscow. Soon thereafter came *The Anatomy of Lies*, published in Moscow in Russian (1982) and English (1984). Taken together, they represent a kind of *summa* of the Kremlin’s lumbering efforts to sway international public opinion on human rights and dissent in the USSR.¹⁶⁸ As with *Izvestiia*’s orchestrated campaigns and Zivs’ letter to the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the two book-length attacks continued to offer a primitive brew of disinformation and innuendo. Once again Zivs ridiculed Amnesty’s estimate of 10,000 Soviet prisoners of conscience (falsely describing how it arrived at that admittedly inaccurate number) without offering a shred of counter-evidence.¹⁶⁹ Once again the dramatic rise in Amnesty’s budget was transformed into proof of covert funding.¹⁷⁰ Once again smear tactics against individuals from Amnesty - above all, Peter Reddaway and Thomas Hammarberg - substituted

¹⁶⁸ But not the final word: the campaign to discredit Amnesty and the dissident movement continued until as late as 1988, well into the Gorbachev era, with the publication of Boris Antonov’s *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR and their Patrons* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1988). It appears to be undergoing something of a renaissance, as evidenced by the Russian government’s raid on Amnesty’s Moscow office in March 2013, part of a broader offensive against Western-sponsored NGOs in the Russian Federation. See David Herszenhorn and Andrew Roth, “Russian Authorities Raid Amnesty International Office,” *New York Times* (March 26, 2013), p. A9.

¹⁶⁹ Readers who bothered to compare the analysis of sources in Amnesty’s report with Zivs’ description of that analysis would have quickly grasped his method. At one point he quotes the report claiming as “absolutely reliable” the figure of 10,000 total prisoners of conscience. No such claim was made. On the contrary, the report repeatedly notes the difficulty of calculating the number of prisoners in the absence of published statistics and the wide range of existing estimates. See *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR*, pp. 48-53.

¹⁷⁰ Zivs, *Anatomy of Lies*, pp. 9-12.

for fact-based responses to their criticisms of Soviet practices.¹⁷¹ Once again Amnesty and other Western organizations were portrayed as the masterminds behind the production of samizdat while dissidents “claim[ed] immunity before the law.”¹⁷² And once again, Amnesty’s critique of Soviet courts and prisons was dismissed as “psychological warfare.”¹⁷³

“Is there any object for discussion with dissidents?,” Zivs asked in *Human Rights: Continuing the Discussion*, evidently unaware that a negative response to that question would sit poorly with the title of his book:

We shall allow ourselves to state that there are some points of view on which history itself has closed debate. It has issued its final verdict on them [...]. We do not intend to argue with dissidents.¹⁷⁴

But dissidents intended to argue with him. Just as Amalrik publicly rebuffed Sukharev’s attempt to undermine Amnesty’s claims, so in Zivs’ case Andrei Sakharov delivered a withering rebuttal - in samizdat as well as on the pages of the *New York Review of Books*. For all of Zivs’ efforts to discredit Amnesty’s claims about the Soviet Union, Sakharov observed, “never has a single international commission - the Red Cross, the World Health Organization, or any other authoritative and impartial body - been allowed into places of confinement in the USSR, and that, better than any words, demonstrates how groundless are Zivs’s efforts at refutation.”¹⁷⁵

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¹⁷¹ Zivs, *Anatomy of Lies*, pp. 25-34.

¹⁷² Zivs, *Human Rights*, pp. 97, 104; *Anatomy of Lies*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁷³ Zivs, *Human Rights*, pp. 12, 97; *Anatomy of Lies*, p. 47. In his afterword to *Human Rights: Continuing the Discussion*, Zivs claimed not to speak for the Soviet government, noting that “all too often anything written by a Soviet author is presented in the West as official, or at least as toeing the official line.” But as Andrei Sakharov noted, it is “extremely unlikely that Zivs could have gained access to the sources cited in his books” - unpublished government data, transcripts of dissidents’ trials, documents confiscated during searches - without substantial assistance from the KGB and/or other government institutions. Sakharov, “A Reply to Slander,” *New York Review of Books* (July 21, 1983).

¹⁷⁴ Zivs, *Human Rights*, pp. 89, 100.

¹⁷⁵ Sakharov, “A Reply to Slander,” *New York Review of Books* (July 21, 1983).

Valery Chalidze once joked that for the Soviet Union there existed not one but two organizations: the good “*Mezhdunarodnaia amnistiia*” (International Amnesty) and the evil “*Emnisti Interneshunel*.”¹⁷⁶ The 1967 Soviet handbook of international NGOs, mentioned in the previous chapter, had certainly adopted that stance, simultaneously lauding Amnesty’s defense of the rights of free speech of imprisoned leftists in the West while warning of its sinister manipulation by the capitalist ruling classes. In an updated version of the handbook, published in 1982, the good Amnesty disappeared. What remained was “a reactionary organization which has de facto turned into a mouthpiece for ‘psychological warfare’ waged by imperialist secret services against the countries of socialism.”¹⁷⁷ Noting the existence of Amnesty chapters in Great Britain, the United States, West Germany, Sweden, and elsewhere in the West, the handbook declined to inform its readers about the existence of an affiliate in their own country.

By the time of the revised handbook’s publication, the eleven founding members of that affiliate had become the target of relentless harassment - or worse. Sergei Kovalev was serving a seven-year sentence in Perm-36, a hard labor camp by the Ural mountains, 700 miles east of Moscow, to be followed by three years of internal exile. Yuri Orlov was nearby, in Perm-35, serving a similar sentence, to be followed by five years of internal exile. Andrei Tverdokhlebov was in Pennsylvania, having spent nearly three years in prison and Siberian exile before being given the option to emigrate. Valentin Turchin was in New York; he too had accepted the KGB’s offer of emigration (in 1977), after years of unemployment and threats of arrest. Vladimir Albrekht, Turchin’s successor as chair, was blacklisted and constantly followed by KGB agents who made no effort to remain incognito, threatening to beat him or push him onto

¹⁷⁶ Paraphrased from Sakharov, “A Reply to Slander.” The joke plays on the fact that the Russian rendition of Amnesty’s name never became standardized in the Soviet press, so that both versions - one translated, with the adjective preceding the noun, the other transliterated from English and therefore foreign-sounding - continued to be used.

¹⁷⁷ V. S. Shaposhnikov, ed., *Mezhdunarodnye nepravitel’stvennye organizatsiia i uchrezhdeniia. Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1982), p. 159.

subway tracks. “If I receive the order,” one agent informed him, “I’ll kill you.”¹⁷⁸ He would subsequently (in 1983) be arrested and imprisoned for four years before emigrating to the United States.

Remarkably, for every member arrested or exiled, a new one joined. The Soviet Amnesty group adopted new prisoners of conscience in Greece, Indonesia, and Poland, on whose behalf it diligently worked. But communication with the outside world had become more difficult, with frequent disruptions of both postal and telephone service. Members increasingly relied on visits by Amnesty representatives from abroad for news about the organization and the fates of their adopted prisoners. Isolated and under severe pressure from Soviet authorities, with few concrete successes beyond the sheer fact of survival, members fell into bickering over priorities, procedures, and leadership.¹⁷⁹ In his summary of KGB activities for the year 1982, Viktor Chebrikov, the new KGB chairman, confidently reported to his predecessor Yuri Andropov - who had recently succeeded the deceased Leonid Brezhnev as leader of the Soviet Union - that “the so-called Russian section of Amnesty International” had been “dismantled,” its “most active participants now subject to criminal proceedings.”¹⁸⁰

It proved a Pyrrhic victory.

The story of Soviet dissidents and Amnesty International, distant strangers brought together by overlapping aims, appears with hindsight to have unfolded in three acts. In Act One,

¹⁷⁸ Kline Archive, Folder “Soviet Human Rights Movement - General,” Letter of 3 Sept. 1976 to the AI International Council, p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ Kline Archive, Folder “Amnesty International Moscow Group,” Letter to Martin Ennals from Alan Missen, member of the Australian parliament, after visiting the Moscow Amnesty group, 16 Aug. 1976, pp. 2-3; Protocol of general meeting of the Moscow group on 4 July 1981, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸⁰ A. A. Makarov, N. V. Kostenko, G. V. Kuzovkin, eds., *Vlast' i dissidenty: iz dokumentov KGB i TsK KPSS* (Moscow: Moskovskaia Khel'sinskakaia Gruppy, 2006), p. 256, Zapiska no. 547-Ch/OV predsedatelia KGB SSSR V. M. Chebrikova v TsK KPSS i General'nomu sekretariu TsK KPSS Iu. V. Andropovu “Otchet o rabote Komiteta gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR za 1982 god,” 15 March 1983. Andropov’s immediate successor as head of the KGB, Vitalii Fedorchuk, served for six months before being replaced by Chebrikov in December 1982.

each side more or less blindly sought information, not about the other - of whose existence they were scarcely aware - but more broadly about the world on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Amnesty received its earliest data from persecuted Evangelical Baptists, whose appeals to Soviet leaders unintentionally crossed the USSR's western border. Only later, toward the end of the 1960s, did secular, metropolitan dissidents primarily from the scientific intelligentsia supplant Christians as Amnesty's main informants within the USSR. From the Soviet side, too, the courtship began in more or less random fashion. Raised by the Soviet system to think of themselves not as nationalists but as internationalists, Soviet dissidents initially addressed their post-1968 appeals to fraternal communist parties across Europe, to the United Nations, the Red Cross, or to the hazy entity known as "global public opinion" (*mirovaia obshchestvennost'*). It was not sheer chance that brought some of those appeals to Amnesty's London headquarters - unless, with Seneca, we understand chance as what happens when preparation meets opportunity. Nor was it an accident that the dissidents found more interlocutors among human rights NGOs than among student protesters. But neither was it the dissidents' intention.

The increasing flow of information on political and religious persecution inside the Soviet Union transformed Amnesty's work. To be sure, the USSR was one of many dozens of countries around the world on which Amnesty sought to keep watch. But the quantity and quality of data on persecution in the USSR, coupled with its status as Cold War superpower, ensured that Soviet prisoners of conscience remained at or near the forefront of Amnesty's, and eventually the Western public's, attention. The narratives and values embedded in the data, moreover, subtly pulled that attention toward those Soviet citizens - among them the data's compilers and editors - whose mode of activism resonated most powerfully with Amnesty's. For their part, Soviet dissidents who were drawn to Amnesty invested it with heightened meaning, as the embryo of a global civil society. In their message to an Amnesty meeting in Strasbourg, Valentin Turchin and Vladimir Albrekht described the organization as the catalyst of an emerging new human community:

Amnesty is an important new phenomenon in international life. This organization stands above political struggle and at the same time works for the resolution of the most

important political problems, which are connected with the rights of the person. This is a great undertaking destined for a great future. We believe that only if people base their activities on those principles and methods which are adopted by Amnesty can they achieve genuine integration of free people, whether on the scale of the national state or on the scale of the whole planet.¹⁸¹

Amnesty's visionary founder Peter Benenson, himself just one generation removed from the Russian intelligentsia, had harbored similarly maximalist dreams, in which Amnesty would foster an "awakened and vigilant world consciousness" that would tackle not just the symptoms of political imprisonment, but its causes.¹⁸²

The courtship between Amnesty and a cohort of Soviet dissidents culminated in an alliance of sorts - the drama's second act. This new species of transnational encounter has since been reproduced many times over (with considerable variation) as Amnesty and a swelling roster of Western human rights organizations have extended their reach across the globe, often in alliance with local activists. We can now glimpse in Amnesty's relationship with its Moscow affiliate a striking anticipation of controversies in today's Russia, Ukraine, and other countries of the former Soviet Union regarding the relationship between international NGOs and embattled local rights groups (the former branded as "front organizations" for Western governments, the latter stigmatized as "foreign agents").¹⁸³

As we have seen, the courtship between Amnesty and a small but determined group of Soviet dissidents was neither quick nor smooth. To be sure, in Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration the two parties found a common, ready-made language of human rights. But when it came to human rights *activism* - the deployment of that language in the world - there

¹⁸¹ Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," letter of 3 Sept. 1976 from Turchin and Albrekht to the AI International Council (meeting in Strasbourg), pp. 1-2.

¹⁸² On Benenson's vision, expressed in an extraordinary memorandum not meant for publication, see Buchanan, "'The Truth will Set you Free,'" p. 595.

¹⁸³ For contemporary analyses, see Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, "Foreign Assistance, International Norms, and NGO Development: Lessons from the Russian Campaign," *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 419-49; Sarah E. Mendelson and Theodore P. Gerber, "Activist Culture and Transnational Diffusion: Social Marketing and Human Rights Groups in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 23/1 (2007), pp. 50-75.

was considerable confusion and mutual skepticism. For in addition to diffusing certain human rights norms, Amnesty was implicitly in the business of spreading particular norms of human rights advocacy, a cluster of techniques that I have called “distanced empathy.” When Soviet dissidents sought to participate in Amnesty’s work as partners rather than as adoptees, alarm bells unexpectedly went off in London. Would Soviet dissidents, so passionately at odds with their own government, be able to exercise the emotional restraint necessary for “distanced empathy”? Could individuals who lived in such a powerful ideological force-field really afford the luxury of political neutrality so prized by Amnesty? London’s long delay in responding to the proposed engagement led dissidents to develop their own doubts: how “international” in fact *was* Amnesty? Was its vaunted political non-partisanship merely a euphemism for political cowardice and lack of principle?

It did not help, of course, that some on the Amnesty side were simultaneously courting the Kremlin in the hope of identifying shared purposes. For several years the Kremlin encouraged that hope, if only to steer Amnesty away from its dissident suitors. But it was too little, too late. In the 1960s, during Act One, the Kremlin’s refusal to respond to Soviet dissidents’ letters and petitions - or rather, its punitive response to their letters and petitions - had led them to look abroad for allies. Similarly, the Kremlin’s silence in response to Amnesty’s many inquiries had led its members to rely entirely on Soviet dissidents for information on prisoners of conscience. During Act Two, as Amnesty officials awkwardly shuttled between Samuil Zivs’ office at the Association of Soviet Lawyers on Kalinin Prospect and, eight metro stops away, Valentin Turchin’s apartment on Butlerova Street, they faced a stark choice between two possible alliances, one from above, the other from below. Above loomed the Soviet government, which held the fate of the USSR’s prisoners of conscience in its hands and which had a dismal track record of responding to Amnesty’s concerns. Below stood Turchin, Tverdokhlebov, and like-minded dissidents, who were keen to serve not as victims of human rights violations, but as allies in human rights advocacy - and to gain whatever protection might come from affiliation with a prominent western organization. Once it became public, the

Moscow group's request for recognition was virtually inescapable. As Andrew Blane, professor of Russian history at the City University of New York and a member of Amnesty's International Executive Committee, put it in a 1974 memorandum, "even the appearance that grass-roots association is being sacrificed to high-level dialogue strikes me as not the stuff of which Amnesty is made."¹⁸⁴

With the recognition of a Soviet affiliate in 1974 and the publication of a damning exposé on Soviet prisoners of conscience the following year, Amnesty effectively burned its back-channel to the Soviet government. In Act Three, the Kremlin began its siege of Amnesty's Soviet group but also found itself pulled into precisely the kind of "undesirable discussion" that Andropov had warned against. Not the lopsided "bilateral negotiations" conducted discretely in Zivs' office or on the sidelines at Amnesty conferences in Europe, but a bruising public contest for global opinion carried out in headlines, opinion pieces, pamphlets, and books, in street actions organized by local Amnesty groups across Europe and the United States, and in broadcasts of Western shortwave radio stations that reached millions of Soviet listeners. If we understand human rights as a politics of the information age, then human rights activism, as pioneered by Amnesty in the 1960s and 1970s, is the art of selecting, shaping, and strategically making that information public. It was an art at which the Kremlin proved remarkably unskilled, its decades of experience producing propaganda seemingly overwhelmed by centuries-old habits of secrecy.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Kline Archive, Folder "Soviet Human Rights Movement - General," letter from Andrew Blane to Ivan Morris and other members of the Madison Avenue Group, 31 Jan. 1974, p. 6.

¹⁸⁵ A similar reluctance to engage in the global contest for public opinion, and the sense of the inadequacy of Soviet propaganda on the international stage, appear in the minutes of a January 7, 1974 Politburo discussion on how to respond to the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. Again and again, Politburo members asserted that 'we cannot remain silent' (molchat' nel'zia) - suggesting a certain difficulty in determining what exactly should replace the reigning silence regarding Solzhenitsyn's revelations. Many also tacitly acknowledged the weakness of Soviet media in countering the West's 'psychological warfare.' Aleksei Kosygin: "Articles on Solzhenitsyn should be published in the press, but serious ones." Nikolai Podgorny: "Articles should be published in the newspapers, but they should be well argued and convincing." Brezhnev: "We must publish well argued articles giving a strict and clear response

Did the contest over that elusive entity called “public opinion” actually matter - and if so, in what way and with what consequences? “Pressure of opinion a hundred years ago,” Peter Benenson had declared in Amnesty’s founding text, “brought about the emancipation of the slaves.”¹⁸⁶ In a gesture of Cold War ecumenism, Benenson noted that Amnesty’s founding in 1961 coincided with the centenary of both Abraham Lincoln’s inauguration and Russia’s emancipation of its serfs. The fact that it took not only the “pressure of opinion” but a brutal civil war (in the American case) and a humiliating defeat in the Crimean War (in Russia’s case) to put an end to systems of unfree labor makes Benenson’s gesture perhaps less compelling than it appeared. But there is no denying that a changed climate of moral opinion was a necessary if not sufficient cause of the demise of those systems - as it would be of the Soviet Union in 1991.

“The most rapid way of bringing relief to Prisoners of Conscience,” Benenson argued, “is publicity, especially publicity among their fellow-citizens.”¹⁸⁷ As Amnesty recognized, the pressure of public opinion was nearly impossible to mobilize inside a country like the USSR. The same applied to many of the countries with the largest numbers of prisoners of conscience. In such cases, Seán MacBride announced in 1969, “Amnesty International may represent public opinion where public opinion has no local outlet of expression.”¹⁸⁸ One struggles over which is more breathtaking: the claim to know what “public opinion” in the Soviet Union was, or the notion that Amnesty could represent it from its perch in London. We may interpret MacBride’s remarkable pronouncement as a sign that in practice, the opinion whose pressure Amnesty sought to apply to Soviet authorities was not so much that of the prisoners’ fellow-citizens as of some imagined transnational entity: “awakened and vigilant world consciousness” (as Benenson conceived it), “the global public” (as Soviet dissidents put it), or perhaps “the international

to the writings of such journalists as [Joseph] Alsop.” Andrei Kirilenko: “Articles should be published in the newspapers, but they should be well argued and thorough.” See V. N. Denisov, ed., *Kremlevskii samosud: sekretnye dokumenty politbiuro o pisatele A. Solzhenitsyne* (Moscow: Rodina, 1994), Document 112, pp. 352-62.

¹⁸⁶ See Chapter 8, footnote 4.

¹⁸⁷ Benenson, “The Forgotten Prisoners,” *The Observer* (London) 28 May 1961.

¹⁸⁸ Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1968-69*, p. 3.

community” (as we are fond of calling it today). Little wonder, then, that Samuil Zivs, echoing Stalin’s quip about the Pope’s divisions, mocked Amnesty’s repeated claim to have a “mandate.”¹⁸⁹ Yet by 1974, Amnesty had concluded - and the evidence seems to suggest that they were right - that “Soviet authorities are perhaps more susceptible to bad publicity than [those of] any other country.”¹⁹⁰

When the idea of public opinion was born in eighteenth-century Britain and France, contemporaries vigorously debated how they might capture this new, protean form of authority. Republicans or would-be republicans were not the only ones who invoked it, however. In pre-revolutionary France, the monarchy too found itself engaging in the politics of public contestation and thereby unwittingly helped legitimize public opinion as a force in its own right.¹⁹¹ The ‘global public opinion’ invoked by Soviet dissidents, Amnesty International, and a host of other players in late twentieth-century geopolitics was, if anything, even more protean, more virtual, than its eighteenth-century forebear, which could at least claim to be contained within the boundaries of the nation. Like the French monarchy, the Soviet government became an active participant in the contest for public opinion, now on a global scale. On certain subjects (education, social welfare, science and technology, military power) and in the eyes of certain groups within the global public (ex-colonies and less industrialized, agrarian societies), the Kremlin achieved considerable success. But as Yuri Andropov sensed, in the contest with Amnesty and Soviet dissidents over human rights in the global information age, the USSR had entered a battle it could not win.

¹⁸⁹ Zivs, *Anatomy of Lies*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁰ AI-USA Record Group IV, Series 1, Box 11, F.9, Doc. 3, Notes from April 20-21, 1974 meeting of national sections on the USSR.

¹⁹¹ See the elaboration of these ideas in Keith Michael Baker, “Politics and Public Opinion Under the Old Regime: Some Reflections,” in Jack Censer and Jeremy Popkin, eds., *Press and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 204-46.

