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Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE AMERICAN TRADITION

Nothing the Carter Administration has done has excited more hope, puzzlement and confusion than the effort to make human rights a primary theme in the international relations of the United States. Observers, watching the human rights initiative stumble from one contradiction to another, have announced its demise at regular intervals. Yet the campaign has plainly touched exposed nerves around the planet; it reverberates from Moscow, Santiago and Kampala to Peking; and, after two uncertain years, it remains a vital if problematic strain in American foreign policy. It therefore seems appropriate to attempt an interim assessment of the human rights initiative: its origins, its ambiguities, its achievements, its perils, its prospects.

II

Human rights—roughly the idea that all individuals everywhere are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness on this earth—is a relatively modern proposition. Political orators like to trace this idea to religious sources, especially to the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. In fact the great religious ages were notable for their indifference to human rights in the contemporary sense—not only for their acquiescence in poverty, inequality and oppression, but for their addiction to slavery, torture, wartime atrocities and genocide.

Christianity, for example, assigned to earthly misery an honored and indispensable role in the drama of salvation. The trials visited on mankind in this world were conceived as ordained by the Almighty in order to test and train sinful mortals. From the religious perspective, nothing that might take place on earth mattered in comparison to what must take place hereafter. The world was but an inn at which humans spent a night on their

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voyage to eternity, so what difference could it make if the food was poor or the bed uncomfortable?

No doubt the idea of natural rights has classical antecedents, among, for example, the Stoics. But humanitarianism—the notion that natural rights have immediate, concrete and universal application—is a product of the last four centuries. Tocqueville persuasively attributed the humanitarian ethic to the rise of the idea of equality. In aristocratic societies, he wrote, those in the upper caste hardly believed that their inferiors "belong to the same race." When medieval chroniclers "relate the tragic end of a noble, their grief flows apace; whereas they tell you at a breath and without wincing of massacres and tortures inflicted on the common sort of people." Tocqueville recalled the "cruel jocularity" with which the intelligent and delightful Madame de Sévigné, one of the most civilized women of the seventeenth century, described the breaking on a wheel of an itinerant fiddler "for getting up a dance and stealing some stamped paper." It would be wrong, Tocqueville observed, to suppose that Madame de Sévigné was selfish or sadistic. Rather, she "had no clear notion of suffering in anyone who was not a person of quality."

But the age of equality, Tocqueville suggested, vastly increased the number of people who saw each other as equals. That equality was the source of the new mood of "general compassion" was proved by the contrast between the way white Americans treated themselves and the way they treated their slaves. "The same man who is full of humanity toward his fellow creatures when they are at the same time his equals becomes insensible to their afflictions as soon as the equality ceases. His mildness should therefore be attributed to the equality of conditions rather than to civilization and education."[1]

The ethic of humanitarianism came into its own in the eighteenth century. Since religion had traditionally rejected the notion that people had a right to earthly happiness, early human rights formulations, as with Voltaire and later in the French Revolution, had a markedly anti-religious cast. Only later, as religion itself succumbed to the new ethic and began to see the Kingdom of God as attainable within history, could the claim be made that the Judeo-Christian tradition commanded the pursuit of happiness in this world. The basic human rights documents—the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man—were written by political, not by religious, leaders.

[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II, book 3, chapter 1.

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III

The United States was founded on the proclamation of "unalienable" rights, and human rights ever since have had a peculiar resonance in the American tradition. Nor was the application of this idea to foreign policy an innovation of the Carter Administration. Americans have agreed since 1776 that the United States must be the beacon of human rights to an unregenerate world. The question has always been how America is to execute this mission.

John Quincy Adams discussed the American choice in his famous Fourth of July address in 1821. "Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled," Adams said,

> there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad, in seach of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own. She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom. The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from *liberty* to *force*. . . . She might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit.[2]

In 1847 Albert Gallatin, the last survivor among the great statesmen of the early republic, made the same point. "Your mission," he told his countrymen, "was to be a model for all other governments and for all other less-favored nations, to adhere to the most elevated principles of political morality, to apply all your faculties to the gradual improvement of your own institutions and social state, and *by your example* to exert a moral influence most beneficial to mankind."[3]

Then in December 1849, Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan, who had been Jackson's Secretary of War and in 1848 the Democratic presidential candidate and who later became Buchanan's Secretary of State, introduced a resolution instructing the Foreign Relations Committee to inquire into the "expediency" of suspending diplomatic relations with Austria. Cass intended this as the national

[2] Walter LaFeber, ed., *John Quincy Adams and American Continental Empire: Letters, Speeches and Papers,* Chicago: Times Books, 1965, p. 45.

[3] Albert Gallatin, *Peace With Mexico*, New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1847, Section vii. Emphasis added.

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response to the bloody suppression by Austrian and Russian troops of the Hungarian revolution of 1848—"atrocious acts of despotism," Cass said, "by which human liberty and life have been sacrificed." Louis Kossuth, the President of the short-lived Hungarian republic, soon visited the United States, pointing out in powerful speeches the anomaly that, while Americans talked endlessly about their mission of liberty, they declined "to take any active part in the regulation of the condition of the outward world." Yet, if the American destiny was what "you all believe it to be, then, indeed, that destiny can never be fulfilled by acting the part of passive spectators and by this very passivity granting a charter to ambitious czars to dispose of the condition of the world." Americans, Kossuth said, trusted so much "to the operative power of your institutions and of your example that they really believe they will make their way throughout the world by their moral influence. . . . I have never yet heard of a despot who had yielded to the moral influence of liberty."[4]

Cass's resolution and Kossuth's challenge confronted Americans with the question of how they were to fulfill the mission of human rights. John Parker Hale, a Free Soil Democrat from New Hampshire, opened the debate. "Aching and throbbing hearts," he said ironically, "[had] been waiting, and watching, and agonizing for just such a day as that when the Government shall . . . express its sympathies for the millions who are under the heel of power." But, if the Hungarian repression were indeed a moral question, Hale thought, the resolution should speak, not of the "expediency" of suspending relations with Austria but the "duty." Cass, however, had assured the Senate that American trade with Austria was negligible, thus making it "quite clear to the country that they can let off a good deal of indignation, and that it will cost them but very little." Was this the way to treat a moral question? Imagine the American minister in Turkey, where Kossuth had now fled, trying to cheer the Hungarian refugees by telling them "that the Senate of the great American Republic are inquiring, this very day, how much it will cost to utter a little indignation in their behalf?"

The future historian, Hale said, might start off his chapter about these times:

> At the commencement of this year, the American Senate, the highest legislative body of the world, the wisest, greatest, and most magnanimous people that ever lived or ever will live, forgetting and neglecting the trifling local affairs which

[4] Kossuth's speech at Concord, May 11, 1852, *Old South Leaflets,* No. 111, p. 15.

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concerned their own limits, constituted themselves into a high court, and proceeded to try the nations of the earth for "atrocious acts of despotism."

Hale hoped that the historian could go on to say that the United States proceeded "to try, not some few second-rate Powers with but little commerce, and whom it would cost but little to deal with, but that they took the empire of Russia first, and tried her." After all, Russian arms had overcome Kossuth. "I will not consent to sit in judgment upon Austria, until we have passed judgment upon some of these larger criminals. I am not willing that our action should be like that of small nets which catch the small fishes but let the great ones go."

What Cass proposed, Hale continued, was "that we erect ourselves into a high court of indignation! We are to arraign at our bar the nations of the earth, and they are to pass in trial before us, and we are to pass judgment upon them." An excellent principle—but why stop with Austria? I want to try the czar of Russia, Hale said, not just for what he did in Hungary but "for what he had done long ago in sending those unfortunate exiles to Siberian snows. . . . I want them to know that the American Senate have sympathies also for them. . . . I want to try him for his agency in the partition of Poland. . . . When we have done this, we shall show that we are governed by no pusillanimous motives in expressing our indignation against a weaker Power." And, "when we have tried Russia, let us not stop there. I think we ought to arraign . . . England for the manner in which she tried Smith O'Brien and the Irish patriots. . . . I want to go to India, and to try England for the oppressions, the cruelties, and the wars that she waged there."

If the principle was good, Hale said, it should be applied impartially. "After we have got through with Russia and England, I want . . . France to be placed at the bar . . . I want to go to Algiers and to inquire what France has done there. . . . Then, sir, while the court is in session . . . I want to try Spain. . . . Let us show that we are in earnest, and not merely showing off our indignation where there is no power of resentment, and where it will not be likely to cost us anything."

And, after we have passed judgment on the nations of Christendom and "they lie writhing in an agony of mortification at our feet," then let us "go from these high places down before the bar, and plead ourselves." For in "the capital of the Model Republic . . . within sight of the flag of freedom that floats over our heads . . . men are to be bought, and women are to be bought, and kept at twenty-five cents per day, until ready to be transported

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to some other market." The principle of the Cass resolution—"that liberty is [man's] God-given right, and the oppression that takes it from him by man is a wrong"—ought to begin at home.

Henry Clay, then in the twilight of his career, joined the debate. He was struck by the "incongruity" between Cass's premises and his remedy. Cass had discoursed about the "enormities of Austrian despotism," but his conclusion was only to recall "a little chargé d'affaires that we happen to have at Vienna. Why, the natural conclusion would be to declare war immediately against Austria." But was it really sensible to close the door of intercourse with Austria? Why not send a distinguished American to Vienna to plead quietly on behalf of the Hungarians? And why not "bring forward some original plan for affording succor and relief to the exiles of Hungary?"

In any event, Clay said, the Cass resolution asks us to judge foreign nations "as their conduct may be found to correspond with our notion and judgment of what is right and proper in the administration of human affairs." It assumes "the right of interference in the internal affairs of foreign nations. . . . But where is to be the limit?" You may say to Spain that unless it abolishes the inquisition, to Turkey that unless it abolishes polygamy, the United States will cease all intercourse with you. "Where, again I ask, are we to stop? Why should we not interfere in behalf of suffering Ireland? Why not interfere in behalf of suffering humanity wherever we may find it?" Let the Senate reflect, Clay warned, that in going down this road, we may "open a new field of collision, terminating perhaps in war, and exposing ourselves to the reaction of foreign Powers, who, when they see us assuming to judge of their conduct, will undertake in their turn to judge of our conduct."[5]

IV

This ancient debate serves as a reminder of what small progress America has made since the 31st Congress in resolving the question of the national mission. Cass's resolution showed the profound and admirably uncontrollable American impulse to demonstrate sympathy for suffering people in other lands. The response by Hale and Clay expressed doubts that still persist: Is the point of foreign policy to discharge moral indignation or to produce real changes in a real world? May quiet diplomacy not be more effective in international persuasion than public denunciation? Must not the United States, when it invokes human rights, apply the principle

[5] *Congressional Globe*, 31st Cong., 2nd Sess., January 7, 1850, pp. 113–116. For this and other references to Senate debates, I am indebted to Richard Baker and the Senate Historical Office.

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across the board and not just to small and weak countries? May not intervention on behalf of human rights jeopardize other national interests and increase the danger of war? In any event, by what authority do we interfere in the internal affairs of foreign countries? Should all nations be expected to embrace the American conception of human rights? Does not the habit of passing judgment on foreign states nourish national self-righteousness? Should not a human rights crusade perhaps begin at home?

Cass's resolution failed. Yet the questions raised by his appeal nagged the national conscience. After the Civil War President Grant observed in his first annual message that while Americans sympathized "with all people struggling for liberty . . . it is due to our honor that we should abstain from enforcing our views upon unwilling nations and from taking an interested part, without *invitation,* in the quarrels . . . between governments and their subjects."[6] Nonetheless, both Congress and the executive thereafter condemned assaults on human rights abroad—the persecution of Jews in Russia, Eastern Europe and the Levant; the massacre of Armenians in Turkey; the oppression of the Irish; "the cruel treatment of State prisoners in Siberia."[7] Justification presumably lay in the doctrine of humanitarian intervention.[8] "Although we . . . as a rule scrupulously abstain from interfering, directly or indirectly, in the public affairs" of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Secretary of State Hamilton Fish informed the American minister in Vienna in 1872, the persecution of Jews in Moldavia and Wallachia was so "inhuman" as to impart to the situation "a cosmopolitan character, in the redress of which all countries, governments, and creeds are alike interested."[9] Twenty years later Secretary of State James G. Blaine told the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs that, while the American government "does not assume to dictate the internal policy of other nations . . . nevertheless, the mutual duties

[6] Ulysses S. Grant, first annual message, December 6, 1869.

[7] The quoted phrase is from a resolution referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1891. See *Congressional Record,* 51st Cong., 2nd Sess., February 14, 1891, p. 141.

[8] Grotius and many subsequent authorities defended the legality of such intervention, even in the form of invasion and war. E. M. Borchard thus defined the doctrine in 1915: "When. . .'human' rights are habitually violated, one or more states may intervene in the name of the society of nations and may take measures to substitute at least temporarily, if not permanently, its own sovereignty for that of the state thus controlled" (E. M. Borchard, *The Diplomatic Protection of Citizens Abroad,* New York, 1915, p. 14). Senator McGovern's recent proposal for U.N. intervention in Cambodia was in this tradition. Other authorities have been skeptical of the doctrine. A. Rougier concluded after systematic inquiry into "*la théorie de l'intervention d'humanité*" that it was "neither possible to separate the humanitarian from the political grounds of intervention nor to assure the complete disinterestedness of the intervening States. . .Barbarous acts are committed by the thousands every day in some corner of the globe which no State dreams of stopping because no State has an interest in stopping them." See the discussion in L. B. Sohn and Thomas Buergenthal, *International Protection of Human Rights,* Charlottesville (Virginia): Michie Co., 1973, chapter 3.

[9] John Bassett Moore, *A Digest of International Law,* Washington, 1906, VI, pp. 360–61.

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of nations require that each should use its power with a due regard for the result which its exercise produces on the rest of the world."[10]

The pressures of conscience, reinforced by ethnic lobbies fearful for relatives in the homeland, injected human rights into foreign affairs so regularly in these years that Theodore Roosevelt in 1904 felt impelled to issue a warning. No shrinking violet when it came to the assertion of American power in the world, TR nonetheless cautioned Congress:

> Ordinarily it is very much wiser and more useful for us to concern ourselves with striving for our own moral and material betterment here at home than to concern ourselves with trying to better the condition of things in other nations. We have plenty of sins of our own to war against, and under ordinary circumstances we can do more for the general uplifting of humanity by striving with heart and soul to put a stop to civic corruption, to brutal lawlessness and violent race prejudices here at home than by passing resolutions about wrong-doing elsewhere.[11]

Despite TR's effort to recall his countrymen to the older tradition of doing good by example rather than by interference, the conviction grew in the bloody twentieth century that crimes against humanity indeed had "a cosmopolitan character" and were humanity's business. Wilsonianism gave this view general blessing, though Wilson cast the issue in terms of national self-determination. But the conception of an international interest in *individual* rights was evolving. The eighth Conference of American States (1938) produced resolutions in "defense of human rights." Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms (1941) applied specifically to people, not to nations. Roosevelt also extended the conception to cover not only freedom of speech and worship, but freedom from want ("economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants") and freedom from fear (that is, of military aggression). FDR's third freedom, supplemented by his Economic Bill of Rights (1944), soon flowered into the idea of social and economic rights to be sought along with traditional "Bill-of-Rights" rights.

The "Declaration by United Nations" (1942) called for "complete victory" in order, among other things, "to preserve human rights";

[10] Moore, *ibid*., pp. 354–56. The "result" that disturbed Blaine was the discharge into the United States of large numbers of destitute Jews from Russia.

[11] Theodore Roosevelt, fourth annual message, December 6, 1904. Roosevelt went on to acknowledge it as "inevitable" that the nation "should desire eagerly to give expression to its horror on an occasion like the massacre of the Jews in Kishenef" and conceded that "in extreme cases action may be justifiable." The form of action, however, must depend "upon the degree of the atrocity and upon our power to remedy it."

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and the U.N. Charter (1945) pledged member nations to joint and separate action to promote "human rights." Three years later the U.N. General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This lengthy document included both "civil and political rights" and "economic, social and cultural rights," the second category designed to please states that denied their subjects the first. The Declaration was followed by a series of subsidiary conventions and covenants. As David Owen, the present British Foreign Secretary, has accurately noted, these documents, "though usually passed by large majorities, normally had no perceptible impact on the protection of human rights in any part of the world."[12] Yet standards solemnly declared, even if unobserved, live on to supply ammunition to those who thereafter demand observance.

The idea of human rights, like nearly everything else, was caught up in the cold war. The democratic states assailed the communist world for its abuse of civil and political rights; the communist world assailed the democratic states for their neglect of social and economic rights. Human rights began to emerge as a theme in American foreign policy in this context; thus Kennedy in his inaugural address spoke of a new generation of Americans "unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed." But human rights were also seen as an object of détente; thus Kennedy asked at American University in 1963: "Is not peace, in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights?" "Since human rights are indivisible," Kennedy told the United Nations two months before Dallas, "this body cannot stand aside when those rights are abused and neglected by any member state."

Vietnam interrupted Washington's movement toward human rights as a major theme of foreign policy. The case for American intervention spoke of national self-determination rather than individual rights; it would not, in any case, have been easy for a state engaged in mass destruction to allege a consuming interest in human rights. The issue lay dormant in Washington even after American forces left Vietnam in 1973. Henry Kissinger's diplomacy made a virtue of the de-ideologization of foreign relations. A policy aiming at the manipulation of the balance of power doubtless contained an inner bias in favor of governments that could deliver their nations without having to worry about political opposition or a free press. In any event, the United States in these years embraced without visible disgust governments both of the

[12] David Owen, *Human Rights,* New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1978, p. 107.

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authoritarian Right (Greece, Portugal, Brazil, Chile) and of the totalitarian Left (Russia, China, Romania, Yugoslavia).

What forced the human rights issue on the world was the courage of the dissenters in the Soviet Union. Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn, the Medvedevs, and the rest of those intrepid men embodied the challenge to the democratic conscience that Kossuth and the heroes of 1848 had embodied a century earlier. The initial response to this challenge came not at all from Washington but from the governments of Western Europe, especially Britain and France, and resulted in the celebrated Basket Three of the Helsinki Final Act, with its manifold human rights provisions. In 1975 and 1976 many Americans denounced Helsinki—among them, Jimmy Carter.

But the dominance of Realpolitik in the Kissinger years frustrated those in the Wilsonian tradition who felt that American foreign policy should be founded on ideals. It frustrated equally those in the school of FDR who did not doubt that foreign policy must be founded on national interest but considered ideals an indispensable constituent of American power. Official indifference to the Soviet dissidents, symbolized by President Ford's refusal in mid-1975 to receive Solzhenitsyn, seemed to reveal a moral vacuum at the center of American foreign policy.

Congress meanwhile undertook to force the human rights issue on the executive. It used its legislative power to forbid or restrict economic or military aid to countries that engaged "in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." It denied aid to a long list of erring countries by name. In the case of the Soviet Union, it demanded change in Soviet emigration practices as a condition for export credits and for the extension of most-favored-nation trade status. It required the State Department to submit annual reports on the state of human rights in more than a hundred countries.

Congressional pressure soon affected Foggy Bottom. "If the Department did not place itself ahead of the curve on this issue," Deputy Secretary of State Robert Ingersoll warned Secretary Kissinger in 1974, "Congress would take the matter out of the Department's hands." In 1975 the Department established an Office of Humanitarian Affairs. But the Secretary doubted that human rights had a serious place in foreign policy. Informed that the American Ambassador to Chile had raised human rights issues with the military dictatorship, he said, "Tell Popper to cut out the political science lectures."[13] And, if human rights were in any sense

[13] See the well-informed article by Patrick Breslin, "Human Rights: Rhetoric or Action?," *The Washington Post,* February 17, 1977.

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an object of policy, the Secretary was sure that quiet diplomacy, not public exhortation and punitive action, was the way to promote them—a view that received a measure of vindication when Jewish migration from the Soviet Union sharply declined after the passage of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Congressional pressure continued to rise nevertheless. Eventually it affected the Secretary himself. In 1976 Kissinger pronounced human rights "centrally important . . . one of the most compelling issues of our time."[14]

V

By 1977 the world was well prepared for new human rights initiatives. Up to this point Washington had lagged badly behind. But the new President, in a remarkable display of leadership, seized the standard of human rights and succeeded in presenting it to the world as if it had been American property all along. He was able to do this because the time was ripe and because the cause fulfilled the old American conviction of having a mission to the world.

It is not altogether clear how Carter personally came to human rights. The phrase does not appear in the chapter on foreign policy in his memoir *Why Not the Best?* (1975). Nor was the issue prominent in his presidential campaign. On occasion, indeed, he seemed to be moving in the opposite direction. He criticized not only the Helsinki Agreement but the whole philosophy of intervention. "Our people have now learned," he told the Foreign Policy Association in June 1976, "the folly of our trying to inject our power into the internal affairs of other nations." At the same time, he had a general feeling, as he wrote in *Why Not the Best?*, that "our government's foreign policy has not exemplified any commitment to moral principles," that foreign policy must rest on the same moral standards "which are characteristic of the individual citizens"[15]—and that "there is only one nation in the world which is capable of true leadership among the community of nations, and that is the United States."[16] "We cannot look away," he added in Washington on September 8, 1976, "when a government tortures people, or jails them for their beliefs, or denies minorities fair treatment or the right to emigrate."

[14] E. P. Spiro, "A Paradigm Shift in American Foreign Policy," *Worldview*, January-February 1977.

[15] This was an odd proposition to come from a man who had announced himself a disciple of Reinhold Niebuhr. In the first sentence of *Moral Man and Immoral Society,* Niebuhr wrote: "The thesis to be elaborated in these pages is that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the moral and social behavior of individuals and of social groups, national, racial, and economic; and that this distinction justifies and necessitates policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing." Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society,* New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1932, p. 11.

[16] Jimmy Carter, *Why Not the Best?*, New York: Bantam Books, 1976, pp. 140–41.

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The future historian will have to trace the internal discussions during the interregnum that culminated in the striking words of the inaugural address: "Because we are free we can never be indifferent to the fate of freedom elsewhere. . . . Our commitment to human rights must be absolute." (Carter also said that the United States had a special obligation "to take on those moral duties which, when assumed, seem invariably to be in our own best interests." The irony appears to have been unconscious.)

One can surmise that the President-elect, seeking to give American foreign policy a moral force and content it had lacked in the Nixon years, arrived at human rights as the perfect unifying principle. This principle tapped the most acute contemporary concerns as well as the finest American traditions. It promised to restore America's international moral position, so sadly eroded by Vietnam, Watergate, support of dictatorships, CIA assassination plots, etc. It promised also to restore a domestic consensus behind foreign policy. The doctrine gratified both cold warriors, who wanted to indict the communist world, and idealists, who saw human rights as the only basis for lasting peace.

So the campaign was launched with appropriate pyrotechnics—a presidential letter to Sakharov; a White House meeting with Vladimir Bukovsky; brave declarations of human rights principle. But it soon ran into trouble. The idea, critics were quick to point out, had not been "thought through." Perhaps this was just as well. Had the new President confided the idea to the State Department for analysis, there very likely would have been no human rights campaign at all. Confronted by new departures, bureaucracies customarily feel that risks outweigh opportunities. Sometimes changes can be wrought in government only when a President, by publicly committing the government to a new course, forces the bureaucracy to devise new policies. Truman's Point Four and Kennedy's Alliance for Progress are other examples.

Yet the failure to think the initiative through led Carter, then and later, to make the promotion of human rights sound a little too easy. He would have been wiser to admit the difficulties of converting principle into policy. "When I began to speak out for human rights," David Owen recently remarked, ". . . I warned that there was a price to pay, and that the price was a little inconsistency from time to time. If I had to make that comment again, I would no longer say a *little* inconsistency, I would say a *very great deal* of inconsistency."[17] The questions that John P. Hale and Henry Clay had raised long before against Lewis Cass returned to bedevil the

[17] Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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Carter Administration. "Administration Still Groping to Define 'Human Rights'" read the headline in *The Washington Post* three months after the inauguration.[18]

Two weeks later Secretary of State Vance made a valiant and judicious essay at definition. Speaking at the University of Georgia Law School, he distinguished three categories of human rights: the right to be free from government violation of the integrity of the person (an adaptation of FDR's freedom from fear); the right to the fulfillment of vital needs as for food, shelter, health care and education (freedom from want); and the right to civil and political liberties (FDR's other two freedoms). In pursuing these rights, Vance warned, we must recognize "the limits of our power and of our wisdom," avoid "a rigid, hubristic attempt to impose our values on others" and reject the illusion that "a call to the banner of human rights will bring sudden transformations in authoritarian societies. We have embarked on a long journey." But Vance did not really try to deduce a policy from the principle, saying enigmatically that "there may be disagreement on the priorities these rights deserve."

Disagreement on the priorities was indeed unceasing. Diplomats objected when the human rights campaign threatened arms control negotiations or political relationships. Admirals and generals objected when it imperiled cherished military bases and alliances. Treasury officials estimated that foreign policy restrictions cost the economy up to ten billion dollars a year, thereby increasing the trade deficit.[19] Businessmen objected when the campaign hurt exports. Carter himself, the presumed number-one human rights crusader, was soon to be found visiting authoritarian nations, selling them arms and saluting their leaders. His human rights policy, it appeared, was entirely compatible with effusive support for the Shah of Iran, with an egregious letter of commendation to Somoza in Nicaragua, with the possible recognition of Vietnam and Cuba. Washington was fearless in denouncing human rights abuses in countries like Cambodia, Paraguay and Uganda, where the United States had negligible strategic and economic interests; a good deal less fearless toward South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Yugoslavia and most of black Africa; increasingly circumspect about the Soviet Union; totally silent about China.

By mid-1978 Solzhenitsyn could speak sarcastically of bureaucrats who exploded in "anger and inflexibility . . . when dealing with weak government and weak countries" but became "tongue-

[18] *The Washington Post*, April 16, 1977.
[19] "Trying to Right the Balance," *Time*, October 9, 1978.

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tied and paralyzed when they deal with powerful governments."[20] "Unless standards of human rights are seen to be applied uniformly and neutrally to all nations regardless of the nature of their regimes or the size of their armaments," Senator Moynihan of New York sternly said, "unless this is done it will quickly be seen that it is not human rights at all which are invoked . . . but simply arbitrary political standards dressed up in the guise of human rights."[21]

VI

The campaign—it could not be termed a policy—raised other problems. There was the question of its impact on the Soviet Union. "What we are now facing," Georgi Arbatov, the Kremlin's house Americanologist, told an English interviewer in November 1978, "is a consistent effort of interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union and an attempt to inflict harm on some of our institutions. It is waged in a way that would have produced a serious uproar in the United States if we'd done what you've done toward us."[22] This was, of course, a ridiculous complaint from the representative of a country that for more than half a century had consistently tried to interfere in American internal affairs and to inflict harm on American institutions (and especially ridiculous in view of the fact, well known to Arbatov, that such interference had long since produced "a serious uproar" in the United States). Still, if Americans would recall how they felt about Soviet subversion, they might understand that this was precisely the way the Soviet government felt about the human rights campaign. Nor could anyone doubt that the campaign, pursued *à outrance*, would strike at the very foundation of the Soviet order.

The deterioration of Soviet-American relations during 1977 alarmed those who believed that the ultimate human right was the right to be alive and, therefore, that the prevention of nuclear war was the overriding issue for mankind and the condition for the promotion of all other human rights. Carter's campaign, French President Giscard d'Estaing observed in the summer of 1977, "has compromised the process of détente."[23] The Soviet resentment, for some utterly mysterious reason, astonished Carter himself; he spoke in June 1977 of the "surprising adverse reaction in the Soviet Union to our stand on human rights."[24] But he accepted it as a fact

[20] In his Harvard Commencement speech, *Harvard Gazette*, June 8, 1978.
[21] D. P. Moynihan, "The Politics of Human Rights," *Commentary*, August 1977.
[22] Interview with Arbatov by Jonathan Power, *The Observer* (London), November 12, 1978.
[23] Interview with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing by Arnaud de Borchgrave, *Newsweek*, July 25, 1977.
[24] *The New York Times*, June 26, 1977.

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of life and moderated his campaign accordingly, thereby raising the virtuous wrath of those who had seen the campaign primarily as a means of reviving the cold war.

There was the question, too, of the impact on the United States. America was once again erecting itself into a "high court of indignation." But what was America to sit in judgment upon the world? A born-again President might have remembered Matthew 7: 2-3: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" As John P. Hale had reminded the Senate in 1850 of the slave markets in the District of Columbia, so latter-day critics asked whether the United States ought not, before setting forth to reform the world, secure human rights for black, red and brown citizens, for the targets of the FBI and the CIA, for the victims of muggers in the streets. How could the government invoke Helsinki's Basket Three while it denied visas to Soviet trade unionists and diplomats—and granted one to Ian Smith? How dared it lecture Fidel Castro about human rights after having spent a number of years trying to murder him?

An even more difficult question was involved—the question urged by Henry Clay when he wondered about American presumption in supposing that all nations were morally bound to accept our own conception of what was "right and proper" in human affairs. Was it reasonable, asked the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, "to expect from developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to apply overnight your high standards when most of them are still grappling with problems of food, education, health, employment, etc.?"[25] Was not the whole concept of political and civil rights ethnocentric and culture-bound and therefore the American determination to cram it down the throats of the world an adventure in cultural imperialism? "Those Americans who profess to know with such certainty what other people want and what is good for them in the way of political institutions," wrote George Kennan, "would do well to ask themselves whether they are not actually attempting to impose their own values, traditions, and habits of thought on peoples for whom these things have no validity and no usefulness."[26]

Observers commented on the "holier-than-thou" attitude discernible in the Washington human rights bureaucracy—a conde-

[25] Fereydoun Hoveyda, "Not All Clocks for Human Rights Are the Same," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1977.

[26] George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger: Current Realities of American Foreign Policy*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1977, p. 43.

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scension toward lesser breeds summed up in the odious remark an unnamed official made to Elizabeth Drew of *The New Yorker*: "I think that the mulish world has noticed the two-by-four."[27] And, as the British historian Sir Herbert Butterfield reminds us, "Moral indignation corrupts the agent who possesses it and is not calculated to reform the man who is the object of it."[28] Little has done more harm to human affairs than illusions on the part of leaders and of nations of their infallibility. Reinhold Niebuhr has warned of "a deep layer of Messianic consciousness in the mind of America" and of "the depth of evil to which individuals and communities may sink particularly when they try to play the role of God in history."[29] The human rights campaign led even pro-American Europeans to worry about rekindled messianism across the Atlantic and to recall, as Countess Marion Dönhoff put it, that "foreign policy based on moral values, as espoused by Wilson and Dulles, did not make the world noticeably more moral. On the contrary it led to dead ends and catastrophes."[30]

VII

In short order the human rights campaign was hailed before a high court of indignation of its own, and readily convicted of hypocrisy, double standards, undermining détente, undermining stalwart anti-communist allies, of cultural imperialism, racism, messianism and so on. It is little wonder that the initiative, buffeted by intractable circumstance, by plausible criticism and by quarrels among its original supporters over its emphases, came to seem so selective, intermittent and riddled with contradiction that it chronically threatened to disappear altogether. One writer entitled an article on the subject in mid-1978 "A Crusade Quickly Cancelled."[31]

Yet the criticism, however plausible, may also have been exaggerated. To all-or-nothing demands of the Solzhenitsyn-Moynihan sort, Patricia Derian, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, made persuasive response:

> We candidly recognize that diversity of cultures and interests and different stages of economic and political maturity make it essential to treat each country on the merits of its own situation. It would be impossible to pursue our human rights objectives in precisely the same way for all countries, and silly to try.[32]

[27] Elizabeth Drew, "Human Rights," *The New Yorker*, July 18, 1977.

[28] Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations*, London: Collins, 1951, p. 110.

[29] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1952, pp. 69, 173.

[30] Marion Dönhoff, "Weltpolitik mit Fanfarenstössen," *Die Zeit*, March 4, 1977.

[31] Tracy Early, "A Crusade Quickly Cancelled," *Worldview*, July-August 1978.

[32] Patricia Derian, "A Commitment Sustained," *Worldview*, July-August 1978. One is constrained to ask Senator Moynihan, the upper chamber's neoconservative philosopher, which statement he thinks would have commended itself more to Edmund Burke—his own or Assistant Secretary Derian's.

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Of course the double standard was inherent in the situation. Not only were other nations in varying stages of maturity, but the promotion of human rights could not in any case be the supreme goal of foreign policy, the object to which all else was to be subordinated. A nation's fundamental interest must be self-preservation; and, when national security and the promotion of human rights came into genuine conflict, national security had to prevail—though this was not at all to say that the national security bureaucracy was anywhere near to being the infallible expositor of national security. Human rights, in the nature of foreign policy, could only be one of several contending national interests.

As for the impact on the Soviet Union, this was perhaps exaggerated. It was often said that the 1977 crackdown on dissidents was a response to the human rights campaign. Prominent dissidents themselves disagreed.[33] Viewed in retrospect, the crackdown was more probably a response to the effect that dissidence was having within the Soviet Union and would have taken place whether or not Washington had let loose on human rights.

The campaign unquestionably infuriated the Russians. But the Soviet response was tactical rather than strategic, and even the tactics were confused. Part of the time Soviet representatives responded with bluster. They claimed before the U.N. Human Rights Commission that the communist system protected individual freedoms to a "qualitatively unprecedented level," that any Soviet citizens may express opinions that "may not coincide with the Soviet outlook" and that there has "never been any case in which a healthy person has been interned in a psychiatric asylum: this is absolutely impossible."[34] At the same time, they have compromised their old line that the discussion of individual cases represents an intervention in internal affairs by themselves raising American human rights cases in international forums. "The more the Russians take up western cases," as the London *Times* recently noted, "the less they can legitimately complain when the west does the same."[35]

The future of détente would depend on other factors than human rights—unless cold warriors in the Senate succeeded in using human rights to block a new SALT agreement. (And, if they

[33] "Absolutely untrue," wrote Andrei Amalrik, the historian. " . . . These arrests were planned and set in motion earlier." See "Dissidents' Fate Turns on Kremlin Struggle," *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1977. Though Amalrik and Roy Medvedev, another dissident historian, agreed on little, they agreed on this; see Medvedev's statement in *Newsweek*, June 20, 1977. So did Ludmila Alexeyeva, authorized representative in the United States of the Moscow Group to Monitor the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords in the U.S.S.R. in a letter to *The Washington Post*, published June 18, 1977.

[34] "UN Jurists Question Russians on Rights," *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), October 27, 1978; Murray Kempton, "The UN Spins Its Wheels," *The New York Post*, October 29, 1978.

[35] "Calling the Kettle Black," *The Times* (London), November 14, 1978.

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attempted this, they would be rejecting the counsel of leading Soviet dissenters. "I emphasize the priority of the disarmament issue within the overall complex of détente aims," Sakharov said in his statement of July 15, 1978. "I emphasize the practical necessity for an independent decision of current problems in the disarmament area and international security."[36]) Arbatov, crabbing about human rights in November 1978, did *not* say, as he carefully said when considering the possibility of a Chinese-American axis, "Then the whole situation would look different to us. . . . Then there is no place for détente."[37] Plainly, the Russians prefer the discomfiture of living with the human rights campaign to the danger of a break with the United States and a Chinese-American alliance.

The impact on the United States was exaggerated also. In practice, the human rights campaign turned out to be notably less than a crusade. Moreover, intercession into the affairs of countries that mistreat their own citizens now had a more solid foundation in international law than simply the old doctrine of humanitarian intervention. The U.N. Charter and succeeding international documents ended finally the idea that human rights were solely a matter of domestic jurisdiction.

Nor was it by any means certain that concern for human rights was a form of cultural imperialism. If the assertion that such rights were universal, and not merely the local prejudice of Caucasian societies bordering the North Atlantic, might imply racial arrogance, the limitation of these rights to a few white nations might imply racial arrogance as well. Did the relativists mean that nonwhite peoples were incapable of appreciating due process, personal liberty and self-government? History certainly suggested that democracy has worked best in the North Atlantic orbit, but democratic aspiration could not be so easily localized. "Human rights," a distinguished former Philippine senator told Americans with understandable irritation, "are not a western discovery."[38] India, for all its religious and linguistic divisions, its poverty and its illiteracy, had voted emphatically in early 1977 for a return to democracy.

[36] Sakharov's statement condemning the trials of Ginzburg, Shcharansky, and Petkus, reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, 95th Cong., 2nd Sess., September 13, 1978, p. H9744. Senator Kennedy reported after a meeting with dissenters in Moscow, "Almost all of the dissidents agreed with Dr. Sakharov that our two nations have an obligation to make progress on arms control. They urged us to conclude the SALT II agreement as soon as possible, on its own merits. They felt strongly . . . it would create a more favorable environment to pursue our concern about human rights." *Congressional Record*, 95th Cong., 2nd Sess., September 13, 1978, p. S15044.

[37] *The Observer* (London), November 12, 1978.

[38] Raul S. Manglapus, "Human Rights Are Not a Western Discovery," *Worldview*, October 1978.

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The case of China was to the point. So far as one could tell, there was probably more intellectual freedom in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev than in China under Mao. The American government, however, was far more zealous in preaching human rights to Moscow than to Peking. Why? American officials used to explain that, since there was "no visible constituency for it within the country," the regime was not at a stage where anything could be done about it.[39] Perhaps they supposed there was no constituency for abstruse historical reasons—the Confucian tradition, the concern with the collective rather than with the individual good, and so on. But by 1978 Amnesty International had issued a telling report portraying the sweep of political repression in China[40]; and Peking wall posters proclaimed, "We cannot tolerate that human rights and democracy are only slogans of the western bourgeoisie, and [that] the eastern proletariat only needs dictatorship."[41] Another poster: "As Chinese citizens, we think that truth is universal and that the soul of mankind, human rights, is not limited by national boundaries or geography." The poster was signed "The Human Rights Group."[42]

Perhaps human rights were less culture-bound than some Americans, in an excess either of humility or vanity, liked to believe. In the end, the answer to the question whether political and civil rights are local or universal depends on one's view of man. Over the long run, this historian finds it hard to believe that the instinct for political and civil freedom is confined to the happy few in the North Atlantic littoral.

VIII

By the end of 1978 it appeared that, even if the crusade was dead, the campaign was here to stay, at least for the life of the Carter Administration. Human rights was now institutionalized as a claimant agency in American foreign policy decisions. Foreign assistance took account of the condition of human rights in cases where strategic considerations were not deemed overriding. (The Interagency Group on Human Rights and Foreign Economic Assistance ought, however, to extend its purview to military assistance as well.) A long list of countries was denied aid or permitted it under severe restrictions: Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, Chile, Argentina, Uganda, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Paraguay, and

[39] Elizabeth Drew, *supra,* footnote 27.

[40] Report of November 27, 1978.

[41] Fox Butterfield, "Peking's Poster Warriors Are Not Just Paper Tigers," *The New York Times,* November 26, 1978.

[42] "Peking Wall Poster Plea to Carter," *The New York Post,* December 13, 1978.

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others. The American government opposed loans by international financial institutions to countries flagrantly violating human rights. American embassies became human rights watch offices around the world. The repeated resurrections of the campaign in the face of premature obituaries demonstrated both the genuine continuity of the Administration's concern and, even more, the issue's underlying vitality.

For all its vulnerabilities, the campaign had significantly altered the international atmosphere. It had placed human rights on the world's agenda—and on the world's conscience. It had given heart to brave men and women fighting for their rights around the planet. It had encouraged the release of political prisoners in Indonesia, South Korea, the Philippines, Brazil, Cuba and other countries, amnesty in Poland, a peaceful change of administration in the Dominican Republic.[43] It had placed the burden of proof within the American government on those who wanted to embrace despots. And, by exerting pressure, however unevenly, for human rights, the American government had also significantly altered the world's theory of the United States as a rampant capitalist power bent on global economic hegemony.

But where does the campaign go from here? The Senate, if it cares so deeply about human rights, might now ratify the U.N. human rights covenants still pending—on Civil and Political Rights, on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights and on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, not to mention the Genocide Convention, which Truman submitted a generation ago. Recalling Clay's recommendation that the United States, instead of merely proclaiming its virtue, bring forward plans affording succor and relief to political exiles, Congress might also take action to provide, for example, refuge asylum for the "boat people" fleeing Vietnam. We cannot always expect to be virtuous without cost to ourselves.

Can the United States do more than it has done to induce other governments to stop abusing their people? If a strong prima facie case can be made against military assistance to countries that trample on political and civil rights, the case for the termination of economic assistance is sometimes less clear.[44] Why should people already poor and oppressed be punished further because of the iniquity of

[43] Reinol Gonzalez, recently released after 16 years in Castro's prisons, told *The New York Times* that he was "convinced that the Cuban President was releasing the prisoners because he felt politically secure, and, especially, because of President Carter's human-rights initiatives. 'Even a single prisoner stains the record,' Mr. Gonzalez said." Howell Raines, "Castro Prisoners Arrive As a Split in Exiles Rises," *The New York Times*, December 13, 1978.

[44] See the able discussion by Edwin M. Martin, "Should Observance of Basic Human Rights Be a Prerequisite for Aid?," *Atlantic Community Quarterly*, Summer 1978.

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their governments? In most cases the denial of American assistance would not cause a government whose survival depends on repression to change its policies of control. Moreover, once inserted into bilateral relations, human rights invites unseemly bargaining—the release of political prisoners, for example, in exchange for a credit from the Export-Import Bank.

The more the United States presses human rights as a unilateral initiative, the more it risks becoming a high court of indignation. One hopes that the Administration will ponder the point made by American statesmen from John Quincy Adams to Theodore Roosevelt that, save in extreme cases, we can probably do more for human rights by example at home than by intervention abroad. One would wish, too, for more systematic self-scrutiny of our own motives. Not every American who invokes human rights these days really cares all that much about human rights per se. Cold warriors, who showed no interest in the fate of human rights under Greek colonels or Chilean generals, hope to use the issue in order to block a SALT II agreement. Protectionists seize the issue in order to stop the import into the United States of competitive Latin American products such as sugar and cotton. Nor has the United States been willing to join any international authority that would engage in external scrutiny of our practices. This fear lies behind the continued resistance to those toothless wonders, the U.N. conventions and covenants. While it may be arresting to hear our President proclaim that "no force on earth" can separate us from the commitment "to enhance human rights,"[45] we would be wise to rid ourselves of the messianic illusion that the United States is the only nation "capable of true leadership among the community of nations."

IX

The limits of a unilateral American role in reforming the world are plain—and raise the question of the multilateralization of the human rights campaign. But the U.N. General Assembly's concern for human rights is evidently exhausted by contemplation of South Africa, Israel and Chile. Even Cambodia and Uganda have thus far escaped rebuke. And the U.N. Human Rights Commission is an imposture, its members nurtured, in the words of Murray Kempton, "in the libertarian atmosphere of countries like Bulgaria, Iran, . . . and the Soviet Union."[46] Even Uganda is a member.

[45] In his speech of December 6, 1978, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[46] Murray Kempton, "The UN Spins Its Wheels," *The New York Post,* October 29, 1978.

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Minor mechanical improvements have been suggested in the U.N. process. Some years ago Costa Rica revived a proposal, originally made by India, for the appointment of a U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. The United States advocates the return of the U.N. Division on Human Rights from Geneva, where it is buried in obscurity, to the bright lights of New York. Ambassador Richard Gardner has proposed transforming the Trusteeship Council, which has little left to do, into a Human Rights Council and thereby raising human rights to "new authority and visibility" in the U.N. process.[47] Such institutional changes would be of no more than marginal benefit, for law is the expression of community, and enforcement machinery requires a consensus. The Council of Europe can establish a High Court for Human Rights—but one cannot expect serious human rights action from the United Nations so long as nearly two-thirds of the member states abuse human rights in their own countries.

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, established under the Helsinki Agreement, provides another forum for the promotion of human rights. The first follow-up meeting (held, ironically, in Yugoslavia, a nation celebrated for the high quality of its political prisoners) gave the democracies an opportunity to challenge the communist states on their failure to give effect to Basket Three. By responding with specific allegations of Western violations, the communist states themselves legitimized the issue for international debate. Though the meeting adjourned without agreement, it conducted an effective review of the post-Helsinki record. The communists neither walked out nor declined the next meeting to be held in Madrid in 1980.

It would be a mistake, however, to expect drastic transformations to come out of Madrid. It may well be that, given the existing balance of values as well as power in world affairs, human rights cannot be pushed much further in the sphere of government-to-government relations. The next phase of the campaign is likely to gather its force outside government. One side effect of the Carter Administration's campaign has been to leave the impression that human rights is essentially a matter among states. Yet, when states push human rights, their motives are always, and rightly, suspect. The "moral duties" assumed by governments, in Carter's unfortunate but accurate phrase in his inaugural address, seem "invariably" to be in their own "best interests." Politicization is not necessarily the best destiny for human rights.

[47] Richard Gardner, "Human Rights and Foreign Policy," address before American Chamber of Commerce in Italy, May 17, 1977.

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X

The moral duties of human rights rest just as strongly on nongovernmental as on governmental bodies. Amnesty International, the International League for the Rights of Man and the International Commission of Jurists have of course performed notable work. A special obligation rests, I would think, on professional associations. Many political prisoners are professionals themselves. When they are arrested, sent to labor camps or insane asylums, tortured, murdered, their professional colleagues around the world have the obligation to rally to their defense. So the National Academy of Sciences spoke out for Sakharov, Shcharansky and other Soviet scientists; so the American Psychiatric Association protested the arrest of Alexander Podrabinek after the publication of his book on the confinement of Soviet dissenters to insane asylums; so the World Psychiatric Association condemned the political misuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union and elsewhere; so PEN, the Authors League and the Association of American Publishers have protested the suppression of cultural freedom.

It is singular that American scientists and psychiatrists have been far more sensitive to human rights issues than American political scientists and historians. The American Political Science Association, after righteously declining to meet in Chicago because Illinois had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, could find no human rights obstacle to participating in the 1979 meeting of the International Political Science Association in Moscow. The American Historical Association watched the persecution of Soviet historians—Amalrik, Medvedev, Solzhenitsyn (whose *Gulag Archipelago* is an historical work), Valentyn Moroz—without a word of objection or regret.

The conventional argument against protests is that they antagonize orthodox Soviet political scientists and historians without helping the dissenters. Yet experience has shown that it is precisely the spotlight of international concern that exerts restraining effect on arbitrary government. "The most frightening thing that can happen to a person," Mihajlo Mihajlov, the dissident Yugoslav writer, has noted, "is to be forgotten in prison."[48] Amalrik has testified that it plays "a very important part in terms of moral support, to know that one is known and well-known. . . . The Soviet authorities do react quite sensitively to western public opinion."[49] "It must be understood," Solzhenitsyn himself has said,

[48] Mihajlo Mihajlov, "Notes of a Survivor," *New Leader*, July 31, 1978.
[49] "Dissent in Exile—Andrei Amalrik Talks to Michael Charlton," *Listener*, October 14, 1976.

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"that the East is not at all indifferent to protests from Western society. On the contrary it mortally fears them—and only them."[50] E. P. Thompson, the historian of the English working class, commented: "Solzhenitsyn has asked us to shout once more. And we must, urgently, meet his request. . . . We must make it clear again, without equivocation, that we uphold the right of Soviet citizens to think, communicate, and act as free, self-activating people; and that we utterly despise the clumsy police patrols of Soviet intellectual and social life."[51]

The American Historical Association did not shout, or even whisper. Instead, it took part in the Third U.S.-U.S.S.R. Historians' Colloquium in Moscow in November 1978 and secured a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for two U.S.-U.S.S.R. conferences on quantitative history in 1979 and 1980, thereby expressing its solidarity with the historians the regime approves rather than with those the regime persecutes. I write all this with intense shame for my profession.

To regard human rights as simply an issue among states is a form of cop-out. Nor, I would emphasize, should professional concern be confined to the abuse of human rights in the communist world. Since professional associations need not balance competing national interests, they can speak without constraint about the persecution of their colleagues in all countries. The promotion of human rights depends in the end on the individual commitment of men and women in free societies. "Nothing is more disgusting," said Emerson, "than the crowing about liberty by slaves, as most men are, and the flippant mistaking for freedom of some paper preamble like a Declaration of Independence or the statute right to vote, by those who have never dared to think or to act."[52] In the end, it is on the strength of this spirit, applied primarily at home and secondarily and carefully abroad, that the success of the American mission depends.

[50] Interview in *Le Monde*, reprinted in *The New York Review of Books*, October 4, 1973.
[51] Letter in *The Times* (London), September 13, 1973.
[52] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Fate" in the volume of essays, *The Conduct of Life*.

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