





RESEARCH STUDY

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AFTER SOLZHENITSYN: DISSENT IN THE USSR

Summary

The expulsion of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn from the USSR on February 13, 1974, was a serious but not fatal blow to the small but durable dissident movement in the Soviet Union. With his loss, Sakharov and Roy Medvedev are among the few dissidents of wide international reputation left in the USSR, and there is a possibility that the Kremlin will attempt to exile Sakharov and Medvedev abroad as well, if they continue to speak out.

The dissident movement as presently constituted grew out of the Khrushchevian "thaw" of the late 1950's. It began as a "cultural opposition" of creative artists, then became politicized in the mid-sixties in response to trials of dissident writers and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Always small and amorphous, in the last two years it has been weakened (but not destroyed) by a systematic regime effort to stifle it.

The movement is now in disarray, but it can be expected to endure, in one form or another, because its members are responding to problems of Soviet life that persist and that the leadership is not addressing at all, or only unsatisfactorily.

The dissident movement apparently has little effect on the way the Kremlin conducts its policies, other than perhaps to restrain it from certain actions which, were it not for the dissidents, would never be publicized abroad and which the Kremlin could therefore take without fear of international repercussion. Still, the regime itself clearly does not regard the dissidents as unimportant, as it has demonstrated by its efforts to suppress them.

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But ideas of political activism, public accountability, and, above all, the rule of law and respect for basic human rights have penetrated the Soviet intelligentsia, albeit to a limited degree. In the last two years the regime has systematically tried to suppress any evidence of this embryonic development, with only occasional token concessions in the cultural realm. The result, however, has not been to do away with the dissident movement, but only to make it less visible.

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Background and Nature of Dissident Movement

The dissident movement in the USSR -- the dissidents have never had a single program or organization, so the term "movement" is used loosely -- grew out of the Khrushchevian "thaw" of the late fifties. Soviet historian Roy Medvedev describes the thaw as "the noticeable weakening of censorship restrictions in all areas of intellectual and artistic life" after Khrushchev launched his de-Stalinization campaign at the 20th Party Congress in 1956.*

The first fruit of this relaxation in censorship appeared in the Soviet cultural world. Andrey Amalrik -- in Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984? -- calls it a "cultural opposition," directed "not against the political regime as such but only its culture, which the regime regarded as a component part of itself." The members of the cultural opposition were primarily artists: writers, painters, etc. Out of this opposition, and official attempts to suppress it, came samizdat, the ironic, official-sounding Russian abbreviation for "self-published" literature (typed or handwritten) that gave the oppositionists an uncensored outlet for their ideas.

Stimulated by such events as the trial of writers Andrey Sinyavskiy and Yuliy Daniel in 1966 and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the cultural opposition in the mid-sixties became politicized. The Chronicle of Current Events, a samizdat newsletter that appeared every two months between 1968 and 1972 and was

*See Medvedev's samizdat essay "The Problem of Democratization and the Problem of Detente," Moscow, October 1973. Published in English translation as a Radio Liberty Dispatch dated November 19, 1973. Excerpted in The New York Times, November 8, 1973.

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the "organ" of a large number of dissenters, carried the masthead motto: "The Movement in Defense of Human Rights in the USSR Continues." The Chronicle, drawing on a network of anonymous "correspondents" throughout the USSR, advocated no specific reforms. Instead, it reported in a strictly factual, telegraphic manner on political trials and protests, religious and national persecutions, samizdat, labor camp news, and a variety of other dissident concerns. Copies regularly reached foreign radio stations, especially Radio Liberty, and were rebroadcast to the USSR.

In the transition from cultural opposition to human rights movement, the dissenters picked up new members from the scientific-technical intelligentsia. Although some students and workers became involved as well, the movement as a whole remained firmly grounded in the intelligentsia -- a minority of the intelligentsia at that. Amalrik analyzed the composition of the movement in its heyday -- early 1968 -- by examining the occupations of some 700 signatories to samizdat letters protesting the trial in January that year of two writers, Aleksander Ginzburg and Yuriy Galanskov. He found that academics, including not only university professors but also members of research institutions, such as the Academy of Sciences, constituted 45% of the signatories. Artists accounted for 22% (of whom 60% were members of official creative unions), engineers and technical specialists 13%, and teachers, doctors, lawyers, and publishing-house employees 9%. Workers (6%) and students (5%) were a small minority of the signatories.

Despite the "class" uniformity of the dissidents, however, they hold often widely differing political and social views. Amalrik recognizes three general categories in the human rights movement:

--"Genuine Marxist-Leninists" claim that the present regime has distorted the founding doctrine of the Soviet state and call for a return to true principles. Roy Medvedev is in this category.

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--"Supporters of 'Christian ideology,'" writes Amalrik, "maintain that the life of society must return to Christian moral principles, which are interpreted in a somewhat Slavophile spirit." This group would include Solzhenitsyn, whose Slavophile orientation was clearly expressed in his September 5, 1973, letter to the Soviet leadership (excerpted in The New York Times, March 3, 1974).

--"Finally, believers in 'liberal ideology' ultimately envisage a transition to a Western kind of democratic society, which would, however, retain the principle of public or governmental ownership of the means of production." Andrey Sakharov belongs to this last category.

At least two other major categories of dissent must be distinguished: religious and nationalist. Among the most active religious dissenters are the Lithuanian Catholics, who for several years have produced their own samizdat journal, the Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. In the past year this journal, which at first dealt almost exclusively with religious persecutions, has devoted more attention to Lithuanian nationalist activities. Catholicism and nationalism are closely related in Lithuania, but the movement toward the latter in the pages of the Lithuanian Chronicle may reflect the same kind of "coming of age" of dissent that occurred in the transition from cultural opposition to human rights movement.

Nationalist dissent, active and passive, has a broader base of support among the Soviet population as a whole, both Russian and non-Russian, than the other kinds of dissent mentioned above. Occasionally, as in the 1972 riots in Kaunas, Lithuania, it becomes violent. In the case of the Ukraine it has been subjected to especially harsh repressions and has produced samizdat works of high caliber, such as Ivan Dzyuba's Internationalism or Russification? Nationalist dissenters such as the Crimean Tatars, deported to Central Asia under Stalin, are among the most persistent dissidents.

The Jewish nationalist movement is at present having unheard-of successes, by Soviet standards, in securing

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the right to emigrate for its members. Former prison camp inmates now in Israel describe national loyalties as easily the strongest among the million-odd prisoners of the camps.

Western media have focused on the "liberal" wing of the dissident movement, whose active members probably never numbered more than a few thousand (though the number of passive sympathizers is certainly larger). Great Russian nationalists, for example, who can be described as right-wing, are more numerous and certainly more influential. The authorities have reacted to the left and centrist opposition and to the non-Russian nationalists far more harshly than to the Russian nationalists. Vladimir Osipov, editor of the Russophile samizdat journal Veche, includes his name and address in the journal, something the Chronicle editors never dared to do.

The Crackdown

Regime concern with the dissident movement in general and the Chronicle in particular evidently led to an order for a crackdown on dissent at the November 1971 Central Committee Plenum, the same one that approved the general game plan for detente. According to the Chronicle's 27th issue, the last to appear, on January 14-15, 1972, the KGB searched apartments in Moscow, Leningrad, Novosibirsk, and Vilnyus, all in connection with "Case No. 24," the name of the drive to suppress the newsletter. Thousands of samizdat documents were reportedly confiscated. Among the apartments searched were those of two prominent Moscow dissenters, Pyotr Yakir and Victor Krasin. Six months later, in June, Yakir was arrested and imprisoned in Moscow for interrogation. Krasin was arrested in September.

The Yakir-Krasin Trial

A year later, on August 27, 1973, the two men were brought to trial in a suburban Moscow courtroom, charged with violating Article 70 of the Russian Criminal Code forbidding "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." Specifically, they were accused of accepting money and anti-Soviet literature from NTS (the Peoples' Labor Alliance,

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a Russian emigre group in West Germany that collaborated with Hitler) and distributing this literature to Soviet citizens. The defendants cooperated with the prosecution during the investigation and publicly "repented" of their "crimes" at the closed trial and an open press conference a few days later. They were sentenced to relatively lenient three-year terms in prison camp and three years in internal exile. Shortly after the trial, a Moscow appeals court reduced the prison sentences to just over a year, and, since both men had already been held that long during the pre-trial investigation, they went immediately into exile, as provided by Soviet law.

The regime evidently hoped the carefully prepared Yakir-Krasin trial would be the capstone to its campaign against the dissident movement. Unlike earlier political trials, this one was well-publicized both at home and abroad, although exclusively via official TASS reports -- foreign newsmen were not admitted. The lesson for the dissident audience in the USSR was clear: be silent or face similar treatment. For its foreign audience, the regime's message was that there is no indigenous dissident movement in the USSR, only a few slanderers willing, for a price, to serve as outlets for anti-Soviet agitators abroad. TASS quoted Yakir as saying, "We misled public opinion in the West by selling the idea that there was a political opposition in the Soviet Union."

The Movement Today

But even today, half a year after the trial, Yakir's statement is not convincing. Dissidents continue to speak out, new names appear on letters of protest, and samizdat continues to circulate because the audience for it in the USSR is undiminished.

The movement is even more amorphous, however, than it was in 1968-1972. Two years of systematic police harassment have sent most of the early activist leaders into prison camps, psychiatric hospitals, or exile. Now that Solzhenitsyn has been expelled, Sakharov and Roy Medvedev are among the few internationally prominent dissenters left.

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There is a real possibility that now the Kremlin will expel Sakharov and Medvedev as well if they continue to speak out. (Medvedev's brother, Zhores, is already in forced exile in London.) Sakharov said last November he had taken preliminary steps to get permission to come to the US and lecture on physics at Princeton. But in the wake of Solzhenitsyn's deportation he has reportedly decided to stay and continue his civil rights activities. The Kremlin, however, may pressure him to go ahead with his original plans. Once abroad, he would almost certainly be stripped of his citizenship and forced into permanent exile. The loss of Sakharov, always more of a political organizer than Solzhenitsyn, would be devastating to the movement.

The two-year-old drive against the dissidents has resulted not only in the exile or imprisonment of a large part of its leadership but also the demoralization of many of those who are still at large.

There is a noticeably stronger strain of desperation in the movement now as its members, never sanguine about their chances of success in bringing about reforms, face a powerful regime that has demonstrated the seriousness of its commitment to repression. When Sakharov's Human Rights Committee was formed in Moscow in 1970, the Chronicle (Issue No. 17) published the group's statement of aims, among which was "consultative assistance to the organs of government in the establishment and application of guarantees of human rights, carried out on the initiative of the Committee or of interested organs of government." This hope for an interest in the regime in promoting human rights, while not totally abandoned now (especially by "loyal oppositionists" like Roy Medvedev) is certainly dimmer than it was then, and the Committee's founding documents may sound a little naive to today's dissenters.

But although the movement is in disarray, it can be expected to endure, in one form or another, because its members are responding to problems of Soviet life that persist and that the leadership is not addressing at all or only in an unsatisfactory manner. Even if it were possible to intimidate, imprison, or exile all the activists, what British scholar Peter Reddaway calls a "second generation" of dissenters could be expected to appear in response to

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the national and religious repressions, censorship, bureaucratism, and official arbitrariness that produced the first wave of dissent in the sixties. Last year's press campaign against Sakharov and now the Solzhenitsyn expulsion have already led to a limited resurgence of open protest, and many of the names on today's letters and petitions were absent from the record of the last decade's activities.

Conclusion

The dissident movement apparently has little effect on the way the Kremlin conducts its policies, other than perhaps to restrain it from certain actions which, were it not for the dissidents, would never be publicized abroad and which the Kremlin could therefore take without fear of international repercussion.

Still, the regime itself clearly does not regard the dissidents as unimportant, as is demonstrated by its efforts to suppress them.

Moreover, in the case of such dissenters as Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, the decisions are clearly important enough to be made in the Politburo itself. Brezhnev's March 10 reply to a French correspondent that he is "not concerned" with the Solzhenitsyn issue, and Kosygin's February 16 remark to a Scandinavian newsman that he is "not interested" in it were probably more wishful thinking than an accurate reflection of the Politburo attitude since the issue blew up with the publication of The Gulag Archipelago in Paris last December.

The regime's hypersensitivity to open domestic criticism reflects a fear that such criticism represents a "clear and present danger" to its authority, an attitude characteristic of Soviet regimes, including Khrushchev's, since 1917. Its repressive reaction to dissent reflects the continuing predominance in the regime of people who, as Roy Medvedev writes, "grew up and were formed in conditions of the full political passivity of Soviet society, with an absence of public accountability, with a preponderance of not political but administrative forms and methods for directing society based not on persuasion but on compulsion." Nevertheless, ideas of political activism,

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public accountability, and above all the rule of law and respect for basic human rights have penetrated the Soviet intelligentsia, albeit to a limited degree. In the last two years the regime has systematically tried to suppress any evidence of this embryonic development, with only occasional token concessions in the cultural realm. The result, however, has not been to do away with the dissident movement, but only to make it less visible.

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SOLZHENITSYN, SAKHAROV, MEDVEDEV The Dissidents' Détente Debate BY RUDOLF L. TOKES

A LEXSANDR I. SOLZHENITSYN's expulsion from the Soviet Union last month, coming as it did in the midst of a growing concern over the course of East-West détente, has intensified the debate in the Free World about what the current relaxation of tensions between the superpowers means for dissidents within the USSR. A number of observers have noted that were it not for the Kremlin's policy of improving relations with the West, the Nobel Prize-winning author would probably have been prosecuted and imprisoned instead of deported; indeed, he is the first prominent Soviet figure to be forced into exile since 1929, when Stalin ordered Leon Trotsky out of the country. Others have pointed out that since the Nixon-Brezhnev summit of May 1972, the Soviet government has largely succeeded in breaking the back of the dissident movement; and in banishing Solzhenitsyn, the Kremlin has not only rid itself of its most celebrated domestic critic but clearly hoped to diminish the power of his voice by making him just another Russian émigré cut off from his spiritual roots.

Long before this debate flared outside, however, it

was under way inside the USSR. In the 1970 Nobel lecture that Soviet authorities would not permit him to deliver, for example, Solzhenitsyn expressed the fear that East-West détente would harm prospects for internal democratization in the USSR. His view was not shared, though, by either of the other two leading Soviet dissidents—Andrei D. Sakharov, the nuclear physicist and father of the Russian H-bomb who became a fighter for civil rights in his country; or Roy A. Medvedev, the revisionist historian who advocates the return of Communism to its original Marxist-Leninist principles. It seems an especially appropriate time, therefore, to analyze the different attitudes of the three men toward détente, which have tended to be obscured by their common opposition to the excesses of the Soviet regime.

Solzhenitsyn, following the classical tradition of the Russian intelligentsia, is perhaps above all else a moral philosopher. Accordingly, he assumes the posture of keeper of his people's moral conscience and guardian against its corrupt and inherently immoral rulers. His contempt for professional politicians ("boils on the neck of society preventing it from freely moving its

head and arms"), far from being restricted to the Soviet leadership, extends to powerful hypocrites of all nations, including avaricious heads of nonaligned nations, apologists for acts of terrorism and "national liberation wars," U.S. Democrats seeking to profit from the Watergate scandal, International Olympic Committee officials, and those who in the name of ending the Cold War wish to muzzle free international broadcasting.

In his letter proposing Sakharov for the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize, Solzhenitsyn deplored "the widespread mistake of defining peace as the absence of war rather than the absence of violence," and urged the leaders of world opinion to expose individuals who accept a fraudulent peace as the alternative to armed conflict:

"Coexistence on this tightly knit earth should be viewed as an existence not only without wars—that is not enough!—but also without violence, or telling us how to live, what to say, what to think, what to know and what not to know. . . . If we want to achieve not just a brief respite from the threat of war, but a real peace, a peace in essence, with a healthy foundation, we will have to struggle no less intensely against the quiet, concealed forms of violence than we struggle against the loud forms. . . . We will have to erase from human consciousness the very idea that anyone has the right to use force against justice, law and mutual consent."

Solzhenitsyn's moral-absolutist definition of international order leads him to an unqualified repudiation of East-West détente as it has been practiced in the post-Vietnam era. He argues that it resolves nothing and serves to prolong the danger of global war:

"There seems to be little doubt, as many now realize, that what is going on in the USSR is not simply something happening in one country, but a foreboding of the future of man, and therefore deserving the fullest attention of Western observers. No, it is not any difficulties of perception that the West is suffering, but a desire not to know, an emotional preference for the pleasant over the unpleasant. Such an attitude is governed by the spirit of Munich, the spirit of complaisance and concession, and by the cowardly self-deception of comfortable societies and people who have lost the will to live a life of deprivation, sacrifice and firmness."

ANDREI D. SAKHAROV, in his famous 10,000-word statement, "Thoughts on Progress, Peaceful Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom," was the first to consciously link the question of political democratization in the USSR with the larger issue of peaceful coexistence and global economic progress. A strong advocate of East-West convergence, he nevertheless also supports a balance-of-power approach to international peace and stability. But he fears a devil's pact between the two superpowers at the expense of their democratic opponents at home and their mili-

tarily weaker clients abroad. Consequently, although he is an anti-Machiavellian in the general area of international politics, Sakharov is prepared to use every legitimate lever—such as U.S. denial of "most-favored-nation" status to the USSR until it eases emigration restrictions—to bring about a liberalization of Soviet society. His overall view was perhaps most succinctly stated in an interview he gave to a group of Western reporters on August 21, 1973, the fifth anniversary of the occupation of Prague:

"Détente without democratization, détente in which the West in effect accepts the Soviet rules of the game, would be dangerous. It would not really solve any of the world's problems and would simply mean capitulating in the face of real or exaggerated Soviet power. It would mean trading with the Soviet Union, buying its gas and oil, while ignoring all other aspects. I think such a development would be dangerous because it would contaminate the whole world with the antidemocratic peculiarities of Soviet society, it would enable the Soviet Union to bypass problems it cannot resolve on its own, and to concentrate on accumulating still further strength.

"As a result, the world would become helpless before this uncontrollable bureaucratic machine. I think that if détente were to proceed totally without qualifications, on Soviet terms, it would pose a serious threat to the world as a whole. It would mean cultivating a closed country where anything that happens may be shielded from outside eyes, a country wearing a mask that hides its true face. I would not wish it on anyone to live next to such a neighbor, especially if he is at the same time armed to the teeth."

Yet, as I. F. Stone observed in his insightful analysis in the *New York Review of Books*, Sakharov "is no enemy of détente. On the contrary, complete and genuine détente, ideological as well as political coexistence, has been one of the two objectives of the extraordinary campaign that he has been waging since 1968. The other is the democratization of the Soviet Union."

Roy A. Medvedev, unlike Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov, believes the impetus for democratic reform will come from gradual personnel and policy changes in the top Party leadership, rather than from outside pressures. He tends to downgrade the positive results achieved by open protest, and is sharply critical of what he terms the "immorality" and "provocative" behavior of certain dissidents. Medvedev's *samizdat* essay, "The Problem of Democratization and the Problem of Détente," made public last November, was prompted by what he considered to be the counterproductive radicalization of several leading spokesmen for the Soviet civil rights movement. These people, he argues, "have begun to express more extreme views and to make still less constructive proposals, guided more by emotions than by considerations of political appropriateness."

The examples of this kind of imprudent behavior cited in Medvedev's essay clearly point to at least three identifiable figures. One is the writer Vladimir Y. Maksimov, who in an open letter to the German novelist Heinrich Böll denounced Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* as a fraud and described its architect as a "mediocre apologist for a new Munich who takes himself for a great politician." Another is Sakharov, who is taken to task for his endorsement of U.S. trade restrictions against the USSR. The third is Solzhenitsyn, who is chastised for comparing the South African government's treatment of imprisoned blacks with the Kremlin's confinement of dissident activist Pyotr Grigorenko in a hospital for the criminally insane.

Medvedev admits that a causal relationship might exist between the relaxation of international tensions and the growing repression of Soviet dissidents. But in the long run, he feels, the advantages of détente may outweigh the difficulties now being experienced by the regime's critics. In his opinion, the responsibility for recent retrograde policies belongs to "our hawks" and "Right-wing circles" within the Party's Central Committee. With the removal of conservative Politburo members Pyotr Shelest and Gennadi Voronov, he intimates, these forces have lost their leaders.

Medvedev credits the cessation of jamming of foreign Russian-language broadcasts in September 1973, the ratification by the Supreme Soviet of two United Nations covenants on social and political rights, the continued outflow of Jewish emigrants, the de facto suspension of the notorious "education tax," and the generally pragmatic stance toward the West to détente-inspired compromises. While he does not discount the influence of Western public opinion on Soviet internal policies, he thinks there are practical limitations to the efficacy of dissident protest aimed at foreign countries:

"In general, the opportunities for pressure on the Soviet Union from the point of view of interstate or economic relations should not be overestimated. Not only because the Soviet partners in the talks will reasonably protest against interference in Soviet domestic affairs, but we generally doubt very much that the majority of Western leaders are really seriously concerned with problems of political and human rights in the USSR or China. In the long run, Nixon, Pompidou and Heath defend the interests of the ruling classes of their countries, and it is not axiomatic that capitalist circles in the United States, England, France, and the German Federal Republic are so interested in the most rapid development of socialist democratization in the USSR or in speeding up economic, social and cultural progress in the Soviet Union. Therefore, Soviet 'dissidents' who turn to Western countries for support must consider carefully the 'address' to which they direct these appeals."

The trouble, as Medvedev sees it, is that dissident

appeals have provided Western "Rightist" circles with too much comfort, and have not given enough encouragement to "Leftist social organizations which are most interested in the evolution of genuine socialist democracy in our country." In any case, he feels "it would be an illusion to think that Western public opinion will sometime become more concerned with internal Soviet problems than with internal problems of its own." Finally, he reminds his fellow intellectuals "not to fall victim to a peculiar Moscow-centrism and fail to see that in many other countries there are just as severe, and in many instances still more severe, internal problems than those that exist in the USSR."

DESPITE THEIR disagreements about how to put pressure on the Party leadership, a remarkable consensus exists among dissident Soviet intellectuals on the nature of contemporary international relations and the place of the USSR in the community of nations. All seem to agree that some kind of change is inevitable in the way the USSR coexists with the rest of the world. None has false illusions about the Western political institutions and the capitalist market economies that shape the daily lives of politicians, intellectuals and the common people on the "other side." They oppose political extremism and ideological demagoguery of all kinds. They are deeply concerned about the prospects of a genuine and enduring peace, and are fearful of the Soviets' "military-industrial complex."

According to their individual temperaments, these men address different constituencies at home and abroad. As an artist, Solzhenitsyn probably speaks to the largest audience: everyone who dreads war, oppression and the power of faceless bureaucrats over the destiny of mankind. Sakharov, the liberal scientist, seems to be directing his remarks to political decision makers, educated elites, and those who believe in the superiority of reason to the blind passions of anachronistic ideologies. Medvedev might be called the honest broker between the two, trying to reconcile his comrades' pleas for sympathy and help from the outside with the forbidding political realities of the Soviet Union—where, he argues persuasively, all domestic reform must begin.

With Solzhenitsyn in exile and Sakharov in danger of being forced to follow him abroad, we may soon see the important debate on democratization and détente that has been flourishing among Soviet dissidents reduced to the more orthodox positions taken by Medvedev and other inward-looking reformers. If that happens, the dissident movement will probably "go native" for a while and cease to be a serious obstacle to Moscow's efforts to sell its version of détente to the West. But then, of course, the moral fiber of the West will face its true test.