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The Uncertain Crusade

Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas
of Human Rights Policy

by Joshua Morevchik, Ph.D. (former Ex. Dir. of
the Coalition for
a Democratic
Majority)

to be published by Hamilton Press
in Dec. 1985

foreword by the Hon. Jeanne
Kirkpatrick

Enclosures filed in
Oversize Attachments #

12567

The Uncertain Crusade

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Acknowledgements

This book is based on my doctoral dissertation. I am deeply indebted to the Institute for Educational Affairs which provided me with a generous grant that underwrote the research for the dissertation, as well as to the Earhart Foundation and the Georgetown University Government Department for the fellowships that made it possible for me to attend graduate school.

Many people gave me help in the research and writing of this book. Sylvia Gear of the Montgomery County Library and Rachel Van Waigen, Carolyn Colwell and Gail Flatness of the Georgetown University Library all were generous with their time and energies. Vita Bite of the Congressional Research Service helped me to locate some important materials and answered numerous questions for me. Karlyn Keene of *Public Opinion* magazine and John Rees of *Information Digest* and Susan Morris then of Senator Moynihan's staff took pains to provide me with source materials, as did John Haynes, a friend and former Congressional staff member to whom I turned repeatedly for advice. Dr. William V. O'Brien of Georgetown University nursed me through the dissertation on which this book is based. I had several valuable conversations with Charles Fairbanks, then the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights. Three people read the manuscript in different stages and offered valuable advice: Midge Decter, about getting it published; Michael Jackson, about the issues

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of political theory on which it touched; and Bruce Cameron who offered constructive challenge to many of my views. To all of these people I express a warm thank you. My daughters, Stephanie, Madeline and Valerie, patiently bore sacrifices, some of which they were aware of, during the years I spent as an overage graduate student and writing the dissertation. Above all, I owe thanks to my wife, Sally, whose support was unflagging, whose forbearance was nearly so, to whom I dedicate this book.

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Foreword

In retrospect it seems nearly inevitable that human rights should have become a central issue in American Foreign Policy once the U.S. became really involved in the world. The rights of individuals, whose protection we have always viewed as the purpose of a government, has always been a central preoccupation of America in politics.

Unlike older societies which have gone through diverse political transformations and have an identity that transcends any regime, the U.S. was born at a particular time out of a struggle over the rights of citizens. Our identity is inextricably involved with the Declaration of Independence and Constitution. The notion that policy should *not* reflect concern with human rights and democracy is as far-fetched as the notion that foreign policy should not express the nation. In the American view, human rights are universal and the very purpose of government is their protection. American politics ring with declarations that our rights are inextricably intertwined with the rights of others, and assertions that no one's rights are safe while others' rights are violated.

Still, the protection of human rights has been regarded by almost all nations as an internal matter—to be settled between a government and its citizens. Englishmen wrested their rights to representation, free speech and religion from reluctant English monarchs. Americans and French protect our rights through *our* constitutions and courts and so forth. The protection of human rights has never loomed large as a

motive of governments in dealing with one another. Instead, governments have given priority to such factors as trade, aid, balance of power and alliances. It was Adolf Hitler's aggression, not his treatment of Jews, gypsies and dissidents, that provoked democratic nations into World War II. In the conventional view the purpose of foreign policy is to serve the national interest. The national interest does not include trying to shape other governments' treatment of their citizens.

Our national origins and our political culture assured that our approach to foreign affairs would not be routine *realpolitik*, but would have an explicit moral purpose. This requirement has sometimes led us to avoid the world, and other times to try to remake it.

Louis Hartz, the historian of American liberalism, noted that the American concern with morality in foreign policy had dual results. It stimulated both isolationism and meliorism. From the time of Jefferson onward, it was characterized by very strong isolationist impulses. "The sense that America's very liberal joy lay in the escape from a decadent old world that could only infect with its own disease," Hartz noted, "drove our isolationism." And this spirit pervaded our culture even during the revolutionary age of American history. "Yet," said Hartz, "in the 20th Century Americanism has also crusaded abroad in a Wilsonian way. It has been driven onto the world stage by events. It is inspired, willy-nilly, to reconstruct the very alien thing that is the world it had tried until then to avoid." "Its messianism," said Hartz, "is the polar counterpart of its isolationism. An absolute national morality is inspired either to withdraw from alien things or to transform them."

Woodrow Wilson's interpretation of the founding fathers led alternately to isolationism and internationalism.

In his speech, "Patriotism and the Sailor," for example, Wilson said, "It was not merely because of passing and transient circumstances that Washington said that we must keep free of entangling alliances, it was because he saw that no country had yet set its face in the same direction in which America had set her face. We cannot form alliances with

those who are not going our way, and in our might and majesty and in the confidence and definitiveness of our own purpose, we need not and we should not form alliances with any nation in the world. Those who are right, those who study their consciences in determining their policies, those who hold their honor higher than their advantage do not need alliances. You do not need alliances when you are strong. You are weak only when you are not true to yourself. You are weak only when you are in the wrong. You are weak only when you are afraid to do the right thing. You are weak only when you doubt your course."

Abraham Lincoln believed we had a vocation to secure the rights of others asserting, "While man exists, it is his duty to improve not only his own condition, but to assist in ameliorating that of mankind."

Because these national characteristics are profoundly rooted in our political culture, it was probably inevitable that once the objective facts of international interdependence had been created—had "driven us into the world," in Hartz' term—the United States should seek ways of acting in the world compatible with our national predispositions. The notion that foreign policy should be guided by balance of power politics, or *realpolitik*, is utterly foreign to the American tradition and foreign to the American scene today. All our wars, beginning with the Revolutionary War, were justified in terms of the protection, the extension of universal human rights. Thus, the United States approached its participation in international affairs as an opportunity and a duty to achieve moral goals—preservation of democracy, respect for human rights, the peaceable settlement of disputes and elimination of war. We entered the world's center stage to make the world safe for democracy. And no sooner did we become seriously involved in global politics than our presidents—first, Woodrow Wilson, then Franklin Roosevelt—undertook to guarantee permanent peace and democracy through a world organization. We authored a universal declaration of human rights and secured its adoption in the global institution which we brought into being.

None of these efforts worked as expected, so, in the nineteen seventies, the U.S. undertook a new approach to foreign policy—the deliberate use of American policy to influence the internal policies of other nations with regard to the respect for human rights. Although that approach is associated with the Carter presidency and found its clearest and broadest expression in that administration, it is worth noting that the essential elements of “linkage” had other sources and were present before the Carter inauguration. These sources of linkage are, I believe, three.

The first legislation to systematically link U.S. economic policy to human rights of another country was the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the 1972 trade agreement. This amendment, authored by the late “Scoop” Jackson, made trade concessions to the Soviet Union contingent on a liberalization of immigration policies for Christians, Jews and others.

A quite different source of “linkage” is found in the anti-war movement, one of whose principal charges was that South Vietnam’s human rights abuses made that government morally unworthy of survival. Similar charges were pressed against other Third World friends and allies—especially Iran and South Korea. These charges were most often made against traditional, not Marxist dictatorships by liberals who argued that we should form alliances only with those who share our values and goals and that we need not worry about a purist policy weakening us because strength depends on moral clarity and integrity. By definition, doing the “right thing” could not be inconsistent with our national interest.

The Carter approach to human rights had a third antecedent which was not home grown. The Soviet Union was by the mid-seventies pushing world wide a new doctrine of national liberation which denies legitimacy to governments targeted for incorporation into the Soviet bloc, defines armed opposition to these governments as a legitimate response to oppression, and defines a government’s defense as a violation of human rights. More and more of those who advocated linking U.S. foreign policy to “human rights” seemed to accept these definitions without much thought.

The new doctrines of "linkage" struck root in American soil because they were compatible with essential strains of our political culture. They reflected our concern with our own virtue and with making the world more virtuous. They expressed the familiar conviction that we should seek universal altruistic goals, not "mere" national advantage, and they assumed that being true to ourselves meant making our foreign policies consistent with universal moral goals.

Yet, despite its manifest compatibility in the dominant strain of the American tradition and culture and the wide consensus in the U.S. concerning the role of human rights, the Carter approach to human rights was controversial from the start. This controversy, which continues still today, revealed that alongside the consensus on the importance of human rights in foreign policy existed important disagreements:

—Disagreement about what human rights are and which are more important among them—political, civil, legal, economic, social?

—Disagreement about how to promote respect for human rights in other countries—by persuasion, coercion, destabilization, example or what?

—Disagreement about the relations among our moral and strategic goals.

—Disagreement about what we should do and could do.

—Disagreement about politics and history.

Can we have strategic interests in countries with poor human rights records? Are traditional autocracies doomed to fall in any case? Should the U.S. take the risk of supporting Marxist/Leninist regimes in the hope of establishing good relations?

These disagreements illuminate several of the great issues that divide not only America but the world, and they raise serious questions about how far the Marxist/Leninists had succeeded in substituting their conceptions of human rights for the liberal, democratic conception and establishing a *presumption* that groups associated with them are the carriers of respect for human rights.

Carter policy confronted us head on with all the questions and problems latent in a serious effort to link human rights and foreign policy.

Do we want to deny food to people who already suffer under bad government *because* they suffer under bad government? Do we want to deprive of material assistance people already deprived of self-government? Do we want to turn over to efficient communist dictators people who already suffer under inefficient, home bred autocracies? Do we have the power to force reform on other nations? Do we have the wisdom to do so? Do we have the obligation?

The intellectual and practical problems of linking human rights and foreign policy are difficult and complex. Their analysis requires skill, balance, and a broad, sophisticated knowledge of the contemporary ideological and political world.

Josh Muravchik brings just such learning, balance and sophistication to the examination of the Carter Administration's record, and to the analysis of the broader problems.

Muravchik's life and work make clear his strong personal commitment to the use of American power to enhance human rights. Neither his analytical spirit nor his negative conclusions concerning the consequences of the Carter Administration's efforts diminish his solidarity with the struggle for human freedom and well being.

Muravchik's analysis of the dilemmas of human rights policy faces without compromise the full complexities of the relations among political, legal, social, and cultural rights, acknowledges the claims of each, and explains why there are no "trade offs" between democracy and equality, between democracy and law, between democracy and development because only democracy finally ensures respect for human rights, the rule of law, and opportunity for all.

Few of us in or out of government are willing to think about the relations between trade, aid, banks, tanks, and repression in Iran, Poland, Romania, Nicaragua, and El Salvador before and after Carter. The reason, probably,

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is that thinking about them brings us face to face with difficulties and limits—limits of our power, limits of our interests, limits of our commitment, limits to our seriousness. It brings us face to face with what many liberals have sought above all to avoid: the appalling complexity of the relations between intention and action, between ideas and institutions, between morality, power and foreign policy. Muravchik knows that "As long as there are armed tyrants in the world, human rights must be defended not only in the realm of ideas but in the realm of arms, as well." And he might have added, they are finally dependent on our power, understanding and realism as well as our good intentions.

This book eschews fashionable sentimentalities and simplifications, fashionable politics and ideology. It places its author solidly in the tradition of his mentor and friend, the late Scoop Jackson who might have been speaking to Muravchik, himself, when he said, "My friends, you and I fought for human rights before it became fashionable. I am confident that we will continue even after the fainthearted have tired of the struggle."

————— Jeane Kirkpatrick

Introduction

Soon after taking office in 1981, President Reagan appointed Ernest Lefever as his chief human rights official. Lefever was a distinguished academic who had spoken out against the very idea that the way other governments treat their own subjects should be an issue in U.S. dealings with them. Lefever had written: "we cannot export human rights....in dealing with Third World countries, their foreign policy behavior should be the determining factor, not their domestic practices."¹

The Republicans had just won control of the Senate on Ronald Reagan's coattails, and thus the new president was enjoying a particularly cozy honeymoon with the senior chamber. But it rebelled against the appointment of Lefever, even though in his confirmation hearings he explained that he had changed his views.

Several different things fueled the opposition to Lefever, but at the core was Lefever's own expressed skepticism about President Carter's decision to give the subject of human rights a central place in U.S. foreign policy. Not that the senators approved of all that Carter had done in the name of human rights. On the contrary, most were deeply critical of Carter, and many shared some of the trenchant criticisms expressed in Lefever's writing, but few wanted to remove human rights from the agenda of American diplomacy.

Yet only eight years earlier, Henry Kissinger had, during his own confirmation hearings, expressed views identical to

Lefever's. "I do believe that it is dangerous for us to make the domestic policy of countries around the world a direct objective of American foreign policy," said Kissinger.² Kissinger was testifying to the same Foreign Relations Committee that later voted 13 to 2 against Lefever; indeed, in 1973 that committee, like the Senate as a whole, was more liberal than in 1981 (and controlled by the Democrats). Nonetheless, Kissinger's views evoked little objection. There were of course many differences between the Kissinger and the Lefever nomination, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that one of them was that President Carter had wrought a lasting change in the prevailing view of the requisites of U.S. foreign policy. As the Reagan administration learned the hard way, the idea that the promotion of human rights throughout the world should be an important U.S. goal had taken hold.

In lieu of Lefever, President Reagan nominated Elliott Abrams, a former aide to senators Henry Jackson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, two Democratic pioneers in the field of human rights. And soon thereafter the State Department declared, "Human rights is at the core of our foreign policy."³

But just as Republicans joined Democrats in upholding Carter's idea of having a "human rights policy," many Democrats joined Republicans in criticizing the way Carter had carried out that policy. After the Carter administration left office, Richard Holbrooke, Carter's assistant secretary of state for Asia, criticized the policy so harshly before a congressional committee, that the committee scheduled an additional day of hearings in order to afford Patricia Derian, Carter's assistant secretary for Human Rights, the opportunity to respond.⁴ The fact that Holbrooke had been the author of the first speech ever delivered by Jimmy Carter on the subject of international human rights, a campaign speech before the B'nai B'rith in September 1976, made his subsequent disillusionment with the policy all the more significant.

Nor was Holbrooke alone. Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski has written in his memoirs of his unhappiness with the way the human rights policy

was carried out.⁵ Interestingly, similar sentiments have been given voice by former Under Secretary of State David Newsom, a State Department liberal much criticized by Brzezinski.

On the other hand, Patricia Derian, the chief human rights official of the Carter administration, often vented her frustrations with what she was and was not able to accomplish in her job. She testified on one occasion, for example, that: "Every night when I go home I think, 'I ought to quit this job.' Every morning when I get up I think, 'I will do it one more day.'"⁶ And other Carter human rights officials, while defending the policy, volunteer that its presentation was "grandiose" or "overstated,"⁷ a euphemistic way of saying that the policy did not live up to expectations.

In short, the Carter experience left in its wake a consensus on two points: first, emphasizing human rights in foreign policy is a good idea; second, implementing this idea is difficult and Carter's own efforts left much to be desired. This difficulty has two chief sources. First, too little is known about how to foment a lasting improvement in observance of human rights in societies where they are not widely observed. Experience teaches that this is at best a very difficult task, especially if the impetus comes from the outside. Second, even those who believe most strongly that the United States should have a human rights policy agree that it cannot be the only goal of U.S. foreign policy. Sometimes the pursuit of human rights may suggest actions that would disserve other goals.

The story of the Carter human rights policy is to a great extent the story of the discovery of the vexing dilemmas that arise in the course of trying to make human rights a central issue in the conduct of foreign policy. Carter had hit upon the human rights issue during the campaign, criticizing President Ford for refusing to invite Alexander Solzhenitsyn to the White House. Carter followed up by making human rights a central theme of his inaugural address. From that moment on, his administration was committed to an emphasis on human rights. Only in the ensuing months did

administration officials come to appreciate the difficulty of constructing a human rights "policy."

This book aims, in part, to tell the story of the Carter human rights policy. Its more important aim is to identify the critical dilemmas of our human rights policy as they were revealed by the experience of the Carter administration. These dilemmas are of fundamental importance and will have to be confronted by any U.S. human rights policy. I have grouped these dilemmas into four major questions.

The first question concerns the relationship of human rights to political systems. Should a U.S. human rights policy endeavor to transcend the ideological conflict between the democratic and the Communist worlds, lest our policy seem self-serving or inspired by ulterior motives? Or is the struggle for human rights inseparable from that conflict?

The second question concerns the definition of "human rights." Which "human rights" should U.S. policy promote, those that are found in the American tradition or those that are embodied in international law and documents? Should U.S. policy recognize the category "economic and social rights"? Should it draw a distinction between civil and political rights, on the one hand, and rights of "integrity of the person," on the other? Should some rights receive priority over others, and if so which?

The third question concerns consistency. Should U.S. human rights policy aspire to respond in a similar manner or with similar severity to similar human rights violations irrespective of the identity of the offending government? If not, what are the justifiable bases for inconsistent responses? Should we treat countries differently based on our estimation of their "readiness" for human rights? Or based on other goals—strategic, economic, arms control—that might be at stake in our relations with them?

The fourth question concerns the use of punitive measures. Should the United States manipulate its economic aid, security assistance, credits and financing, trade, or other forms of resource transfers in the hope of coercing other governments into showing more respect for their subjects'

rights? Do such measures work? If not, should we cut aid anyway in order to assure that the United States is not complicit in human rights violations? If the United States eschews such measures, what other tools can it use to promote human rights?

This book is organized into two major parts. Part One reviews the history of the Carter policy—its origins, its personnel, its goals, and its actions. Part Two consists of an explication of the critical dilemmas, the ways that the Carter administration responded to them, and possible alternative responses. The book has two concluding chapters, one devoted to a summary evaluation of the Carter policy, the other setting forth recommendations for a future U.S. human rights policy.

NOTES

1. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy, *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Organizations*, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 1979, pp. 230-231.
2. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Nomination of Henry A. Kissinger*, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., p. 117.
3. William Clarke, Deputy Secretary of State, and Richard T. Kennedy, Under Secretary of State for Management, "Memorandum for the Secretary, Subject: Reinvigoration of Human Rights Policy," Oct. 26, 1981, p. 1, copy in author's file.
4. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Reconciling Human Rights and U.S. Security Interests in Asia*, Hearings before the Subcommittees on Asian and Pacific Affairs and on Human Rights and International Organizations, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 1982, pp. 3-81, 477-529.
5. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), p. 128.

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6. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights and the Phenomenon of Disappearances, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 1979, p. 399.
7. Interview with Stephen Cohen, held in Washington, D.C., Nov. 14, 1983.

ONE

Prelude to Policy

ORIGINS

Where did the Carter human rights policy come from? It was, says former Carter speechwriter Hendrik Hertzberg, "pure Jimmy." "Jimmy Carter had a moral ideology but no political ideology and the human rights policy is very much a reflection of the strong moral impulses tethered somewhat loosely to a set of political goals," says Hertzberg.¹ Hertzberg's evaluation is echoed by Carter's other principal presidential speechwriter, James Fallows: "the moral theme was something right in Carter's soul...*realpolitik* was not what he wanted to do."²

But if the moral impulse was genuine, the issue of human rights, as an expression of that impulse, developed in Carter only slowly. In 1975, Jimmy Carter published a book, *Why Not the Best?*, designed to boost his then-nascent presidential campaign.³ In part an autobiography and in part a discussion of issues, the book contains no mention of human rights. It does however contain this expression of the quest for morality in foreign policy: "As it has related to such areas as Pakistan, Chile, Cambodia and Vietnam, our government's foreign policy has not exemplified any commitment to moral principles....A nation's domestic and foreign policies actions [sic] should be derived from the same standards of

ethics, honesty and morality which are characteristics of the individual citizens of the nation."⁴ Throughout 1975 and the following presidential primaries in 1976, morality in government and in foreign policy was a constant theme of Carter's, but "human rights" was rarely mentioned. Moreover, Carter made a point of his opposition to the "Jackson Amendment" on free emigration, the rallying point of one human rights crusade. At the 1975 Democratic Issues Conference Carter said: "I think that the so-called 'Jackson Amendment' was ill-advised....Russia is a proud nation, like we are, and if Russian Communist leaders had passed a resolution saying that they were not going to do this or that if we didn't do something domestically, we would have reacted adversely to it. That's exactly what happened."⁵

The human rights issue emerged not in any Carter speech, but in the writing of the 1976 Democratic Platform. "It was seen politically as a no-lose issue," says Patrick Anderson, Carter's chief speechwriter during the 1976 campaign. "Liberals liked human rights because it involved political freedom and getting liberals out of jail in dictatorships, and conservatives liked it because it involved criticisms of Russia."⁶ But it was more than a "no-lose" issue, it was a rare point of unity in a bitterly divided party. The Democrats had fought their way through bruising internecine primary battles in each of the two previous presidential elections, in 1968 between Humphrey, Kennedy, and McCarthy, and in 1972 between McGovern, Humphrey, Muskie, and others. Each time the winners were left exhausted and the losers were left embittered. Each time the Republicans triumphed in November. And in the intervening years the Democrats continued their feuding, in the councils of the Democratic National Committee and in a procession of party commissions and conventions. These bodies wrangled over rules and representation and the party's charter, but the real source of division was foreign policy. The war in Vietnam, the most divisive issue in America's postwar history, ravaged the Democratic party, while leaving the Republicans relatively unscathed, since both sides in America's great schism

were led by Democrats. It was Democrats who led America into the war, and Democrats who led the fight to get America out of it. Even as the war became increasingly the responsibility of a Republican administration, and finally drew to a close, polarization among the Democrats persisted. On one side were those to whom the war had taught the lesson that America needed above all to overcome what Senator J. William Fulbright called her "arrogance of power." On the other side were those who feared that America's failure in Vietnam would lead to a dangerous shift in the world's "correlation of forces" in favor of the Soviet Union.

In the presidential primaries of 1976, Senator Henry Jackson represented the latter of these groups, while several Democrats, most successfully Congressman Morris Udall, sought to speak for the former group, whose avatar, Senator George McGovern, did not enter the race that year. Jimmy Carter remained carefully aloof from these ideological battles, and it is likely that this helped him to win the nomination. Democratic primary voters were attracted to his "outsider's," "anti-Washington" pitch, not only because they were tired of big government, but also perhaps because they were tired of the relentless feuding among their party's leaders. Carter's "new face" may have looked more appealing for not having been scarred in these wars.

But if the split among the Democrats had been an asset to Carter's quest for the nomination, it was a liability to his prospects in the general election. As an "outsider" running against an incumbent, he badly needed the support of a united party. As the Democrats gathered to draft their platform in 1976, both of their well-defined factions were ready for battle. On the one side were the "Jackson Democrats," led by "Pat" Moynihan, Ben Wattenberg and Jeane Kirkpatrick, drawing staff support from the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM). On the other side were the "McGovern Democrats," led by Sam Brown and Bella Abzug, and drawing staff support from Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Each side had the goal of pulling the Democratic platform closer to its own convictions. The Carter

didate Carter placed more emphasis on human rights than in any previous campaign speech.¹⁰ In early September, Carter, speaking before B'nai B'rith, gave his first major campaign speech whose principal theme was human rights.¹¹ According to Patrick Anderson, Carter's chief speechwriter during the campaign, "the impetus" for the B'nai B'rith speech and for the new emphasis on human rights "came from Stu" Eizenstat. Anderson attributes Eizenstat's interest in the issue to his being a "devout Jew" whose "main concern was the rights of Jews in Russia to leave."¹² Anderson may well be right in his description of Eizenstat's feelings; Eizenstat is active in various Jewish causes. But Eizenstat had been Carter's top issues man for a couple of years already, during all of which time Carter had ignored the issue of human rights, had forcefully opposed the Jackson Amendment, and had taken a position on Middle East issues that was less clearly pro-Israeli than that of the other Democratic candidates. This suggests that the emergence of the human rights issue as a Carter campaign theme was less the product of Eizenstat's Jewishness than of his firsthand observations at the Democratic platform meetings that this alone of all foreign policy issues united the Democrats.

It had this effect not only on the Democratic leaders and ideologues who wrote the platform, but among Democratic voters. Elizabeth Drew reported that "surveys by Patrick Caddell, Carter's campaign pollster, had shown that human rights was an issue that united liberals and conservatives—that it seemed to be, Caddell now says, 'a very strong issue across the board.'"¹³ Carter's human rights theme served not only to draw support from various disparate constituencies, it also served to tie together a variety of criticisms of the incumbent. Drew reports being told by one Carter official: "Human rights was an issue with which you could bracket Kissinger and Ford on both sides....it was a beautiful campaign issue, an issue on which there was a real degree of public opinion hostile to the [Ford] Administration."¹⁴

This effect was magnified by President Ford's famous gaffe during the second presidential debate when he said:

representatives, led by Carter's top "issues" man, Stuart Eizenstat, had the goal of keeping everybody else reasonably happy, and keeping the party intact. There were some differences on domestic issues, but the real dividing line was over foreign affairs. On that there was almost no agreement, except, as it turned out, about human rights. On this the two sides shared a humanitarian impulse, although they certainly didn't approach the issue in the same way. To the Jackson Democrats, the human rights issue brought to mind primarily the victims of Communism, and they thought of it as a way of maintaining the ideological struggle against Communism at a time when Americans were losing their stomach for the policy of containment. On the other side, the McGovern Democrats had in mind primarily the victims of rightist governments. Raising this issue was to them a way of scaling back America's foreign entanglements. But there was here, unlike most other foreign policy issues, enough common ground to allow a meeting of the minds. Moynihan has recalled it in these words:

...."We'll be against the dictators you don't like the most," I said across the table to [Sam] Brown, "if you'll be against the dictators we don't like the most." The result was the strongest platform commitment to human rights in our history. Whether or not it was this commitment which directly influenced the new President to take the offensive, he began doing so from the very first, in his inaugural address.⁷

Both factions went away satisfied. Bruce Cameron, then the foreign policy lobbyist for ADA, noted afterward with satisfaction that the platform's human rights language was based on an original ADA draft⁸ while the next issue of CDM's newsletter boasted that the final human rights language adopted by the party was prepared with the help of CDM's staff.⁹ Both were right.

The impact on Carter's campaign was probably greater and more immediate than Moynihan realized. The platform was adopted during the week of June 13. Ten days later, speaking before the Foreign Policy Association, can-

"there is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, and there never will be under a Ford Administration." To which Carter deftly replied: "I would like to see Mr. Ford convince the Polish-Americans and the Czech-Americans and the Hungarian-Americans in this country that those countries don't live under the domination and supervision of the Soviet Union behind the Iron Curtain."¹⁵ That exchange may well have been the campaign's turning point and for the remaining month of the campaign, human rights remained one of Carter's constant themes. He chided Ford for having rebuffed Alexander Solzhenitsyn and he pledged that "when I am elected and go to the White House next January, I'm going to invite Alexander Solzhenitsyn to come by and see me."¹⁶

Thus, by the time of Carter's election, human rights had become one of the key points of his campaign. It gave needed substance to his otherwise vacuous pet theme of restoring morality to foreign policy. And all of those who were around him say that he took the issue to heart. As Brzezinski puts it:

The commitment to human rights reflected Carter's own religious beliefs, as well as his political acumen. He deeply believed in human rights and that commitment remained constant during his Administration. At the same time, he sensed, I think, that the issue was an appealing one for it drew a sharp contrast between himself and the policies of Nixon and Kissinger.¹⁷

Carter stressed the human rights issue in his inaugural address and took some other actions in this area during his first weeks in office. He discovered quickly that this issue could be as politically valuable to him as president as it had been as a candidate. He reports in his memoirs:

Judging from news articles and direct communications from the American people to me during the first few months of my administration, human rights had become the central theme of our foreign policy in the minds of the press and public. It

seemed that a spark had been ignited, and I had no inclination to douse the growing flames.¹⁸

Actually, Carter had something more to go on than "news articles and direct communications." He had his private polls. Elizabeth Drew reported a few months after Carter took office: "Polls taken by Patrick Caddell in this country this spring indicated that of the issues Carter was given high approval on, this was among the highest. 'Just enormous,' Caddell says."¹⁹

The impetus for Carter's human rights campaign was that the issue had resonance, both in Carter's soul and in his polls. But, at the time he took office, this commitment had not been translated into a consciously formulated "policy." Brzezinski reports that two weeks before he took office, Carter's National Security Council held an initial unofficial meeting. "The broad scope of the new President's policies was reflected by the studies that were commissioned" at that meeting, he says.²⁰ None of the fifteen studies was about human rights. And the issue was far enough from the center of Secretary Cyrus Vance's thoughts that, in a message of greeting he issued to the rest of the department upon taking office, human rights was not included in the list of a half dozen "global issues" that he mentioned. Six months after Carter's inauguration, Drew was still able to report:

throughout our government, officials have been struggling to wrestle an idea into a policy....one foreign-policy official recently told me [that] "No one knows what the policy is, yet it pervades everything we do." Another official, who has done a good deal of the wrestling, told me, "....There's no question that human rights was stated as a principle before anyone thought about it in operational terms as a concrete policy."²¹

PERSONNEL

If there was not at first a "policy," there began to be

assembled a staff—a group of officials whose job it would be to carry out the human rights “policy” as it became formulated, and to help formulate it. In assembling this staff, the Carter administration departed in one decisive way from the approach of the Carter campaign. To the campaign, the human rights issue had been a means of uniting both ideological wings of the Democratic party. This had been one of the salient features of that issue. And given Ford’s debate gaffe about Eastern Europe, his rebuff of Solzhenitsyn, and his vulnerability on the issue of detente, candidate Carter probably gave more emphasis to the Jackson/Moynihan version of the human rights issue than to the McGovern/Sam Brown version. At least that was how it appeared to one knowledgeable and impartial observer, the *Washington Post*’s Stephen Rosenfeld, who wrote:

Sen. Henry Jackson (D.-Wash.) may have lost the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination but—to judge by the foreign and defense chapters of the Democratic platform worked out in Washington this week—he has largely won the policy war....

The result is a document that firmly (though not exclusively) asserts the basic Jackson & Co. principle that the linchpin of American foreign policy is the survival of freedom around the world.²²

But when the Carter administration began to assemble its human rights staff, no person who approached the human rights issue from the Jackson perspective was included; all who were chosen were from the party’s McGovern wing.

This slant in the composition of Carter’s human rights appointments in part reflected the overall coloration of Carter’s foreign policy team. Although candidate Carter had carefully straddled his party’s two ideological wings, not just on human rights but on foreign and defense issues in toto—he let it be known, for example, that in preparation for the second debate he had been briefed by both Paul Warnke and Paul Nitze—when it came to staffing his administra-

tion, he included only the McGovernites. This group, to be sure, was leavened with some key figures from the foreign policy establishment who were seen as ideologically neutral, Secretary Vance, for example, but they were not balanced by any voices from the party's Jackson wing. And this despite the fact that Jackson had withdrawn from the presidential race relatively early—after losing the Pennsylvania primary—and had refused to be party to any “stop Carter” machinations, while such McGovernites as Udall and Senator Frank Church had insisted on battling Carter to the bitter end.

Why Carter chose this slant, for which his campaign gave no forewarning, remains something of a mystery on which neither his memoirs, nor those of Vance nor Brzezinski, shed any light. But that there was such a slant, although denied in a perfunctory way by Carter spokesmen, was widely recognized and commented upon by Democrats of both factions. Ben Wattenberg, advisor to Jackson and chairman of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, complained that his was a “missing point of view” in the Carter foreign policy team,²³ while Alan Baron, advisor to McGovern and organizer of the McGovernite faction in the Democratic National Committee, enthused: “George McGovern told friends that he considers the majority of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance’s appointments to date to be ‘excellent...quite close to those I would have made myself.’”²⁴ In the human rights area, this slant was especially pronounced, and it was all the more galling to the Jacksonites who felt that they had made an especially important contribution to the Carter campaign on the issue.

As his chief human rights official, Carter appointed Patricia Derian, whose title was soon upgraded to that of assistant secretary of state. Like UN Ambassador Andrew Young, another official who had an important part in Carter’s human rights policy, Derian came to her post as a result of her political ties to Carter and was without any experience in foreign policy. Derian had served as deputy director of Carter’s campaign, and on the Carter transition team planning policy for the Department of Health, Education and

Welfare. Despite her inexperience in international affairs, there was a certain logic to her appointment. It made sense to choose for the human rights field someone of stature in the American civil rights movement, and Derian was such a person. She had been, in the 1960s, one of the few white Mississippians to assume a prominent position in the overwhelmingly black "loyalist" Democratic party which was formed when the regular Democratic party of that state refused to acquiesce in racial integration.

To have stood with Mississippi's blacks in that situation proved that Derian had much raw courage. It did not prove that she was very far to the liberal side of the political spectrum. The Mississippi "regulars" were sufficiently reactionary and bigoted that even a moderate or conservative, by northern standards, might have stood with the "loyalists." But, in fact, Derian did stand rather far to the liberal side of the spectrum. In the councils of the Democratic National Committee, Derian was counted regularly in the "McGovernite" faction. She was a member of the Executive Committee of the American Civil Liberties Union, a member of the Steering Committee of the National Prison Project, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Center for Community Justice.²⁵

In addition, Derian has lectured at the "Washington School" of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), and served as a member of an IPS delegation that met at a week-long conference held in Minneapolis in 1983 with a delegation of Soviet officials on the subject of peace and disarmament.²⁶ IPS describes itself as a center for "radical scholarship,"²⁷ but its most important role is acting as a transmission belt for conveying certain kinds of radical ideas to the liberal political establishment.²⁸ Derian's association does not prove that she herself is a "radical." It does, however, reveal a blindness to certain subjects critically important to her work as a human rights official.

IPS is distinctive not so much for being "radical," but because its ideological center of gravity is unmistakably sympathetic to various Communist governments, and apologetic

for the human rights abuses of those governments. IPS's two founders and dominant figures, Richard Barnet and Marcus Raskin, were pungently critical of those human rights activities of the Carter administration that aimed at the Soviet Union. Raskin wrote that "Carter's administration hoped to recapture the world image of moral champion...while continuing the same imperial mischief. Its political objective was to split the Soviet elite."²⁹ And Barnet wrote that "watching the Soviets squirm as world attention is focused on the Ginsberg, Bukovsky and Sakharov scandals is in the tradition of the propaganda wars of the past."³⁰ It is hard to imagine that Derian would have associated in any way with a group apologetic for right-wing dictatorships, say in South Korea or Chile, or that she would have kept silent had her successors in the Reagan administration done so.

Derian herself has never evinced a trace of sympathy for Communism, but she has sometimes shown what seems to be an impatience with anti-Communism. She praised President Carter for having "raise[d] some fallen banners and illuminate[d] some values that had grown dim while we were busy containing communism, arms racing, selling America abroad, and devastating our nation's morale with war."³¹ And she has described revolutionary guerrillas as a lesser evil than repressive governments: "the citizenry, faced with official terrorism, and guerrilla terrorism, wisely decides to go with something that hasn't got the force of law behind it."³²

Derian's principal deputy was Mark Schneider, who came to the Human Rights Bureau from the staff of Senator Edward Kennedy, and who was well known on capitol hill as a liberal activist. During the years that Schneider served as Kennedy's foreign affairs aide, the senator established an uneven record in the human rights area, characterized by a militant, punitive stance toward rightist dictators and a restrained one toward leftist dictators.³³

The other deputy assistant secretary in the human rights bureau during the first years of the Carter administration was Stephen Cohen, who is of an ideological bent similar to

Derian's and Schneider's. Cohen says that his involvement in politics began in the Vietnam antiwar movement and in the 1968 Eugene McCarthy presidential campaign. A teacher of tax and corporate law by profession, Cohen says "I got my job" in the Carter administration as a result of "the people I knew from liberal Democratic Party politics."³⁴

Schneider and Cohen, as well as John Salzberg, who came to the Human Rights Bureau in 1979 from the staff of Congressman Donald Fraser (D.-Minn.), were mentioned by Carter's Under Secretary of State David Newsom as among those "people at the Bureau of Human Rights who, I don't think it is putting it too strongly, came into the Department dedicated to the idea of seeing the overthrow" of rightist dictators in such countries as Indonesia, Nicaragua, Iran and the Philippines.³⁵

In addition to Schneider and Cohen, two other people held the title of deputy assistant secretary in the human rights bureau, albeit only briefly, toward the end of the Carter years. One was Roberta Cohen, who came to the bureau from one of the mainstream human rights organizations, the International League for Human Rights. The other was Stephen Palmer, a career foreign service officer, who was, he says, brought into the bureau at the urging of Deputy Secretary Christopher during Carter's last year "in order to have a senior professional in the bureau should there be a need for transition to another kind of administration" and to bring more "professionalism" to the bureau.³⁶

Given its mission and its political composition, it is not surprising that the human rights bureau was often embroiled in heavy bureaucratic conflict with other parts of the government. But it did not always stand alone. It often found allies among officials in other parts of the executive branch whose political philosophies were similar to those of Derian, Cohen, Schneider and Salzberg.

The official in charge of human rights issues on the National Security Council staff was Jessica Tuchman, who had worked at developing policy positions for the Udall presidential campaign. Tuchman was one of those whom

Brzezinski says he hired in part in order to give himself political cover. He explains in his memoirs:

I intentionally recruited several individuals whose views were more "liberal" than mine, but whose expertise on foreign affairs I very much respected. I knew that at some point I would be attacked from the left...and that the attack would focus on my alleged reputation as a "hawk." I felt, therefore, that a liberal presence on the staff would give me a more diversified perspective and would also be politically helpful.³⁷

Another NSC staff member whom Brzezinski lists in this group is Robert Pastor, who served as his chief Latin American specialist. Pastor, who joined Brzezinski after serving as staff director for the so-called "Linowitz Commission" on U.S.-Latin American relations, had also been one of the seven members of IPS's Ad Hoc Working Group on Latin America, a role which Pastor says was of little importance.³⁸

The State Department's Policy Planning staff was designated as the "buffer" between the human rights bureau and the department's other bureaus. Its Latin American specialist was Richard Feinberg, who came to State from the Treasury Department, which Feinberg had left following an embarrassing disclosure about him in papers recovered by the FBI from the briefcase of Orlando Letelier. Letelier, a former top official of the Allende government of Chile, was in exile in Washington, working for IPS, when he was brutally murdered by agents of the Chilean secret police. In his briefcase at the time of his death was a letter to him from an official of the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), an openly Castroite offshoot of the 1960's New Left, organized to mobilize support for Communist guerrillas in Latin America. The letter asked Letelier to cooperate with Feinberg in some research for a report he was writing for NACLA, and asking Letelier to "not tell anyone else that he is working on the project, please. It wouldn't help his work at Treasury (obviously)."³⁹

Another important figure in Carter's human rights campaign with strong ideological proclivities was UN

Ambassador Andrew Young. Numerous observers have described Young's role as that of a militant on human rights issues in the administration's internal debates. But if this was so, it was only with respect to nations friendly to the United States, for the special role that Young carved out for himself was that of defending governments hostile to the United States, including the defense of their human rights records. Thus, Young praised the role of Cuban troops in Angola as "bring[ing] a certain stability and order" and he praised Ayatollah Khomeini as "some kind of saint."⁴⁰ In regard to human rights Young said: "before we take the road to criticize others, we should rather see what we can ourselves do. In the area of human rights, for example, it is we, among all the significant countries, who have not yet ratified the three most important international instruments for the protection of human rights."⁴¹ And to carry out this dictum, Young belittled Western criticisms of the trial and imprisonment of Anatoly Scharansky by arguing that there were "hundreds, perhaps thousands, of political prisoners" in the United States.⁴² Young brought with him to the UN Brady Tyson, an original founder of the Castroite organization, NACLA, who used the opportunity of representing the United States at the UN Human Rights Commission to proclaim a public, though unauthorized, apology on behalf of his country for having overthrown the Allende government,⁴³ an accusation pressed by Communists, but which the Church Committee, after a probing investigation, had concluded was probably not true.⁴⁴

In sum, the foreign policy team of the Carter administration included a network of individuals in key positions affecting human rights policy who shared a "McGovernite" or "left-liberal" worldview and whose human rights passions were focused on the depredations of rightist regimes. It included no one, at least among its political appointees, who shared the "Jacksonite" worldview and whose human rights passions were directed to the acts of Communist governments.⁴⁵

This distinct political character of the human rights staff

appointed by Carter was reinforced by, or perhaps was a reflection of, the approach of Secretary of State Vance. Although Vance was very much the apotheosis of the foreign policy establishment, and certainly no ideologue, he was not politically neutral. His style was bland and professional, but his opinions were strong. He says in his memoirs that: "I hoped that I would be asked to become Secretary of State because I had strong views about what should be done in foreign policy."⁴⁶ And his record as secretary gives much reason to credit the sincerity of that statement. Buttoned-down establishmentarian that he was, Vance resigned his office over a matter of principle, an act all the more remarkable because the issue involved was a trivial one on which his stance was surely not popular either with his colleagues or with the public.

Nor is there any reason to doubt the sincerity of Vance's declarations of support for the human rights policy, although it is obvious that he was much less gripped by the issue than was Carter. This comes through when Vance says in his memoirs that Carter "felt particularly strong about the need for the United States to make human rights a central theme of its foreign policy. I was in accord. I pointed out, however, that we had to be flexible and pragmatic..."⁴⁷ What did grip Vance, as shown in almost his every act as secretary, was a driving urge to effect a reconciliation between the United States and its Communist and Third World antagonists, especially the Soviet Union.

Vance said in an interview with *Time* magazine that he thought that Carter and Brezhnev "have similar dreams and aspirations about the most fundamental issues."⁴⁸ In a letter to the president quoted in Brzezinski's memoirs, Vance said: "we can help encourage a more cooperative attitude on the part of Soviet leaders by conspicuous attention to the sense of equality to which they attach so much importance."⁴⁹ When Soviet international behavior incited a surge in anti-Soviet sentiment within the United States, Vance preferred to place the blame on Americans rather than Russians. "It is true that there was [in 1978] growing public and congressional

concern about Soviet international behavior," he wrote. "But I felt that much of it arose from background press sessions held by staff members of the national security advisor and was self-inflicted."⁵⁰ To arrest the deterioration in relations, Vance says he urged a number of steps, most of them conciliatory, including this one: "We should review the application of our human rights policies toward the Soviet Union. It was clear there was a critical point beyond which our public pressure was causing the Soviets to crack down harder on Soviet dissidents."⁵¹

To fill the post of chief advisor to the State Department on Soviet affairs, Vance chose Marshall Shulman, one of the most conciliatory and optimistic of American Sovietologists. If Vance was at most lukewarm about human rights actions aimed at the Soviet Union, Shulman was ice-cold. At the time he assumed his position in the Department of State, Shulman published an essay arguing that "the effort to compel changes in Soviet institutions and practices by frontal demands on the part of other governments is likely to be counterproductive." He urged that U.S. human rights efforts be limited to statements by private "individuals and groups."⁵²

Vance's and Shulman's approach to U.S.-Soviet relations was counterbalanced to some extent by that of Brzezinski. Although Brzezinski seems to have been more attuned to countering the Soviets through geostrategic power politics—playing the "China card," shoring up the Shah—than through the ideological politics of human rights, he says in his memoirs that he "felt strongly that in the U.S.-Soviet competition the appeal of America as a free society could become an important asset, and I saw in human rights an opportunity to put the Soviet Union ideologically on the defensive."⁵³

But in his views on the Soviet Union, Brzezinski was one against many within the Carter administration. The philosophical composition of the Carter team was weighted toward a human rights policy that focused on the abuses of rightist rather than Communist governments. This impulse warred against the legacy of the Carter election cam-

paign, in which the human rights issue was frequently and effectively expressed in terms of criticisms of détente, the Helsinki Accords, the Solzhenitsyn rebuff, and Ford's debate gaffe about Eastern Europe. It took a few months before the Carter team's philosophical impulses effectively braked the policy momentum from the campaign. In its early weeks the Carter human rights policy aimed just as strongly at the Soviet bloc as at rightist governments. But as time passed the focus came to rest much more heavily on the latter.

GOALS

Because the human rights campaign began as something less than an explicitly formulated policy, no one seems in the beginning to have asked what exactly Carter hoped it would accomplish. Only gradually did the administration come to articulate explicit goals for the policy. In addition to the most obvious one—"to enhance respect worldwide for internationally recognized human rights"⁵⁴—three other distinct themes emerged in the statements of administration officials. One was essentially inward looking. Carter said: "I really felt when I came into office that something needed to be done just to raise a banner for the American people to admire and of which they could be proud again."⁵⁵ An important implication of this goal, as explained by Brzezinski, was that human rights policy would help "to sustain domestic support for our policies by rooting them clearly in our moral values."⁵⁶

Another was to strengthen America's position in the international arena. As Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher put it, the human rights policy "gives us a way of taking the ideological initiative, instead of merely reacting."⁵⁷ This, said Carter, "might possibly reverse the tide that has been going against democracies in the past."⁵⁸ A fourth goal was, in the words of the president, to "strengthen our influence among some of the developing nations."⁵⁹ The way to do this was to get on the side of "change." Secretary Vance said: "Change

was and is sweeping through Africa, and those who identify with it will be able to influence its direction."⁶⁰ By getting on the side of change, America could have friendly relations with incoming governments as they overthrew existing governments. As Derian put it: "If we ignore oppression, we may obtain closer relations with a particular regime over the short run. But there is significant risk that its successor will be hostile to our interests."⁶¹

There may have been a fifth, ulterior goal. This was of course not publicly proclaimed by the administration, but it was reported by a sufficiently impressive array of journalists to lend credence to the inference that it was indeed on the administration's mind. Elizabeth Drew wrote: "one of the (at least privately) acknowledged points of speaking out on human rights in the Soviet Union was to give the President 'running room' on the right in the United States so that he could get approval of a SALT agreement."⁶² *U.S. News and World Report* wrote that "by vigorously backing human rights, the Administration seeks to mobilize solid support among the American people and in Congress for its foreign policy—in particular, the policy of seeking a new treaty with Russia to curb the nuclear-arms race."⁶³ And columnist Anthony Lewis wrote:

The Soviets forced an early and awkward test of the Carter policy when they expelled an American correspondent, threatened Andrei Sakharov and arrested other dissidents. If the President had not responded clearly, he would in effect have given his position away at the start. He would also have looked weak, and he would have hurt his chances of selling any future arms control agreement to the Senate.⁶⁴

NOTES

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 34. Interview with Stephen Cohen, held in Washington, D.C., Nov. 7, 1983.
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 36. Interview with Stephen Palmer, held in Washington, D.C., June 13, 1983.
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TWO

The Policy in Practice

LAUNCHING A POLICY

Carter was inaugurated on January 20, 1977. Before the month was over, his human rights campaign, even if not yet a "policy" to those who insist on a rigorous use of the term, was at the center of diplomatic activity. On January 26, State Department spokesman Frederick Z. Brown read a statement criticizing the government of Czechoslovakia for arresting and harassing Czech dissidents who had circulated a statement, "Charter 77," calling for Czech observance of the terms of the Helsinki accords.¹ At the same time, the department criticized Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith for his stance in negotiations over the future of that country.² Also at that briefing, a reporter asked the department, had it "any comment concerning the warnings the Soviets have given to Sakharov about his activities?"³ Peter Osnos, Moscow correspondent for the *Washington Post*, speculated that those warnings may have been intended to test the willingness of the new administration to risk straining U.S.-Soviet relations over human rights matters.⁴

The department did not respond to the query about Sakharov until the next day, when this statement was given to reporters:

We have long admired Andrey Sakharov as an outspoken

champion of human rights in the Soviet Union. He is, as you know, a prominent, respected scientist, a Nobel laureate, who, at considerable risk, has worked to promote respect for human rights in his native land.

Any attempts by the Soviet authorities to intimidate Mr. Sakharov will not silence legitimate criticism in the Soviet Union and will conflict with accepted international standards in the field of human rights.⁵

The statement was moderate in tone and contained no threats. It is hard to imagine that the department could have said much less in response to the Sakharov question. Nonetheless, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin called Secretary Vance to protest,⁶ and two days later Tass, the Soviet press agency, issued a statement denouncing the State Department's words about Sakharov as an "unsavory ploy" and criticizing Western correspondents stationed in Moscow for giving too much attention to Soviet dissidents.⁷ A visible tremor went through the administration. The next day, Carter told reporters that the Sakharov statement had not been cleared with him.⁸ He said that the statement correctly reflected his "attitude" about the Sakharov matter, but that he wanted to avoid "aggravating" relations with the Soviet Union, leading the *New York Times* to infer that "his intent seemed to be to emphasize that while criticism of the Soviet Union was by no means unthinkable, it should be made only after consideration at the highest level."⁹ The following day, Vance announced that the Sakharov statement hadn't been cleared with him, either. "I did not see it," said Vance.¹⁰ And he made a statement that seemed designed to reassure the Soviet government that the Carter administration had no wish to engage in an ideological battle. He said:

We will speak frankly about injustice both at home and abroad. We do not intend, however, to be strident or polemical, but we do believe that an abiding respect for human rights is a human value of fundamental importance and that it must be nourished. We will not comment on each and every issue, but we will from

time to time comment when we see a threat to human rights, when we believe it constructive to do so.¹¹

The administration also took action on some human rights issues during those first few days that were directed at smaller countries, and these created fewer problems. On January 28, the administration asked a Chilean government official, who was here as a guest of the State Department, to leave the United States, following charges by human rights groups that he had been responsible for the torture of some prisoners in Chile.¹² The Chilean denied the charges, but complied with the request.¹³ Also during January, according to Stanley Karnow, "the administration subtly communicated its displeasure to a totalitarian client by spurning a request by South Korea that Vice President Mondale visit that country after his visit to Japan."¹⁴ And at the same press conference at which Vance labored to reassure the Soviets about the Sakharov statement, he resumed the offensive against Rhodesia's Ian Smith. "The so-called 'internal settlement' will not produce a peaceful settlement and therefore will not have the support of the United States," said Vance. And he announced that "to reemphasize our opposition to the maintenance of minority-imposed control of the government of Rhodesia, this administration will strongly support repeal of the Byrd amendment."¹⁵

Carter's and Vance's efforts to distance themselves from the State Department's Sakharov statement prompted CBS correspondent Marvin Kalb to ask whether the administration was "not running the danger...of setting up what amounts to a double standard [by] the manner in which you respond to violations of human rights in the Soviet Union and in smaller countries where there is not a direct, vital interest conflict?"¹⁶ But whether or not it wished to back off from confrontation with the Soviet Union, neither the Soviet government nor the dissidents it was persecuting would give the administration the chance to do so. On January 28, the State Department received a letter addressed to President Carter from Andrei Sakharov that had been smuggled out of the Soviet Union by two American

human rights activists. The letter described Soviet government violations of the Helsinki Accords, detailed the persecution of fifteen leading dissidents, and called on Carter "to raise your voice" on their behalf.¹⁷ In the first days of February, the Soviet government arrested the noted dissident, Alexandr Ginzburg, and expelled Associated Press correspondent George Krimsky from the Soviet Union because of his contacts with dissidents.¹⁸ The day before the Soviet expulsion of Krimsky, Czech authorities had detained NBC correspondent Leslie Collitt as he was trying to leave that country.¹⁹ The Krimsky and Collitt incidents, coming only a day apart and within a week of Tass's warnings to Western correspondents, suggested an orchestrated campaign to cut the nexus between Soviet bloc dissidents and the Western press.

Whatever the feelings of Carter or Vance, the administration could scarcely have avoided responding to any of these events. Having made a campaign issue of Ford's rebuff of Solzhenitsyn, Carter could not ignore a letter from Sakharov, the Soviet Union's other most prominent dissident. Nor could he, in view of the close connection between Solzhenitsyn and Ginzburg, easily ignore the arrest of Ginzburg. Solzhenitsyn had used the proceeds from *The Gulag Archipelago* to create a fund for the relief of the families of persecuted Soviet dissidents. Ginzburg had been arrested for his work as the executor of this fund. Nor could the administration easily ignore Soviet abuse of Western reporters.

It may be unfair to speculate about whether the administration had any hesitations, for the essential point is that it responded in a clear way to all three events. After getting off what may have been the best quip of his presidency—he said he was tempted to respond to the expulsion of the AP correspondent in Moscow by expelling the AP correspondent in Washington—Carter did retaliate by expelling a Soviet correspondent.²⁰ On February 4, Vance conveyed to Ambassador Dobrynin the administration's concern about Ginzburg, and three days later, apparently having received no positive response, the State Department issued a public

statement calling the incident "a matter of profound concern for all Americans."²¹ Most important, Carter sent a return letter to Sakharov.

Carter's letter was drafted jointly by Vance and Brzezinski, says Brzezinski, and it was "couched in language that made it clear that the President's concern was global in character and not focused specifically on the Soviet Union."²² The letter said: "You may rest assured that the American people and our government will continue our firm commitment to promote respect for human rights not only in our own country but also abroad."²³ However gently the message was couched, the mere fact that Carter sent it evoked strong reactions among both Soviet dissidents and their persecutors. According to Freedom House's Ludmilla Thorn, a leading American contact for Soviet dissidents, "that one letter, dissidents told me later, gave enough spiritual food for them for three months."²⁴ On the other side, Ambassador Dobrynin this time did not just phone, but came to the State Department to deliver his protest. More ominously, the Soviet government, according to Brzezinski, demonstrated its defiance by "stepp[ing] up sharply their suppression of human-rights activists."²⁵

At about the same time, the administration discovered that even with regard to small countries, its outspokenness about human rights could cause it difficulties. On February 16, the Anglican Archbishop of Uganda and two cabinet ministers were reported by the Ugandan government to have been engaged in an insurrectionary plot and to have died in an "automobile accident."²⁶ A week later, after evidence mounted that the three had been murdered, perhaps by Idi Amin's own hand, amidst a bloody campaign against Uganda's Christians, the State Department released a statement deploring the "massive violations of human rights in Uganda" and the "violent death" of the three men.²⁷ The same day, President Carter said at a press conference that events in Uganda "have disgusted the entire civilized world."²⁸ Ugandan dictator Idi Amin responded by ordering the two hundred Americans then living in that country