

cases have been settled, not on the basis of rights and obligations, not under the provisions of the Soviet constitution, but as bargains and trade-offs in a cynical campaign of public relations that has rendered justice to a select few while leaving the more fundamental issues untouched.

With countless others, we plead for the release of Ida Nudel and Vladimir Slepak. But we know that they, as the Scharanskys' who suffered before them, are but metaphors for the Soviet reality; a reality which turns requests for family unification into criminal charges of "malicious hoologanism; a reality which gives freedom to a handful while denying visas to tens of thousands; a reality which converts the Soviet Constitution and the Soviet Bill of Rights into weapons for the prosecution.

Other religions and minorities have suffered similar fates. For the almost fifty million Muslims who reside within the borders of the Soviet Union, the free and open practice of their religion is impossible. In the past few years, there has been a dramatic escalation in Soviet activities directed against Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, and Catholics. All have been subjected in varying degrees to equally systematic attempts to destroy the basis of religious practices. So, too, the fate of Soviet dissidents of every faith - for them the words "human rights" are but a cynical phrase in the vocabulary of legal repression. It is difficult for a world which seeks to trust Soviet promises on arms control to reconcile those promises with what we know of equivalent Soviet commitments on human rights.

And Afghanistan compounds the problem. For more than six years the people of Afghanistan have been subjected to an obscene war of occupation and liquidation at the hands of Soviet forces. Atrocities have been clinically documented by our own Rapporteur. Evidence is as overwhelming as it is sickening. Yet no attempts have yet been made by Soviet authorities to square their record in Afghanistan with their solemn pronouncements in support of respect for human rights and the self-determination of peoples.

It would be some comfort to believe that such flagrant violations of human rights were restricted to one region or practised by one ideology. It would be equally gratifying to believe that the slow march of totalitarian and authoritarian practices had been definitively halted. But the evidence is otherwise. There continue to be reports of prisoners of conscience in countries as ideologically diverse as Chile and Cuba, South Africa and Vietnam. There are clear limits to trade union activities, restrictions on free expression and curbs on political organization in Nicaragua, a country that emerged from a dictatorship of