

the restrictions on personal freedom in that country. In the period of the Cold War, when repression was more widespread and brutal, we felt remote from these occurrences and, in any case, we were resigned to the fact that there was little we could do about them. In the era of *détente*, when pictures of our political leaders rubbing shoulders with Communist dignitaries have been brought into our living-rooms, our sense of obligation towards the victims of abuse has been heightened. At the same time, an improved international climate has emboldened human-rights activists in the Soviet Union to promote their cause openly. They have taken advantage of their access to the Western mass media to disseminate information about their activities, considering this as offering a measure of protection against reprisals by their governments.

In turn, popular pressure on Western governments to try to help the dissidents has elevated the issue of human rights to the level of East-West diplomacy. The Western powers placed it on the agenda of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and succeeded in incorporating into the Final Act provisions against violations of basic personal freedoms. Subsequently, at the meeting in Belgrade, they examined the implementation of those safeguards. Meanwhile, the new administration in the United States adopted a more articulate stand on human rights. The issue has become one of central concern in East-West relations.

The progress of *détente* and the observance of human rights are closely linked, but they are not the same. The movement of the Soviet dissidents has been helped by the improved climate in East-West relations, but it grew from indigenous roots and was not instigated – as some of its Communist critics claim – by the West. Conversely, the initial Western efforts at *détente* were concerned with reducing the danger of nuclear confrontation, and whatever beneficial effects they may have had upon human rights were incidental. Indeed, there are definite limitations on the use of *détente* as a vehicle to promote freedom in the Communist orbit. The constraints are inherent both in the nature of the existing balance of power and in the system of values to which we adhere in the democratic world.

Restricted action

In the present constellation of forces in the world, the ability of Western democracies to influence Soviet policies, especially domestic ones, remains greatly restricted. As President Carter bluntly put it: "I can't go in with armed forces and try to change the internal mechanism of the Soviet Government". Any attempt by the West to dictate

its terms to the U.S.S.R. by force would be resisted, as we ourselves should resist a similar endeavour on the part of the Soviet Union. Risking a nuclear holocaust to uphold respect for human rights would be, of course, senseless – it could obliterate oppressors and oppressed alike.

Our first obligation to humanity is to reduce the danger of nuclear war. Negotiations with the Soviet Union aimed at limiting the nuclear-arms race and nuclear proliferation and at containing any conventional confrontation that may threaten to escalate into a nuclear conflict represent minimum goals of *détente*. These objects, as Marshall Shulman reminded us recently in *Foreign Affairs*, should be consistently followed, for even when they produce no other beneficial effects they are valuable in themselves.

Yet, even if we could change the Soviet system by force, we ought not to do so. Democracy cannot be imposed from outside but has to be nurtured in native soil. The Soviet political tradition is very different from ours. For centuries the people of the U.S.S.R. have been reared under autocracy; the notions of personal liberty, equality before the law and self-government are alien to most of them. They compensate for their lack of freedom with pride in the accomplishments of their state. They derive great satisfaction from the present position of the U.S.S.R. as one of the two superpowers in the world. They resent any criticism of their system by outsiders, and they are unlikely to adopt any foreign models, especially under duress. If democracy is ultimately to prevail in the Soviet Union, it will be as different from that of the Anglo-American political tradition as are the democratic systems of France or Japan.

This does not mean that over the last quarter-century there has been no progress in the U.S.S.R. Soviet society today is very different from what it was during the Stalinist era. Extensive contacts with the dissidents tend to distort our picture of Soviet reality – we minimize the positive changes and focus our attention on the continuing aspects of autocratic tradition. Yet the very presence of dissidents testifies to substantial change. Under Stalin, Solzhenitsyn would never have escaped from the "Gulag Archipelago" to the West, and Sakharov, after holding his first press conference in Moscow, would have disappeared for good.

Our admiration for the human-rights activists in the U.S.S.R. is amply justified by their intellectual ability, determination and courage, but it must not prevent us from seeing them for what they really are. They do not, unfortunately, represent the mainstream, but only a marginal element of

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