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United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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INFORMATION
MEMORANDUM

Wash up

TO : The Secretary
FROM : HA - Richard Schifter
SUBJECT: Human Rights Group at Moscow Summit

Our Human Rights Working Group held four meetings for a total of about fourteen hours. In addition, I had meetings with representatives of the Institute of State and Law, the Institute of Legislation and the First Deputy Minister of Justice. As before, I also met with individual groups suffering discrimination, including Russian Orthodox, Pentecostals, Eastern Rite Catholics, refuseniks, and political dissidents.

As usual our Working Group focused on both basic issues and specific cases.

Concerning basic issues:

1. The Soviets spoke more hopefully than they have in the recent past about early enactment of legislation which will (a) repeal the laws that make it crimes to "defame the Soviet system" and to engage in the unauthorized practice of religion, (b) allow religious congregations to qualify for legal status, allow greater contact between believers in the Soviet Union and fellow believers abroad, permit greater freedom in the importation into the Soviet Union of bibles and prayerbooks, and permit parents to organize groups for the religious education of their children, to be taught by clergy, as long as the place of instruction is a private home (not a church building); (c) relax restrictions on emigration.
2. We agreed on a round table meeting on the rule of law, to be held around July 11-15.
3. The Soviets agreed in principle to a visit by U.S. physicians to the Soviet Union for the purpose of meeting and, if appropriate, examining the remaining political prisoners.
4. We also confirmed our previous understanding on a visit, probably in September, by U.S. psychiatrists for the purpose of discussing issues of "forensic psychiatry" (our euphemism for "abuse of psychiatry").

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Concerning cases:

1. We received detailed status reports on 400 refusenik cases to which we had called attention last April; 102 of these cases have been resolved in the intervening period; we agreed on a procedure to continue the exchange of information on these and other refusenik cases and the Soviets promised to try to whittle them down further; (it is evident that the Foreign Ministry staff is going out of its way in interceding with the Interior Ministry in efforts to obtain a favorable resolution of cases).

(2) We went into a great deal of detail on the cases of political prisoners and persons committed to psychiatric institutions on political grounds; some of our own data tends to be hazy as it comes from groups whose reports are based in part on rumor; I believe that the number of purely political prisoners is down substantially, perhaps to around 100.

Other items of interest are:

(1) The Dutch Ambassador in Moscow told me that the number of Jews applying for emigration has "exploded." The MFA officials seemed to confirm this when they told me that the head of the Emigration Office is complaining that his staff is not large enough to handle all the new business. (This may very well turn out to be the next major constraint on Jewish emigration.)

(2) I told the Soviet officials in side conversations that we continue to be deeply troubled about reports of abusive treatment of citizens by the KGB. They agreed that this is a problem. I mentioned a number of specific cases and they promised to look into them.

(3) The Soviets continue the charade of raising U.S. human rights cases. We go through the formalities of responding in a serious fashion. But it is clearly understood that both sides are aware that this is indeed a charade.

Comment: I am now persuaded that the persons with whom we interact and the majority of the Soviet leadership generally are committed to improving the Soviet Union's human rights performance. But the gulf between that commitment and the reality throughout the country is enormous. Though one doesn't get sent to Siberia any more for dissident behavior, the KGB still does its very best to intimidate citizens and occasionally brutalize them. It's still going to take quite a while before the pall of fear lifts from the Soviet people. (You may be interested in the attached conclusion of my recent testimony before the House Human Rights Subcommittee.)

Attachment:
as stated.

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