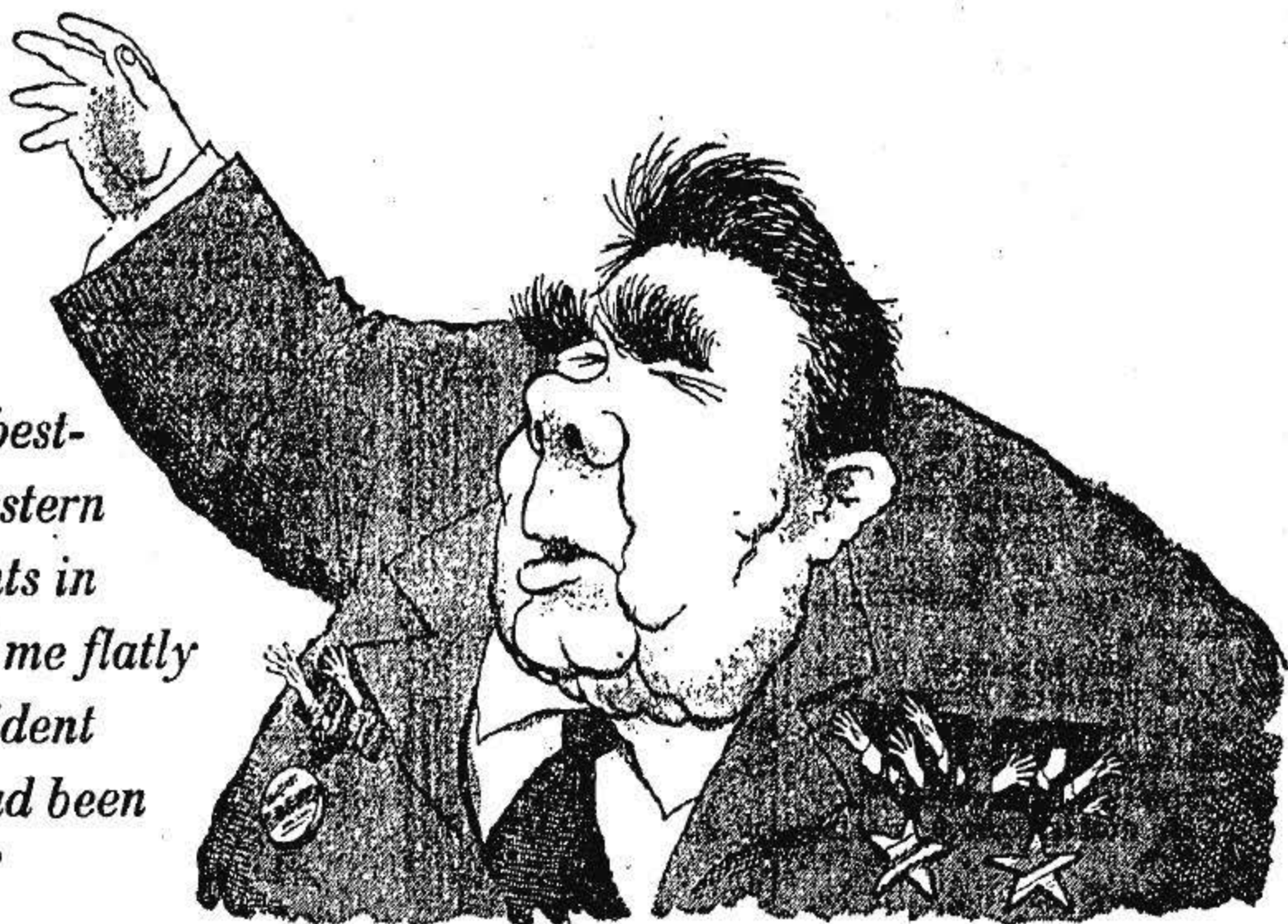


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By Auth for the Philadelphia Inquirer

Joseph Kraft

Soviet Dissidents on the Run

MOSCOW—I was in the apartment of Andrei Sakharov a year and a half ago when an Italian journalist brought the famous dissident physicist the first tape of the Nobel Peace Prize lecture delivered by his wife in his absence. Dr. Sakharov was burning to hear the tape.

But before playing it, he made us all listen to the story of another caller. He was a one-legged Ukrainian sailor who was being harassed by Soviet authorities because he had tried to order a new wooden leg from West Germany.

Today that almost ludicrous effort to work others into the protest act would almost certainly not occur. Far from doing new recruiting, the Soviet dissidents are on the run. They have been put on the defensive by the well-meaning but ill-conceived human-rights campaign of President Carter.

Carter, it will be remembered, initiated his campaign in January with a reply to a personal communication from Sakharov. Though the embassy here warned against it, the message was delivered and made public. The President followed with various statements aimed at Russia, and by receiving an exile, Vladimir Bukovsky, whom the Russians regarded as a criminal.

The President's intervention into the affairs of the dissidents handed the Soviet authorities a weapon they had always wanted. It enabled them to tie the dissidents to Washington in a way that suggests the protests are a cover for American espionage. The authorities have made the most of the opportunity even though it means breaking with the policy of keeping mum about the dissidents as if they didn't really exist.

The first big break with that policy came on March 4 when Izvestia car-

ried, under the title "The CIA and Human Rights," an open letter from one S. L. Lipavsky, a former dissident and medical doctor whose vulnerability to official pressure is suggested by the fact that both his father and son have committed jailable offenses. Lipavsky "confessed" that he had been recruited as an agent for American intelligence by the so-called dissidents.

In his letter Lipavsky cited three leading Jewish dissidents. He said they were connected with two American embassy officials (both Jews): Melvin Levitsky, who used to work in the American mission here, and Joseph Presel, who is still on the staff.

He further implicated, as go-betweens, several American correspondents, including Alfred Friendly Jr., who used to represent Newsweek magazine here, and Peter Osnos, presently the Washington Post correspondent in Moscow. Finally he tied the whole lot in with another Soviet dissident group including Yuri Orlov and Anatoly Scharansky, who had organized a committee to monitor Soviet compliance with the human-rights provision of the Helsinki declaration on peace and security.

The statement of March 4 was followed early last month with a "press conference" given by Lipavsky and published by Izvestia under the title "How I Was Recruited by the CIA." The interview again threw into the same bag the American diplomatic officials, the newsmen, and two groups of Soviet dissidents: the Jews seeking to emigrate and the liberals trying to monitor the Helsinki accord. It asserted that under the guise of interest in human rights the Americans and the dissidents were actually "collecting information about the defense capacity of the U.S.S.R."

Naturally the Russians have not stopped at mere words. Yuri Orlov, one of the founders of the Helsinki monitoring movement, was arrested in February and has been held incommunicado. Seven other members of his monitoring group based in the Ukraine and Georgia have met the same fate.

At the beginning of March Anatoly Scharansky—a young physicist who has been the link between Sakharov and the two groups of dissidents—was taken into custody. He is charged with having "collected on behalf of CIA agents secret intelligence in scientific, technical, military and political fields."

Yesterday there was word that charges of treason were being prepared against Scharansky. The great fear is that he and perhaps others will be put on display in a show trial loaded with anti-Semitism and ringing appeals to Soviet patriotism.

In these circumstances, dissident activities have been reduced to a trickle. The frequent protests, not to mention the press conferences and other contacts with the West, are a thing of the past. Even the most heroic persons have become cautious. One of the best-informed Western correspondents in Moscow told me flatly that the dissident movement had been "destroyed."

Perhaps not. The dissidents are daring and ingenious people. They may survive, especially if an agreement on arms control eases the climate of Soviet-American relations.

But it is apparent that President Carter's first fine careless fling of enthusiasm for human rights boomeranged in the U.S.S.R. Carter ought to meditate on that experience with the kind of intensity that caused Socrates, on reviewing his life just before the end, to recall that he had "a debt to pay."

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