

Dissident Words, Western Voices:  
The Relationship between Samizdat and Radio Liberty during Détente

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

European, Russian and Eurasian Studies

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Ottawa, Ontario

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## Abstract

Détente was a period of reorientation for Soviet society. Samizdat literature was one of the primary sources of information about the dissident community available outside the Soviet Union. The western-backed station Radio Liberty saw the value of samizdat early on, and incorporated these documents into their broadcasts. A symbiotic relationship developed between samizdat and Radio Liberty and this relationship affected the aims of both groups. Their relationship encouraged the transmission of information across Soviet borders and promoted awareness of dissident issues within the greater Soviet population. This thesis examines the relationship between samizdat and Radio Liberty, and its influence on Soviet society during détente.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Jeff Sahadeo for his continuous support and guidance in the creation of this thesis. I would also like to thank Denise Handy and Andrew Gwyn for helping me every step of the way.

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## Introduction

Information can assure stability, but it also has the power to fuel revolution. The battle to maintain control over information was one of the great challenges that faced the Soviet Union in the later half of the twentieth century. The transmission of information was changing as technology advanced, and it was no longer possible for the Iron Curtain to shield the Soviet world from Western influences. The conditions of détente hastened this process and brought about a new awareness of life beyond the Cold War boundaries.

The late 1960s to the end of the 1970s is an often-overlooked period in Soviet history. The 1970s was the heyday of détente and the heart of the Brezhnev era; at first glance, it is a quiet period in late Soviet history. The 1970s lacked open Cold War conflict and experienced a continuity of leadership. However, beneath the calm surface it was a time when significant changes were taking place in Soviet society. Soviet citizens were gaining a new awareness of both the outside world and conditions within their own country. The loosening of the Soviet government's monopoly on information had allowed new channels of information to reach the greater Soviet population.

Two channels that rose to prominence at this time were Radio Liberty and the *samizdat* literature of the dissident movement. Radio Liberty was a western radio station, backed by the American government, which broadcast to the Soviet Union. Samizdat was self-published literature that was hand-typed and distributed among Soviet citizens. The goal of samizdat was to evade the strict Soviet censorship, which prevented many documents from reaching publication.

Radio Liberty and samizdat had existed long before the late 1960s, but both experienced a significant increase in audience and influence at this time. These two channels of information

served as a means of circumventing Soviet control and undermined the Soviet Union's attempts to maintain a closed society. The relationship between Radio Liberty and samizdat was mutually reinforcing and necessary for the survival of both despite government persecution and opposition. Their history mirrors the weakening informational borders of Soviet society and the relationship of necessity between the dissident community and the western media.

The current literature on late Soviet samizdat and the history of Radio Liberty rarely examines the two together or presents them as mutually dependent forces. Two such intertwined histories have the potential to yield significant information when studied together. Radio Liberty and the thousands of samizdat documents and their authors formed a network of information and influence which crossed the "Iron Curtain" division during the Cold War, bringing the intellectual communities of the western and Soviet worlds closer than they had ever been. A symbiotic relationship between Radio Liberty and samizdat in the late Soviet Union guided the development of each, and had repercussions throughout the Cold War and for the fall of Communism. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to critically examine the origins, shaping forces, developments, and effects of that relationship between Radio Liberty and samizdat literature during the Brezhnev era (1964-1982). This work will add to the literature on both subjects and open the door to further interdisciplinary studies of samizdat and Cold War broadcasting. Discovering the strength of the samizdat/Radio Liberty relationship will allow scholars of Soviet dissent to assess the effect of western interest and attention on dissident identity, and on the community's increasingly pro-western orientation. Additionally, understanding the dependence of foreign broadcasting on an extremely limited source of information gathered from samizdat will contribute to our understanding of why Radio Liberty

chose to prioritize the desires of the dissidents over the greater Soviet population, in its broadcasts.

Current research and academic literature on samizdat focuses primarily on the nature and role of samizdat documents within Soviet society. This focus, has created a body of scholarly literature which emphasizes traditional production and distribution over the more common experience of western production and transmission that this thesis will highlight. Ann Komaromi's article, "The Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat," focuses on the Soviet reaction to these dissident produced documents. Komaromi maintains that the experience of reading and interacting with these physical symbols ritualized samizdat consumption and created a sense of community among those involved in reproduction and distribution.<sup>1</sup> While this approach yields valuable information on the perception of samizdat and dissent among select community members, it is limited to those who experienced original samizdat documents, and it lacks a parallel study of how samizdat was experienced by the thousands of Soviet citizens who consumed samizdat more remotely and individually through international broadcasts.

Current literature on samizdat is additionally tied up with the study of dissent and the government response to samizdat as a dissident product. Alexander Griбанov analyzes how samizdat was discussed in early KGB documents in his article "Samizdat according to Andropov". In this article he discusses government documents which reveal that the KGB recognized the impossibility of suppressing samizdat while also understanding the importance of allowing limited state criticism to act as a release valve for dissent.<sup>2</sup> This approach positions samizdat within the Soviet sphere and presents it as oppositional to official publications. Sergei

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Komaromi, "Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004): 608-609.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Griбанov, "Samizdat according to Andropov," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring, 2009): 96.

Oushakine proposes an analytical model which presents samizdat as means of mimicking and paralleling official Soviet publications and literature.<sup>3</sup> Both of these approaches provide invaluable insight into the role of samizdat with Soviet society. However, samizdat was a transnational product and the effect of western promotion and orientation presents complications and challenges for these approaches which must be taken into consideration. For example, although the KGB viewed samizdat as a necessary release valve for domestic dissident sentiments, it reacted harshly to these documents leaving the Soviet Union.

While most of the current literature on samizdat focuses on the Soviet existence of documents, some researchers have taken a critical look at samizdat abroad. Olga Zaslavskaya researches the existence of samizdat documents in western collections and how these documents reached the West. Her article “From Dispersed to Distributed Archives” traces the history of the Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe samizdat collections from which the sources in this thesis were taken. Her article is an invaluable source on the history of the archival goals and policies of the Radios, and the structure of their collection.

My research will connect several of these trends. My focus on the experience of listening to samizdat documents will parallel Komaromi’s study of the material experience, while expanding the examination of samizdat consumption beyond the dissident community to the greater population of curious Soviet listeners and dissident sympathizers. Additionally this thesis will address how western involvement in the creation and promotion of samizdat affected Soviet perception of samizdat documents on the part of the government and the greater population.

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<sup>3</sup> Serguei Alex. Oushakine, “The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2001): 203.

Academic approaches to the history of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe appeared after the collapse of the Soviet system. The current literature on Radio Liberty is predominantly composed of insider accounts and histories of the station's development. Those academic sources which address Radio Liberty's effect on the Cold War world focus on American Cold War aims and neglect the countering influence of Soviet listeners and dissident sources. For example, Arch Puddington's book *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* presents Radio Liberty as a successful force in turning the tide of the Cold War conflict and promoting Western values. Although samizdat and dissident communication are addressed in Puddington's discussion, they are limited to events where documents and Soviet occurrences directly affected the station, such as the generational staff change which resulted from the opening of the Soviet borders for emigration under Brezhnev.<sup>4</sup>

Two significant examples deviate from this pattern. R. Eugene Parta's book *Discovering the Hidden Listener* is one of the few sources to look directly at Radio Liberty's Audience Research Department (ARD) and their findings about Soviet perceptions of the station. This book is an assessment of the data collected by the ARD from 1970-1991<sup>5</sup>, and it is one of the few sources to take a quantitative look at Radio Liberty's influence in the Soviet world. Although this data has some empirical flaws, it is unique in that it shifts the discussion of Radio Liberty's significance away from US aims and towards the Soviet audience. The second example of Soviet focused discussions of Radio Liberty is the article "Stealing the Monopoly of

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<sup>4</sup> Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 170-171.

<sup>5</sup> R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), xix.

Knowledge?” by Simo Mikkonen.<sup>6</sup> Mikkonen discusses the ARD’s tactics for collecting audience information but his prime goal is to shed light on the reaction of Soviet authorities and media to western broadcasting and how they hindered and influenced the official alternatives.<sup>7</sup>

My own research will build on Parta and Mikkonen’s findings regarding the effects of Radio Liberty’s broadcasts on Soviet society. Additionally, I will examine how the reactions of listeners and the Soviet government contributed to the development of the station itself, and how the findings of the ARD were employed to help orient Radio Liberty’s toward dissident needs. The literature on Radio Liberty needs to be expanded in order to truly reflect the station’s Cold War role as a transnational channel of information. This shift in focus will allow us to discover how Radio Liberty furthered US aims but also how it aided the independent aims of the dissident community.

Both samizdat and Radio Liberty have significant bodies of academic literature. In the case of samizdat this literature is complex and interdisciplinary but tends to focus on the Soviet portion of the life span of a samizdat document. Conversely studies of Radio Liberty are primarily chronological and personal accounts, and their analysis of Radio Liberty’s role and effectiveness is evaluated based on American aims. This thesis will add to these bodies of literature by approaching samizdat and Radio Liberty as interdependent forces and evaluating them as parts of a channel of transnational communication. Currently a study directly paralleling and analyzing the effects of samizdat and Radio Liberty together is lacking; such a study has the potential to enrich both fields of study and break down the boundaries between the two.

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<sup>6</sup> Simo Mikkonen, “Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?: Soviet Reactions to U.S. Cold War Broadcasting,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol 11, No 4 (Fall, 2010): 773.

<sup>7</sup> Mikkonen, “Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?” 797-798.

In order to move forward in the discussion of samizdat and Radio Liberty it is necessary to understand the origins and original goals of each. Samizdat in particular presents a challenge for scholars, due to the complicated process of its creation and the evolution of its aims over time. It is difficult to establish a set definition of samizdat. The term samizdat means to self-publish, and it exists in direct opposition to *Gosizdat*, which was the state publishing house that published most official censored texts.<sup>8</sup> The opposition of *gos* (implying state) with *sam* (self) is telling of the battle over control of publication.<sup>9</sup> The standard samizdat document as we understand it today was a manuscript which, due to the strict censorship on official publications, an author published him or herself through the creation and distribution of a limited number of typed (or even handwritten) copies. These copies in turn could be retyped and distributed by readers to a wider audience. This form of samizdat transmission was possible only on a small scale, and it necessitated a close relationship between author/transcribers and readers due to the illegality of the documents. This life cycle changed dramatically with the involvement of the western media and the growth of *tamizdat*, or “*there-published*” documents (published in the west and transmitted or smuggled back into the Soviet Union). A universal definition capable of capturing all the different types of samizdat may well be impossible, but for the purposes of this thesis I will be defining samizdat as any document that was created by Soviet citizen/citizens with the aim of reaching a greater audience (domestic or international) through unofficial/illegal channels.

The decade of *détente* witnessed many changes in the nature of samizdat, the most significant being its overall politicization. Samizdat in various forms had existed since the

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<sup>8</sup> Hyung-min Joo, “Voices of Freedom: Samizdat,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Jun., 2004): 572.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

beginning of the Soviet Union primarily as a means of circulation unpublishable or illegal literary works which had not made it past the censors (or in many cases had never been submitted for publication). Writers and poets like Boris Pasternak, Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam and Mikhail Bulgakov had been using samizdat practices to smuggle their works to the West since the 1920s and 1930s. These early writers used samizdat primarily as a means of transit. For these early samizdat writers and those who helped them in this daring process, the self-published state of their works was only a means to an end, and that end was official publication somewhere else in some other form.

The characteristic open letters and political tracts, which are synonymous with our understanding of samizdat today, only began to gain real circulation during the Khrushchev thaw. For many westerners, the trial of the two dissident writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel was a starting point of their awareness of samizdat. Both men were accused of publishing anti-Soviet material abroad. What they had done was not new, and their trial (1965-1966) marked the reversal of Khrushchev's liberal stance toward censorship. The trial was closed to the public but samizdat transcripts soon appeared and furnished both the Soviet audience and the West with knowledge of what had taken place. The trial was also a catalyst for a large number of self-published commentary and protest documents during the mid to late 1960s, and it was a major starting point for late Soviet political samizdat.

The party and even the KGB, which was responsible for the battle against samizdat, understood that it was a creation, first and foremost, of state censorship. In the 1971 reply to the KGB report on samizdat, the Secretariat of the Central Committee acknowledged the failure of censorship to repress dissent, also acknowledging as Alexander Gribanov suggests, that the

exclusion of influential writers and whole segments of cultural thought had driven readers to samizdat.<sup>10</sup>

Samizdat was a Soviet product, but it would take the attention of western media to expand it beyond the boundaries of the small Soviet dissident community and allow it to reach a significant audience both domestically and internationally. Radio Liberty would become the foreign media station most closely associated with the dissident movement and samizdat. Radio Liberty was a western radio station funded by the CIA that broadcast in Russian and other nationality languages to Soviet audiences. It was a political station that placed an emphasis on domestic and international news and politics, and was openly critical of the Soviet state. Due to its criticisms and its pro-American/western orientation, the Soviet government aggressively sought to jam Radio Liberty's broadcasts to varying degrees throughout its history.

The concept of broadcasting to the Soviet Union in Russian was not an innovation on the part of Radio Liberty or the CIA. The BBC had begun a Russian service in 1945 and shortly after the Voice of America (VOA) began broadcasting to the Russian speaking population as well.<sup>11</sup> International stations sprung up from the legacy of World War II broadcasting and pre-existing structures. The innovation behind Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty lay in the content and aim of their broadcasts. In the late 1940s the CIA developed a new broadcasting vision. They wanted to create surrogate media for the communist states, which would bring to the peoples behind that Iron Curtain news that was relevant to them presented in their own language.<sup>12</sup> The CIA founded Radio Free Europe in 1949 through a private émigré association. Its formation was

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<sup>10</sup> Gribanov, "Samizdat according to Andropov," 96-97.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: the Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997): 11, 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

announced to the American public with much fanfare and accompanied by the public “Crusade for Freedom” fundraising drive that masked the fact that the CIA had created and backed the project by giving stations the appearance of private funding.<sup>13</sup> Although both Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty would develop into relatively autonomous entities, they were dependent on covert government support in their early years on the air.<sup>14</sup>

The CIA created Radio Liberty four years later in 1953 under its original name, Radio Liberation. AMCOMLIB (American Committee for Liberation of the Peoples of Russia) was an American anti-communist group that acted as a front for the CIA creation and backing of Radio Liberty. The Committee also provided the émigré connections needed to staff the station. AMCOMLIB had been founded by the US government in the 1940s and had strong ties to the Soviet émigré community. It had initially been envisioned by its US creators as a means of providing welfare to the émigré community until the committee became stable enough to become an independent oppositional force to the Soviet regime.<sup>15</sup> However, the only thing that united the various nationalities and waves of emigration represented in AMCOMLIB was their fanatic opposition to the Soviet regime, and due to this instability the CIA and US government had to retain primary control over both AMCOMLIB and Radio Liberty in the early days of its life.

The circumstances of Radio Liberty’s birth were much different from those of its sister station, Radio Free Europe. Although it was also allegedly created as an émigré project, Radio Liberty would never receive the public face and advertising that RFE enjoyed. Instead, its

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth A. Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 4, No 2 (Spring, 2002): 93.

<sup>14</sup> A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010): 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

founders sought to emphasize its exiled Soviet staff instead of Western ties.<sup>16</sup> This emphasis on presenting Radio Liberty as a Soviet project was intended by the American leadership to win the trust of dissident listeners and the wider Soviet population, who remained suspicious of western propaganda. While the American public remained relatively unaware of its existence, Radio Liberty was seen by many insiders as a token project which would remain much more firmly under the power of the CIA in its initial decades than its rebellious sister station. Unlike the recently subjugated peoples of the satellite states, the Soviet population had experienced a generation of communism and the full extent of the violent suppression of Stalinism.<sup>17</sup> The CIA designers of Radio Liberty believed that growing up in the most oppressive era of communist history had rendered the Soviet population orthodoxly communist and submissive to the regime, compared to the populations of Eastern Europe, where resistance to communism seemed to spring up vivaciously in most major urban centers. When Radio Liberty began its broadcasts in the 1950s, it looked to be more a symbolic US attack on the Soviet government than a truly useful force for the overthrow of communism.

Despite the fact that Radio Liberty was a CIA product, its relationship to the agency would be relatively fluid, and the station would develop a significant level of independence throughout the first twenty years of its history. Radio Liberty's relationship with the dissident movement would increase its contact with its Soviet audience and contribute to the progressive shift in its orientation toward Soviet needs and concerns.

This thesis will examine how the relationship between dissident samizdat and Radio Liberty formed and developed. The thesis will be structured as three separate chapters. The first

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<sup>16</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 155-156.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

of which will look at the formation of the relationship between samizdat and Radio Liberty, dissident samizdat's initial orientation, and Radio Liberty's early attempts to create a policy for using and preserving samizdat documents. The second chapter will be a discussion of the various western and Soviet groups and Cold War factors that contributed to the development of the Radio Liberty/samizdat relationship. The final chapter will look at the consequences of the symbiotic relationship in the détente period.

This thesis employs a wide variety of academic secondary sources on Soviet history, dissent, Cold War media, and Soviet literature and readership. However, the primary sources used are samples of Brezhnev era samizdat documents, Radio Liberty policy documents and audience research reports. These sources were taken from the Open Society Archives (OSA) at Central European University in Budapest and were all originally part of the Radio Liberty Samizdat Department collection. The OSA contains the records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, which inherited the documents of Radio Liberty's Audience Research and Samizdat departments when the two stations merged. The OSA has one of the largest collections of Radio Liberty documents (the other main repository is the Hoover Institute), and additionally, it houses the complete *Arkhiv Samizdata*. The *Arkhiv Samizdata* was an international project, which compiled the largest collection of samizdat in the western world. The collection was preserved primarily by Radio Liberty, and the conference that led to its foundation will be discussed in greater detail in the opening chapter of this thesis.

In my research I looked solely at the OSA's samizdat archives. The Radio Liberty documents that are discussed in this thesis were taken from the Samizdat Department's administrative files which span the period from 1956 to 1994. I selected the samizdat documents

from the published section of the *Arkhiv Samizdata*. I selected my sample of samizdat documents based on type, author, and intended recipient. All the samizdat documents I selected are open letters, but I selected a variety of authorial types and orientations. My goal was to take a sample of samizdat open letters that was broadly representative of the changing orientation of samizdat from Soviet recipients toward international recipients, but I have also included cases that did not conform to this general shift. The documents I have selected are political in nature, this is partially due to the political character of open letters, but it also reflects the bias of Radio Liberty toward preserving and promoting political samizdat. Due to the sheer number of samizdat documents and Radio Liberty files, my selection is only a brief impression of the content of the OSA collection. However, this sample has proved rich enough to inform this thesis, and inspire a discussion of the international transmission of information.

In the following chapters the relationship between the dissident samizdat movement and Radio Liberty will be traced and discussed. The interdependence between the dissident world and RL was a relationship of both convenience and design from the late 1960s onward, and the major political and social forces on both sides of the Cold War divide influenced it. Both the dissident movement and RL were products of the Cold War political environment, and in the 1970s the conditions created by the period of *détente* between the superpowers allowed the scope of their audience to grow dramatically. The symbiotic relationship between RL and the dissidents was not solely a product of its times; it was also a force for Soviet domestic social change which along with many other factors influenced *détente* politics and encouraged the shift toward the domestic decline of the regime in the late Soviet period. The goal of this thesis is to explore how Radio Liberty and dissident samizdat came together to bridge the Iron Curtain information

barrier, and to explore how the open transmission of information undermined the foundations of the Soviet regime.

## Chapter 1: *Samizdat in a Closed Society*

On December 21, 1970, KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov sent a briefing to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union addressing the development of samizdat over the previous five years. The document outlined the KGB's belief that samizdat, left uninhibited, could catalyze and unite the opposition and possibly leak dangerous information to the Western world.<sup>18</sup> The Committee's reply, sent on April 21, 1971, was titled "On Measures to Counteract the Illegal Dissemination of Anti-Soviet and Other Politically Harmful Materials." It is telling that neither document called for or suggested the possibility of the complete suppression of samizdat activity. It seemed assumed within the Soviet regime that samizdat had become a new feature of Soviet life, one likely to continue indefinitely.<sup>19</sup>

Several days later, on April 23, 1971, on the other side of the Iron Curtain in London Britain, Radio Liberty held a panel discussion on the future of samizdat. The attendees were some of the first in the Western World to become aware of samizdat and its role in the dissident movement. The panelists were a mix of academics, journalists, researchers and Radio Liberty staff. The goal of the panel was to discuss and answer questions about the future of samizdat, as well as the role of Radio Liberty in that future. In 1971 samizdat documents, and the networks through which they circulated, were a still a strange, new phenomenon to most Western observers, as, at the time, samizdat was mainly an internal Soviet product with domestic goals. Over the next decade Radio Liberty would become the most important force in distributing samizdat to a broader Soviet audience as well as the primary provider of samizdat to the Western world.

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<sup>18</sup> Gribanov, "Samizdat according to Andropov," 91.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, samizdat emerged as an informal cultural bridge between the Soviet Union and the West. Though Radio Liberty and the dissident movement both opposed certain actions of the Soviet government, and though this mutual opposition united them their other aims, their approaches to opposition remained quite diverse. There was a mutually beneficial relationship between samizdat and Radio Liberty. The influence of this relationship would eventually shape the aims of both forces towards a more unified political opposition. By examining samizdat documents themselves, as well as the formation of the policy that Radio Liberty used in approaching and broadcasting samizdat, a clearer understanding of the aims and the influence of both parties can be attained. The 1971 London conference is perhaps the clearest example of the Western intellectual world trying to establish a framework for collecting, using, and studying samizdat. The decisions reached at the conference led to the prime role of samizdat in Radio Liberty's broadcasting and began the cycle of Soviet contact and Western response that would develop interdependently throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

This chapter will address the early years of samizdat and how Radio Liberty and western observers first began to follow and interact with samizdat documents, as well as their authors and audience. The chapter will begin with a look at the origins of samizdat and the internal role it played in Soviet society. All samizdat documents discussed were selected from the *Arkhiv Samizdata*. Having its foundations in the collection already assembled by Radio Liberty, the *Arkhiv Samizdata* was a collaborative international project involving over a hundred individual scholars, institutions, and journalists by 1973. The documents span the period of 1965-1973, and follow the samizdat format of the open letter (*otkrytoye pis'mo*). Open letters were documents written by an author or group of authors to specific figures, groups, or organizations. These

letters were widely distributed among dissidents and the greater Soviet community. The focus of these documents was public rather than the traditional private letter. Publicity provided authors with the hope that the government or other recipients would not ignore their pleas. I selected this sample of documents specifically to represent a cross-section of authors, messages, recipients, and audiences. I also chose to discuss solely political documents, firstly due to their prevalence in the *Arkhiv Samizdata* collection, and secondly because political texts demonstrate most clearly the aims of the dissident community. By comparing these early political aims to those expressed later in the détente period (those appearing in the 1970s) I hope to demonstrate a measure of the effects of western broadcasting such as Radio Liberty on dissident goals.

The discussion will also take an in-depth look at the 1971 London samizdat conference, using Radio Liberty's transcript of the event. The transcript will provide background on the policies that were subsequently created, as well as a first-hand look at the formation of the *Arkhiv Samizdata* and the start of the Radio Liberty Samizdat Unit.

The symbiotic relationship that formed between samizdat and Radio Liberty would help both to survive and expand its audience during the détente period, and laid the groundwork for the revolutionary influence of Radio Liberty and the dissident movement in the 1980s. This chapter investigates the unmet social and political needs contributed to the politicization of samizdat and drove samizdat authors to reach out to western audiences. In turn, we will look at how the political and journalistic motives of Radio Liberty controlled which samizdat documents reached both western readers and Soviet listeners. The question I hope to answer is whether the aims of dissidents and foreign broadcasters in the late 1960s and early 1970s were aligned in

their opposition to the regime, and if not how the foundations of their relationship shaped both sides toward a more unified goal.

### The Early Days of Samizdat

To understand the needs that drove samizdat to look for support in the West, we must look first at the cultural and intellectual climate that created it and the deficiencies of the official alternative. Literature was at the heart of the Soviet cultural mission, and yet was that country's most censored artistic product. This strict control over the written word stifled literary development across all genres and yielded a highly politicized literary culture. It was Soviet citizens whose reading habits and intellectual tastes bore the brunt of this conflict. Similar to the situation created by the Soviet government's neglect of consumer needs, this tight control of cultural and intellectual needs would lead to dissatisfaction with official publications, a burgeoning grey market for unofficial publications, and an increased interest in Western products. This strained relationship between Soviet intellectual desires and official publications would contribute greatly to the success of RL's broadcasts and samizdat's increasingly western orientation during the 1970s.

Imperial Russia had a long literary history, and its writers held uniquely influential positions in social, political, and cultural life. Weaknesses in the government and civil institutions left writers in an influential position to shape national identity and form the ideology of the intelligentsia.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps this is why the Bolsheviks, who owed so much to pamphlets, slogans, and print propaganda in their own rise to power, saw literacy as the key to shaping

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (London: St. Martin's Press, INC., 2000), 10.

Soviet citizens. Print culture scholar Stephen Lovell has studied Russian reading extensively and argues that the printed word was so central to government control because, as in so many other places, it was the media of industrial modernization in the Soviet Union.<sup>21</sup> Despite the power of the written word in Russian culture and its influence on the intelligentsia, illiteracy was widespread in the imperial era; directly after the revolution in 1920 only a third of the population was literate.<sup>22</sup> But in the first twenty years of the Soviet Union mass literacy was achieved.<sup>23</sup> The push for literacy continued so that, by the time the first generation of Soviet children came of age, literacy had become a measure of social and political success, and the book was held up as one of the greatest tools of socialism.<sup>24</sup> The directed reading groups created by the Soviet government were only one of the many campaigns based on the written word, which aimed to give citizens of all ages the necessary ideological education required to be a politically orthodox members of communist society.

The written word was the medium of the state, but it had also been the medium of the revolution. This left the Soviet authorities deeply aware of the power of print in dissent. Because of this privilege the position of the written word in Soviet society was matched by an equally intense focus on the written word's censorship and criminality when used by oppositional forces. Despite the fact that visual artists and musicians also presented critical views of the regime, the written word was always treated by the state as a more dangerous vehicle for dissent and was subject to far greater censorship and scrutiny. Samizdat had an audio equivalent called

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Lovell, "Books and Their Readers in Twentieth-Century Russia" in *The Space of the Book: Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination*, ed. Miranda Remnek (Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2011), 244.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 21.

*magnitizdat*, which encompassed unofficial audio recordings of music, poetry and other censored audio material. However, as J. Martin Daughtry explains in his article on *magnitizdat*, the bards and those others who engaged in the creation and exchange of underground music recordings were often able to transmit much more and receive significantly lighter punishments than their *samizdat* counterparts.<sup>25</sup> While other artists acted relatively unimpeded at the creative level, literature from its creation to its production, distribution and consumption was treated as a politically significant act. The government charged librarians and even book kiosk workers with the responsibility of acting as political educators, and literature was presented not as a commodity for consumption but a tool for education.<sup>26</sup>

This narrow Soviet emphasis on the political and ideological role of literature meant that other valuable elements were neglected in the Soviet approach. Socialist realism was defined by these political aims and was often criticized by Soviet writers and western critics for its formulaic and limited scope. It was these limitations that the literary scholar Andrei Sinyavsky argued against extensively during the 1950s and 1960s, when he called for the separation of literary and artistic production from Marxist ideology and politics.<sup>27</sup> Despite criticism, socialist realism remained firmly ensconced as the dominant literary style throughout the Soviet period. The limitations on the number and type of publications allowed by the state would drive readers toward unofficial products and contribute to making reading an increasingly private act. Both reader dissatisfaction and increased privacy were necessary conditions for the creation of *samizdat* and its consumption.

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<sup>25</sup> J. Martin Daughtry, "Sonic Samizdat: Situating Unofficial Recording in the Post-Stalinist Soviet Union" *Poetics Today*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring, 2009): 31.

<sup>26</sup> Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution*, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Ann Komaromi, "The Unofficial Field of Late Soviet Culture" *Slavic Review*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (Winter, 2007): 608.

This one-dimensional politicized literary culture proved stifling to the newly literate Soviet masses. Since the 1930s the patriotic myth of Russians as the best read people on Earth had been propagated across the Soviet world, although, as Lovell points out, this statement had its origins in some rather dubious studies conducted by counting the numbers of people reading on the metro.<sup>28</sup> It is clear, however, that, as literacy spread in the early twentieth century, the Russian population consumed enough literature to present challenges to the heavily censored Soviet publishing industry.

Book famine was widespread throughout the Soviet era as strict censorship severely limited the number and the scope of the books published in the Soviet Union. By the 1970s and 1980s more than 80% of print publications in the Soviet Union were controlled by the state.<sup>29</sup> Despite the growth in demand, publication rates stagnated.<sup>30</sup> The books that did make it to publication were increasingly not the genre, topic, or style that was in demand among the reading population, leading to an overabundance of undesirable books which would be reduced to pulp rather than read.<sup>31</sup> The strict requirements of socialist realism and ideological orthodoxy served to streamline those texts that did make it into print. This led to the publication of innumerable near-identical novels revolving around repetitive themes such as the glorification of the working class, the communist experience, and the socialist everyman hero. For Soviet readers this created a dilemma. Literary and intellectual consumption was a key part of life in an increasingly urbanized and technologically developing society; however, the government was proving unable

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<sup>28</sup> Lovell, "Books and Their Readers in Twentieth-Century Russia," 232.

<sup>29</sup> Valeria D. Stelmakh, "Reading in the Context of Censorship in the Soviet Union," *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Winter, 2001): 145.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Lovell, "Books and Their Readers in Twentieth-Century Russia," 240.

to provide a sufficient number nor a sufficient variety of products. Paired with this was the fact that, by labeling unofficial literature illegal, samizdat documents were politicized regardless of their content.

Desirable books became a rarified commodity for the average Soviet citizen and all sorts of means of circumventing the market developed ranging from the discreetly legal to outright theft. Second hand book shops flourished despite government attempts to regulate them and purge them of censored titles, and private sales and exchanges of books were commonplace and proved uncontrollable.<sup>32</sup> In some cases high demand books were stolen unfinished during the printing process without covers or before being properly bound, and even finished books were stolen from libraries.<sup>33</sup> These changes were more than simply a shift in means of procurement. Changes in Soviet reading habits would contribute to the shift of the reading experience in an increasingly deviant direction. The idea of politically dangerous and rebellious literary consumption was normalized by the grey market nature of procurement. Samizdat was considered by Soviet readers to be less dangerous and more “normal” because it existed in an already deviant literary climate.

The grey book market, along with the increase in the number of private single-family apartments in the post-Stalinist period, meant that books were moving from the public sphere of reading groups and libraries into the private world behind closed doors.<sup>34</sup> As Lovell writes, “We find here a central paradox of Soviet cultural construction: the most culturally prestigious medium of this state socialist society became less collectivistic and more individualizing in its

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution*, 65.

<sup>34</sup> Lovell, “Books and Their Readers in Twentieth-Century Russia,” 243.

modes of consumption as time went on.”<sup>35</sup> In the post-Stalinist period, the idea of the home as a private and secure space began to return.<sup>36</sup> Having a private safe place provided the opportunity for interested citizens to discreetly read unofficial and samizdat texts while minimizing the consequences. The trend of private reading allowed for an increase in unofficial literary consumption that only fueled the demand for new literature outside of official publications. With book hunger driving readers to extremes, the social stage was set for samizdat.

Samizdat played two very necessary roles throughout its early history from the 1940s to the mid-1960s. It met the creative and consumer needs described in the previous discussion by providing an alternative means for literary and intellectual creation and consumption. Just as significantly, it also became the catalyst for political rebellion, and a central element of dissident culture. As discussed in the introduction the early years of samizdat were defined by the transmission and preservation of literary texts, but by the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s the samizdat world became dominated by political documents. Our understanding of samizdat today is most strongly shaped by this later political role. Government censorship was partially responsible for politicizing Soviet authors, as was the rise of the dissident movement after the denunciation of Stalin. However, as we shall see later in the discussion of Radio Liberty’s London 1971 conference, western media also played a significant role in perpetuating and encouraging the politicization of samizdat. Before we can discuss these western influences, it is necessary to look at early political samizdat and understand its authors and their goals.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>36</sup> Mark B. Smith, “Social Rights in the Soviet Dictatorship: The Constitutional Right to Welfare from Stalin to Brezhnev,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Winter 2012): 386.

Changing reading conditions contributed to the growth of samizdat. Although not all documents were literary, even openly political documents, such as open letters, had their audience bolstered by book/literature hunger and the frustration with censorship discussed above. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the samizdat phenomenon incorporated a wide variety of document styles and genres. Open letters were created by authors and signatories to be both public and political. Each of the documents that we will examine in this chapter sought to bring the author's concerns and grievances to the attention of their state and their society. Samizdat became the politicized vehicle of such communication in the absence of a legal alternative. Open letters were a staple of political samizdat and they are also some of the best examples of the very public nature of Soviet dissent. Open letters by their very design spoke to multiple audience groups, and although broad and uncontrollable audiences were a feature of most samizdat, open letters usually contained two distinct messages/meanings. One message was directed at the individual or individuals to whom the letter was addressed; this could, for example, be a direct petition or complaint. To the greater audience of those who would encounter the letter in dissident circles, it was a means of informing them both of events and experiences described, but also that these happenings had been brought to the attention of the recipient. The open letters to leaders and to influential Soviet groups proved to those who read them that their government knew of their grievances even if they chose to ignore them.

The samizdat open letters from this early, pre-1970s, period were written for a Soviet audience, which sets them apart from the *détente* and post-*détente* trend of Western directed dissident literature. The recipients of early samizdat letters were often well known Soviet figures, leaders, government bodies, or committees. The intention was that grievances in the

letters would be brought directly to the attention of the individual in question, and the extended audience was other interested citizens who often shared these grievances. For the Soviet government it was the burgeoning relationship between samizdat and the West that posed the greatest threat to stability.

Devout Communists wrote a significant number of these initial open letters to state and government leaders. These letters were often earnest entreaties or warnings about repression or the reversal of liberalization. Some were critical, but most writers presented themselves as loyal to the Soviet state but concerned and hopeful that reform could help to better the regime and create real socialism. Communist reformers were very active in the samizdat movement and the desire for reform and liberalization could often go hand in hand with socialist beliefs and political loyalty.<sup>37</sup> The early samizdat was oriented towards state and party leadership by this generation of within-system reformers.

The dividing line between petition and samizdat in these early reform documents is not clearly demarcated. As discussed in the introduction, establishing a set definition of samizdat remains one of the hardest struggles for scholars. Many of the samizdat open letters found in the *Arkhiv Samizdata* may have begun their life as well intentioned petitions, but repression by the state and unofficial reproduction by the dissident community transformed them into samizdat. Samizdat as means of unofficial production meant that true authorial control was lost the moment the document left the authors' possession. This makes the writer's true intentions extremely difficult to ascertain. Yet with or without authorial intent, each of the documents presented in this chapter began as publicly oriented open letter and became samizdat on the most

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<sup>37</sup> Joo, "Voices of Freedom: Samizdat," 577.

basic level as documents which the Soviet government sought to repress which were unofficially reproduced by dissidents and distributed in dissident circles.

The history of Communist involvement in samizdat had begun a decade earlier in the 1950s with the first wave of de-Stalinization. The denunciation of Stalin's cult of personality opened a Pandora's box in the Soviet Union. The denunciation allowed for criticism of the regime, and the relaxation of censorship from 1956 onward allowed writers an element of freedom to discuss themes and ideas that would previously have been impossible.<sup>38</sup> The briefness of this period of limited free speech heightened the concerns of reforming communists. Reformers who felt the time was ripe for change saw this reversal as a failure of socialism, and without an official means of recourse speaking out through petitions and mass documents was the only way to be heard.

Many samizdat documents created in the early Brezhnev period reflected the concern among within-system reformers about reversals of "liberalization". The first document that we will discuss is an example of communist citizens expressing concern directly to their government. In September 1967, 43 children of the victims of Stalin's purges sent an open letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party; they wrote as a group to voice their concerns about what they viewed as neo-Stalinism.<sup>39</sup> Those who wrote and signed the letter did not express hostility toward the party and professed to be proud communists; in fact, they asserted that it was due to this pride that they objected to the rehabilitation of Stalin within the Soviet Union which they believed would both dishonor the memory of the thousands who died and also

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<sup>38</sup> Herman Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet Literature, 1917-1991* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 141.

<sup>39</sup> "Letter of 43 Surviving Offspring of well known Communists who were victims of Stalin", 24 September 1967. HU OSA 300-85-9; RLR# R 134; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 364.

discredit the cause of communism internationally.<sup>40</sup> The tone of this document is not one of hostility, and the writers clearly aim to work within the Soviet system to prevent a return to Stalinism. The petitioners see themselves as defending true socialism and the image of their state on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of its creation, and they end their letter with the request that the Central Committee seriously consider what they had written. In their own words they ask the committee “consider our letter as part of the struggle for communism.”<sup>41</sup>

It is possible, and in fact likely, that not all of the 43 who signed felt the loyalty to the communist system that their letter claimed, but their stated aim was not the destruction of the communist system but rather reform from within. The letter of the children of the purges was sent directly to the Central Committee in letter form, but its reproduction and transmission in samizdat is a demonstration of how self-publishing became a medium for the broader communication of ideas within the Soviet Union. Those samizdat contributors who decided to copy and distribute this letter saw value in the document as an example of the government’s failure to address valid critiques and concerns shared by both communist and dissidents. The lack of an active response from the government highlighted to samizdat readers and those reproducing the document that the goals and concerns of the letter had gone unaddressed. Publicity was one of the key goals of samizdat. Reproduction and distribution of such documents served as a substitute for government action. General public awareness encourages government accountability; even in the event of government inaction public awareness makes an issue harder to ignore. The public nature of samizdat allowed letters and documents to circumvent the official system and present their disputes to the court of public opinion.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

The letters of some other communists were not so fawning. I. A. Yakhimovich was the chairman of a *Kolkhoz* in Latvia; in 1968 he wrote a letter to the Central Committee member Mikhail Suslov about what he saw as the duty of a communist to stand up in defense of progressive citizens.<sup>42</sup> He criticized the Central Committee for persecuting talented writers such as Solzhenitsyn, Sinyavsky and Daniel and warned that the persecution of young dissenters would be dangerous to the stability of the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup> He was not gentle with his words, and his accusations against the actions of the party were blatant. He wrote that the persecution of writers and dissidents did more harm to the stability of Soviet society than all foreign broadcasting agencies and interventions combined.<sup>44</sup> Yet throughout the letter he presented himself as a communist. He was a communist who passionately believed in an end to persecution, and a communist who was proud of the progressive intellectual nature of the Soviet people and believed that there was strength in laying claim to samizdat and these new minds as their cultural legacy. This communist self-presentation may have been primarily defensive. By representing himself as a communist, Yakhimovich might have hoped to avoid accusations of slander and state persecution. However, he did choose to frame his criticisms in communist terms and depict reforms as a prerogative of communism rather than dissent. He wrote “Let *Novyi Mir* again print the works of Solzhenitsyn. Let G. Serebriakova publish her *Sandstorm* in the USSR and Ye. Ginzburg her *Journey Into the Whirlwind*. Anyway they are known and read; it’s no secret.”<sup>45</sup> Of samizdat, he wrote the following:

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<sup>42</sup> "The Duty of a Communist" [by Yakhimovich, I. A.], 22 January 1968. HU OSA 300-85-9; RLR# R 011; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Samizdat can be eliminated only by one means: by the development of democratic rights, not their violation; by the observance of the constitution, not its violation; by the realization in practice of the Declaration of Human Rights, which Vishinsky signed in the name of our state, not by ignoring it.<sup>46</sup>

This passion was dangerously similar to dissent, and unlike the letter of the 43 children of the purges he was not careful to hold back open accusations. A year later in 1969 Yakhimovich was charged with slander against the State after his letter and another work he circulated reached the West in samizdat form. It is significant that this decisive state reaction occurred a year later in response to the document's international visibility rather than to Yakhimovich's letter itself. The KGB interpreted the main threat to the regime as external; therefore, only when samizdat travelled beyond the "Iron Curtain" it became perceived as a serious danger to the Soviet system.

Just hours before his arrest Yakhimovich wrote another open letter, called "In Lieu of a Final Statement" in which he defended himself from the coming accusations and wrote encouragement to other writers, other dissident figures, the people of Latvia with whom he had worked, and others.<sup>47</sup> Even at the point of his arrest he still styled himself a loyal communist and ended his final statement with a message to the communists of the Soviet Union and all nations, writing: "You have one master, one sovereign -- the people. But the 'people' is made up of living persons, of actual fates. When the rights of man are violated, all the more so when it is done in the name of socialism, in the name of Marxism, only one position can be taken."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>47</sup> "In Lieu of a Final Statement " [by Yakhimovich, I. A.], 24 March 1969. HU OSA 300-85-9; RLR# R 102; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

Yakhimovich's open letters transgressed the laws of Soviet censorship by their harsh criticism of the Party's policy toward dissent but, like the letter of the 43 children of those killed in the purges, the open letter was available to a wider Soviet audience regardless of the official reactions. Other open letters also served as sources of information for the dissident community. In 1973, the well known dissident Andrei Sakharov wrote an open letter to KGB chairman Andropov, objecting to the repeated interrogation of his wife by KGB officials and demanding that he order his subordinates to cease their harassment.<sup>49</sup> Expository documents like this served to inform Soviet and later western readers of the arbitrary and continual harassment faced by dissident figures and their loved ones at the hands of the KGB.

By circulating documents in samizdat among the dissident community, a group identity based on shared experiences and information could be fostered. Not all open letters were directed to government officials or the state; some open letters were addressed to other dissenters and served as a means of communication among members of the samizdat community. These open letters had only the direct samizdat audience in mind and did not share the same duality of meaning as those directed to leaders and official channels. As one of the primary means of communication within the dissident community, samizdat was also the means of political education and the medium through which group identity and ideology was spread.

Each of these open letters sought to open communication between authors, recipients and the greater community of Soviet readers. For every active dissident writer, there were many more readers who engaged in more passive dissent by reading. However, the domestic audience was limited by the challenges of the production and distribution that were inherent in samizdat,

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<sup>49</sup> "Open letter to KGB Chairman Andropov" [by Sakharov, Andrei], 28 November 1973. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 1511; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1.

and these documents achieved nothing near the same level of circulation of mass-produced texts.<sup>50</sup> The involvement of Radio Liberty and other western media outlets in publishing and broadcasting samizdat would vastly expand samizdat's Soviet audience. At the same time, foreign broadcasters would influence the goals and directions of political samizdat by reorienting documents like open letters towards western recipients, and by perpetuating those texts that agreed with western Cold War ideological goals.

### London 1971 and the Role of Radio Liberty

Throughout the 1960s, the samizdat movement grew, and documents began to proliferate. *Khronika Tekuschikh Sobytij*; (*The Chronicle of Current Events*) began in 1968 and soon drew the attention of Western journalists and scholars. The *Chronicle* was the staple periodical of the dissident movement; it was published by a dissident group that unofficially published volumes of samizdat documents mainly relating to the Human Rights movement in the Soviet Union. In many Western circles, the *Chronicle* would become a trusted source for information about Soviet society, but not all of the initial western impressions of samizdat were positive. In the late 1960s, western journalists in Moscow were still hesitant to use samizdat material, due to its uncertain origins and their unfamiliarity with it. It took a 1968 report by Amnesty International to confirm the authenticity of samizdat to many westerners and observers.<sup>51</sup> It would take the efforts of devoted western forces such as Radio Liberty to build awareness and recognition of the importance of samizdat documents outside of the Soviet Union.

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<sup>50</sup> Ann Komaromi, "Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter, 2008): 635.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 639.

Radio Liberty had established itself early as a supporter of samizdat and a forum for dissident voices. It had been using samizdat documents in its broadcasts since the 1950s.<sup>52</sup> It was Radio Liberty that would help samizdat bridge the division of the “Iron Curtain” and reach a new western audience. However, Radio Liberty had its own political and journalistic motives for supporting and collecting samizdat. The station used samizdat to increase its credibility in the Soviet world, to prompt dissent, and to publicize the struggles of dissidents. Therefore, the samizdat documents which Radio Liberty primarily chose to broadcast and preserve were political documents that reflected their station mission or supported their anti-communist goals. Radio Liberty’s policy towards the use of samizdat, and their political goals would have lasting consequences for the type and topic of documents that the station preserved and publicized. Much of Radio Liberty’s ongoing samizdat policy had its origins in the first samizdat conference held in London at the beginning of détente. The remainder this chapter will focus on that conference and how the politics and goals of Radio Liberty formed policy and influenced the Western understanding of samizdat.

On April 23, 1971, ten men met to discuss samizdat in London. Radio Liberty had arranged the discussion and Albert Boiter of the Radio Liberty staff was the moderator. This conference was the foundation point of both the Radio Liberty Samizdat Unit and the international *Arkhiv Samizdata*. It was also the start of the official discussion of the nature and value of dissident samizdat in the Cold War world. There was a bit of televised pomp and circumstance at the opening of the discussion, but everyone present seemed quite happy when the cameras left and they were free to get down to the business of discussing the main questions

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<sup>52</sup> Olga Zaslavskaya, “From Dispersed to Distributed Archives,” *Poetics Today*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter, 2008): 685.

of the day. Those questions were: What was the likely future of samizdat in the next few years, and what was the appropriate role of Radio Liberty in that future? Boiter introduced the panelist to the cameras by stating, "It would only be a slight exaggeration, I think, to call this gathering the 'summit meeting' of western samizdat experts."<sup>53</sup> This was high praise, but the awareness of samizdat in the west was quite recent, and the systematic study of it was almost non-existent. The aim of the discussion was to remedy this with a communal discussion of goals, roles, and strategies.

Samizdat reached the western world through a variety of means, and these changed over the years. But once past the "Iron Curtain" and brought to the West the fate of these documents was far from certain. In 1971, before the Radio Liberty conference, there was no set policy for gathering and providing open access to samizdat. Documents surfaced sporadically and often ended up in private collections or in the archives of independent institutions, which did not necessarily report or publish these new acquisitions. It was common for interesting pieces to be published in journals or papers like the *New York Times* or broadcast by stations such as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe; many smuggled samizdat documents were specifically sent abroad by dissidents for this purpose. With documents scattered around the western world, and no official way to access them, interested parties turned to their own informal networks. The Open Society Archive has boxes of Radio Liberty papers labeled as samizdat correspondence; many are letters back and forth from other samizdat enthusiasts and scholars who would send documents that they had received to an individual at Radio Liberty on an ad hoc basis. In turn,

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<sup>53</sup> Albert Boiter, "The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects", (London Conference), 5 April 1971. HU OSA 300-88-47:6.9; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1.

Radio Liberty had, by the late 1960s, begun a small mailing list of scholars to whom they sent samizdat documents and updates of new acquisitions at their own expense.<sup>54</sup>

By the early 1970s, these unofficial friendship and acquaintance-based transactions had formed a relatively small network of individuals in the western world who were involved with samizdat; the majority of the panelists at the London discussion were part of this community. Like their counterpart networks in the Soviet Union these associations had limits. Each individual exercised a level of censorship in what they deemed worthy of passing along, and some documents were excluded, ignored, or forgotten. By 1971, the resources of the Radio Liberty Research Department were being strained by requests to join the mailing list and even at that early stage it was apparent that the number of documents was increasing at such a pace that some formal system would have to be created to collect, organize and make these documents available to the western world.<sup>55</sup> The staff of Radio Liberty saw themselves as the natural catalyst for this system, and indeed at the time of the conference the Research Department had already begun experimenting with creating a system to catalogue, duplicate, research and distribute incoming samizdat documents.<sup>56</sup> The goal of the panel was not only to assess their role in broadcasting samizdat, but also to try to make the existing scholarly community aware of their system, and bring them on board to create a broader official network.

The choice by Radio Liberty to act as the catalyst of this new distribution network was a strategic move for the station. Acting as the hub of the network of samizdat researchers gave Radio Liberty unprecedented access to the widest possible range of documents; it also gave

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 4.

Radio Liberty the influence to promote politically oriented samizdat, which supported the station's goal of opposition to the state. This control would shape the western knowledge of samizdat, but it would also dictate the documents that were broadcast back to the greater Soviet audience. Additionally, it made Radio Liberty the premiere destination for samizdat literature being smuggled out of the Soviet Union by citizens and travelers.

Radio Liberty's interest in samizdat and its use of it in broadcasting had grown dramatically from the late 1960s. In 1969, Radio Liberty spent an average of four broadcasting hours per month on samizdat, whereas by the beginning of 1971 that figure had grown dramatically to 58 hours per month.<sup>57</sup> At the time of the panel one-sixth of Radio Liberty's original programming effort consisted of samizdat material, and there were three separate shows that addressed various documents and genres.<sup>58</sup> With repeat programming included, the proportion of samizdat was even higher. In later chapters, we will discuss the innovative research done by the Radio Liberty Audience Research Division and the insight it provides into who was listening to what, but for now it will suffice to say as Boiter pointed out at the panel, that the response from listeners in the USSR to the broadcasting of samizdat was overwhelmingly positive.<sup>59</sup> Samizdat was becoming a significant pillar of Radio Liberty's work. The broadcasting of original documents written by Soviet dissidents also granted a certain legitimacy to Radio Liberty in the eyes of its Soviet listeners by linking their goals with those of domestic Soviet

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

struggles. These broadcasts also helped to combat any association with its origins as a vehicle of democratic propaganda and CIA involvement which still lingered in the minds of some.<sup>60</sup>

Samizdat also had a unique image in the Western psyche. There was a perception among academics and scholars that these documents were the product of greater truth due to their lack of censorship, and they had the aura of the dissident hero about them that attracted those looking for signs of decay in the Soviet world.<sup>61</sup> There was a temptation to read western desires into samizdat; additionally, this perception of truth meant that the oppositional or critical nature of many dissident documents was generalized and assumed to be the true opinion of the greater population. This glorification of samizdat and generalization of dissent was present to some extent throughout the panel itself.

The phenomenon of samizdat also brought about a shift in how Radio Liberty perceived itself. Edward Van Der Rhoer, a policy director for Radio Liberty, was at the London discussion and helped Boiter to outline their current uses of samizdat. He explained this shift in station identity in a clear and purposeful manner that deserves consideration here and set the tone for the discussion that followed:

We have gradually shifted to seeing our role not necessarily diminished in generating information and ideas but seeing ourselves as providing a forum for Soviet citizens to express themselves, their own views and to exchange information. It is not only a question of providing a forum, but also helping by what might be called a kind of geometrical progression to disseminate the information contained in samizdat far beyond its original sources and channels of distribution.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Zaslavskaya, "From Dispersed to Distributed Archives," 688.

<sup>61</sup> Komaromi, "Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon," 630.

<sup>62</sup> Edward Van Der Rhoer, "The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects," 5.

Van Der Rhoer's statement demonstrates that some within Radio Liberty saw the potential of working with Soviet dissidents to further their mutual goals. Radio Liberty had the ability to spread dissident literature over the airwaves to audiences far beyond the reach of a single physical samizdat document, and to reach audiences on both sides of the Cold War. By doing so Radio Liberty could provide a great service to the dissident community, but their motives also included the political mission of the station. By styling itself as a forum for dissident voices, Radio Liberty gained a valuable and reliable source of information about Soviet domestic struggle that, in turn, supported their institutional goal of undermining the Soviet government's monopoly on information.

The discussion that followed was not just about the future of samizdat or the role of Radio Liberty in preserving these documents; it was also a discussion of which group Radio Liberty served. The idea of paring down Radio Liberty's mission to simply creating a forum and a means of giving the Soviet listeners their own free press was discussed.<sup>63</sup> With the abundance of samizdat Radio Liberty had to make difficult choices about what to broadcast; therefore, staff could not politically and philosophically simplify their role to this extent. Leo Labeledz, a professor and editor, pointed out that Radio Liberty had the dual role of presenting samizdat to a western audience, as well as rebroadcasting samizdat to the Soviet Union, and that each of these audiences demanded a separate strategy of presentation.<sup>64</sup> In this he believed that Radio Liberty was more than just a forum; he held that the goal of samizdat broadcasts back to the Soviet Union should be to facilitate the development of dissident identity and thought.<sup>65</sup> His ideal

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<sup>63</sup> David Floyd, "The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects," 6.

<sup>64</sup> Leo Labeledz. "The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects," 9.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Radio Liberty was an educator of the Soviet public as he put it, “in the hope that they will reach a high level in terms of evolution, in terms of questioning the legitimacy of the existing orthodoxy, if not of the regime itself.”<sup>66</sup> Regardless of the simplicity or complexity of the suggested role, the perception of the panel was that Radio Liberty ought to serve its listeners first and foremost.

This consensus did not take into account the origins and history of Radio Liberty and its ideological mission. As discussed in the introduction, Radio Liberty owed its creation and funding to the CIA and the American government. Therefore, Radio Liberty did have a political mission that demanded that it be selective in the choice of samizdat documents for programming. Radio Liberty’s original ideological mission was to oppose the current Soviet system through the dissemination of anti-Soviet information, censored materials and democratic perspectives. Samizdat in contrast was not necessarily anti-Soviet (despite the beliefs of the Soviet government) and often supported reform within the system and the improvement of the communist system. As Radio Liberty developed throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, it moved away from complete opposition to communism and tried to distance themselves from their earlier reputation as a purveyor of western propaganda. However, their founding ideological mission and their continued CIA funding meant that Radio Liberty would privilege political and oppositional documents in both their broadcasts and their archive. This selective bias would limit the samizdat that western audiences had access to. The prioritizing of political samizdat would reinforce the political definition of samizdat to Soviet listeners while marginalizing other samizdat genres such as the literary, scientific, philosophical and economic. Selective censorship

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

was an inescapable part of the broadcast and archiving process; the true debate of the London conference was what this selective preservation should be based upon.

At the core of the previous debate about service was the idea that samizdat had a purpose and a value and that it was possible to ascertain the intrinsic usefulness of each document. Unlike official western publications, samizdat differed hugely in the key area of standardized quality. Much of the samizdat which reached the west appeared unpolished to western readers and showed the surface mistakes, mistypes, and omissions which often characterized documents which had been retyped hastily several times. At the conference, Labedz criticized the content of samizdat when judged by western standards, and suggested using careful selection in the programming process in order to promote the quality documents.<sup>67</sup> Others, like the professor Max Hayward, saw the various developmental stages of samizdat as valuable. In his opinion, they were representations of the growth of dissident thought in a closed society and some represented powerful reminders that dissent was more than literary sophistication but was, in fact, the capacity to resist and rebel in any form.<sup>68</sup> As in so many debates, there could be no clear answer except the fact that with so many documents and limited air time Radio Liberty would have to make tough choices based on broadcast needs and current trends.

There never was, or could have been, a strict guideline or rule for what type of samizdat could be broadcast. There were numerous internal documents within Radio Liberty outlining goals, and chains of approval, and emphasizing that all documents had to be cleared before broadcast. In theory, all documents had to have their authenticity checked, but in practice this was challenging to determine. There were instances of “fakes” reaching Radio Liberty; these

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>68</sup> Max Hayward, “The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects,” 15.

fakes included documents attributed to incorrect authors and even forged samizdat created by the KGB to spread misinformation. Researchers fell back on cross referencing with other samizdat documents, analyzing writing, and looking for mentions of the document by émigrés. Concerns about authenticity led to hesitance in broadcasting in some cases. Even with doubtful documents excluded, the pool of potential broadcast material was too broad and there had to be a policy of strategic selection.

The sample of samizdat documents that reached Radio Liberty had already been subjected to a gauntlet of censorship. Dissident readers and creators throughout the natural samizdat lifecycle of transmission and copying selectively culled samizdat documents. All forms of official publication contain at their core the principle of censorship, and even throughout their unofficial existence samizdat documents had not been immune to this. Each person involved in the samizdat network performed an element of censorship; by choosing what they thought worth reading, copying, or smuggling they shaped the documents themselves.<sup>69</sup> The documents that reached Radio Liberty, especially in the early years of the 1960s, were those that had been deemed by samizdat transcribers to be relevant enough to the dissident community to warrant the time investment on hand typed reproduction. A new range of challenges would develop as samizdat documents proliferated, and new holes in the Cold War borders developed during détente. In 1971, confronted with an overabundance of sources, Radio Liberty staff had to assess the worth of each document. The station had to choose what to redistribute, and the bias of their identity as a western democratic backed agency was inescapable in this process. During the conference the Reverend Michael Bourdeaux warned, “Human nature being what it is, we are

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<sup>69</sup> Komaromi, “Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon,” 635.

always going to be tempted to select what we most like and I think this is something we've got to guard against, because this is a more subtle type of censorship, and one we are more liable to operate, than the censorship which the KGB operates."<sup>70</sup>

Despite this and other warnings to strive for objectivity and to be willing to give voice to views that disagreed with the Radio Liberty mission, bias and censorship remained a necessity of selective broadcasting. These documents, which were broadcast by Radio Liberty, would influence the understanding of samizdat among thousands of Soviet listeners outside of the dissident community. Additionally, the success of the political documents that aligned with Radio Liberty's goals reinforced the political orientation of samizdat and promoted the creation of more politicized documents amongst the dissident community.

Radio Liberty served the Soviet people in a western manner, and privileged those documents that displayed greater stylistic sophistication and a politicized message that was in line with their mission. The choices primarily involved which documents to broadcast during Radio Liberty programming. Other choices involved which documents took priority in the fact checking and archiving process. In each of these areas documents that supported Radio Liberty's goal of ideological opposition to the Soviet system were privileged over apolitical options. That selective bias is apparent today in the content of the *Arkhiv Samizdata* and the collections of samizdat documents vetted for broadcast, in which social and political documents dominate to the exclusion of literary and other non-political texts.<sup>71</sup> In some cases, the samizdat documents that were broadcast were also accompanied by commentary from Radio Liberty staff, which further helped in orienting the documents toward Radio Liberty's aims.

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<sup>70</sup> Michael Bourdeaux, "The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects," 13.

<sup>71</sup> Zaslavskaya, "From Dispersed to Distributed Archives," 695.

At the panel in London in 1971, the discussion ran on for most of the morning in a loosely organized fashion around that topic of the future, use, and nature of samizdat. Like all enthusiast forums, some attendees waxed brilliant about their passions and their areas of expertise. This panel discussion was foundational in establishing Radio Liberty's new policies and focus on samizdat, and it is tempting to focus on the obvious outcomes and to look at the discussion that day as simply a brainstorming session that would lead to agency-based change on the part of Radio Liberty. The transcript of this discussion has more to tell us, as it was also a meeting of the first samizdat scholars and what they said and the words they chose can give us insight into how western observers read samizdat and into the beginnings of the professional study of the phenomenon.

Radio Liberty's anti-Soviet bias was not unique in the western academic world. The Cold War environment supported the development of a scholarly community that was critical of the Soviet regime, and for this generation the struggles of the dissident movement held a particular salience. However, the perceptions of the dissident writer were often part idealized fantasy. Samizdat itself presented a unique set of challenges for western readers, but perhaps the primary challenge was the temptation to read their own hopes into samizdat texts. This temptation only furthered the bias involved in selection and preservation on the part of Radio Liberty staff. Popular figures such as writers and dissident émigrés from the Soviet Union contributed to this image of the individual suffering for his or her ideals. Solzhenitsyn had won international fame with his literary quest for "truth" in the face of Soviet oppression, and he had

also captured the imagination of western audiences by mixing this truth seeking with personal heroism.<sup>72</sup>

The relevant fact was that Radio Liberty was developing an image of its samizdat listener as a striving dissident, and this is the figure that it sought to foster through its broadcasts. Not only did this figure appeal to the treasured heroic dissident ideal, but such a listener was also exactly the type of politically active and revolutionary citizen that Radio Liberty's ideological mission revolved around creating. The image of the dissident hero made an appearance at the panel discussion in a less traditional way. The conversation began with a reference to classical mythology, and presented the writer of average samizdat as a kind of heroic "everyman" figure, who represented the potential for grassroots change and the first steps of intellectual independence. Professor Leonard Schapiro raised the point as a reminder to be wary in censorship based on western standards. He wrote:

I think there is a tremendous force behind publishing the ordinary, naive, unknown, unimportant chap. Why is it important? He may be unimportant intellectually, but he is important because the strength of these things, the movement or whatever it is, is the strength of the hydra: if you cut off one head another one grows. .... I would stress this little man and the hydra head. I don't think you ought to forget him. I don't know what your resources at Radio Liberty are but I think you ought to bear this little man in mind and that you ought not to become a plum-picking institution.<sup>73</sup>

Other speakers grabbed onto this image of the little man and the hydra. Max Hayward spoke of an early piece of writing by one of these ordinary hydra men, as one of the first powerful examples he had encountered of the fact that even after the repression of the first half of the twentieth century the Russian people still had the voice to resist and dissent. He described such

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<sup>72</sup> Komaromi, "Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon," 630.

<sup>73</sup> Leonard Schapiro, "The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects," 12-13.

documents as, “indications that there were people there [in Soviet Russia] who had preserved the capacity to scream.”<sup>74</sup>

The language of these two comments and others like them is emotive. The use of mythology, and the dramatic descriptions of guttural screams and bare human rebellion lend an aura of heroic glamour to the samizdat movement that was discussed by the participants that day. The men at the London 1971 conference had only anecdotal proof of the existence of such “average” men. Modern scholarship has found that the individuals engaged in samizdat were rarely average citizens, but were primarily members of the educated Soviet intelligentsia.<sup>75</sup> The true existence of this heroic figure was of little consequence. By acting as a mouthpiece for this politicized and revolutionary element of the dissident community, Radio Liberty was able to strategically spread the message of those Soviet dissidents whose aims most closely matched its own. The real debate would take place throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as Soviet listeners became increasingly aware of Radio Liberty’s role and began to try to shape its broadcasts to their true lives and needs.

In the afternoon session, the discussion turned to the role of Radio Liberty in the western world and the conundrum of how to best to create an organized system of collecting and distributing samizdat. Radio Liberty was the obvious choice to create this system. Its broadcasts depended heavily on samizdat materials, so its Research Department was already active in processing and cataloging a large quantity of samizdat material for internal use.<sup>76</sup> At the time of

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<sup>74</sup> Max Hayward, “The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects,” 15.

<sup>75</sup> Stelmakh, 147.

<sup>76</sup> Albert Boiter, “The Future of Samizdat: Significance and Prospects,” 37.

the conference, Radio Liberty already had by far the largest archive of samizdat documents.<sup>77</sup> As mentioned earlier, Boiter and his associate Peter Doran were already active in the unofficial samizdat circles, and had been using their resources to distribute copies of samizdat materials to others. By 1971, their distribution list had grown to twenty-five individuals, including the majority of the attendees of the conference, with new requests for samizdat coming in daily.<sup>78</sup> Radio Liberty had become the primary source for samizdat in the west, and the fact that one of the main goals of the conference was to discuss Radio Liberty's role in making samizdat more available demonstrates that they had begun to see this position as part of their greater responsibility to the dissident movement.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the question posed at the conference revolved not as much around whether or not Radio Liberty should be at the heart of the distribution of samizdat, but instead around how best and most efficiently to expand their current process to accommodate the rapidly growing interest.

The 1971 London panel discussion had lasting consequences. Radio Liberty formed a small Samizdat Unit that would continue to be the centre of samizdat research and distribution until the fall of the Soviet Union. Later on that year staff at the Radio Liberty Research Department in Munich officially formed the *Arkhiv Samizdata*. Although the content of this collection is mainly political in nature it remains one of the most complete collections of samizdat in the world, and verification of authenticity remained a standard of the collection.<sup>80</sup> Through carrying the expense of providing materials to the *Arkhiv Samizdata* Radio Liberty

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

claimed to be fulfilling a moral obligation both to the western world and to samizdat authors.<sup>81</sup>

In these early days of samizdat Radio Liberty defined itself as a forum for its Soviet listeners. It established itself both as the voice of western democracy and an educator, but it also acted as a mouthpiece for Soviet voices to reach a much larger group of listeners over the airwaves.

However, it performed these services with its own ideological orientation and mission in mind by promoting those dissident voices that were most politicized and critical of the current Soviet system.

At the same time as it oriented itself toward the Soviet Union, it also gave a voice to Soviet writers in the western world through the *Arkhip Samizdata* and the publicizing of dissident literature in the west. Radio Liberty as an institution began to actively bridge that Iron Curtain through samizdat in the early 1970s. This double role of being the provider to east and west would lead to conflicting priorities in the coming decades as Soviet listeners became more vocal about their demands and began to see Radio Liberty as more of a tool than a teacher.

### Conclusions

The 1960s to early 1970s were a time of growing awareness of dissident issues on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Dissidents and average Soviet citizens had gained a new awareness of the West during the relaxation of the Khrushchev thaw, and broadcasters such as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe sought to break down the walls of the Soviet closed society and bring the world to Soviet listeners. Meanwhile, the international fame of figures such as Sinyavsky, Daniel

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

and Solzhenitsyn were raising awareness of conditions in the Soviet Union for a new audience of Western observers.

The key aim, which united both samizdat authors and Radio Liberty, was the desire to overcome the Soviet government's monopoly on information. However, the burgeoning relationship between dissidents and the western media contributed to the significant changes in samizdat as it entered the late Soviet era. By the late 1960s, samizdat was already becoming politicized by the rise of reformers and dissidents and the continuation of censorship and book famine. The samizdat of this period was a domestic product aimed at reaching a Soviet audience and looking for change within the Soviet world even when it opposed the regime. The growing dependence of Radio Liberty on these documents helped to redefine the station as a forum for dissident voices, rather than a purveyor of western propaganda and to reorient them toward Soviet domestic needs. However, the ideological mission of Radio Liberty led them to strategically select and publicize those samizdat documents which most reflected their own goals. This selective presentation helped to link samizdat with the dissident movement in the mind of both the greater Soviet and western audiences. In turn this promoted the further politicization of samizdat and the new orientation of reaching an international audience through western media.

Therefore, foundations of the relationship between samizdat and Radio Liberty proved to be a powerful factor in orienting both parties towards the needs of the other and shaped both sides toward a more unified goal. External Cold War forces and the environment of détente also influenced this mutual relationship. Both Radio Liberty and their Soviet audience were complex

and composed of multiple different groups, which shaped how the relationship between foreign broadcasting and Soviet dissent developed.

## Chapter 2: *The Reorientation of Radio Liberty and the Dissident World in the 1970s*

The 1970s were a time of growth in the audience and influence for Radio Liberty; it was also the decade when Radio Liberty became firmly identified as the media voice of the growing Soviet dissident movement. Dissidents would become increasingly visible throughout the Soviet Union as their writings gained both domestic and international publicity, but as the 1960s came to an end they were also left increasingly isolated within Soviet society due to state repression. The Brezhnev period would see a shift in dissident orientation from inciting domestic action to winning Western aid and support, and Radio Liberty would be instrumental as a line of communication across the Iron Curtain. In the greater narrative of the Cold War, this was the heyday of détente and pressure to take a hard anti-Communist line in broadcasts decreased as words like “liberation” and “rollback” gave way to milder ideas of “containment” and even coexistence.<sup>82</sup> This easing of tensions allowed Radio Liberty to come into its own and develop a distinct broadcast style and journalistic approach that would serve its Soviet audience, as well as its US government financiers. The symbiotic relationship between dissident information and foreign media bridged the division created of Cold War borders, and usher in an era of public opinion diplomacy, which has become a fixture of political relations in the late twentieth century and today.

Using Radio Liberty audience research reports and samizdat documents from the Radio Liberty archives, I hope to shed light on how Radio Liberty policy and the samizdat process were changing in the 1970s. The question I hope to answer is how Radio Liberty and the dissident

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<sup>82</sup> Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War,” 89.

movement were shaped by the international forces of the time. Additionally I will examine to what extent the relationship between Radio Liberty and samizdat acted as a barometer of Cold War international relations during the Brezhnev era.

The CIA created Radio Liberty with the goal of undermining the Soviet government's monopoly on information, and also as a means of harrying the Soviet government and draining resources from Soviet projects. Throughout Radio Liberty's life the station was able to develop in remarkably independent ways, as long as its end outcomes reflected the CIA aims and resulted in the growth of domestic opposition to the Soviet state. The apparent lack of dictated policy from the CIA left Radio Liberty free to become a truly international agency focused more toward the Soviet World than America.

In turn the Soviet idea of dissent was also evolving into a more western oriented phenomenon. This opened up opportunities for Radio Liberty to act as the intermediary between Soviet dissidents and the western world. The dissident movement in the Soviet Union had gained visibility and a voice through samizdat, but their samizdat found a forum in Radio Liberty.

The story of Radio Liberty and international samizdat broadcasting revolves around the struggle between four Cold War groups. These groups sought to control information and leverage influence using a mix of threats, money, petitions, and politics. Radio Liberty in the Brezhnev era, and specifically in the 1970s, sought to mediate and navigate between governments, listeners, and even its own staff in order to keep its messages on the air. This chapter will discuss these influencing groups in turn: the US government, Radio Liberty staff, Soviet government opposition, and the new generation of Soviet dissidents.

### Western Observers, Broadcasters, and Financiers

In the introduction, we examined the creation of Radio Liberty in 1953. As the product of the CIA and the staunchly anti-communist AMCOMLIB, Radio Liberty seemed predestined to live out its history as an agent of western propaganda in the Soviet Union. Behind the CIA intentions, and within Radio Liberty itself, were evolving relationships that would lead to the reform of Radio Liberty's broadcasting style and a significant change in the station's relationship with its Soviet audience. These changes were, in part, caused by a natural generational change in Radio Liberty's staff, as well as the shift toward more stable détente relations on the part of the American government. They were also a product of the station's increased awareness of its Soviet audience and ironically the attempted repression of Radio Liberty broadcasts by the Soviet government. The first section of this chapter will examine how the influence of the CIA, changing Radio Liberty staff, and the Soviet media environment shaped the relationship between Radio Liberty and the dissident community.

Radio Liberty began its life as a CIA attempt to influence the values and beliefs of Soviet citizens through exposure to democratic ideology and anti-Soviet propaganda. Radio Free Europe, its Eastern European counterpart, was designed by the CIA to perform the same function across the communist bloc. The vision behind both Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty was the creation of surrogate media for the communist states, which would bring to the peoples behind that Iron Curtain news that was relevant to them and presented in their own language.<sup>83</sup> It was, therefore, key to this mission that the staff and broadcasters present Radio Liberty, and its message, as a Soviet émigré product, in order win the trust of dissident listeners and the wider

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<sup>83</sup> Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, 47.

Soviet populations who remained suspicious of western propaganda. Radio Liberty's founding mission fit neatly into the category of psychological warfare, a term which encompassed any means of influencing public opinion that did not involve the use of military force.<sup>84</sup> America's Cold War strategy depended heavily on turning Soviet public opinion against the regime. Beneath the CIA vision, was the assumption that Radio Liberty's primary goal would be the promotion of the aims of western democracy and its US government financiers. The true test of American influence would come as the 1970s brought the needs of the Soviet audience, rather than American aims, to the forefront of Radio Liberty's mission. This period saw a transformation in Radio Liberty and a drastic increase in its broadcasting influence as the Soviet dissident movement gained an influential and international voice. Even with this increase in importance the CIA and the US government would remain forces in Radio Liberty's development. The political influence of the US government would mean that shifts in Radio Liberty policy often reflected the changing Cold War climate as US/Soviet relations heated and cooled.

When the term psychological warfare entered the vocabulary of average Americans in the 1940s, few people would have thought it would become one of the US government's primary weapons in the post-World War II world. The audiences of such government propaganda were domestic and allied citizens as often as they were enemy populations. It was the Soviet Union that had shown an affinity for the manipulation of public opinion in earlier decades. The Soviet Union had been broadcasting internationally in order to support communist revolution abroad

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<sup>84</sup> Osgood, "Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War," 85.

since the 1920s, and few in the Soviet leadership would have thought that such international propaganda would come to aggressively target their own citizens after World War II.<sup>85</sup>

Like the world wars before it, the Cold War had to be sold to the American people. In his article “Heart and Minds: the Unconventional Cold War”, Kenneth A. Osgood describes how the “red menace” of communism was sensationalized in the domestic media to lend immediacy and awareness to a conflict which, otherwise, was often seen to be simmering very far away.<sup>86</sup>

Spinning how the truth was portrayed was not a new concept in US public relations. Osgood writes, “[Containment] allowed U.S. officials to package U.S. foreign policy objectives so that they appeared noble, restrained, and fundamentally defensive.”<sup>87</sup> One of the most effective examples of this propaganda diplomacy was the US government’s attempts to present its foreign involvement in the Soviet world as aid; Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty are prime examples of this. The Radios were vehicles of western propaganda in Eastern Europe, but they also doubled as a cover that allowed the American psychological warfare to masquerade as support of Soviet émigrés in the eyes of the American public.

Despite American leadership, the staff of Radio Liberty was drawn mainly from the Soviet émigré community. As mentioned earlier, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were originally founded as émigré organizations. AMCOMLIB had been created by the American government as a form of émigré welfare project providing work to Soviet exiles,<sup>88</sup> and both Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty acted as major conduits for funneling CIA funds to émigré

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<sup>85</sup> Mikkonen, “Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?,” 772.

<sup>86</sup> Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War,” 103.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>88</sup> Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 26.

leaders and governments in exile that opposed communism.<sup>89</sup> Unlike Radio Free Europe, which at its founding could boast a staff of influential political and public figures who had fled Eastern Europe, Radio Liberty started off with a far less notable staff. Most were from the new wave of émigrés who had fled in the final days of World War II; others had fled earlier during the first wave of emigration after the revolution. Few if any had broadcasting experience or a history of political leadership.<sup>90</sup> Factionalism between nationalities and political groups would haunt AMCOMLIB and Radio Liberty in the early years. The representatives of the Soviet nationalities opposed Russian leaders, and even the Russian émigrés were divided generationally between the two waves of emigration.<sup>91</sup> Radio Liberty had inherited in its multinational staff the population issues that the Soviet Union itself was also facing. The Americans who maintained leadership of Radio Liberty fought hard to force unity and guide the representatives of the different émigré groups. The divisions and conflicts in the Radio Liberty staff demonstrated that their primary loyalty remained to communities, rather than to the success of the station and its mission. US government forces began to view the involvement of the émigré community as something to be managed and minimized rather than encouraged. Staff weakness only strengthened the influence of the CIA and American leadership on Radio Liberty's early years.

Initially after its formation, émigré representatives were to be involved in Radio Liberty at all levels and were meant to have a say in the station's development. However, with the almost debilitating divide between competing groups and personalities, the American leaders of AMCOMLIB and Radio Liberty's American managers ended this and kept control of key

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<sup>89</sup> Osgood, "Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War," 93.

<sup>90</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 156.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

decision making and policy in American hands.<sup>92</sup> Many talented individuals from the émigré community did occupy important positions within Radio Liberty. The richness, cultural relevance, and legitimacy that these Soviet voices gave to broadcasts were the key to marketing Radio Liberty as a product of Soviet people.

It is challenging to assess the influence of the CIA on Radio Liberty and its relationship to the dissident movement. Although many of the documents related to CIA activities during the Cold War were declassified in the mid-1990s,<sup>93</sup> there is little documentary proof of CIA involvement in Radio Liberty affairs. Many insiders have claimed that the CIA did not meddle often or to any major extent in broadcasting matters.<sup>94</sup> It is unlikely that the CIA left Radio Liberty to its own devices. Most likely, government influence was present but was only seriously felt at the higher levels of the station administration. What does remain to scholars of Radio Liberty are the policy and programming documents from the CIA years, which display an evolving language regarding their broadcasting mission in the Soviet Union.

One of the most significant changes was the name change from Radio Liberation to Radio Liberty in 1959. When AMCOMLIB created Radio Liberty in 1953 it had a militant station in mind. The first aired broadcasts called for the overthrow of the USSR by revolutionary means, and the station's early mandates claimed that the goal of Radio Liberty was to wage a continuous struggle against the Soviet Union until its destruction.<sup>95</sup> To some extent the CIA did not need to push Radio Liberty to oppose the Soviet regime, due to the fact that the early station

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>93</sup> Osgood, "Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War," 86.

<sup>94</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 166.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 162-163.

and its staff were already vehemently anti-communist. In fact, in the mid-1950s a CIA review of programming found Radio Liberty's aggressive language and provocative tone to be counterproductive and alienating to Soviet listeners, and they demanded programming reform.<sup>96</sup> The change in Radio Liberty's name corresponded with a greater reevaluation of US/Soviet relations in the wake of Stalin's death. The failure of the 1956 Hungarian revolution had been a clear sign to many in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, as well as the US government, that espousing violent or revolutionary overthrow could have disastrous results. The suppression of the Hungarian revolution reaffirmed that the Soviet state was willing to intervene militarily to suppress political opposition, while at the same time highlighting that the US was not prepared to escalate the conflict into a hot war in defense of revolutionaries. In the wake of 1956 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's earlier calls for the overthrow of the Soviet dictatorship now seemed more like ill-advised provocation rather than encouragement. Supporters of rollback were beginning to feel the changing tides as strategies of containment and coexistence became the norm. The name change from Liberation to Liberty was a clear-cut linguistic abandonment of the aggressive struggle for overthrow, and the adoption of a new focus on gradual liberalization.

It was more than the station name that changed in 1959; a process of internal reform and development was taking place in Radio Liberty, which would continue well into the 1970s. These reforms reflected the changing nature of the Cold War as the US/Soviet tension became normalized and both sides began to realize the conflict would be prolonged. Radio Liberty's mission was beginning to evolve from pursuing immediate change toward the long-term goal of supporting the independent intellectual and ideological development of Soviet citizens.

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<sup>96</sup> Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 63-64.

Some in the Radio Liberty leadership had taken the early criticisms of the station to heart. Accusations of inflammatory tone, lack of broadcast professionalism, and talking down to the Soviet listener had given Radio Liberation, as it was then known, a bad name on the international broadcasting scene and alienated the Soviet listeners whom they sought to reach. A new vision had emerged in the late 1950s of Radio Liberty as a truly alternative media, one that aimed to end the isolation of Soviet citizens and present news and information from true and representative Soviet émigré perspective.<sup>97</sup> In a 1959 AMCOMLIB memorandum on this new policy of Radio Liberty, Gene Sosin wrote, “[Radio Liberty] is a reliable, constructive critic of Soviet reality, giving listeners a perspective on Soviet life and stimulating them to think independently and to draw their own conclusions.”<sup>98</sup> The new Radio Liberty envisioned at the time of the name change was a Soviet voice speaking to Soviet listeners about issues relevant to them, and the aim was to cultivate a new broadcast tone and manner which reflected this. It was at this time that the five main broadcasting principles of this new Radio Liberty were established by the station leadership. In his book on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty the scholar A. Ross Johnson summarizes these principles as follows:

The first principle was that effective broadcasting had to focus on the mindset and interests of the audience, not on those of émigrés or U.S. officials. The second principle was that newscasts, to be credible, had to report the bad along with the good involving the United States and the West generally and to avoid confusing news with commentary. The third principle was that broadcasts could, on occasion, be critical of U.S. government policy. The fourth principle was that commentary from a “leftist” or socialist perspective was sometimes the most effective counter to the injustices of the Soviet system. And the fifth, overarching principle was that liberation was not an event but a process.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 170.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>99</sup> Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*, 177.

I include this quote in full in order to highlight the fact that points one through four challenge the original conception of Radio Liberty as a simple mouthpiece for American propaganda. Radio Liberty remained a vehicle that promoted western ideology; however, the station's methods as well as its brand of propaganda were changing. This newly reformed Radio Liberty openly professed loyalty to its audience and broadcast standards over its government financiers while still opposing the Soviet state. These changes would not take place right away, and it would take decades of broadcast evolution to for Radio Liberty's programming and tone to reflect these new ideals. Yet the fact that such reforms developed unopposed under the nose of the CIA throughout the 1960s and 1970s supports the belief that the CIA allowed Radio Liberty to develop as a relatively independent entity, as long as it continued to support American interests and oppose the Soviet regime.

The CIA's Cold War aims for Radio Liberty clearly included psychological warfare and democratic propaganda, but foreign broadcasts were also designed to harry the KGB and the Soviet government. This was perhaps one of the station's most striking and yet overlooked successes, and an example of how Radio Liberty's broadcasts could simultaneously serve the needs of Soviet listeners while still striking a blow for the west in the Cold War conflict. Since the 1950s, the KGB and the Soviet government had engaged in a vast censorship campaign against foreign broadcasters seeking to reach Soviet audiences. KGB and government leaders understood that the control of information within Soviet society was one of the only ways to limit Western influence and maintain some level of control over the development of culture. The "Iron Curtain" was as much an information blockade as it was a political divide. The vast commitment of time and state funds invested in suppressing the spread of unwanted information

had the unexpected effect of driving more and more average Soviet citizens to doubt the performance of Soviet media, and to perceive Western radio as their only source of trustworthy news and information.

As discussed earlier, the Soviet Union had been broadcasting internationally since its formation; however, its opposition to foreign broadcasters targeting its citizens was immediate and aggressive. Jamming was an attempt by Soviet authorities to render foreign broadcasts inaudible by the construction of radio stations that broadcast blanket interference and white noise over known frequencies used by foreign stations. Extensive jamming was a complicated project that consumed a great deal of time and money, but to the Soviet government it was necessary to prevent Western propaganda from reaching its citizens. Unfortunately, the costs of jamming for the Soviet state and media were significant. By 1958, the money being poured by the Soviet state into the jamming foreign stations greatly exceeded the budget for both domestic and international Soviet broadcasting combined.<sup>100</sup> That expense continued to grow as foreign stations increased their monthly broadcast hours to reach the rapidly expanding radio audience. For the CIA, funding Radio Liberty guaranteed a continuously and progressively increasing drain on Soviet finances.

In 1960, the CIA completed an array of new high-powered transmitters in Spain that were designed to allow Radio Liberty transmissions to reach the Soviet Union. The CIA funding of this project was crucial to Radio Liberty's success, and it demonstrated the significant financial investment of the US government in the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty project. These transmitters vastly improved Radio Liberty's audibility and finally allowed broadcasts to

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<sup>100</sup> Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens*, 91.

reach a sizable audience within the Soviet Union.<sup>101</sup> While jamming could disrupt broadcasting, it did not always succeed in stopping Radio Liberty from reaching Soviet listeners. By changing broadcast frequencies and broadcasting on frequencies close to Soviet official stations, Radio Liberty often managed to effectively evade jamming.<sup>102</sup> As Radio Liberty and the Soviet authorities fought for control of the airwaves they acted out their own version of the era's technology race, competing to find ways to strengthen and reinforce their respective broadcast/jamming signals. Radio Liberty maintained the upper hand with varying success in ensuring audibility depending on the region, and the ARD discovered that successful jamming was often limited to major urban areas, leaving the surrounding countryside relatively free of interference.<sup>103</sup>

The Soviet radio audience was itself rapidly growing. By 1965, the number of wireless radio sets in the Soviet Union had reached 37 million, and more Soviet citizens were listening to radio in the privacy of their own homes.<sup>104</sup> The pressure of limited resources meant that the Soviet authorities were unable to suppress the growing range of foreign broadcast and had to be increasingly selective of which stations and programs to jam. As the most anti-Soviet of the foreign broadcasters, Radio Liberty would remain the primary target of continuous Soviet jamming until the late 1980s, even as the jamming of other stations such as the VOA and BBC gradually decreased.<sup>105</sup> Eventually, the Soviet authorities were forced to limit jamming further,

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<sup>101</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 161.

<sup>102</sup> Mikkonen, "Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?" 787-788.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 788.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 780.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 783.

focusing whenever possible on “dangerous” or “subversive” broadcasts such as samizdat, international/Soviet news, and commentary while leaving cultural programs and music generally audible.<sup>106</sup>

These radio battles would affect Soviet listeners as well. By the late 1960s, listeners were becoming more critical of their own media and drawn to the promise of reliable truth in Western broadcasts. The real problem with the Soviet policy of jamming was not the response of Radio Liberty, but the effect that it had on Soviet listeners and the toll it took on domestic broadcasting. By spending extravagantly on jamming, the Soviet authorities had unintentionally financially impoverished their own domestic media. Soviet broadcasting was notoriously unreliable, and even party officials were known to listen to Radio Liberty, which provided a more trustworthy news service regarding internal Soviet affairs than the official Soviet media.<sup>107</sup> Harsh censorship, state secrecy and a closed informational border meant that the Soviet Union had never developed an effective way of collecting and distributing information throughout its vast territory.

As in so many other areas of Soviet life the attempt of the party and the authorities to keep absolute control over information had rendered state media inefficient, and only increased the comparative value of foreign broadcasts. Just as increased censorship and suppression of samizdat documents had only created an even greater cultural vacuum, strict media control had made Radio Liberty indispensable. An overall attempt to improve the quality of Soviet broadcasting was begun by the state in the 1970s. It is demonstrative of the success of Radio Liberty that these planned media reforms borrowed heavily from their example and those of other foreign stations, adopting everything from the tone and style to broadcasting techniques in

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 784.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 792.

an attempt to win back Soviet audiences.<sup>108</sup> The Soviet authorities had lost perspective, and become so focused on defensive tactics that they neglected their responsibility to their own media and to their citizens. The failures of both effective Soviet jamming and an official media alternative opened the door even further for Radio Liberty. Radio Liberty's staff provided Soviet listeners with the information they craved and the means of making their voices heard internationally. With CIA backing and an information hungry audience, the stage was set for Radio Liberty to evolve into a true surrogate Soviet media. The staff of Radio Liberty underwent their own changes.

The factor that truly revolutionized Radio Liberty and its staff would take place in the Soviet Union itself, and it came at the perfect time for the station. It is here that the histories of Radio Liberty and the samizdat phenomenon became permanently intertwined. It was samizdat and dissident authors that breathed new life and relevance into Radio Liberty, its staff and its broadcasts. In the early days of the 1970s, Radio Liberty was still struggling with the ever present issue of aggressive broadcast tone which alienated and strained its relationship with Soviet listeners. More seriously its programming and aging broadcast staff were failing to catch the interest of the new generation of young Soviet listeners, and becoming increasingly out of touch with Soviet needs and realities.<sup>109</sup> The staffing issue had become especially dire for Radio Liberty. In his Cold War history of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, Arch Puddington describes the challenges of this staffing crisis. Puddington explains that as the post-war émigrés were retiring, a lack of qualified candidates in the West fluent in the necessary Soviet languages was driving Radio Liberty to hire the Western born children of émigrés. Most of these western

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 799.

<sup>109</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 170.

born second generation émigrés had never been to the Soviet Union and were not attuned to the lives of Radio Liberty's audience.<sup>110</sup> With foreign travel and emigration tightly controlled for Soviet citizens, it looked as though this staff crisis was only likely to worsen with time.

As discussed in the previous chapter, after the 1965 trial of dissident writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, samizdat had begun to gain attention in the West as well as in urban centers in the Soviet Union. Radio Liberty's first conference on samizdat, held in London in 1971, demonstrated that the staff of Radio Liberty had early on seen the value of broadcasting and preserving samizdat and supporting Soviet dissidents. It was the Soviet government's response to the dissident community that would unexpectedly save Radio Liberty. Strict government repression led thousands of dissidents to leave the Soviet Union when the Brezhnev regime loosened its emigration policy in response to détente. Radio Liberty's staff crisis was ended by the sudden infusion into the émigré community of innumerable intellectuals and authors passionate about supporting the struggle of dissidents in the Soviet Union and eager to work for the station.<sup>111</sup> At first there was a rather haphazard hiring rush to fill positions. Radio Liberty tried to grab up as many recent emigrants as possible, fearing that the window would be short, but gradually the administration realized that, for the first time in its history Radio Liberty could afford to be picky in its hiring practices.<sup>112</sup> Whenever possible, they selected those emigrants who were educated and had a background in media or journalism.<sup>113</sup> These new employees had both the skill and the life experience to truly serve the station.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

The fact that many of those leaving the Soviet Union were Jews and dissidents meant that the composition of Radio Liberty's staff changed drastically. Yet the changing composition was inescapable and would have effects on Radio Liberty programming as well. This new infusion of émigrés brought the values of the Soviet human rights and dissident movement to the airwaves. Their voices and recognizable names contributed to Radio Liberty's image as a "Soviet" run station and the new staff brought with it personal connections to key dissidents across the Iron Curtain.

The most valuable thing these new employees brought with them was a firsthand knowledge of life in the Soviet Union and the unmet needs of dissidents as well as average citizens. The infusion of new émigré staff accelerated the boom in samizdat, human rights and dissent literature in Radio Liberty broadcasts. It was also during this time that Radio Liberty progressed with the archiving and distribution of samizdat documents by the newly created samizdat unit under Mario Corti.<sup>114</sup> The 1970s saw Radio Liberty's audience grow. Puddington notes that Radio Liberty had finally begun to earn a name for itself as a reputable station, surpassing the BBC and VOA in its coverage of Soviet affairs, the human rights movement and samizdat.<sup>115</sup> Being able to employ active members of the émigré and dissident community helped Radio Liberty to become a cultural hub for Soviet dissidents in the western world. Factional conflict would continue to be a part of Radio Liberty's staff politics, but the dissident infusion of the 1970s shifted the focus permanently toward the Soviet audience.

In the closed informational climate of the Cold War connections could degrade quickly once an individual emigrated, and Radio Liberty could not depend on continuously hiring new

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 172.

staff as a means of keeping abreast of changes in the Soviet Union. The struggle of Radio Liberty and their staff to maintain up to date information about their audience was one of the biggest challenges to audience focused broadcasting.

A little recognized achievement of Radio Liberty and its innovative research staff was the groundbreaking work of its Audience Research Department (ARD). In my research, I focused on a selection of ARD documents and their influence on how Radio Liberty perceived its audience. Due to their bias and their limitations, the findings of the ARD are often neglected in current research. Although it is true that many of the findings of the ARD are doubtful, the primary value of these findings lies in how they shaped the opinions of the station's staff. The ARD reports were the primary information on which Radio Liberty staff could base their broadcast decisions; they were also the foundation of how station employees and leaders pictured their audience. Therefore, in my research I approached the ARD and their presentation of the audience as a lens through which Radio Liberty's vision of the Soviet audience can be examined. This audience understanding significantly affected the relationship between the station and Soviet dissidents, and the whole discussion of the symbiotic relationship itself.

Today scholars overlook the difficulties facing foreign stations that had little to no access to basic information about their audience. Measuring the effect of foreign broadcasts on the Soviet population was a daunting task. Even such basic information as who was listening to what, and at what time of the day was unavailable. The émigré nature of Radio Liberty's staff did give it an overall advantage, and a greater insight into Soviet listening habits than many other

stations possessed.<sup>116</sup> To meet the needs of Soviet listeners, Radio Liberty needed to invest in finding new ways to circumvent Cold War barriers and discover its audience.

In his article on Soviet reactions to American broadcasting, Simo Mikkonen discusses in depth the innovative tactics of the ARD. The ARD was primarily created by Max Ralis, a Soviet born son of an émigré with a background in intelligence and psychological warfare, as well as a doctorate and a dissertation on interviewing techniques.<sup>117</sup> True to his background, Ralis would create a research department that would employ techniques that were one part psychology and one part the stuff of spy novels. The ARD was a separate unit from Radio Liberty but was also under the supervision of AMCOMLIB (which would eventually change its name to the Radio Liberty Committee). The key to Ralis' data gathering plan was the opening of Soviet borders during détente for select citizens to take business trips and limited tourist trips abroad.<sup>118</sup> These Soviet tourists, as well as recent emigrants, were the only Soviet citizens that Ralis and the ARD had access to, but travelers could be persecuted upon their return to the Soviet Union if it was discovered by the authorities that they had provided information to Western journalists or Radio Liberty staff. Ralis circumvented these challenges by hiring Soviet émigrés and personally training his own staff of clandestine interviewers.<sup>119</sup> The ARD would then orchestrate seemingly chance meetings between his interviewers and Soviet travelers. In public places such as cafes, restaurants, bars, and lobbies Ralis' interviewers would strike up seemingly casual conversations with Soviet travelers and gather interview information from them without their knowledge and

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<sup>116</sup> Mikkonen, "Stealing the Monopoly of Knowledge?," 776.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 777.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 778.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

ideally without arousing their suspicions.<sup>120</sup> Sadly, the resulting reports do not include documentation of how interviews were arranged and executed. Throughout these “interviews” no notes were taken, and no recording devices were ever used by the interviewer. Ralis trained his interviewers to memorize key information that was then written up from memory in reports submitted after each interview.<sup>121</sup> If these interviews went according to plan, travelers would go on their way after encounters, believing they had simply had a chat with a former Soviet citizen about conditions at home.

The data that Ralis’ team gathered formed the backbone of Radio Liberty’s audience knowledge. The innovative but unprofessional manner in which the ARD gathered its information had some major empirical flaws. Aside from the fact that such interviews were an obvious breach of ethics (which luckily for Ralis were not a terribly big concern in the Cold War era), the data is also skewed due to the fact that Soviet citizens allowed to travel outside of the Soviet Union belonged to a privileged and small segment of Soviet society and were often not representative of the greater audience population.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, the practice of paying interviewers for each relevant and successful interview may have led to false reporting or exaggerations to make the information found more desirable to the ARD.<sup>123</sup> Although the information gathered in this manner was far from reliable and had only limited applicability to the greater Soviet population, it was the only audience information that Radio Liberty had. These interviews and the more in depth accounts given by recent emigrants were all that kept Radio

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 777.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 777-778.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 778.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

Liberty from broadcasting blind to the Soviet world. They were extensively used even while being treated with some distrust.

Whether or not false reports or misrepresentations occurred on a large scale is unknown; however, Ralis did make sure that all reports for internal use contained information about sources and credibility. Unfortunately, this information was often not much more than an estimate based on the interviewer's perceptions of the subject. A sampling of the reports sent to Radio Liberty's Samizdat Unit show that the ARD provided the basic information associated with the interviewee even when their identity was not divulged in the report (which was the standard practice with tourist interviews). At the beginning of each document is listed whenever possible the following range of information about the source: their employment, age, level of education, where they listened to Radio Liberty and other foreign broadcasts, the language of listening, the frequency with which they listened, their listening habits and times, favorite programs, attitude toward Radio Liberty, other stations listened to, and perceived credibility. This information alone was revolutionary to Radio Liberty and its development, allowing staff to track listener demographics as well as the success of programming and making Radio Liberty increasingly attuned to its audience. Later in the mid-1970s, this statistical data was compiled by the ARD and issued to all Radio Liberty departments in quarterly trend reports. This information allowed Radio Liberty staff to track trends in their audience and especially in the perception of their programming.

In 2007, another former director of audience research named R. Eugene Parta published a book called *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, which compiled the data from over 50,000 of these interviews spanning the period of 1972-1990. Parta's collection of statistics can help us piece together the basic nature of Radio Liberty's audience in the Brezhnev years; however, his

findings must be taken with a grain of salt as they are based on the same limited interviews discussed above and, therefore, can be considered more educated guesses than truthful statistics. Parta outlines the basic nature of Radio Liberty's audience; he discovered that the audience who reported listening to foreign broadcasts was predominantly made up of urban males in the 30-50 year age range and listening rates were twice as high amongst those with secondary education or higher.<sup>124</sup> He also found predictably that the Radio Liberty listeners were more inclined to have a self-professed "Liberal" political orientation.<sup>125</sup> From 1972-1988, Radio Liberty's estimated weekly audience comprised between 5-10% of the adult population;<sup>126</sup> 77% of interviewed listeners reported turning to Western radio for the latest news.<sup>127</sup> Samizdat was listed as the third most listened to programming (below newscasts and info on the USSR) in the Brezhnev era, with 6 out of 10 listeners singling it out in interviews.<sup>128</sup> It is impossible to assess the truthfulness of these statistics, as there are no comparative Soviet statistics regarding foreign broadcasting. At best Parta's findings are reflective of the limited subset of Radio Liberty's audience that the ARD was able to interview. For the purposes of this chapter, the true value of the ARD findings lies not in the representativeness of the statistics but the effect they had on Radio Liberty's staff and their understanding of their Soviet audience.

The statistics Parta presents give an overview of ARD findings condensed into neat tables and percentages; however, the ARD reports contained more than just numerical data. Each report is a document of the individual opinion of a Soviet (or former Soviet) citizen. Coming

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<sup>124</sup> Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 27-29.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-32.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, xix

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

from a society where individual opinion was rarely recorded and even more rarely acknowledged by the government and state media, these documents are valuable sources. The qualitative side of this data is invaluable because it can illuminate opinions about Radio Liberty and dissent and more importantly the reasoning behind them.

In my research, I took a sample of the ARD interview reports sent to Radio Liberty's samizdat unit for between 1968 and 1980. My sample consists of twenty individual reports from both Soviet travelers and émigrés. Even through the concise, summary language of the interviewers' reports true Soviet voices can be heard. What stands out most in reading these reports is the opinions expressed by listeners about what they believed the role of Radio Liberty in the Soviet world ought to be. The following is a selection of quotations from these ARD reports that illuminate some personal reactions to Radio Liberty and its broadcasting role:

“For me Radio Liberty is a warm personal friend... I think it is the most interesting station of them all.” - Moscow journalist, 1971<sup>129</sup>

“Radio Liberty should primarily serve, inform, and publicize the dissident movement in all its ramifications.” - Moscow architect, 1971<sup>130</sup>

“Finally, may I repeat that what we really want is for Radio Liberty to find its place and clearly state its anti-communist line.” - Nataliya Artamonov and husband (recent emigrants), 1974<sup>131</sup>

“Radio Liberty is one of the few stations to cater to the tastes of Soviet listeners... Its understanding of our problems stems from the fact that most

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<sup>129</sup> “Target Area Listener Report #64-71”, 10 March 1971. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.15; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

<sup>130</sup> “Target Area Listener Report #55A-71”, 29 April 1971. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.15; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

<sup>131</sup> “Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #25-74”, 16 July 1974. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.16; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

of its contributors were once in the same position as ourselves.” -Saratov engineer, 1974<sup>132</sup>

“I myself am to some extent a product of Western radio broadcasts.” - Vladimir Dremlyuga (dissident émigré), 1975<sup>133</sup>

“You should avoid confusing the public and artistic stance of artists. At all costs avoid elevating unimportant writers, critics, and painters to positions of importance in their respective fields merely because they are dissidents.” - Gherman Andreev (German-Russian repatriate) 1976<sup>134</sup>

Several of these quotations come from in-depth interviews with recent emigrants who were aware of the interview process and had agreed to meet with the ARD. The samples above are biased by the fact that they were taken from a collection of documents that were circulated by station staff within Radio Liberty and sent to the Samizdat Unit. Therefore, these documents included mainly those interviews that were considered by the station leaders to be constructive, useful to Radio Liberty’s broadcast planning, and generally positive. Parta’s statistics do suggest that many of those interviewed had negative views of Radio Liberty and its relevance, credibility and professionalism.<sup>135</sup> However, the above reports reflect the type of listener which Radio Liberty staff was most concerned with understanding and engaging in their broadcasts. These listeners were actively interested in foreign media, engaged with Soviet political issues, and aware of the dissident movement. As discussed in the previous chapter, Radio Liberty promoted

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<sup>132</sup> “Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #33-74”, 10 October 1974. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.16; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

<sup>133</sup> “Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #11-75”, 15 April 1975. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.16; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

<sup>134</sup> “Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #10-76”, 31 August 1976. HU OSA 300-88-47:13.2; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

<sup>135</sup> Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 36-38.

the voices of dissidents that most closely mirrored their own goals, in a similar way their audience research prioritized those groups, which reflected the goals of their ideological mission.

For many other listeners, Radio Liberty remained a critical voice. One of the greatest victories of Radio Liberty in the Brezhnev era would be its reversal of this trend through the softening of its broadcast tone. The émigré nature of Radio Liberty's staff and its growing ties to the dissident movement meant that despite US funding and mild CIA prodding Radio Liberty grew more and more focused on the needs of the Soviet world, rather than directly pursuing CIA aims. However, as long as the end results of Radio Liberty's broadcasts coincided with CIA goals; their American financiers were willing to allow Radio Liberty's staff a significant measure of independence. For the first time in the 1970s, Radio Liberty could truly hear the voices of at least a small group of its listeners, and those voices were not shy in demanding what they wanted. Although Radio Liberty focused in on a limited group of listeners who reflected the values they espoused, if the station was truly to become surrogate Soviet media, even for that small segment of listeners, it would have to reach out to the public opinion of a changing generation of Soviet citizens.

### The Soviet Audience, and State Opposition

The audience that Radio Liberty hoped to reach in late Soviet era has a complicated history of its own, one that Radio Liberty and other Western groups struggled to understand. While Radio Liberty sought to balance the relationship between its CIA loyalties and its staff, the Soviet dissident movement was undergoing a transformation from a generation of within-system reformers to an isolated dissident community looking for support from the Western world. Radio

Liberty had distinguished itself as both the most oppositional of the foreign broadcasters and the most responsive to dissident issues and became the primary station for dissidents across the Soviet world. In this final section, we will look at the emergence of this new generation of western-oriented dissidents and their samizdat. On the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain, media was an ideological battleground, and the shifting balance between intellectual freedom and repression defined the intellectual life of Soviet citizens during détente.

The last decade has seen a renewed interest in the study of the last Soviet generation and both its effect on the collapse of communism and their experience of it. The term “last Soviet generation” is somewhat of a simplification as there were two distinct generational groups that shaped late Soviet communism. The first was the generation that had lived through WWII and Stalinism and came of age in the 1950s and 1960s, and the second were the Soviet baby boomers who entered adulthood in the 1970s and 1980s. These two generations were both products of an uninterrupted communist upbringing. Both the earlier generation, which as children lived through the traumas of the 1930s and 1940s, and the younger generation born into it were shaped by the legacy of war and Stalinist repression.

At the time of Stalin's death, Soviet society entered a point of crisis. These two generations reacted very differently to the pressures and challenges of Soviet life, but together they represented the primary audience of Radio Liberty from its foundation to its final days in the 1990s. The dissidents of these generations would become the most active of Radio Liberty's listeners, and they embodied and influenced Radio Liberty's conception of its ideal listener. By looking at the emergence of these groups, we better understand their motives and the role they

played in Cold War international relations. The Soviet vacillation between reform and repression shaped these new generations; it was the driving force behind the shift away from within-system reform and toward seeking support from the west.

From Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956, a new era of possibilities seemed to be poised to begin for youth and young adults in the Soviet Union. However, instead the late 1950s and 1960s became a time of hesitation as Nikita Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership vacillated between thaw and repression. The youth in secondary and post-secondary education who were reaching adulthood during this period were some of the most affected by this changeable state of affairs. Intellectuals and youth saw the denunciation of Stalin as a social turning point that would usher in political change. Many students in the immediate aftermath of the secret speech engaged in what the historian Vladimir Zubok described as the “collective catharsis” of the time, when for a brief period (and for the first time for many) citizens were able to openly voice their criticism and concerns about their government and the health of the Soviet system.<sup>136</sup> The suppressed Hungarian revolution led to a rise in radicalization among students. Perceiving what were assumed to be weakening points in the Soviet system, Khrushchev and his leadership began a crackdown on dissent within the Soviet Union.<sup>137</sup> Throughout the rest of his time in power, Khrushchev would flirt with the idea of a cultural thaw, which incorporated a lessening of censorship and an increased amount of political freedom for artists and intellectuals. He would initiate what many intellectuals saw as a second thaw at the October 1961 party congress in an

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<sup>136</sup> Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: the Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 63.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

attempt to discredit his rivals,<sup>138</sup> only to initiate another brutal crackdown on the Soviet artistic community a year later in December 1962.<sup>139</sup>

For many, Radio Liberty and other western broadcasters provided them with their only access to the progressive opinions and literature of other Soviet citizens. Additionally, during periods of increased repression these foreign media sources provided the only external support for the dissident community, and aided in preserving the ideas and aims that emerged during the periodic thaws.

The generation of youth in the 1960s and 1970s was differentiated from those that followed because many remained true believers in the principles of communism. Rather than revolution, this generation on the whole wanted the reform of the existing system, and they romanticized a return to the “pure” legacy of pre-Stalinist communism.<sup>140</sup> The Soviet world experienced a revival of the Russian intelligentsia and their legacy in the 1960s.<sup>141</sup> In Mayakovsky Square in Moscow, young artists and thinkers met to discuss poetry and politics, and exchange their own works and the typewritten works of banned authors, beginning the tradition of circulating samizdat texts. The square soon became known as the Mayak (lighthouse) and Zubok describes it as “a place where lonely intellectuals could gain a sense of civic togetherness.”<sup>142</sup> Radio Liberty’s collection and broadcast of these Mayakovsky Square creations helped to spread the ideals of this small community and others like it beyond the limitations of

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 170.

the urban intelligentsia, by making it accessible to any interested listener with a radio and a clear frequency.

It was this intellectual community that Sinyavsky and Daniel came from, and it was members of the Mayakovsky square poetry community who created and published the samizdat protests against the trial, which brought it international attention. The trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel was yet another crackdown on culture, but it also coincided with the end of Khrushchev's time in power and the rise of Brezhnev.<sup>143</sup> The early years of Brezhnev's time in office would see the birth and rise of the human rights movement, but the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 changed the relationship between the government and the new generation of intelligentsia. The harsh treatment of Czechoslovakia was a significant contributing factor to putting an end to the dreams of reformers who had sought change within the communist system.<sup>144</sup> The legacy of this rift between government and intellectuals and progressive youth would be the creation of new and extremely polarized generation in the 1970s.

The absence of citizen agency within Soviet society was the primary force behind the reorientation of dissidents toward the Western world. The generation of Soviet baby boomers had grown up in peacetime and witnessed the seemingly futile back and forth struggle of their parents for reform. Armed with newly rampant cynicism, these young citizens had discovered that playing by the rules could provide material comfort and security.<sup>145</sup> The baby boomers, who

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 316-317.

were better educated than any generation before, understood the flaws in the Soviet system and fell back on irony and humor, creating their own form of tongue in cheek conformism.<sup>146</sup>

In his book *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* the anthropologist Alexei Yurchak discusses the discourse of the later Soviet era and sheds light on the paradoxes of Soviet life and how citizens were able to accept them as truth. Yurchak defines the late Soviet period as spanning from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, or as he describes it “when the system was still being experienced as eternal.”<sup>147</sup> According to his findings, the greatest paradox of Soviet life and the source of so much of the generational cynicism of the 1970s and 1980s was the perception held by so many citizens that Soviet system was terribly sick and yet at the same time indestructible.<sup>148</sup> Many citizens were unable to believe in the system that the regime had constructed and yet unable to escape it. They now viewed the ideological trappings and rituals of Soviet life as meaningless performances.<sup>149</sup> Yurchak challenges modern day scholars to approach these decades without retrospective terminology like “stagnation” and “decline”, and to understand that those experiencing them did not perceive these trends as visible and inevitable.<sup>150</sup> This generation of Soviet citizens saw their world as deeply flawed but also unchangeable and inescapable. Understanding Yurchak’s perception explains for us why so many Soviet citizens chose outward conformism and the pursuit of private individual freedoms rather than opposition. For a segment of the population, this loss of faith in system reform did not translate into a loss of

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>147</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 7.

faith in change altogether. Radio Liberty broadcasts contributed to the transition towards looking to the west for support, acknowledging and promoting dissidents abroad, while at the same time presenting American Cold War aims and democratic principles as the solution to changing the Soviet world. CIA aims and the Radio Liberty dissident orientation came together and sought to unify the goals of the dissident opposition with western interests. This is the prime example of the multiple players in this Cold War drama influencing the Radio Liberty/dissident relationship.

The revolutionary legacy of the intelligentsia did not completely die out in 1968, and the small but vocal dissident community stood in stark contrast to the conformist majority. The dissident movement came of age as many former communist reformers abandoned the hope of working within the system and left the party. As discussed in the Chapter 1, a significant number of early samizdat documents were addressed by their authors to the Soviet state and aimed toward encouraging reform. By the 1970s, this orientation had shifted from the Soviet state to the dissidents and the western world as the populations became polarized between reformers and dissidents. The samizdat of détente attacked the Soviet system with literature and ideas, especially the ideals of the human rights and constitutional movements.<sup>151</sup> The positions of dissidents and intelligentsia members had drastically changed. Openly identifying oneself as a dissident or supporting the dissident movement could mean the loss of party membership, employment, and could even result in imprisonment. Many still chose to oppose the Soviet government in spite of harsh consequences. There was a romantic appeal to siding with the dissidents who saw themselves as the intellectual and cultural children of the pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia rather than their Marxist-Leninist forefathers.<sup>152</sup> Unfortunately, their harsh

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<sup>151</sup> Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 300.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

idealism and attitude of moral superiority toward the conformist intelligentsia, as well as the penalties for supporting them, meant that the dissidents of the 1970s became increasingly isolated from the rest of Soviet society.<sup>153</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, samizdat had originated as a semi-public domestic product. The intelligentsia of the previous generation had written samizdat to sway Soviet public opinion and pressure their government for change.<sup>154</sup> The primary weapons of the human rights movement in the 1960s had been signature petitions and open letters to Soviet leaders. In the 1970s, the disillusioned dissidents turned to an international audience, hoping to leverage Western public opinion and outrage to pressure their government into change.<sup>155</sup> The lack of acknowledgement on the part of the Soviet government was in stark contrast to western fascination with samizdat and interest in dissident issues. Radio Liberty promised a means of reaching both Soviet and international audiences. Although they never solicited letters to the West, their success at publicizing documents and their emphasis to listeners that the Western world was aware of their situation encouraged this new orientation.

This new samizdat encompassed letters to world leaders and international communities, the public airing of Soviet human rights violations, and the publicizing of literature on Soviet life. Radio Liberty found itself at the centre of a new storm of samizdat, singled out by the dissident community due to its policy of collecting and publicizing samizdat in the West.

The lifecycle of a samizdat document was transformed by this international shift. Samizdat documents, which formerly had been produced by dissidents and distributed within

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 303-304.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

networks of trusted individuals, had faced physical limitations. The few and fragile copies had been limited by wear and destruction, their paper and print quality being infamously bad, but for many the “wretched state” of samizdat texts had been an integral part of the reading experience.<sup>156</sup> The documents themselves were relics that reflected the state of dissent in the Soviet Union, materially impoverished and physically fragile but intellectually rich.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, the audience of these documents had been limited by connections and geography, remaining an urban phenomenon centered within the Moscow and Leningrad communities. Considering the dangers associated with creating and distributing these materials, the necessary bonds of trust had also kept readership circles small.

Radio broadcasts and Western publication had the potential to spread samizdat far beyond these limited circles. The average readership of a document published in samizdat would be limited to hundreds at most, but a document broadcast over the radio could reach an audience of thousands or even eventually millions.<sup>158</sup> The new mission of the dissident community was to smuggle samizdat out of the Soviet Union and into the hands of the Western media for publication. Documents published abroad and sent back to the Soviet audience became known as *tamizdat* (published there). As *tamizdat* became the new dream for dissident writers. The policy that Radio Liberty had developed of collecting, archiving, and disseminating samizdat documents to the Western community, as well as its openly oppositional stance toward the Soviet government, made the station the centre of dissident communication.

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<sup>156</sup> Komaromi, “Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat,” 616.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom*, 170.

This new Western-oriented samizdat had changed its tone and attitude toward Soviet life as well as its destination. The following three samizdat documents demonstrate these shifts in samizdat content as well as direction. These three documents are all open letters taken from Radio Liberty's archives; they were all received by Radio Liberty or other international organizations in the 1970s. I chose these three documents to highlight the extraordinary range of authors and themes that samizdat displayed during this period, but also to demonstrate the exposé trend that was developing in dissident literature. The authors of each of these three documents had three vastly different audiences in mind; however, each had the goal of exposing what their creator viewed as Soviet crimes against themselves or others.

In stark opposition to the 1960s trend of petitioning Soviet leaders and the Central Committee, the 1970s saw a boom in dissident letters to Western leaders. The refusal of Soviet leaders to acknowledge valid samizdat critiques had robbed dissidents of agency within Soviet society. By writing to influential western leaders, samizdat authors sought to regain their agency by reaching those whom they believed had the power to force change. In these cases, the classic samizdat form of explanation/petition was preserved, and only the intended audience itself changed. In some ways western oriented samizdat was an attempt to go over the heads of the Soviet government and showed an element of faith in the western strength to overcome Soviet resistance.

On January 20, 1977, the famous physicist and dissident human rights activist Andrei Sakharov wrote an open letter to American president Jimmy Carter the day after his inauguration. This letter was aimed both to drive home information about the violation of human rights in the Soviet Union and also to remind the president of his duty, as Sakharov saw it, to

hold the Soviet leaders to account for the violation of international law. Sakharov begins his letter by urging Mr. Carter to do his duty as an international leader, “It is very important to protect those who suffer for their non-violent struggle for transparency, for justice, for the violated rights of others. It is our duty and yours - to fight for them. I think that very much depends on this struggle - the trust between people, confidence in the high promises and ultimately international security.”<sup>159</sup> This quote highlights, not only the request for accountability on the part of the American government to the international community, but also that Sakharov viewed the protection of Soviet dissenters as a key American responsibility. The transfer of responsibility for citizen welfare from the state to an oppositional power, even by a small segment of the population, demonstrated how distanced from Soviet society dissenters were. Sakharov urges the president to continue to put diplomatic pressure on the Soviet government to release political prisoners, especially those who are ill or endangered by their imprisonment.<sup>160</sup>

Sakharov’s letter is a brief and respectful plea for international support. Letters like this sought government accountability rather than overthrow. It was a measure of the lack of citizen participation in the Soviet system that such petitions were no longer addressed to leaders and party representatives but instead were sent by their authors abroad to the leaders of “enemy” nations. What is even more remarkable is that the US president not only acknowledged receiving this letter but also replied. On February 5, President Carter wrote a brief reply to Sakharov that was delivered to him at the US embassy in Moscow several weeks later. This reply was full of the usual broad and non-committal language that was the staple of international diplomacy;

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<sup>159</sup> "Letter to President Carter" [by Sakharov, Andrei], 21 January 1971. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 2857; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

although it lacked concrete promises, it did highlight the seeming investment of his administration and the American people in the plight of the dissident community. Carter wrote, “Human rights are a central concern of my administration. In my inaugural address I said, ‘Being free, we cannot be indifferent to the fate of freedom else where.’ You can be sure that the American people and our government will maintain a firm commitment to promote respect for human rights not only in our country but also abroad.”<sup>161</sup>

Recognition like this was significant because it demonstrated not only that samizdat authors were being heard internationally but also that western leaders were prepared to acknowledge dissident aims in ways that their own government never had. Such public acknowledgements backed Radio Liberty’s claims that the western system could offer more to Soviet dissidents than their government. Despite countless open letters to Soviet leaders and the Central Committee, the Soviet government never openly acknowledged samizdat petitions or directly responded to demands. It remained silent and uncompromising toward the dissident community. Western audiences in contrast gave dissidents the feeling of being heard. Radio Liberty publicized this and other western responses to samizdat and dissident needs, but on a smaller day-to-day level their own policy of broadcasting and commentating on samizdat gave the Soviet intellectual community a valuable sense of reply and dialogue.

International open letters were not only sent to world leaders and organizations. In the autumn of 1975, a Kiev railway worker named Ivan Grigorevich Dvoretzky wrote an open letter addressed to all American railway men. Dvoeretsky was an unlikely dissident. As a worker in a respected career rather than a member of the intelligentsia, he represented the type of citizen who

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 2.

generally fit smoothly into Soviet society and ideology. I include his letter because of its double value in the study of dissident international identity and orientation. Dvovertsky's letter to his American counterparts is not only an exposé of Soviet abuses; but also includes an account of how and why this Soviet worker apparently became disillusioned with the state and what beliefs led him to turn to a western audience for aid and accountability.

In the letter, Dvovertsky tells his account of how, in 1967, he managed, just barely, to prevent a terrible railway accident almost caused by negligence on the part of the state-owned railway system. The near collision of his train with a car full of fuel he attributed to the recklessly inefficient management of Soviet rail system, and he insists that the explosion, which would have resulted, stood to endanger many lives and homes in the nearby community. Dvovertsky attempted to confront the railway management only to end up in the hands of the KGB. After failing to buy his silence about the incident, they then beat him and had him committed to a psychiatric hospital. Labeled insane and prevented from working on railways after his release, he was forced to take a job as a janitor.<sup>162</sup>

Dvovertsky was enraged at his personal experience of the abuses of the Soviet system, and the tone of his letter was deeply angry. Yet his choice of audience is demonstrative of how deeply he had embraced the communist beliefs in class sympathy and worker identity. He begins his letter by discussing the relationship he feels that he shares with his audience:

How do I address you, the American railroad workers, do I call you class brothers or just friends? We are doing the same thing - we transport people and all that is necessary for life. And though the ocean separates us, still beneath our wheels rings one planet. And as people we are

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<sup>162</sup> "Open letter to American Railwaymen" [by Dvovertsky, Ivan Grigorevich], Autumn 1975. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 2316; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1-2.

thinking about the same things: how to make a living, so that everyone feels themselves a free man, not a slave.<sup>163</sup>

After suffering through abuses at the hands of his government, Dvoretzky's class and worker identity caused him to come to believe that he shared more with the international community of railway workers than he did with the Soviet world. He never identifies himself as having dissident or human rights affiliations prior to his incident, and although Dvoretzky's story is uncorroborated, his experience of alienation from Soviet society is representative of many dissenters who witnessed or experienced abuses and were driven into the arms of the West. In concluding his letter he asks his fellow railway men to avenge him, should he be persecuted for writing the letter, by shaming those who promised to defend international human rights, "I beg you, brothers, do not forget that not everywhere in the world has done away with slavery. And if I am again sent to terrible torture in a psychiatric hospital for this letter - pelt those who signed the Helsinki agreement with rotten tomatoes and rotten eggs. I will be very grateful to you for that!"<sup>164</sup>

The final selection of samizdat resembles the earlier style of domestic petitions. I chose this document from the Radio Liberty collection to demonstrate that the shift toward western audiences was not complete. Some samizdat open letters were sent to Soviet leaders. What this letter also demonstrates is that the tone used by dissident sympathizers in addressing the state had changed significantly since the previous generation.

On July 3, 1975, Mykola Rudenko, a writer and member of Amnesty International, wrote an open letter to Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev about the recent arrest of himself and another

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 2.

member of Amnesty. Although this letter is addressed to the Soviet leader, its tone and content are radically different from the petitions of the previous decade. Rudenko's letter does not ask for anything or seriously attempt to sway Brezhnev's views; instead it is a public defense of his actions and an exposé to outside readers of what he views as the absurdity of Soviet bureaucracy and inflexibility. His tone throughout the letter is light and bordering on mocking. He writes about the confiscation of his typewriter saying with a touch of humor, "Now, about typewriters. We consider ourselves civilized people, yet even such a workers' instrument as a typewriter still evokes suspicion -- it is, after all, a means of "mass" communication. But then, in my opinion, one must also take the ball-point pen into consideration."<sup>165</sup> He uses this allusion to the ball-point pen to later chide Brezhnev on the bloated extent of the Soviet bureaucracy, which has time to chase down each typewriter used for dissident activities, while wondering rhetorically whether there will one day be a bureaucrat assigned to confiscate each dissident pen.<sup>166</sup> According to Rudenko the real reason for the problems facing the Soviet government was that it had lost contact with the spirit of the times. Rudenko writes that the reason behind this disconnect has always been the same, "we fly in rockets, while our ideas travel on oxen. Older people, as in times past, do not wish to become reconciled with the fact that young people experience the spirit of the times much more intensely."<sup>167</sup> It is this spirit that he claims inspired the Western nations to come to the aid of Soviet dissidents and reformers when their own government will not.<sup>168</sup> The goal of his letter is to expose the stubborn nature of Brezhnev's

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<sup>165</sup> "Open letter to Brezhnev" [by Rudenko, Mykola], 3 July 1975. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 2215; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 8.

regime, and to shame the Soviet leadership by showing that they have fallen out of step with their society and the world. Additionally, this letter, like the others discussed above, reached Radio Liberty and a western audience. This message reached far beyond the Soviet Union and informed western readers about the backwardness of Soviet censorship.

Each of these open letters was a product of a new generation of Soviet dissenters, a generation which had lost faith in change from within and instead looked Westward for support in their quest to ensure the rights of their community. The samizdat of this new internationally oriented dissident culture would play neatly into the US narrative of the Cold War as a fight for freedom. Radio Liberty would become the mouthpiece of these dissident writers, helping their message to reach its intended Western audience. Radio Liberty was also the largest broadcaster of these dissident voices back to Soviet listeners, leading to an immeasurable increase in domestic awareness of (if not always open involvement with) the struggles of dissidents and reformers in their own country.

### Conclusion

The 1970s was the period when the relationship between Radio Liberty and the dissident community was at its strongest. Radio Liberty was transitioning from being a tool of American psychological warfare to becoming a more independent entity while still preserving its loyalty to western Cold War aims. The US government and the CIA remained the financiers of Radio Liberty and its sister station Radio Free Europe, and although they did not exert their power to manage programming, their influence was felt in the development of Radio Liberty's mission and policy. The greatest change for Radio Liberty in the 1970s was its increased focus on the

needs of its dissident audience. A generational change in staff and greater connection to the dissident community aided in making Radio Liberty more sensitive to the needs and conditions of Soviet life. Through audience research and samizdat, Radio Liberty's staff was able to understand a segment of their listener group. Although the group to which they had access to was small, they often reflected the ideals that Radio Liberty was aiming to promote. These politically engaged, educated, and dissident listeners represented the goal of Radio Liberty broadcasts.

Within the Soviet Union, the impoverishment of domestic media drove an increasing number of Soviet citizens to turn to privately listening to foreign broadcasts as a means of accessing reliable information. Despite the fact the Radio Liberty's audience grew, active dissident members were increasingly isolated within Soviet society by an increase in legal suppression. Soviet dissidents, fed up with the back and forth between thaw and repression, and frustrated by their lack of agency within the Soviet Union, turned to the western world for aid and acknowledgement. As dissidents increasingly sought to communicate with the West, Radio Liberty's role as an information bridge became invaluable to both dissidents and those abroad who were engaged with their plight.

Both Radio Liberty and the dissident movement were influenced strongly by their respective governments throughout the 1970s, but both groups were able to negotiate their own development in response to the changing conditions of the Cold War world. Radio Liberty's CIA financiers did maintain control of the station, but allowed the émigré staff to prioritize Soviet dissident interests over American propaganda, as long as the outcome was opposition to the Soviet state. The Soviet government actively sought to suppress Radio Liberty's broadcasts

through jamming; however, the exorbitant cost impoverished domestic Soviet media and only increased reliance on western broadcasts. Meanwhile, the dissident community reacted to increased censorship and persecution by turning to the west for support and change.

The relationship between Radio Liberty and the dissident movement was mutually reinforcing, and it contributed to the agency of both parties within their respective societies. Samizdat and dissident products granted Radio Liberty legitimacy and purpose in both the Soviet Union and the West. In turn, Radio Liberty's broadcasts offered an alternative to reform from within and allowed dissidents to extend their message to a responsive international audience.

### Chapter 3: *Consequences in the time of Détente*

Détente heralded an unparalleled level of exposure to the Western world for the Soviet Union. This simultaneously challenged the protected intellectual climate created under Stalin and exposure to ideas and comparisons with the democratic West. The 1970s was a time of new encounters on many levels with a high variety of consequences, and in the study of détente there is ample room to consider both materialist approaches and the role of ideas.

The aim of this chapter is to establish where Radio Liberty and samizdat documents fit into the greater history of détente and of the Late Soviet Union. It is necessary to devote some time to understanding the unexpected consequences of détente versus the intentions behind it. The question I will address is how much the Radio Liberty/samizdat relationship and its legacy contributed to the social reforms and political changes of the 1970s and 1980s and coincided with the collapse of the Soviet system.

This chapter will explore how détente changed the Soviet social environment and domestic opinion in the 1970s. Those changes increased the average Soviet citizen's awareness of dissident issues and created a greater interest in foreign broadcasting. We will also discuss the rising tide of pessimism in Soviet society and how that began the process of closing the distance between the aims of dissidents and conforming citizen dissatisfied with the regime. The chapter will examine the specific case of the Soviet human rights movement that emerged in the 1970s in order to understand the role of foreign broadcasting and dissident writings. The human rights movement became the unifying force of the dissident movement and a pivotal factor in the significant social changes that took place a decade later. Radio Liberty was one of the main conduits through which human rights documents reached the West, but it was also for many in

the Soviet Union the main source of information about the domestic human rights struggle. The human rights movement also united the dissident movement to the greater public interests. Human rights samizdat exploded onto the dissident scene in the mid to late 1970s and came to be one of the largest and most documented sections in the Radio Liberty collection.

These changes were the product of increasingly open borders between East and West, an influx of Western material and ideological exposure, and greater access to information about the Soviet Union's international relations. Awareness of life outside of the Soviet Union exposed citizens to the failures of Soviet economic and consumer performance, and, as in the case of human rights, this awareness would also highlight the disconnect between their government's international promises and actual domestic policies.

#### Détente as a turning point in Soviet society

This section will examine the intentions behind détente and its unintended, subversive consequences. The aim is to understand why détente created fertile ground for the spread of dissident ideas, and increased the significance of unofficial information channels such as the one created by Radio Liberty and the transnational movement of samizdat documents. Détente influenced the morale of Soviet citizens, and select samizdat documents began to expand beyond dissident circles and claim to address and/or represent the greater population of average middle class Soviet citizens.

Détente was a period of improved geo-political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. It lasted from 1971 to 1980, although the stability and strength of détente policy had begun to deteriorate by the mid to late 1970s. Although the premise of détente was

essentially rehabilitation of state level relations between the US and Soviet governments, it had numerous and unexpected social consequences for Soviet citizens. These consequences were caused primarily by a breakdown in the human and informational barriers between East and West, which allowed for the spread of new ideas as well as material encounters. The decade of détente was the point where the credibility of the communist system declined domestically and internationally. It is necessary to look at the period of détente as more than just a time of superpower bilateral relations; it was also a period when other international players and domestic forces were beginning to become active participants in Cold War history.

From the perspective of the governments that created the détente system, and those involved in the international affairs that sustained it, détente was not a revolutionary period nor source of great change; it was a necessary pause in the ongoing Cold War, allowing both sides the opportunity to pull back from the escalating tension of the 1960s. Aside from several major American victories in other spheres, most notably the opening of China under the Nixon administration, détente was most memorable for its lack of Cold War conflict and drama. The heyday of détente appears to be a lull in the Cold War and perhaps for that reason it remains one of the least studied periods in the history of the conflict.<sup>169</sup> Détente was a time when Cold War relationships were becoming more complex. With the rising importance of Western Europe, the conflict was becoming increasingly multilateral and societal, and cultural issues such as human rights and consumer needs were finally beginning to exert a significant level of influence on state players.

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<sup>169</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimäki, "Conservative goals, revolutionary outcomes: the paradox of détente," *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 2008): 504.

Jussi M. Hanhimäki maintains that the American architects Nixon and Kissinger envisioned détente as fundamentally similar to the policy of containment.<sup>170</sup> Détente was an opportunity for America to preserve its key position of dominance on the international playing field through a strategic peace while allowing for the period of stability needed to recover from the military and psychological strain of Vietnam and the continuous threat of nuclear conflict.<sup>171</sup> The legacy of détente, which would be felt in the 1980s, was the greater communication between Soviet leadership, growing societal awareness of life on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and the far-reaching effects of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and US.<sup>172</sup>

At its outset détente offered the irresistible possibility of increased economic connection with both Europe and America while maintaining a strong international position. However, détente proved to have many unexpected consequences for the Soviet system both economic and social, which neither the US nor the Soviets anticipated in the early 1970s. Neither the American nor the Soviet leadership really believed that the peace that they were creating was a true end to the Cold War; rather, détente was viewed by both sides as an opportunity to make a prolonged conflict more livable<sup>173</sup> For Brezhnev, the main Soviet architect of détente, the advantages of a more peaceful relationship were primarily economic and practical. As in America, decades of sustained conflict had proved exhausting to the Soviet economy, and pro-détente forces within the Party supported the policy as a means of recovery. Détente offered the possibility of trade and investment as well as the hope of large-scale technological transfers from the West that could

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 506.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 508-509.

<sup>173</sup> Jeremi Suri, "Détente and human rights: American and West European perspectives on international change," *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 2008): 529.

revitalize the Soviet economy.<sup>174</sup> The chronic lack of consumer items to meet the growing demand in the Soviet Union had become a serious issue by the Brezhnev era and continued to highlight the lack of adaptability in the isolated Soviet command economy.<sup>175</sup>

For Soviet citizens, détente had a significant effect on both their understanding of the world and their self-identity. The economic benefits promised in détente and improved East-West relations succeeded in drawing the attention of Soviet citizens away from the underlying issues that plagued Soviet society. Détente's successes masked the fact that there was an absence of real change within Soviet society.<sup>176</sup> The economic boon could not completely hide the fact that despite a significant and growing level of imports in the 1970s, the Soviet economy remained technologically behind and heavily dependent on the export of raw materials.<sup>177</sup>

At the same time as the Soviet Union's economic dependence on the capitalist system was growing, its ideological credibility was waning internationally. However, the domestic perception of ideology was much more complicated and still remains a topic of scholarly debate. For some scholars such as Zubok, the 1970s and 1980s were a period when both domestically and internationally the Soviet model appeared to be a failing experiment rather than a viable alternative to the capitalist system.<sup>178</sup> While this understanding of the last Soviet decades is most common, this interpretation is challenged by other scholars who see this period as a time when economic failures and the current state of the Soviet government led to dissatisfaction, but not

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<sup>174</sup> Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Union and détente of the 1970s," *Cold War History*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (November 2008): 429.

<sup>175</sup> Daniel C. Thomas, "Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism, and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 114.

<sup>176</sup> Zubok, "The Soviet Union and détente of the 1970s," 348.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

the rejection of the core beliefs in communist ideology. In contrast to Zubok, the historian John Bushnell, who had been studying and writing about the Soviet middle class in the 1970s, presented a very different version of events. His finding was that Soviet citizen dissatisfaction centered on the system's performance rather than its ideological credibility and that, for the Soviet middle class, it was the economic/consumer failings rather than political ones which created mass pessimism.<sup>179</sup> He describes the limitations of dissatisfaction by pointing out that, "underneath the pervasive pessimism of the middle class there is a residue of systematic optimism: there is still a feeling that in the very long run things will turn out alright, because the Soviet socialist system is, after all, better than the Western capitalist system."<sup>180</sup> Although this seems to contradict Zubok's findings on the loss of ideological credibility it is most likely that the two are not mutually exclusive and that in truth Soviet public opinion in the 1970s was a mixture of both. However, for the purposes of this chapter it is necessary to understand that economic and political challenges combined to create a general dissatisfaction among Soviet citizens and this contributed to the erosion of trust in socialism as a whole.

For Radio Liberty, this dissatisfaction would increase interest in Western radio and dissident voices and contribute to the growth of their audience. For the samizdat movement in particular this shift to pessimism would open up new avenues to act as a voice for a great number of dissatisfied citizens outside of the dissident community. Although it was mainly dissidents who took this logic to the next level and rejected the system itself,<sup>181</sup> the dissatisfaction of this

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<sup>179</sup> John Bushnell, "The New Soviet Man Turns Pessimist," *The Soviet Union Since Stalin* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1980), 185.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

greater general population made them inclined to acknowledge and consider critiques of the state which a decade earlier during the era of optimism they would have dismissed.

One of the many drivers of this emerging mass pessimism was comparison. Détente's surge in pessimism corresponded to the increased access to information and experiences outside of the Soviet Union.<sup>182</sup> Although its focus was primarily political, Radio Liberty would also contribute to the growing awareness of the West and the economic dissatisfaction that sprang from it. Foreign broadcasts were just one of the ways that Soviet citizens were gaining access to the western world.

Travel restrictions were loosened by the Soviet state during détente which created a greater opportunity to experience and understand life abroad. Donald J. Raleigh interviewed two cohorts of Soviet baby boomers who graduated from Soviet institutes in 1967 and wrote about the effects of travel on the worldview of Soviet citizens. From his findings, it is apparent that travel and especially encounters with capitalist consumption had a deep impact on how Soviet citizens perceived their own country and challenged the traditional Soviet teachings about life in capitalist societies.<sup>183</sup> Even in the era of détente, travel remained limited and involved a significant amount of time, paperwork, interviews and hassle to get permission from the authorities.<sup>184</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, travel abroad increased Radio Liberty's access to audience members and allowed them to gather valuable (if at times questionable) listener information. Increased Soviet travel also lent reality of experience to the social and economic criticisms which Radio Liberty and samizdat documents presented. Dissatisfaction and

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<sup>182</sup> Bushnell, "The New Soviet Man Turns Pessimist," 193.

<sup>183</sup> Donald J. Raleigh, "On the Other Side of the Wall, Things Are Even Better. Travel and the Opening of the Soviet Union: The Oral Evidence," *Ab Imperio*, Vol. 4 (2012): 377.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

questioning of state performance on one level could spread to create a negative perception of state action in other areas such as political repression.

Despite the numerous hurdles involved in travel, trips were seen as well worth the effort. Those who could not get permission to travel experienced life outside of the Soviet Union vicariously through the accounts of family members and friends.<sup>185</sup> One of the women whom Raleigh interviewed told the story of how a gift brought back by her aunt from America when she was a child had provided her with a glimpse of the West and had a lasting influence her decisions later in life to travel and eventually emigrate:

She was in New York in 1958 or 1959 and brought back a View-Master. It was truly a window on the West. I don't know how to say 'Wow!' in Russian. There was nothing else like it. No journals, no films, no television broadcasts, especially during those years, were comparable to the 3-D View-Master... [I] can still see New York, the Rockefeller Center, as if it were yesterday.<sup>186</sup>

Experiences abroad grew more common during détente as the restrictions of travel were somewhat relaxed to accommodate a closer international relationship with the West. Travel had many consequences within the Soviet Union itself. Exposure to foreign capitalism encouraged comparisons with very negative results for views of Soviet domestic performance.

The irony of the Soviet Union's attempts to limit travel was that these limitations preserved idealized images of life outside the Soviet Union. Rare and brief experiences of life in the West left much open to the imagination, and the West to many Soviet citizens remained a sort of fairytale.<sup>187</sup> Many who had first impressions of Western states as consumer dreamlands went home and perpetuated this myth, whereas longer trips and exposure to regular daily life abroad

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 379.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Bushnell, "The New Soviet Man Turns Pessimist," 190.

may have helped to temper expectations with a healthy dose of realism.<sup>188</sup> As it was the failure of Soviet living standards in comparison to their Western neighbors contributed to the disillusionment of many citizens at the same time as it encouraged interest in Western items, ideas, and values.

Travel to Eastern Europe highlighted the extent to which Soviet living standards and consumer society were lagging behind those in the rest of Europe, but it also made clear how far the Soviet Union had fallen behind the living standards of other communist countries. The “elder brother” mentality that Soviet citizens had toward Eastern Europe was shaken by this realization.<sup>189</sup>

Dissatisfaction through comparison threatened the loyalty of citizens toward the system they had grown up in on multiple levels. The changing beliefs and attitudes of Soviet citizens during this decade transformed the audience of both Radio Liberty broadcasts and samizdat documents. Despite attempted limitations, the greater international openness that détente advocated created fertile ground for information exchange as well comparisons. Since the end of the Second World War the Cold War divisions had successfully acted as an information barrier that had allowed the Soviet government to control the information about the Western world. Although this information barrier had been weakening for decades, détente speed up the process and in so doing undermined the Soviet narrative of superiority. For international channels of communication that pre-dated détente, such as Radio Liberty and the dissident community, this breakdown of information barriers increased their relevance and credibility.

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<sup>188</sup> Raleigh, “On the Other Side of the Wall, Things Are Even Better,” 388.

<sup>189</sup> Bushnell, “The New Soviet Man Turns Pessimist,” 193.

Passionate conviction and a resistance to the Soviet system despite steep personal costs defined the dissidents. Although the dissident community remained isolated and confined to specific urban centers, the growing disillusionment of average citizens created an expanding audience for their arguments and writings. Although samizdat remained controversial among many Soviet citizens, it was also routinely one of the most listened to elements of Radio Liberty's broadcast lineup according to the audience research department findings.<sup>190</sup> Samizdat itself often remained a dissident product identified with the small dissident community; however, the rise of pessimism did inspire the creation of some documents that claimed to represent the concerns and experiences of the greater population. These documents were complicated products that often remained focused on dissident issues while still claiming that their concerns originated with the Soviet people or average citizens.

An example of this citizen samizdat is the document entitled "Open letter to the world on the eve of the 60th Anniversary of the USSR" which reached Radio Liberty in 1977. This document is from 25 workers, public servants, and white-collar workers. The document is structured as a group public letter followed by shorter individual accounts from the signatories. The initial group letter is the most representative of the intent of the letter as a whole.

The letter begins with a discussion of the ideological and international goals of the state in the last decade and a quotation from KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov. This quotation sets the tone for the letter by highlighting the state's presentation of rights and domestic opinion, both of which is contrasted with the self-proclaimed opinions of the letter writers. The core of Andropov's statement was that the government provided the political freedom to, constructively,

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<sup>190</sup> Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 53.

criticize the state to each citizen and that the so-called dissidents were abusing this privilege by spreading libel and breaking Soviet law.<sup>191</sup> Most significantly for this document, Andropov is quoted as saying that the dissidents had no support within the USSR from their fellow citizens.<sup>192</sup> The group letter then goes on to assert their right to criticize on behalf of the average Soviet citizens of the USSR. The letter identifies the authors and their aims in the following way:

We Soviet people from different walks of life, not knowing each other... people of different nationalities and from different parts of the country are forced to turn to the so-called "bourgeois press." We, the honest workers of a socialist society, producing wealth, are unwilling to listen to our leaders, our media, party and government organs, which by virtue of their vocation and responsibilities we have to listen to and resolve our issues.<sup>193</sup>

This self-presentation claims both that the writers are average and contributing members of Soviet society and also that their dependence on Western media was directly linked to the perceived failure of their state.

These are themes that we have seen in dissident texts as well, but it is significant that these self-proclaimed "average" non-dissidents not only mirror those motivations but also lay claim to dissident concerns as their own. In the short letters that follow, the authors each present their own experience with repression and the failure of Soviet justice in their work place and their daily lives.<sup>194</sup> The goal of the open letter is both publicity (which is stated in the beginning of the main letter) and to dispel any perception that the desire for personal rights and justice was

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<sup>191</sup> "Open letter to the world on the eve of the 60th Anniversary of the USSR" [by 25 Soviet workers], 18 September 1977. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 3191; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 2.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 4.

limited to the dissident community. They write that their struggles are the struggles of the greater Soviet community and that it is only state repression and isolation that separates the dissident community from conforming sympathizers.<sup>195</sup> Of the Soviet people who state repression and injustice effects they write the following: “We think that we are tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. We will not pronounce big words. We simply tell about their simple, subhuman troubles, and sufferings.”<sup>196</sup> The letter itself is an attempt to present accessible accounts of the suffering of average citizens to balance and also reaffirm the many personal accounts written by dissidents at the time.

This letter is an exception for several reasons. Firstly the vast majority of samizdat originated from self-identifying dissidents, and secondly it may reasonably be concluded from the tone and content that these “average” citizens were citizens who already possessed a strong sympathy with and awareness of the dissident community. But even with these biases taken into consideration this document still reflects a growing section of the middle class Soviet population whose dissatisfaction was evolving toward a desire for social action by the mid-late 1970s. This sympathy with dissidents may not have always translated into action for the majority, but the effects of the era of Soviet pessimism would become very apparent a decade later.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 1970s was a time of significant generational change. The educated generation, which came of age in the 1960s, had witnessed the futility of seeking reform within the Soviet system and had become disillusioned with communism. This was the age of cynical conformism and for a significant portion of the population and even those within the Party itself, Marxism-Leninism had become a form of public performance based on

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 2.

ritual and rhetoric rather than personal belief.<sup>197</sup> Within the Party, a system of elite privileges reinforced the concept of outer conformism for personal gain. During the Brezhnev era, higher-level Party membership became synonymous with privileges such as special stores, apartments, comfortable jobs, dachas, and travel opportunities.<sup>198</sup> The average educated Soviet citizen in the 1970s had abandoned the belief in Soviet superiority and perhaps even extended this to a loss of faith in the convictions of communist ideology. Yet apathy remained a common feature of educated Soviet life during détente.

The dissident battle against apathy was another area where samizdat and Radio Liberty both came together to influence the Soviet side of détente. Beneath Radio Liberty's mission to expose Soviet listeners to the truth about the West and their own society was the goal of ending the cycle of apathy and inciting the involvement in the Cold War struggle. Similarly, although the dissident movement at the time held itself aloof from those who conformed, dissidents aimed to end not only government change but also an end to the quiet acceptance of Soviet abuses. One document where both of these goals merge is in Solzhenitsyn's well known essay "Live Not By Lies" which was the final document written by Solzhenitsyn in the Soviet Union in 1974.

Although this document is not technically within the category of open letters, it embodies both the public nature and the directed audience. The audience of "Live Not By Lies" is one of its most notable features. Solzhenitsyn writes to those Soviet citizens who sympathize with the dissident struggle and who oppose the state but who chose to conform and perform the rites of Marxist-Leninism for personal gain or security. The essay is in and of itself a beautifully written piece about the necessity of lies in the preservation of Soviet legitimacy and the role of

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<sup>197</sup> Zubok, "The Soviet Union and détente of the 1970s," 434.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

individual choice in the strengthening and propagating of untruth. It is also an example of a notable Soviet dissident reaching out to the greater Soviet community and attacking the apathy of conformism.

In the essay, he addresses the fears of Soviet conformers as fears of material lost and personal security. He writes, “We fear only to lag behind the herd and to take a step alone-and suddenly find ourselves without white bread, without heating gas and without a Moscow registration.<sup>199</sup> The fear of loss of financial security and jobs had only been heightened by the dissatisfaction and pessimism we previously discussed. Whatever security was possible was guarded at all costs; the fear of losing personal security to win greater social change was enough to pressure many into inaction. All of this made the abandonment of individual security for the sake of principles, which Solzhenitsyn was calling for, an impossible sacrifice.

His insistence was that a true sympathizer could not claim to disagree with Soviet actions while still conforming without propagating the system of lies which would only continue to rob them of power.<sup>200</sup> The continuation of the lies involved in acting out ritual communism, the Soviet workplace, the citizen relationship with their government and civic activities only weakened the position of Soviet citizens.

What Solzhenitsyn is asking is for the greater Soviet community to adopt the lifestyles and beliefs of the dissident community. This principled denial of lies regardless of consequences reflected a limited group who viewed their sacrifices as badges of honour by which they had gained access to their community. Asking this of the greater Soviet population was impossible.

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<sup>199</sup> "Live Not by the Lie" [by Solzhenitsyn, Alexander], 12 February 1974. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 1587; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 1.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Just as the earlier letter discussed represented a non-dissident attempt to work with the dissident community, this letter represented a parallel attempt to bring sympathizers into line with dissident expectations. Behind both of these attempts is the belief that the desires of average Soviet citizens and the aims of the dissident community were essentially similar, and that unity between the two groups was needed to bring about real change. As Solzhenitsyn writes, “This path will be easier and shorter for all of us if we take it by mutual efforts and in close rank. If there are thousands of us, they will not be able to do anything with us. If there are tens of thousands of us, then we would not even recognize our country.”<sup>201</sup>

The creators of détente did not anticipate the effects that international openness would have on the Soviet population and their expectations. The rise of mass pessimism and dissatisfaction with state performance broke down the loyalty of citizens toward their regime, which began to close the distance between dissidents and the conforming majority. Foreign broadcasting and specifically Radio Liberty as the voice of dissenters was key to bringing dissident voices to the Soviet population.

#### The Helsinki Final Act and the Soviet Human Rights movement as a product of Détente

The issue of the rise of Human Rights in Eastern Europe is an ideal example of the effects of forces such as Radio Liberty and dissident samizdat on the greater politics of détente. The détente era dispelled many long standing Soviet propaganda myths that had survived in the closed communist environment. One of the crowning achievements of the dissident community during détente was the rise of the Human Rights movement across the Soviet bloc. Dissident

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 5

claims of political corruption, lack of freedoms, and government abuses gained credibility among average middle class Soviet citizens during détente, and foreign broadcasting brought these opinions to audiences on both sides of the Cold War.

The Human Rights movement would have an influential legacy that would contribute to the collapse of communism in the late 1980s, but its emergence in the 1970s is a useful case study for evaluating the influence of foreign broadcasting and dissident literature on Soviet society during détente. When the Human Rights movement took off in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1970s, it was a surprise to both American observers and the Soviet government.

The Helsinki Final Act was the final act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The conference, which began in 1973, involved the Communist Bloc and the countries of Western Europe as well the US and Canada. The CSCE was intended as a forum to discuss and agree upon the primary expectation necessary to assure peace in Europe and closer cooperation between the West and the Communist Bloc. The Helsinki Final Act would shake the détente world due to its inclusion of internationally agreed upon standards for the protection of human right.

The Helsinki Final Act was not the first agreement of its kind in which the Soviet Union had taken part. The ideas of human security that the Helsinki Act contained were not designed to be particularly revolutionary or intrinsically subversive to Soviet society. The question of why this particular diplomatic event spurred such a reaction can be explained by its specific circumstances and timing. The CSCE came at the high point of détente while Soviet citizens were experiencing an increased amount of access to information and when the links between

dissident communities and the Western media had reached their strongest. The only leading Soviet figure who seemed to sense the danger of domestic reactions to the Helsinki Act was Yuri Andropov, then the chairman of the KGB. Andropov, who had witnessed the changes that détente had brought about in Soviet society, summarized his concerns by saying:

The principle of inviolability of borders – this is of course good, very good. But I am concerned about something else: the borders will be inviolable in the military sense, but in all other respects, as a result of the expansion of contacts, of the flow of information, they will become transparent.<sup>202</sup>

This prediction would prove correct, and it would shape the decades that followed. What Andropov grasped, that others did not, was that the Helsinki Final Act was being signed in a different social environment than any of the Soviet Union's previous human rights treaties. For the first time, the opening of information borders would mean that Soviet citizens would be not only fully aware of the contents of the Helsinki Final Act but also able to call their government to account internationally for violations. It was this new transparency that led to the rise of the Soviet human rights movement.

Before Human Rights became a salient and controversial issue in the 1970s, a system of basic socioeconomic, political and personal rights had long been a significant part Soviet society. Developed mainly during the period from the revolution to the creation of Stalin's 1936 constitution, the system reflected the centrality of social rights and would reflect the trends that emerged later on in post-war Europe.<sup>203</sup> The technical right to social security, education, healthcare, and jobs on a universal scale was a defining part of the self-identity of the Soviet

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<sup>202</sup> Svetlana Savranskaya, "Human rights movement in the USSR after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, and the reaction of Soviet authorities," *The Crisis of Détente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975–1985*, ed. Leopoldo Nuti (New York: Routledge, 2009), 29.

<sup>203</sup> Smith, "Social Rights in the Soviet Dictatorship," 385.

Bloc.<sup>204</sup> As with so many things in Soviet society, the difference between Soviet rights in theory and in actuality was often extreme.

State paternalism promoted an understanding of personal rights as the privileges linked to good Soviet behavior and compliance with social expectations. With rights tied so completely to the state, their protection and implementation varied wildly over the decades depending on the power of the regime. They only gained a stability and accessibility in practice under Khrushchev in the 1950s, and even then the limited and ill-defined area of personal rights remained the most unstable and weakest element within the system.<sup>205</sup> Personal rights and human security were key issues for both Radio Liberty and the dissident movement. The absence of the protected right to freedom of speech and political orientation was at the core of the KGB persecution of dissidents and the state opposition to foreign broadcasting. Radio Liberty itself acted as a medium of limited free speech by broadcasting out of reach of the Soviet legal system. Therefore, both Radio Liberty and the dissident community were invested in the struggle to make Soviet rights real and protected.

Despite a long theoretical history of established rights and many post-war international agreements, the Soviet Union had experienced only limited protests over rights, mainly among persecuted groups such as dissidents, marginalized religious communities and nationalities. Although these groups had been active in the human rights movement for decades, it was the explosion of interest in Soviet human rights issues among average citizens, and the international community, which caught the Soviet authorities off guard in the 1970s.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

CSCE was one the first significant opportunity for the Western European community to exert their influence on the Cold war stage. Over the previous decade, the Western European community had been coming together to establish their own Cold War aims, which centered around integration and the protection of European values across Europe.<sup>206</sup> One of these fundamental values was human rights and protections. Although human rights were a part of the American Cold War approach as well, Kissinger and Nixon disagreed with the European community about its primary importance in stable international relations and instead saw it as a secondary goal that would not be possible until there was an established foundation of military stability.<sup>207</sup>

CSCE began on July 3, 1973 and would continue until the signing of the Helsinki Final Act by representatives of the 35 participating states on July 30 and August 1, 1975. The Helsinki Final Act covered a wide range of international issues including sovereignty, the inviolability of borders, and non-intervention. However, it was the inclusion of Principle VII of the Final Act regarding respect of human rights which was controversial. The principle stated “The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.”<sup>208</sup> Humanitarian issues were not part of the original Helsinki proposals; human rights had been included later on in what was called Basket Three of the agreement.<sup>209</sup> It was the Western European states which pushed for the inclusion of human rights, a move was initially

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<sup>206</sup> Suri, “Détente and human rights,” 528.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 532.

<sup>208</sup> Principle VII of the Helsinki Final Act, (1975).

<sup>209</sup> Savranskaya, “Human rights movement in the USSR after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act,” 27.

opposed by both the US and the Soviet Union.<sup>210</sup> The inclusion of humanitarian issues was not intended to undermine the Cold War system; it was a part of the Western European plan to establishing a set of core values among the participating states to encourage greater stability and to ease the integration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc into the European community.<sup>211</sup> The Helsinki Act itself was a conservative document and its later radicalization by the dissident community was unforeseen during the CSCE process.<sup>212</sup>

While the Soviet and American governments initially resisted the inclusion of human rights, both eventually accepted the additions of Basket Three. For the Soviet government the signing of the Helsinki Final Act was a strategic choice. It was not the first time that the Soviet Union had signed international agreements about human rights. The Soviet Union had approved the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and taken part in several human rights agreements in the 1960s, which had not had significant effects on their domestic practices.<sup>213</sup> Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders saw the necessity of some compromise and perhaps even some real controlled liberalization in the area of human rights, but the main reason that the Soviet Union agreed to the Helsinki Final Act was that they believed that it would only be a token commitment.<sup>214</sup> Like so many other international agreements before it, the Soviet government believed that the Final Act was an opportunity to rehabilitate their humanitarian image in the international community through compromise, while not committing to real change in practice. The Soviet government did not believe that Western Europe and America would

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<sup>210</sup> Suri, "Détente and human rights," 530.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Thomas, "Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism," 117.

<sup>214</sup> Savranskaya, "Human rights movement in the USSR after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act," 28.

commit to policing their domestic practices at the expense of international stability.<sup>215</sup> The accommodating environment, created by détente, prioritized stability over ideological principles and supported these Soviet assumptions. However, as Andropov had predicted, the recent domestic changes within the Soviet Union would mean that Soviet citizens would have access to information and to the agreement itself in ways they never previously had.

The Helsinki Final Act was published in the Soviet papers, and within weeks it was the topic of a wave of samizdat documents highlighting the abuses of human rights in the USSR.<sup>216</sup> In response, the Soviet government attempted to define its reading of the Final Act and limit its scope a month later in September in *Izvestia* by insisting that the human rights pledges did not extend to Anti-Soviet and subversive members of society.<sup>217</sup> Yet the international recognition of the Helsinki agreements gave dissidents the hope that by exposing human rights violations they could mobilize Western opposition and force reforms.

Human rights samizdat and its variations became the fastest growing and most documented topic in Radio Liberty's archive after 1975. Violations of the Helsinki Final Act provided dissidents with a standard framework in which to present their revelations and criticisms of the Soviet system. The broadness of the human rights statements in Basket Three meant that it could be applied to many different categories or 'genres' of samizdat, including the samizdat of gender and nationality issues, political repression, cultural and economic critiques, and even the most basic personal petitions. Additionally, Radio Liberty's mission of providing surrogate domestic media and its focus on the political elements of opposition made it

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 32.

predisposed to preserving and rebroadcasting human rights documents due to their anti-Soviet nature and their international appeal.

On May 12, 1976, almost a year later, Yuri Orlov formed the Public Group to Assist the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords in the USSR, better known as the Moscow Helsinki Group.<sup>218</sup> The group itself created a great deal of literature about the Human Rights struggle in the Soviet Union and was one of Radio Liberty's most trusted sources. This group included the internationally known dissident Andrei Sakharov and was closely tied to the long running samizdat periodical, the *Chronicle of Current Events*. The Moscow Helsinki Group sought to monitor Soviet compliance to the Helsinki Final Act and expose violations both domestically and internationally. The Moscow Helsinki Group inspired new branches across the Soviet world throughout the next year, and the fight for human rights provided a unifying thread that proved capable of connecting humanitarian groups and pre-existing dissident communities.<sup>219</sup> Throughout the late 1970s, these Helsinki groups grew in influence and gained an international audience.

By the mid-1980s, 50% of Radio Liberty's listeners expressed a preference for human rights programming based on Audience Research Department findings.<sup>220</sup> For many citizens outside of urban centers, foreign radio was their only source of information about the human rights movement and violations by their government. Additionally, Radio Liberty broadcasts exposed Soviet listeners to the Western perspectives on humanitarian issues and perpetuated the

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>220</sup> Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener*, 35.

international normative environment of the West, which would eventually make respect for human rights non-negotiable under Gorbachev.<sup>221</sup>

For the Soviet government during détente, the rapid rise of the dissident human rights movement came as a surprise. In 1975, in the immediate aftermath of the publication of the Helsinki Final Act, the number of KGB arrests dropped significantly, and the Soviet government attempted to explain away the flurry of dissident activity in its relations with the other signatories.<sup>222</sup> The Moscow Helsinki Group was allowed to function un-harassed until February 1977; an unheard of allowance on the part of the KGB toward the dissident community.<sup>223</sup> Due to international attention and pressure on the Soviet government to uphold its promises in the immediate wake of the signing, the inevitable wave of arrests of members of the dissident human rights community was strategically held off until after the first CSCE review conference in Belgrade in October 1977.<sup>224</sup> After that, the number of arrests accelerated as détente relations began to collapse. The experience of the rise of the human rights movement drove home to the Soviet government that they had vastly underestimated the power of the dissident relationship with the Western media such as Radio Liberty and other non-government organizations.<sup>225</sup> Channels of information such as Radio Liberty and samizdat had not only opposed the regime domestically but also exposed it to international criticism by airing human rights violations abroad. Faced with an increasing loss of control over Soviet channels of information, the

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<sup>221</sup> Thomas, "Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism," 127.

<sup>222</sup> Savranskaya, "Human rights movement in the USSR after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act," 33.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>225</sup> Zubok, "The Soviet Union and détente of the 1970s," 442.

government yet again opted to reverse the liberalization of détente and institute a new wave of repressive measures at the end of the 1970s.

### Conclusion

Détente brought the Soviet world into closer communication with the West. From the perspective of the Soviet and American governments, détente was intended to be a conservative period of recovery. Few Soviet leaders anticipated the negative results of this policy; instead, they underestimated the effect of allowing the Cold War borders to become increasingly permeable to people and information.

The relationship between Radio Liberty and samizdat had existed for decades, but the developments of détente invested it with new significance. As familiarity with life abroad bred pessimism among the middle class Soviet population, Radio Liberty and the dissident movement aimed to channel this economic dissatisfaction toward political opposition. Although samizdat remained a primarily dissident product, there were important examples of samizdat written by and to this growing group of conformist sympathizers.

The rise of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union was a catalyst capable of uniting Soviet dissidents and appealing to the concerns of the greater Soviet population. The international publicity offered by Radio Liberty and other international broadcasters made human rights violations known to the other signatories of the act. This gave agency to Soviet citizens and threatened the stability of the Soviet Union's relationship to Western Europe.

The relationship between Radio Liberty and the dissident movement was a product of détente forces, but it was also a contributing factor in the development of Soviet society during

détente. Radio Liberty's broadcasts broadened the access of the Soviet audience and amplified Soviet dissent and dissatisfaction at all levels.

## Conclusion

The Helsinki watch groups, which had marked the height of the human rights movement, had been suppressed by the end of détente in the early 1980s. Svetlana Savranskaya writes, “The period from 1982 until the beginning of perestroika in 1985 was the darkest and most stagnant period from the point of view of the human rights movements.”<sup>226</sup> This period of repression was felt across the dissident community at all levels. Yet the legacy of the fight for human rights, the opening up of Soviet society during détente and the victories of international media such as Radio Liberty and samizdat, was secured by its effect on a new generation of Soviet leaders and reformers.

Although the ranks of the dissident movement were extraordinarily small compared to those who chose to conform and remain a part of the Soviet system, the message of those who rebelled permeated society during détente. A new generation of party elites spent their formative years exposed to dissident and foreign criticism of the regime, and to some extent this new generation internalized them.<sup>227</sup> Even many of those officials directly charged with repressing dissidents often found them questioning the validity of a system that suppressed rather than addressed valid critiques.<sup>228</sup> Although, it was the reformers within system who eventually toppled the Soviet system, it was the dissidents of the détente period who made human rights a household term, who exploited the opening of East-West borders to gain support abroad, and who highlighted the disconnect between Soviet foreign promises and domestic realities.<sup>229</sup> The

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<sup>226</sup> Savranskaya, “Human rights movement in the USSR after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act,” 35.

<sup>227</sup> Thomas, “Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism,” 119.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>229</sup> Savranskaya, “Human rights movement in the USSR after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act,” 38.

increased international visibility of Soviet violations of human rights and persecution of the dissident community in general was promoted by samizdat and the publication/broadcast of dissident and Soviet voices beyond the communist world. Gorbachev and his new generation of party members witnessed the impossibility of maintaining stable domestic and international relations without bending to international norms, and many of these new reformers had themselves realized that there was a moral and political value in addressing the critiques of their own citizens.<sup>230</sup>

This thesis has discussed the origins of Radio Liberty's interest in samizdat, its policy of preservation, and its growing broadcast dependence on it. We have discussed the transition of samizdat from a domestically oriented phenomenon to an international product, and how these changes paralleled the transition of dissident aims from the pursuit of internal change to the quest for western support. The influence of government and non-governmental groups on both sides of the conflict made the relationship between samizdat and Radio Liberty a truly Cold War phenomenon, and the histories of both were shaped by the opening relationship and the weakening borders between the Soviet world and the west. Finally, we have seen that this symbiotic relationship between western media and Soviet dissent was a factor in the experience of détente for Soviet citizens. This relationship hastened the breakdown of ideological borders and helped to shape broad based pessimism and dissatisfaction into opposition to the regime.

The histories of Radio Liberty and dissident samizdat became intertwined in the late Soviet period, and it is impossible to look at the development of one without taking the other into serious consideration. Radio Liberty truly came into its own through its reorientation toward the

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<sup>230</sup> Thomas, "Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism," 29.

dissident experience and their needs. It was samizdat that provided access to that experience and endowed Radio Liberty with the necessary aura of Soviet legitimacy. In turn, Radio Liberty was the megaphone through which the dissident movement was able to reach the West and more importantly other Soviet citizens. Western media and the process of tamizdat was integral to developing samizdat consumption from a small, elite, and urban experience to a common middle class practice. The relationship between these two forces helped to sustain them through the challenges of Soviet persecution. That same dependence shaped the two towards more unified aims by the end of the samizdat period, such as human rights, political freedoms and an end to the persecution of dissent.

The collapse of the Soviet system had many origins and contributing factors. One of the most significant of these causes was the increasing permeability of Soviet borders to information. The unchallenged position of the Soviet system could only be preserved through a strict state monopoly on information and the isolation of a closed society. Domestic dissent challenged the limits of Soviet control internally while western media transgressed the boundaries of Soviet space. These forces, combined with the technological advancements in communications in the second half of the twentieth century, would spell the end of the ability of any state to maintain complete control over domestic information. Today, in an era of Internet access and mass communication, it is easy to underestimate the power which fundamental truths and individual voices possessed in Soviet society. Radio Liberty and samizdat challenged communism by creating a forum for this information and a media voice outside of state control, and together they shaped a new generation of Soviet citizens who would go on to reshape their society.

## Samizdat

(Chronological)

"Letter of 43 Surviving Offspring of well known Communists who were victims of Stalin", 24 September 1967. HU OSA 300-85-9; RLR# R 134; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"The Duty of a Communist" [by Yakhimovich, I. A.], 22 January 1968. HU OSA 300-85-9; RLR# R 011; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"In Lieu of a Final Statement " [by Yakhimovich, I. A.], 24 March 1969. HU OSA 300-85-9; RLR# R 102; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"Letter to President Carter" [by Sakharov, Andrei], 21 January 1971. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 2857; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"Open letter to KGB Chairman Andropov" [by Sakharov, Andrei], 28 November 1973. HU OSA 300-85-9; AC# 1511; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"Live Not by the Lie" [by Solzhenitsyn, Alexander], 12 February 1974. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 1587; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"Open letter to Brezhnev" [by Rudenko, Mykola], 3 July 1975. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 2215; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"Open letter to American Railwaymen" [by Dvoretzky, Ivan Grigorevich], Autumn 1975. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 2316; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

"Open letter to the world on the eve of the 60th Anniversary of the USSR" [by 25 Soviet workers], 18 September 1977. HU OSA 300-85-9; AS# 3191; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

## Radio Liberty Documents

(Chronological)

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“Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #25-74”, 16 July 1974. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.16; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

“Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #33-74”, 10 October 1974. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.16; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

“Special Broadcast Area Listener Evidence #11-75”, 15 April 1975. HU OSA 300-88-47:12.16; Records of the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute; Samizdat Archives; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

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