

## Americans' Human Rights Activism in the Long 1960s

### L'activisme des Américains pour les droits de l'homme dans les longues années 1960

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#### Abstract

**T**his article challenges existing narratives that date the emergence of interest in human rights in the United States to the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter in 1977. Instead, it shows that Americans operating at low levels or outside the government entirely were increasingly drawn to human rights activism in the 1960s and early 1970s. By examining human rights activism relating to Southern Rhodesia, Greece, and the Soviet Union, this article explores the beginnings of what would become a significant non-governmental movement for human rights in the years that followed.

#### Résumé

**C**et article interroge les récits qui datent de l'émergence de l'intérêt sur les droits de l'homme aux États-Unis lors de l'inauguration du Président Jimmy Carter en 1977. Il montre au contraire comme les Américains situés aux niveaux moins élevés de l'appareil administratif ou hors de celui-ci pratiquaient déjà une forme de militance fondée sur les droits de l'homme au cours des années 1960 et 1970. En examinant l'activisme pour les droits de l'homme à la Rhodésie du Sud, la Grèce et l'Union soviétique, cet article explore le début de ce qui deviendrait un mouvement non gouvernemental très important pour les droits de l'homme dans les années suivantes.

**H**istorian Samuel Moyn has written that, “The drama of human rights, then, is that they emerged in the 1970s seemingly from nowhere.”<sup>1</sup> Moyn’s book, *The Last Utopia*, is the most prominent in a wave of literature analyzing a “boom” of human rights activism in the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Moyn specifically regards 1977 as “the breakthrough year” for human rights.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as this article will show, many Americans operating at low levels or outside the government entirely were increasingly drawn to human rights activism in the years before 1977. This article explores the beginnings of what would become a significant non-governmental movement for human rights. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, human rights activists and organizations such as the International League for the Rights of Man, Free-

<sup>1</sup> S. MOYN, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010, 3.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, J. ECKEL and S. MOYN (eds), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014; and B. KEYS, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> S. MOYN, *The Last Utopia*, 122.

dom House, Amnesty International, Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), as well as members of Congress and key diplomats sought to ensure that human rights were not ignored in United States policymaking. The selected cases show that human rights activists were engaged with human rights abuses in Southern and Eastern Europe as well as Africa and pursued a wide range of tactics to influence United States policy.

This article will employ the term “human rights” as policymakers at the time did – to signal support for the rights to due process, the practice of one’s religion, freedom of movement, participation in one’s own government as well as freedom from racial discrimination and torture. Put another way, they were attentive largely to civil and political rights, not the fuller list of human rights outlined in United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).<sup>4</sup> Although many activists and policymakers were concerned about what might be labeled “social and economic rights”, they rarely used the language of human rights in that respect in those years.

Americans’ concerns about human rights violations internationally were sparked and then heightened by a range of developments. At the international level, decolonization drew attention to racial discrimination. The movements for African-American freedom and against the war in Vietnam shaped Americans’ thinking about the policies of their government and led many to push for new approaches to human rights in United States policy. Displeasure with the conduct of United States foreign policy, including the war in Vietnam, the 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic, support for military dictatorships, and covert intelligence operations abroad, corroded the Cold War consensus that had privileged containment and anti-communism in the Cold War over other priorities.

Support for human rights internationally was also closely linked with domestic concerns about civil, political, economic, and social rights during the Kennedy and Johnson years. The movement for greater protection of African Americans’ rights generally heightened Americans’ attention to human rights language, to the plight of those oppressed by illiberal leaders, and specifically to the oppression of black Africans who suffered under colonialism or white minority regimes. Although “rights” have been significant to the United States since the country’s founding, it was the 1960s that produced “an explosion of demands for new rights.”<sup>5</sup> In many ways, human rights activists were building on the successes of the civil rights movement in that white and black liberals sought to export the

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<sup>5</sup> M. ISSERMAN and M. KAZIN, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, 117. Thomas Jefferson described the United States as a “monument of human rights” in 1809. Thomas Jefferson to the Citizens of Washington, DC, March 4, 1809. In Risa Goluboff’s description, the civil rights movement shifted from emphasizing social and economic rights to civil and political rights in 1950s and 1960s, shortly before Johnson stressed greater attention to the former. R. L. GOLUBOFF, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2007, 264-5.

movement's victories abroad. As part of changing conceptions of the role of the federal government in the 1960s, the civil rights movement wanted it to protect Americans from violations of their rights; that thinking led, by extension, to a belief that the United States could play a role in protecting people from violations abroad in Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, Greece, and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> How significant that role should be, however, was a contentious topic, and more often than not the executive branch decided to limit U.S. involvement.

Moyn does not see a strong connection between American attention to human rights internationally and the domestic civil rights movement: "It is tempting to believe that the civil rights movement that had transformed American race relations prompted the new invocations of human rights, but the evidence is thin. Though some participants in the civil rights movement later joined the American human rights movement, the timing of the latter is too late for any truly powerful connection to be made."<sup>7</sup> Moyn's argument is based to some degree on the existence of a gap between the dissipation of the freedom movement, to use a broader term, and the development of a mass human rights movement in the late 1970s. Looking at attention to human rights in the long 1960s, however, suggests a closer relationship between the two.<sup>8</sup> The two most persuasive links are the overlap of personnel – for example the involvement of prominent freedom leaders such as Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young in human rights debates – as well as the claims of many involved such as Secretary of State Dean Rusk, UN Human Rights Commission Morris Abram, and United States Ambassador to the UN Arthur J. Goldberg about the links between U.S. foreign and domestic policies.

At a time at which American policymakers were increasingly tackling the rights of Americans at home – not just their civil and political rights, but also through programs like the Great Society and the War on Poverty, their social and economic rights – Americans became progressively concerned about consistency in the domestic and foreign policies of the United States.<sup>9</sup> Law professor Louis Sohn echoed the language of many in urging greater attention to human rights by the Johnson administration when he wrote, "As a supporter of the President in his many efforts to create the Great Society at home and to bring peace, justice and economic development to the strife-torn world, I am certain that the new initiatives in the field of human rights suggested in our report are close to the president's heart and are worthy of his attention."<sup>10</sup> Morris Abram similarly pushed

<sup>6</sup> R. L. GOLUBOFF, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights*, 266.

<sup>7</sup> S. MOYN, *The Last Utopia*, 159.

<sup>8</sup> For example, historian Benjamin Nathans argues American Jews turned to the cause of Soviet Jewry as they were increasingly marginalized in the civil rights movement. B. NATHANS, "The Wild Desire to Leave: On Soviet Jewry", *The Nation*, November 10, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson administration officials, such as Morris Abram suggested Johnson's "War on Poverty" was extending social and economic rights. United States and International Human Rights – Retrospect and Prospects, December 1968, Executive IT 47-9/A, Box 13, WHCF, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (hereafter LBJL). Important for further shaping my thinking about this question were R. M. IRWIN, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012; and H. H. VIK, *The United States, the American Legal Community and the Vision of International Human Rights Protection, 1941-1953*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oslo, 2009, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Sohn to McPherson, February 14, 1966, United Nations, Box 17, Office Files of Harry McPherson, LBJL.

for more U.S. engagement with the full range of rights enumerated in the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights saying, “Most Americans have, by now, come to realize that the economic and social rights of the Universal Declaration are not luxuries, but necessities for a free and united society.”<sup>11</sup> For those, such as Abram, committed to the universality of human rights, greater attention to human rights domestically prompted increased concern for human rights abuses abroad:

■ My country recognizes, certainly today, that while man does not live by bread alone, he does not live without bread, and that economic, social and cultural rights are part and parcel of the fabric of American civilization. We are also perfectly aware of the fact that it is not enough simply to open the doors of opportunity, that when the doors are open it frequently is a fact that men do not have the resources, and the society may not have the resources, to permit men to walk through the gates of opportunity to achievement.<sup>12</sup> ■

Abram sought deliberately to echo Johnson’s address at Howard University where the president had declared: “It is not enough to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. This is the next and most profound stage of the battle for civil rights.”<sup>13</sup>

A further reason that many Americans began to press policymakers to take greater account of human rights in their foreign policy were worries that U.S. policy was increasingly out of line with American values.<sup>14</sup> Put another way, they feared U.S. foreign policy was immoral. Vietnam loomed as the most significant overseas intervention, but United States actions in the Dominican Republic, Chile, and elsewhere also played a role.<sup>15</sup> For example, as a congressional aide in 1970 Representative Tom Harkin (D-IA), later an active proponent of limiting U.S. support to governments that violate human rights, discovered and publicized the “tiger cages,” an inhumane detention facility on Con Son Island in South Vietnam, raising questions about the record of the South Vietnamese government and American conduct there.<sup>16</sup> In February 1966 hearings on Vietnam, the criticism

<sup>11</sup> Abram linked his language to Johnson’s earlier statement: “Freedom is not enough.” Morris Abram Speech, November 10, 1967, Nov. 10, 1967-United Nations Association of the USA, Box 16, Series I, Morris B. Abram Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter Abram Papers).

<sup>12</sup> Press Release, March 4, 1968, Human Rights Commission: International Conventions on Human Rights, Box 88, Series I, Abram Papers.

<sup>13</sup> L. B. JOHNSON, “Commencement Address at Howard University: ‘To Fulfill These Rights’”, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965: Volume II*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1966, 635-40.

<sup>14</sup> Those who opposed the war in Vietnam overlapped in many ways with those advocating for greater civil rights for African Americans in the United States. For further discussion, see T. BORSTELMANN, *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012, 181, 204; R. FOOT, “The Cold War and Human Rights”, in M. P. LEFFLER and O. A. WESTAD (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume III: Endings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, 446, 450, 457, 464; and C. APODACA, *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy: A Paradoxical Legacy*, New York, Routledge, 2006, xiv.

<sup>15</sup> T. BORSTELMANN, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, London, Harvard University Press, 2001, 177.

<sup>16</sup> Moral opposition to the policy of containment, which had led to American involvement in Vietnam, fueled critics of United States policy. See for example, Hans Göran Franck to Johnson, August 4, 1966, AMMO, Box 142, WHCF-Name File, LBJL; “Human Rights in the Vietnam War”, April 21, 1968, U.S. Vietnam Correspondence, 1964-6, Box 36, International League for Human Rights Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York;

of Senator Frank Church (D-ID) set a precedent for criticism of the war and U.S. foreign policy. As David Schmitz and Natalie Fousekis have put it, in the hearings' aftermath, "The postwar consensus on containment and presidential domination of foreign policy now began to crack."<sup>17</sup>

As the decade progressed, U.S. support for military dictatorships in Brazil, Greece, and Chile prompted further questions about the wisdom of U.S. policy.<sup>18</sup> James Green, who has written about human rights activism that targeted the Brazilian military government in the 1960s, sees veterans of the civil rights and antiwar movements as drawn to activism regarding Brazil and Chile.<sup>19</sup> At issue for many was the extent to which Cold War priorities were diminishing America's image abroad and undermining the morality of United States foreign policy.

The breakdown of the Cold War consensus, prodded in part by greater congressional activism in foreign affairs, also produced a degree of democratization in foreign policymaking.<sup>20</sup> Although nonstate actors have always played influential roles in shaping U.S. foreign relations, changes in the 1960s opened space for them to have an enhanced role in policymaking, which for some time had been dominated by a closed, elite group who subscribed to a consensus view of U.S. policy.<sup>21</sup>

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The crisis over Southern Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from Great Britain in 1965, intended to ensure the continuation of white minority rule, heightened American and international attention to human rights issues during Johnson's presidency.<sup>22</sup> Many outside policymaking circles spoke

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and D. M. FRASER, "Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy: Some Basic Questions Regarding Principles and Practice", *International Studies Quarterly* 23:2 (June 1979), 176. In Keys' argument, concern for human rights was a way to overcome "guilt" and "revulsion" over Vietnam. B. KEYS, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 3, 63. Others have suggested Congressional interest in human rights in the early 1970s was spurred by attention to the issue of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. Richard Schifter Interview, "The Life and Legacy of George Lister: Reconsidering Human Rights, Democracy, and U.S. Foreign Policy", Bernard and Audre Rapport Center for Human Rights and Justice, University of Texas School of Law.

<sup>17</sup> D. F. SCHMITZ and N. FOUSEKIS, "Frank Church, the Senate, and the Emergence of Dissent on the Vietnam War", *Pacific Historical Review* 63:4 (November 1994), 561. According to Van Gosse, due to the Vietnam War, after 1967, "opposition to U.S. foreign policy became pervasive instead of marginal", which enabled many to question the government and push for greater protections of human rights. V. GOSSE, "Unpacking the Vietnam Syndrome: The Coup in Chile and the Rise of Popular Anti-Interventionism", in V. GOSSE and R. MOSER (ed.), *The World the 60s Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2003, 100. See also Y. DEZALAY and B. GARTH, "From the Cold War to Kosovo: The Rise and Renewal of the Field of International Human Rights", *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* (2006), 231.

<sup>18</sup> K. SIKKINK, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004, 20-1; and V. GOSSE, "Unpacking the Vietnam Syndrome", 100-1; and C. CHIPOCO and L. SCHULTZ, Program Evaluation, 1981 Ford Evaluation, Box 28, Washington Office on Latin America Records, David M. Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (hereafter WOLA).

<sup>19</sup> J. N. GREEN, "Clerics, Exiles, and Academics: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States, 1969-1974", *Latin American Politics and Society* 45:1 (Spring 2003), 87.

<sup>20</sup> E. L. CLEARY, *The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America*, Westport, Praeger, 1997, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Keys and Daniel Sargent see *détente* as opening up space in which attention to human rights could flourish. B. KEYS, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 10; D. J. SARGENT, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015, 203; and V. BOUVIER, "The Washington Office on Latin America: Charting a New Path in U.S.-Latin American Relations", Box 28, WOLA.

<sup>22</sup> Only six percent of the Rhodesian population or 220,000 of four million people were white.

out against Smith's action. Initially, American newspapers were strongly opposed to Smith's declaration.<sup>23</sup> For example, the *Washington Post* opined that Smith's declaration of independence was "built upon a false basis, upon a denial of human rights that affronts much of the world."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Representative Adam Clayton Powell (D-NY), one of the most prominent African-American elected officials at the time, wrote to Johnson and called for a "world economic boycott of Rhodesia and severance of all diplomatic relations." Urging U.S. leadership on the issue, Powell asserted, "Colored peoples of the world look to our great democracy to bring about the moral imperatives of freedom and equality throughout Africa."<sup>25</sup> In addition, A. Philip Randolph and Donald S. Harrington, the co-chairs to the American Committee on Africa, encouraged Secretary of State Dean Rusk to recall American officials from Southern Rhodesia and sever trade relations with the regime.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, civil rights leaders repeatedly weighed in on American policy. In the wake of Smith's UDI, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke out from Paris, declaring, "I think that it is very urgent for the world, for all of the nations of the world to take a stand against this attempt on the part of the Government of Rhodesia to turn the clock of history back. Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia will become another South Africa and the world cannot stand another South Africa."<sup>27</sup> James Farmer, Executive Director the Congress for Racial Equality, wrote to the White House in advance of Smith's UDI:

■ "[I] urge you take all possible steps to prevent unilateral declaration of independence by white minority strong public statement by you regarding US positions imperative urge public announcement of intent to boycott independent Rhodesia and to move to forbid US investment urge you instruct Ambassador Goldberg to initiate action through United Nations aimed at terminating 1961 Constitution and calling new constitutional conference in which Rhodesia's black majority is given its fair voice."<sup>28</sup> ■

In addition, Farmer, King, and Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the NAACP, all wrote to Johnson to encourage strengthened sanctions including an oil embargo against Southern Rhodesia.<sup>29</sup> Wilkins also wrote to the White House several months later, drawing links between the administration's domestic and foreign policies: "We in the NAACP believe it is essential that the United States ally itself

<sup>23</sup> Telegram, November 13, 1965, POL 16 RHOD, Box 2606, Political and Defense, CFPE, 1964-6, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (hereafter RG 59, NARA II).

<sup>24</sup> "Over the Brink", November 12, 1965, *Washington Post* A16.

<sup>25</sup> Powell to Johnson, November 15, 1965, POL 16 Independence. Recognition RHOD 12/1/65, Box 2607, Political and Defense, CFPE, 1964-6, RG 59, NARA II.

<sup>26</sup> Randolph and Harrington to Rusk, November 11, 1965, POL 16 Independence. Recognition RHOD 12/1/65, Box 2607, Political and Defense, CFPE, 1964-6, RG 59, NARA II.

<sup>27</sup> Comment by Martin Luther King, Jr., October 25, 1965, in Martin LUTHER KING, Jr., "In a Single Garment of Destiny": A Global Vision of Justice, Boston, Beacon Press, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Farmer to Johnson, October 27, 1965, GEN CO 250 Rhodesia 11/22/63-1/5/66, CO Box 65, White House Central Files, LBJL (hereafter WHCF).

<sup>29</sup> Farmer to Johnson, December 16, 1965, GEN CO 250 Rhodesia 11/22/63-1/5/66, CO Box 65, WHCF, LBJL; and King to Johnson, December 16, 1965, *ibid.*; and Greenfield to King, November 26, 1965.

with the cause of racial equality in Africa, as it is doing at home, rather than with an isolated and embattled minority."<sup>30</sup>

The activism of these prominent leaders fits with historian James Meriwether's analysis of the transnational connections they felt to black Africans struggling for greater rights:

■ African Americans had turned to contemporary Africa and included it in their lives for a number of positive reasons: for the inspiration it provided for the struggle in America; for a sense of solidarity, be it from a common sense of oppression or from a shared heritage; for the pride and confidence that came from seeing black men and women win their freedom and run their own countries.<sup>31</sup> ■

Concern about African American support of the Johnson administration if it did not act against Ian Smith was one factor that induced the United States to withhold recognition of his government, recall the American consul, shelve its United States Information Agency activity, freeze loans and credits to Smith, oppose American travel to Rhodesia, and demand those who did travel there have British visas.

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American citizens were similarly concerned with United States policy toward Greece in the aftermath of the 1967 *coup d'état*. In the wake of the coup, the Greek junta dealt harshly with its perceived enemies, arresting them, subjecting them to torture, and imprisoning them in island concentration camps. Yet, Greece's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Cold War security concerns meant many governments were hesitant to criticize the regime too harshly. Although the Johnson administration condemned the nature of the Greek regime, repeatedly inquired with the junta about the fate of political prisoners, and implemented an embargo against heavy military exports to Greece, the United States did not actively undermine the new leaders. Moreover, the selective embargo, implemented in May 1967, was later lifted, due to concerns that stemming the flow of military aid to Greece could weaken the NATO alliance.

As with Southern Rhodesia, debates concerning United States policy drew new adherents to the cause of human rights and galvanized many others. A considerable numbers of academics, a wide range of members of Congress, concerned citizens, international human rights groups, and ad hoc nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the U.S. Committee for Democracy in Greece succeeded in keeping policymakers' attention on human rights violations and limiting the

<sup>30</sup> Wilkins to Johnson, May 4, 1966, GEN CO 250 Rhodesia 11/22/63-1/5/66, CO Box 65, WHCF, LBJL.

<sup>31</sup> J. H. MERIWETHER, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2002, 243-4.

Johnson administration's policy options. As in other instances in which concern for human rights intersected with Cold War politics, several factors complicated high-level officials' instincts to ignore reports of abuses.

Concerns about the administration's tepid position toward Greece were raised in the context of a campaign against the politically repressive junta, and non-state actors played a significant role in forcing the president and his aides to grapple with human rights concerns. Amnesty International was very active in responding to reports of human rights violations in the aftermath of the Greek coup, and its reporting maintained international attention on the junta's repression. The group sent a delegation to Greece in December 1967, and its personnel stayed for four weeks, interviewing prisoners and taking testimony from their family members. In its January 1968 report, "Situation in Greece," Amnesty International outlined its argument that "torture as a deliberate practice is carried out by the Security Police... and the Military Police" and detailed twelve different physical methods being used to torture political prisoners. Its investigators found the psychological torture employed by the regime to be equally devastating to political prisoners and stated the Security Police and Military Police operated without any restrictions on their behavior.<sup>32</sup> Such reporting inspired a range of governmental and nongovernmental actors to oppose ongoing United States support for the regime. Many American critics viewed the government's attitude toward the colonels in the context of their own opposition to the war in Vietnam and intervention in the Dominican Republic.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most prominent organizations was the U.S. Committee for Democracy in Greece, which was organized by many well-known Washington-based liberals such as Representative Don Edwards (D-CA), former Attorney General Francis Biddle, labor leader Victor Reuther, and Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI). The committee was part of a broader network of groups and individuals in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, who were opposed to the Greek regime.<sup>34</sup> The group warned that the United States risked tarnishing its international image if it failed to separate itself from the leadership in Athens. In a newsletter to its supporters, the Committee cautioned: "The presence of the Greek dictatorship is a constant threat to the unity of the Western world... By continuing assistance to the present regime, the United States would risk seriously undermining the

<sup>32</sup> Amnesty International, "Situation in Greece", January 27, 1968, Trip to Greece-May 1968, Box 149G.2 (F), Fraser Papers; and B. KEYS, "Anti-Torture Politics: Amnesty International, the Greek Junta, and the Origins of the Human Rights 'Boom' in the United States", in A. IRIVE, P. GOEDDE and W. HIRCHCOCK (eds), *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012. A second Amnesty International report based on a March 1968 visit to the country alleged the Greek government had condoned the use of torture. A. M. CLARK, *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2001, 41.

<sup>33</sup> A. GARFINKLE, "The Nadir of Greek Democracy", in D. PIPES and A. GARFINKLE (eds), *Friendly Tyrants: An American Dilemma*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1991, 71.

<sup>34</sup> Lyons to Colleague, n.d., Greek Committee, 1968, Box 151.H.3.3 (B), Donald M. Fraser Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota (hereafter Fraser Papers).



entire Western alliance.”<sup>35</sup> Later, using explicit “human rights” language, the committee urged the United States government to limit contact with the Greek junta by denying economic aid and preventing transfers of weapons to Athens “to bring pressure for the enforcement of those commitments to human rights which the present Greek regime has so scandalously violated.”<sup>36</sup> Although opponents of the regime in Athens made their case in hyperbolic terms at times, tensions were growing within NATO over the regime’s human rights violations with Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway all initiating action against Greece before the European Commission on Human Rights in 1967.

The cause also drew wide attention as former colleagues, friends, and supporters of Greek politician and now political prisoner Andreas Papandreu mobilized on his behalf in the United States. His wife, Margaret, also worked to keep international attention focused on her husband’s plight and repeatedly appealed to the United States embassy in Athens for assistance given her United States citizenship and her husband’s previous career as an academic in the United States. She wrote to John Kenneth Galbraith at Harvard University, Stephen Rousseas of New York University, and George Linias at Purdue University to enlist their support for her husband, and academics from Minnesota, Leo Hurwicz and John Buttrick, let her know that they were working on behalf of her husband.<sup>37</sup> Overall, 250 economists were said to have written to the White House on Papandreu’s behalf.<sup>38</sup> After the coup was launched, Galbraith heard that Papandreu might be executed by the Greek junta and many American academics, including fellow economists from Stanford, Minnesota, and Harvard, reached out to him for his assistance. Galbraith called Johnson aide Joseph Califano at the White House to express the widespread concern for Papandreu’s fate in academic circles. Johnson reportedly said, “This is the first issue in history on which all the American economists seem to have agreed.”<sup>39</sup> Galbraith reports that Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach called him later that evening to report a message from Johnson: “Call up Ken Galbraith and tell him I’ve told those Greek bastards to lay off that son-of-a-bitch—whatever he is.”<sup>40</sup> Economist Walter Heller, who was particularly active, wrote to Johnson, “The academic grapevine was crackling from coast to coast last night with the good news that you were taking a direct hand

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Committee for Democracy in Greece, “Greece—A Call to Conscience”, Trip to Greece—May 1968, Box 149.G.9.2 (F), Fraser Papers; and B. KEYS, “Anti-Torture Politics”.

<sup>36</sup> Press Release, June 12, 1969, Press Release Book 1969, Vol. 1, 152.L.9.3 (B), Fraser Papers.

<sup>37</sup> J. E. MILLER, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece: History and Power, 1950-1974*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2009, 138; and M. PAPANDEU, *Nightmare in Athens*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1970, 162-3, 170, 191, 298.

<sup>38</sup> Academics from Harvard University, Stanford University, Tufts University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Wellesley College, University of California at Berkeley, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, the University of Miami, Colorado State University, Purdue University, University of Washington, State University of New York-Buffalo, and University of California Santa Barbara wrote to the White House to express their concern for Papandreu. See for example, Calhoun to Johnson, May 5, 1967, CO 94 Greece 11/9/66-5/10/67, CO Box 35, WHCF, LBJL; and M. GANSBERG, “Johnson to Appeal to Save Jailed Son of Papandreu”, *New York Times*, May 8, 1967, 1.

<sup>39</sup> J. K. GALBRAITH, *A Life in Our Times: Memoirs*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1981, 459-460; and M. GANSBERG, “Johnson to Appeal to Save Jailed Son of Papandreu”, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Galbraith conveyed the economists’ pleasure at Johnson’s intervention. J. K. GALBRAITH, *Name-Dropping: From F.D.R. On*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999, 150-1; and M. GANSBERG, “Johnson to Appeal to Save Jailed Son of Papandreu”, 1.

in the Papandreou case... The word of your quick and direct interest is spreading fast and favorably.”<sup>41</sup> White House aides were cognizant of the extent to which Andreas’s incarceration focused attention on United States policy toward Greece: “Our major problem here in the White House is domestic concern for the safety of Andreas Papandreou... Andreas’ friends – Walter Heller, Carl Kaysen and others – have mounted a major telephone campaign, which some of us fear could cause real trouble.”<sup>42</sup> In their responses, White House representatives wrote that the United States embassy was pressing for the “safety of political prisoners.”<sup>43</sup>

In part due to the campaign by his supporters, the United States conveyed its concerns for Papandreou’s safety to Greek officials.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, it had been involved even before Papandreou’s supporters had mobilized. Andreas Papandreou’s father-in-law, Douglas Chant, visited the United States embassy the day of the coup to seek American intervention to protect Andreas. Ambassador Philips Talbot reportedly told Chant that the United States “has and would by every means discourage Greek military leaders from any resort to violence or bloodshed.”<sup>45</sup> Talbot warned that any harm suffered by political prisoners would “greatly increase complications of already complicated situation.”<sup>46</sup> Several days later, the United States expressed concern about the fate of detainees in a meeting with the Greek Minister of the Interior who told Talbot that the regime “intends to kill no one.”<sup>47</sup> In addition, Deputy National Security Adviser Francis Bator reached out to the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Richard Helms, to highlight that Papandreou had a range of supporters in intellectual and academic circles in the United States. Bator also noted a “consular rationale, – Papandreou’s wife and children were American citizens – for “special attention” to Papandreou’s case.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, internal State Department documents reveal that “Ambassador Talbot has expressed U.S. concern to the new Prime Minister about the fate of the prisoners, and he was assured none would be harmed... There is some uneasiness about the fate of the younger Papandreou should he remain incarcerated.”<sup>49</sup> American analysts believed Papandreou was not in immediate danger, but noted, “The junta desires to eliminate Andreas from the Greek political scene.” They hoped to avoid “summary action” against him.<sup>50</sup> Papandreou later wrote in

<sup>41</sup> Heller to Johnson, April 27, 1967, Foreign Policy Greek Crisis, 04/26-27/67, Box 176, Personal Papers of Joseph Califano, LBJL.

<sup>42</sup> Saunders to Rostow, April 26, 1967, Greece Memos & Misc. [1 of 2] 1/66-7/67, Box 126, NSF Country File, LBJL.

<sup>43</sup> Califano to Eisner, April 27, 1967, Foreign Policy Greek Crisis, 04/26-27/67, Box 176, Personal Papers of Joseph Califano, LBJL.

<sup>44</sup> Saunders to Rostow, April 27, 1967, Greece Memos & Misc. [1 of 2] 1/66-7/67, Box 126, NSF Country File, LBJL; and J. E. MILLER, *The United States and the Making of Modern Greece*, 138.

<sup>45</sup> Telegram, April 21, 1967, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968: XVI*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 2000, 581.

<sup>46</sup> Telegram, April 21, 1967, *ibid.*, 580.

<sup>47</sup> Telegram, April 28, 1967, *ibid.*, 594-597.

<sup>48</sup> Memorandum for the Files, April 27, 1967, Greece Memos & Misc. [1 of 2] 1/66-7/67, Box 126, NSF Country File, LBJL.

<sup>49</sup> Battle to Secretary, April 23, 1967, Greece Memos & Misc. [1 of 2] 1/66-7/67, Box 126, Country File, National Security File, LBJL; and R. V. KEELEY, *The Colonels’ Coup and the American Embassy: A Diplomat’s View of the Breakdown of Democracy in Cold War Greece*, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010, 95.

<sup>50</sup> “Greek Junta’s Plans for Andreas Papandreou”, Greece Memos & Misc. [1 of 2], 1/66-7/67, Box 126, Country File, NSF, LBJL.

his memoirs, "There was some fear in the United States, I learned, that I was to be taken before a kangaroo court and summarily executed, and my friends in that country had been pressuring President Lyndon Johnson to intervene on my behalf. It was to the concern of those friends, I concluded, that I owed the fact that I was still alive."<sup>51</sup> Margaret Papandreou also believed this pressure had been essential and wrote to Johnson expressing appreciation for his "swift humanitarian action on behalf of her husband."<sup>52</sup> Activism by Greek-Americans, economists, and liberals shaped U.S. policy toward the junta, although their pressure never overrode security considerations.<sup>53</sup>

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NGOs and activists were focused on two issues with regard to the Soviet Union – the plight of Soviet dissidents and the treatment of Soviet Jews. Their endeavors were intended to draw more attention to the causes and shape United States policy. In one effort, the West Coast branch of AIUSA formed a Medical and Scientific Committee for Human Rights of Amnesty International. Many of the members of the committee were scientists, and they spoke out about Soviet pressure on physicist Andrei Sakharov and encouraged fellow scientists to join their effort.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Freedom House, an organization focused on promoting democracy and freedom, used its 1973 Freedom Award to honor Soviet dissidents.<sup>55</sup> Individual American citizens also signaled their concern about Soviet human rights abuses. The Nixon administration encouraged such efforts, arguing that private citizens could have more influence on the Soviet government than the American government could.<sup>56</sup> In advance of the November 1974 Vladivostok Summit, the White House received many letters asking Ford to raise Ukrainian nationalist Valentyn Moroz's case with Soviet leaders, and after the summit, Kissinger did discuss Moroz's plight with Dobrynin.<sup>57</sup> In April 1975 when the Soviet government started targeting members of the Amnesty group there, the publisher Edward Kline wrote to Charles Runyon in the legal advisor's office at the State Department to bring his attention to the arrests of Sergei Kovalev and Andrei Tverdokhlebov in the hopes that U.S. officials might ask their Soviet coun-

<sup>51</sup> A. PAPANDEOU, *Democracy at Gunpoint: The Greek Front*, Garden City, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970, 27.

<sup>52</sup> Papandreou to Johnson, June 21, 1967, CO 94 Greece, CO Box 8 [2 of 2], WHCF Confidential File, LBJL; and A. PAPANDEOU, *Nightmare in Athens*, 298. The influence of the United States, however, is less clear as Andreas Papandreou reports that Talbot told him after his release that the junta had never planned to kill him and that the leaders had told Talbot that they would treat Papandreou well before Johnson's message arrived. A. PAPANDEOU, *Democracy at Gunpoint*, 294.

<sup>53</sup> For further discussion, see S. B. SNYDER, "The Rise of Human Rights During the Johnson Years", in F. J. GAVIN and M. A. LAWRENCE (ed.), *Beyond the Cold War: Lyndon Johnson and the New Global Challenges of the 1960s*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, 244-6.

<sup>54</sup> News Release, September 6, 1973, Folder 81, International Executive Committee, Amnesty International International Secretariat Archives, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (hereafter IEC AISA).

<sup>55</sup> Gideonse to Friend, November 12, 1973, Folder 8, Box 5, Freedom House Records, Public Policy Papers, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>56</sup> Dubs to Kalba, June 30, 1969, SOC 14 USSR 5/1/69, Box 3112, Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969 Social, RG 59, NARA II.

<sup>57</sup> Clift to Scowcroft, December 14, 1974, USSR (6), Box 17, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan (hereafter GRFL).

terparts to intercede.<sup>58</sup> Even relatives of Soviet prisoners wrote to the president, asking that he press the Soviet government to release their family members as a humanitarian act.<sup>59</sup>

Separately, American Jews and those of other faiths worried about the situation of Soviet Jews and hoped the United States would work to ameliorate conditions there. In historian Andrew Preston's view, the salience of the plight of Soviet Jews for Americans could be found in the compounding abuse of their human rights – first that they faced restrictions in practicing their religion and then second that they could not emigrate from the Soviet Union and escape those persecutions.<sup>60</sup> In one example of human rights argumentation regarding Soviet Jewry in these years, when Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. participated in a phone conference with thirty-two groups supporting Soviet Jews in December 1966, he said, “No person of good will can stand by as a silent auditor while there is a possibility of the complete spiritual and cultural destruction of a once flourishing Jewish community. The denial of human rights anywhere is a threat to the affirmation of human rights everywhere.”<sup>61</sup>

During the Nixon administration and in the years that followed, activists continually lobbied the White House to do more to support religious freedom in the Soviet Union and emigration from it.<sup>62</sup> In the context of considerable nongovernmental interest, an official statement of United States policy toward Soviet Jewry, State Department officials wrote, “We have made numerous private, high-level diplomatic approaches to Soviet authorities under-scoring our support for the principle of free emigration and the reuniting of families, and have made repeated representations in cases of Soviet citizens seeking to join relatives in the United States.”<sup>63</sup> Later that year, over 1500 telegrams and letters, expressing concern about the Soviet exit tax, arrived at the White House. Such concern prompted the White House to formulate its response carefully. The director of White House correspondence Roland Elliott wanted to assure letter writers that U.S. officials were raising the issue with their Soviet counterparts.<sup>64</sup> In 1973, around 100,000 people participated in a demonstration in New York City on behalf of Soviet Jewish emigration. Many protesters dressed in striped outfits in an effort to connect Soviet Jews with those imprisoned in concentration camps and Soviet

<sup>58</sup> Kline to Runyon, April 25, 1975, Human Rights, 1975, Box 149.G.9.7 (B), Fraser Papers.

<sup>59</sup> Butman to Ford, September 1, 1974, CO 158 USSR Executive 9/1/74-9/14/74, Box 50, WHCF SF CO, GRFL.

<sup>60</sup> A. PRESTON, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of the Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 563.

<sup>61</sup> Press Release, December 11, 1966, [freedom25.net/blog/post/6](http://freedom25.net/blog/post/6) (accessed November 24, 2014); and G. BECKERMAN, *When They Come for Us, We'll Be Gone*, New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010, 138. I thank James Loeffler for bringing this document to my attention. Stern notes that the right to emigrate drew different ethnic, economic, and ideological groups to the cause. P. STERN, *Water's Edge: Domestic Politics and the Making of American Foreign Policy*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1979, 195.

<sup>62</sup> A. PRESTON, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of the Faith*, 564.

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Policy Toward Soviet Jewry, March 13, 1972, Soviet Jewry 1972 [3 of 4], Box 119, Alpha-Subject Files, SMOF: Leonard Garment, WHCF, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NPMP).

<sup>64</sup> Elliott to Davis, September 25, 1972, Soviet Jewry 1972 [1 of 4], Box 118, Alpha-Subject Files, SMOF: Leonard Garment, WHCF, NPMP.

prisons, seeking to change Soviet and American policies.<sup>65</sup> Despite this growing public activism, the administration, and particularly Henry Kissinger, remained unconvinced of the wisdom of emphasizing human rights in Soviet-American relations.

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Reviewing efforts by NGOs and human rights activists in the 1960s and early 1970s long before Moyn's "breakthrough" year of 1977 makes it difficult to regard human rights as neglected. In the years before Jimmy Carter's presidency, American human rights activists had the greatest success when their concerns aligned with the administration's foreign policy or domestic political interests. In other cases, their influence on policy was more episodic. Nonetheless, their activism provided an important foundation in the years that followed. It may be that the most important shift characterizing human rights activism in the mid- to late-1970s was its increasingly transnational connections.<sup>66</sup> The later proliferation of human rights NGOs and spreading participation in human rights work built upon a number of broad trends from the 1960s, such as a declining faith in the government, the democratization of foreign policymaking, and a broader "rights revolution."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> A. PRESTON, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of the Faith*, 564-5.

<sup>66</sup> That evolution can be seen in the context of advocacy for human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. S. B. SNYDER, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> ISSERMAN and KAZIN, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, 117.