

# 269 More Victims of Soviet Brutality

**A**re you outraged at the slaughter of a planeload of 269 people by the Soviets—and indignant at American inaction? Do you believe that we ought to do *something*, in spite of all the contorted arguments being presented for the alleged necessity to continue diplomacy-as-usual with the Soviets?

Well, here is a proposal to *end* diplomacy-as-usual: America should immediately break off all diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. We should close all its embassies and consulates, and deport all its diplomatic personnel. We should declare that we have nothing to talk about with the Soviets. Negotiations on everything from cultural exchanges to arms control should be terminated. True, this is a drastic step—but it is the inescapable consequence of one unavoidable fact: *the Soviet government does not value human life.* We should react to the Soviet despotism exactly as we would to any mass murderer—with moral revulsion, with social ostracism and with a well-armed police force.

Many people are expressing bewilderment at the motive behind the Soviets' action. But the question of *why* they massacred the people aboard the Korean plane can be asked of *everything* they do. Why do they shoot down people who try to flee over the Berlin Wall? Why do they ship critics of the government off to Gulags and psychiatric wards? Why do they respond to the pleas for freedom in Budapest, in Prague, in Gdansk with tanks and machine guns?

To seek some *rational* explanation for Soviet behavior is to assume that the Soviet government is run by civilized, well-meaning people. It is to assume that they share our basic values, that they are horrified at wanton killing, that they cherish human life.

structures—they are two different *universes*. In one, brute force rules and human life is expendable; in the other, freedom reigns and the individual's life, liberty and pursuit of happiness are fundamental values.

Is it surprising, therefore, that Moscow acted so ruthlessly in shooting down the Korean airliner? Is it any wonder that its officials show such callous disregard for the lives of the 269 people—when they exhibit the same savage behavior every day toward their own citizens? And is this the type of government with which we should be signing human rights agreements or negotiating on how strong our defenses against a Soviet attack should be?

What is the only sane attitude to adopt toward a country that views the individual's rights as nonexistent and the individual's life as inconsequential? Any dealings between two parties presuppose their having some significant value in common, some basic objective on which both agree and toward which they can work in concert. *No such agreement exists, or can exist, between the United States and the Soviet Union.* The two nations have *antithetical* values in every important respect. If we uphold human life and human liberty while the USSR consistently acts to destroy these values—if we have a military designed to *defend* the individual against subjugation while the Kremlin has a military intended to attain that very subjugation—what possible basis for discussion is there? Would we negotiate with Nazis and pretend that the fact that we have a Declaration of Independence while they have concentration camps and gas ovens is simply a difference of political opinion? Wouldn't maintaining normal diplomatic

they pose to our freedom.

It is undeniably true that it is in the Soviets' interest not to have war. But so what? It is also in their objective interest not to shoot down innocent airline passengers—just as it is in their interest to abandon communism and to allow freedom and prosperity to flourish. But this does not change their ideology. They have a totally different definition of their interests. What interests them is the exercise of absolute power—and prospective victims had better beware.

To see this issue more concretely, imagine a similar argument being made with respect to criminals. Imagine someone urging the "easing of tensions" between society and the murderers and rapists in its midst. Both criminals and police—this reasoning would go—have enough weapons to destroy one another many times over. We may not like the criminals' philosophy of life, but let us try to minimize the risk of deadly conflict. Let society adopt a policy toward its criminals of negotiation, cooperation and non-confrontation. Let us demonstrate our commitment to peaceful coexistence by lending them money, inviting them over for dinner, and declaring a freeze on bullets. We would thus encourage restraint on the part of potentially dangerous criminals by extending the carrot of conciliation rather than the stick of confrontation.

Now, it is obvious that "detente" with criminals is impossible. On what issues could a bank compromise with a bank robber? On what terms could a victim reach an accommodation with her rapist? Far from making society safer, any such policy would only benefit the criminals and render society even more vulnerable to them.

But if so, how does that policy become more credible when, in place of common criminals, one substitutes Soviet dictators? Does it become any less ludicrous if the criminals proclaimed an abiding love for humanity, a longing for peace, a desire to settle differences amicably, and an unfortunate need to take over several city blocks as a "buffer" against unprovoked attacks by the police? If detente with murderers is patently suicidal, why is it somehow desirable with Russian mass murderers?

The United States should immediately brand the Soviet Union a barbarous state and cut off all diplomatic ties with it. Let it stand isolated, without the mask of respectability we have helped to provide, its true nature on display for all to see. Let us proclaim that we will have no more diplomatic contact with the Soviets, because we have nothing to discuss with amoral killers, who claim the right to dispose of human life at whim.

*If you agree with the above, we urge you to contact your Senators (Wash., DC 20510), Representatives (Wash., DC 20515) and the White House (Wash., DC 20500) and express your viewpoint. And feel free to include copies of this ad with your letters. Good luck.*

Peter Schwartz, Editor and Publisher  
The Intellectual Activist

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It is an assumption which the Soviets try very hard to foster—and it is totally false.

This despicable act of calculated mass murder is *not* some startling aberration on the part of the Soviet government. *It represents nothing new.* For a state that consistently preaches and practices a philosophy of brutal, totalitarian subjugation, destroying an unsuspecting, unarmed planeload of people is completely in character. It is no more difficult to understand why they killed 269 innocent people than why they enslave the 269 million citizens of the USSR.

And those people are quite literally slaves. The single idea at the root of the Soviet political system is that the individual owes total, unquestioning obedience to the all-powerful state. It is difficult for an American to appreciate the kind of terror and intimidation that is a part of the daily lives of Soviet citizens. They may not get jobs, or travel, or read newspapers, or rent apartments—unless the government approves. They live—and die—entirely by government edict. They cannot plan, they cannot hope, they cannot even assume that whatever meager existence they do manage to eke out will not be taken away at the whim of an omnipresent government that announces itself with a midnight knock at the door.

In his wildest imaginings, the typical Soviet citizen does not have the freedoms that we in America take completely for granted. Here we can choose our careers, read whatever books we desire, change jobs at will, organize demonstrations, move to another city, join any of a variety of political groups, start a private business, demand due process of law from an independent judiciary, and speak out openly against the government on any street corner without worrying that some KGB agent will whisk us off to Siberia.

These are not merely two different political

relations with the Nazis actually be a *sanction* of their behavior and a concession of legitimacy to their ideas?

The same applies to the Soviets. We should stop sustaining the illusion that the USSR is a peaceful, civilized country, no different at heart from the United States.

Now, many people are worried that a cutoff of relations with the Soviet Union would be a threat to peace. They have been told that, while the Soviets may have an undesirable form of government, we have no choice but to try to come to terms with them and to negotiate on how to live on this planet together in harmony. This view, however, overlooks one crucial point: *The Soviets don't want peace.*

A genuine desire for peace requires a certain ideology—it requires a renunciation of force, a willingness to leave people free, an acknowledgement that individuals have *rights*, which no state may violate. Does this sound like a philosophy to which the Soviet state subscribes? Is it conceivable that the Soviet government has any *moral* compunction about resorting to aggression? The most recent answer to that question was given ten days ago over the Sea of Japan.

The Soviet government wages permanent war against its own citizens, who must endure a constant state of oppression. Does it make any difference to the Soviet Union whether the people whose rights it violates are inside its borders or out? Does Moscow make some ethical distinction between shooting down people within its airspace or outside it? The Soviets' sole concern is: Can they get away with it? It is time we started to say no. It is time we asked ourselves how many more planes they have to shoot down—how many more countries they have to invade—how many more people they have to enslave—before we understand the threat

IN SUPPORT: Michael Berliner, Ph.D., St. John's University, NYC; Northrup Buchner, Ph.D., St. John's University, NYC; Walter Huescher, Second Renaissance Book Service, Concord, Ontario; Lewis E. Little, Ph.D., First Vice President, Commodities Corp., Princeton, NJ; Edwin Locke, Ph.D., University of Maryland, College Park; Edith Parker, Ph.D., Vice President, Thomas Jefferson Institute, Laguna Hills, CA; Leonard

Prickoff, Ph.D., Author, *The Ominous Parallel*; Editor, *The Early Ayn Rand* (forthcoming), NYC; George Reisman, Ph.D., Pepperdine University, Los Angeles; John Ridpath, Ph.D., York College, Toronto, Ontario

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*The Intellectual Activist*

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