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Statement of

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on

Soviet Emigres

before the

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

Committee on Governmental Affairs

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Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, while it is a pleasure to appear before you today, it is also a challenge of a most delicate sort. The subject of your interest, Soviet emigres, how they might better be used to support government and educational activities in the U.S., is complex, fraught with ambiguities, permeated with emotional and political sensitivities, yet fascinating for both the potential which Soviet emigres bring and the difficulties they encounter in our use of it.

I would like to begin with some background observations and then turn to the practical problem you raise of how we can take better advantage of the new wave of Soviet emigration.

Emigres, particularly political emigres, from the territory now controlled by the USSR have been coming to the West for a very long time. Alexander Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin, two of the great Russian revolutionary writers of the last century, were emigres. Lenin and Trotsky, of course, were emigres as well, two of the better known of a very large community of Russian intelligentsia that found it necessary to come to the West if they were going to carry on the intellectual and political activities they desired.

Let me clarify a technical point here. I will use the word Russian to label many emigres who are not Russian and who are adamant about the distinction between Russian and other nationalities within the old Russian empire. The same problem exists in any discussion of the Soviet Union. Let me state clearly that if I use the term Russian when in fact the person or groups covered are Ukrainian, Jewish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian,

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Georgian, Armenian or some other ethnic identity, it is not because I favor Russification or Sovietization of these peoples. I do not, and if I were one of them, I too would insist on the distinction. For this discussion today, however, matters might become too complicated if these ethnic facts were clarified in every detail. The best way to handle the issue is to acknowledge, as the first problem in dealing with Soviet emigres, that they are not all Russians, that many of them do not accept the political legitimacy of either the Soviet Union or the old Russian empire as the government of their nations.

The United States is more entangled in this problem than most of us realize. Both Woodrow Wilson and Lenin called for self-determination of all nations in 1919. Wilson's principle was seized by many groups to escape the reestablishment of the Russian, Hapsburg, German and Ottoman empires: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Georgia and Azerbaidzhan. While Lenin promised self-determination vis-a-vis the old empire, he opposed it within the fledgling socialist camp. During and after World War II, the USSR reincorporated several of these states into the Soviet Union and imposed a political and military hegemony over most of the others which remains more or less intact today.

We cannot deal effectively with the emigre problem without keen sensitivity to this nationality issue. While the Soviet Union has spoken abundantly more about national liberation from imperialism than has the United States, the United States has done

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abundantly more to help the cause of national self-determination, not only in creation of succession states in East Europe after World War I but also in decolonization on a global basis after World War II. At the same time, the Soviet Union has expanded imperial rule over non-Russian and Russian peoples. That, in large part, explains why we have experienced three waves of emigration from the Soviet Union while the Soviet Union has not enjoyed a stream of immigration to its territories (except, of course, the forced repatriation after World War II).

This excursion into history is not academic. The fate of Soviet emigres in the United States is inextricably entwined with U.S. policy and Soviet policy on the nationality question. In those quarters in the West, in both government and the universities, where Wilson's principle of national self-determination is not welcome when applied to the last remaining large territorial empire (some would also include China, particularly for its actions in Tibet), emigre views are frequently unwelcome. Many emigres remain interested in the decolonization of the USSR. Some of us in the West do not. Thus the nationality issue, with all its historical baggage, permeates the topic you are addressing in this hearing.

In my own experience with emigres, I see today three general patterns of behavior among them. Bear in mind, though, that these patterns are enduring ones, also visible in preceding waves of Russian and Soviet emigration which span a century and a half.

First, there are those who, although forced to come West, do not ignore the West but adapt to become Americans and Europeans.

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They include illustrious names such as Joseph Conrad, Vladimir Nabokov and many others. I hesitate to continue the list because I might overlook many who have so successfully adapted that you would not recognize them as emigres. Most in this group are ordinary people. The large Jewish immigration to the U.S. after the turn of the century included many of this type of emigrant. Large numbers of Poles, Baltic peoples, Ukrainians and Russians also fit this pattern.

Many of the more illustrious among them did not try to educate us on Russia or the Soviet Union because they perceived the gap between East and West as hopeless to bridge. Conrad, who left Russian-ruled Poland to escape induction into the Russian Army, refused to write about his native empire for many years. At the turn of the century, however, he could no longer resist. He gave us a novel, Under Western Eyes, intended to bridge the gap of understanding, to try to let us grasp something of the divide between us and Russia in political, emotional, and social terms. I commend it to you as just as valid today as it was at that time, particularly in light of the apparent winds of change blowing in the USSR. It will give you a sense of the climate that probably prevails within emigre communities today -- not precisely, but certainly a reference point for understanding the cross-pressures emigres experience. Overall, however, emigres in the first pattern shift their life focus and energy to the West, abandoning the political struggle over the future of Russia.

The second group comes to the West not because they want to

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become Americans but because they want our freedom to pursue their own concerns about the future of the USSR. They adjust to the West only insofar as they must. They learn little or nothing about the West. Sometimes they scorn the West, reject it culturally and politically, while they focus their energies on the USSR. Herzen, Bakunin, Plekhanov, Lenin, Trotsky and most of the revolutionaries followed this pattern. Today, one only has to read the literature of the recent emigres to see their obsession with changing the USSR or predicting change there. Not surprisingly, they differ among themselves about the future they would like to see in the USSR. As they have more time to debate the complex question of "whither the USSR?" they will become more fragmented, more contentious in their assessment of Soviet affairs, and given to factions and political struggle among themselves.

A third group, probably much smaller, follows a pattern not unlike that set by Russian intellectuals in the 19th century who became wholly disillusioned with the West, convinced of Russia's moral superiority, and then evolved into proponents of Russian imperialism. Dostoevsky, for example, began as a young radical, was arrested, sentenced to be hanged, given a reprieve, and later became very anti-Western and pro-Russian autocracy. You should not be surprised, therefore, to see occasional cases where individuals return to the USSR, very disillusioned by the U.S.

I mention these patterns in order that you understand better the heterogeneity of the emigre community. Those who have the most to contribute to the purposes you have in mind, naturally, are the

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ones most likely to fit into the second and third patterns. Those in the first pattern find a new life and make their way as Americans. They are not likely to trade on their knowledge about the USSR although they include many who are most able to help us understand that society. Some of them who choose an academic career, especially in the social sciences -- economics, political science, sociology, psychology and history -- may eventually, after they have "made it" in their disciplines, turn to the Soviet area for research. They will make great contributions. Their predecessors have done so. The "first wave" of emigrants after the Russian revolution gave us Karpov and Florinsky, great historians. Kuznets and Leontiev come to mind in economics. There are many others.

It is important to dwell a bit more on the difficulties the new, or third, wave faces in adjusting to the U.S. Language is the first problem. Men and women who climb to lofty positions in their chosen fields in the USSR and then arrive in the U.S. in mid-life are faced with being functional illiterates in English. Until they can speak and, more importantly, write in English, their contributions are greatly restricted. Yet they arrive without the funds and means to spend four or five years studying English. They arrive with a feeling that they know a great deal they could tell us; yet they are insufficiently articulate in English either to offer their insights or, in some cases, to realize that their insights are not so new to us. In both cases they are naturally put off, embittered with a feeling of being unappreciated.

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Second, they come with a grounding in Marxism-Leninism and Soviet categories of analysis, modes of thought that turn out to be obstacles to understanding, both for us and for them. In economics, in law, and in history the barriers are particularly strong. In academic circles where there is strong expertise in these categories, they can be understood, but there are few jobs and professional opportunities there. In circles where such expertise does not reside, they are faced with becoming Americanized so that they can communicate about non-Soviet subject matter.

Third, there is the problem of adjusting to an entirely new sociology of life: how to find an apartment, how to find a job, how to move about, how to deal with local government. In the Soviet Union, position and connections are the currency for dealing with these problems. In the U.S., the currency is dollars. Money is of little concern for most Soviet intelligentsia. Friends, influence, connections, etc., count for everything. In the U.S., things seem upside down for them. They do not find reorientation easy as they face the burdens which American freedoms impose -- choice and opportunity coupled with responsibility for one's self. Their lot is not easy, and we will do well to empathize with it.

Perhaps equally complex and difficult in this matter are the differences among Americans in dealing with emigres. The first wave of emigrants, in the 1920s, does not seem to have made a big impression in American government circles. Most were anti-Soviet and pro-Tsarist, although some were merely anti-Bolshevik, and others were pro-revolution but anti-Marxist. The lack of deep U.S.

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involvement in the affairs of Europe gave our government, academic, and intelligence circles little sustained and disciplined interest in the USSR. Therefore, the first wave was left to fend for itself.

Those in the second wave, after World War II, had quite another experience. They were anti-Stalinist and largely out of touch with the several political alternatives that had inspired hope in 1917. They were welcomed for their views as well as their expertise. They were, however, not as sophisticated as the third wave which followed. Of course there were great exceptions, but many were simply displaced persons with little education, and those with education from Stalinist times knew their Marxist-Leninist catechism extremely well but not much more. While many did not necessarily favor a capitalist road for the USSR, they joined the consensus in the U.S. that the USSR was a major threat, politically and militarily. This allowed the matter of alternatives for the future in the USSR to be glossed over in our dealings with them. That consensus is less strong today, particularly after Vietnam. And it has dissolved in our policy toward competition with the USSR in the Third World, even to some degree in our policy toward Europe.

This change in the political climate coincides with the arrival of the third wave of emigres, which includes very sophisticated and well-educated people. They are not victims of war and upheaval, but people who have tried to change the USSR from within, people who have begun to rethink the basic and age-old questions facing their former country: What is Russia's purpose?

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Whither the USSR? Can a totalitarian regime evolve toward a liberal and humane regime? They have come West not merely to survive Stalin and the fate of war, as did the second wave; they have come from relative privilege in many cases, from positions of status, with keen and energetic minds. They have come with basically different aims, hopes and purposes than did their predecessors. They are more akin to their nineteenth century predecessors than to the first and second waves.

Can we take better advantage of the talents and knowledge they bring? The answer is yes, but the ways to do that are not easy to find.

I would like to cite one example of a very successful use of Soviet emigres. The Army's Russian Studies Institute in Germany has traditionally been staffed almost wholly by Soviet emigres as the teaching faculty. The idea of the institute originated at the end of World War II when it was realized that the Army would need a small cadre of officers fluent in Russian and highly knowledgeable of Soviet affairs. The program included a year of Russian language study at the school in Monterey, a year of graduate study at a university, and then two years at the USARI in Germany, where courses are taught in Russian, exams written in Russian, and the subject matter taught from an ethnocentric Soviet viewpoint. These last two years were originally intended to be in Moscow, but as relations soured in 1946, it became evident that we could not arrange a two-year study program in Soviet schools. As a substitute, a number of Soviet emigres were selected to establish a

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school in Germany. That site was chosen because some of the faculty had difficulties with U.S. immigration authorities over their Marxist beliefs and Communist Party backgrounds. The faculty included several former Red Army colonels, a lawyer who helped Vyshinsky run the purge trials, and a former high-ranking party official who taught at the Institute of Red Professors, heard lectures by Stalin, and was eventually imprisoned as a Bukharinite. Others had worked in the economic planning apparatus, in propaganda, and in the NKVD supervising concentration camps. They gave a lecture course about those institutions and topics on which they were expert from experience and study. They did not understand the U.S. They had never been here except for short visits. They were in mid-life, or older in some cases. But they were extraordinary teachers. While they tended to be vigorously anti-Soviet, some were outspoken opponents of U.S. foreign policy. Some remained convinced Marxists. One former MVD colonel had helped deport and destroy the Chechen-Ingush people in the North Caucasus. A few doors from his office resided a Chechen who never spoke to him and certainly never forgave him his crimes. Needless to say, studying with these people helped give one a view of the USSR from within, not through an American academic prism. The officer-graduates of this program have been the core of the Defense Department's cadre of Soviet area experts. The return on our investment in that program is probably greater, dollar for dollar, than almost all others I know. The institute allowed the Soviet emigres on its staff to make an enormous contribution, to pursue their own academic work, and to

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enjoy status and self-respect.

Perhaps similar schemes could be worked out for other agencies. In the area of military affairs, we might be able to make better use of a select number of emigres who have served in the Soviet armed forces -- not for intelligence purposes, but for interpreting and using a lot of Soviet military press. A wealth of professional articles appear in Soviet journals, but the Soviet approach to military affairs -- conventional force tactics and operations -- is quite different from ours, making it difficult for non-Soviet specialists to grasp it or to avoid being bored by it. For the uninitiated, it is indeed boring.

Another example of how the Department of Defense has used emigres well is the Defense Language Institute. Keeping a native Russian-speaking faculty is imperative. We began to slip from that standard in the 1970s. Things have improved, but DLI needs to keep a fresh flow of new emigres into its ranks in order to stay abreast of current Russian idiomatic speech in the USSR. In passing, I would like to pay my respects to the many dedicated and able Russian instructors at Monterey who, over the four postwar decades, have done more to help Soviet studies than any other single group in the U.S. In the days of the military draft in the U.S., many young college graduates entered the Army, were selected for study at Monterey, and came away with a rather solid foundation in the language. Several of those people became professors in Soviet area studies in many of our universities. Others became diplomats. Seldom have the emigres of the first and second waves who taught at

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Monterey received the praise they deserve for the effect they have had through their students, not only on the academic community but also on the foreign service, the intelligence community and the military services.

Today, the third wave has made its appearance at DLI in a few cases, and in time it must take the torch of language teaching almost wholly into its hands. Its influence may not be as broad as when the military draft made it imperative for a wide cross-section of our society to study there. However, it will still have a large influence, a very important one.

Another example of good use of the third wave by the Department of Defense is Andrew Marshall's Net Assessment Office. A number of projects are funded by Mr. Marshall, small studies by individual Soviet emigres. I have found several of them fascinating, providing written accounts of activities and institutional arrangements in the USSR which do not make the grade in project selection for academic grants. The authors cannot meet the same rigorous standards for evidence, for method of analysis, or simply for interest among university circles that others do. Yet they have very important things to record for us, to explain to us. Many of these papers are uneven, particularly when the author is unread in the Western academic literature, but they frequently contain genuinely new evidence and insights if one is willing to fish for them.

I do not know with great confidence how well the third wave has been used in the academic world over the past few years, but I

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can share some tentative impressions. On the one hand, I have seen a growing number of monographs and books published by emigre scholars. A small number of new emigres have managed to secure teaching positions in spite of a dearth of opportunities in the last couple of decades. Perhaps the most encouraging thing I see is a small number who have come to the U.S. young enough to learn English well and earn a graduate degree, and yet able to remember their experiences in the Soviet Union. They are sufficiently bicultural to succeed as American academicians and to study the Soviet area.

On the other hand, I sense a genuine hostility to the views of many of these emigres. Many American scholars have a much more benign view of the USSR than do most emigres. Some emigres trim their views to meet American preferences. Others do not. At the same time, there is a tendency in some American scholarship to treat emigre and dissident views and writings as biased, evidence to be used with care, if used at all. There is no doubt that biases exist in emigre views, but there is occasionally a kind of lofty pomposity masquerading as detached objectivity among a few American scholars that brings an equal bias to analysis of Soviet affairs.

I mentioned earlier that the politics of the emigres have been diverse, bringing several strains of politics from pre- and post-revolutionary Russia to the West. Those strains meet head-on with an equally diverse set of political biases in the West. Depending on what one thinks U.S. policy toward the USSR ought to be, one will find emigre views more or less congenial. We like the emigres who buttress our prejudices. We ignore those who do not, or

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we snub them if they are sufficiently articulate to make us hear their views in any case.

I emphasize this point because your hearing can easily convey the impression that there are thousands of emigres just waiting to divest themselves of the unvarnished truth about the USSR -- an accurate impression -- and that U.S. policy would become much more effective by a large degree if we simply listened to that unvarnished truth and took it to heart -- a most inaccurate impression. Some emigres arrive with a kind of naivete, convinced that if they could tell the right people about the iniquities of the USSR, U.S. policy would change at once for the better. They slowly become wiser or disillusioned.

Some Americans are equally possessed of a conviction that anything emigres say about the USSR is to be discounted. Those who maintain extensive contact with Soviet officials and value assurance that they will always be welcome in the USSR are sometimes given to this view. Soviet officials know this well, and they play to the American concern, feed it, and do what they can to limit emigre influence.

I do not believe we can get rid of these biases -- pro and anti -- about emigre views. There is truth on both sides, and there is gross distortion on both sides. I readily confess my own bias, one that has shifted over the years. Living among emigres during my language and area training, I found their interminable debates hard to bear. I was particularly impatient with their lack of knowledge about what had been written in the West about the USSR. In the mid-

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and early 1960s, I believe we understood a lot more than most emigres were willing to concede. As our foreign policy consensus broke down and we launched into polarizing debates about the nature of Soviet politics, refracting them through the prism of the radical movement on U.S. university campuses in the late 1960s and 1970s, I noticed more Western scholarship about the USSR that seemed to abuse the facts dramatically.

As I saw more of the third wave of emigres, I came to the conclusion that their biases are a much overdue corrective. Our experts exaggerated the prospects for liberalization in the USSR. Once Khrushchev denounced the malignancy of Stalinism and began to exorcise it, we tended to believe the USSR would soon lose its uniqueness, its totalitarian structure, and become just an ordinary authoritarian system likely to evolve as authoritarian systems were doing in Portugal, Spain, and some Latin American countries. Thirty years after the initiation of de-Stalinization, we find Soviet emigres using the term "totalitarianism," a term believed long irrelevant to an understanding of the USSR in most Western circles. In the mid-1970s I found myself more sympathetic to the general line heard from the emigres, less sympathetic to some American academic circles.

I suppose that you might get a better perspective on what the third wave of emigration can offer if you imagine an American immigration to the Soviet Union -- scholars, lawyers, teachers, economists -- and picture an analogous debate in Soviet official circles about how to understand America from these newly arrived

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Americans. Could those American emigres explain American politics and society to Soviet officialdom? They would certainly believe so, adamantly. Which ones should be taken seriously? The economists who studied under Milton Friedman? Or those who internalized the teachings of John Kenneth Galbraith? Should they believe the opponents of detente or the proponents of detente? Both groups would speak with equal vigor and confidence that they alone possessed the truth. Actually, both groups could tell Soviet officials a great deal, and it would be more accurate than what most Soviet scholars and experts know about us.

The same is true of Soviet emigres. We can learn a lot. It would be interesting to see a close analysis done of what emigres from all three waves have told us over the past seven decades and compare it with what some of our own pundits have reported, including more than a few scholars. Their biases notwithstanding, the emigres generally have been right about more. I believe the record would show that Americans who travel a great deal to the USSR have tended to exaggerate change and liberal trends while the emigres have not. American scholars who have traveled less, listened to the emigres, and carefully studied the evidence available from written sources have done much better in understanding the USSR. This is only a hunch. There are exceptions among the travelers. Tocquevilles do appear occasionally, but only occasionally.

In closing, I want to emphasize that the new Soviet emigres are a great resource. We already have learned a lot from them, and

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we can learn much more. Given the large numbers, however, I doubt that we can use them all; we shall always find some cases of neglected emigres with much to offer us. At the same time, we should not expect vast new insights that alter our policies and basic understanding. The practical task is loosening our own biases sufficiently to accept the truths they bring.

The most important ones are not good news. Are we willing to accept the bad news? I am inclined to skepticism after watching Americans go to the USSR, mix eagerly with Soviet dissidents, champion their views and causes, and then drop them once they have emigrated because their views are troubling. While they are in the USSR, they are treated as sources of great insight. Once they arrive in the West and express doubts about the good will toward the West of the incumbent General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, their views lose cogency for these Americans.

Solzhenitsyn was a hero of our media before he was expelled. He came here, told us unflattering things about both the U.S. and the USSR, and the media discounted his views on both. I find Solzhenitsyn an extraordinary observer of Soviet society, and I listen to him for what he knows about the USSR, not for his views on the U.S.

Rare is the emigre who can deal with both topics, but we have one right here in Washington, the most distinguished novelist of his generation, Vasilii Aksyonov. His most recent book, In Search of Melancholy Baby, opens with a vignette about this very problem with Western intellectuals concerned with the Soviet Union. In his novel

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The Island of Crimea, he satirizes Westerners' fascination with Soviet politics, yet their inability to handle the truths of that politics once back in the West. Are we really ready, as we frequently assert, to recognize these truths?

There are many things we could do to take better advantage of the new emigres, and I hope the committee finds ways to do them. It will not be easy, however, because of the enduring prejudices both we and the emigres bring to the dialogue. The dialogue is important, nonetheless, more important than our dialogue with those Soviet citizens who have not emigrated, insofar as we are intent on seeing the Soviet phenomenon clearly.

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