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To cite this article: James Brown (13 Nov 2023): Resistance International: Soviet dissidents, US conservatives, and Cold War 'anti-communist internationalism', 1983-93, Cold War History, DOI: [10.1080/14682745.2023.2253756](https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2023.2253756)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2023.2253756>



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Published online: 13 Nov 2023.



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Resistance International: Soviet dissidents, US conservatives, and Cold War ‘anti-communist internationalism’, 1983-93

James Brown 

University of Northumbria, Newcastle

ABSTRACT

In 1983 a group of East European dissidents convened Resistance International (RI); a one-of-a-kind Cold War organisation designed to wage a global struggle against communism. Later, in 1984, a US branch of the group was formed with wealthy anti-communist conservative backers. Historians have begun to highlight the complexity of the partnership between East European dissidents and US anti-communists. This article conducts the first detailed study of RI and provides a new opportunity to study how dissident-anti-communist cooperation functioned. The article examines how dissidents involved in RI managed their relationship with US-based anti-communists alongside their relationships with the wider dissident community.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 07 Jul 2022
Revised 08 Jul 2023
Accepted 25 Aug 2023

KEYWORDS

Soviet dissidents;
Neoconservatism; Anti-communism; Cold War NGOs; US politics

[A] rag-bag of East European émigrés, prominent Western right-wing intellectuals, and counterrevolutionary organizations from Africa and Latin America.¹

Africa Now on Resistance International, 1983

In his 2009 article on the late Vladimir Bukovsky’s relationship with Soviet communism, Philip Boobbyer first drew historians’ attention to the 1983 establishment of Resistance International (RI).² As Boobbyer described, the nexus of RI was the Paris-based East European dissident community. RI’s initial purpose was to create a ‘counterweight’ to the 1980s European peace movement which Bukovsky, the group’s founder, and like-minded comrades viewed as a stooge of Moscow that campaigned for the disarmament of Europe to shift the balance of the Cold War in the USSR’s favour.³

CONTACT James Brown  jamespetriebrown@gmail.com

¹A quote describing Resistance International attributed to *Africa Now* by Associate Director of the Washington Office on Africa Kenneth Zinn. See Zinn memorandum to Members Of The Destabilization Task Force, Southern Africa, 20 September 1983, Private Collection of David Wiley and Christine Root (PCoDW&CR), African Activist Archive (AAA), Michigan State University Libraries and Special Collections East Lansing, MI. Available online: https://africanactivist.msu.edu/document_metadata.php?objectid=210-808-1238 (accessed 28 June 2022). For discussion of the concept of ‘anti-communist internationalism’, see Arnd Bauerkämper, ‘Revolutionaries for the right: anticommunist internationalism and paramilitary warfare in the Cold War’, *Cold War History* (2022): DOI: 10.1080/14682745.2022.2063752.

²Philip Boobbyer, ‘Vladimir Bukovskii and Soviet Communism’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 87, no. 3 (July 2009): 452-487; Luke Harding, ‘Vladimir Bukovsky Obituary’, *Guardian*, 28 October, 2019: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/28/vladimir-bukovsky-obituary> (accessed 28th June 2022).

³*Ibid.*, 469; Vladimir Bukovsky, *Patsifisty protiv mira* [Pacifists Against Peace] (Paris: La Presse Libre, 1982).

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RI quickly expanded beyond Europe, establishing its US offshoot in 1984, the American Foundation for Resistance International (AFRI). AFRI eventually attracted significant funding and political attention, including expressions of support by President Ronald Reagan (1981-89); several senior members of the President's administration joined the group's board or advisory committee including Jeane Kirkpatrick, the US ambassador to the UN during 1981-85.⁴ RI aimed to eventually coordinate all anti-communist activism worldwide.⁵

Boobbyer remains the only historian to examine RI and his analysis was part of a broader exploration of Bukovsky's belief system, rather than an in-depth study of the organisation which occupied the dissident's time for a significant part of the 1980s and 1990s. This article presents the first detailed history of this fascinating and sometimes controversial group, using it as a lens to explore wider issues in the study of dissidents, their partnerships with allies in the West, and anti-communism in the late Cold War.

Scholars increasingly recognise the complexity of dissidents' position within Cold War politics and human rights discourse. Kacper Szulecki has recently drawn attention to the creation of 'dissident figures', media profiles of dissidents separate from their real identities, and developed the framework of 'dissidentism' to analyse how Western publications and politicians depicted the appearance of dissidents in the Warsaw Pact as proof of the inevitable triumph of Western individualism against communism, typically focusing on select 'heroic' male personalities.⁶ As Szulecki has said, to this day, 'the West keeps looking for dissidents everywhere it encounters authoritarianism, wherever Western values are not acknowledged or are challenged ... the "dissident" figure carries a presupposed notion of universal values – liberal values.'⁷

Richard Shorten, meanwhile, has suggested there were ideological symmetries between conservative opponents of détente in the West and Soviet dissidents. He posits that these groups can be compared as Cold War 'rebels' who opposed the established Western and Warsaw Pact 'orders' of détente and state socialism respectively through a common appeal to anti-totalitarianism.⁸ At the same time, Jeff Bloodworth and Eliza Kriza have examined the important role played by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in US and British politics in the 1970s and 1980s and his relationship with the neoconservative campaign against détente.⁹

⁴Boobbyer, 'Vladimir Bukovsky and Soviet Communism', 469; President Ronald Reagan to Albert E. Jolis, 23 October 1985, Box 22, Folder 23, *Vladimir Konstantinovich Bukovskii Papers* (VKBP), Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanford, CA.

⁵Galina Akkerman, 'Vladimir Maksimov — sud'by skreshchen'ya', *Kontinent*, 2010, no. 146.

⁶Kacper Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe: Human Rights and the Emergence of New Transnational Actors* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2019), 192 & 207-13. Also see in the same book 'The Absent Women', 155-8 for discussion of the gender dynamics inherent to Western portrayals of East European dissident movements, which meant women's roles were overlooked. .

⁷Ibid, 14; Szulecki, 'The 'Dissidents' as a Synecdoche and Western Construct: A Fresh Look on the Democratic Opposition in Central Europe Before 1989', Conference Paper in *SSRN Electronic Journal*, July 2007: 4-10, 9-10.

⁸Shorten, 'The Cold War as comparative political thought', 406-7.

⁹Jeff Bloodworth, 'Senator Henry Jackson, the Solzhenitsyn Affair, and American Liberalism', *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 97, no. 2 (2006): 69-77; Eliza Kriza, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Cold War Icon, Gulag Author, Russian Nationalist?* (Ibidem Verlag, 2014). See also Umberto Tulli "'Whose rights are human rights?'" The ambiguous emergence of human rights and the demise of Kissingerism', *Cold War History*, 12, no. 4 (2012): 573-93.

A key goal of scholars in the field has been to challenge the tendency to overemphasise the extent of ideological alignment between dissidents and their conservative allies, created by conservatives' own pronouncements to this effect, and the historical failure to illustrate dissidents' agency within these partnerships.¹⁰ In its study of RI, this article contributes to such efforts by highlighting an overlooked example of a partnership between dissidents and Western conservatives, not yet seriously studied in the literature. This further highlights the complexity, inherent tensions, and agency of dissidents within their partnerships with anti-communists and other Cold War allies in the West.

In its examination of RI's continued anti-communist activism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the article also draws attention to the fact that some Soviet dissidents remained highly critical of the USSR despite Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms during 1985-1991. This criticism complicates the typically accepted narrative that the East-West binaries which had defined international politics for the second half of the twentieth century were effectively transcended by the 'liberal triumphalism' of the late 1980s.¹¹

Finally, the article also contributes to recent efforts by Cold War historians to highlight the extent and influence of US anti-communist non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their links with anti-communists around the world. Kyle Burke has notably drawn attention to the complex but extensive relationships between 'radical US conservatives' and anti-communist paramilitary groups in the Third World, as well as the efforts of anti-communist NGOs to lobby the US government.¹² This article further explores this milieu of US anti-communists and their international allies by highlighting RI's role in supporting anti-communist East European dissidents and Third World insurgencies.

The Founding of the Anti-Communist 'International'

The extensive files on RI held at the Hoover Institution that were made available to the author, alongside its members' memoirs, writings, and historical press coverage of the group, form the main source base of this article. These sources reveal that the organisation's early existence was precarious and troubled as Bukovsky, and his allies went about building a network of contacts to support their planned activities.¹³ Following his arrest

¹⁰Some key recent publications include Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratisation and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (London: Routledge, 2005); Robert Horvath, "'The Solzhenitsyn Effect': East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege", *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29 (2007): 879-907; Mark Hurst, *British Human Rights Organizations and Soviet Dissent, 1965-1985* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Ann Komaromi, 'Samizdat and Soviet Dissident Publics', *Slavic Review*, 71, no. 1 (Spring, 2012): 70-90; Benjamin Nathans, 'Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs', *The Journal of Modern History*, 87, no. 3, Literary and Visual Arts in the European Public Sphere (September 2015): 579-614; Serguei A. Oushakine, 'The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat', *Public Culture*, 13, no. 2 (April, 2001): 191-214.

¹¹Represented most notably by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992). For further discussion of how historians should re-evaluate the end of the Cold War, see Shorten, 'The Cold War as comparative political thought', 407-8.

¹²Kyle Burke, *The New Cold War History* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Bauerkämper, 'Revolutionaries for the right'.

¹³Although a majority of the surviving archival material on RI was made available to the author, a limited number of files, mainly relating to RI's finances and some staff meetings, were impossible to access due to the effects of Covid-19 related restrictions on travel to archives throughout 2020-2022 and the resulting increased demand placed on the electronic photoduplication service provided by the Hoover Institution; this meant that not all requests for materials could be processed fully. However, all surviving RI-related correspondence was made available as well as copies of the

and torture in the USSR, Bukovsky had arrived in the West in 1976 as part of a highly publicised prisoner-exchange in which Moscow received the leader of the Chilean Communist Party, Luis Corvalán.¹⁴

Bukovsky subsequently spent time in Britain and America. In both countries, like several other dissidents, he became involved in libertarian and anti-communist politics supporting the conservative campaigns against détente.¹⁵ Bukovsky argued that the West was ‘undergoing unilateral moral disarmament’ and that détente merely represented ‘yet another step forward in the communist offensive and the further enslavement of peoples’.¹⁶

Alongside this activity, Bukovsky involved himself in human rights activism, including the Campaign against Psychiatric Abuse (CAPA) which had called for his release while still in the Soviet Union.¹⁷ Bukovsky ultimately ‘understood himself to be involved in an ideological war with Soviet Communism’ and took a strategic approach to executing his campaign against it, ‘searching constantly for means to influence public opinion’.¹⁸ These overlapping political interests of anti-communism, libertarianism and human rights were all represented in the goals and activities of RI.

The origins of the organisation are to be found in a series of meetings and proposals exchanged between members of the dissident community in Paris in the first half of 1983. The French capital was an important site of East European dissident activity and human rights activism; indeed it was ‘the epicentre of’ what Robert Horvath has called ‘the Solzhenitsyn Effect’.¹⁹ Solzhenitsyn’s exposé of communism in his momentous *Gulag Archipelago* (1974) shattered many leftists’ faith in revolution and ‘undermined ideological obstacles to human rights’ on the Western left, particularly in France.²⁰ The Solzhenitsyn Effect contributed to the wider ‘breakthrough’ of human rights into the mainstream political discourse of the West in the 1970s, which created new levels of public interest and support for human rights groups that dissidents were then able to benefit from.²¹

Following the end of the Vietnam War and the appearance of human rights crises in right and left-wing dictatorial regimes in Eastern Europe and the Third World, new forms of political activism became possible that transcended earlier left-right binaries.²²

group’s founding principles. The main Bukovsky memoir consulted for this article is *Judgment in Moscow: Soviet Crimes and Western Complicity* (Westlake Village, CA: Ninth of November Press, 2019). Bukovsky’s other memoirs, *To Build a Castle* (New York: Viking, 1979) and *Pis’ma russkogo puteshestvennika* (New York: 1981), pre-date RI’s activities. Executive Director of AFRI, Albert Jolis (d. 2000), also published a memoir, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds* (New York: East European Monographs, 1996), which was used to inform on AFRI’s founding and operations. Also see ‘Paid Notice: Deaths Jolis, Albert’, *New York Times (NYT)*, 22 September 2000, Section A, 25.

¹⁴Olga Ulianova, ‘Corvalán for Bukovsky: a real exchange of prisoners during an imaginary war. The Chilean dictatorship, the Soviet Union, and US mediation, 1973–1976’, *Cold War History* 14, no. 3 (2014): 315–336.

¹⁵For Bukovsky’s views on détente in this period, see Andrei Amalrik, Vladimir Bukovsky, Ota Filip, Leszek Kolakowski, Jiří Pelikán, George Schöpflin & Rudolf Tökes, ‘Is détente working?’, *Index on Censorship* 6, no. 6 (1977): 44–51.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Boobbyer, ‘Vladimir Bukovskii and Soviet Communism’, 465.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 485.

¹⁹Robert Horvath, ‘“The Solzhenitsyn Effect”: East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 29, no. 4 (2007): 879–907.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 901 & 907.

²¹Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *The Breakthrough Human Rights in the 1970s* (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2015); Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

²²Kenneth Cmiel, ‘The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States’, *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3, The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue (December 1999): 1231–1250, 1234.

RI capitalised on this changed political environment in the West. Its intention was to gain support to create a vehicle to wage a global struggle and form an anti-communist 'International', a reference to the Internationals of the European communist movement in the early twentieth century, and RI planned to take the offensive to the Soviet Union and its allies by organising anti-communist resistance worldwide. The organisation, however, was beset by logistical difficulties, infighting, and a lack of media exposure from the outset.

The group was formally launched in May 1983 in Paris. The idea for RI had been conceived in the previous winter, when Bukovsky was involved in trying to arrange anti-communist broadcasts to Eastern Europe from Scandinavian countries, a region which later became a focus of RI's European endeavours. The two other notable Soviet dissidents involved with the initial organisation and running of the European group were Vladimir Maksimov, editor of the influential dissident journal *Kontinent* and RI Europe's Executive Director, and Eduard Kuznetsov who had taken part in an attempted 1970 plane hijacking to escape the USSR.²³

Maksimov and Kuznetsov were members of the third wave of Russian émigrés and joined an already active dissident community in the West populated by the first wave made up of those 'Whites' who fled Russia following Bolshevik victory in the Russian Civil War (1917-22), and the second wave of Soviet citizens displaced during WWII who managed to avoid being repatriated.²⁴ These Russian dissidents lived alongside a wide range of nationalities from Eastern Europe and the USSR, with whom they often ran into conflict.²⁵

As well as Maksimov, Kuznetsov, and Bukovsky, another founding member was Olga Svintsova, who played a key role on RI's Third World desk and made several trips to Afghanistan in support of RI's work there freeing Soviet prisoners-of-war.²⁶ In addition to being a founding member of RI, Svintsova was also secretary general of a group called the Sakharov Institute which collaborated with RI.²⁷ Svintsova, however, appears to have been removed from the RI founders' council in 1986 after its members expressed unexplained 'professional mistrust' of her.²⁸ Svintsova's firing is mysterious as there is little useful documentation clarifying the background to her dismissal.

In fact, it is difficult to find much reliable contemporary information about Svintsova and she is not mentioned in either Jolis' or Bukovsky's biographies, only appearing in any detail in an article by the Russian émigré Galina Akkerman on Maksimov. Akkerman was

²³Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 469-70; Bernard Gwertzman, 'Soviet Said to Arrest 20 In Plot to Hijack a Plane', *NYT*, 22 June 1970, 1; Judith Cummings, 'Leningrad Hijacking: A Desperate Act', *NYT*, 30 April 1979, Section A, 12.

²⁴Simo Mikkonen, 'Exploiting the Exiles: Soviet Émigrés in U.S. Cold War Strategy', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 14, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 98-127, 102-103; John Glad ed., trans. Joanna Robin & Richard Robin, *Conversations in Exile: Russian Writers Abroad* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 21.

²⁵Simo Mikkonen, 'Exploiting the Exiles', 99.

²⁶Akkerman, 'Vladimir Maksimov'.

²⁷E. J. Dionne Jr., 'Sakharov Kin Ask New Helsinki Pact', *NYT*, 15 June 1984, Section A, 11. A dissident advocacy group, the Sakharov Institute was criticised by Sakharov himself. See Patricia A. E. Rodgers memorandum to Richard V. Allen, 13 May 1981, b23, f1 (Dissidents), Jack F. Matlock Files, 1983-86 (JFMF), Digital Library Collections, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California; American Embassy, Moscow message to Secretary of State, 14 May 1981, b21, f1, JFMF; Allen memorandum to Gregory Newell, 14 or 13 May 1981, b23, f1, JFMF; Paula Dobriansky memorandum to Allen, 14 May 1981, b23, f1, JFMF; Akkerman, 'Vladimir Maksimov'.

²⁸Gerstenmaier, Kuznetsov, Maksimov, A. Malounian, Nissen, Z. Grigorienco on behalf of P. Grigorienco minutes of a session of the RI Founders Council to Jolis, 20 April 1986, b22, f12, VKBP.

a close associate of Maksimov and worked at RI for a short period during 1986-88 in the RI Paris press office, and is the only female member of RI to have written any account of her experiences.²⁹ Akkerman's involvement with RI was only brief, however, during which time she worked largely with Maksimov with little involvement in the internal workings of the organisation and thus her account only offers limited extra clues as to the working of RI. This is a frustrating fact but unfortunately it is reflective of the gaps in the historical record on women's involvement in Cold War dissent.³⁰ Akkerman does, however, offer insights into some of the relationships between different members of RI and her account of the day she arrived at RI's Paris offices suggests there are other plausible reasons for Svintsova's ejection from the RI founders' council, for example.

The vague reference to Svintsova's supposedly 'mistrust[ful]' character is arguably reflective of a reality inherent to the Cold War dissident community which frequently saw discrimination against women who were relegated to secondary roles.³¹ Indeed, it is certainly possible to detect sexist attitudes within RI, whereby women were treated as an othered, sexualised, or subsidiary category of actor within the work of the organisation and Akkerman attests that Maksimov treated Svintsova poorly, describing overhearing a screaming argument between them the day she arrived at RI.³²

Frequently, women in dissident circles were left to do behind-the-scenes tasks, such as note-taking and administrative duties, and expected to assist the male dissidents while they engaged in their more political, public and 'risky' activities.³³ Indeed, the day-to-day operations of RI seem to have reflected this highly gendered division of labour, with the press team and position of secretary the only roles pre-dominantly occupied by women; Svintsova led the former and Alexandra Schmidt performed the latter role.³⁴ Documentation on Schmidt's involvement in RI is scarce, even though she was again a founding member.³⁵

However, even when women were entrusted with more risky tasks, their role was still often gendered. For example, RI's Czechoslovakian section head, Pavel Tirgid, suggested that for his plan to infiltrate the European peace movement it should be 'preferably a woman of Swedish, French, English, or Dutch nationality' who would covertly embed themselves with peace movement members and extract information.³⁶ The rationale for this preference was not explicitly explained, but Tirgid's preference for a woman to do this work clearly reflected reductive stereotypes of women as *femme fatales*. However, gender was not the only example of where discrimination impacted the work of RI. Ethnic divisions and accusations of Russian domination (complaints reflected throughout the *émigré* community), also afflicted RI.

²⁹Akkerman, 'Vladimir Maksimov'.

³⁰Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe*, 155-8; Shana Penn, *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). Also see Maggie MacAndrew, 'Women's Magazines in the Soviet Union', in *Soviet Sisterhood: British Feminists on Women in the USSR*, ed. Barbara Holland (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), pp. 78-115.

³¹Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe*, 155-8.

³²Akkerman, 'Vladimir Maksimov'.

³³Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe*, 158.

³⁴WOA, Declaration de Principe [Declaration of the Principles of Resistance International], Paris, 16 May 1983, PCoDW&CR, AAA.

³⁵The only surviving letter found to date was one sent by Kuznetsov, which was essentially a list of demands all related to administration, in which the latter reminded her not to forget to complete some instructions he had dictated to her earlier. Kuznetsov to Alexandra Schmidt, 12 June 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

³⁶Paul' Goma and Pavel Tirgid to Maksimov, 6 January 1984, b22, f20, VKBP.

The predominance of Russians in the RI leadership and its day-to-day running (Bukovsky was in principle leader although he mainly functioned as the group's public face) would prove to be a bone of contention among other nationalities in the émigré community.³⁷ Yet other Russian Soviet dissidents were also apparently critical of Bukovsky; these critics included Lyudmila Alekseyeva, one of the most prominent figures in the Soviet human rights movement who Kuznetsov described as waging a campaign – Kuznetsov called it a 'war' – against Bukovsky within the dissident community.³⁸

As a founder member of the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG) which monitored Soviet compliance with the human rights stipulations which the USSR agreed to when it signed the Helsinki Accords in 1976, Alekseyeva took a different view on human rights and détente to Bukovsky.³⁹ Bukovsky, on the other hand, was critical of the effectiveness of the Accords although he praised the work of the monitoring groups, saying it was only their effort that made the Helsinki Agreements worthwhile in any way.⁴⁰ Bukovsky and Alekseyeva also cooperated on the early work of the MHG, jointly writing a letter to *The Times* with Andrei Amalrik to raise awareness of the persecution of the group, in which they called 'the violation of ... [human] rights in the USSR ... a threat to the whole world.'⁴¹

Later when Bukovsky arrived in the UK in 1977, questions were raised by the British press as to why he, like many of the dissidents, mostly associated with right-wing politicians. Alekseyeva defended Bukovsky's meetings with the British Conservative and Liberal politicians and not representatives of the Labour party, asking for patience towards émigrés who could not be expected to immediately understand the precise differences between different political factions in the West.⁴² It is unclear what later disagreement Kuznetsov was referring to in his 1983 letter. There is no further documentation detailing it; but, given that hostility would grow towards RI's association with the Anglo-American right among centrist and left-leaning dissidents, perhaps it was Bukovsky's evolution towards libertarianism and conservatism that had disappointed the more moderate Alekseyeva and provoked her supposed 'war' against him.

In the face of these pressures, Kuznetsov and Maksimov anticipated RI would continue to be pulled in different directions by the various factions of the dissident milieu. Early on in the development of the organisation's structure, they argued for the leadership to have sweeping executive powers.⁴³ These efforts were initially successful. However, the two dissidents also reflected that RI was in a confused situation in general, with severe bureaucratic problems and a lack of coherent vision.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the leadership decided to go ahead with a press conference in Paris on the 16 May 1983 to launch the group officially. The programme included a declaration of RI's principles, which it defined as a response to what the group considered to be the West's 'abandon[ment]' of countries oppressed by communism in Africa, Latin America,

³⁷Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 469-70.

³⁸Eduard Kuznetsov and Vladimir Maksimov joint letter, 5 May 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

³⁹'Soviet Dissident Warned on Rights Unit', *New York Times*, 16 May 1976, 3.

⁴⁰Bukovsky et al., 'Is détente working?', 48.

⁴¹Lyudmila Alekseyeva, Andrei Amalrik & Bukovsky, 'Letter to the editor: Soviet human rights', *The Times*, 26 April 1977, 15.

⁴²Hella Pick, 'Monopoly' on dissidents', *The Guardian*, 10 March 1977, 1.

⁴³Kuznetsov and Maksimov joint letter, 5 May 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

and Eastern Europe. The programme also committed RI to lobbying Western governments on behalf of these nations and shaping Western public opinion in an anti-communist direction.⁴⁵ Once again, the global scope of the group was made clear. Among the signatories to the declaration was Armando Valladares, a notable Cuban human rights activist, poet, and former political prisoner of Fidel Castro's regime. Valladares served as a Vice-President of RI until 1987 when he was made US ambassador to the UN Human Rights commission.⁴⁶

However, the declaration clearly stated that 'the main threat weighing on freedom . . . [was] Soviet imperialism'. Although 'oligarchies and dictatorships' worldwide were also targets, RI's efforts to resist totalitarianism would be chiefly directed against the USSR, given that the state's 'avowed aim' was 'to conquer the world.'⁴⁷ In terms of specific objectives, RI strove to coordinate anti-communist activity by dissidents worldwide and:

... ensure effective coordination of all actions taken against the totalitarian offensive, whether they relate to the defense [sic.] of human rights or whether they are political; provide material and political support to all movements of resistance in totalitarian countries; to help the victims of dictatorial regimes and to demand the rights of refugees; collect and disseminate all information from the totalitarian countries; develop a political philosophy and new methods of action; be recognized by international organizations as a representative public and political institution.⁴⁸

A range of anti-communist groups and political figures attended the conference. These included members of the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO), a guerrilla group with strong links to South Africa which was then waging war against the Mozambique government. Their attendance was of interest to the Washington Office on Africa (WOA), an American trade union and church organisation which lobbied and publicly advocated for US sanctions against Pretoria's apartheid regime.⁴⁹ WOA were concerned about the development of a relationship between the South African-backed RENAMO and RI, which was expanding its US connections. The issue of whether to support the work of the likes of WOA would become a focal point of conflict between the dissidents and American conservatives who ran RI.⁵⁰ At the same time, WOA's interest in RI also reveals how the latter faced criticism in a domestic American context, where left-leaning human rights activists critiqued conservatives' inaction on South Africa and their disproportionate focus on communist regimes as abusers of human rights.⁵¹

Others present at the launch included renowned French philosopher Raymond Aron, chairman of the Committee for a Free World, and British historian of the Soviet Union, Robert Conquest.⁵² Both Aron and Conquest sat on RI's support committee, which numbered 31 people at the time of the conference.⁵³ Most significant among this disparate array of guests and supporters, was a representative of the neoconservative

⁴⁵Declaration de Principe [Declaration of the Principles of Resistance International], 16 May 1983, AAA.

⁴⁶Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 469.

⁴⁷Declaration de Principe [Declaration of the Principles of Resistance International], 16 May 1983, AAA.

⁴⁸Declaration de Principe [Declaration of the Principles of Resistance International], 16 May 1983, AAA.

⁴⁹Kenneth Zinn, 'South Africa Is Teetering', *Washington Post*, 1st September 1985, C1.

⁵⁰Zinn memorandum to Members of The Destabilization Task Force, Southern Africa Working Group, Washington D. C., 20 September 1983, PCoDW&CR, AAA.

⁵¹Kenneth Zinn, 'South Africa Is Teetering', *Washington Post*, 1 September 1985, C1.

⁵²Declaration de Principe [Declaration of the Principles of Resistance International], 16 May 1983, AAA..

⁵³Ibid.

wing of American politics in the form of Norman Podhoretz, editor-in-chief of the influential political journal, *Commentary*.⁵⁴ Links with prominent American neo-conservatives would pave the way for the future foundation of AFRI and the acquisition of significant funds for RI.⁵⁵

Despite the presence of such notable guests, however, the preparation for and results of the event seem to have disappointed Kuznetsov.⁵⁶ In particular, the failure to attract a significant number of journalists to the launch event concerned him. Kuznetsov estimated that, out of the 150 people in attendance, only 30% were journalists.⁵⁷ AFRI chief executive, Albert Jolis, however said the event was 'highly publicised' and the *Associated Press (AP)* published a release which was picked up elsewhere.⁵⁸ Bukovsky anticipated questions about the independence of RI which would dog the group through its existence, and stressed to the *AP* journalist that RI was 'not associated with any government or governmental agency.' *Radio France Internationale (RFI)* also broadcast news of the group's founding in Polish.⁵⁹ In addition, RI appears to have had a four-person press team in place, led by Svintsova, which broadcast news of the International to Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Despite this coverage, Kuznetsov wrote a detailed memo to the leadership, urging for RI to place greater emphasis on building a media profile and a network of useful contacts.⁶⁰ Bukovsky seems to have followed these recommendations by appearing in an interview with a French newspaper to promote RI that month.⁶¹

Even before this detailed memo and its recommendations, Kuznetsov had been busy designing the group's political structure, setting out a complex arrangement as to how RI should be run.⁶² Among his proposals was the idea for a yearly RI congress which would be the key decision-making body; Kuznetsov argued this yearly congress should appoint officials democratically as well as approve group policies. Kuznetsov also paid attention to how RI should address the question of representing the myriad nationalities which were present in the membership.⁶³ The congress was intended to be balanced, comprising representatives from each country who operated their own branch of the group and had a single vote at the congress.⁶⁴ The board, meanwhile, was intended to be composed from regions and countries which were 'most actively resisting totalitarianism ... Afghanistan, Africa, Eastern

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Kuznetsov memorandum to Jacques Broyelle, Bukovsky, Maksimov, & Alexandre Nissen, 9 June 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 363; Greg Macarthur, 'Exiles form anti-communist Resistance International', *The Associated Press, International News Section*, 16 May 1983, Monday, AM cycle.

⁵⁹Typewritten transcript of 'Radio France Internationale transmission in Polish language 12:43', 16 May 1983, b21, f4, VKBP.

⁶⁰Declaration de Principe [Declaration of the Principles of Resistance International], 16 May 1983, AAA; Kuznetsov memorandum to Jacques Broyelle, Bukovsky, Maksimov, & Alexandre Nissen, 9 June 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁶¹Rémy Montour & Vladimir Bukovsky, 'Strolling through the streets, a taste of freedom. An interview with Vladimir Bukovsky', *France Catholique-Ecclesia*, 17 June 1983, translated by Arthur Beard and accessed through *Soviet Dissident Movement in the French Press, Soviet History Lessons*: <https://www.soviethistorylessons.com/vladimir-bukovsky-french-press>.

⁶²Montour, Bukovsky, & trans. Beard, 'Strolling through the streets, a taste of freedom. An interview with Vladimir Bukovsky'; Kuznetsov to Bukovsky, 5 June 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

Europe, Vietnam, China, Latin America, Poland, and the Soviet Union'.⁶⁵ This highlighted the truly international scope of the group and the importance of places beyond Eastern Europe and the USSR to its operations.

Yet while democracy was supposed to be at the core of RI's values, Kuznetsov emphasised that it could not 'be an end in itself' and that 'workability' should be the priority.⁶⁶ Consequently, the only grounds for dismissal of an RI official, via a re-call election, were poor performance.⁶⁷ This reflected his earlier concerns regarding the weakness of the executive body of RI. According to Kuznetsov, the candidates for leadership positions should only be elected and removed when a two thirds majority in the Congress acted to do so, making it harder for personnel changes to take place.⁶⁸ The executive leadership also reserved certain powers as well as the right to make various kinds of requests of the regional/national divisions of RI in terms of their organisation.⁶⁹ Furthermore, only representatives of groupings recognised as UN member-states or eligible for such status had voting rights.

Kuznetsov described his suggestions as 'open for discussion, additions, and any kind of changes' - admittedly only if they were, in his view, 'reasonably justified'. The studied files do not suggest there were any serious immediate revisions to this structure, and the group forged ahead with their ambitious plans of making their anti-communist International a reality. The network of contacts built up by the group, however, would attract criticism from others within the dissident community.

Fighting communism and controversy within RI

Historians increasingly recognise the interconnectedness and transnational character of anti-communist and dissident activism during the Cold War. RI's work stands as further evidence of this.⁷⁰ Correspondence among the leadership from August 1983 reveals RI's members were involved in a myriad of political and human rights activities.⁷¹ Kuznetsov mentioned plans for 20 RI members to take part in a 'March for the Freedom of Nations' between Carlberg and Hambacher Schloss, West Germany.⁷² The same letter also referenced plans to take part in pressurising the Soviet government on its payment of pensions, as well as the idea for a Nuremberg-style trial of communist leaders.⁷³ Kuznetsov estimated the costs of this and other operations would total about \$400,000 and needed funders. This reflected the growing scale of the organisation and the scope of its goals but also increasing concerns about acquiring financial support.⁷⁴

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Kuznetsov and Vladimir Maksimov joint letter, 5 May 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁶⁹Kuznetsov to Bukovsky, 5 June 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁷⁰Martin Klimke, Jacco Pekelder & Joachim Scharloth, eds., *Between Prague Spring & French May: Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960–1980* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

⁷¹Kuznetsov to Bukovsky, 23 August 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

RI's work also transcended the Iron Curtain, further highlighting how the Cold War's state and ideological borders were not always completely impassable for activists.⁷⁵ A letter dated December 1983, sent by West German human rights activist Olgierd Swida to Kuznetsov, reveals that RI was involved in supporting independent publishing in Poland in the aftermath of Polish premier Wojciech Jaruzelski's anti-Solidarity crackdown during 1981-82.⁷⁶ A Polish affiliate of RI, 'Fighting Solidarity', was eventually set up 'which facilitated the smuggling of anti-Soviet US films to Poland.'⁷⁷

Other RI correspondence, meanwhile, with another West German activist, Malwina Shurawel, details RI spending on photographing 'acts in support for Sakharov' in January 1984, reflecting the organisation's newfound emphasis on promoting its image.⁷⁸ Shurawel also recommended that RI explore forming links with the West German Greens, who she envisaged could be 'useful to the group's purposes'.⁷⁹ Other activities discussed included a Baltic 'Freedom Cruise', when a group of dissidents aboard a boat sailed to Helsinki Harbour to protest against the ineffectiveness of the Helsinki Accords.⁸⁰ The sum of this correspondence would suggest that RI was travelling in a European direction in terms of the composition of the network it was building. Later enterprises would include a Swedish branch of RI and plans for a Finnish one, while an affiliate organisation included the French Committee for the Supervision and Application of the Helsinki Agreements.⁸¹

However, RI was also heavily involved with anti-communist groups outside Europe. Notably, RI was making contacts with anti-communist groups leading resistance against socialist governments in Guinea, namely the *Mouvement des Guinéens de l'Extérieur* [Movement of Guineans Abroad] who resisted the rule of the Marxist President Ahmed Sékou Touré (1958-84); Ghana, where RI had contacts with the Ghana Democratic Movement; Laos, where contacts were formed with the *Front pour la Liberation Nationale du Laos* [National Movement for the Liberation of Laos]; Afghanistan; and the Republic of Congo.⁸² RI also disseminated information to the Western press on behalf of UNITA, the anti-communist insurgent group in Angola.⁸³

RI's principal goals in dealing with these groups were to help them attract publicity to their struggles, but also act as an intermediary between them and Western governments as they sought political support. A further area of key concern at the time was supporting anti-communists in Central America. Anti-communists in Nicaragua were particularly important. Svintsova was given responsibility for overseeing relevant operations, and she assisted the work of the prominent Contra politician, Alfonso Robelo while he toured Europe in 1984.⁸⁴

Robelo first visited London and met with Foreign Office officials. He also visited Paris RI's members who were reportedly assailed by 'highly organised' members of the French

⁷⁵Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe*, 4.

⁷⁶Olgierd Swida to Kuznetsov, 12 December 1983, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁷⁷Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 471.

⁷⁸Malwine Shurawel to Bukovsky, January 1984, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁷⁹Shurawel to Bukovsky, January 1984, b22, f18, VKBP.

⁸⁰Jolis to Bukovsky, 27 November 1985, b22, f5, VKBP.

⁸¹Anders Larsson to Maksimov, 4 August 1985, b22, f19, VKBP.

⁸²Untitled and unauthorised memorandum to Bukovsky and Valladares, 11 April 1984, b21, f4, VKBP.

⁸³Jolis to Bukovsky, 27 November 1985, b22, f5, VKBP.

⁸⁴RI, 'Report on the visit of Alfonso Robelo', 20 April 1984, b21, f4, VKBP; Reid G. Miller, 'Alfonso Robelo to Quit Contra leadership', *The Gettysburg Times*, 15 April 1987, 7; RI, 'Work Schedule until the end of 1984', undated, b21, f4, VKBP.

Comité de Solidarité avec le Nicaragua [Solidarity Committee with Nicaragua] and the left-wing El Salvadorian *Farabundo Martí* front who destroyed some of the group's documentation and assaulted Svintsova.⁸⁵ The incident highlighted the intensity of the ideological conflicts in which RI was involved, and the level of opposition to the activities it supported, including from left-wing human rights activists and socialist internationalists in Europe. Yet, RI also had its own plans for aggressive, more subversive measures to be directed against the peace and ecological movements in Europe of the time.

In a letter written in January 1984 to Maksimov, Pavel Tirgid, the representative of RI's Czechoslovak section, proposed radical plans to infiltrate the European peace movement. The intended strategy was to send this person to make contacts within the movement and learn more about the ways in which RI could influence it.⁸⁶ These plans (which, according to Bukovsky seem to have been actioned) were a realisation of one of RI's core aims: to undermine the peace movement as part of a wider effort to create a binary choice for its activists to come out as either against the Soviet Union and its allies, or for them.⁸⁷ The ultimate goal was to delegitimise middle road stances, using methods such as accusations that peace activists were in the pay of Moscow, in order to force them to prove their loyalties and independence and to split the peace movement.⁸⁸

In its efforts to attract funding, RI's representatives made these aims abundantly clear, especially when approaching American businesspeople and conservative foundations. However, whatever benefits American help may have brought RI, such actions led to growing concern among the wider dissident community about the increasing influence of American figures and groups in RI, and the rigid structure of the organisation.

In October 1983, the Vice Chairman of the dissident organisation, the European Liaison Group (ELG), Stanislav Grocholski wrote to Bukovsky to complain of what he considered 'the mess with RI' and its organisation.⁸⁹ (At the time, ELG was an associate of RI). First of all, referring to Kuznetsov's original system that made it difficult to remove the leadership, Grocholski criticised RI's structure as oligarchic and designed 'to keep everything in the hands of the "founder members" which, alas, mean[t] Russians'.⁹⁰ Grocholski then followed up this letter with another in January 1984. This second letter initially began positively, reflecting on how many of the criticisms he and the ELG had made of the imbalances in RI's structure had been heard and acted upon.⁹¹ However, Grocholski had a sterner warning on the growing 'smell of American money' in RI.⁹² Grocholski relayed the concerns expressed to him by other dissidents about whether RI was becoming an 'American agency', and whether Bukovsky had been 'taken over by the "Anglo-American right"'. It is also noteworthy that Bukovsky's association with the American and British right alienated Western human rights supporters as well as dissidents themselves.⁹³

⁸⁵RI, 'Report on the visit of Alfonso Robelo', 20 April 1984, b21, f4, VKBP, 2.

⁸⁶Paul' Goma and Pavel Tirgid to Maksimov, 6 January 1984, b22, f20, VKBP.

⁸⁷Bukovsky to Henry Salvatori, 31 December 1983, b22, f27, VKBP.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Stanislav Grocholski to Bukovsky, 17 October 1983, b22, f6, VKBP.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Grocholski to Bukovsky, 26 January 1984, b22, f6, VKBP.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Bent Boel, 'The International Sakharov Hearings and Transnational Human Rights Activism, 1975–1985', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 23, no. 3 (Summer 2021): 81–137, 122; Grocholski to Bukovsky, 26 January 1984, b22, f6, VKBP.

The Paris émigrés lived in a world where their cooperation was constantly sought by the US government, particularly its intelligence agencies. Thus suspicions often arose as to the sources of funding behind émigré organisations, and dissidents strove to disassociate themselves from official bodies to maintain their independence.⁹⁴ Although Grocholski showed understanding for RI's difficult financial position, he emphasised the need for improvements and warned that even though RI might have got 'the ear of the mighty and some money' - i.e. US conservatives - it still faced the problem of 'how long' such money could be held on to, and the problems associated with relying on assistance from politically transient supporters.⁹⁵

The criticism RI faced from more left-leaning sections of the dissident movement reflected the complex position in which its dissident members found themselves as they attempted to navigate Western politics in order to secure support. Although the rewards of cooperation with the American right were great, they inevitably risked alienating other members of the dissident community. The dissidents, meanwhile, also unavoidably ended up becoming actors within Western politics on opposite sides of the political spectrum.

However, despite Grocholski's and the other dissidents' warnings, RI's links with the US right only intensified. Already, as early as summer 1983, Bukovsky had unsuccessfully reached out to Robert Reilly, Director of the Office of Private Grants Programs of the United States Information Agency (USIA), the official public diplomacy branch of the US government.⁹⁶ This approach was at odds with the RI leadership's consistent public efforts to distance itself from Western governments. It is likely that it was a reaction to the increasing financial burdens being placed on the group. Yet, even if Bukovsky had not been successful with USIA directly, his government contact Reilly put him in touch with the wealthy and more sympathetic conservative businessman and philanthropist Henry Salvatori.⁹⁷ Bukovsky wrote to Salvatori at Reilly's suggestion, detailing at length the goals and plans of RI, as well as its achievements to date, such as smuggling Soviet soldiers out of Afghanistan and supporting independent publishing in Warsaw Pact states. Bukovsky told Salvatori of his desire to grow RI's operations; however, he spoke of a need to focus on 'first building up [its] infrastructure on a solid footing' and expressed his 'hope' that the businessman could 'contrive a solution.'⁹⁸

Salvatori was receptive to Bukovsky's plea, offering to donate \$10,000 to RI. He still tried to convince Reilly that government funding was necessary (Reilly had moved to another government department by then).⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Salvatori's donation was the first in what would become an avalanche of funding from sympathetic conservative

⁹⁴Mikkonen, 'Exploiting the Exiles', 98-127. Also see Giles Scott-Smith's study of the Interdoc network for insight into Western intelligence agencies' efforts to coordinate worldwide anti-communism: Scott-Smith, *Western anti-communism and the Interdoc network* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁹⁵Grocholski to Bukovsky, 26 January 1984, b22, f6, VKBP.

⁹⁶Robert Reilly to Bukovsky, 9 August 1983, b22, f1, VKBP.

⁹⁷Reilly was demoted from his post as Director of the Office of Private Grants Programs in June 1983. However, he continued as a public servant as Associate Director of the Office of Public Liaison and maintained some correspondence with Bukovsky and his supporters. See Ed Rogers, 'Wick shifts conservative from USIA grants post', *The Washington Times*, 21 June 1983, 5A; Reilly to Salvatori, 3 January 1984, b22, f27, VKBP.

⁹⁸Bukovsky to Salvatori, 31 December 1983, b22, f27, VKBP.

⁹⁹Salvatori to Reilly, 12 January 1984, b22, f27, VKBP.

donors once RI gave itself some of the ‘infrastructure’ Bukovsky had described, in the form of the American Foundation for Resistance International (AFRI).

RI’s American Alliance

Formed throughout the summer of 1984, AFRI was intended to shape American public opinion and attract funding for RI’s growing remit of activities.¹⁰⁰ A series of meetings held in Washington D.C. from May onwards led to the development of the legal and operational framework for AFRI, as well as provisions for its staffing. The key figures in the early days of RI’s American venture, in addition to the original leadership, were Albert Jolis a wealthy American businessman and former member of the WWII-era US intelligence agency the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and initially Mikhail Makarenko, a Soviet dissident imprisoned for a lengthy period by the KGB during the 1970s.¹⁰¹ According to Jolis, his own involvement with RI began in 1983 after reading press coverage of a conference at which three deserters from the Soviet army that invaded Afghanistan in 1979 were presented to the public; RI had facilitated their escape to the West.¹⁰² Jolis sought out Bukovsky whom he met in Palo Alto, California where the dissident was doing research.¹⁰³

At their meeting, Jolis expressed his desire to help RI. Bukovsky explained that his offer was welcome, but that most of all he needed financial support.¹⁰⁴ Jolis offered his services as a fundraiser, despite lacking professional experience, and suggested that an American based branch was needed.¹⁰⁵ However, Jolis was informed that such a branch already existed, Resistance International USA (RI USA). This had been set up in Washington D.C. by Makarenko on Bukovsky’s instructions. However, this enterprise quickly collapsed as Jolis and Bukovsky struggled to work with Makarenko, who disrupted the organisation of the group. Makarenko’s daughter and son-in-law, who were also on RI USA’s board, resisted the inclusion of Americans.¹⁰⁶ With Makarenko exerting so much control over RI USA, Jolis and Bukovsky resolved to set up an entirely new body, calling it AFRI.¹⁰⁷

Despite the shaky start, AFRI became a successful enterprise launching a number of anti-communist projects and attracted significant funding. Total donations throughout its lifetime amounted to several millions of dollars, according to Jolis, and importantly, for the sake of AFRI’s public image, it drew ‘not a cent from government.’¹⁰⁸ Although the available financial records are incomplete, they nonetheless suggest that fundraising likely

¹⁰⁰Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 369.

¹⁰¹‘Mikhail Makarenko’, *A Chronicle of Current Events* (reprinted by Amnesty International Publications) no. 48 (1978): 97-99; By Sandhya Somashekhar, ‘Rights Activist Killed at N.J. Rest Stop’, *Washington Post*, 16 March 2007: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/15/AR2007031501923.html> (accessed 28 June 2022).

¹⁰²Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 361.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶Bukovsky to Mikhail Makarenko, 6 August 1984, b22, f20, VKBP; Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 364-5; Jolis memorandum to Bukovsky, ‘Resistance International (USA) Administrative Arrangements’, 31 May 1984, b22, f20, VKBP; ‘Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Director of Resistance International’, Washington D.C., 25 June 1984, b22, f20, VKBP; Olga Murashova and Valeri Varus memorandum to Bukovsky, ‘Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors RI USA’, Munich, West Germany, 13 July 1984, b22, f20, VKBP.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 369.

reached at least US\$1 million. In April 1985, the Olin Foundation's donations helped RI fund what Jolis described as a 'delegation of European World War II Resistance leaders and parliamentarians. [This was] at a time when Ronald Reagan was trying to get a balky Congress to approve his policy of resistance to Communist subversion in Central America.'¹⁰⁹

With the support of Jeane Kirkpatrick, who afterwards accepted Jolis' invitation to join AFRI's board and was often involved in the group's activities, the delegation was able to go to the Capitol and address an audience of senators.¹¹⁰ Reagan eventually met with the group in the White House and Jolis wrote to the President in August later that year.¹¹¹ The letter mainly praised Reagan and explained RI's mission, but Jolis also included an AFRI brochure in the hope of gaining the President's public support.¹¹²

Jolis' overture was successful. Reagan first wrote a letter in praise of AFRI and then later gave remarks to be read on his behalf at one of two 'Helsinki "Parallel" Conferences' in 1986. During this conference RI exposed what its members saw as the failings of the Helsinki Accords to punish human rights abuses in the USSR and involved notable Soviet dissidents such as Natan Scharansky and Yuri Orlov.¹¹³ Eventually, those sitting on AFRI's board and advisory committee included a host of influential American political and cultural figures, including Reagan's political adviser Richard Perle¹¹⁴, Nobel laureate Saul Bellow, the conservative political commentator William F. Buckley Jr., and Republican congressman Jack Kemp.¹¹⁵ Jolis also mentioned a fruitful partnership with Midge Decter, Executive Director of the right-wing Committee for the Free World think tank, and an influential neoconservative figure along with her husband Norman Podhoretz.¹¹⁶

RI operated at a nexus of private business and politics which was markedly different from previous iterations of formal cooperation between East European émigrés and the US, which had often involved the intelligence services. Indeed, Jolis himself had been involved in an organisation called American Friends of Russian Freedom (AFRF) in the 1950s supporting those fleeing the communist bloc.¹¹⁷ Although mainly overtly funded through the United States Escapee Plan (USEP) run by the State Department, on occasion AFRF collaborated with the CIA.¹¹⁸

AFRF was but one example of how the CIA became involved in attempts to mobilise East European émigrés in the context of the Cold War in the 1950s.¹¹⁹ In this era there was a strong liberationist drive in US foreign policy that led to repeated clandestine attempts to weaponise émigrés and defectors to undermine the communist states, especially the USSR.¹²⁰ The CIA supported Russian émigrés with the view that they

¹⁰⁹ibid, 366.

¹¹⁰ibid, 367.

¹¹¹ibid.

¹¹²Jolis to President Ronald Reagan, 21 August 1985, b22, f23, VKBP.

¹¹³Reagan to Jolis, 23 October 1985, b22, f23, VKBP; Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 370-1; John A. Callcott, 'Reagan pledges to support freedom fighters everywhere', *United Press International (UPI)*, 14 April 1986.

¹¹⁴Richard Perle served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Strategic Affairs 1981-1987.

¹¹⁵Jolis to Bukovsky, 22 October 1992, b22, f15, VKBP.

¹¹⁶Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 366.

¹¹⁷Richard H. Cummings, *Cold War Frequencies: CIA Clandestine Radio Broadcasting to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2021), 58.

¹¹⁸ibid, 61.

¹¹⁹Simo Mikkonen, 'Exploiting the Exiles', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 14, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 98-127; Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹²⁰Benjamin Tromly, *Cold War Exiles And The CIA: Plotting To Free Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 5.

could lead the liberation of the Russian nation. These efforts ran into difficulties, however, as US operatives struggled to reconcile the various political and ethnic disputes that divided the émigrés and prevented the desired formation of the broad anti-communist coalition; the stability of Soviet rule was severely underestimated by the US which also overestimated the strength of Russian anti-Soviet sentiment.¹²¹ There were also, of course, consistent efforts to incite anti-Soviet opinion by broadcasting dissidents' messages via Radio Free Europe.¹²²

AFRI was certainly different to AFRF and deliberately avoided any association with the CIA and official involvement with the US government. However, AFRI and RI's relationship with the US government, or at least their interest in having one, was slightly less clear than the organisation's members would make often out. As mentioned, AFRI attracted public political support and bid, albeit unsuccessfully, for financial backing from USIA. Bukovsky also appears to have met the US National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane in 1983 on the subject of Soviet POWs, presumably in Afghanistan, and US national security officials certainly had RI on their radar with the National Security Council's Soviet Political Action Working Group recommending a 'review be undertaken to determine [the] support needed by . . . Resistance International'.¹²³

What support this entailed and whether it was provided is unclear, though it may have simply referred to public political support which was provided by the Reagan administration in the form of public and private remarks of support.¹²⁴ Ultimately, there is no hard evidence that implies RI had any kind of formal relationship with the US government while AFRI keenly appreciated the damage that association with the US government could do to its image as well as to RI's relations with the wider East European émigré community.¹²⁵

East European émigrés faced a constant process of identity negotiation in the West while also navigating political pressures exerted by Western politicians and governments to engage with anti-communist policies. As Anna Mazurkiewicz says, 'the exiles were used (abused?) by both sides of the Cold War divide'.¹²⁶ AFRI's and RI's set-up reflected the growing trend towards private, independently led activist groups supporting dissidents that emerged in the West following the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975. As Christian Philip Peterson points out, private citizens played a vital role in shaping public opinion and pressuring Western governments to support human rights issues in the

¹²¹Ibid, 6.

¹²²Alexey Antoshin, 'U.S. and 'Turkestan' Political Exiles during the Cold War: Information Policy of Radio Liberty in Soviet Central Asia', *Journal of Russian History*, 21, no. 4 (December 2022): 509-525.

¹²³Walter Raymond to Robert 'Bud' McFarlane, 6 December 1983, *Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File*, RAC Box 24, Folder 'USSR (12/01/1983-12/06/1983)' *Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RRPL), Simi Valley*; Raymond to McFarlane, 9 December 1983, *Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File*, RAC Box 24, Folder 'USSR (12/01/1983-12/06/1983)', *RRPL, Simi Valley*; Walter Raymond to Soviet Political Action Working Group, 6 January 1984, *Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File*, RAC Box 25, Folder USSR (1/6/1984-1/7/1984) *RRPL, Simi Valley*.

¹²⁴Anne Higgins to Rodney McDaniel, 8 April 1986, *Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File*, RAC Box 25, Folder USSR (1/6/1984-1/7/1984) *RRPL, Simi Valley*.

¹²⁵Grocholski to Bukovsky, 26 January 1984, b22, f6, VKBP.

¹²⁶Anna Mazurkiewicz, 'Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War', *Polish American Studies*, 72, no. 2 (Autumn 2015): 77; Anna Mazurkiewicz, ed., *East Central Europe in Exile. Volume 2: Transatlantic Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013); Anna Mazurkiewicz, ed., *East Central European Migrations During the Cold War: A Handbook* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

1970s and 1980s.¹²⁷ AFRI was an example of this more informal form of alliance between the émigré community and US political groups.

One of AFRI's particular concerns was counteracting what Jolis and others saw as the susceptibility of the US public to Soviet propaganda. In anticipation of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1987, Jolis wrote to William Simon, chairman of *Wesray Capital Corporations* (and former Secretary of the Treasury 1974-77), that the US media would 'gobble up' the Soviet propaganda and that RI and *Wesray* should: 'be prepared to meet this propaganda onslaught. We should create a "National Committee to Commemorate the October Revolution." The theme should be "Seventy Years of misery, genocide, economic failure, religious persecution, spiritual starvation, and colonial expansion"'.¹²⁸

In this public relations mission, AFRI was able to gain exposure in both the *Washington Post* and *NYT*, running large advertisements making appeals to readers and Congress on issues such as the need to send aid to the resistance against the FSLN dictatorship in Nicaragua, and to support the passage of the McClure Amendment to restrict trade with the USSR on human rights grounds.¹²⁹ Other plans included the idea for an RI student group based at Boston University.¹³⁰ At the same time, the group's financial fortunes continued to rise. Gross income in 1985 grew to US\$131,156, from US\$62,000 in 1984, rising again to US\$153,575 in 1986, with the majority of the grants supplied by the Olin and Smith Richardson foundations after AFRI gained tax-exempt status in 1985.¹³¹

In 1986 RI also held a 'Tribunal on Cuba' which featured addresses by Cuban exiles who had suffered political repression, and the event was picked up by both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.¹³² Yet focusing on these fundraising and publicity successes as well as acts of political unity disguises the significant ideological differences, especially those regarding approaches to human rights activism raised by Grocholski, which existed between the dissidents and neoconservatives who ran AFRI.

These ideological differences had come to the fore in late 1985 when Bukovsky lent his name to a campaign supporting the human rights movement led by Desmond Tutu against the apartheid government of South Africa. Bukovsky was approached by Joan C. Baez, the president of the human rights organisation Humanitas International, to be among the signatories to a letter written in support of Tutu. The letter was intended to

¹²⁷Christian Philip Peterson, *Globalizing Human Rights: Private Citizens, the Soviet Union, and the West* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

¹²⁸Jolis to William E. Simon, 3 August 1986, b22, f12, VKBP.

¹²⁹'Display Ad 13 – No Title', *Washington Post*, 20 June 1988, A11; 'Display Ad 42 – No Title', *NYT*, 18 April 1985, B28. The McClure amendment, proposed by Republican Senator James McClure, was an unsuccessful attempt to link Most Favoured Nation status to a stricter regime of human rights requirements at a time when trade relations between the US and USSR were improving under Gorbachev. See 'Senate Amendment 2433 to HR 4775', Monday 27 June 1988, *Congressional Record, 100th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 134, Part 11 — Bound Edition* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1988), 16008-17; Clyde H. Farnsworth, 'Rights Measure Disturbs Hopes for Soviet Trade', *NYT*, 5 June 1988, Section 1, 16.

¹³⁰Sutherland to Bukovsky, 1 May 1985, b22, f1, VKBP.

¹³¹AFRI memo, 'Annual Meeting of The Board of Directors of The American Foundation', 16 May 1985, b21, f5, VKBP; Jolis memo to Board of Directors, 'Progress Report', 7 May 1985 b21, f5, VKBP; AFRI, 'Statement of Receipts and Expenditures', 30 September 1985, b21, f5, VKBP; Jolis memo to Board of Directors, 'Progress Report', 12 May 1986, b21, f6, VKBP.

¹³²Unauthorised and undated memo, 'Tribunal on Cuba', referencing public event which took place 11-12 April 1986 in Paris, b21, f6, VKBP.

feature in South African newspapers and to reach a multiracial audience.¹³³ Bukovsky agreed and among the co-signatories were other prominent East European dissidents, including Lech Wałęsa and Aleksandr Ginzburg.¹³⁴

Bukovsky's support for the enterprise deeply rankled with Jolis, however, who wrote a detailed letter to the dissident expressing his shock at seeing his colleague's name attached to the letter to Tutu. Jolis argued RI should distance itself from involvement with South Africa, and especially refrain from giving any support for the African National Congress (ANC).¹³⁵ Jolis told Bukovsky, he was 'totally astonished' and called many of the co-signers 'useful idiots' and 'fellow travellers' of Moscow.¹³⁶ Bukovsky had spoken to Jolis about the publication of the letter in advance and argued its relevance and suitability to AFRI. However, Jolis completely disagreed and fretted about the impact that Bukovsky's association with the anti-apartheid ANC might have on future funding bids from anti-communist foundations, controversially calling the ANC an 'integral part of the Soviet power structure.'¹³⁷ Jolis suggested that while RI should oppose apartheid, it need not become embroiled in a campaign against the South African government which he felt aided the USSR by destabilising the whole of Southern Africa to allow a communist takeover. He also argued that South Africa was less of a priority than the USSR as it did not try to export its regime unlike Moscow.¹³⁸ Jolis concluded by stressing his respect for Bukovsky but explaining that was why he felt obliged to warn him of the supposed perils of involving himself and RI in the South Africa issue.¹³⁹

Jolis and Bukovsky's disagreement reveals the differences between the neoconservative's and dissident's priorities in their approach to human rights activism. While critical of détente and fervently anti-communist, Bukovsky's focus ultimately was to promote human rights and he saw no conflict in co-signing the letter supporting Tutu with RI's anti-communist cause. Bukovsky linked communism with a denial of human rights and therefore opposed abuses of human rights when they took place in other contexts. Jolis, on the other hand, was clearly preoccupied with the cause of anti-communism on the basis of communism's perceived evil nature alone. He was also sympathetic to the influential ideas of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine, that right-wing dictatorships were a lesser threat to the US than 'totalitarian' communist ones.¹⁴⁰

Of course, Bukovsky was certainly critical of human rights ideas on one level. For example, as discussed earlier, the dissident attacked the Helsinki Act, the fundamental legal embodiment of human rights concerns during the Cold War.¹⁴¹ However, his anger towards Helsinki lay more in what he perceived as the weak wording of the act and the failure of Western governments to hold the USSR accountable to its agreement.¹⁴² Bukovsky had a unique view on human rights. He rejected attempts to politicise him

¹³³Lucy Howard, 'South Africa: A Letter to Bishop Tutu', *Newsweek*, 7 October 1985, 23 clipping in b22, f8, VKBP.

¹³⁴Joan C. Baez et al., 'Dear Bishop Tutu', in b22, f8, VKBP.

¹³⁵Jolis to Bukovsky, 16 October 1985, b22, f1, VKBP.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰Jeane Kirkpatrick, 'Dictatorship and Double Standards', *Commentary*, 68, no. 5 (November 1979):34–45.

¹⁴¹Amalrik, Bukovsky, Filip, Kolakowski, Pelikán, Schöpflin & Tökes, 'Is détente working?', 47.

¹⁴²Vladimir Bukovsky, *Judgement in Moscow: Soviet Crimes and Western Complicity* (Westlake Village, CA: Ninth of November Press, 2019), 594.

in traditional terms of 'left' and 'right', which became more frequent the longer he stayed in the West. Bukovsky focused on 'moral opposition', evoking the non-partisan spirit which was the foundation of Soviet human rights movement.¹⁴³ Bukovsky emphasised principles over politics. Libertarianism was a consistent feature of his personal outlook derived from his perception of the Soviet regime as an oppressor of personal liberty, rather than the more political libertarianism he may have encountered in the US.¹⁴⁴ In this way, it is possible to see how Bukovsky saw it as appropriate to support the anti-Apartheid campaign and that the South African government was a further example of a regime that oppressed the individual.

Furthermore, the level of Jolis' surprise at Bukovsky's support for the anti-Apartheid initiative illustrates that there was significant scope for political misidentification between Western conservatives and otherwise sympathetic Soviet dissidents. In his memoirs, Bukovsky reflected that his American allies misunderstood the true purpose of RI and that this led the group to lose its direction.¹⁴⁵ Yet, as well as coming into conflict with conservatives within his own organisation, Bukovsky increasingly found himself at odds with the conservative US administration for different reasons, particularly after Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Soviet Union in 1985. The dissident had already begun to attack the US as weakened by its prosperity. He claimed US foreign policy had an 'absence of any defining concept' and enabled the USSR to dominate Eastern Europe and trample on human rights.¹⁴⁶ When Gorbachev initiated his reforms with the support of Western states, Bukovsky called '[g]lasnost more shadow than substance' and AFRI continued to direct its efforts against the USSR.¹⁴⁷

AFRI and RI in the era of Gorbachev

Bukovsky suggested that *glasnost's* innovations were merely the 'guise of a democracy' under which the old elite could cling to power.¹⁴⁸ The dissident doubted that there was any real difference between Gorbachev and the men he had succeeded as Soviet leader.¹⁴⁹ Bukovsky was especially concerned that Gorbachev had convinced the West he was a true reformer and attracted firm support from Reagan, with the dissident later criticising the President for abandoning his 'economic war' against the USSR.¹⁵⁰

In response, the Soviet press singled out RI for criticism in 1986, with an article attacking the group for its opposition to Gorbachev printed in the multi-language Soviet publication *New Times*.¹⁵¹ However, in the context of *glasnost*, increasing East-West cooperation and later the 1989 revolutions, RI's members were becoming increasingly isolated in Western politics. They began to associate more and more with those remaining Western conservatives still committed to waging the Cold War, having already

¹⁴³Boobbyer, 'Vladimir Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 463.

¹⁴⁴Ibid, 485.

¹⁴⁵Bukovsky, *Judgement in Moscow*, 596.

¹⁴⁶Ibid, 17.

¹⁴⁷Bukovsky, 'Gorbachev's Glasnost More Shadow Than Substance', *Human Events*, 12 December 1987, 6 & 19.

¹⁴⁸Bukovsky, *Judgement in Moscow*, 582.

¹⁴⁹Ibid, 583.

¹⁵⁰Ibid, 584-7.

¹⁵¹Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 369; M. Putinkovsky, 'International of Resistance', *New Times*, 1986, no. 14: 19-21 in b22, f22, VKBP.

appeared at a London conference organised by the 'Committee for the Free World' where speakers critiqued Western reconciliation with Gorbachev's USSR.¹⁵²

This era marked a new phase in the history of AFRI and RI. The original European branch lost relevance after 1989 and was replaced by a body called Democracy and Independence. This entity was led by Bukovsky but principally run by Paruir Airikian, an Armenian nationalist dissident. Maksimov fell out with Bukovsky and Valladares at this time, which also hastened the demise of RI in Europe.¹⁵³ This did not undermine AFRI's determination to continue resisting communism, however, and it continued to fight its crusade against the USSR.

In 1989 RI convened a special wing of its organisation, the National Council to Support the Democracy Movements (NCSDM), 'to expand [RI's] fund-raising capacity' and AFRI continued to attract generous donations from conservative sympathisers, including US\$25,000 from the *Goldsmith Foundation* belonging to the right-wing British business tycoon, James Goldsmith.¹⁵⁴ Gross income for the year 1990 stood at US\$482,195.¹⁵⁵

At this time a range of enterprises were launched through the auspices of NCSDM. A key achievement included helping to organise a meeting between the newly elected President of Czechoslovakia Václav Havel and 'democracy leaders from each of the Soviet republics' in Prague in 1990. Yet again, there had been reservations among some on the Czechoslovakian side about the involvement of AFRI, but the event ultimately went ahead and received widespread media coverage.¹⁵⁶

In this period RI was also involved in supporting clandestine activities to support anti-Gorbachev broadcasting in the Soviet Union, with Bukovsky meeting associates of Boris Yeltsin in 1990.¹⁵⁷ Having acquired radio equipment from a private donor, RI supplied it to groups of students travelling from Amsterdam to the USSR who would go on to deposit the various pieces of hardware with sympathetic parties. According to Jolis, the broadcasts were in support of Yeltsin while the politician was seeking to topple Gorbachev.¹⁵⁸ In addition, RI facilitated the transport of printing and 'computerised typesetting' equipment to Estonia and Armenia to support independent publishing.¹⁵⁹

More dramatically, however, RI anticipated a political crackdown would occur in the Soviet Union in 1991. This was prescient given the August Coup occurred that year. RI began preparations to support an 'underground resistance' in the USSR in late 1990.¹⁶⁰ Poland was selected as the training base to give activists the necessary skills to resist a possible Stalinist revival.¹⁶¹ Though this plan was never put fully into action as a result of the failure of the August Coup, a range of fairly sophisticated preparations were made nonetheless and became briefly operational.

¹⁵²Nigel Hawkes, 'Overtaking the Thatcherites on the Right', *The Observer*, 24 March 1985, 10.

¹⁵³Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 471.

¹⁵⁴Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 371; Jolis to Michel Smidof, 28 November 1990, b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁵⁵AFRI, 'Annual Report 1991', b21, f5, VKBP. Comparable figures on AFRI's financial affairs for 1987-89 are missing from the files.

¹⁵⁶Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 372-5; Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 471-2.

¹⁵⁷Jolis to Members of the Board, 'Minutes of Annual Meeting', 9 May 1991, b21, f7, VKBP.

¹⁵⁸Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 375.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid, 376; Boobbyer, 'Bukovskii and Soviet Communism', 472.

¹⁶¹Ibid; Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 376.

With the support of the Polish branch of RI, ‘Fighting Solidarity’, established in the mid-1980s, ‘infrastructure for eventual underground resistance in the Soviet Union had been established in Poland’, organised under the name ‘Warsaw 90’; this became effective on 7 January 1991.¹⁶² The group put together what Jolis described as a ‘secret radio communications network . . . linking a number of locations inside the Soviet Union with the Polish base’, including Ternepol (in modern-day Ukraine), Belarus, and Lithuania.¹⁶³ Jolis claimed RI installed radio equipment in the building of the Lithuanian parliament which was working at the time Soviet soldiers clashed with protestors during Lithuania’s struggle for independence in 1991.¹⁶⁴

Other activities included broadcasts from a radio station in Tbilisi and the training of 76 ‘underground activists’ at Warsaw 90’s base between February and May 1991.¹⁶⁵ These preparations illustrate RI dissidents’ continued commitment to anti-communism and reflect how some in the Soviet dissident movement did not consider the Cold War to have been ‘won’ by either 1989 or 1990. They continued to be involved in activities aimed at undermining Gorbachev’s government till the very end of the USSR’s existence. Highlighting RI’s continued resistance against the USSR, despite the ascension of Gorbachev, also serves to exhibit the diversity of the dissident movement. At the same time RI was decrying Gorbachev as a hardliner in disguise, other prominent dissidents were offering the General Secretary their support, most notably Andrei Sakharov, who later joined the new Congress of People’s Deputies initiated by Gorbachev.¹⁶⁶ More significantly, however, observing RI’s continuation of the Cold War struggle supports arguments in favour of forward-looking readings of Cold War history, that demonstrate the non-inevitability of the Soviet collapse. Major historians of Cold War history now consistently argue the need to purposefully read Cold War history forwards to understand the nature of the collapse, and the possibility it may have been delayed or even prevented.¹⁶⁷ The example of RI illustrates how a well-resourced alliance of American conservatives and Soviet dissidents did not perceive the collapse as imminent as late as 1990.

AFRI and RI, however, could not survive the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their gross income for 1991 saw a 67% drop in revenue to US\$159,917, though they apparently tried to continue their activities against communist and totalitarian regimes until 1993.¹⁶⁸ Notably, AFRI’s flagship publication, *Democracy Bulletin (DB)*, was still being printed as late as 1992.¹⁶⁹ According to Jolis, this quarterly 16-page newsletter reached 5,000 readers; among this readership were members of the US Congress and American university libraries.¹⁷⁰ *DB* focused on communist regimes around the world and reported on democratic and dissident activities. Early editions of the magazine simply listed key events in different localities and the style was

¹⁶²Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 376.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶Jay Bergman, *Meeting the Demands of Reason: The Life and Thought of Andrei Sakharov* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 372.

¹⁶⁷Vladislav Zubok, Michael Cox, Vladimir O. Pechatnov, Rodric Braithwaite, Kristina Spohr, Sergey Radchenko, Sergey Zhuravlev, Isaac Scarborough, Svetlana Savranskaya and M. E. Sarotte, ‘A Cold War endgame or an opportunity missed? Analysing the Soviet collapse Thirty years later’, *Cold War History*, 21, no. 4 (2021): 541-99.

¹⁶⁸AFRI, ‘Annual Report 1991’, b21, f5, VKBP.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 377; AFRI, ‘Annual Report 1992’, b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁷⁰Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 377.

slightly reminiscent of the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the publication run by Soviet dissidents that catalogued examples of repression by the KGB and Soviet courts.¹⁷¹ Before the collapse of the USSR, *DB* continued to promote the themes which were at the heart of AFRI's work, attacking the West's failure to counter Soviet disinformation. Jolis argued this deficiency justified the launch of a 'National Council to Support the Democracy Movements in the USSR' (its relationship to the NCSDM founded in 1989 is unclear). *DB* also featured essays by Bukovsky on the dangers brought by the West's support for Gorbachev.¹⁷² In 1992 its running costs were US\$23,000 and benefitted from US\$9,500 in 'reader donations', suggesting at least some continued interest in AFRI's work.¹⁷³ *DB* was also translated into Polish and distributed by Grzegorz Hajdarowicz, a student at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.¹⁷⁴ However, by this point the production quality of the magazine had dipped. Aside from an invitational feature by the Yugoslavian journalist Slobodan Pavlovic on the breakup of Yugoslavia and a statement of *DB*'s opposition to Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's regime, much of the content was comprised of reprints of essays by Jolis and Bukovsky in other outlets.¹⁷⁵

Jolis' correspondence from this period references that AFRI was also involved in the shipping of radios to Moscow between October 1992 and February 1993.¹⁷⁶ This was the continuation of a well-established practice by RI. *DB* mentioned the shipment to a group led by Bukovsky, known as the 'Artistic Association -Iceberg'. The group's name was a reference to the Moscow-based 'Artistic Association of Former Dissidents' that was active during 1991-98.¹⁷⁷ The group was involved in arranging the broadcast of documentaries on Russian television and radio about the human rights movement.¹⁷⁸ The equipment was donated by the US government, again countermanding the organisation's public emphasis on avoiding ties with Washington.¹⁷⁹ There appear to have been problems getting the equipment through Russian customs, although it does seem to have reached its intended destination and performed its intended function.¹⁸⁰ (This activity coincided with the period when Bukovsky attained access to the CPSU archives in the autumn of 1992 and secretly copied around 4,500 classified documents.¹⁸¹)

Ultimately, AFRI's days were numbered and the radio enterprise seems to have been the last great gasp for RI as a whole. The annual report for AFRI of 1992 made grim

¹⁷¹For example, see *A Chronicle of Current Events*, 1978, no. 48.

¹⁷²Jolis, 'Why We Should Support the Democracy Movements in the USSR', *Democracy Bulletin*, 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 8-10; Bukovsky, 'Soviet Reality and the Mirage of Perestroika', *Democracy Bulletin*, 2, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 5-7; Elaine Windrich, 'Media Coverage of the Angolan Elections', *A Journal of Opinion*, 22, no. 1 (Winter - Spring, 1994): 19-23, 23n.

¹⁷³AFRI, 'Annual Report 1992', b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵Jolis, 'October Surprise', *Democracy Bulletin*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 3-5; Bukovsky, 'Russia's Second Chance', *Democracy Bulletin*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 6-9 reprinted from *New York Times Magazine*, 12 January 1992; Slobodan Pavlovic, 'A Step into the Future', *Democracy Bulletin*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 10-11.

¹⁷⁶AFRI, 'Annual Report 1992', b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁷⁷See Iceberg, Artistic Association of Former Dissidents, Moscow, Russia, 1991-1998, b28, f14 to b29 f7, VKBP; Hoover Institution Library and Archives Staff, 'Register of the Vladimir Konstantinovich Bukovskii papers', *Hoover Institution Library and Archives* (2017), 22.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹Bukovsky to G. Kazakov and Viktor Idolenko, 2 February 1993, b22, f15, VKBP; K. N. Borov to Bukovsky 1 February 1992, b22, f15, VKBP.

¹⁸⁰Idolenko to Bukovsky, 23 January 1993, f22, b15, VKBP.

¹⁸¹Jolis to Bukovsky, 22 October 1992, b22, f15, VKBP; Bukovsky, *Judgment in Moscow*, 87-8.

financial reading for Jolis and his colleagues. The report stated that ‘activity was brought almost to a standstill during 1992’, aside from the Iceberg enterprise, ‘due to the drastic falling off in grants and donations’ while ‘all major donors’, apart from US\$10,000 given by the Milliken Foundation, had ‘discontinued their grants’.¹⁸² AFRI was left with an operating budget of a mere US\$25,400, scarcely enough to cover *DB*’s printing costs and postage.¹⁸³ The report concluded that AFRI should go into ‘inactive status’. It ended on a cautiously optimistic note, stating that ‘by retaining [its] legal existence [sic.], though inactive, as long as funds permit, [AFRI] could respond to a radical change in the situation should it develop’.¹⁸⁴ All financial and continuing operating responsibilities were transferred to the NSCDM, which apparently benefitted from a ‘marginally better’ financial position compared to AFRI.¹⁸⁵ In March 1993, however, AFRI ceased to operate once and for all.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion

RI and its two US offshoots, AFRI and NSCDM, were curious entities that were products of a meeting of two imperfectly suited strands of anti-communism. It is notable that Bukovsky mentioned RI far less frequently and in much more unfavourable terms than Jolis in their respective autobiographies. Jolis devoted two entire chapters to his involvement with the group and with reference to his and others’ work, stated that ‘we like to think we helped a little, and indeed in a few sharply focused instances, I think our actions did make a difference’.¹⁸⁷ By comparison, in his memoirs, Bukovsky only briefly mentioned the group and reflected that he felt that often his ‘Western friends did not understand what we [dissidents] were hoping to achieve’ regretting the way in which RI ‘was pulled in all directions’ as a result of his allies’ misinterpretation of his objectives.¹⁸⁸

Disagreements between RI’s dissident members and supporters, and its conservative American backers, were a recurrent feature of the organisation. Jolis also apparently ‘had [his] own problems with’ Maksimov whom he insultingly called ‘homo sovieticus’.¹⁸⁹ Galina Akkerman mentions that by 1986 their relationship had deteriorated to the point that Jolis threatened to cease fundraising for RI if Maksimov remained at the head of the organisation.¹⁹⁰ The level of concern expressed by Jolis at Bukovsky’s support for anti-apartheid activism in South Africa, meanwhile, reveals the breadth of the ideological divide between them. At the same time, Grocholski’s warning letter to Bukovsky about American influence highlights the complex position in which RI’s dissidents found themselves as they tried to gain Western financial support while still maintaining their political independence and preserving a relationship with the wider dissident

¹⁸²AFRI, ‘Annual Report 1992’, b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴AFRI, ‘Annual Report 1992’, b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁸⁵Jolis to Bukovsky, 5 January 1993, b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁸⁶Jolis to Bukovsky, 15 March 1993, b22, f13, VKBP.

¹⁸⁷Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 369.

¹⁸⁸Bukovsky, *Judgment in Moscow*, 596.

¹⁸⁹Jolis, *A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds*, 369.

¹⁹⁰Akkerman, ‘Vladimir Maksimov’.

community. Olga Svintsova's ejection from the organisation in 1986 is also suggestive of RI as having been conflict-ridden.

RI left a fascinating but complex legacy and exploring the stories told in its files extends historians' understanding of key issues in the field. RI is a particularly useful case study in forming conclusions about the nature of relationships between dissidents and anti-communist supporters in the West. RI is best understood as a unique example of cooperation between Soviet dissidents and American anti-communist conservatives who consistently sought to associate with Soviet and East European dissidents during the Cold War.¹⁹¹ The files on RI reveal the tensions inherent to this partnership and how some Soviet dissidents remained committed opponents of the Soviet governments through *perestroika* to the collapse of 1991. Most of all, RI illustrates why partnerships between dissidents and their Western supporters should be viewed as coalitions rather than true alliances. Their cooperation represented a strategic alignment between two very different groups with overlapping goals.

Ultimately, their partnership was one of practical necessity rather than ideological unity and a product of the extremely contested political conditions of the Cold War. The dissidents of RI decided to compromise on their independence in order to attract the support of powerful allies to further their own cause. Yet, clearly, the dissidents maintained their agency and exercised their influence, although they were always at the financial mercy of their Western supporters whose support ebbed and flowed according to the political and foreign policy priorities of the day. Bukovsky notably considered that his views and those of the Reagan government only ever fully aligned briefly. The dissident said he had been most optimistic during the early 1980s, while he felt the Reagan Doctrine outlined by Jeane Kirkpatrick, as he interpreted it, was being fully implemented. He described his and US conservatives' purpose:

... if they [the USSR] spend so much money on external expansion, we need[ed] to make it even more expensive. The more expensive it costs them, the sooner they will go bankrupt, the sooner they will go bankrupt, the sooner they will have to change something here and the sooner this publicity and *perestroika* will begin here. And this idea of ours, my friends who worked for Reagan, made it a doctrine, and so they called it the "Reagan doctrine". But this was, however, the only time in my life when my interests and the interests of Western governments completely coincided.¹⁹²

RI was an attempt to plug the perceived gap left first by the West's embrace of *détente* and then Reagan's abandonment of his eponymous doctrine, that saw the organisation connect with a myriad range of anti-communists across the globe.

ORCID

James Brown  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2760-9065>

¹⁹¹Szulecki, *Dissidents in Communist Central Europe*, 192.

¹⁹²Nikolaya Mitrokhina, "Internatsional Soprotivleniya", *Interv'yu s Vladimirovom Bukovskim*, *Panorama* 30, no. 3 (December 1991): 11.