

SAKHAROV AND SHCHARANSKY

Jewish fate is tied up with the Soviet Union in two different and somewhat conflicting ways. Sakharov symbolizes one wing of this dilemma, Shcharansky the other.

Sakharov smuggled out his first major letter from Gorky, where he is segregated, and it was published by the *New York Times* two weeks ago. In it, he writes that the burden rests mainly on the United States for "economic, ideological and military resistance to the expansion of totalitarianism," with the support of the free world.

"Western unity," writes Sakharov, "is one of the main conditions for international security, a unity that will promote resistance and ultimately lead to rapprochement and the convergence of world systems, averting thermonuclear catastrophe."

But," he points out, "the world is facing very difficult times and cruel cataclysms if the West and developing countries trying to find their place in the world do not now show the required firmness, unity and consistence in resisting the totalitarian challenge. It is important that the common danger be fully understood -- everything else will then fall into place."

By the same token, if this "common danger" were fully understood, the situation in the Middle East would fall into place. The basic framework is not ^{the} Israel/Arab

~~but~~ the U.S./Soviet contest, the
free world/totalitarian contest.

Even the matter of American access to Middle East oil is hostage to that basic contest. Israel is a critical part of the free world.

The PLO is a critical part of the totalitarian world.

If the PLO didn't exist, the Soviet Union would have to create it. One of the inevitable functions of the PLO is to extend Soviet influence and cut the U.S. off from Middle East oil. One of the problems for the U.S. -- a horrendous one -- is to make some accommodation to Palestinian Arab aspirations without enthroning the PLO.

But the free world seems in danger of abandoning that purpose, of abandoning its understanding of "the common danger." The European nations just stopped short of giving full recognition to an unreconstructed PLO, but they have been moving in that direction.

In his letter, Sakharov wrote:

"Europe must fight shoulder to shoulder with the transoceanic democracy which is Europe's creation and Europe's main hope. A certain lack of unity, of course, is the reverse side of the coin of democratic pluralism. But this disunity is also caused by the systematic Soviet policy of driving 'wedges,' a policy that the West has not resisted adequately because of carelessness and blindness." Of course, the U.S. has to provide a leadership in which Europe has confidence.

In any case, the fate of Israel depends upon the outcome of this global struggle. And Jews everywhere must give their attention to this struggle. Jewry's generic enemy in the modern world has always been totalitarianism. But Israel's specific enemy in the Middle East is totalitarianism as embodied in the Soviet Union.

At the same time, there are many thousands of Jews held hostage in the Soviet Union, who want to get out. The premise of the Soviet Jewry movement has always been that it is not interested in attacking the Soviet Union ideologically or in any other way. It only wants to free Jews, and does not feel that general attacks on the Soviet Union will help in that enterprise. The fact that a quarter of a million Jews have been released is a testament to that philosophy. And the continued entrapment of many thousands, including Shcharansky, requires a continuation of that philosophy.

But while the Soviet Jewry movement, supported by the entire Jewish community, must continue its special-purpose struggle, that Jewish community cannot stand aside from the general struggle against totalitarianism -- which affects the fate of so many Jews and of humanity in general.