P.S. to **the NEWS**

RELEASE: MAY 30

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TREATY WATCHDOG COMMITTEES

Whi.le the rigged trial of Yuri F. Orlov was making a farce of the Helsinki Agreement, elsewhere U.S. negotiators were blithely pursuing still another U.S.-USSR treaty. Yet there is no reason to think that the forthcoming SALT II Treaty will be honored any more than the Helsinki accord.

Yuri F. Orlov is the prominent Soviet physicist who was arrested, kept incommunicado for 15 months, subjected to a staged trial before a claque of government agitators, and then sentenced to seven years in prison plus five years exile in Siberia.

Orlov was convicted of "anti-Soviet agitation." What he did was to organize Helsinki Watchdog Committees in five Soviet cities to monitor and publicize Soviet violations of the human rights provisions of the Agreement signed in Helsinki in August 1975 by 35 nations, including the Soviet Union and the United States.

In the Helsinki AGreement, the Soviets pledged these inspiring words: "The participating states will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedor of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

Orlov's real crime was that he was more successful than anyone else in getting the freedom-loving peoples inside Russia to work together as a coalition. His strong personality brought together such disparate groups as Jews who want to emigrate, Christians who want freedom to worship, Georgians who want to secede, Russians who want to stay and reform the system, and artists and writers who want the freedom to pursue their art or comment on what is happening.

The casual observer of the Orlov case might think that the Soviets were stupid to rig the trial so brazenly, to deny him all semblance of fair procedure,

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to have the KGB harass Orlov's wife and strip her clothes off, to pack the courtroom \''ith government agents shouting for a harsher sentence, .or to have five cars of KG agents chase journalists bumper-to-bumper through Moscow traffic.

But the Soviets do not fear that such acts will damage· them in world opinion, inhibit th cooperation of President Carter, or impede negotiations on SALT II. The State 0epartment promptly announced as muc . The gullible American diplomats who did not let the 1968.Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia stand in the way of SALT I will hardly let Orlov's conviction stand in the way of SALT II.

Orlov's arrest and imprisonment, however, will teach an important lesson in police-state discipline to Soviet citizens and reduce dissent to practically nothing. The Orlov lesson for Russians is, keep your mouth shut or get ready to go to Siberia.

But in our still-free America, the Orlov lesson should be different. Standing ih front of the same courthouse in Moscow two years ago, Orlov told an American visitor: "If you are not careful, what is happening in there will be happening i'n your country 20 years from now.... We are not fighting for ourselves, but to save you. It is too late for us."

In America we have no need for a Helsinki Watchdog Corrrnittee because we have the protection of something better than the Helsinki promises. It's called the American Bill of Rights.

But we do have an overriding need for a SALT Watchdog Committee which is independent·of the Carter Administration just as outside auditors are independent of company accountants. The purpose of a SALT Watchdog Committee would be to monitor and publicjze Soviet violations of SALT I, and to expose the dangers to Americans from the loopholes and the trickery of SALT II.

An American SALT Watchdog Committee would require citizens as brave and determined·as Orlov, because its members would incur the bitter enmity of the Carter Adrwinistration and others who have a vested interest in the myth of detente and the dec ptive treaties it hatches.

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