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**T THREE: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI
ACCORDS**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HELSINKI ACCORDS
VOLUME II**

**RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN THE
SOVIET UNION
APRIL 27 AND 28, 1977**

**HELSINKI COMPLIANCE IN EASTERN EUROPE
MAY 9, 1977**

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The human rights we defend are not distinguishable from human duties—that is, the right and duty of man to be responsible to himself, to his fellow men, and ultimately, to God.

In signing international agreements, such as those of Helsinki, the U.S.S.R. has bound itself not only to relax its totalitarian ways of handling some individual and isolated cases, but to publicly acknowledge that it, too, believes and affirms that the human being comes first—all the rest after.

Thank you. I introduce now, my friend, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. Mr. PELL. Rabbi Tanenbaum, welcome.

STATEMENT OF RABBI MARC TANENBAUM

Rabbi TANENBAUM. Senator Pell and Mr. Friendly and members of the committee—first, I should like to begin with an expression of gratitude for this invitation to appear before you this morning.

There is a study on "Religious Liberty in the United States" by a leading Presbyterian scholar, Prof. Elwyn Smith, in which he makes the case quite persuasively that the struggle for religious liberty in the United States was antecedent to all other liberties.

His study demonstrates that freedom of conscience becomes the key-stone—the foundation of all other liberties in our society. Therefore, in addressing ourselves to the issue of religious liberty in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, and indeed, throughout the world, we are, in fact, lifting up to human consciousness a concern for all human liberties—freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press. That is why a commitment to the defense of religious liberty at Helsinki, and based on the Helsinki agreement, and a forthright advocacy on the part of the American delegation in Belgrade, are absolutely fundamental not only to religious liberty in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe, but to the cause of liberty in this country and elsewhere throughout the world.

As you well know, the Jewish community, as you will hear later on from my friend and colleague, Rabbi Israel Miller and from others from the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, are deeply concerned as a matter of priority about the right of the Jewish people and others in the Soviet Union to leave that country.

But the fact of the matter is—the reality is that even as we uphold that as a primary obligation within the Jewish community, and increasingly as many Christian friends understand that as a priority concern, there will be anywhere between 2 and 2½ million Jews who remain in the Soviet Union. Their future, therefore, as Jews, and the right to remain Jews in the Soviet Union, are very compelling concerns and raise the question of religious liberty and freedom of conscience in a most urgent way.

The right to self-determination—to religious, cultural, and religious educational or self-determination—is a pressing and pragmatic concern. We hope sincerely that the meeting in Belgrade will address itself to that issue with forcefulness and determination and not allow itself to be turned away by specious arguments and by the effort of the Soviet Union, which apparently is pretty desperate these days, to try to make a case that they are, in fact, honoring Basket Three of the Helsinki agreement.

Prof. William Fletcher of the University of Kansas, a Baptist scholar who testified at our March 16 hearing, indicated that despite all the oppression, all of the Soviet government's campaigns seeking to undermine religious commitments with all their determination to prevent the perpetuation of religious culture on the part of all believers in the Soviet Union, there is, in fact, today an estimated 45 percent of the Soviet population who continue to regard themselves as "believers" of one form or another.

It seems to me essential to unmask what, in fact, has been an incredible shell-game which has been played especially since the days of Khrushchev. During the Khrushchev regime, a rather remarkable piece of melodrama was played out in which Khrushchev allowed for the first time members of the Russian Orthodox Church to become members of the World Council of Churches. That was taken as an effort on the part of the U.S.S.R. to sustain religious liberty through association among religious groups. And, in fact, that deception prevailed in a world that was yearning for some sign of support of freedom of conscience.

But while the public impression was created that the World Council of Churches was embracing one of its sister churches, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Soviet regime began quietly and systematically to turn off, suppress, repress the Russian Orthodox Church. Seminaries were closed, churches were converted quietly into museums—and very little of that was reported publicly.

So you have this rather extraordinary phenomenon on the stage of the world community—a widespread impression—being promulgated by the U.S.S.R. of an increased support of freedom of conscience, religious liberty and free association. Beneath the public appearances, the exact opposite situation was taking place.

If that was true with regard to the Russian Orthodox Church and to the Christian bodies, it was even more demonically true with regard to the Jewish community.

The Jewish community has been placed in a vise. Unless there is an opportunity to allow rabbis and religious educators to be trained and unless religious education for children beneath the age of 18 is permitted, we will find a whole generation of Russian-Jewish people as well as Russian-Christians facing what ultimately cannot be characterized by other than—and it is not hyperbolic language—spiritual genocide. Unless that vise of repression is opened, there will take place the extinction before our eyes of a whole religious civilization in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Chairman, religious commentators and social scientists increasingly document and report that an axiological revolution is underway in the world today. There is a widespread spiritual revival taking place in this country as well as in many other parts of the world. That spiritual renewal is a datum which we hope the American delegation to the Helsinki hearings will keep in mind.

There are today in the United States more than 146 million people affiliated with churches and synagogues of this country. Those commitments take place in a voluntary, open, pluralistic society. It is the largest network of organization and communication in this society. There are none larger, in fact, in terms of association. Neither the labor unions, nor big business, nor even the academic world reach as exten-

sive a network of Americans as do the Christian and Jewish communities

A friend of mine, a Methodist, said to me that there are, in fact, more Methodist Churches in the United States than there are post offices. And my comment on that—somewhat facetiously—was that I hope they “produce the goods” more effectively than the post offices do.

But, in fact, that is a reality. There are in the world community today nearly a billion people who are identified with churches and synagogues throughout the world.

I spend a great deal of time traveling around the country. I have just come back from a lecture tour meeting with Christians and Jews through the Southeast, the Southwest, and Midwest. I can testify that, in terms of issues of concern, the cause of human rights, the support that President Carter has received in his appeal before the United Nations, that this is a central issue among many Americans today. Human rights are inextricably linked with the ethos of American democracy and the religious commitments of the American people. The cause of human rights is not a hyperbolic flourish. It is an expression of a very deeply felt reality on the part of millions and millions of Americans. And when the American delegation goes to Belgrade, I think that they can go confidently knowing, at least based on my own personal experience, that they will have the widest possible support on the part of tens of millions of Americans, Christians and Jews, who want to see America keep high that banner of commitment to religious liberty and religious conscience, the foundation of all liberties throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. PELL. Thank you very much, Sister Gillen.

STATEMENT OF SISTER ANN GILLEN

Sister GILLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Pell, Mr. Friendly, Soviet experts tell us that Soviet policy is shaped, to some degree, by their anticipated evaluation of the probable reaction or nonaction of the Western World. They explained that Soviet leaders wish to have a good image for the sake of their expansion plans in the Third World and also for the contentment or the containment of their own peoples in the USSR, including such a large number of diverse nationality and cultural groups.

When I visited the Soviet Union in 1974, in Moscow and Leningrad Soviet Jews stated their conviction that only Western help and Western publicity can free them.

Vladimir Slepak told me that it is a miracle that anyone leaves the Soviet Union. It is a miracle that over 130,000 Jews have been able to leave.

It is certainly a miraculous event when a political prisoner has been freed—for example, Silva Zalmanson who was released by world public pressure after serving 4 years of an unjust 10-year sentence.

And yet the media in our country do not always realize the tremendous courage and drama that is behind the human rights struggle.

When Silva Zalmanson came to this country and began her first outside the United Nations, because she wanted to return to the Soviet Union and have a family visit with her husband (who has a 15-year

sentence and whom she will not see until 1985), and with her old father (who is waiting in Riga for his two sons to be able to leave prison).

In New York City, we were told that her fast was not news, that this woman, having been freed from prison and asking to return for this family visit, was not making news. She was making history, but that night in New York City, I looked to see what TV considered new and I was shocked to find that they were focusing on a pizza-eating contest.

I think there is something that we are learning in this country about the sense of religious values from persons in the Soviet Union who are going through this tremendous exodus struggle.

Vladimir Slepak had his apartment invaded recently by a group of hoodlums who ransacked that apartment after the Soviet Union allowed to be shown on prime TV time the viciously anti-Semitic film called “Traders of Souls” in which the Jews were linked with an attack on Lenin in an earlier period of history. When one considers that Lenin has been almost deified, this is really a return to the old blood libel charge which has been a burden for the Jewish community for so long.

The heroic leaders of the emigration struggle and the human rights movement are showing us what a small group of people can accomplish when they courageously claim their human rights.

Other small groups in this country and in other countries of the world are responding to their calls for help—writing to prisoners to keep their hopes up, writing to political leaders to activate the channels of diplomacy in the cause of human rights.

The old saying which is at the root of all religious apathy, “What can I do? I am only one person,” is being replaced by the conviction born from experience that one person can accomplish a great deal through correspondence and communication.

The determined small groups of such persons can even change the direction of history.

I sense that the peoples of the world in this movement have been building their own informal court of world public opinion out of desperation because the doors of international halls of justice have hitherto been blocked to the consideration of human rights causes. I hope that the Belgrade meeting will give hope to such determined small groups that there is an avenue, a forum where their concern will be heard.

The people are finding new ways to give deeper meaning to previously existing international agreements because people believe, at least a significant percentage of the people believe that human rights are a human responsibility of the whole human family, regardless of race, religion, creed, sex—and that the road to peace will finally be built only with such endeavors.

Only when the people of one country break through the disinformation barrier and recognize that the people of another country seek the same basic human rights and are helping one another across international boundaries to achieve these human rights will people question together the enormous expenditures of their governments in destructive armaments rather than consumer goods, education, health care and all the things that the human family really wants.