

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE

July 8, 1978

During the past two days we have learned that next week the Soviet Union will start the trials of several prominent dissidents.

These men and women of uncommon courage are being put on trial on a number of pretexts. In truth, they are being tried for asserting fundamental human rights -- to speak out and to petition and criticize their Government -- rights guaranteed in international agreements entered into by their Government.

These trials, with their lack of due process, violate fundamental principles of justice.

I reflect the deepest feelings and values of the American people when I deplore these events.

They inevitably affect the climate of our relations and impose obstacles to the building of confidence and cooperation between our countries.

My plans to meet with Foreign Minister Gromyko next Wednesday in Geneva are unchanged. ~~[We have long said that the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks stand on their own feet.]~~

I have often expressed to Soviet authorities our deep concern about Soviet treatment of dissidents. I shall do so again next week.

In light of these developments we have taken certain actions. Yesterday I asked Barbara Blum, Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and her delegation to cancel their trip to the Soviet Union. I have today, at the President's direction, instructed the President's Science Advisor, Frank Press, and his delegation to do likewise..

Let me say finally that the struggle for basic human freedom is not a short-term effort. We will persevere because of our enduring belief in the dignity of the individual.