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Author(s): PHILIP BOBBYER
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Vladimir Bukovskii and Soviet Communism

PHILIP BOOBBYER

Introduction

Vladimir Bukovskii was one of the most outspoken and influential of the Soviet dissidents. Prior to his exile to the West in 1976, he helped create the Soviet human rights movement and played a central role in exposing the abuse of psychiatry in the USSR. He also spent roughly twelve years in prisons, camps and psychiatric hospitals. In the West, he was a key player in a variety of anti-Communist initiatives, whilst also seeking to galvanize Western opinion against the Soviet threat; and after the collapse of Communism, he was a vigorous proponent of lustration policies in former Communist countries. More recently, in 2007, he put himself forward as an opposition candidate for the 2008 Presidential elections. There is a growing body of literature on the Soviet dissidents and human rights movement, as well as on dissent in the USSR generally, but there has no been work on Bukovskii himself.

This article seeks to fill this gap by examining Bukovskii’s moral and political ideas and activities, and assessing the reasons for his influence. The focus is on Bukovskii’s understanding of, and struggle with, the Soviet regime rather than its Russian successor, but since he saw important continuities between the two there is also some reference to his insights into post-Soviet Russian politics.

Bukovskii wrote little in the USSR. His main pre-exile writings and statements include a text entitled ‘Theses on the Collapse of the Komsomol’ (c. 1961), some short stories, speeches during trials,

Philip Boobbyer is a Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Kent.

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interviews with Western correspondents, and a co-authored samizdat piece, ‘A Manual of Psychiatry for Dissidents’ (1974). In the West, however, he was much more productive — in spite of the fact that he detested writing. Five books in particular, Vladimirskaya tiur’ma (1977), ‘I vozvrashchaetsia veter’... / To Build a Castle (1978), Pis’ma russkogo puteshestvennika / To Choose Freedom (1981/87), URSS: de l’utopie au désastre (1990) and Jugement à Moscou / Moskovskii protsess (1995/96), along with numerous articles in newspapers, magazines and edited volumes, provide an excellent basis for assessing his ideas and influence. Although Bukovskii’s attempts to stand for President in 2008 are not a concern of this article, his pre-election manifesto of 2007 is also a useful source. Interviews with Bukovskii have provided further information.

A strategy and a philosophy

Bukovskii’s disillusionment with Soviet Communism set in at an early age. Born in December 1942, he grew up in Moscow. He accepted the Stalin cult at face value, and was thus stunned by the dictator’s death; it shattered his myth of authority and invulnerability. Bukovskii felt he had been deceived. This feeling was strengthened by the subsequent process of de-Stalinization; and in this sense Bukovskii’s political awakening was similar to that of those contemporaries for whom the Twentieth Party Congress was a defining moment. This kind of youthful disillusionment with the system found lucid expression some


6 ‘Rossiia na chekistskom kriuke’, downloaded from Bukovskii’s official website <http://www.bukovsky.org/official> [accessed 29 October 2007]. The title of this was chosen to counter the suggestion of Viktor Cherkesov, head of Russia’s Drug Enforcement Agency, that the security services had provided a ‘hook’ that had prevented post-Soviet Russia falling into an abyss; see Viktor Cherkesov, ‘Nel’zia dopustit’, chtoby voiny prevratilis’ v torgovtsye’, Kommersant, 9 October 2007, p. 1.

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years later, in 1967, in a short story Bukovskii published in the émigré journal *Grani*, recounting the story of a boy who was disappointed to discover that the red stars glittering in the Kremlin at night were made of glass rather than rubies. The message was that life in the USSR was not as it first appeared. At a certain level, Bukovskii's understanding of Soviet life was a translation of this sense of disillusionment onto a wider canvas. Everyone, he believed, eventually came up against this discrepancy between the official ideology and reality.

Bukovskii's dissent began early. Already, at ten years old, he resigned as chairman of his class Pioneer group when he was asked to reprimand one of his classmates — although he could not then have explained exactly why he did so. At fourteen, he refused to join the Komsomol. Reading Lenin and the socialist utopians in his teens aroused a suspicion of the Russian revolutionary tradition, although he was impressed by Herzen's non-Marxist way of thinking. After the Soviet invasion of Hungary, he became part of a small conspiratorial organization at school. Cynicism alone struck him and his contemporaries as sincere, and he was even brought before the Moscow City Committee for his uncooperative behaviour.

At Moscow University, which Bukovskii entered in September 1960 to study biology, he and a couple of friends decided to revive the Maiakovskii Square poetry readings that had taken place in the late 1950s; and in this they linked up with people involved with literary samizdat who had participated in the earlier readings, such as Vladimir Osipov, editor of *Bumerang* (1960), and Iurii Galanskov, editor of *Feniks* (1961). Then in spring 1961 Bukovskii tried to get some friends in the Komsomol to help him set up an official club under one of the Komsomol district committees; they endorsed the idea, but then also tried to put some limitations on it. At around this time, Bukovskii wrote his 'Theses on the Collapse of the Komsomol', arguably one of the programmatic documents of the Maiakovskii Square movement.

Displaying his clear hostility to the regime, Bukovskii portrayed the USSR as an 'illegal society' facing an acute ideological crisis, and asserted that the Komsomol was 'dead', in the sense that it had lost moral and spiritual authority. He also called for the democratization of

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10 *To Build a Castle*, pp. 80–91, 94, 104; interviews, autumn 2007.
11 For details see Vladimir Bukovskii, 'Gaid-park po-sovetski', in Polikovskaia, *My predchu-stvo ... predtecha* ... p. 9 fl. Here Bukovskii’s account (pp. 8–22) of the Maiakovskii Square movement is a synthesis of material from *To Build a Castle* and interviews conducted in 1994. See also Joshua Rubinstein, *Soviet Dissidents*, Boston, MA, 1980, pp. 17–19.
12 Polikovskaia, *My predchu-stvo ... predtecha* ... p. 153.
the Komsomol, arguing that it would be more effective to work through an existing organization, than by means of an illegal struggle.  

Not surprisingly, this text and these activities brought Bukovskii to the attention of the authorities; he was interrogated twice, and then thrown out of the university in autumn 1961. An unofficial exhibition of abstract art that he tried to organize through the Komsomol club in 1962 was shut down. Although he remained at large when Il’ia Bakshtein, Eduard Kuznetsov and Osipov were arrested in February 1962 for their role in the Maiakovskii Square readings, he was detained and confined to a psychiatric hospital in May 1963 (amongst other things for possessing a couple of photocopies of Milovan Dijas’s *The New Class*), remaining there until February 1965.

An important moment in Bukovskii’s development was his encounter in 1961 with dissident mathematician Aleksandr Esenin-Vol’pin. Under Vol’pin’s influence, Bukovskii stopped believing in violent revolution and turned towards a legalist strategy. Vol’pin suggested that in supposedly creating a law-based state, even if primarily for propaganda purposes, the Soviet authorities had overreached themselves, and given oppositionists an opportunity. Dissidents could challenge the authorities by taking responsibility for defending the state’s laws. As Bukovskii later put it: ‘So let us defend our laws from being encroached upon by the authorities. *We* are on the side of the law. *They* are against it.’ The idea assumed that people had sufficient personal freedom — what Vol’pin called a ‘subjective sense of right’ — to take responsibility for their lives and society.

Bukovskii played an important role in putting these ideas into practice. ‘I had to work out how these concepts would become a

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13 Bukovskii, ‘Tezisy’, in Polikovskaia, *My predchaustvie ... predtecha ...*, pp. 153–56. The ‘tactical’ nature of this text (Bukovskii wrote it to engage the interest of the Komsomol) means there is some uncertainty as to its sincerity. It is also not clear whether it was written on the initiative of Bukovskii himself or the Komsomol raikom instructor, Boris Talitskii; see Polikovskaia, *My predchaustvie ... predtecha ...*, p. 153. There was an ironic reference to Bukovskii’s views on the Komsomol in L. Lavlinkii, ‘Obnaglevshii nul’, *Motodii kommunist*, 1962, no. 2, p. 89. For another attack on Bukovskii, see A. Elkin, ‘Kubarem s Parnasa’, *Komsomol’skaya pravda*, 14 January 1962, p. 3.

14 Bukovskii was confined (under article 70–71) in the Serbski Institute of Forensic Psychiatry from May to December 1963, when he was transferred to Leningrad prison psychiatric hospital until his release in February 1965. He was arrested again in December 1965, and spent time in psychiatric hospital no. 13 in Liubliino, the hospital at Stolbovaia station, and again the Serbski Institute before his release in 1966. See *Abuse of Psychiatry for Political Repression in the Soviet Union*, Washington, D.C., 1972, pp. 30–32.

15 According to his memoirs, Bukovskii met Vol’pin around September 1961; see Vladimir Bukovskii, ‘I vospomnienia ocher’ ..., Moscow, 2007, p. 190. Vol’pin introduced Bukovskii to his circle of friends, many of whom had spent time in Stalin’s camps; interviews, autumn 2007.

16 *To Build a Castle*, pp. 190–92.
weapon’; he said later. In 1965 Vol’pin suggested that there should be a public demonstration against the forthcoming trial of Andrei Siniaevskii and Iulii Daniel’. Bukovskii took up the idea, playing a central role in organizing the protest that took place on 5 December — although he himself was re-arrested three days before. It was an event that came to be seen as marking the beginning of the Human Rights Movement. The ‘Civic Appeal’, which was drafted by Vol’pin and distributed by Bukovskii and other activists, called for the authorities to obey Soviet laws requiring glasnost in the legal process. In January 1967 Bukovskii was arrested again, this time for his role in organizing a demonstration on Pushkin Square against the arrest of four young people involved in samizdat. Bukovskii liked the public nature of these demonstrations; he thought the dissidents should engage in an open struggle because the law was on their side, and underground conspiracy was open to infiltration. Demonstrations became part of dissident culture, with a protest taking place annually on Pushkin Square on 5 December.

In his struggle with the authorities, Bukovskii constantly drew attention to legal questions. At the 1967 demonstration, he and his fellow protesters demanded the revision of Article 70 of the Criminal Code that proscribed ‘agitation and propaganda’ against the Soviet authorities and state, on the grounds that it was open to too broad an interpretation, and also complained about the incorporation of articles 190:1 (which forbade the dissemination of fabrications about the Soviet system) and 190:3 (which forbade the violation of public order) into the RSFSR Criminal Code. Before the demonstration, Bukovskii read aloud to the protesters the text of article 190–3, and warned them not to commit an offence of public order and to submit to the demands of the authorities, and before his trial in August/September he

18 The demonstrators included members of a youth group called SMOG (acronym for ‘Youngest Society of Geniuses’ and ‘Boldness, Thought, Form, Depth’) that had tried to revive the Maiakovskii Square readings. Another activist, Iulii Vishnevskiia, was also detained prior to the demonstration, and placards calling for the release of Bukovskii and Vishnevskiia were included in the protest. For details see A. Iu. Daniel’ and A. B. Roginskii (eds), Piatoe dekabria 1965 goda v vospominaniakh uchastnikov sobytii, materialakh Samizdata, dokumentakh partiinykh i komsomol’skikh organizatsii i v zapiskakh Komteata gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti v TsK KPSS, Moscow, 1995, pp. 13 and 50; also see Moskovskii protess, p. 106.
20 For details, see Pavel Litvinov (comp.) and Peter Reddaway (ed.), The Trial of the Four, New York, 1972. Bukovskii was once again working with SMOG; see Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, The Thaw Generation, Boston, MA, 1990, p. 163.
22 Horvath, Legacy of Soviet Dissent, p. 65.
23 For the wording of these articles, see Litvinov and Reddaway, Trial of the Four, p. 391.
24 To Build a Castle, pp. 229–30.
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threatened a hunger strike unless the regime gave him a copy of the Criminal Code. In his final plea during the trial, Bukovskii attacked the regime's failure to follow legal procedures, quoting Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution in defence of the right to organize demonstrations, and suggesting that the prosecution had consistently departed from the Code of Criminal Procedure in its conduct of the case.25 Of the three defendants at the trial, Vadim Delone and Evgenii Kushev both received suspended jail sentences and were released, while Bukovskii was sentenced to three years in a corrective labour camp.26

Bukovskii was very conscious of the way the trials could be made into good publicity for the human rights movement. He certainly saw the 1967 trial as an opportunity to expose the Soviet legal system to wider scrutiny. His final plea, which was an attack on the absence of free speech in the USSR, was particularly powerful, circulating in samizdat as part of a collection of materials about the demonstration and subsequent trials compiled by Pavel Litvinov.27 In her memoirs, Bukovskii's defence lawyer, Dina Kaminskaia, described Bukovskii's final plea as a 'momentous event', suggesting that it was the first time since Stalin’s terror that such merciless criticism of the Soviet system had been made in open court.28

Bukovskii continued to emphasize the illegality of Soviet actions after 1967. When he was put on trial again in January 1972 (after his arrest in March 1971), he drew attention to the legal weaknesses in the case against him, insisting that he had never protested against the Soviet regime as 'a political form of government'.29 During his subsequent imprisonment, he continued to insist on his rights: in Vladimir prison in 1975–76, in response to the authorities' attempt to force political prisoners to work, Bukovskii and fellow inmates wrote an avalanche of complaints to various Soviet authorities, all of which had to be answered officially, eventually forcing the authorities to retreat;30 and

25 Bukovskii's statement can be found in Pavel Litvinov, The Demonstration in Pushkin Square, London, 1969, pp. 87–95; see also Abuse of Psychiatry, pp. 37–43.
26 Bukovskii received three years in a corrective labour camp with a normal regime, dating from his arrest, and was sent to Bor Settlement in the Voronezh region.
27 Litvinov, Demonstration in Pushkin Square.
30 To Build a Castle, pp. 33–37.
they also wrote to the Supreme Soviet and the Soviet of Nationalities proposing legal recognition of the rights of political prisoners.31

Bukovskii also used Western media and professional expertise to put pressure on the Soviet authorities, in particular in his campaign to expose the abuse of psychiatry in the USSR. In an interview with American reporter William Cole, filmed in Moscow and broadcast in the USA on the CBS network in July 1970, he described conditions in Soviet mental hospitals;32 it was, Sakharov noted later, a 'new and effective form of publicity'.33 In early 1971 Bukovskii sent 150 pages of documentation concerning the Soviet abuse of psychiatry to the West, including what he claimed to be exact copies of the official forensic psychiatric reports on six dissidents. In an accompanying letter, addressed to 'Western psychiatrists' and written in a deliberately restrained tone, Bukovskii asked the Western psychiatrists to consider if the evidence justified the isolation of the said persons, and for them to discuss the matter at the next International Congress of Psychiatrists.34 The material was released to the press in March by a small French group called the International Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, and Bukovskii's letter appeared in The Times and the British Journal of Psychiatry.35

This tactic of mobilizing professional opinion in the West proved very successful. In September 1971, forty-four European psychiatrists wrote to The Times expressing grave doubts about the diagnoses of the six people concerned.36 At a meeting in November 1971, the World Federation of Mental Health called on its members to investigate the charges and defend the right to free opinion where it was threatened.37 The World Psychiatric Association, which was initially silent on the matter, was eventually pressured into taking the matter seriously, and at its Sixth World Congress in 1977 resolutions were passed condemning Soviet practices, and a review committee set up to

31 Vladimirskaja tis' ma, pp. 8–20.
34 Peter Reddaway, 'Plea to West on Soviet "Mad-House" Jails', The Times, 12 March 1971, p. 8; also in Abuse of Psychiatry, pp. 29–30. For a reply by Western psychiatrists, see The Times, 16 September 1971, p. 17. The documentation can be found in Abuse of Psychiatry, and in Vladimir Boukovsky, Une nouvelle maladie mentale en URSS: L'opposition, Paris, 1971. See also Rubenstein, Soviet Dissidents, pp. 138–41.
36 The Times, 16 September 1971, p. 17.
37 Bloch and Reddaway, Russia's Political Hospitals, p. 85.
Jewish was prison Vladimir was giving - Union before prisoners - strike of a called Bukovskii's psychiatric system involved in the campaign to have the death sentences of two of the defendants, Eduard Kuznetsov and Mark Dymshits, revoked. Bukovskii's awareness of nationality issues had increased following his release in 1970, and now, following the hijackers' trial, he got closely involved in coordinating the Jewish refusnik movement (though not Jewish himself). In 1973, he used the media to expose the Soviet camp system to outside scrutiny, and in particular to undermine what he called the 'Perm' blockade', the authorities' project of isolating political prisoners in the Perm' camps that was launched in 1972. Bukovskii, who was in Perm' 35 from March 1973 to May 1974, helped to organize a month-long hunger strike that began on 12 May 1974 in a number of the Perm' camps (although he was transferred to Vladimir prison before it ended). Before the hunger strike began, he sent out a message about the proposed action through his then defence lawyer, Vladimir Shveiskii, which reached the West; consequently, when the strike commenced, Western radio stations broadcasting to the Soviet Union outlined the details.

In addition to Bukovskii's emphasis on legality and glasnost, there was also an emerging moral philosophy. Here Bukovskii's thinking was very much shaped by prison experiences; he once even said that Vladimir prison had been a kind of university for him. Bukovskii saw prison as a battleground between interrogator and inmate, where interrogators sought to accustom prisoners to the idea of compromise. It was comparable to a chess game. Bukovskii described how, during his interrogations in 1961, he presented himself as a Soviet patriot, thereby giving a 'false impression of himself'. This encouraged the authorities to believe that he was a pliable person, so when he was arrested again

39 Bukovskii, Moskovskii protest, p. 144.
40 Rubenstein, Soviet Dissidents, pp. 173—74.
41 Interviews, autumn 2007.
42 To Build a Castle, p. 334.
44 To Build a Castle, p. 338; interviews, autumn 2007.
in 1963 his interrogators put pressure on him to reveal who had given him the book. On this occasion, he behaved much more resolutely and refused to talk. Bukovskii concluded that giving way, even if only partially, was counterproductive; it simply made the regime more aggressive and eroded the capacity of people to resist. Giving way, or retreating, was wrong in other areas too. In the run-up to the 1967 demonstration, the former General and dissident Petro Grigorenko suggested to Bukovskii that there were so few people in the human rights movement that it was best not to protest; using military terminology, he noted that a temporary retreat was not a defeat. Bukovskii countered that in an ideological war — which was what it was — retreat was never right, and meant instant defeat.

The task at a personal level, then, was to resist the pressure to conform and become inwardly free of one’s own fears. The ‘frontiers of freedom’ lay inside each person. Only through self-overcoming would the system be challenged: ‘The tragedy was that [Soviet man] existed inside every one of us, and until we could overcome this Soviet man within, nothing in our life would change.’ Keeping a clear conscience was part of the challenge. Moral survival was not only desirable, it was possible. In ‘A Manual on Psychiatry for Dissidents’, written just before Bukovskii’s transfer from Perm’ 35 camp to Vladimir prison, Bukovskii and his fellow inmate Semyon Gluzman warned dissidents not to give doctors reasons for diagnosing ‘creeping schizophrenia’ or ‘paranoid development of the personality’, the two loosely defined conditions that were used to justify the confinement of dissidents, and stated that there were no scientific methods that could force a person to go against his will or conscience. The very humanity of people was at stake; Bukovskii said of his fellow defendants at the 1967 trial, Delone and Kushev, ‘God grant that they would find the strength to master themselves and remain human.’

One method Bukovskii used to make himself invulnerable was to construct a castle in his mind into which he could retreat from the challenges of interrogation. Under pressure to make compromises, he could return to his ‘friends’ in the castle, and close ‘the massive oak doors’ behind him. There he was safe: ‘Let the storm rage outside the

45 To Build a Castle, pp. 14, 24, 309, 123, 136–39.
46 Interviews, autumn 2007.
47 Vladimir Bukovsky, ‘Frontiers of freedom lie inside each one of us’, The Times, 10 May 1977, p. 1; on ‘inner freedom’ in the dissident movement, see Boobbyer, Conscience, Dissent and Reform, chapter 6.
48 To Build a Castle, p. 66.
51 To Build a Castle, p. 239.
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52 Ibid., pp. 24, 32, 342.
55 To Choose Freedom, p. 165.
demonstration, and that the judge herself would not forget what happened. ‘Therefore our demonstration was by no means entirely pointless’, he said.56 People could be shamed into changing their behaviour.57 Bukovskii’s example was certainly an inspiration to some. Dina Kaminskaia recalled that as she prepared for the 1967 trial she was increasingly astonished at Bukovskii’s ‘firmness’, and drew attention to the element of ‘heroism’ in his character.58 An interrogator, with whom he made friends, said to Kaminskaia that he would like his son to have the same human qualities as Bukovskii.59 On 29 March 1975, a day designated as ‘Vladimir Bukovskii day’ by certain dissidents (it was the fourth anniversary of his arrest in 1971), one medical researcher suggested that he was in a kind of debt to Bukovskii: ‘If I had done my duty, then I would now be where Bukovskii is today. But he did it for me.’60

Bukovskii, like some other dissidents, sometimes conceptualized dissent in terms of sacrifice.61 Again during the 1967 trial, he tried to take upon himself responsibility for the accusations: there was a sense of sacrificing himself in order to minimize the sentences on Delone and Kushev, as well as asserting his own point of view.62 However, the idea of individual sacrifice was also conceptualized in national terms. In To Build a Castle, Bukovskii wrote, ‘To be alone is a tremendous responsibility. With his back to the wall, a man understands: “I am the people. I am the nation. I am the party. I am the class, and there is nothing else at all”’.63 Reviewing the memoirs of Cuban dissident Armando Valladares in 1986, Bukovskii stated that, at a time of crisis, a nation needs a symbol to survive:

A sense of enormous responsibility for your nation becomes much stronger than a craving for your personal life. Those who have never lived through such an experience may see the struggle as senseless fanaticism, a death wish, or as simple masochism. [...] But dictators and conquerors do see the point. As long as there is a symbol, the nation is not conquered.

In 1995 Bukovskii said: ‘I clearly understood we were in a certain sense offering ourselves as victims. [...] We became an extreme sacrifice, we were expiating for the sin of those who did not go down that road.’64

56 Kaminskaia, Final Judgement, p. 190.
58 Kaminskaia, Final Judgement, p. 179.
59 Ibid., pp. 180, 177, 188; see also To Build a Castle, p. 239.
61 Boobbyer, Conscience, Dissent and Reform, p. 100.
63 To Build a Castle, p. 198.
Bukovskii believed that this ethic of self-sacrifice derived from Christianity; indeed he once stated that the ethics of European civilization were Christian. He particularly endorsed those aspects of the Christian moral system that served to give his own life an ethical meaning. In his review of Valladares’s book, he highlighted a passage in which Valladares stated that, listening to nightly executions, he ‘embraced Christ in desperation’, and that Christ had served to give his life, and possible death, an ‘ethical meaning’. Bukovskii was not a religious believer: he was critical of Christianity for its failure to prevent the rise of fascism and communism, and believed the Orthodox Church to be corrupt, and he thought the faith of many religious dissidents he met in prison was not genuine. However, he fully accepted Valladares’s thinking: “Ethical meaning” — that I fully understand. If your life has to be sacrificed in the struggle against a great evil, you want to feel that your sacrifice fits into a meaningful order of things.

Bukovskii’s worldview on leaving the USSR thus contained a number of key elements: the Soviet Union’s claims about itself were illusory; law and publicity could be used against the regime; a strong individual could effectively challenge and even change the system; there should be no retreat; compromise was counter-productive and led to the erosion of personal autonomy; resistance offered a moral example and symbol to the country. These ideas did not all come at once, but emerged through a series of encounters, experiences and activities. It is notable that taken together these things constituted more of a moral philosophy than a political one. Many commentators have emphasized that the human rights movement was not overtly political, in the sense that activists and intellectuals with different political ideologies united behind a common commitment to human rights and truth-telling. Bukovskii was no different. He himself asserted in the West that he was not a politician with a political programme for the USSR, and stated that the dissident movement never advocated revolution and was a ‘purely moral opposition’. ‘Human conscience [was] becoming a factor in world politics’, he wrote in Vladimirskaiia tiur’ma, and that summed up his political philosophy.

65 Ibid.
69 See Boobbyer, Conscience, Dissent and Reform, pp. 75–77.
72 Vladimirskaiia tiur’ma, p. 6.
At the same time, Bukovskii’s stress on the individual conscience, and his attempts to expose the Soviet regime to legal scrutiny had definite political implications in a country that lacked an independent civil society. Dissident networks by their very nature challenged Soviet integration and legitimation processes, and official political socialization. In this context, Bukovskii’s thinking and strategy could not fail to be political. Moreover, he was clearly a man intent on creating a social movement for reform. For these reasons, if dissidents are divided into politiki and zakonniki, there is a clear case for assigning him to the former category. As two recent commentators have noted, Bukovskii embraced Vol’pin’s legalist strategy not for legal reasons alone, but as an instrument in a political struggle against the state.

Similar points can be made about the extent to which Bukovskii was an ideological figure. When Bukovskii arrived in the West in 1976, the French left-wing newspaper Libération heralded him as a figure who challenged traditional political categories, and who was committed to the struggle for human rights rather than a particular philosophy or ideology. There was an element of truth in this in the sense that Bukovskii’s programme could not be identified as specifically right- or left-wing. However, in another way, of course, Bukovskii was strongly ideological: he was deeply hostile to Soviet socialism. Moreover, he had a more generalized suspicion of left-wing politics which was to become very evident in the West.

The struggle continues in the West

Frustrated by Bukovskii’s high profile both at home and abroad, the Soviet authorities eventually decided to send him into exile. In a deal that aroused international media interest, Bukovskii was flown to Zurich on 18 December 1976, and exchanged for the Chilean Communist leader, Luis Corlovan. However, if the Soviet leadership hoped that emigration would silence Bukovskii, they were wrong. While taking an undergraduate degree in natural sciences at King’s College, Cambridge (1978–81) and a Masters in neurophysiology at Stanford University (1982–86), Bukovskii got heavily involved in a variety of

74 Gilligan, Defending Human Rights in Russia, p. 31.
75 Daniel’ and Roginskii (eds), Piatoe dekabria, pp. 5–6.
77 For a recent attack on Bukovskii, see interview with First Deputy Minister of Justice A. Ia. Sukharev in Literaturnaya gazeta, 27 October 1976, p. 10.
78 For details of the exchange, see Chronicle of Current Events, nos 43–45, London, 1979, pp. 1–8.
activities designed to undermine Soviet policy and propaganda, as well as writing many articles on the USSR and the Cold War.

Bukovskii built up an impressive set of connections with Western leaders, especially on the right of the political spectrum. In the UK, where he chose to settle (in Cambridge), he sometimes collaborated with the Conservative MP, Winston Churchill, on whose Sussex estate in summer 1977 he wrote the main part of To Build a Castle, and Conservative peer and member of the European parliament, Nicholas Bethell, who had put a resolution to the European parliament in 1976 calling for his release. He visited Mrs Thatcher at the House of Commons soon after his release, telling her that détente was a dangerous myth and that democracy and socialism were incompatible. They met a number of times in the following years, and she was particularly impressed by his suggestion that the peace movement of the early 1980s was sponsored by the USSR. However, Bukovskii fell out with Thatcher over her support for Gorbachev, publicly refuting her position at a conference of the Committee for the Free World in London in March 1985. Bukovskii was generally sympathetic to rightwing libertarian groups that were suspicious of the state; in 1989, for example, he became a vice-president of the UK’s Freedom Association.

Bukovskii also got involved with British human rights groups. He worked with the Campaign against Psychiatric Abuse (CAPA), which had protested against his imprisonment, and joined forces with CAPA and the British Helsinki Human Rights Group in organizing a televised mock trial of Iurii Orlov in 1977, at which many dissidents were present. Bukovskii also collaborated with the Women’s Campaign for Soviet Jewry (the 35’s) in a campaign they launched in summer 1978 for a boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Bukovskii helped kick off the campaign with a letter to The Times in August 1978, signed by him and others, which called on the International Olympic Committee to remove the ‘Olympic cachet’ from the games. Over the next couple of years, Bukovskii consistently argued that the human rights situation in the USSR contravened the spirit of the Olympic movement.

82 Bukovskii spoke at a CAPA rally in May 1977, see The Times, 9 May 1977, p. 4.
83 The Times, 14 June 1978, p. 8; interviews, autumn 2007.
Bukovskii also built up an impressive set of connections in the USA. He met President Carter at the White House in early March 1977, and on the same visit met Senator Jackson and his then aide, Richard Perle, who was to remain a good friend.\textsuperscript{87} Through George Meany, President of the American Federation of Labour, he went on a speaking tour of the USA in late 1977.\textsuperscript{88} He developed close links with the Reagan administration, and even had some influence on it. For example, he was frequently in touch with Mark Palmer, the senior Soviet specialist at the State Department in 1981–86. When Palmer wrote the first draft of Reagan’s speech to the British parliament in 1982, where Reagan said that Communism was nearing its end in the USSR and Eastern Europe, Bukovskii ‘reinforced’ Palmer’s convictions on the subject. More generally, he strengthened the conviction of people in the Reagan administration that radical change was ‘necessary and doable’. He also played a strong role in ensuring that human rights issues were central in meetings with senior Soviet officials, including in Schultz’s first meeting with Gorbachev in 1984 and at the Geneva summit in November 1985, and helped the US side focus on individuals who ought to be released.\textsuperscript{89} Bukovskii also got to know Jeane Kirkpatrick well, and indeed claimed credit for a UN Resolution in December 1982 endorsing the rights of non-governmental organizations to campaign for peace.\textsuperscript{90} He also developed good contacts in neo-conservative intellectual circles, for example making good friends with Norman Podhoretz, editor of \textit{Commentary}, and his wife, Midge Decter, founder of the Committee for a Free World in 1981.\textsuperscript{91}

The abnormality of the Soviet system was a constant theme of Bukovskii’s statements and writings in the West. Westerners often tried to treat the USSR as any other country, but in his view this was a

\textsuperscript{87} Bukovskii and Ginzburg were amongst ten dissidents honoured at a dinner arranged by the Coalition for a Democratic Majority in June 1979, attended by Jackson. See \textit{Washington Post}, 13 June 1979, Section ‘Style’, p. E1.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{The Times}, 8 November 1977, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{89} Email letter from Mark Palmer to author, 1 November 2007. Bukovskii also had good relations with Casper Weinberger and speechwriter Anthony Dolan (interviews, autumn 2007). Bukovskii was a speaker at a 1982 State Department conference on fostering change in Communist countries; \textit{Associated Press}, 18 October 1982, PM cycle. This and all subsequent press agency reports were accessed through \textit{LexisNexis News & Business}.

\textsuperscript{90} Bukovskii suggested to Jeane Kirkpatrick that a resolution was needed that would give peace movements the right to exist in Communist countries (interviews, autumn 2007). He probably had in mind Resolution 37/100, H, I and J, passed on 13 December, which contained statements recognizing the contribution of non-governmental organizations to world disarmament. See Dusan J. Djonovich (comp. and ed.), \textit{United Nations Resolutions. Series 1 Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly}, Vol XXI 1982–1989, Double Ferry, NY, 1986, p. 309.

\textsuperscript{91} Bukovskii first met Podhoretz at a conference of the Jonathon Institute in Israel, organized by Benjamin Netanyahu in 1979. Interviews, autumn 2007.
serious mistake. Communists were incapable of normal human cooperation: either they were your enemies or they ruled you. The psychology of compromise that had proved useful in addressing the problems of Western societies had proved fatal in dealing with terrorism and totalitarianism. The Soviet government used ‘tricks, pranks and stunts’ to get its way; its leaders were ‘top-class game-players’. Here Bukovskii transferred his own experience of prison relationships to the Cold War as a whole. The West’s attitude to the USSR was like that of inmates towards professional crooks in a prison; it thought it could buy it off with a suitable ransom or friendly behaviour; and it was getting into the habit of trying to please the ‘prison supervisor’, i.e. the Soviet regime. In the Cold War relationship, one of the partners was a ‘natural predator’, and the other a victim. In his view, the USSR was one huge prison camp.

In this context, Bukovskii was particularly critical of the policy of détente, which he saw as a Soviet strategy for getting the West to pay for Soviet economic development, and indeed the expansion of Communism. Western support for détente, he thought, was based on four erroneous assumptions: the USSR was a state like any Western state; the two adversaries had no option other than détente apart from war and world destruction; détente worked for the liberalization of Soviet society; and it was wrong to put too much pressure on the Russians. The reality was that détente was a form of buying off a robber. It was also counter-productive; between 1968 and 1978, there had been a ten-fold rise in international terrorism.

He called the Helsinki Accords ‘the most successful Soviet trick of the détente era’, stating that they had led to a deterioration in conditions inside Soviet prisons. The West failed to pressurize the USSR to live up to the Accords, and betrayed those Soviet dissidents who had tried to take them seriously by shelving human rights issues at the Helsinki review conferences that had taken place in Belgrade and

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95 Moskovskii prosess, p. 412.
96 To Choose Freedom, pp. 43, 98.
97 See Christopherson, French Intellectuals, p. 176.
99 To Choose Freedom, p. 154.
101 To Choose Freedom, pp. 33, 186.
Madrid. In arresting Iurii Orlov and others in 1977, Moscow threw down an open challenge to the world, and the West ‘capitulated’. The 1977 Brezhnev constitution, an attempt to strip Soviet citizens of any legal basis for dissent, was clearly in defiance of the Helsinki Accords." In Moskovskii protsess Bukovskii was particularly scathing about the German Social Democrats, firstly for their initiation of détente, and then for what he saw as their attempts to soften Carter’s human rights policy on the grounds that it was a threat to détente.

Bukovskii also questioned the basis of the peace movement that emerged in the early 1980s, suggesting in a 1981 article in The Times that its activities were coordinated from Moscow. He said that it was no accident that the peace movement had emerged just after the invasion of Afghanistan, noting that while most governments had criticized the invasion, the peace movement had not. The article was partly based on remarks Bukovskii made at a Cambridge University Union Society debate in autumn 1981 in which Bukovskii lined up alongside Winston Churchill and the then UK defence secretary, John Nott, against the General Secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Bruce Kent, and others. Bukovskii expanded his thinking the following year in a longer article in Commentary, arguing that in Communist terminology the struggle for peace was identical to the struggle for the expansion of Soviet interests. In both articles he asserted that the World Peace Council was a front for the promotion of Soviet interests. The White House was impressed enough to include the Commentary piece in a list of three articles particularly recommended on the subject, and it was also reprinted as a pamphlet. Bukovskii was also a central figure in a wider international campaign against Communism. In 1981, Bukovskii and Churchill launched Radio Free Kabul, a radio station targeted at countering Soviet influence in Afghanistan. Its programmes were intended to sow division between officers and other ranks in the Soviet army. One idea was to create a system of bringing Soviet deserters to the West and then publicizing their fate over the radio. Programmes were also broadcast in Pushtu

102 "Quousque tandem Catilina", pp. 85–86.
103 Moskovskii protsess, p. 255.
104 The Observer, 2 October 1977, p. 12.
105 Moskovskii protsess, pp. 240–45.
107 Interviews, autumn 2007.
111 Bethell, Spies and Other Secrets, pp. 141–43.
and Dari for Afghans. The radio started operating in October 1981 and by the end of 1982 had eleven portable transmitters at work inside Afghanistan. Bukovskii outlined some of the details at a press conference at Freedom House in New York in March 1982. The programmes likened the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to the Nazi occupation of the USSR; and they often ended with a 10- to 15-minute pre-recorded tape in Russian by dissidents like Bukovskii, Grigorenko and Vladimir Maksimov — reminiscent of Japan’s ‘Tokyo Rose’ broadcasts to American troops in World War Two. Unlike Radio Liberty, Radio Free Kabul was privately financed and independent. However, the Soviet authorities, who were clearly frustrated by its activities, saw it as an instrument of the CIA.

The network of dissidents and human rights activists that supported Radio Free Kabul was also behind the formation of Resistance International (RI), an organization launched in Paris in May 1983 with the aim of supporting resistance movements in totalitarian countries and mobilizing Western public opinion against Communism. Conceived as a kind of counterweight to the European peace movement, it was an umbrella body that attracted support from a broad range of anti-Communist groups, and was particularly active in the years 1983–86. Bukovskii was President; Maksimov, editor of Kontinent and based in Paris, was the Executive Director; and Armando Valladares was Vice-President until he became Reagan’s Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Commission in 1987. If Bukovskii was the ‘charismatic motive force’ in the establishment of RI, his involvement was

113 Ibid. Interview between author and Ol’ga Svitsova, Paris, November 2007. The cost of transmitters, which was $2,200 each, came from private donations, often from political, intellectual and scientific figures in Europe; Associated Press, 4 March 1982, Section ‘Domestic News’. See also Christian Science Monitor, 29 November 1982, p. 3. The London committee for Radio Free Kabul included Lord Chalfont and Frank Chapple, as well as Bukovskii and Churchill. Interviews, autumn 2007.
115 Interviews, autumn 2007.
116 Associated Press, 16 May 1983, AM cycle. Interview with Ol’ga Svitsova. RI’s member organizations were the Bulgarian Liberation Movement, Comité Entr’aide et Action (Czechoslovakia), Committee of Cuban Intellectuals in Exile, Independent and Democratic Cuba, Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahidin, Miskito, Fumo, and Rama Indian Front (Nicaragua), National Democratic Committee for a Free Albania, Nicaraguan Democratic Front, Resistance Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, Revolutionary Force of Young Vietnamese in Europe, the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (Cambodia), United Front for the Liberation of Laos, UNITA (Angola), Witness (Czechoslovakia), and Fighting Solidarity-Solidarność Walczaca (Poland). Albert Jolis, A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds, Boulder, CO, 1996, pp. 369, 397.
sometimes representative as much as practical. Maksimov once said of him: ‘He represents, I work.’\textsuperscript{117} In fact, a small group of Paris-based activists did the organizational work.\textsuperscript{118}

Bukovskii was well known in Paris; his arrival in the West in 1976 had received considerable coverage in the French press. The publication of the French edition of Solzhenitsyn’s \textit{The Gulag Archipelago} (starting in June 1974), and the arrival in Paris in January 1976 of Ukrainian dissident Leonid Plushch, newly released from a Soviet psychiatric hospital, had heightened French interest in dissidents, and Bukovskii’s exile reinforced it.\textsuperscript{119} RI drew on this reservoir of support. The philosophers Raymond Aron, André Glucksman, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and Jean-François Revel were amongst its French backers.\textsuperscript{120}

RI promoted a variety of initiatives: it helped to set up news conferences for Soviet defectors in Afghanistan;\textsuperscript{121} campaigned for the right of International Red Cross prisoners to choose political asylum in the West;\textsuperscript{122} and lobbied the US Congress to release funds for the ‘contras’ in Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{123} It organized a major conference on ‘disinformation’ in Paris in 1984,\textsuperscript{124} and also organized ‘parallel’ conferences in 1986 to coincide with the official Helsinki Review meetings organized by the CSCE.\textsuperscript{125} Press books, bringing together newspaper articles about the activities of Resistance International, were produced for the supporters of the organization. Like Radio Free Kabul, Resistance International was privately financed; Bukovskii stated that it was not associated with any government or government agency.\textsuperscript{126} However, a daughter organization, the American Foundation for Resistance International, was set up in 1984, also with Bukovskii as President, which partly had the remit of raising money for the Paris-based organization. The key figure in this was an American businessman, Albert Jolis, who as Executive

\textsuperscript{117} Curtis Cate, ‘The Unsung Exile’ (article on Maksimov), \textit{The Washington Times}, 7 December 1984, p. 3D.

\textsuperscript{118} Interview with Ol’ga Svintsova.

\textsuperscript{119} See Christopherson, \textit{French Intellectuals}, pp. 115, 177, 172.

\textsuperscript{120} Cate, ‘The Unsung Exile’, p. 3D. Also on RI’s committee of support were Churchill, Bruno Bettelheim, Eugene Ionesco, Yehudi Menuhin, Mstislav Rostropovich and Simon Wiesenthal; \textit{Associated Press}, 16 May 1983, AM cycle. The French philosophers were also involved in the campaign to boycott the Moscow Olympics and Radio Free Kabul. However, while the philosophers were keen to be associated with the dissidents, they were sometimes reluctant to be as overtly anti-Soviet as Bukovskii and Maksimov. (Interview with Ol’ga Svintsova.) Glucksman dedicated his book, \textit{Les maîtres pensers} (Paris, 1977) to Bukovskii; see Christopherson, \textit{French Intellectuals}, p. 177.

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Associated Press}, 5 December 1983, AM cycle; 28 June 1984, PM cycle.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Christian Science Monitor}, 1 September 1983, p. 6.


\textsuperscript{124} Cate, ‘The Unsung Exile’, p. 1D.

\textsuperscript{125} Jolis, \textit{A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds}, pp. 370–71.

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Associated Press}, 16 May 1983, AM cycle.
Director raised several million dollars overall, in particular from conservative foundations in the USA. In 1989, a special division of the American Foundation for Resistance International, the National Council to support the Democracy Movements, was set up for fund-raising purposes, and this split away from RI altogether in 1991. The Paris organization itself became less relevant after 1989 as revolutions broke out in Eastern Europe, but it was also undermined by the fact that Maksimov fell out with Bukovskii and Valladares. It was replaced by Democracy and Independence, a body founded in Paris in 1989 specifically to foster democracy in the Soviet republics. Bukovskii again played a central role in this, although this time the Armenian nationalist and dissident Paruir Airikian was President.

Bukovskii was also a founder member of the New York-based Center for Democracy in the USSR, headed by fellow dissident Iurii Iarim-Agaev, which was formed in 1985 with the aim of gathering information about life in the USSR through human rights channels, and backed by right-leaning defence specialists and Sovietologists.

Bukovskii was instrumental in gaining financial support for the Center from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), established by Congress in 1983. Through the Center, Bukovskii also gained funding from NED to finance a project to smuggle American films, often with anti-Soviet themes, into the USSR through Fighting Solidarity, a Polish affiliate of Resistance International. Bukovskii was also involved in a major international conference in Prague in July 1990 entitled ‘A Peaceful Road to Democracy’. Organized by the National Council to Support the Democracy Movements, Democracy and Independence and the Center for Democracy in the USSR, it brought together an

128 An important reason for the split was that Bukovskii fell out with the chairman, Martin Colman. See Jolis, A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds, pp. 371, 375.
129 Ibid., p. 369.
131 The Center grew out of a conference involving the Andrei Sakharov Institute and the Hoover Institution that took place at Stanford University in September 1984. Bukovskii stated that it would act independently and have no ties with the US government. The Andrei Sakharov Institute, headed by Éduard Lozanskii, was set up in 1980; Associated Press, 5 November 1984, PM cycle.
132 Bukovskii knew the President of the National Endowment for Democracy, Carl Gershman, who was a former assistant to Jeane Kirkpatrick at the UN and member of the Committee for a Free World. See Kevin Coogan and Katrina Vanden Heuvel, ‘U.S. Funds for Soviet Dissidents’, Nation, 19 March 1988, p. 378.
impressive range of dissidents and pro-democracy leaders from the former USSR and Eastern Europe. The conference was opened by Bukovskii and Airikian, and Vaclav Havel welcomed the delegates. In an interview with Kasparov at the time of the conference, Bukovskii argued for the ‘immediate break-up of the [Soviet] Union’. Subsequently, in expectation of a crackdown in the USSR in 1990–91, Bukovskii worked with Fighting Solidarity to create a support infrastructure for eventual underground resistance in the Soviet Union which was known as ‘Warsaw 90’.

Bukovskii’s main ideological focus in the mid-1980s was on countering what he saw as Western illusions about perestroika. Bukovskii believed that Andropov, a sinister figure he called ‘more ruthless than Stalin’, was ultimately responsible for perestroika rather than Gorbachev. Gorbachev’s reformism was superficial, since his patrons had included Andropov, Suslov, Kulakov, Ustinov and Gromyko. In any case, personality played little role in the Soviet system; the General Secretary of the Communist Party was not an autonomous individual, but a ‘function’. Bukovskii complained that Gorbachev borrowed the concept of glasnost from the dissidents; he ‘hijacked our slogans’, he said at the Heritage Foundation in March 1987. Yet while the aim of dissident glasnost was to expose lies, Gorbachev sought to use glasnost to conceal them.

Bukovskii thought Gorbachev’s attempt to combine socialism with democracy was bound to fail, since the two objectives were incompatible. In reality, Gorbachev wanted to maintain what was essentially an unreformable totalitarian state. Writing in 1986, he welcomed the implications of Tat’iana Zasлавская’s gloomy assessment of the Soviet economic system in her so-called ‘Novosibirsk Report’ (1983), noting that Gorbachev used many of Zasлавская’s phrases, but warned that given the choice between socialism and the marketplace, Gorbachev would probably choose the former. In his writings of the next few

134 ‘Chto nas zdet zavtra?’, Demokraticheskaia Rossiiia, no. 2, 1990, p. 3.
135 Jolis, A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds, p. 376.
years, he attacked Gorbachev for what he saw as a lack of attention to political reform, and criticized his economic changes as ‘half-measures’ that had accentuated the country’s crisis. He compared the USSR in 1989 with Russia in 1905, while also stating that the country’s crisis was worse than at any previous time in Russian history. ‘There will be a 1917 too’, he warned.141 Later, he suggested that Gorbachev had created his new legislative system specifically to slow down the pace of change.142 As regards Gorbachev’s European policy, he wrote in Moskovskii protsess that its purpose was to create a united Germany on Soviet conditions, so provoking the collapse of NATO, the departure of the USA from Europe, and a leftwing shift in European politics in the direction of the convergence long-dreamed of by what he called ‘West European Mensheviks’. In other words, Gorbachev’s strategy was carefully formulated to serve Soviet interests. However, events got out of his control.143

Bukovskii was also frustrated by Gorbachev’s popularity. In Moskovskii protsess he described the perestroika years as the most difficult of his life, suggesting that ‘practically the whole world betrayed us — tempted by the lie, by the promise of a miraculous healing from a general ailment, yes, the promise of a petty swindler’. He was angry that people believed Gorbachev, a man who had chosen for himself the ‘service of the lie’, rather than him, who had opted for a life of imprisonment and exile specifically to avoid lying. He was also frustrated that dissidents like Sakharov were ready to work with Gorbachev, later noting that the dissident movement split at this time into supporters of Gorbachev and those who refused to serve as ‘a screen for the General Secretary and his games’, and complained of Sakharov’s ‘suicidal alliance’ with the leaders of perestroika.144

Bukovskii thus argued against coming to terms with Gorbachev. The West should not support Gorbachev and thereby delay the Soviet system’s inevitable crisis. ‘The time has come to mount the pressure, not to relax it’, he said in spring 1985.145 Instead of aiding Soviet client states, the West should pressurize the USSR by supporting resistance movements. Any slowdown in military competition could only serve to reduce the need for reform.146 The arms reduction negotiations in

143 Moskovskii protsess, pp. 467, 470; for more on Bukovskii’s views of Europe, see Vladimir Bukovsky and Pavel Strolov, EUSR: The Soviet Roots of European Integration, Worcester Park, 2004.
144 Moskovskii protsess, pp. 225–26, 219, 74.
145 ‘Quousque tandem Catilina’, p. 82.
146 ‘Will Gorbachev Reform the Soviet Union?’, p. 23.
Geneva were a mistake.147 and there was no necessity for the INF treaty.148 Bukovskii conceived a particularly tough strategy for pressurizing the Soviet regime in a report for the Heritage Foundation in 1985. The US, he argued, should try to exploit the potential nationalities problem in the USSR, develop exchange activities only where the Soviets could not control them, offer loans and subsidized trade on condition that the Soviet regime introduced economic decentralization and increased incentives, and offer material and moral support for liberation movements in Communist countries. Bukovskii also suggested that the US should withdraw from the Helsinki Accords unless all imprisoned members of the Helsinki monitoring groups in the USSR were released, and threaten to reopen the question of the European post-war borders. A new peace conference on Europe should be convened, in which the provisions of the Nazi-Soviet Pact would be examined, thereby bringing the ‘ideological battle’ into the Soviet territories for the first time.149

Bukovskii felt that the West lacked a strategy for dealing with the USSR. He was impressed by Carter’s stance on human rights; Carter had risked the anger of the Soviet authorities by meeting him in March 1977, and at the time Bukovskii called him ‘one of the greatest of the American Presidents’.150 Yet he also thought that Carter lacked a thought-out programme, the consequence being that he abandoned under pressure whatever was of worth in the human rights concept. The idea of peace itself could have been turned into a way of pressurizing the Soviet regime. He was impressed by Reagan’s so-called ‘zero option’ proposal of November 1981, in which the US administration suggested the removal of all intermediate range missiles from Europe, as well as the UN resolution of December 1982. However, he believed that ‘timid steps’ like these were not developed into a coherent strategy.151 Part of the problem was that American Presidents had to be constantly looking to the next elections.152 Western governments lacked the ability to pursue a policy over a sustained period, and their policies were often based on ‘passive reactions’ to Soviet moves.153

147 ‘Peace as a Political Weapon’, p. 32.
148 Bukovsky, correspondence on glasnost, p. 4.
149 Vladimir Bukovsky, *Heritage Foundation Reports*, 1985, Section: Critical Issues; Confronting Moscow; An Agenda for the Post-Soviet Era, p. 67; Source: LexisNexis News & Business.
151 ‘Peace as a Political Weapon’, p. 29.
152 *To Choose Freedom*, p. 47.
goals, long-term strategy and common sense were lacking in the Western response to the ultimate crisis of Communism.  

Like many Soviet dissidents, Bukovskii had an ambivalent attitude to the West. He supported the West to the extent that it could be seen as a repository of liberal and democratic values. In an article of 1987, for example, Bukovskii argued for a strategic approach to countering Soviet peace initiatives by saying ‘our effort should be aimed at thwarting them’ by emphasizing the most controversial aspects of their campaign’, and that Soviet violations of previous agreements should be the target of ‘our counterattack’ (emphasis added — PB).  

Some years earlier he had written, ‘Let us not bring into being terrorist states that would simply be Soviet agents, which all of our history tells us encourage the destruction of Western positions’ (emphasis added — PB).  

The collective that Bukovskii identified with was at one level ‘the West’.

At the same time, Bukovskii was very critical of the West. He came to the conclusion that the West did not really exist as a monolithic unity. He also thought that the West’s legal consciousness was not as well developed as was generally thought, and that there were many similarities between the Western and Soviet economic systems. Moreover, he believed that at a deeper level Westerners were often in the grip of a moral malaise that hindered their capacity to understand the real nature of the USSR. For example, writing about the peace movement, Bukovskii suggested that people’s craving for peace had made them ‘illogical and irrational […] and unable to think calmly’; members of the peace movement made no attempt to distinguish between what was true and what was not. Such people could be manipulated by the Soviet regime; to use Leninist terminology, they were ‘useful idiots’.

People in the West were not ready to understand the nature of the ideological war they were involved in: they could not see that Soviet citizens travelling abroad were frontline soldiers in a war; they were ‘not prepared to detect a colossal and audacious falsification’. The malaise could even be seen as spiritual. There was a ‘spiritual gulag’ in the West, Bukovskii said; indeed, Bukovskii was uncertain as to whether he was really freer in the West than in the USSR — even if he was more secure.

159 ‘Peace as a Political Weapon’, p. 10.
160 To Choose Freedom, pp. 34, 97.
In this context, the USA was a particular target. Writing in 1984 in *The American Spectator*, Bukovskii suggested that, like all egocentrics, Americans felt that the world existed only in their own perception. He criticized American liberals for failing to distinguish between the Soviet people and the Soviet system, and American conservatives for their failure to organize. Decadence was part of the problem. This great nation of pioneers, he said, had become ‘effeminated’ by a few decades of peace, prosperity and social security.\(^{161}\) Later, in 1989, he stated that people in California, and the US generally, seemed to suffer from the sort of self-questioning that came from ‘too much comfort, too much superficial living, and too little suffering’.\(^{162}\) He later said that he did not like America, and had not liked it from his very first encounter with it, stressing that he preferred European culture as ‘a certain distinct and cohesive reality’.\(^{163}\)

Intellectuals and academics were also the target of Bukovskii’s criticisms. In an introduction to Arthur Koestler’s *Darkness at Noon* in 1980, he sarcastically noted that while Marxism remained popular amongst ‘rich idlers and university professors’ in developed countries, it was a ‘blood-stained tragedy’ for their pupils in Vietnam and Cambodia.\(^{164}\) He had a particular dislike of Sovietologists, declaring in 1988 that the work of the ‘Sovietological mafia’ had been exposed as a ‘pile of trash’. He criticized the tendency of scholars to divide Politburo members into ‘hawks’ and ‘doves’, essentially on the grounds that no dove could rise to power in the USSR;\(^{165}\) the very idea of hawks and doves in the Soviet leadership was a ‘planned duplicity’ based on a negotiating technique long used by the KGB and professional criminals.\(^{166}\) It seems that Bukovskii also translated the conflict between career and conscience in Soviet life into a Western context, for he suggested that the failure of Western scholars to tell what he saw as the truth about the USSR was rooted in a desire to preserve a reputation for moderation, and to have their works accepted by prestigious publishers. The dissidents were often treated with a condescending attitude, he thought: ‘As for us, we are still “émigré intellectuals” with something on our shoulders, or around our necks. We are still “too extreme” and not sufficiently “balanced”.’\(^{167}\)


\(^{162}\) ‘The Quiet Exit of Soviet Communism’, p. 222.

\(^{163}\) *Moscowskii protsess*, pp. 261–62. The Swedish model of socialism was another target of Bukovskii’s hostility; see *To Choose Freedom*, p. 128.


\(^{165}\) Correspondence on glasnost, p. 4.

\(^{166}\) *To Choose Freedom*, pp. 153, 155.

\(^{167}\) Correspondence on glasnost, pp. 6, 4.
The reputation of the dissidents, and in particular of Solzhenitsyn, was a central theme of an article Bukovskii wrote in Kontinent in 1980. This was a response to a piece by a fellow dissident, Valerii Chalidze, in which Chalidze suggested that Solzhenitsyn was anti-Western and lacked a respect for the rights of man.\textsuperscript{168} Bukovskii complained that Solzhenitsyn had come to represent the dissident movement as a whole, and that people who attacked Solzhenitsyn or Kontinent (he cited Roy and Zhores Medvedev) could be used by the Soviet authorities in their own campaigns against them. He said he did not agree with all of Solzhenitsyn’s views: he did not share his religious convictions, for example, or his belief that Russia’s third wave of emigration to the West had no special mission; and he wrote of one of his works that it reflected a naive belief in the power of words to change things.\textsuperscript{169} But he was anxious to highlight the way in which Solzhenitsyn had become a figure in global ideological battles, and the way in which attacks on Solzhenitsyn could play into the hands of the Soviet authorities.\textsuperscript{170}

Bukovskii and Solzhenitsyn actually had much in common. For example, both figures believed that compromise with the regime eroded a person’s moral autonomy.\textsuperscript{171} Both also believed that intellectuals, with no practical understanding of the consequences of their ideas, were largely to blame for the crimes of Soviet Communism; and both emphasized Communism’s non-Russian roots. In URSS: de l’utopie au désastre, Bukovskii insisted that the roots of Soviet Communism were to be found in Marxism rather than Russian history, and that Lenin, far from departing from Marx, was slavishly true to his ideas and inherently totalitarian; and he likened Marx to Goethe’s Faust, emphasizing the utopian aspects of his thought.\textsuperscript{172} In addition, Bukovskii’s moral self-defence strategies were not unique to him. For example, his techniques of handling interrogation were in some ways similar to those of Anatolii Shcharanskii, a prominent member of the Moscow Helsinki Group, although he did not share Shcharanskii’s Jewish patriotic or religious convictions. Shcharanskii’s Fear No Evil (1988) was also similar to To Build a Castle, in the sense that although both texts were essentially memoirs, they were also survival manuals with a strong message about human rights.\textsuperscript{173}

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\textsuperscript{170} Pochemu russkie soviatsia?, pp. 176, 178, 180–81, 191, 193.
\textsuperscript{171} See, for example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, The Oak and the Calf, London, 1980, pp. 163,
\textsuperscript{172} URSS: de l’utopie au désastre, pp. 15–33, 124, 128. Part 1 of the book is entitled ‘Les Racines: De Faust à Lénine’; Part 2, entitled ‘Les Fruits: Chronique d’un déclin’ (pp. 159–276), is made up of French translations of essays that appear elsewhere in English.
\textsuperscript{173} See Boobbyer, Conscience, Dissent and Reform, p. 98.
\end{flushright}
While Bukovskii was much admired in some dissident and émigré circles, his ideas and activities also met with considerable criticism: the émigré historian Aleksandr Yanov suggested that *To Build a Castle* reflected a ‘heroic romanticism’ reminiscent of the Russian populists of the 1870s, the sociologist Vladimir Shlapentokh argued that Bukovskii exaggerated the role of the KGB and Andropov in the origins of perestroika; and the dissident Liudmila Alekseeva thought Bukovskii’s attitude to the Helsinki Accords was too antagonistic. Furthermore, some Westerners thought that Bukovskii’s activities, and those of his circle, were too confrontational and likely to be counter-productive. In 1988 two American reporters for the left-leaning weekly *Nation* suggested that the Center for Democracy in the USSR’s schemes were ‘reckless and provocative’, and questioned the wisdom of taking money from NED because it was a government source. In addition, Alekseeva refused to be associated with the Center on the grounds that it might endanger people in the USSR; and Pavel Litvinov thought that it harmed the cause of human rights by concealing what were political intentions under a human rights front. Bukovskii’s ‘no compromise’ approach to dealing with the USSR did not appeal to everyone.

*On the Soviet collapse and its aftermath*

Bukovskii returned to the USSR for the first time since 1976 in April 1991, visited again after the ill-fated August coup, and subsequently returned as an expert witness for the trial of the Communist Party in summer 1992. His reputation in Russian liberal circles was high, and he was apparently even on a short-list of vice-presidential candidates for El’tsin in 1991. However, he resisted attempts to draw him more formally into the political sphere. During the visit to Moscow in July 1992 he turned down a proposal by a group of liberal deputies in the Moscow City Council for him to run for Mayor of Moscow, on the grounds that to fulfil the mayor’s duties he would need a large team of intellectuals committed to radical reform, and there was a lack of such

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people in the country. Instead he tried to influence the course of events with his ideas.

Consistent with his scepticism about perestroika, Bukovskii took the view that Gorbachev himself was the major obstacle to reform, and in 1991 was eager for the opposition to act more quickly to remove him. During his visit to the USSR in April 1991 he argued that only a nationwide general strike could remove Gorbachev from power and end Communist rule. The country was on the edge of civil war, and the only way to avoid it was to dissolve the Union itself. The ill-fated August coup a few months later was, in his view, an attempt by Gorbachev himself to introduce martial law without being seen as its leader. Bukovskii's enduring scepticism about Gorbachev's reforms, and about the Soviet regime generally, was evident at this time in a comic novel, Zolotoi eshelon (1991), which he himself conceived and wrote in collaboration with the dissident poet Irina Ratushinskaia and her husband, Igor' Gerashchenko, the defector Viktor Suvorov and the American neo-conservative, Michael Ledeen. The book revolved around an American entrepreneur who, seeing Russia's shortages, arrives in the USSR with some soap, hoping to make a quick profit, only to find himself in a disintegrating country. Ironically, since the novel was written before the events of August 1991, the narrative culminates in a coup. Gary Kasparov was so impressed by the text that he arranged for it to be published by the Democratic Russia publishing house.

Bukovskii supported El'tsin as the 'first democratically elected leader of Russia', and felt insulted by Western experts who suggested he (El'tsin) was unreliable or unbalanced. However, he thought El'tsin made some serious mistakes which put the whole reform process on the wrong track. Writing in Commentary in 1993, Bukovskii argued that El'tsin missed the chance of confronting the Soviet regime robustly in spring 1991 and betrayed his natural allies, the miners; instead, he entered into an alliance with the liberal wing of the nomenklatura, and got involved in the Novo-Ogarevo process for renegotiating a new Union Treaty. El'tsin and the democratic forces had been afraid of confrontation and mistakenly impressed by the Polish

179 TASS, 28 July 98; Source: LexisNexis News & Business.
182 Vladimir Bukovsky, 'The Disappearing Act', The New Republic, 1/6/92-1/13/92, P. 42.
round-table agreement between Solidarity and the Communists. A general strike or campaign of civil disobedience would have been the better tactic. The alliance with the liberal nomenklatura made the creation of real opposition structures more difficult, and the lack of confrontation with the authorities hindered the development of the democratic forces themselves. It was unfortunate that Gorbachev's reforms were introduced from above, rather than being brought about by the efforts of the people; 'given' by the authorities, they could always be taken back.

El'tsin also proved himself unwilling to make proper use of his power after August 1991; in fact, his government was like the Provisional Government of 1917 in its inability to address key problems. Unlike Lenin, who moved swiftly to undercut the counter-revolution after October 1917, El’tsin failed to act quickly to prevent the old elites, which were particularly strong in the provinces, from regrouping. At this point, El’tsin could have purged the nomenklatura by ordering swift parliamentary elections that would have brought new people into power; he could also have declared a unilateral withdrawal of Russia from the USSR, which would have helped address Russia's urgent need to extricate itself from its imperial past. Even if these things could not have all been implemented immediately, they should at least have been launched, thereby shaping the main lines of El’tsin's policies. The failure to act meant that the supervision of reform, and specifically the programme of privatization, fell into the hands of the old party bureaucracy, which then implemented change in a way that protected its own interests. Evidently unhappy at their nomenklatura backgrounds, Bukovskii was contemptuous of Gaidar and his team, believing that it had been unwise to model the Russian reform process on Polish shock therapy when the two countries were so obviously different.

Intriguingly, Bukovskii began to question at this time the dissident tradition of avoiding political organization in favour of moral opposition. Writing in the New York Times Magazine in January 1992, he suggested that although the strategy of moral resistance adopted by the dissidents had in some way contributed to the 'velvet nature' of the anti-Communist revolutions in Eastern Europe, the refusal to organize an opposition political force also bore some responsibility for the messy

186 Ibid., pp. 131–32.
187 Moskovskii protses, p. 73.
188 'Tumbling Back to the Future', pp. 34, 42, 40.
189 'Boris Yeltsin's Hollow Victory', pp. 32–35.
transition that Russia was going through.\textsuperscript{190} The dissidents of the late 1980s had failed to create a sufficiently strong political organization.\textsuperscript{191}

Bukovskii also believed that El’tsin had missed the chance of instituting a direct confrontation with the crimes of the Soviet era, and thus of de-legitimizing Soviet Communism once and for all. In his youth, Bukovskii had been impressed by Stanley Kramer’s film, \textit{Judgment at Nuremberg} (1961),\textsuperscript{192} and he wanted to see some kind of Nuremberg-style trial of the Soviet system. The greatness of Nuremburg, he wrote in \textit{Moskovskii protsess}, was that it presented to the world ‘absolute moral norms of behaviour, reminding a confused world of the basic principle of our Christian civilization — that we are given freedom of choice, and that consequently we are responsible for that choice’.\textsuperscript{193} Following the failed August coup, Bukovskii came to Moscow on 25 August. At a gathering at the dacha of Mikhail Poltoranin, El’tsin’s Minister of Information, attended by state secretary of the Presidential Council Gennadii Burbulis and other prominent figures, Bukovskii suggested that the Communists were like a wounded beast that needed to be finished off once and for all, and called for a kind of Nuremberg process. The suggestion was well received, and Poltoranin contacted the head of Soviet television, Egor Iakovlev, to start initial moves. Iakovlev arranged for a televised interview between Bukovskii and the newly appointed head of the KGB, Vadim Bakatin, on 9 September,\textsuperscript{194} during which Bukovskii argued against the mass exposure of informers and the hysteria that might result from legal examination, but emphasized the importance of repentance. Bakatin agreed with many of his points, but rejected the idea that there should be an international commission to examine the Soviet archives. In any case, El’tsin did not wish to pursue the matter.\textsuperscript{195}

However, in July 1992 Bukovskii joined writer Lev Razgon and dissident priest Gleb Yakunin as a witness for the prosecution in the trial about the legality of the Communist Party that came before the Constitutional Court. A few days before he gave evidence, Bukovskii wrote a piece for \textit{Izvestiia}, stating that his own experience was itself a witness to the criminality of the Party; the article also included a specially-written statement by Margaret Thatcher emphasizing the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{190} ‘Tumbling Back to the Future’, p. 34; see also Vladimir Bukovsky, ‘Russia’s Future Jeopardised by Unfinished Revolution’, \textit{Freedom Today}, June 1992, p. 14.\textsuperscript{197}
\item \textsuperscript{191} Interviews, autumn 2007.\textsuperscript{19}
\item \textsuperscript{192} Ibid.\textsuperscript{195}
\item \textsuperscript{193} \textit{Moskovskii protsess}, p. 38.\textsuperscript{196}
\item \textsuperscript{194} Interviews, autumn 2007.\textsuperscript{197}
\item \textsuperscript{195} Boobbyer, \textit{Conscience, Dissent and Reform}, p. 217.\textsuperscript{198}
\end{itemize}
totalitarian nature of Communism. In his evidence at the trial, Bukovskii recounted his experiences of arrest and imprisonment, and claimed that the average Soviet citizen had ‘understood everything’ about life in the USSR. In an interview afterwards he stated that he was not looking for revenge against the Communists, or to put them in jail. However, he said that he hoped the case would act as a ‘safety valve’ to release public anger against the Communists, stating that unless the party’s crimes were condemned in some civilized way, then ‘the streets’ would pass their judgment very quickly.197 The court eventually found that the ruling organs of the party were illegal, but that the local branches were not. However, the trial never went beyond this issue to discussing the issue of the criminality of the Communist regime.

Bukovskii made his appearance at the trial of the Communist Party conditional on having access to the Soviet archives. Before and during the trial, he used a hand-held scanner to copy roughly 7000 documents. A small number of these were published in Commentary in 1996, and an expanded selection appeared in Moskovskii protess, along with an extended commentary by Bukovskii. The documents offered a striking insight into the Soviet system and the way it organized its operations abroad. Moskovskii protess appeared in several languages, but not in English; Random House considered it, but apparently believed that some of Bukovskii’s accusations were unsubstantiated.198 In a sense, the book functioned as Bukovskii’s own indictment of the system. It certainly reflected his belief that the transition process had been flawed. Bukovskii stated that the old establishment, which he called ‘a nomenklatura of collaborators, Pétainists and Quislings from the Cold War’, remained in power both in Russia and the West.199 He also criticized the intelligentsia, both for its ‘self-love’, which the regime had known so well how to manipulate, and its lack of radicalism after 1991. Solzhenitsyn had been right to summarize the intelligentsia as obrazovanshchina (‘smatterers’) in a controversial essay.200

196 Vladimir Bukovskii, ‘Kommunizm i demokratija nesovmestimy’, Izvestiia, 21 July 1992, p. 3. Three other statements were included in the article: one by Lord Bethell; another by Robert van Voren, General Secretary of the Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry; and the other by members of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group.
199 Moskovskii protess, p. 76.
All of Bukovskii’s writings from the mid-1990s to the present day have reflected a frustration that there was no concerted attempt to confront the crimes of Communism after 1991, and a belief that this has impeded Russia’s development. Charged by readers of Commentary in 1993 that he was too harsh on El’tsin, Bukovskii replied: ‘It is one thing to forgive your defeated and repentant enemies, and quite a different story if you allow them to rule the country again, totally unrepentant of their past crimes.’ A seventy-five-year-long trauma required a ‘harsh and just’ moral judgment. In 1996 he was incredulous that while the leading Nazis were tried at Nuremberg, nothing similar had happened in the USSR. A few years later he even suggested that the West lost the Cold War at the ideological level:

There was no Nuremberg process in Moscow. Why? Because while we won the Cold War in a military sense, we lost it in the war of ideas. The West stopped one day too soon, just like in Desert Storm. Just imagine the Allies being satisfied with some kind of Perestroika in Nazi Germany — instead of unconditional surrender.

Similar points were made in Bukovskii’s pre-election Presidential manifesto of 2007, where he argued that the absence of a Nuremberg-style trial of Communism, and adequate lustration policies, had been a crucial reason for Russia’s reversion to KGB rule under Putin; already from 1994 onwards, El’tsin was a hostage of the security agencies rather than his own master, and a restoration was ‘inevitable.’

There was a note of anger and disillusionment in Bukovskii’s post-1991 writings; Bukovskii always had a tendency to see the potential for evil in situations, but the pessimistic note was now accentuated. Moskovskii protsess itself was an aggressive, sometimes sarcastic, book. In Le Monde in 1996 Bukovskii asked whether the prisons, camps and psychiatric hospitals had all been in vain, and whether the dissidents were not similar to the so-called ‘superfluous men’ of nineteenth-century Russia. That being said, Bukovskii’s battle to keep the nature and crimes of Communism in the news continued. This applied not only to...
Russia. In Poland in 1998, Bukovskii used documents from the Soviet archives to spark controversies about Soviet involvement in those countries, and in Chile in 1999 he emphasized Moscow’s role in the civil war of the early 1970s. Comitatus pro Libertatibus, an Italian libertarian organization of which Bukovskii became General President in 2001, organized a memorial day for Gulag victims each year on 7 November. Yet Bukovskii’s quarrel was always as much with socialism, dictatorship and the repression of human rights generally as with the Soviet regime specifically, and after the Soviet collapse his attention was increasingly drawn to what he saw as the totalitarian tendencies of the European Union. He was often a guest speaker at Eurosceptic gatherings, co-authored a booklet suggesting that the EU was the project of a ‘bankrupt socialist nomenklatura’ trying to salvage its utopian dreams, and became a patron of the anti-EU United Kingdom Independence Party prior to the EU elections of 2004. Elsewhere, he was a strong supporter of the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Conclusion

Bukovskii once said he hated politics, but it is hard to take this seriously. However, it was particularly the underlying ethical aspects of politics that interested him. This was shown on the one occasion when he made a formal attempt to enter the political arena; his Presidential manifesto of 2007 was a rallying cry for justice and decentralization rather than a detailed policy programme. He was also drawn to the strategic and tactical dynamics of political life. If Bukovskii saw interrogation as a kind of chess game, he saw Soviet politics and the Cold War in the same way. Perhaps for this reason, in spite of his anti-Communism, he recognized Lenin’s political intelligence: ‘Say what you will about comrade Lenin,’ he wrote in 1984, ‘but he was a tactical

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209 Chips, 11 November 1999; Source: Lexis/Nexis News & Business.
210 Email letter from Dario Fertilio to author, 21 November 2007.
212 Bukovsky and Stroilov, EUSSR, p. 41.
216 ‘Rossiia na chekistskom kriuke’.
genius. In addition, Bukovskii had an uncompromising approach to strategy. He understood himself to be involved in an ideological war with Soviet Communism, and in this he saw little space for compromise; as he said to Grigorenko, a tactical retreat would lead to defeat in such a struggle.

As well as emphasizing strategy, Bukovskii was constantly searching for means to influence public opinion. Prior to 1976, he did this by organizing poetry readings and an art exhibition, planning demonstrations, and even from within prison through exposing the Perm' blockade. The campaign against the abuse of psychiatry, which sparked a significant international debate on Soviet practices that eventually led to the isolation of Soviet psychiatry, was a particular success. After his exile, he continued to do similar things, organizing radio propaganda in Afghanistan, creating publicity for anti-Communist groups, arranging for the transmission of videos into the USSR, and copying and publicizing documents from the Soviet archives. These activities were the hallmarks of a man with a campaigning tendency and a flair for propaganda.

In an appreciation of Bukovskii written in 1971, religious dissident Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin rightly noted that Bukovskii was a fundamentally practical person rather than a theoretician or a dreamer. At the same time Bukovskii had a set of ideas that informed his strategy and actions, and gave it a consistency. He was a strong defender of personal freedom. He believed that everyone in the USSR faced a battle to preserve their personal autonomy, and that this could be done only through a focused effort of the will. In a sense, the English version of the title of his memoirs, To Build a Castle, summed up the task facing people: they had to become morally impregnable. There was a strong libertarian element here. Bukovskii once said that the dissidents shared Albert Camus's philosophy more than any other, having in mind Camus's emphasis on personal sovereignty: 'We acted from a deep-seated conviction that our inner sovereignty was under attack.' Acutely aware of the way individuals could become swallowed up by collectives, he saw the essence of Marxism as the subordination of the individual 'I' to the collective 'We'.

Yet Bukovskii's libertarianism was not just about personal autonomy. The dissidents, he wrote in 1996, had tried to show that an individual

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219 'Ne mechom i kop'em', pp. 137, 138.
221 'The Quiet Exit of Soviet Communism', p. 212.
222 Bukovsky, 'Introduction' to Darkness at Noon, pp. 8–9.
could alter the course of his own and thereby his country’s life by barring the road to arbitrary rule and oppression.\textsuperscript{223} The individual could and indeed was morally obliged to try to change the world. There was a set of political principles here. In 1998 the Freedom Association, of which Bukovskii continued to be a vice-President, distilled its core beliefs into six main tenets, which roughly reflected Bukovskii’s own thinking: individual freedom; personal and family responsibility; the rule of law; the free market economy; limited government; and national parliamentary democracy.\textsuperscript{224} There was also a conservative element in Bukovskii’s thought. His attacks on the USSR and Western decadence often put him in the company of conservative commentators. Moreover, his experience of Soviet life meant that he was always suspicious of the state, and in the West he was often drawn to conservatives with a similar distrust. He himself noted that there was an overlap between certain kinds of conservatism and libertarianism.\textsuperscript{225} Suspicion of the state and a belief in grass-roots reform were distinctive features of Bukovskii’s pre-election Presidential manifesto.\textsuperscript{226}

Although a libertarian, Bukovskii’s ethics were not relativistic. Though not a religious believer, Bukovskii believed in good and evil, conscience, self-sacrifice, truth-telling, repentance, and more generally the centrality of Christian ethics for Western civilization. Personal accountability was another enduring theme in his thought. ‘Everyone had a choice’, he said. People paid for their misdeeds.\textsuperscript{227} Those who chose to work within the system, even for what seemed like healthy motives, were corrupted by it.\textsuperscript{228} Bukovskii also generally interpreted larger events, as well as personal choices, from the ethical point of view; indeed he once wrote that he found it impossible to avoid using epithets like ‘good’ and ‘evil’ when describing the world situation.\textsuperscript{229} He thought the Soviet system depended on people’s readiness to be silent in the face of criminality; détente was an attempt by the USSR to bully the West into rescuing the Soviet economy, and Westerners, out of moral blindness, colluded with it; the failure to institute a Nuremberg-style trial meant that the Russian state continued to be ruled by a compromised elite. This moral emphasis was of course not unique to Bukovskii; it was a typical feature of the dissident movement throughout the Eastern bloc.

\textsuperscript{225} Interviews, autumn 2007.
\textsuperscript{226} ‘Rossiia na chekistskom kriuke’.
\textsuperscript{229} \textit{To Choose Freedom}, p. 30.
As regards his relationship with Russia, although an admirer of Herzen, Bukovskii was sceptical about the revolutionary tradition. He shared with thinkers like Solzhenitsyn the belief that Communism was a fundamentally flawed idea and that the Revolution was a critical turning-point in Russian history, rather than reflecting continuities from the past. He was also pleased with the emergence of a democratic Russian leader in the person of El’tsin, although he was ultimately disappointed with what he saw as his mistakes. Yet it would be wrong to see Bukovskii in a purely Russian context: he transferred his human rights struggle from a Soviet milieu onto a larger stage without difficulty, and was part of and indeed helped to shape a global anti-Communist network.

Bukovskii’s personality clearly helped to shape his ideas and activities. He had good networking skills, and this helped him build alliances with people around particular issues. He could clearly command considerable loyalty; supporters were impressed by his boldness and his record of standing up to the Soviet regime (even while there were also people who found him too strident). He believed in speaking his mind, and was sometimes abrasive. Jolis recalled that when the ‘Peaceful Road to Democracy’ conference in Prague in 1990 was threatened by doubters who feared provoking the USSR, Bukovskii ‘with lacerating invective, shamed the timid and silenced the naysayers’.230 This was typical Bukovskii; his attitudes were consistently uncompromising. Even in his youth he had a combative nature, and this was accentuated by his prison experiences. In a sense he was, as Krasnov-Levitin noted, a ‘fighter’ and ‘revolutionary’, even if he did not like the concept of revolution.231

230 Jolis, A Clutch of Reds and Diamonds, p. 373.