

## Exploring a Forced Migration Movement in the Period of the Cold War from the (Former) U.S.S.R. to Abroad

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### Abstract

*The paper studied extremely important categories in the (former) U.S.S.R. such as dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and 'non-returnees' to their country of origin because of the political persecution in the 20th century, as well as, in the 21st century the category of 'Foreign Agents' in contemporary Russia in the period of Russia's full invasion of Ukraine for the political persecution too, when this successor country of the U.S.S.R. found enemies and agents again among its citizens, who tell the truth about Russia's war 2014-2022- in Ukraine. All the categories of 'enemies' and 'agents' of the 20-21st century have been characterized and analyzed in the paper. Also, the movement of refugees and asylum seekers from 1975 to 1990, from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A. has been summarized and analyzed in the paper.*

### Keywords

the cold war; iron curtain;  
non-returnees; dissidents;  
foreign agents



### I. Introduction

The Cold War, which started after WW2 in 1947 between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., theoretically has been finished in 1991 (Carrier, 2018). However, currently, with 2022 Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, more and more scientists assert that the Cold War did not finish (Blakemore, 2022) and it never ended (Kotkin, 2022), and the U.S.S.R. did not finish to exist as a state.

The Cold War, during which the 'Iron Curtain' has been created in the U.S.S.R., an oppressive and suffocating atmosphere in the country, in which citizens could not freely move or flee, they were isolated from the civilized world, and if the citizens were not agreed with this situation in the country, they became enemies of the Soviet power. Part of them have been arrested and sent to prisons, part to become patients of the forced punitive medicine in special prisons actually in psychiatric hospitals, and part tried to escape from this 'prison of nations,' however, not always successfully.

Thus, the article has explored the dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and 'non-returnees' processes in the period of the 'Iron Curtain' in the 20th century, and the term 'Foreign Agents' in the 21st century in contemporary Russia in the period of Russia's full invasion of Ukraine, when Russia categorized people, who have the will tell the truth about the war in Ukraine, as enemies of the regime and foreign agents.

According to Soviet propaganda, officially, the dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and 'non-returnees' processes did not exist because the country was closed from the whole civilized world by the imaginary wall, entitled the 'Iron Curtain.' But, all these processes existed, and the paper has presented some results of the research on that. Why the 'Iron Curtain' was necessary? To show that life in the (former)

U.S.S.R. was wonderful. But, this research presents a lot of examples that showed the contrary.

Officially, before the ‘Iron Curtain’ fell, the U.S.S.R. did not show official refugees or forced migration data from this country because the country tried to show, how people good lived in that country, and nobody did not want to leave the country. Why? According to the data from the Library of Congress (The Library of Congress, 2020) in the article, entitled ‘Soviet Exiles,’ is possible to find some answers to this question:

*‘...in 1952, the Soviet government had become embarrassed by the high rate at which its artists and scientists were decamping to America, and it established strict controls over emigration’* (The Library of Congress, 2020).

In the paper, the explored period was from the 1970s (before the ‘Iron Curtain’ fell) to the first part of the 1990s, when the ‘Curtain’ fell, which has been called the ‘period of dark spots concerning dissidents, exiled emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and ‘non-returnees.’ Why does the paper study this period? Because the official data of refugeeism from the U.S.S.R. for analysis in the paper has been found only starting from 1975 to the 1990s, to the falling of the ‘Iron Curtain,’ and these data were received thanks to the U.S.A. sources, like the U.S.A. Refugee Processing Center.

## II. Research Methods

The methodology of the paper consisted of a set of secondary research methods, qualitative and quantitative, which allowed us to analyze the situation of the movement of dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, ‘non-returnees’ from the U.S.S.R. in the 20th century, and the cases of ‘foreign agents’ in the 21st century during the period of the Cold War thanks to a lot of open sources in the Internet, libraries, and archives. In particular, some data from the U.S.A. Refugee Processing Center has been used from 1975 to 1990, which is extremely important for understanding the situation with the movements in the (former) U.S.S.R.

## III. Results and Discussion

Here has been exploring the categories of dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, the phenomenon of ‘non-returnees,’ which belonged to the 20th century, and the category of ‘Foreign Agents’ in the 21st century in contemporary Russia in the period of Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine, when Russia categorized people, who have the will, to tell the truth about the war in Ukraine, as enemies and agents. All the categories have been characterized and analyzed in the paper. Besides, the movement of refugees and asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A. from 1975 to 1990, has been summarized and analyzed.

### 3.1 Dissidents in the U.S.S.R., who could become forced emigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers, and who decided to stay in the U.S.S.R. to continue their fight

According to the Collins English Dictionary, the term ‘*dissidents are/were citizens who disagree(d) with and criticize(d) the Soviet government, especially because it is undemocratic*’ (Collins, 2022). One of the examples in the dictionary was the example of a former Soviet dissident’ (Collins, 2022) because the phenomenon was widely spread there.

For the Soviet regime and propaganda, dissidents were ‘crazy’ people, who consciously dared to say or do anything against the Soviet power, and, because of that, the majority of them became patients of the forced punitive medicine in special prisons, actually psychiatric hospitals of the closed types, where those who have been disagreed with the Soviet authorities, they died a slow, horrible death from torture. They were forced ‘treated,’ or the dissidents could become political prisoners in the Gulag or other special prisons for these kinds of prisoners.

After special prisons and tortures there, some of them, who survived, could have only a few ways:

- To become forced emigrants (exiled), refugees (political refugeeism through political persecution in the homeland, as well as non-political because of lack of freedom in the country), or asylum seekers to Western countries outside of the ‘Iron Curtain.’ Here is possible to find a lot of examples of Soviet people, who left the country forever. For example, Alexander Shatravka (Shatravka, 2019), was in special prison and survived after being tortured there. When he fled from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A., he published the book in 2019, entitled ‘Escape From Paradise: A Russian Dissident’s Journey From the Gulag to the West.’ The preface presents the abstract of a non-human story of this dissident. The book

*‘tells of the fate of a Soviet dissident, Alexander Shatravka, who tried to escape from the Soviet Union in 1974, only to be caught and returned to twelve years of imprisonment in Soviet psychiatric hospitals and labor camps’* (Shatravka, 2019).

- to continue staying in the country of origin and fighting against the Soviet regime. Among very famous cases are only a few, but very decent people, who in this fight lost freedom, their health, previous awards, and, in the end, their lives. Here is very important to say about the Soviet academic Andriy Sakharov, who lost everything because he did not share the values of Soviet propaganda and authorities, and because of that, he was a dissident and prisoner in Soviet prisons (Gorelik & Bouis, 2005). The story also knows an example of a very brave lady with the 40-year of experience in dissidence. Her name was Valeriya Novodvorska and one day she was killed by the Russian regime, a (former) Soviet, which is the same. She was a genius lady, journalist, publicist, lecturer, writer, translator, and, of course, the bravest dissident of the (former) U.S.S.R. In her books in Russian, titled ‘Beyond Despair’ and ‘The Catcher in the Lie,’ among three others, she described her heroic fight against the Soviet regime for years. When she was killed in 2014, her father, who lived in the U.S.A. gave an exclusive interview about his heroic daughter, where he showed his shock because of her sudden death (Gedrich, 2015).

### **3.2 Explanation of refugeeism and/or asylum seeking**

In general, refugeeism is a phenomenon when refugees were forced to leave their countries because of some negative processes inside their countries of origin. As a rule, there could be persecutions, different conflicts, wars, genocides, rapes, different types of violence, dictatorships, revolutions, etc.

Concerning the U.S.S.R. there were political and non-political refugeeism from the country. Political refugees were people who survived in conditions of the totalitarian regime and fled the country when it become possible and did it even if it was not possible. As a rule, political refugees were dissidents because the U.S.S.R., together with the total lack of freedom, was a punitive medical system for dissenters, and a lot of the intelligent and very-well educated, talented people in the U.S.S.R. became victims of penal medicine.

Lucky dissidents became political refugees or asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R., sometimes with a big risk to life because it was not so easy to leave the closed country U.S.S.R.

Non-political refugees were people from the number of 'happy' Soviet people, who, maybe, did not demonstrate their disagreement with the activity of the Soviet Party and Government in public, however, prepared themselves for escaping the U.S.S.R.

Among refugees from the U.S.S.R. were a lot of bright professionals, who left the country forever, among them were:

- talented scientists Michael Voslenski, Stanislav Kurilov, and others;
- a cybernetic engineer Yuri Vetokhin (Vetokhin, 1992), among others;
- poets, writers, and essayists, such as Joseph Brodsky, Lev Loseff, Sergei Dovlatov, Pyotr Vail, and others;
- genius ballet dancers, such as Alexander Godunov, Serge Lifar, Rudolf Nureyev, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and others;
- ordinary Soviet people who just wanted to live in freedom and peace outside of the U.S.S.R.;
- famous and ordinary Soviet women (Koshulko, 2020). In 1970, a famous ballet dancer Natalya Makarova from the U.S.S.R. asked for political asylum in the U.K. (Hofmann, 1970). In 1979, an 18-years Ukrainian young girl Liliana Gasinska, best known as a Red Bikini Girl, entered Australia from a Soviet ship by swimming in the Pacific Ocean and came to the Australian coast only in a bikini: *'she made her dramatic swim for freedom in January 1979'* (Edwards, 2010). In 1980, the 17-years Ukrainian girl Natalie Polovchak decided to stay in Chicago, the U.S.A., and did not want to come back to the U.S.S.R. together with her parents (NYT, 1982).

### 3.3 Examination of exile

A forced emigration or exile was a process when dissidents or other pro-active groups of Soviet citizens, disturbed the Soviet regime, so the regime forced them to be put out forever because they were unwanted citizens in their country, and because of that they have been exiled outside of the U.S.S.R. outside the 'Iron Curtain.'

Thus, all the categories of dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and 'non-returnees' knew that they will not come back to their country of origin, perhaps, during the time of the ruling Soviet regime. Of course, it was a big tragedy and a huge risk for their families inside of the U.S.S.R., but they knew that they received 'tickets in one side.'

### 3.4 Soviet citizens as asylum seekers to the U.S.A.

In the U.S.S.R. and after falling that country, there is not possible to find information about all the groups of Soviet people, which have been described before (dissidents, forced migrants, refugees, and 'non-returnees') because they did not 'exist' for the Soviet power, or this statistic was secret, it is the most likely, but currently, is not possible to explain. However, according to the data from the Refugee Processing Center of the U.S.A. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, thousands of Soviet citizens sought political asylum abroad in the 1970s, mainly in the U.S.A. (Refugee Processing Center, 2020).

The data on refugee admissions from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A. from 1975 to 1990 are analyzed in Table 1.

In 1975, the number of asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A. was 6,211 people. Over the period from 1975 to 1990, the number of asylum seekers increased from 6,211 people to 50,628 people.

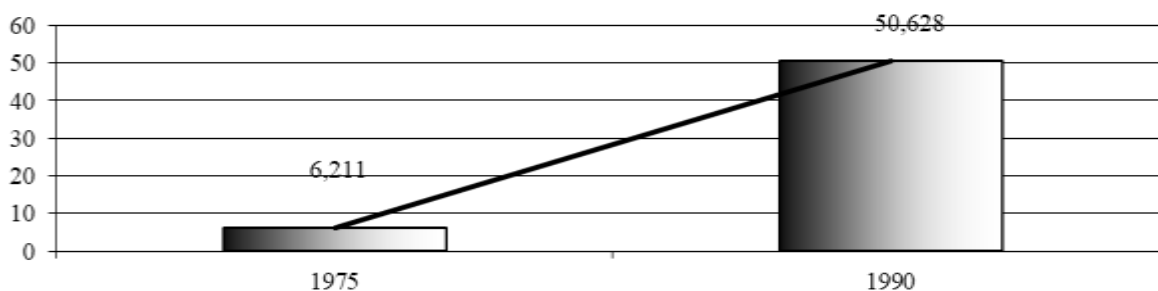
The gap between the number of asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S. in 1975 and 1990 increased by 88%, from 6,211 persons in 1975 to 50,628 in 1990. What is possible to say about this number of asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.? First of all, there is not possible to say that dissidents and migration movements in the period of the Cold War from the U.S.S.R. did not exist. Secondly, the number of dissidents and migration movements increased very much in the period from 1975 to 1990, before the U.S.S.R. was finally damaged, but it is also a question. Is it the U.S.S.R. in 1991? Or was the U.S.S.R., like the Cold War, never ended?

**Table 1.** Admissions of asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S. from 1975 to 1990, persons

Fiscal year	Soviet Union	Fiscal year	Soviet Union
1975	6,211	1983	1,342
1976	7,450	1984	721
1977	8,191	1985	623
1978	10,688	1986	799
1979	24,449	1987	3,699
1980	28,444	1988	20,411
1981	13,444	1989	39,602
1982	2,760	1990	50,628

Source: U.S. Refugee Processing Center, 2020

Graphically, the gap between the number of asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S. in 1975 and 1990 is possible to see in Fig. 1. The data source was taken from the U.S. Refugee Processing Center, 2020.



**Figure 1.** The number of asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A. from 1975 to 1990 in the period of the Cold War, persons

### 3.5 ‘Foreign Agents’ in the 21st century in Russia

The paper explored cases of dissidents, forced migrants, refugees, and ‘non-returnees’ during the period of the Cold War in the 20th century, but the Cold War, which started after WW2 (Carrier, 2018), did not finish until the 21st century. The Cold War continues, at least, from the side of Russia. According to some opinions of international scientists, for example, Stephen Kotkin, the Cold War never ended (Kotkin, 2022) because the world sees Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a new ‘Iron Curtain,’ in which Russia separated itself from the civilized world, as well as, the appearance of new dissidents in Russia or people, called there like ‘Foreign Agents,’ who told the truth about the war and occupation in Ukraine in this country-terrorist. How to finish the Cold War and the U.S.S.R.? How to finish Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine? Only to capitulate before

Ukraine and the democratic world. As said by the American scientist Timothy Snyder in his interview for the Guardian that Russia wins by losing (Rankin, 2022).

#### IV. Conclusion

The paper studied the level of the movement of refugees and asylum seekers from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A. from 1975 to 1990, in the period of existence of the U.S.S.R. and the 'Iron Curtain' in it. According to the results of the research, from the period from 1975 to 1990 from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A., the number of refugees and asylum seekers increased by 88%, from 6,211 persons in 1975 to 50,628 in 1990.

Also, some categories of 'enemies' and 'agents' in the 20-21st century in the U.S.S.R. and the successor country of the U.S.S.R., Russia, have been characterized and analyzed in the paper, among them were the following categories, as dissidents, forced (exiled) emigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and 'non-returnees' to their country of origin because of the political persecution in the 20th century, as well as, in the 21st century the category of 'Foreign Agents' in contemporary Russia.

Besides, the paper analyzed a lot of cases of very talented people from the U.S.S.R., who were forced to leave the country because of political persecution, pressure, life in fear for their life and health, fear to be arrested in any moment of their life behind the 'Iron Curtain,' etc.

In addition, some examples of very brave people, dissidents, including women, have been presented in the paper, who decided to stay in the U.S.S.R. and continue their fight with the Soviet system for freedom of the country and other countries too, but were forced to pay for the solution by their life, health, and freedom.

And last, but not least, the paper analyzed extremely important political categories, such as the Cold War and the 'Iron Curtain,' which received new confirmation because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where is very understandable that the Cold War and the 'Iron Curtain' in the successor country of the U.S.S.R., Russia, did not finish and, maybe, will not be finished never until this country-terrorist is still existed.

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