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The Committee of Concerned Scientists Records, 1970-2006 (Bulk dates: 1974-2005) HR# 0004

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SUMMARY INFORMATION

Creator

The Committee of Concerned Scientists

Title and dates

The Committee of Concerned Scientists Records, 1970-2006 (bulk dates: 1974-2005).

Abstract

This collection documents the efforts of the Committee of Concerned Scientists in promoting academic and personal freedom for scientists, scholars, engineers, and students.

Size

45.36 linear feet [108 document boxes]

Call number

HR# 0004

Location

Columbia University
Butler Library, 6th Floor
Rare Book and Manuscript Library
535 West 114th Street
New York, NY 10027

Language(s) of material

English

History of the Committee of Concerned Scientists

The Committee of Concerned Scientists (CCS) is a human rights organization composed of scientists, engineers, and scholars who promote academic and personal freedom for their colleagues worldwide. The Committee supports the rights of scientists to collaborate on research and share data, travel to conferences and meetings, and emigrate if they choose. More broadly, CCS advocates human treatment of all individuals and government compliance with human rights agreements.

The group began in 1972 as an ad hoc committee of scientists based in New York City and Washington DC. It originally concentrated on helping Soviet colleagues, especially *refusenik* scientists. The term *refusenik* refers to citizens of the USSR who applied to leave the country and were denied exit visas. Most *refusenik* scientists were refused on the grounds of possessing "state secrets" that they might share with foreigners. They often lost their jobs at universities and research facilities and were barred from attending scientific conferences. Some were stripped of academic titles, forced to work in labor camps, or charged with parasitism when they could not find work. Persecution was especially harsh for Jewish scientists, who often faced anti-Semitism in addition to the *refusenik* stigma.

The Committee argued that any secrets these scientists might possess were too insignificant and outdated to be of any threat to security and sent dozens of letters asking the country to change its emigration procedures. On a more immediate level, CCS members translated and published papers for *refusenik* scientists, subsidized subscriptions to scholarly publications, and visited the USSR under the guise of tourists to deliver books and offer moral support. In 1988, CCS sponsored the Frontiers of Science Conference in Moscow. Held in the private apartments of *refuseniks*, the conference allowed scientists to present their research at a time when they were barred from most international meetings.

Although Eastern Europe was a major focus at first, CCS quickly expanded its reach and has monitored human rights violations in over seventy-five countries, protesting travel restrictions on Israeli scientists, the imprisonment of professors in China, and violence against students in Ethiopia, among many others. The Committee often takes action by writing letters of protest directly to government officials and by sending alerts and contact information to other scientists, encouraging them to do the same. The group also contacts members of the United States Congress and the Executive Branch who can address human rights issues during diplomatic meetings. In the 1970s, CCS sent representatives to meetings of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE; also known as the Helsinki Commission), which monitors compliance with the Helsinki Final Act. The Committee reported to CSCE with information about the hardships faced by scientists, particularly *refuseniks*. The group may follow a case for years, repeatedly reminding officials of the violations in their country in the belief that international pressure will lead to change. There have been many successes, particularly in freeing scientists from prisons and acquiring exit visas.

The Committee also raises awareness among the scientific community by attending conferences, circulating petitions, and writing press releases. It helps persecuted scientists on an individual level when possible through calls, visits, and financial help. The Committee manages two grant programs; the Marc Kac Memorial Fund, which defrays the costs of membership in the American

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Physical Society for scientists in Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine, and the Program for Refugee Scientists, which assists recent immigrants to the U.S. by providing financial support and aid in job searches.

Description

The Records of the Committee of Concerned Scientists consist of a wide variety of materials that the group retained to track its own action and progress. Materials document CSS involvement in many countries, but place a significant emphasis on aid to scientists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Much of the collection also relates to the work of Dorothy Hirsch, who was an active member of CCS from 1977 to 2003 and an executive vice president. Materials include correspondence, administrative records, petition forms, annual and financial reports, fundraising records, press releases, photographs, and audiocassettes.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in six series.

Series I. Administrative Records, 1973-2006	PAGES 7-8
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[Series I: Administrative Records, 1973-2006.](#)

[Subseries I.1: Annual Meetings and Reports, 1973-2006.](#) Files concerning the annual board meeting include notes, agendas, attendance lists, and financial reports for each year, as well as correspondence--usually in the form of printed email--about topics discussed at the meetings. Annual reports, available from 1976 to 2004, provide detailed summaries of the human rights violations CCS members addressed each year and the outcome of their efforts.

[Subseries I.2: Executive Board, 1974-1997.](#) This subseries contains executive board files, which are made up primarily of correspondence between board members and other human rights groups, CCS members, and scientists. They discuss wide variety of topics, including current human rights issues and event planning. The subseries also holds memos that the board distributed to members, such as summaries of meetings, announcements of upcoming activities, and information about CCS decisions and official positions on issues.

[Subseries I.3: Financial Records, 1974-2003.](#) Annual financial reports from 1974 to 2002 can be found in this series, along with fund files that contain correspondence and contribution lists relating to charitable funds overseen by CCS, such as the Marc Kac Memorial Fund. Fundraising files hold solicitation letters, contribution lists, reports, and correspondence about fundraising

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methods. These materials are sometimes divided into two groups: Board Fundraisers (fundraising drives aimed at the CCS board) and General Fundraisers (those intended for the general public).

[Subseries I.4: Publicity, 1974-2003.](#) This subseries contains materials representing the public face of the Committee, including the CCS newsletter "Current," newspaper articles about CCS, copies of press releases that drew attention to human rights violations and reported what actions CCS had taken, and printouts of articles and information pages written for the CCS website.

[Subseries I.5 General, 1973-2004.](#) This small subseries contains the Committee's statement of purpose and bylaws and a file of information about CCS records sent to the Anti-Defamation League for retention.

[Series II: Refusenik Closed Case Files, 1974-2005.](#)

The Committee's efforts to help refusenik scientists are documented primarily through correspondence; CCS members updated each other on developments in each case, sent letters of protest to Soviet government officials, and corresponded with the refuseniks themselves through letters that sometimes had to be smuggled out of the USSR. These cases were closed when the refusenik's plight found resolution--usually, they were able to emigrate. Materials are filed alphabetically by surname, with a small number of general files at the beginning of the series.

[Series III: Country Files, 1974-2005.](#)

This series documents the Committee's reaction to human rights violations in eighty countries. Content varies by country; most files include letters addressed to government officials protesting a specific incident or the abuse of an individual scientist. Response letters from governments, correspondence between human rights groups, and case updates may also be present. Many files also contain a small number of clippings describing the incident, but most clippings were removed as they are readily available through the *New York Times* Article Archive and similar indexes. Some files are more extensive; for example, the USSR files also contain reports and trip summaries from CCS members who visited refuseniks in their homes. Items are arranged alphabetically by country and then chronologically by year of incident.

[Series IV: Organizations and Conferences, 1973-2005.](#)

This series documents the Committee's interaction with the scientific community and with other human rights organizations. It contains correspondence with members of other groups, petitions that CCS circulated at conferences, articles submitted to scientific journals, and information about collaborative projects, such as the American Physical Society's Membership Matching Program. Files on the CCS-sponsored Frontiers of Science Conference can be found here, as can information on the Committee's work with the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Materials are arranged alphabetically by the name of the organization or conference.

[Series V: Subject Files, 1970-2002.](#)

The subject files hold general information and correspondence regarding psychological abuse, secrecy in the USSR, postal interference, and other topics that CCS encountered. Files are arranged alphabetically.

[Series VI: Media, 1975-2004.](#)

This small series contains photographs of events in the USSR, including the Frontiers of Science Conference in 1988. It also holds portraits of some of the scientists CCS helped and photographs of CCS activists, such as Dorothy Hirsch. Photographs are in their original order. The series also

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contains correspondence files on 3-inch floppy disks and two audiocassette tapes: Dorothy Hirsch's report on a visit to the USSR and a CCS press conference.

ACCESS AND USE

Access

This collection is located off-site. You will need to request this material at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance to use the collection in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library reading room.

This collection has no restrictions.

Restrictions on Use and Copyright Information

Single photocopies may be made for research purposes. Permission to publish material from the collection must be requested from the Curator of Manuscripts, Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML). The RBML approves permission to publish that which it physically owns; the responsibility to secure copyright permission rests with the patron.

Other Finding Aids

ACQUISITION AND APPRAISAL

Provenance and Acquisition

Deposited with the Rare Book and Manuscript Library in October 2006.

Accrual of Records

Additions are expected.

PROCESSING AND OTHER INFORMATION

Processing Information

This collection was processed by Carolyn Smith. Finding aid written by Carolyn Smith in December 2007.

Descriptive Rules Used

Finding aid adheres to that prescribed by *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*

Encoding

Finding aid written in English.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Name of Collection; Box and Folder; Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

Subject Headings

Committee of Concerned Scientists Records

These papers have been indexed in the Columbia University Library online catalog using the following terms. Those seeking related materials should search under these terms.

Committee of Concerned Scientists.

Engineers--Civil rights.

Europe, Eastern.

Freedom of Association.

Human rights.

Human rights advocacy.

Human rights--China.

Human rights--Soviet Union.

Medical practitioners--Civil rights.

Political prisoners.

Refuseniks.

Scientists--Civil rights.

Soviet Union.

Teaching, Freedom of.

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Box 2	General, 1979-1983 (7 folders)
Box 3	General, 1984-1987 (7 folders)
Box 4	General, 1988-1993 (8 folders)
Box 5	General, 1993-1998 (7 folders)
Box 6	General, 1999-2003 (7 folders)
Box 7	General, 2003, 2006 (2 folders)
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Box 8	1985-1988 (6 folders)
Box 9	1988-1997 (6 folders)
Box 10	1997-2006 (5 folders)
F.1-5	Executive Board Mailings, 1975-1979 (2 folders)
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Box 11	Executive Board Mailings, 1979-1989 (7 folders)
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