

Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network. By Sarah B. Snyder. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. x, 293 pp. \$85.00.)

Despite an outpouring of literature on the topic, the end of the Cold War remains

something of an enigma. Among the many theories advanced to explain the demise of the Soviet bloc, the role played by the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which established the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), has often been acknowledged but seldom spelled out in any detail. Of particular interest is the act's so-called Basket VII, focusing on "human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief"—something that obviously went against the grain for Soviet leaders of the 1970s (p. 6). This book makes extensive use of primary documents not brought to light before and remedies that problem with considerable aplomb. It provides a compelling account of the emergence and role of the CSCE that helps further our understanding of the end of the Cold War and improve knowledge about the place of human rights in the evolution of Europe's (loosely defined) security institutions.

With impressive detail, Sarah B. Snyder examines how—quite contrary to the expectations of Soviet leaders at the time—the Helsinki Final Act came to play a significant role in shaping East-West relations. In particular, it shows how the rise of transnational advocacy networks stemming from the act—actively supported by the U.S. government—supported human rights advocacy inside the Soviet Union by using the standards agreed to at Helsinki as a basis for ongoing monitoring and advocacy, both of which placed pressure on the Soviet regime. Most notably, this network gave rise to the Moscow Helsinki Group, comprising activists supporting various agendas united under the banner of implementing Helsinki. What follows is a classic tale of what constructivist theorists of transnational networks and norms call "normative entrapment": having accepted the Helsinki principles on the grounds that they contained some "baskets" that suited Soviet interests and in the belief that the human rights basket could not be implemented, Moscow found itself unable to repress local activists who demanded that the human rights dimensions be implemented without undermining its prior commitments. The fact that the Moscow Helsinki Group was tightly connected to similar groups throughout Europe and North America only heightened this sense of entrapment. The

work of these groups opened space for dialogue on human rights inside the Soviet Union and helped create an understanding that with economic reform must come political reforms, a view taken up by Mikhail Gorbachev. The rest, as they say, is history.

Written with skill and meticulously researched, this important book brings new evidence to bear on the issue by precisely charting how the transnational advocacy networks that sprung up in the wake of the Helsinki Final Act changed political discourse in the Soviet Union.

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