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## THE HUMAN RIGHTS REVOLUTION

### An International History

EDITED BY

Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and  
William I. Hitchcock

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PRINCIPLES OVERWHELMING TANKS

*Human Rights and the End of the Cold War*

SARAH B. SNYDER

Upon becoming Soviet General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev faced a myriad of domestic problems including a stagnating economy, decaying infrastructure, and environmental degradation. Abroad, he was locked in an expensive arms race with the United States, was bogged down in an exhausting war in Afghanistan, suffered strained relations with Europe and China, and was overextended in Eastern Europe and the Third World. Gorbachev also presided over a system with a long record of repression and human rights abuses, which had invited considerable international criticism and domestic activism. At the time, Soviet human rights violations seemed of secondary importance, but the Soviet record proved to be a stubborn obstacle to successfully addressing the country's other problems. Gorbachev's approach to human rights evolved; the transformation was most evident during the 1986–1989 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Review Meeting in Vienna, thus making a focus on the meeting's negotiations essential to gauging the role of human rights in the end of the Cold War.

Influenced by exposure to Western ideas, advice from like-minded aides, and the circumstances of his generation, Gorbachev believed the appropriate response to his many challenges was fundamental reform of the Soviet system. He chose to pursue *glasnost*, or openness, *perestroika*, or restructuring, and new political thinking, which together significantly altered Soviet diplomacy and the domestic system. Above all, Gorbachev undertook reform to address the USSR's economic problems, which had become particularly glaring, because increased contacts with the West, among other factors, highlighted the disparity between Soviet and Western

standards of living. In order to ease the strain on the Soviet economy, Gorbachev sought to curb the arms race with the United States, withdraw troops from Afghanistan, limit aid to socialist allies, and improve relations with Western Europe. As time went on, he also recognized the need for some liberalization of the Soviet political system to facilitate his economic reforms. To encourage international cooperation with his economic agenda, Gorbachev worked to improve the Soviet human rights record.

That Gorbachev saw improving Soviet human rights practices as a step to developing deeper relations with the West points to the reach of human rights activism. Numerous studies have examined how different external and internal pressures shaped Gorbachev's course of reform, although there is limited historical research demonstrating the role of human rights activism and ideals on Soviet policies.<sup>1</sup> In 1975, the Soviet Union was one of thirty-five signatories of the Helsinki Final Act, which outlined a commitment to respect human rights and facilitate East-West contacts.<sup>2</sup> In the years that followed, a network of governmental and nongovernmental actors arose that was dedicated to monitoring compliance with the agreement. Given the Soviet Union's record of human rights abuses, the USSR was often subject to international criticism, in part at the international CSCE meetings held to review implementation of the agreement. Evidence suggests that over time Soviet leaders shifted from solely resenting such scrutiny as interference in their internal affairs to identifying ways to use it for Soviet purposes. Under Gorbachev, Soviet leaders saw improving human rights practices as a way to advance relations with the West, which was an essential part of Gorbachev's reform policies.

Recognition of the need to improve the Soviet human rights record evolved slowly, eventually influencing Gorbachev and his aides to move away from long-standing policies of heavy-handed repression in order to gain cooperation from Western policymakers, whose approach was shaped, in large part, by a transnational network of activists that had lobbied for years for greater Helsinki compliance. Soviet leaders experienced Western concerns about human rights violations in many ways. For example, while posted to Ottawa as the Soviet ambassador to Canada, Gorbachev adviser Alexander Yakovlev frequently faced questions from Canadian politicians about the plight of human rights activist Andrei Sakharov and the treatment of other dissidents in the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> Conversations with Western leaders such as British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, United States President Ronald Reagan, and United States Secretary of State George Shultz led Gorbachev and his close advisers to see human rights as a necessary element of Soviet foreign policy—an interlocking component of their larger agenda.<sup>4</sup> Describing his reform efforts, Gorbachev wrote:

For many long years the Soviet Union considered human rights as some sort of false issue that had been manufactured artificially (even the phrase human rights was published in our country only in quotation marks preceded by the word so-called). For a totalitarian system, the very posing of the question of human rights is a challenge, a vicious assault on the very essence of its policies. And only perestroika brought this to an end.<sup>5</sup>

Although Western and neutral governments, their CSCE delegates, and a broader coalition of Helsinki activists and groups had pressed the Soviets to improve their human rights record, for years their efforts had produced few results, but that changed under Gorbachev's leadership.<sup>6</sup> The CSCE review meetings, and in particular the 1980–1983 Madrid meeting, had put the Soviets “in [the] dock before public opinion.” Gorbachev recognized in particular the damage Soviet human rights violations were causing to relations with Western Europe and determined the situation needed to change.<sup>7</sup>

Soviet leaders' attitudes toward human rights evolved slowly after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. Initially, in the late 1970s, Soviet officials repressed private citizens who sought to monitor implementation of the agreement and criticized international inquiries into human rights abuses as interference in internal affairs. Their intransigence continued for so many years that when the Soviet Union began criticizing Western countries' records in propaganda counterattacks, it was a welcome shift because it acknowledged human rights were a matter of international concern. The eventual willingness of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Gorbachev to discuss domestic human rights violations in diplomatic negotiations was seen as important progress.

Their readiness to engage on human rights manifested itself most strikingly in the years of the CSCE Vienna Review Meeting (1986–1989), during which the Soviet attitude toward compliance with the Helsinki Final Act seemingly transformed. Gorbachev and his aides sought to comply with their commitments on human rights and human contacts to prevent their isolation and estrangement from Western Europe and the United States. The Soviet proposal at the Vienna CSCE Review Meeting to host a conference on human rights in Moscow demonstrates the influence of transnational Helsinki activism, as well as subsequent efforts to secure consensus for the proposed meeting, such as inviting the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), an umbrella group of Helsinki monitoring groups, and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe to Moscow.<sup>8</sup>

The Soviet proposal became the defining issue of the Vienna negotiations; for many observers, progress on the proposed Moscow conference served as

a barometer of Eastern advancement on human rights, as the acceptance of the conference proposal and thus agreement on a concluding document was conditioned on Soviet progress on human rights.<sup>9</sup> Some delegates were adamant that they would not consider the proposal given the USSR's abysmal rate of Helsinki compliance, whereas others thought its merits should be explored. As the Soviets were slow to expand fully on their proposal, Western delegations, in consultation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), began amassing a list of conditions that might be necessary for its acceptance.<sup>10</sup>

The Soviet proposal for a human rights conference in Moscow was a preemptive strike to limit international criticism of the Soviet record at Vienna and was the centerpiece of a calculated strategy to respond to Western scrutiny by projecting an improved Soviet image to the West. With the Moscow conference proposal, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were pressuring others in the Soviet government to make rapid, far-reaching progress. Shevardnadze explained the rationale for the conference proposal: "I was convinced that the conference was essential in order to show the country and world how far we intended to go and, beyond that, to provide an impetus for democratization and the perestroika of legislation in everything relating to human affairs."<sup>11</sup> It is unclear if the conference's proponents realized the degree of concessions that would be necessary for its achievement, but they nonetheless remained committed to the proposal and to demonstrating a changed stance on human rights.<sup>12</sup>

To this end, the Soviet delegation went to extensive lengths to interact with journalists in the early stages of the Vienna meeting, holding six press conferences in one week alone. According to Shevardnadze, the Soviet Union's policy of increased contact with the press there was due to the influence of *glasnost*.<sup>13</sup> In the analysis of Helsinki Watch, a United States-based Helsinki monitoring group:

The Gorbachev government, in an unexpected series of acts and declarations, has apparently put human rights concerns at the top of its public agenda and is taking the initiative in related matters. Whatever the motivation behind the gestures that have been made, certain implications are clear. International concern about human rights abuses in the Soviet Union has not gone unnoticed by Soviet leaders.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast with previous meetings, Soviet delegates were willing to accept lists of *refuseniks* and political prisoners, as well as to meet with a range of interested NGOs and individuals. In the words of one observer, the Soviets tried to draw a contrast between their new openness and "the bad old days."<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless Western observers were frustrated by the incongruity between Gorbachev's talk about *perestroika* and *glasnost* and the Soviet negotiating positions at Vienna. As at past conferences, the Soviet Union and its allies employed varied strategies to deflect Western human rights criticisms, including introducing new proposals and accusing the West of violations. The strategy of the Soviet Union and its allies at Vienna was to insist on compliance with economic, social, and cultural rights to counteract the Western emphasis on civil and political rights, causing the first year of debate in Vienna to be unproductive because diplomats there avoided working together to reach mutual compromises.<sup>16</sup>

An additional tactic the Soviets pursued to deflect attention from their human rights record was creating governmental bodies that supposedly addressed domestic human rights problems. First, they established a bureau on humanitarian affairs in the foreign ministry whose leader, Yuri Kashlev, also led the Soviet delegation in Vienna.<sup>17</sup> Second, the Soviet Union formed the Public Commission for International Cooperation in Humanitarian Problems and Human Rights in late 1987. Headed by Fedor Burlatsky, a Gorbachev adviser, it was charged with monitoring Soviet and other CSCE states' Helsinki compliance as well as reforming Soviet legislation.<sup>18</sup> The development of new Soviet institutions tasked with monitoring human rights demonstrated recognition that a new stance was advantageous to Soviet interests. Nevertheless a meaningful commitment to reducing human rights violations did not come until later in the Vienna negotiations.

Many observers viewed the Soviet Union as making only cosmetic changes, and Western delegates largely perceived the Soviets to be unwilling to engage in productive negotiations at Vienna. By March 1987, the Soviet Union had sponsored 32 proposals, none of which addressed human rights issues. In the words of one Western diplomat: "We have heard a lot from Moscow and various Soviet officials about new thinking in regard to such problems as exit visas for those who want to go abroad to meet their families. One would expect the USSR to show it is serious by presenting some of these ideas in Vienna. But the table is bare."<sup>19</sup>

Moscow's push to hold a human rights conference prompted considerable dialogue among dissidents, human rights activists, and CSCE diplomats, who over the years had developed a well-coordinated transnational network. Interested groups and individuals shared their views with CSCE delegates as to what conditions should be imposed on Moscow in exchange for agreeing to the conference.<sup>20</sup> By and large, conditions for the meeting focused on two categories: improvements in Soviet human rights practices before agreeing to the meeting; and commitments on the circumstances of

the meeting in Moscow, such as open sessions, guaranteed entry for activists to the Soviet Union for the meeting's duration, and opportunities for parallel meetings, demonstrations, etc. Months after Shevardnadze made his proposal, the IHF urged the Western delegations to support it as long as the Soviet Union met certain requirements, including the release of all Helsinki monitors and other political prisoners from jails, labor camps, internal exile, and psychiatric institutions.<sup>21</sup> Separately, former Soviet dissident Yuri Orlov advocated considerable stipulations, including freeing all political prisoners and admission to the meeting for journalists, human rights groups, activists, and Soviet citizens. If such steps were taken, Orlov said that he would travel to Moscow himself for the meeting.<sup>22</sup> Sakharov, whom Secretary of State George Shultz queried as he sought to formulate the American position, said that the United States should have two key conditions: Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the release of political prisoners.<sup>23</sup> United States Ambassador to the Vienna meeting, Warren Zimmermann also enumerated an ambitious list of changes he felt the Soviet Union needed to undertake to demonstrate compliance with the Helsinki Final Act; in addition to steps such as amnestying all political prisoners, he called for an institutionalization of such changes by abolishing the articles in the Soviet criminal code that facilitated politically motivated arrests and sentences.<sup>24</sup>

The litany of conditions considered by Western governments would have seemed entirely implausible a few years earlier, but by 1987 there was meaningful movement by the Soviets. The Soviet Union made important strides that year, including releasing 140 political prisoners in February, ceasing to jam Voice of America in May, and allowing German and Jewish emigration to rise significantly. As the deliberations wore on, the USSR continued to offer concessions.<sup>25</sup> For example, Kashlev proactively asked Zimmermann for a list of prisoners about whom the United States was concerned.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Soviet diplomats engaged in bilateral negotiations with Shultz and Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Richard Schifter to secure American support for the conference.<sup>27</sup> Over time, the Soviets demonstrated a willingness to resolve outstanding cases in order to gain acceptance of their conference proposal; American and Soviet negotiators would later outline a timetable for Soviet changes, and the United States granted formal approval of the conference in the last days of the Reagan administration.<sup>28</sup>

In the intervening months, pressure on the Soviet Union and its allies to resolve human rights cases continued unabated. The Soviet government responded for the first time to Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe entreaties by resolving 137 of the 442 cases the commission had

raised previously.<sup>29</sup> Shultz began to see genuine change in the Soviet position when Shevardnadze told him in September 1987, "Give me your lists and we will be glad to look at them."<sup>30</sup> By October 1987, the Soviets had granted exit visas to six thousand people, more than six times the number in 1986. Nevertheless, 7,500 cases remained, which raised questions about the depth of the Soviet commitment to change.

Soviet leaders also pursued other steps to win support for their proposed conference, including inviting some of their most ardent critics to Moscow: the IHF and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The IHF was established in 1982 to coordinate the monitoring activities of Western, neutral, and Eastern national Helsinki committees, and the umbrella organization vocally criticized human rights abuses in the Soviet Union. Since its establishment in 1976, the commission had successfully influenced the United States' approach to the CSCE and served as a key forum for reports of violations of the Helsinki Final Act. Describing Soviet motivations for the invitations, Kashlev said, "We are engaged in a dialogue on human rights in the Soviet Union not only with those who like us but those who criticize us as well."<sup>31</sup>

Despite the changed image Soviet officials tried to project during these visits, old practices remained. Soviet authorities moderated their repressive tactics somewhat during the IHF's stay, but nevertheless recorded its meetings with Soviet activists.<sup>32</sup> In Helsinki Watch Executive Director Jeri Laber's view, the meeting between the IHF and Soviet officials in Moscow was "strictly window dressing" and demonstrated the USSR was run by the "same old bureaucrats" doing only a "slightly different number."<sup>33</sup> Laber regarded her Soviet hosts as disingenuous and argues they had no intention of examining the prisoner lists presented by IHF.<sup>34</sup>

Swedish delegate Frantisek Janouch's firsthand account of his time in Moscow with the IHF delegation, however, illustrates the extent to which Soviet officials wanted to cultivate the support of human rights activists from Western and neutral countries. Janouch wrote, "Almost anything was permitted during that one week: Jewish demonstrations as well as demonstrations of Hare Krishna devotees, and many more things, unknown or at least unusual in Moscow."<sup>35</sup> According to Janouch, Shevardnadze's deputy, Anatoly Adamishin, tried hard to persuade the IHF to support the conference proposal, going so far as "promising everything under the sun."<sup>36</sup> Although the IHF representatives encountered a wide spectrum of views on the proposed conference among those they met in Moscow, Janouch personally saw value in using agreement on a conference to induce the Soviets to develop a favorable human rights record:



I am convinced that the organization of a conference on humanitarian issues in Moscow could have a positive influence on future developments in the USSR. The earliest date the conference could meet in Moscow is 1990, probably one or two years later. During the period of preparation the Soviet authorities will logically make sure that fundamental human rights are respected. This means that the present relatively liberal attitude of the Soviet authorities will go on for several more years—and will clearly progress even further during the actual conference.<sup>37</sup>

In Janouch's view and many others', agreeing to the conference would ensure an initial period of respect for human rights and by the time the conference closed, it would be too late for the Soviets to reverse course and return to repressive human rights practices.

Janouch's thinking was in line with the approach the IHF adopted, and after returning from Moscow, the organization began a public campaign in support of a Moscow conference. Leading the effort, Laber wrote an opinion piece for the *International Herald Tribune* outlining the argument in favor of the meeting:

A Moscow human rights conference would . . . give the Soviet people a forum for discussing their government's past, present and future human rights practices. It would allow an infusion of Western ideas and values, including the concept that respect for human rights cannot merely be legislated from above but requires the active participation and vigilance of private citizens.<sup>38</sup>

Soviet authorities saw value in winning over Helsinki activists, and that tactic likely aided their efforts to garner supporters for their conference proposal.

During the commission's visit to Moscow, the Soviets similarly worked to convey an impression of progress and openness, while also conceding more needed to be done and articulating a commitment to undertake further improvements.<sup>39</sup> One member of the delegation reported a changed attitude among Soviet officials: "There was a willingness not only to discuss the issues, but a forthcoming [*sic*] that I've never seen from Soviet officials, one of [whom said]: 'We have made a lot of mistakes, and we are going to change and concern ourselves more with individual liberties. And we're going to do it because it's in the best interest of our people and it's going to help our economy do better.'"<sup>40</sup> At the conclusion of the congressional visit, the Soviets resolved 147 exit visa cases, though none of the two hundred political prisoners about whom members of Congress had inquired were released.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of 1988, there were more improvements in the Soviet human rights situation: Six hundred political prisoners had been released and emigration had swelled to eighty thousand. In addition, Gorbachev announced he was ending Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, withdrawing all troops by February 15, 1989, and reducing Soviet force levels in Eastern Europe by five hundred thousand soldiers and ten thousand tanks.<sup>42</sup> Soviet actions and commitment to continued reform enabled Western agreement on the Moscow conference and paved the way to a concluding document and closing ceremony in January 1989.

The close of the Vienna meeting represented the end to the traditional East-West divide that characterized the CSCE and Europe.<sup>43</sup> The Soviet proposal to host a human rights conference, Western conditions for their agreement, and Soviet efforts to meet those terms denoted a remarkable shift for the CSCE and a significant moment of change in the Cold War.<sup>44</sup> Shevardnadze later described the Vienna meeting as a "watershed." According to him, "Europe had never known such a dialog-intense, at times dramatic, but purposeful and democratic in a way that was without precedent."<sup>45</sup> Kashlev wrote that "without the achievements reached in Vienna, communist regimes in Eastern European countries would have fallen much later."<sup>46</sup> Zimmermann characterized the concluding document as "the most comprehensive statement of human rights commitments that has ever existed in the East-West framework."<sup>47</sup>

The pace of progress accelerated in the months following the Vienna meeting, ushering in significant developments in the Helsinki process. Within the CSCE framework, almost all contentious issues were resolved, enabling agreements on such significant topics as adherence to the principles of pluralistic democracy, market capitalism, and the rule of law. Furthermore, between 1989 and 1991, stunning changes transformed Eastern and Central Europe, and Helsinki monitors, long persecuted by Eastern regimes, were active in the movements that toppled communist leaderships in Czechoslovakia and Poland. The broader Helsinki network was one element in a constellation that shaped changes across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union throughout this period.

Following the Vienna meeting, the Soviet Union continued its new role as a cooperative participant in CSCE meetings. The Soviet approach to the Conferences on the Human Dimension (CHD) that followed Vienna demonstrate that Soviet steps during Vienna were not purely tactical moves designed to insure the acceptance of their conference proposal but also signified a new approach to human rights practices. The changes in Eastern Europe fostered improvements in East-West relations and facilitated some

positive steps at the 1989 Paris CHD. In advance of the Paris conference, a Soviet Foreign Ministry memorandum outlined the negative ramifications of Soviet restrictions on emigration:

In contrast to the majority of countries of the world community, substantial restrictions continue to be maintained in the socialist community in the area of contacts between people [and] private trips of citizens. In the political area this does not serve our interests [and] has an adverse effect on the development of trade and economic, scientific, cultural, athletic, and other ties. At the present time, the question of the maximum removal of restrictions on trips of citizens of socialist countries to the USSR and of Soviet citizens to these countries and the creation of corresponding facilities for this has become unavoidable.<sup>48</sup>

During the meeting, the Soviet Union took additional steps to resolve human contact cases such as those awaiting exit visas and releasing political prisoners.

The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe in the year between the CHD meetings in Paris and Copenhagen meant that many traditional Helsinki points of controversy between East and West were no longer contentious. Instead, the 1990 CHD meeting in Copenhagen charted the way for Eastern Europe to adopt democratic pluralism.<sup>49</sup> One of the most far-reaching and widely supported proposals at Copenhagen advocated the significance of the rule of law and such rights as freedom of expression; freedom to assemble and demonstrate; freedom of association, including membership in a trade union; freedom of thought; freedom of movement; and freedom to own private property.<sup>50</sup> That such a proposal could gain support from both Eastern and Western states was evidence of the striking shifts that had taken place in Europe. United States ambassador to the Copenhagen meeting Max Kampelman described the new dynamic: "The Soviets have been extremely cooperative with me and ready to accept most anything within reason. The newly initiated democracies began to feel their oats."<sup>51</sup>

At the November 1990 Paris CSCE summit, which many CSCE observers regarded as marking the end of the Cold War, the sweeping shifts in the East-West relationship were formalized and, as Gorbachev noted, it "heralded a new, post-confrontational era in European history."<sup>52</sup> Representatives from all CSCE states signed two documents there: the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Vienna Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures, which expanded and strengthened the confidence and security-building measures agreed to at the Stockholm conference in

1986.<sup>53</sup> The Charter of Paris for a New Europe declared, "The era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended" and further emphasized the CSCE commitments to human rights, democracy, rule of law, and market economics.<sup>54</sup> Also at Paris, NATO and Warsaw Pact states signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States, which declared an end to the East-West conflict between the two alliances.<sup>55</sup> The important agreements on democracy and market economics signed at Copenhagen and Bonn, as well as the declaration of an end to East-West military animosity, suggested an end to the Cold War.<sup>56</sup>

Although the Paris summit was hailed as an achievement for Gorbachev and evidence of the transformation of the communist bloc, the period after the summit was at times difficult for the Soviet leadership. Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and their aides faced many who believed Gorbachev's reforms undermined the role of the party, the communist system, and Soviet power. Shevardnadze wrote about his struggle to change human rights in the Soviet Union:

It cost immense effort to bring back from exile and banishment several outstanding scientists, writers, and theater directors—honest, conscientious people whose only offense had been refusing to accept the canon of violence and falsehood. But it was even harder to restore the good name of the country where the best people had been treated that way.

It was difficult to persuade even my colleagues on the simplest point: Since we had signed the Helsinki Final Act and had assumed obligations under international conventions and agreements, we had thereby acknowledged the right of other participants in these agreements to inquire into all issues and to insist that we observe the obligations we had undertaken. By that time it had become perfectly obvious to me that the human dimension in international security was crucial. But many of our partners had yet to believe in the sincerity of my statements on that score.<sup>57</sup>

The long-awaited Moscow Conference on the Human Dimension opened in September 1991, three weeks after the failed coup that would overshadow much of the meeting. In his opening speech, Gorbachev characterized the defeat of the coup against him as a triumph for human rights.<sup>58</sup> Secretary of State James Baker echoed Gorbachev in his opening statement: "[The] CSCE has no divisions of tanks. It has instead the moral authority that flows from [the Paris Charter] principles. But as we saw on the streets of this city three weeks ago, at critical moments people armed with principles have overwhelmed tanks."<sup>59</sup> Most of the issues originally slated for discussion at Moscow, such as



the release of political prisoners and freedom to leave one's country, had been addressed in the earlier Conference on the Human Dimension meetings in Paris and Copenhagen and implemented in the intervening months. Instead, the Moscow conference closely examined the outbreak of nationalist tensions, among other issues.<sup>60</sup> One of the most significant concerns about a human rights meeting in Moscow had been access for NGOs, which had become increasingly part of the fabric of the CSCE, to the conference and delegations; given subsequent developments, openness was not a problem, and abundant Soviet NGOs were active in connection with the meeting.<sup>61</sup>

The Moscow Concluding Document, like the text agreed to at Copenhagen, demonstrated how far acceptance of human rights had progressed in the previous years. The CSCE states noted continuing progress on Helsinki compliance and the challenges of rising ethnic, national, and religious discrimination and violence. They expressed concern about human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as capital punishment, migrant workers, the protection of journalists, and artistic freedom.<sup>62</sup>

Many observers and policymakers on both sides of the East-West divide have attributed significance to the influence of the Helsinki process on Soviet reforms. According to Soviet diplomat Yuri Kashlev, "It is difficult to imagine what our society would have become without all of those democratic changes that were to a very large extent related to our participation in the Helsinki process."<sup>63</sup> In former Jewish refusenik and Soviet human rights activist Natan Sharansky's view, reform in the Soviet Union was possible because Soviet dissidents were "ready to risk their freedom to speak the truth" and "leaders of the free world who [were] ready to support [them] directly and consistently."<sup>64</sup>

Understanding how and why the multilateral CSCE structure positively shaped Soviet human rights reforms offers important lessons on the possibilities for achieving peaceful change and improving human rights observance internationally. Official support from political leaders and diplomats committed to Helsinki compliance heightened the effectiveness of transnational activism by tying progress on trade, arms control, and political support to improvements in human rights practices. The diverse network united by a common commitment to improving the lives of those living behind the Iron Curtain positively influenced the course of East-West relations and the liberalization of Eastern European society and politics at the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, Helsinki monitoring groups learned from and contributed to a broader human rights movement at the end of the twentieth century, ensuring the issue became a permanent fixture of international diplomacy.

## NOTES

1. See for example, Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jeffrey T. Checkel, *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Robert D. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Jack Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004); and Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union and the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

2. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act was the culmination of three years of negotiations at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and contained principles to govern East-West interactions in Europe. In addition to reaching an agreement on the inviolability of frontiers, which was the original impetus for the Soviet desire to hold the conference, the Helsinki Final Act committed the CSCE states to respect human rights and facilitate human contacts across East-West borders. The agreement also contained a follow-up mechanism, setting a meeting to be held in two years time to review implementation of the act. The most important scholarly work on the Helsinki Final Act thus far is Daniel Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), which analyzes the influence and acceptance of human rights norms, using reaction to the Helsinki Final Act in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland as his case studies. Thomas argues that the establishment of human rights as a "formal norm" in the Helsinki Final Act transformed Soviet bloc states and East-West relations. My research on the Helsinki process has led me to emphasize human rights advocacy as opposed to the power of human rights norms. Helsinki activism grew increasingly effective as the movement gained supporters who would incorporate Helsinki compliance into high-level diplomacy.

3. Yakovlev also faced protesters at the Soviet embassy who pressed for family reunification. Christopher Shulgan, *The Soviet Ambassador: The Making of the Radical Behind Perestroika* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2008), 146, 165, 191. Thomas argues that some who were close to Gorbachev had considerable exposure to human rights literature. Daniel C. Thomas, "Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism, and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 119–21; Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 333; Daniel C. Thomas, "The Helsinki Accords and Political Change in Eastern Europe," in *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, ed. Thomas Risse et al. (New York: Cambridge University

Press, 1999), 229; Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Conversations with Gorbachev: On Perestroika, the Prague Spring, and the Crossroads of Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Xinyuan Dai, "Compliance Without Carrots or Sticks: How International Institutions Influence National Policies" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2000), 196.

4. Oral History Interview, Fedor Burlatsky, Folder 9, Box 1, The Hoover Institution and the Gorbachev Foundation (Moscow) Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California. Copyright Stanford University.

5. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Gorbachev: On My Country and the World*, trans. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 267.

6. Thomas, "Human Rights Ideas, the Demise of Communism, and the End of the Cold War," 118.

7. Handwritten Notes, Warren Zimmermann, Zimmermann Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

8. Some observers dispute the suggestion that pressure from Helsinki activists influenced Soviet behavior. See for example, Sandra Louise Gubin, "International Regimes, Agenda Setting and Linkage Groups in U.S.-Soviet Relations: The Helsinki Process and Divided Spouses" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1990), 168; N. Edwina Moreton, "Security, Change, and Instability in Eastern Europe," in *European Security: Prospects for the 1980s*, ed. Derek Leebaert (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1979); and Jonathan Luxmoore, "And So to Vienna . . . The CSCE Eleven Years On," *Contemporary Review* 249, no. 1451 (1986): 307. The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe was made up of members of the executive and legislative branches of the United States government that was devoted to monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Final Act; it came to serve as a clearinghouse for reports of Helsinki violations and was an effective advocate for Helsinki monitors repressed and imprisoned in Eastern Europe. Formed in 1976, it was an essential element of the transnational Helsinki network. For further discussion of the commission's role, see Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 38–52.

9. CSCE/WT.2, December 10, 1986, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Archives, Prague, Czech Republic (hereafter OSCE Archives); Eduard Shevardnadze (USSR), November 5, 1986, CSCE/WT/VR.3, OSCE Archives; and Bohdan Nahaylo, "Shevardnadze Proposes International Conference on Humanitarian Issues in Moscow," November 5, 1986, Human Rights, 1986–1987, Box 692, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, Open Society Archives, Budapest, Hungary (hereafter OSA).

10. Roland Eggleston, "West Considers Soviet Proposal for Humanitarian Meeting in Moscow," Radio Liberty Research, December 4, 1986, Helsinki: Vienna, 1986–1989, Box 1118, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, OSA; and Howe to Avebury,

May 7, 1987, Correspondence: National Committees: United Kingdom, 1986–1992, Box 19, Correspondence and Memoranda, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA.

11. Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, trans. Catherine Fitzpatrick (New York: Free Press, 1991), 86.

12. The degree to which Soviet actions embodied a new approach rather than merely a recognition of the value of conveying a new approach would evolve over the course of the meeting.

13. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 44.

14. A Report from Helsinki Watch: Annual Report, 1986, Box 1, General Files, Helsinki Watch: New York Office Files, Human Rights Watch Records, Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York (hereafter HRWR).

15. William Korey, "Helsinki, Human Rights, and the Gorbachev Style," *Ethics and International Affairs* 1 (1987): 113–33; Roland Eggleston, "The New Soviet 'Openness' in Vienna: Many Words, Little Substance," Radio Liberty Background Report, November 10, 1986, Helsinki: Vienna, 1986–1989, Box 1118, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, OSA; Memorandum, Nagler and Minnema to National Committees, November 20, 1986, Memos, 1986, Box 20, Correspondence and Memoranda, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA; William Korey, *The Promises We Keep: Human Rights, the Helsinki Process and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Institute for East West Studies, 1993), 227, 271; and Orest Deychakiwsky, "Helsinki Review Process: Making Progress Slowly, but Surely," *Ukrainian Weekly* January 18, 1987, CSCE General 1987, Box 17 Unprocessed, Joint Baltic American National Committee Records, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, (hereafter JBANC).

16. Stefan Lehne, *The Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1986–1989* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 74.

17. Transcript, Press Conference with Ambassador Zimmermann, December 3, 1986, CSCE Vienna—November 1986, Box 6 Unprocessed, JBANC; and Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 220.

18. Julia Wishnevsky, "Burlatsky on Goals of Soviet Human-Rights Commission," Radio Liberty Research February 17, 1988, Human Rights, 1988–1988, Box 692, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, OSA; Rahr, "USSR-Fedor Burlatsky to Head New Human Rights Commission," December 1, 1987, Politics: Human Rights: General, 1987–1988, Box 20, New Code Subject Files, OSA; and Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 220.

19. Roland Eggleston, "Gorbachev's 'New Thinking' and the Vienna Conference," Radio Liberty Research, March 18, 1987, Helsinki: Vienna, 1986–1989, Box 1118, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, OSA; and Lehne, *The Vienna Meeting of the*



*Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 75. Helsinki Watch was concerned about the makeup of Burlatsky's commission given indications that some members were not committed to human rights, including one person a staff member described as a "real bad egg in psychiatry." Memorandum, n.d., USSR: Burlatsky, Fyodor: Meetings, 1988, Box 44, Country Files, Jeri Laber Files, Record Group 7, HRWR.

20. Memorandum, IHF to Delegations to the Vienna CSCE Meeting, February 4, 1987, Memos 1987, Box 20, Correspondence and Memoranda, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA; Howe to Avebury, May 7, 1987, Correspondence: National Committees: United Kingdom, 1986–1992, Box 19, Correspondence and Memoranda, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA; "Appeal by Doctor Yuri Orlov to the Vienna CSCE Meeting," January 27, 1987, 1987, Box 20, Correspondence and Memoranda, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA; and Official Response of U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee, January 21, 1987, USSR: CSCE: Vienna, 1986–February 1987, Box 10, Country Files, Cathy Fitzpatrick Files, Record Group 7, HRWR.

21. Memorandum, IHF to Delegations to the Vienna CSCE Meeting, February 4, 1987, Memos 1987, Box 20, Correspondence and Memoranda, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA.

22. Yuri Orlov, *Dangerous Thoughts: Memoirs of a Russian Life*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), 304–5; and Eggleston, "Yuri Orlov Sets Conditions for Moscow Human Rights Conference," November 22, 1988, Human Rights, Declarations, 1988–1990, Box 693, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, OSA.

23. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 291. The Vladimir Bukovsky Foundation, located in Amsterdam, also undertook an assessment of what conditions would make a conference in Moscow acceptable. Robert van Voren, "Is a Human Rights Conference in Moscow Acceptable?" August 1987, Folder 2, Box 37, Human Rights Collection, Andrei Sakharov Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

24. Whitehead Statement, June 23, 1987; and Zimmermann Statement, May 5, 1987, both in Zimmermann Papers.

25. Lehne, *The Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 106.

26. Cable, AmEmbassy Vienna to SecState, June 20, 1988, Eastern Europe (General) 1987–1988 Memos, Cables, Reports, Articles (1 of 2), Box 92440, Nelson Ledsky Files, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California.

27. As high-level discussions ensued about agreement to the conference, the State Department carefully followed political prisoners' releases in the Soviet Union. John Finerty, written communication with the author, June 24, 2008.

28. Alexis Heraclides, *Security and Co-operation in Europe: The Human Dimension, 1972–1992* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1993), 99; and Lehne, *The Vienna Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 128–29.

29. "Soviets Announce Resolution of Commission Cases," *CSCE Digest* April 1987, CSCE Digest, Box 6, JBANC.

30. George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: Diplomacy, Power, and the Victory of the American Ideal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 986.

31. Judy Dempsey, "Moscow Go-ahead for Rights Group," Annual Report 1988, Box 1, Publications, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA.

32. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *On Speaking Terms: An Unprecedented Human Rights Mission to the Soviet Union, January 25–31, 1988* (Vienna: International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 1988), 5, 7; Mickey Edwards, "Is Moscow Due That Rights Session?" *Washington Times*, January 10, 1989, F1–4; Memorandum, Susan to Edwards, January 10, 1989, Folder 11, Box 56, Mickey Edwards Collection, Carl Albert Center Congressional Archives, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

33. Jeri Laber, interview, April 29, 2008. Helsinki Watch was a member of the IHF.

34. Jeri Laber, *The Courage of Strangers: Coming of Age with the Human Rights Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 288; "Political Prisoners," *News from Helsinki Watch* II:1 (February 22, 1988) in Delegation to Moscow: General, 1987, Box 3, Project Files, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA; and Schwarzenberg to Adamishin, March 15, 1988, Delegation to Moscow, Correspondence 1987–1988, Box 3, Project Files, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA.

35. Diary, Frantisek Janouch, January 24–31, 1988, Box 3, Project Files, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA.

36. The IHF's report, however, characterized Adamishin's comments on the conditions for such a conference to be "evasive." International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *On Speaking Terms*, 45–7; and Diary, Frantisek Janouch, January 24–31, 1988, Box 3, Project Files, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA.

37. Diary, Frantisek Janouch, January 24–31, 1988, Box 3, Project Files, Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, OSA; International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, *On Speaking Terms*, 46–47.

38. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 304–5.

39. "Commission Delegation Holds Human Rights Discussions in Moscow," *CSCE Digest* January–February 1989, CSCE 1989: London Conference, Box 2 Unprocessed, JBANC; and Steno Notebook, November 1988, Folder 18, Box 175, Dennis DeConcini Papers, University of Arizona, Tucson.

40. Sean Griffin, "De Concini Observes New Soviet Attitude," *Phoenix Gazette*, November 24, 1988, Folder 18, Box 175, DeConcini Papers. See also Mickey Edwards, "Is Moscow Due That Rights Session?" *Washington Times*, January 10, 1989, F1, F4; and Memorandum, Susan to Edwards, January 10, 1989, Folder 11, Box 56, Edwards Collection.

41. Press Conference: Soviet Union Trip, November 23, 1988, Folder 18, Box 175, DeConcini Papers.
42. Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 304; and Milan Hauner, "A Softening of the Soviet Stance on Human Rights?" Radio Liberty Research, December 7, 1988, Human Rights, 1988–1989, Box 693, Old Code Subject Files, Soviet Red Archives, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, OSA.
43. The Vienna Concluding Document included a mandate to begin Conventional Forces in Europe talks, leading many to point to the close of the Vienna meeting as marking the beginning of a new era for Europe. Schifter and Adamishin see the Vienna Concluding Document as marking the end of the Cold War. Richard Schifter, "Concluding Thoughts," in Anatoly Adamishin and Richard Schifter, *Human Rights, Perestroika, and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), 243.
44. Activists such as Orlov also saw Vienna as a significant breakthrough in Soviet thinking about political prisoners and human rights. Yuri Orlov, interview, March 27 and 28, 2008.
45. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 128–29.
46. Yuri Kashlev, "The CSCE in the Soviet Union's Politics," *International Affairs* (USSR) 7 (1992): 71.
47. Heraclides, *Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 102.
48. Soviet Foreign Ministry, "The Political Processes in the European Socialist Countries and the Proposals for Our Practical Steps Considering the Situation Which Has Arisen in Them," February 24, 1989, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 12/13 (Fall/Winter 2001): 70–1.
49. The Copenhagen meeting was held in the context of the international showdown with Saddam Hussein over Kuwait and a recent show of force by Soviet troops in Lithuania.
50. CSCE/CHDC.16, June 8, 1990, OSCE Archives.
51. Telegram, AmEmbassy Copenhagen to SECSTATE, June 27, 1990, Box 35, Max M. Kampelman Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.
52. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 548.
53. The negotiations that produced the Vienna Document on Confidence and Security Building Measures had been in session since March 9, 1989, and were the second phase of the Stockholm conference held from 1984–1986.
54. "Charter of Paris for A New Europe," November 1990, at Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe website [www.osce.org/](http://www.osce.org/) (accessed May 22, 2006); and Rob Zaagman, "The Second Basket of the CSCE: History, Helsinki-II and Afterwards," in *The Challenges of Change: The Helsinki Summit of the CSCE and its Aftermath*, ed. Arie Bloed (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1994), 181.
55. Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Box 1, Subject Files, Press Office, George Bush Presidential Library, College Station, Texas; and Heraclides, *Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 144–45.

56. The Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) produced an agreement that limited conventional forces in Europe and was described by a Bush administration official as "probably the most ambitious arms control treaty ever concluded." Press Briefing, November 15, 1990, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Box 1, Subject Files, Press Office, George Bush Presidential Library.

57. His memoirs offer important evidence of the adoption of Helsinki ideals by Gorbachev's aides and other Soviets leaders at the time. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 86, 204.

58. The Soviets questioned going forward with the Moscow meeting given the turmoil in the Soviet Union but polled CSCE ambassadors in Moscow who argued that it would offer support to the reforms undertaken by the Gorbachev government. Anatoly Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 390.

59. Korey, *The Promises We Keep*, 393.

60. CSCE/CHDM.33, September 25, 1991, OSCE Archives; CSCE/CHDM.36, September 25, 1991, OSCE Archives; CSCE/CHDM.37, September 26, 1991, OSCE Archives; CSCE/CDHM.46, September 26, OSCE Archives; CSCE/CHDM.47, September 26, 1991, OSCE Archives; and Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 365.

61. DeConcini and Hoyer to Petrovskiy, June 14, 1991, Box 36, Kampelman Papers; and Laber, *The Courage of Strangers*, 366–69.

62. CSCE/CHDM.49/Rev.1, October 3, 1991, OSCE Archives.

63. Yuri Fokine, et al., "Helsinki 30 Years Later," *International Affairs* (May 2005): 188.

64. Natan Sharansky, interview, November 19, 2009.