



The Reagan Moment: America and the World in the 1980s

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Compartmentalizing US Foreign Policy

Human Rights in the Reagan Years

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[-] Abstract and Keywords

This chapter explores how Ronald Reagan's personal beliefs shaped his administration's policies. It includes the considerations of human rights in US foreign policy. Reagan criticized elements of Jimmy Carter's human rights policy before entering the White House because it allegedly neglected the US national interests. The chapter notes the strong connection between Reagan's anti-communism beliefs and support for human rights. On the other hand, administration critics argued that Reagan's policy of constructive engagement toward South Africa had failed as the US policy worsened and indulged the white regime's divide-and-rule tactics. George Shultz's influence sparked a turning point toward greater attention to human rights.

Keywords: Ronald Reagan, human rights, US foreign policy, White House, Jimmy Carter, South Africa, George Shultz, anti-communism

Fully understanding Ronald Reagan's personal beliefs and how they shaped his administration's policies challenged many contemporary observers and scholars writing in subsequent years. Apparent contradictions in his approach to US foreign policy have proved particularly confounding. These difficulties may explain why so many observers examining his approach to human rights have written geographically focused studies.¹ Such an approach makes sense given the highly compartmentalized process Reagan and his aides brought to considerations of human rights in US foreign policy.

In his published memoirs and private diaries, Reagan said relatively little about human rights.² Yet, in the assessment of political scientist Kathryn Sikkink, "No human rights policy in US history was more hotly contested in its time, or is more controversial today, than the practices and legacy of the Reagan administration."³ This chapter explores the content of Reagan's human rights policy and the reasons for its enduring controversy. It also fits into a broader effort to

examine conservative efforts to shape human rights institutions and utilize human rights as a tool in their approaches to domestic and foreign policy.⁴

To those committed to human rights, Ronald Reagan's election on November 4, 1980, caused considerable concern. Their basic worry was that Reagan would abandon Jimmy Carter's human rights policies. Joshua Rubenstein of **(p.189)** Amnesty International spoke for many human rights activists when he said, "We are concerned that the Reagan administration will not have a positive emphasis on human rights and in some parts of the world his election has been taken as a green light, an encouragement for repressive forces."⁵ In some areas of the world, notably in Latin America, such concerns were borne out by the Reagan administration's justification of devastating human rights violations in the name of preventing the spread of communism.⁶ In other spheres, particularly the Soviet Union and Poland, Reagan spoke forthrightly and repeatedly in defense of human rights activists and against repression in the Soviet bloc. Finally, in a number of cases such as South Africa, the Philippines, and Chile, the Reagan administration's stance evolved. The degree of credit that should be given to the US government for changes in those countries is often refracted through a political lens.⁷ Overall, however, Reagan's record is difficult to characterize neatly, which is one of the reasons his policy remains so contested today.

Over the course of his administration, Reagan increasingly used the term "human rights" in his public statements, and the trends in his rhetoric echo what we see in other manifestations of his policy. Based on analysis of the American Presidency Project, we can see that Reagan's utterances increased most significantly from 1981, when he used the term nineteen times publicly, to 1982, with forty-nine mentions. Overall, his usage grew to ninety instances per annum by the last year of his administration. In his public statements, Reagan talked about human rights most frequently in connection with annual celebrations such as Human Rights Day, abuses suffered in the Soviet bloc, and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process.⁸ He also devoted particular attention to the plight of Poles living under martial law, Jews seeking to emigrate from the Soviet Union, and prominent activists such as Andrei Sakharov.⁹ In addition, he used the term in connection with African Americans, apartheid in South Africa, and Central America.¹⁰ Throughout his presidency, however, Reagan adhered to a narrow definition of human rights that ignored social and economic rights as well as women's rights.¹¹

Reagan, and many within his administration, had criticized elements of Carter's human rights policy before entering the White House, charging that it had not improved human rights meaningfully and had neglected the US national interests.¹² A number of early signals suggested that the new administration would implement changes informed by those criticisms. For example, Reagan appointed Jeane Kirkpatrick, who had reproached Carter for prioritizing human rights and neglecting the Cold War, to serve as US ambassador to the United Nations (UN).¹³ Furthermore, the administration announced it would shift its focus to combating international terrorism. In his first press **(p.190)** conference as secretary of state, Alexander Haig said, "International terrorism will take the place of human rights in our concern because it is the ultimate of abuse of human rights. And it's time that it be addressed with better clarity and greater effectiveness by Western nations and the United States as well."¹⁴ Critics of Reagan also note that he invited the military dictators of South Korea and Argentina to visit the White House shortly after he took office.¹⁵ Finally, Reagan's nomination of Ernest W. Lefever, a vocal critic of Carter's human rights policy, to head the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights

and Humanitarian Affairs raised serious questions about the administration's dedication to human rights and strengthened early concerns about Reagan's commitment.¹⁶

Reagan's nomination of Lefever, announced in early February 1981, provoked considerable controversy at the time and continues to loom over scholarship on Reagan's human rights policy.¹⁷ The most significant obstacle was a concern that Lefever would not be an effective champion of human rights, as he had a record of questioning the issue's relevance to US policy. Shortly after Carter's inauguration, Lefever had written in the *New York Times* that "a consistent and single-minded invocation of the 'human rights' standard in making United States foreign policy decisions would serve neither our interests nor the cause of freedom."¹⁸ Such possibilities led the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair, Senator Charles Percy (R-IL), to express skepticism about Lefever's positions, saying, "You seem in doubt about whether your job should exist."¹⁹

Some administration supporters argued that criticism of Lefever reflected opposition to Reagan's human rights approach, which in columnist William Safire's words "has just won an election."²⁰ Testifying before the Senate Committee, Representative Charles Wilson (R-TX) said, "I would point out to my friends with a differing viewpoint from mine, that Mr. Lefever is not the only man in the United States that believes that human rights can best be achieved by using less pyrotechnics and more diplomacy. The President can certainly find others to represent his policy, but I can assure you he is not going to appoint Pat [sic] Derian as Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, no matter what my friends say."²¹ Indeed, some members of the committee suggested that no Reagan nominee would meet with their approval.²²

After a June 4 executive session to enable Lefever to respond to the objections that had been raised against him, the committee voted thirteen to four against him.²³ Senate historians at the time said that it was the first instance since 1959 that a president's nominee had been rejected by a Senate committee.²⁴ In explaining his vote, Percy expressed apprehension about Lefever's commitment to human rights and personal integrity: "Concern for human **(p.191)** rights is not just a policy of the United States. It is an underlying principle of our political system and a fundamental factor in the appeal of democracy to people throughout the world."²⁵ Percy also questioned Lefever's knowledge of policy issues, saying Lefever had "very little familiarity with the [human rights] provisions themselves" and characterized his testimony as "a series of broad generalizations without a willingness to discuss specific issues."²⁶

In the wake of Lefever's withdrawal, the administration did not move quickly to propose a second nominee. Instead, the Reagan administration contemplated disbanding the bureau and eliminating the assistant secretary for human rights and humanitarian affairs position, which led to consternation among human rights groups and members of Congress, given that congressional legislation mandated the assistant secretary position.²⁷

The concern and complaints from human rights advocates were not lost on the administration. Under Secretary of State Richard Kennedy wrote to Haig, "Congressional belief that we have no consistent human rights policy threatens to disrupt important foreign-policy initiatives.... Human rights has become one of the main avenues for domestic attack on the administration's foreign policy."²⁸ Kennedy, working alongside State Department officials Charles Fairbanks Jr. and Paul Wolfowitz, sought to shift the administration's approach.²⁹ To address persistent concerns and signal a new style, Haig gave a speech saying that human rights was "the major focus" of Reagan's foreign policy.³⁰

The administration also leaked parts of a State Department memorandum that stated, “Human rights is at the core of our foreign policy because it is central to what America is and stands for. ‘Human rights’ is not something we tack on to our foreign policy, but is its very purpose.”³¹ The memorandum was greeted warmly when disclosed to the *New York Times* and when a similar version was disseminated to human rights organizations.³² In advance of the planned announcement of a new nominee to head the Human Rights Bureau, the State Department asserted that the bureau was to be “strengthened and reinvigorated” as opposed to the reduction in influence many had feared.³³ The Reagan administration further proclaimed what it argued was a consistent approach to human rights abusers, writing in the 1981 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, “US human rights policy will not pursue a policy of selective indignation.”³⁴

Most significantly, the White House announced its nomination of Elliott Abrams to head the State Department’s Human Rights Bureau on October 30, 1981. Abrams had bipartisan support in Congress, having previously worked for Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) and Henry Jackson (D-WA).³⁵ Abrams faced few difficult questions in his confirmation hearings, and **(p. 192)** Republicans and Democrats alike expressed pleasure at his nomination. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously approved Abrams’s nomination on November 17, 1981. The Senate unanimously confirmed him several days later. Skeptics, however, expressed less than overwhelming enthusiasm for Abrams’s appointment, with one saying, “Everyone’s saying Elliott Abrams is so great just because he’s not Darth Vader.”³⁶

After Abrams’s confirmation, Haig distributed a memorandum directing all regional bureaus to work with the Human Rights Bureau to ensure that “the promotion of political freedom ... not be considered only as an afterthought.”³⁷ Furthermore, Abrams articulated an intention to pursue an active approach: “There has been and will be less public criticism of friendly country governments ... [but] you cannot make a clear distinction between East and West on the basis of freedom if the United States is supporting dictators around the world.”³⁸ Such steps suggested that the administration hoped to signal a shift in its approach to human rights. In terms of personnel, George Shultz’s replacement of Haig as secretary of state in July 1982 also affected the administration’s human rights policy significantly in that Schultz devoted considerable attention to the question of protection of human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, thereby heightening the administration’s commitment to the issue.³⁹

Within the literature on Reagan and human rights, nascent as it is, observers point to a “turnaround” in his approach to human rights. Tamar Jacoby has suggested the Reagan administration’s attitude toward human rights underwent a fundamental reversal.⁴⁰ Sikkink also identifies a “turnaround” in Reagan’s policy and argues that its “symbolic dimension ... should not be underestimated.”⁴¹ In Sikkink’s view, the mystery of the Reagan administration is “how one of the most ideologically conservative administrations in recent history had come to cautiously implement the very policies it had once so fervently challenged.”⁴² Elliott Abrams, however, has said that during the first year and a half of the Reagan administration, “There was no human rights policy. There was a critique of Carter policy, combined with an instinctive distrust of the phrase, crowd, and community associated with it.”⁴³ Abrams’s comments, however, neglect the extent to which the administration articulated a policy that represented more than a blind rejection of what had preceded it and the fact that it acted on it.

More importantly, despite any “turnaround,” concern for human rights was highly compartmentalized as well as dependent on geopolitics and strategic interests. The Reagan

administration was less willing than Carter to criticize states and leaders it considered allies of the United States. In addition, the administration overlooked human rights abuses in Argentina, Chile, the **(p.193)** Philippines, South Korea, and Turkey for many years and sought to reverse congressional legislation related to human rights.⁴⁴

The root of harsh criticisms of Reagan's record on human rights is US policy toward Central America during his presidency. In 1983, Reagan argued that Central America was integral to the security of the United States, and Reagan's statement to Congress echoed Jeane Kirkpatrick's declaration two years before that "Central America is the most important place in the world for the United States today."⁴⁵ US policy toward Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador was driven by Cold War concerns that communists were gaining influence in the strategic region and needed to be thwarted at all costs.

Beginning with Nicaragua, the Reagan administration was funneling money and other forms of support to the Contras, who in their fight against the left-leaning Nicaraguan government, engaged in "kidnappings, torture, and murder of unarmed civilians," according to the human rights organization Americas Watch.⁴⁶ During the course of the fighting in Nicaragua, approximately 30,000 died. William LeoGrande points out that, in terms of a proportion of the population, that number represented more than the proportion of Americans lost in the Civil War, both World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.⁴⁷ In historian Joseph Renouard's words, the Reagan administration had "to perform acrobatic leaps of obfuscation" to characterize the Contras as "democratic."⁴⁸ Yet, its opposition to the Sandinista government distorted the administration's evaluations of the human rights violations of each side and the strategic costs associated with each party's potential triumph. In the subsequent chapter, William Michael Schmidli explores the reasons why US policymakers saw Nicaragua as so significant strategically and identifies a range of geopolitical, strategic, and ideological factors.⁴⁹

The Guatemalan government brutally murdered more than 100,000 Guatemalans in 1982 and 1983, yet, according to Sikkink, the Reagan administration manipulated Guatemala's human rights record to ensure that military assistance could continue to flow to that government. Describing the praise for the Guatemalan government as the "low point" for US policy in Central America, Sikkink argues that Reagan's rhetorical support for Ríos Montt, the Guatemalan president, signaled to the Guatemalan military that the United States would not be concerned by human rights violations: "At the height of the only genocide in recent Latin American history, the Reagan administration gave rhetorical and moral support to a murderous regime through both its public and private diplomacy."⁵⁰ Again, fears of a guerilla insurgency motivated the Reagan administration as it ignored its ally's human rights violations.⁵¹

(p.194) With regard to El Salvador, the Reagan administration sent conflicting messages about its concern about abuses by right-wing groups.⁵² Around 50,000 El Salvadorans were killed by the military and its right-wing allies between 1979 and 1985, yet, in order to keep aid flowing to El Salvador, the administration certified every six months that the government there was making progress on respecting human rights.⁵³ The Reagan administration was motivated by a desire to defend the government in El Salvador from the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). In his memoirs, Reagan wrote, "Yes, it is true there were extreme right-wing outlaw elements in that country, including members of the government security forces, who were guilty of flagrant and grave human-rights abuses, sometimes against innocent Salvadorans. But the brutal pro-Marxist rebels ... were infinitely more barbaric."⁵⁴ While the administration's reports

underplayed the seriousness of the human rights situations in El Salvador, human rights organizations such as Amnesty International disagreed with the administration's characterizations. Accounts of a massacre in El Mozote, in which nearly 1,000 people were killed, further undermined the Reagan administration's certifications.⁵⁵

Recognizing that such abuses threatened US backing, Reagan administration officials undertook efforts to convince San Salvador to curb its repression. During his December 1983 visit, Vice President George Bush signaled to the El Salvadoran government that the United States' continued support was conditioned on a reduction in abuses by right-wing paramilitary squads.⁵⁶ Urging the government to shift course, he said, "These cowardly death squad terrorists are just as repugnant to me, to President Reagan, to the US Congress, and to the American people as the terrorists of the left."⁵⁷ Shultz echoed Bush's message during a January 1984 visit. Shultz admonished the government there that "death squads and terror have no place in a democracy."⁵⁸

Although Reagan administration officials belatedly exerted pressure on the El Salvadoran government to rein in the right-wing death squads, overall, the administration callously overlooked the massive loss of life in Central America for the goal of eradicating communism there. As one critic put it, "The United States has been a beacon of freedom for the oppressed and a leader of humanitarian causes for too long a time to have this asset sacrificed for transitory and perhaps illusory victories over revolutionary movements rooted in circumstances beyond US control."⁵⁹

One of the spheres in which we can see the greatest Reagan administration activism on human rights was East-West relations. Shultz spurred much of this thrust by making human rights one of the four points on the agenda he formulated for discussions with the Soviets, but in many respects, Reagan's **(p.195)** agreement to such an emphasis should not have been surprising.⁶⁰ Specifically, in National Security Decision Directive 75, the Reagan administration outlined an effort to move "the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system." To achieve such a goal, US officials needed to develop a policy with "an ideological thrust which clearly affirms the superiority of US and Western values of individual dignity and freedom."⁶¹ For US leaders, championing human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was a means to achieving internal liberalization and a weakening of ties among the Soviet bloc states.⁶²

There was a strong connection between Reagan's anticommunism and support for human rights. Reagan sympathized with victims of communist repression, and, there were a number of individual cases with which the president became personally involved, the most prominent of which was the Pentecostal families living in the United States embassy in Moscow.⁶³ According to Foreign Service Officer Jack Matlock, Reagan's interest was driven by his concern for "identifiable human beings" and was linked to earlier work as a lifeguard and his desire to save people who needed help.⁶⁴ Reagan pressed Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev for exit visas for the Pentecostal families.⁶⁵ Later, in a February 1983 meeting with the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, Reagan asked that the two families be allowed to emigrate as a signal of goodwill to the United States.⁶⁶ In his public rhetoric regarding Soviet human rights abuses, Reagan supported congressional efforts to support human rights activists in the Soviet Union, such as members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Monitoring Group and spoke about Soviet dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Shcharansky specifically and repeatedly.⁶⁷

Reagan's first-term support for human rights in Eastern Europe was manifested primarily within the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) meeting in Madrid. The US ambassador to the meeting, Max M. Kampelman, pursued vocal and active diplomacy. Kampelman proposed to Shultz that as a prerequisite to a concluding document at Madrid, the United States require the release and possible emigration of a number of human rights activists and Jewish refuseniks. When Kampelman and Shultz discussed the proposal with the president, Reagan asked the ambassador to press for the emigration of the Pentecostals as part of a package agreement and pushed him to negotiate with the Soviets at Madrid to help Jewish refuseniks, saying, "Max, see what you can do to help these people," as he handed him a list.⁶⁸ The United States named 119 individuals of concern during the talks.⁶⁹

After Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet general secretary in March 1985, Reagan repeatedly affirmed the United States' commitment to human rights.⁷⁰ In a subsequent letter, Reagan cited continued Soviet human rights abuses in **(p.196)** violation of CSCE agreements: "We believe strongly that strict observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the Helsinki Final Act is an important element of our bilateral relationship."⁷¹ Reagan's repeated efforts helped convince Gorbachev of the United States' commitment to human rights: Gorbachev later wrote that Americans had "an almost missionary passion for preaching about human rights and liberties."⁷² Facing American and other entreaties on the issue, Gorbachev suggested that he was willing to discuss human rights broadly with the West, but not individual cases.⁷³

For the first Soviet-American summit in six years, Reagan's briefing paper advised him to express concern at low Jewish emigration, Sakharov's exile, political prisoners, and divided spouses, among other issues.⁷⁴ Reagan wrote notes to himself in advance of the 1985 Geneva meeting; of the four and a half double-spaced pages he drafted, one full page was devoted to his thoughts on human rights: "We are somewhat publicly on the record about human rights. Front page stories that we are banging away on them on their human rights abuses will get us some cheers from the bleachers, but it won't help those who are being abused."⁷⁵ In their two days of meetings, Reagan told Gorbachev about American concern for families divided by the Iron Curtain, and he suggested that movement on human rights would facilitate other types of cooperation, such as trade.⁷⁶ Reagan assured Gorbachev he would not claim responsibility if the Soviets moved forward on some cases, and Gorbachev eventually agreed to examine the situations.⁷⁷

After Geneva, Reagan wrote to Gorbachev to outline his concerns about Soviet human rights, emphasizing progress was critical to improving the broader US-Soviet relationship. He noted with pleasure Soviet efforts to reunite divided spouses in the aftermath of the summit but also outlined a number of other areas that he hoped Gorbachev would address, including dual citizens and family reunification requests.⁷⁸ After the summit, Reagan told his cabinet that he would no longer pressure the Soviet Union on human rights publicly.⁷⁹ He hoped to convince Gorbachev that respecting human rights was in the best interests of the Soviet Union, and he recognized that Gorbachev would be much more likely to implement changes if it did not appear as if he was reacting to Western demands.⁸⁰

After Geneva, Reagan continued to stress human rights in his personal correspondence with Gorbachev, including by sending a letter to Gorbachev enumerating seventeen divided spouses, twenty-three cases involving dual citizenship, and 129 family reunification cases the United States hoped could be resolved.⁸¹ The Soviet leader took a number of steps on human rights issues in the subsequent months, including granting exit visas for eight divided spouses and

releasing several dissidents such as Shcharansky and Yuri Orlov **(p.197)** in prisoner exchanges.⁸² When he welcomed Orlov to the White House, Reagan said Orlov had “done more to inform the world of current Soviet human rights violations than any man on Earth.” He went on to describe the dissident as “a hero for our time.”⁸³

At the October 1986 Reykjavik summit, Reagan intended to press Gorbachev on human rights issues, announcing he would link them to other areas of the US-Soviet relationship: “I will make it amply clear to Mr. Gorbachev that unless there is real Soviet movement on human rights, we will not have the kind of political atmosphere necessary to make lasting progress on other issues.”⁸⁴ In their talks, Reagan told Gorbachev that he wished the Soviets could go further on human rights to facilitate more cooperation, and he gave him a list of 1,200 Soviet Jews who were waiting to emigrate.⁸⁵

Matlock argues that after Reykjavik, Gorbachev realized he could achieve normalized relations with the United States only if he was willing to deal with “the full agenda of issues,” which included human rights.⁸⁶ Shultz in particular was committed to pressing the issue, as Reagan noted in his diary after a meeting with Shultz: “He presented some material on his coming trip to Moscow having to do with Human Rights. He really wants to go after observance by the Soviets of the Helsinki Pact.”⁸⁷ The following month, Shultz invited Jewish refuseniks to a seder at Spaso House over Passover in April 1987 to demonstrate to Soviet authorities that Jewish emigration was a priority for him.⁸⁸ Shultz’s emphasis slowly produced results, and he 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.”⁸⁹ By October 1987, the Soviets had granted exit visas to 6,000 people, more than six times the number in 1986, although 7,500 cases remained.

As he had during the December 1987 Washington summit, Reagan pressed his human rights concerns in a number of ways in connection with the Moscow summit from May 29 to June 2, 1988.⁹⁰ According to Reagan, Gorbachev was more receptive to his concerns about religious freedom and human rights during the Moscow meeting than ever before.⁹¹ During the summit, Reagan visited the Danilov Monastery to underline his commitment to religious freedom.⁹² The monastery visit was one of a number of symbolic stops made by Reagan that were designed to demonstrate his commitment to human rights. Reagan’s repetition began to gain traction in Moscow, and in their first one-on-one meeting, Gorbachev said Soviet leaders were ready to work with the Reagan administration and the US Congress to resolve outstanding humanitarian issues.⁹³

Reagan’s personal involvement culminated with his remarks to more than one hundred dissidents at Spaso House, the US ambassador’s residence in **(p.198)** Moscow. Reagan praised Soviet progress on human rights, but in a common theme of the trip, emphasized that more work was needed to fulfill the obligations of the Helsinki Final Act and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.⁹⁴ He expressed a strong commitment to advocating for the freedoms of religion, speech, and travel in his negotiations with the Soviets. The president also thanked the dissidents for their courage as they worked “with your very lives, day in, day out, year after year, risking your jobs, your homes, your all.”⁹⁵ By the end of 1988, 600 political prisoners had been released, and emigration had swelled to 80,000.

The Reagan administration was also attentive to human rights violations elsewhere in the Soviet bloc, focusing considerable attention on the 1981 Polish decision to impose martial law in response to the growing influence of Solidarity, the trade union movement there. Several days later

Reagan asked Americans to follow his example and light a candle in their windows to demonstrate their solidarity with Poles suffering under martial law.⁹⁶

In the wake of the imposition of martial law, Reagan imposed sanctions on the Soviet Union and Poland. The US president targeted the Soviet airline Aeroflot, the export of technology to the Soviet Union, as well as maritime, exchange, and grain agreements. He and officials in his administration repeatedly pressed for the end of martial law, freeing political prisoners, and talks between the Communist Party, the Catholic Church, and the opposition. Reagan's political and economic sanctions against the Polish government affected fishing rights, access for the Polish airline to US airports, export of technology, agricultural assistance, and credits for Polish loans.⁹⁷ In a letter to the Polish general Wojciech Jaruzelski, Reagan framed his opposition to martial law in human rights terms: "The United States government cannot sit by and ignore the widespread violations of human rights occurring in Poland. To do so would make us party to the repression of the rights of the Polish people."⁹⁸ In the face of limited progress, the Reagan administration remained critical of the Polish record. US officials negotiated incremental lifting of US sanctions, including landing rights for the Polish airline and access to fishing grounds in US waters in order to achieve the release of Solidarity members imprisoned in Poland.⁹⁹

South Africa was one of a few noncommunist countries toward which Reagan administration policy slowly evolved, becoming more engaged with human rights concerns over the course of his eight years in office.¹⁰⁰ The administration, however, shifted course largely due to congressional and nongovernmental pressure, raising questions about how much Reagan's stance truly developed over his presidency. Although as historian James H. Meriwether (**p.199**) has emphasized, Reagan condemned apartheid repeatedly, the Reagan administration's policy toward South Africa was formulated within a Cold War context, which led officials to overemphasize the threat of communism to the country and the region.¹⁰¹

Shortly before being appointed assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Chester A. Crocker articulated what would become the Reagan administration's policy of "constructive engagement" in a *Foreign Affairs* article.¹⁰² Crocker wrote, "Clearly, the fundamental goal is the emergence in South Africa of a society with which the United States can pursue its varied interests in a full and friendly relationship, without constraint, embarrassment or political damage. The nature of the South African political system prevents us from having such a relationship now."¹⁰³ Crocker went on to write, "As a multiracial democracy, the United States cannot endorse a system that is racist in purpose or effect."¹⁰⁴ Yet, by arguing that "Americans have no mandate to judge how much reform is enough," Crocker undercut one of the principal tenets of human rights activism—that human rights abuses such as racial discrimination do warrant international condemnation because human rights are universal and not bestowed by a national government.¹⁰⁵ Crocker's articulation of "constructive engagement" revealed early on a tendency to defer to South African officials about the best pace and course for "reform." Crocker later acknowledged that South African leaders saw Reagan's election "as the beginning of an embrace."¹⁰⁶

In his attempt to avoid a showdown with an increasingly anti-apartheid Congress in 1986, Reagan issued an executive order intended to signal American displeasure with apartheid but without including some more far-reaching elements in the proposed congressional legislation. Announcing his executive order, Reagan said, "America's view of apartheid is simple and straightforward: We believe it's wrong. We condemn it, and we're united in hoping for the day when apartheid will be no more."¹⁰⁷ Reagan targeted bank loans to the South African

government, the export of technology to South Africa, and purchases of South-African-made military, as well as engaged the Treasury and State Departments in planning for further steps against the South African government.¹⁰⁸ Critics at the time charged that he shifted away from “constructive engagement” only to prevent the passage of more far-reaching sanctions.¹⁰⁹ Reflecting criticism at the time, reporters pressed Reagan on if he had selected just “the weakest measures in the congressional package.”¹¹⁰

Administration critics argued that Reagan’s policy of “constructive engagement” toward South Africa had “failed” and that US policy had “actually exacerbated the situation inside South Africa by encouraging and indulging the white regime’s divide-and-rule tactics.”¹¹¹ When Reagan’s executive order did **(p.200)** not prevent more far-reaching congressional legislation, the president vetoed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, arguing that it would “seriously impede the prospects for a peaceful end to apartheid and the establishment of a free and open society for all in South Africa.”¹¹² According to historian Thomas Borstelmann, Reagan’s veto put him out of step with other Americans.¹¹³ Congress then overrode his veto. Later, in the administration’s first annual, congressionally mandated report on South Africa’s attempts to dismantle apartheid, officials wrote that the situation of Black South Africans was “bleak” given that they faced “increased repression, harassment, and ... imprisonment.”¹¹⁴ The administration’s report frankly addressed the problems in South Africa, reporting that the country was “not any closer in late 1987 to respecting free speech and free political participation by all its citizens than it was one year ago. No timetable has been set for the elimination of the remaining apartheid laws.”¹¹⁵ Rather than having any improvements to report, administration officials noted that political imprisonment had increased significantly and that civil and political rights were not respected.

Regarding the Philippines, US officials eventually supported the ouster of a repressive dictator but only very late in the game and, to use a second cliché, only when the writing was on the wall for Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos.¹¹⁶ Marcos had declared martial law in 1972 ostensibly in the face of communist insurgents; it remained in place until early 1981. Rather than express concerns about the abrogation of democracy or abuses of human rights under martial law, Reagan focused on the Philippines’ economic growth and stability.¹¹⁷ The assassination of opposition leader Ninoy Aquino in 1983 precipitated a new crisis, but Reagan articulated his continued support for Marcos, saying that the United States would not “cut away from a person who, imperfect though he may be on human rights, has worked with us.”¹¹⁸ Despite Reagan’s vocal support, others within the administration signaled that the United States should reconsider its position. Given such concerns, Reagan agreed to pressure Marcos to reform but would not withdraw his personal support.¹¹⁹ The violence and fraud that marred Marcos’s 1986 election against Aquino’s widow, Corazon, ultimately forced even Reagan to bend. He called upon Marcos to allow a “peaceful transition to a new government.”¹²⁰

Finally, in the case of Chile, Reagan resisted efforts to distance the United States from Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship for several years. Reagan and his advisors had wanted to warm relations with Chile after the strain they had experienced at the end of the Ford administration and during the Carter years. Yet, in the 1980s, challenges to Augusto Pinochet’s rule in Chile grew in the form of public protests and an economic crisis in 1982. Despite the efforts of **(p.201)** US diplomats and military officials to press Pinochet to moderate his response, they were unable to reduce his repression.¹²¹ In addition, obstacles to investigating and adjudicating the Washington assassination of former Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier complicated administration efforts to resume support for Pinochet, although historian Alan McPherson argues that the

stumbling block was the Chilean violation of US national sovereignty rather than its violation of human rights.¹²² Faced with Pinochet's intransigence, State Department officials, including Shultz, expressed increasing frustration with the Chilean dictator's methods and raised questions about future Chilean-American relations.¹²³ Pinochet rationalized his harsh measures as necessary to prevent communists from coming to power, but American officials were increasingly worried that his methods risked precipitating such an outcome as a backlash.¹²⁴ Shultz and Elliott Abrams worked together to shift US policy away from support for Pinochet.¹²⁵

In order to express its frustration with Pinochet, the United States abstained from voting on a 1985 World Bank loan for Chile.¹²⁶ Morris Morley and Chris McGillon argue that the new American position signaled to Pinochet that his broader economic interests, including loans from the International Monetary Fund and Bank Advisory Group, might be at risk. Shortly thereafter, he reduced the number of political prisoners and internal exiles, lifted the state of siege that was in place, and broadened freedom of the press.¹²⁷ Pinochet's steps eased administration concerns, but members of Congress remained opposed particularly in light of reports that arrests, torture, and other human rights abuses persisted.¹²⁸

By July 1986, State Department officials were increasingly concerned that Pinochet sought to remain in power beyond the end of Reagan's presidency and intended to eliminate any moderate opposition that might succeed him.¹²⁹ As Reagan and Shultz debated how to influence Pinochet, the president suggested inviting the dictator for a state visit. Shultz refused, saying, "No way. This man has blood all over his hands. He has done monstrous things."¹³⁰ The United States sought to exert more pressure on Pinochet, with officials debating submitting a resolution to the United Nations General Assembly that criticized Chile's record on human rights.¹³¹

In the end, the United States signaled its dwindling support for Pinochet through a resolution at the UN General Assembly and a second abstention on the World Bank loan.¹³² At the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in 1986, the United States introduced a resolution that criticized the use of torture in Chile and called on Pinochet to end it.¹³³ Whereas Shultz had hoped to vote against a November 1986 \$250 million loan from the World Bank, he was authorized only to abstain.¹³⁴ The United States also devoted several **(p.202)** million dollars, through the National Endowment for Democracy and Agency for International Development, to supporting the democratic process in Chile.¹³⁵ One observer described the US efforts as an "open collaboration" with opposition politicians to oust Pinochet.¹³⁶ After the success of the "no" campaign against Pinochet in 1988, the United States remained engaged in facilitating the country's transition to democracy.¹³⁷

With the cases of South Africa, the Philippines, and Chile, Reagan personally moved to shift US policy only in the face of considerable pressure from members of Congress, his own State Department, and White House aides. And significantly, such pressure could succeed only because the specter of communism was fainter in these three countries than in Central America. In Human Rights Watch Executive Director Aryeh Neier's assessment, "Picking on Pinochet had high rewards and low costs."¹³⁸ Furthermore, in the final years of Reagan's presidency, the president met annually with Gorbachev. As the tensions of the Cold War diminished, supporting repressive dictators as bulwarks against communism seemed less necessary. Therefore improvements in Soviet-American relations may have enabled greater progress on human rights internationally.

By the end of the Reagan's presidency, Neier argues that his administration had "accepted that promoting human rights was a major goal and that the United States should be evenhanded in condemning abuses."¹³⁹ State Department official George Lister agreed, observing that over the course of the Reagan administration, "Human rights policy had become institutionalized."¹⁴⁰ Schmidli makes the same argument in his chapter in this volume, while noting that the definition of rights embraced was quite narrow.¹⁴¹ Drawing a contrast with the early days of Haig's secretaryship, Neier argues that in the early days of George H. W. Bush's presidency, it was "unthinkable that Secretary of State James Baker would propose replacing a concern for human rights with a concern for any other cause."¹⁴²

Progress was made on human rights in the Reagan years. To the extent to which a positive evaluation can be formulated, George Shultz's influence should be noted. His entry into the administration represented a turning point toward greater attention to human rights, and he pressed these issues throughout his secretaryship. But, the positive elements of Reagan's record were determined by geopolitics and not the human rights at stake. Setting aside the Soviet bloc, the administration's attention to human rights was at best belated and episodic. In Central America, US inattention was immoral, and its active involvement made the administration complicit in massive violations of human rights.

(p.203) Reagan's compartmentalized approach to human rights was not unique among Cold War or post-Cold War US presidents. Carter has been similarly criticized over charges of inconsistency in his approach to human rights. A number of scholars have demonstrated that the Carter administration largely ignored human rights concerns when they did not coincide with its larger strategic goals.¹⁴³ Thus in many ways there was a good degree of consistency between Carter's and Reagan's policies regarding human rights.¹⁴⁴ What may have distinguished Reagan's policy was a different approach to thinking about where and when reform might be possible.

The author wishes to express her appreciation for research assistance to Jaclyn Fox.

Notes:

(1.) See, for example, Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: US Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle over US Policy toward Chile* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Roger Peace, *A Call to Conscience: The Anti-Contra War Campaign* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012). One exception is Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

(2.) In his diaries, Reagan primarily noted his signing of annual human rights proclamations (the relevant index entries are Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Conference, Human Rights Day, Human Rights Week, and Human Rights Year) and delved into substance only on South Africa and a Soviet proposal to hold a human rights conference in Moscow. See Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 299, 305; Douglas Brinkley, ed., *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 286, 650, 728.

(3.) Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 179.

- (4.) For other recent efforts, see Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Carl J. Bon Tempo, "From the Center-Right: Freedom House and Human Rights in the 1970s and 1980s," in *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History*, ed. Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 223-244.
- (5.) "Soviet Dissident Calls Reagan Human Rights Policy Dangerous," 10 Feb. 1981, Open Society Archives, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute Records, Soviet Red Archives, Old Code Subject Files 1953-1994, box 691 folder "Human Rights, 1982-1983."
- (6.) Sikkink has argued that instances of human rights abuses increased in the first year of the Reagan administration as leaders in repressive countries took Reagan's election and his early policies as a signal that such practices were now permissible. Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 154.
- (7.) See for example Human Rights Watch Executive Director Aryeh Neier's criticism of the Reagan administration's record in difficult cases: "When the rewards were fewer and the costs were higher than those that followed from opposing Pinochet, the Reagan administration's practices ... were generally not to serve as an advocate of human rights. Worse, it frequently defended the practices of such governments and, thereby, acted as an apologist for abuses." Aryeh Neier, "Human Rights in the Reagan Era: Acceptance in Principle," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 506 (1989): 34.
- (8.) See for example, Reagan, "Address to Members of the British Parliament," 8 June 1982, The American Presidency Project (APP), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>.
- (9.) See for example, Reagan, "Address to the Nation about Christmas and the Situation in Poland," 23 Dec. 1981, APP; Reagan, "Remarks at a White House Meeting with Jewish Leaders," 2 Feb. 1983, APP; Reagan, "Message on the 60th Birthday of Andrei Sakharov," 2 May 1981, APP.
- (10.) Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on the Anniversary of the Birth of Martin Luther King, Jr.," 15 Jan. 1983, APP; Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters on Signing the Executive Order Prohibiting Trade and Certain Other Transactions Involving South Africa," 9 Sept. 1985, APP; Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on the Situation in Central America," 13 Aug. 1983, APP.
- (11.) See William Michael Schmidli's chapter in this volume for a broader discussion. For more on conservative approaches to social and economic rights, see Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution*, 327-331. On Reagan's neglect of women's rights and human rights in the Islamic world more broadly, see Kelly J. Shannon, *US Foreign Policy and Muslim Women's Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 39.
- (12.) David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1985): 208-209; David P. Forsythe, "Human Rights in US Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect," *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 3 (1990): 444-445.
- (13.) Tamar Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 5 (1986): 1068-1069. Historian Greg Grandin charges that Jeane Kirkpatrick "provided the Republican administration with the argument it needed to justify continued support for brutal
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dictatorships.” Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Holt, 2007), 75.

(14.) “Excerpts from Haig’s Remarks at First News Conference as Secretary of,” *New York Times*, 29 Jan. 1981. Richard Schifter, who served as assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs in Reagan’s second term, suggests the extent to which the Reagan administration intended to replace concern for human rights with attention to international terrorism was misinterpreted due to a verbal fumble by Haig. Richard Schifter, “Building Firm Foundations: The Institutionalization of United States Human Rights Policy in the Reagan Years,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 2, no. 3–24 (1989): 4.

(15.) David F. Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictators* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 201; William Michael Schmidli, *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere: Human Rights and US Cold War Policy toward Argentina* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 183. Yet, Joseph Renouard, a more sympathetic observer, argues that each invitation was less an affront to human rights concerns than it seemed at the time. According to Renouard, Reagan administration officials invited General Roberto Viola of Argentina because they regarded him as “a pro-US moderate who favored a return to civilian rule.” In addition, Renouard shows that Reagan’s invitation to General Chun Doo-hwan was conditioned by a promise not to execute opposition politician Kim Dae Jung (Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 191, 195–196). Charles Maechling Jr., “Human Rights Dehumanized,” *Foreign Policy* 52 (Autumn 1983): 128.

(16.) Forsythe, “Human Rights in US Foreign Policy,” 442; John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 57; Hauke Hartmann, “US Human Rights Policy under Carter and Reagan, 1977–1981,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (2001): 403, 424; Carleton and Stohl, “The Foreign Policy of Human Rights,” 208–209; Charles Mohr, “Haig Aide Insists US Rights Policy Is Evenhanded,” *New York Times*, 15 July 1981; Sandy Vogelgesang, “Diplomacy of Human Rights,” *International Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (1979): 230–231.

(17.) For further discussion of Lefever’s nomination, see Sarah B. Snyder, “The Defeat of Ernest Lefever’s Nomination: Keeping Human Rights on the United States Foreign Policy Agenda,” in *Challenging US Foreign Policy: America and the World in the Long Twentieth Century*, ed. Bevan Sewell and Scott Lucas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 136–161. See also chapters by Lauren Turek and William Michael Schmidli in this volume.

(18.) Vogelgesang, “Diplomacy of Human Rights,” 230–231

(19.) Anthony Lewis, “Advice at Home; Advise and Consent,” *New York Times*, 21 May 1981.

(20.) William Safire, “The New Haynsworth,” *New York Times*, 28 May 1981.

(21.) “Nomination of Ernest W. Lefever,” Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 18–19 May and 4–5 June 1981.

(22.) “Nomination of Ernest W. Lefever.”

(23.) The five Republicans who voted against Lefever were Charles Mathias, Nancy Kassebaum, Rudolph Boschwitz, Larry Pressler, and Charles Percy. All of the committee’s Democrats opposed his nomination: Claiborne Pell, Joseph Biden, John Glenn, Paul Sarbanes, Edward Zorinsky, Paul

Tsongas, Alan Cranston, and Christopher Dodd. His sole supporters were Howard Baker, Jesse Helms, Richard Lugar, and Samuel Hayakawa.

(24.) "Exit Lefever, with a Nudge," *New York Times*, 7 June 1981.

(25.) "Nomination of Ernest W. Lefever"; Extension of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, 9 June 1981, 11934-11936.

(26.) "Nomination of Ernest W. Lefever"; Extension of Remarks.

(27.) Congress established the position with an amendment (Section 624 (f)) to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

(28.) Kennedy to Haig, 26 Oct. 1981, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act. See also Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," 1069-1070.

(29.) Jefferson Morley, "Rights and Reagan: Does the Appointment of Elliott Abrams Signal a Reversal in Human Rights Policy?" *Foreign Service Journal* (Mar. 1982): 20; "Elliott Abrams: A Neoconservative for Human Rights," *National Journal*, 1 May 1982.

(30.) Edwin S. Maynard, "The Bureaucracy and Implementation of US Human Rights Policy," *Human Rights Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1989): 182-183.

(31.) Kennedy to Haig, 26 Oct. 1981, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act. See also Maynard, "The Bureaucracy and Implementation of US Human Rights Policy," 182-183; Hartmann, "US Human Rights Policy under Carter and Reagan, 1977-1981," 425-426.

(32.) See, for example William Safire, "Human Rights Victory," *New York Times*, 5 Nov. 1981; Pell to Haig, 12 Nov. 1981, University of Rhode Island Archives, Claiborne Pell Papers, box 54, folder "Alexander Haig."

(33.) Barbara Crossette, "US to Name Human Rights Aide," *New York Times*, 30 Oct. 1981.

(34.) A. Glenn Mower, *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: The Carter and Reagan Experiences* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 46-47.

(35.) Judith Miller, "Man in the News: A Neoconservative for Human Rights Post," *New York Times*, 31 Oct. 1981; George Lardner Jr., "Human Rights Spokesman Reported Chosen," *Washington Post*, 30 Oct. 1981.

(36.) Morley, "Rights and Reagan," 25.

(37.) Schifter, "Building Firm Foundations," 19.

(38.) "Abrams, State's Human Rights Chief, Tries to Tailor a Policy to Suit Reagan," *National Journal*, 1 May 1982.

(39.) Shultz thought Haig's past experience working with Henry Kissinger may have led him to place insufficient emphasis on human rights. George Shultz Interview, Princeton University Archives (PUA), Don Oberdorfer Papers (DOP), box 3, folder 3.

(40.) Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," 1066-1086.

(41.) Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 150.

(42.) Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 149.

(43.) Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 148.

(44.) Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," 1068, 1078; Jerome J. Shestack, "An Unsteady Focus: The Vulnerabilities of the Reagan Administration's Human Rights Policy," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 2 (1989): 33-34, 37-38; Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 150.

(45.) Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1993), 5, 271.

(46.) LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 307. See also Schmidli's chapter in this volume.

(47.) William M. LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 582.

(48.) Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 184.

(49.) See Schmidli's chapter in this volume.

(50.) Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 166-167, 169, 180. See also Jason M. Colby, "Reagan and Central America," in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, ed. Andrew L. Johns (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 445.

(51.) See Lauren F. Turek's chapter in this volume, where she points out that Montt's Pentecostal beliefs led conservative Christians in the United States to support sending more aid to Guatemala.."

(52.) Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 172.

(53.) LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 10, 312, 315; LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 152-153.

(54.) Reagan, *An American Life*, 478.

(55.) LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 153-155, 171.

(56.) LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*, 235. See also Reagan, *An American Life*, 478.

(57.) Quoted in Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 189.

(58.) George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: Diplomacy, Power, and the Victory of the American Ideal* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 404.

(59.) Maechling, "Human Rights Dehumanized," 134.

(60.) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 266n.

(61.) National Security Decision Directive 75, 17 Jan. 1983, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf>.

(62.) NSDD 75.

(63.) The Vashchenko and Chmykhalov families forced their way into the United States embassy in June 1978 in an effort to secure emigration from the Soviet Union. Matlock regards Reagan's interest in Soviet human rights as genuine. Jack Matlock Jr. *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 55–56; Arthur Hartman Interview, PUA, DOP, box 2, folder 16. See also Nicholas Daniloff, *Of Spies and Spokesmen: My Life as a Cold War Correspondent* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 377. Further evidence of Reagan's concern can be found in his personal letters to author Suzanne Massie, *Manchester Union Leader* publisher Nackey Loeb, and businessman Armand Hammer in which he discusses successful American efforts to secure the release of Soviet dissident Yuri Orlov and his wife and Soviet dissidents David and Cecilia Goldfarb. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan: A Life In Letters* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 382–383. In Turek's view, Reagan's concern for the Pentecostals connected with his broader policy goal of reforming the Soviet political system; Turek, in this volume.

(64.) Jack Matlock Interview with author, 3 Apr. 2006.

(65.) Shultz to Moscow, 15 Jan. 1982, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RRPL), Executive Secretariat–NSC (ESNSC), Head of State File (HSF), box 38, folder “USSR: General Secretary Brezhnev.”

(66.) According to Soviet official Andrei Aleksandrov-Agentov, Dobrynin cabled Moscow after his meeting with Reagan, urging resolution of the problem. Gromyko agreed and facilitated their emigration. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 54; George Shultz Interview, PUA, DOP, box 3, folder 2; Andrei Aleksandrov-Agentov Interview, PUA, DOP, box 1, folder 2; Arthur Hartman Interview, PUA, DOP, box 2, folder 16.

(67.) Reagan, “Proclamation 4973,” 21 Sept. 1982, APP; Reagan, “Remarks at a White House Meeting with Jewish Leaders,” 2 Feb. 1983, APP; Reagan, “Proclamation 5063,” 18 May 1983, APP; Reagan, “Remarks on Presenting Congressional Gold Medals to Natan and Avital Shcharansky and an Informal Exchange with Reporters,” 11 Jan. 1989, APP.

(68.) Max M. Kampelman, “Rescue With a Presidential Push,” *Washington Post*, 11 June 2004; Max Kampelman Interview with author, 13 Mar. 2007; Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 57–58; George F. Will, “Helsinki Charade,” *Washington Post*, 21 Aug. 1983.

(69.) Statement of Max M. Kampelman, 15 July 1983, in *Three Years at the East-West Divide*, ed. Leonard R. Sussman (New York: Freedom House, 1983), 115; “The Madrid CSCE Review Meeting,” Nov. 1983, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Archives; Millicent Fenwick, *Speaking Up* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 165–166.

(70.) Reagan to Gorbachev, 11 Mar. 1985, RRPL, ESNSC, HSF, box 39, folder “USSR-GSG 8590272–8590419.”

(71.) Reagan to Gorbachev, 30 Apr. 1985, RRPL, ESNSC, HSF, box 39, folder “USSR GSG 8590475–8590495.”

(72.) Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 215.

(73.) Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 205.

(74.) "Human Rights in the Soviet Union," RRPL, Tyrus W. Cobb Files, box 21097, folder "Soviet Union (Binder)."

(75.) Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 152.

(76.) Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime*, rev. ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 675; Bernard Weinraub, "President Links Rights in Soviet to Summit Success," *New York Times*, 8 Oct. 1986.

(77.) Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 161; Memorandum of Conversation, 20 Nov. 1985, RRPL, Jack F. Matlock Files, box 92137, folder "Geneva: Memcons (Reagan-Gorbachev Memcons Geneva Meeting 11/19-21/1985) 2 of 3."

(78.) Shultz to Reagan, 4 Dec. 1985, RRPL, ESNESC, HSF, box 40, folder "USSR GSG 8591241-8591245"; Reagan to Gorbachev, 7 Dec. 1985, RRPL, ESNESC, HSF, box 40, folder "USSR GSG 8591241-8591245"; Reagan, *An American Life*, 645.

(79.) Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," 1082-1083. See also Sarah B. Snyder, "No Crowing': Reagan, Trust, and Human Rights," in *"Trust, but Verify": The Politics of Uncertainty and the Transformation of the Cold War Order, 1969-1991*, ed. Reinhild Kreis, Martin Klimke, and Christian Ostermann (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 42-62.

(80.) Jack Matlock Interview, 3 Apr. 2006; Shultz to Reagan, 14 Jan. 1986, RRPL, ESNESC, HSF, box 40, folder "USSR GSG 8690024-8690124."

(81.) Reagan to Gorbachev, 7 Dec. 1985, RRPL, ESNESC, HSF, box 40, folder "USSR General Secretary Gorbachev 8591241-8591245."

(82.) The Reagan administration's approach to human rights was shaped by human rights organizations such as Helsinki Watch, which advised US officials on which dissidents needed release most urgently. Sarah B. Snyder, "Bringing the Transnational In: Writing Human Rights into the International History of the Cold War," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24, no. 1 (2013): 108-109.

(83.) Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at a White House Meeting with Human Rights Advocates," 7 Oct. 1986, APP.

(84.) Weinraub, "President Links Rights in Soviet to Summit Success"; Briefing Book, RRPL, Fritz Ermath Files, box 92085, folder "President Reagan's Trip to Reykjavik, Iceland October 10-12, 1986: Overall Briefing Book."

(85.) Shultz proposed a working group to discuss human rights and regional issues. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 226; Cannon, *President Reagan*, 687.

(86.) Jack Matlock Jr., *Autopsy of an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 97. Other scholars such as Robert English have maintained the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in April 1986, not Reykjavik, spurred Gorbachev to focus more on respect for human rights issues, as it demonstrated the dangers of Soviet secrecy and the need to open the Soviet system. 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), 220.

(87.) Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries*, 484.

(88.) Max Kampelman Interview, 24 June 2003, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/diplomacy/>; Charles Hill, written communication with the author, 29 Mar. 2010; Gal Beckerman, *When They Come for Us, We'll Be Gone* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), 511-513.

(89.) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 986. According to Ridgway, Shultz's repeated entreaties convinced Soviet leaders that changing their human rights practices was in the best interests of their reform efforts. Rozanne Ridgway Interview, PUA, DOP, box 2, folder 30.

(90.) National Security Decision Directive 305, 26 Apr. 1988, RRPL, National Security Decision Directives, box 2, folder 6.

(91.) Reagan, *An American Life*, 709. Joseph Renouard emphasizes the growing significance of religious freedom to Reagan over the course of his second term; Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 171. Reagan focused his rhetorical attention on those seeking religious freedom and the right to emigrate earlier in his presidency as well. See for example, Reagan, "Statement on Signing a Bill Concerning Human Rights in the Soviet Union," 22 Mar. 1982, APP.

(92.) Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries*, 613; Remarks by the President, 30 May 1988, RRPL, Katherine Chumachenko Files (KCF), box OA19268, folder "Human Rights Day 1988 (5)."

(93.) Memorandum of Conversation, 31 May 1988, <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB251/>.

(94.) Don Oberdorfer, *From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1983-1991* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 297; Robert Kennedy Eichhorn, "The Helsinki Accords and Their Effect on the Cold War," MA thesis, California State University, Fullerton, 1995, 273; Cannon, *President Reagan*, 705-706; Press Briefing, 30 May 1988, RRPL, KCF, box OA18291, folder "Moscow Summit 1988 (7)"; Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries*, 613-614.

(95.) Reagan, "Remarks to Soviet Dissidents at Spaso House in Moscow," 30 May 1988, APP. Lauren Turek's chapter in this volume shows how Reagan framed human rights violations in religious terms.

(96.) Reagan, "Address to the Nation about Christmas and the Situation in Poland," 23 Dec. 1981, APP.

(97.) Historian Gregory Domber sees little impact from Reagan's sanctions on Polish policy; Gregory F. Domber, *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 254, 256. Reagan *An American Life*, 305.

(98.) Frustrated by the Reagan administration's response, Jaruzelski noted the contrast in Reagan's reaction to human rights violations in Poland, Romania, and Chile. Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 33, 45.

(99.) Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 130.

(100.) Joseph Renouard points to administration criticism of South Africa, South Korea, and El Salvador as evidence that its approach underwent “a profound change.” Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 217.

(101.) James H. Meriwether, “Reagan and Africa,” in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, ed. Andrew L. Johns (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 380, 382.

(102.) Chester A. Crocker, “South Africa: Strategy for Change,” *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 2 (1980): 323–351.

(103.) Crocker, “South Africa,” 324.

(104.) Crocker, “South Africa,” 324.

(105.) Crocker, “South Africa,” 348.

(106.) Chester A. Crocker, “Southern Africa: Eight Years Later,” *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 4 (1989): 159.

(107.) Reagan, “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters on Signing the Executive Order Prohibiting Trade and Certain Other Transactions Involving South Africa,” 9 Sept. 1985, APP. See also Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictators*, 217–223.

(108.) Reagan, “Message to the Congress Reporting on the National Emergency with Respect to South Africa,” 17 Mar. 1986, APP.

(109.) David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 130–132.

(110.) Reagan, “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters on Signing the Executive Order Prohibiting Trade and Certain Other Transactions Involving South Africa,” 9 Sept. 1985, APP.

(111.) Sanford P. Ungar and Peter Vale, “South Africa: Why Constructive Engagement Failed,” *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 2 (1985): 234–235; Helen Kitchen, “Africa: Year of Ironies,” *Foreign Affairs* 64, no. 3 (1986), 572. For a more positive appraisal, see Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 230.

(112.) Reagan, “Message to the House of Representatives Returning without Approval a Bill Concerning Apartheid in South Africa,” 26 Sept. 1986, APP.

(113.) Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 259.

(114.) Reagan “Transmitting a Report on Apartheid in South Africa,” 1 Oct. 1987, APP.

(115.) Reagan “Transmitting a Report on Apartheid.”

(116.) Renouard notes that Reagan’s record toward the Philippines did not show him to be “a democratic visionary.” Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy*, 224.

- (117.) Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictators*, 231-232. See also William J. Burns, "The Reagan Administration and the Philippines," *World Today* 38, no. 3 (1982): 97-104.
- (118.) See Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictators*, 233.
- (119.) Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictators*, 234-237.
- (120.) Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictators*, 237-239.
- (121.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 49-61.
- (122.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 70, 233; Alan McPherson, *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 220-221.
- (123.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 86-87; McPherson, *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle*, 221.
- (124.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 85-7, 96, 108.
- (125.) Reagan is largely absent from their account. Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 108, 123.
- (126.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 119.
- (127.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 126.
- (128.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 127-8.
- (129.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 164.
- (130.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 191.
- (131.) US policy toward Pinochet was constructed in the shadow of the final days of Marcos' rule in the Philippines. Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 194-5, 222.
- (132.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 240-50.
- (133.) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 972.
- (134.) Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 974.
- (135.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 255; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 974. For more on the Reagan administration's efforts at democracy promotion, see Schmidli's chapter in this volume.
- (136.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 265, 322.
- (137.) Morley and McGillon, *Reagan and Pinochet*, 276-278, 292.
- (138.) Neier, "Human Rights in the Reagan Era," 33.
- (139.) Neier, "Human Rights in the Reagan Era," 30.
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(140.) Schmidli, *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere*, 187.

(141.) See Schmidli's chapter in this volume.

(142.) Neier, "Human Rights in the Reagan Era," 31.

(143.) Luca Trenta, "The Champion of Human Rights Meets the King of Kings: Jimmy Carter, the Shah, and Iranian Illusions and Rage," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24, no. 3 (2013): 476-498; Kenton Clymer, "Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and Cambodia," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 245-277; Bradley R. Simpson, "Denying the 'First Right': The United States, Indonesia, and the Ranking of Human Rights by the Carter Administration, 1976-1980," *International History Review* 31, no. 4 (December 2009): 798-826; Simon Stevens, "'From the Viewpoint of a Southern Governor': The Carter Administration and Apartheid, 1977-81," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 5 (2012): 843-880; Rosemary Foot, *Rights beyond Borders: The Global Community and the Struggle over Human Rights in China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 89-90.

(144.) For similar arguments, see Carleton and Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights," 218; Sikkink, *Mixed Signals*, 180.