

# A Helsinki Clue to Moscow's SALT II Intentions

To the Editor:

Despite the improvement in the tone of Soviet-American relations over the past six months, the question remains: Can America trust the Soviet Union to observe the terms of SALT II and other agreements which are to be signed at the Vienna summit meeting? No verification system can be all-inclusive and foolproof. Some degree of trust is necessary, but in the critical field of nuclear armaments such trust must be based on a rational appraisal of the other party's record.

One important recent demonstration of the Soviet attitude toward its international obligations has been the imprisonment of more than 20 members of Helsinki Watch Groups in the U.S.S.R., including the organizer of the first (Moscow) group, Prof. Yuri Orlov. The only "crime" of the arrested Soviet citizens was their effort to monitor Soviet compliance with the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, the most recent major international agreement signed by the U.S.S.R. The arrest of Orlov and other Helsinki monitors was an outrageous and spectacular violation of the Final Act.

At the Belgrade conference the Soviet representatives insisted on interpreting international agreements in an arbitrary fashion to suit their own convenience. And to this day the Soviet Union has shown no willingness at all to respond to reasoned arguments of its Helsinki partners and of world public opinion.

Some concessions with respect to Jewish emigration made by the Soviet leaders in their effort to achieve most-favored-nation tariff treatment are welcome from the humanitarian point of view. But so long as the arrested Helsinki monitors remain in Soviet

prisons, Moscow stands in flagrant violation of the Helsinki Accords.

The Russian physicist Yuri Orlov, the Ukrainian poet Mikola Rudenko, the young Jewish computer scientist Anatoli Shcharansky, the Georgian music teacher Merab Kostava, the Lithuanian teacher Viktoras Petkus and the other imprisoned monitors are living evidence of the Soviet Union's arbitrary and self-serving interpretation of its international obligations.

We ask President Carter, Congress and all Americans: What makes you think that the Soviet leaders will honor any agreements signed at Vienna while they remain in violation of the Helsinki Accords?

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