

The Helsinki Agreement on Cooperation and Security in Europe signed in 1975 by 35 states has been from the very beginning a new concession by the western democracies to the Soviet Union and its satellites. However, the linkage between European security and human rights and regular review meetings to control compliance with these basic rights by each country, established by the Helsinki Accord were viewed by its western promoters as a sufficient condition for peaceful coexistence of two political systems. Human rights activists in the communist countries, while more doubtful about the real intentions of their governments, still considered that these international obligations can lessen repression and founded Public Groups to Promote Implementation of the Helsinki Agreement in Moscow, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

Ten years after Helsinki no one can assume that this agreement can to any extent restrict arbitrariness of the communist authorities. They marked this decade by increasing expansion throughout the world, including direct invasion in Afghanistan, by an unprecedented military buildup, by support of international terrorism, by escalating repression against their people including arrests of almost all members of the Helsinki Groups, by the exile of the Sakharovs, by martial law in Poland, by introducing new legislation virtually banning communications between people of the communist countries and the free world, and by closing emigration. The Helsinki Accord was perceived by Soviets as a good cover for this policy and was interpreted by them accordingly.

Western governments gradually accepted this interpretation. The linkage between human rights and security was first abandoned by continuing cooperation with Soviet authorities while they fragrantly suppressed those rights, then by signing one after another the final documents of the Belgrade and Madrid review conferences without even mentioning the ongoing repression and finally by separating human rights and security in further review conferences.

Unable to serve its initial goal the Helsinki Agreement failed even to protect the Helsinki monitors, people who sacrificed their freedom to make it serve peace and democracy. We tried to persuade western governments to make release of these people a necessary condition to continue Helsinki process. It was not done in time and the situation is irreversible now.

Irreversible are the deaths of imprisoned Helsinki Monitors Oleksa Tikhy, Valery Marchenko and Yuri Litvin from the Ukraine and Eduard Arutyunyan from Armenia. Irreversible are the many years spent in prisons and labour camps by the founders of the Helsinki Movement Yuri Orlov, Anatoly Shcharansky and other prisoners of conscience. Irreversible are the deaths in Poland and Afghanistan.

We have done our best to make Helsinki Agreement serve peace and democracy. However, we can no longer associate ourselves with the agreement which not only failed to serve its humanitarian purposes, but even to protect its most sincere supporters, agreement which has turned into a repressive tool in the hands of Soviet authorities. We appeal to the western governments to make the Helsinki Agreement null and void.

We still believe that peace can be and must be based on human rights. Therefore, until The Soviets prove by concrete actions their readiness to observe these basic rights, any peace or arms control agreement with them would be self deception. It cannot be proved by them unless Helsinki monitors and other prisoners of conscience in communist countries are released.