

Part of this new approach by the Soviet Union is a more sophisticated use of public relations to give the illusion of progress where really there is none. There is no dispute that several prominent and long-standing refuseniks have been released this year. I had the honour to meet Anatoly Shcharansky in Israel in April, and we rejoice with his family at the birth of their first child in freedom last week. We have seen the release of Dr. Yuri Orlov, David Goldfarb and Benjamin Bogomolny. After much pressure, Inessa Fleurova was eventually allowed to be accompanied by her husband when she travelled to Israel to donate bone marrow to her brother who is dying of cancer. We have welcomed these developments and have encouraged the Soviet authorities to continue such releases. But is this really progress? What about the increased repression of those who remain? What about Ida Nudel, Vladimir Slepak or the others who are still denied permission to leave?

In my view, what this dichotomy means is that nothing has really changed in the Soviet Union except where non-compliance with their international obligations is harming their foreign policy interest. The Soviet Union must understand that the release of a few prominent dissidents or refuseniks will not cause the West to reduce the pressure for more fundamental changes in Soviet practices and policies.

In fact, we may be entering a unique time to test the depth of the difference between the Gorbachev Regime and its predecessors. If the new Soviet leadership really understands the West, they will know that the enduring image of Anatoly Shcharansky is as the exception that proves the rule of Soviet repression. Words are not enough. Symbols are not enough. Accepting petitions and calling conferences will only be persuasive if they are accompanied by sustained and real changes in the rights of Soviet citizens to speak, to move, to pray as they prefer.

So what can we do to bring about real progress? First, we have to be hard-headed, both about the intransigence of the Soviet system, and about the practical effectiveness of measures open to us. Mere words are not enough for the West either. We want to end the repression, not just condemn it, and we have to determine how best to do that.