

Soviet Human Rights Violations

Violations by the Soviet Union of its agreements to respect human rights continue to be an important source of friction between East and West. The Helsinki Accords which were signed ten years ago by Canada and thirty-five other nations have not had any affect on the behaviour of the Soviets towards their own citizens. While Canada and other Western countries have been diligent in bringing these violations to the attention of the Soviets, the Soviet attitude has been to deny all charges.

Relations with the Soviets are made difficult not only by the existence of a form of government which is inimical to our principles, but also by our lack of influence upon their behaviour. Given these serious limitations there are still some very important reasons why Canada should continue to voice strongly its objections to Soviet behaviour. By terrifying their own citizens the Soviets have been able to silence internal dissent. By intimidating the West through their military might the Soviets hope to silence us. Such a strategy can only work if we allow it to.

It is for this reason that defending human rights is much more than a humanitarian policy; it is the key to our strength. The only retort to such acts of intimidation is to show that this behaviour will not frighten us and will not cause us to be silent