Noah Coco

Prof. Wezel

HIST 1001

14 March 2017

Helsinki Accords and The Transition to Pluralism in Eastern Europe: the struggle for human rights in Latvia and Czechoslovakia

The Soviet Union’s shortsighted vision of their prosperity and success following the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, also known as the Helsinki Accords, neglected to acknowledge the considerable leverage granted to domestic dissidents throughout Eastern Europe to oppose the Soviet regime. Consumed with their renewed international legitimacy and successful negotiations in maintaining their territorial integrity, they naively ignored the human rights concessions granted in the agreement. These human rights concessions were not ignored by domestic groups, however, and they were later used to exert pressure on the Soviet regime to recognize the rights they agreed to in the Helsinki Final Act. The internal pressure levied on the Soviet regime facilitated structural changes in Soviet politics that paved the way for a more pluralistic society. How did the Helsinki Final Act contribute to the dissolution of the Soviet empire and subsequent transition to a more pluralistic society? Following the Helsinki Accords, many domestic civic groups like Czechoslovakia’s Charter 77 utilized the human rights framework within the Helsinki Final Act to hold the government accountable to the recognition of human rights. Through the institutionalized agreement they were granted some legal ground to make their claims and challenge Soviet authority. The Helsinki Accords provided a binding agreement made by the Soviet Union to uphold the points addressed in the document, and any deviation from these expectations empowered domestic actors to challenge Soviet authority to an international audience. I will argue that the combination of a formal international agreement and its extrapolated human rights framework granted foreign leaders and domestic actors institutionalized power to hold the Soviet regime accountable and to facilitate the transition to a more pluralistic society.

\*Subtitle with title (specific examples of Czechoslovakia and Latvia)

\*Narrow down to domestic groups (not international actors)

\*about a page of intro (about two paragraphs)

\*country, time frame, introduce topic in first

\*research question, thesis, specific details in second

Bibliography

Charter 77. "Declaration of Charter 77." Making the History of 1989. Accessed March 13, 2017. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/628>.

This primary source document established Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia in 1977, which was an informal civic group motivated by the Helsinki Accords to advocate for the recognition of human rights. This document is significant because it outlines the founding principles and framework for human rights in a more democratic society. I will use this as an example of a domestic civic group that was given the institutional framework through the Helsinki Accords to challenge the Soviet regime.

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. "Helsinki Accords: Declaration on Human Rights." Making the History of 1989. Accessed March 13 2017. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/245>.

This primary source document is the Helsinki Final Act, which was an agreement signed by 35 countries in 1975 that addressed a number of issues including national boundaries, which served to legitimize Soviet authority, and human rights. This document is significant because it created the political leverage for foreign leaders and domestic civic groups to exert power on Soviet authorities. I will use the many points made in the agreement as evidence of the power various actors could derive from this agreement to exert internal and external pressure on the Soviet regime.

Gfeller, Aurelie Elisa. “Champion of Human Rights: The European Parliament and the Helsinki Process.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 49 no. 2 (2014). 390-409. Accessed March 13, 2017.

This article analyzes how the European Parliament and its enforcement of the Helsinki Accords created a transnational network and institutionalized framework for the recognition of human rights across Europe, which extended to nations within the Soviet empire. This network served to bring attention to the commitment to observing human rights agreements across the region. This article is useful because it outlines the political power the Helsinki Accords granted international actors to influence the Soviet bloc in its recognition of human rights. I will use this article to explain one of the mechanisms European nations pursued in order to enforce the Helsinki Accords in the Soviet Empire and contribute to the development of democratic and pluralistic regimes.

Hong, Ki-Joon. "The Unintended Consequences of the Helsinki Final Act: A Path Emergence Theory Perspective." *International Political Science Review* 34, no. 3 (2013): 310-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24573531>.

This article provides a theoretical analysis of the effects of the Helsinki Accords. Among other considerations, Hong identifies the social resonance among the masses regarding human rights as an unintended consequence produced by the Helsinki Accords. Furthermore, the Helsinki process facilitated the creation of a transnational network that served to alter the social and political atmosphere across Eastern Europe. This article is useful because it outlines the structural and institutional changes that were fostered through the Helsinki Accords. I will use this article to explain how these changes created a more democratic and pluralistic society across Eastern Europe.

Ronald Reagan. "Reagan's Support for Human Rights." Making the History of 1989. Accessed March 13, 2017. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/67>.

This primary source document is a speech delivered by President Ronald Reagan to the Soviet leadership in 1988 addressing the improvements in the recognition of human rights, but also calling for more intense efforts and developments in their policies. This speech is significant because Reagan alludes to the Helsinki Accords in calling upon the Soviet leadership to continue to enhance their institutional respect for human rights. I will use this document as evidence of the international pressures that foreign leaders had to enforce agreements and foster the development of a more democratic and pluralistic society.

Peterson, Christian Philip. "'Confronting' Moscow: the Reagan administration, human rights, and the Final Act." *The Historian* 74, no. 1 (2012): 57-86. Accessed March 13, 2017. <http://go.galegroup.com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&u=upitt_main&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA284221707&sid=summon&asid=6c5bf2f4884d8d9f10bff505b9a6eaaa>.

This article analyzes how Reagan, once opposed to the Helsinki Final Act, later used this agreement as a mechanism to enforce human rights across the Soviet Empire. According to Peterson’s analysis, Reagan used it as a tool to exert political pressure to hold the Soviet Union accountable to human rights violations while empowering domestic groups to challenge the regime politically. This article is useful because it outlines the methods utilized by Reagan to influence Soviet policies as they pertain to human rights. I will use this article as evidence of the external political pressure waged by foreign leaders on the Soviet empire, and how this connected to domestic groups utilizing this same framework of the Helsinki Accords to facilitate the transition to a more democratic state that recognizes human rights.

Snyder, Sarah. 2010. "The foundation for Vienna: A reassessment of the CSCE in the mid-1980s." *Cold War History* 10, no. 4: 493-512. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost. Accessed March 13, 2017.

This article outlines the developments in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe’s enforcement of the Helsinki Accords as it pertains to the Soviet Union. Its analysis suggests that the enforcement was slow, but there were still developments in the Soviet Union’s attitudes, fostered by the United States, in observing the points of the original agreements made in the Helsinki Accords. This article is useful because it analyzes one of the ways in which international politics exerted pressure on the Soviet Union. I can use this analysis as support for my claim that the Helsinki Accords gave international actors an institutionalized framework to enforce the Soviet Union’s commitment to the agreements made in the Helsinki Accords.