



# When the Russians really were coming: citizen diplomacy and the end of Cold War enmity in America

David Scott Foglesong

History, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, NJ, USA

## ABSTRACT

Between 1985 and 1989 hundreds of Soviet citizens came to the United States in projects initiated by American activists who feared nuclear war and hoped to improve relations with the USSR. This ambitious citizen diplomacy led to hundreds of thousands of encounters between Soviet visitors and Americans that shattered negative stereotypes. Since the Soviet visitors received extensive media coverage, the programs had broad impacts on attitudes in many American towns and cities. As a result, 'the Cold War' ended in the hearts and minds of many Americans long before the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

## KEYWORDS

Citizen diplomacy; enmity; stereotype; image; American; Russian; Soviet; Cold War

## Introduction

The Russians were coming! Not as paratroopers dropping from the sky to occupy Washington DC. Not as sailors infiltrating a New England port from a submarine. Not as soldiers invading American towns alongside communist forces from Cuba and Nicaragua.<sup>1</sup> But as mothers and grandmothers touring Midwestern cities, as teenage mountain climbers scaling Rocky Mountain peaks, as musicians in youth orchestras, and as doctors, physicists, and journalists speaking in high school auditoriums about their desires for peace. Beginning in the autumn of 1985 – before President Ronald Reagan first met Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva – numerous delegations of Soviet citizens came to the United States at the invitation of American activists whose fears of nuclear war had led them to form new organisations dedicated to overcoming the dangerous enmity between the two nations. The Soviet visitors were the first citizens of the USSR ever to come to many American towns and cities. Their arrival provoked some demonstrations by anti-communists who denounced what they claimed was a Soviet propaganda plot to mask the continuing menace and evil of an aggressive and atheistic empire. Yet most of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who met, saw, and heard the Soviet visitors were struck above all by their similarity to Americans, especially in their sincere desires for peace and better

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**CONTACT** David Scott Foglesong  [dsfogle@history.rutgers.edu](mailto:dsfogle@history.rutgers.edu)  History, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 16 Seminary Place, Van Dyck Hall, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8554, USA

<sup>1</sup>On the nightmares of Soviet invasions presented in 'Invasion USA' (1952), ridiculed in 'The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming' (1966), and dramatized in 'Red Dawn' (1984), see Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

futures for their children. That widespread impression was conveyed even more broadly in numerous newspaper articles and radio and television broadcasts about the Soviet travellers. By 1989 – before the fall of the Berlin Wall – the citizen diplomacy projects made major contributions to the easing of American-Soviet antagonism.

The stories of the citizen exchanges, which have received little attention from historians, require reconsideration of scholarly interpretations of the end of the Cold War and of the influence of the anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s.

For three decades, histories of the ending of the Cold War have focused overwhelmingly on top leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union. Historians have disagreed about whether Ronald Reagan won the Cold War with his tough policies or Mikhail Gorbachev ended the Cold War through his visionary initiatives, or American and Soviet leaders jointly ended the Cold War through their interaction and adaptation.<sup>2</sup> But almost all of these historians have kept their eyes fixed on government decision-makers. Yet when Reagan and Gorbachev first came to power neither of them envisioned that the Cold War would end in the near future and that as part of that process they would travel to each other's capitals, where they would be welcomed enthusiastically by cheering crowds. While Reagan, Gorbachev, and their aides certainly recognised the importance of media images and popular attitudes, they did not control the imaginations and beliefs of people in either nation. Instead, they adapted and responded to changes in public opinion that were significantly affected by citizen activists who already in the early 1980s envisioned an end to the nuclear arms race and to the mutual demonisation of the two societies.

Some valuable studies of the end of the Cold War have focused on non-governmental actors such as scientists and human rights activists.<sup>3</sup> However, these accounts have concentrated on how the non-governmental figures affected the thinking and policies of top political leaders. As a result, a crucial dimension has been neglected: how millions of American and Soviet citizens changed their views of each other, moving beyond negative preconceptions to a recognition of their common humanity and their common interests. Just as 'the Cold War' became a felt reality to millions of people at different moments in different parts of the world in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it ceased to be an emotional reality to millions in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Understanding the dissipation of 'the Cold War' in that sense is therefore intrinsically important, even apart from the reverberations in government policies.

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<sup>2</sup>The best studies of the ending of the Cold War include: Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington: Brookings, 1994); Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008); and James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>3</sup>See Matthew Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces: The Transnational Movement to End the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); and Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>4</sup>Masuda Hajimu, *Cold War Crucible: The Korean Conflict and the Postwar World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2–4.

Many writers have neglected, underestimated, or disparaged the involvement of citizens in people-to-people diplomacy. Journalists often depicted American peace groups who visited the USSR as naïve travellers misled by Potemkin shows.<sup>5</sup> One historian of the end of the Cold War who briefly mentioned citizen activists treated them as at best hopelessly unrealistic and at worst pawns of the Soviet security service (KGB).<sup>6</sup> However, most of the Americans who formed new organisations in the early 1980s were not naively pro-Soviet. Instead, they tended to have patriotic, mainstream, and even conservative anti-communist views.

Recently a few historians have made important contributions by showing how American children, particularly the Maine schoolgirl Samantha Smith, travelled to the Soviet Union in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> However, some of the new studies have disregarded the involvement of adults in citizen diplomacy, presented unduly negative views of the peace activism, and ignored how the Reagan administration came to support citizen exchanges.<sup>8</sup>

Scholars have long recognised that in the early 1980s a powerful anti-nuclear movement emerged in the United States. Most studies of the movement have emphasised its failure to have a ‘nuclear freeze’ passed as legislation or adopted as policy.<sup>9</sup> Others have asserted that the movement restrained the Reagan administration or have highlighted how the broad popularity of the movement prompted changes in Reagan administration rhetoric by 1984.<sup>10</sup> Yet almost all of these scholars have neglected the influence of citizen diplomats.<sup>11</sup> According to one of the studies, the anti-nuclear movement ‘peaked in the early 1980s’ and then petered out ‘in the Cold War’s twilight years’.<sup>12</sup> Yet many of the anti-nuclear activists who were involved in the freeze movement in the early 1980s went on to play vital roles in the citizen exchanges of the late 1980s that did much to end Cold War antipathies. Another recent study asserted that in general ‘U.S. activists did not closely coordinate or communicate with their counterparts in other nations.’<sup>13</sup> In fact, however, American activists cooperated extensively with Soviet citizens.

This article redresses misconceptions about the anti-nuclear movement and challenges the prevailing ‘great man’ explanations of the ending of the Cold War by

<sup>5</sup>For example: Alison Smale, ‘Gorbachev Heard What he Wanted to Hear,’ Associated Press dispatch published in *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, 3 June 1988.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War, 1985–1991* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 3, 31–2, 99–101, 262.

<sup>7</sup>Matthias Neumann, “Children Diplomacy during the Late Cold War: Samantha Smith’s visit of the ‘Evil Empire,’” *History* 104, no. 360 (2019): 275–308; and Margaret Peacock, “Samantha Smith in the Land of the Bolsheviks: Peace and the Politics of Childhood in the Late Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 43, no. 3 (June 2019): 418–44.

<sup>8</sup>Peacock, “Samantha Smith in the Land of the Bolsheviks,” 421, 419, 441.

<sup>9</sup>Douglas C. Waller, *Congress and the Nuclear Freeze: An Inside Look at the Politics of a Mass Movement* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987); David S. Meyer, *A Winter of Discontent: The Nuclear Freeze and American Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1990); J. Michael Hogan, *The Nuclear Freeze Campaign: Rhetoric and Foreign Policy in the Telepolitical Age* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1994); and Bradford Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011).

<sup>10</sup>Jeffrey W. Knopf, *Domestic Society and International Cooperation: The Impact of Protest on US Arms Control Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. Chapter 7; Lawrence S. Wittner, *Toward Nuclear Abolition: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement. 1971 to the Present* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003); and William M. Knoblauch, *Nuclear Freeze in a Cold War: The Reagan Administration, Cultural Activism, and the End of the Arms Race* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2017).

<sup>11</sup>One brief early study by a leader of the anti-nuclear movement did address citizen diplomacy: David Cortright, *Peace Works: The Citizen’s Role in Ending the Cold War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>12</sup>Kyle Harvey, *American Anti-Nuclear Activism, 1975–1990: The Challenge of Peace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 168, 169.

<sup>13</sup>Paul Rubinson, *Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2018), xv.

discussing the remarkable surge of American-Soviet citizen diplomacy that began in the early 1980s and peaked in 1988–89. It will focus primarily on describing three of the most ambitious citizen exchanges that brought Soviet visitors to the United States and analysing their impact through close examination of hundreds of articles and editorials in newspapers, which experts recognised were crucial to the shaping of American public attitudes.<sup>14</sup> (Analysis of the effects of citizen diplomacy in the USSR will be deferred to separate publications.) The article will begin, though, by showing the diversity of the American citizen diplomacy efforts by briefly sketching a few of them.

## The wide range of citizen diplomacy projects

Pro-Soviet groups in the United States, such as the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, had worked with the Soviet Peace Committee to organise visits by Americans to the USSR since the 1940s with little effect.<sup>15</sup> But the sharp deterioration of US-Soviet relations in the early 1980s spurred more mainstream Americans to establish scores of new organisations dedicated to overcoming American-Soviet enmity and eliminating the danger of a nuclear holocaust. Most of the founders and members of the new groups were women and, as we shall see, many espoused maternalist views that facilitated their connections to Soviet women.

In 1980, inspired by the passionate Australian paediatrician Helen Caldicott, activists in New England formed the Women's Party for Survival, soon renamed Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND). Although Caldicott and WAND failed to prevent the re-election of Ronald Reagan in 1984, leaders of WAND were by then engaged in a less directly political effort to develop international connections. In September 1984, for example, Sayre Sheldon, a professor at Boston University and president of WAND, was one of four Americans who travelled to Leningrad to participate in a seminar on the role of women in the peace movement organised by the Soviet Women's Committee (KSZh) and Scandinavian women. After four days of sometimes difficult discussions, the women agreed on a joint communiqué that emphasised that 'the myth of "the enemy" must be abolished'.<sup>16</sup> Sheldon continued thereafter to be in contact with leaders of the KSZh. In January 1985, for example, she informed the KSZh about WAND's plans for a year of educational programmes dedicated to promoting 'a better understanding of the U.S.S.R.' and expressed the wish that a KSZh representative would come to a conference in Colorado in April.<sup>17</sup>

In 1983 Cynthia Lazaroff, a Princeton University graduate who had taught in Soviet high schools, founded the US-USSR Youth Exchange Program, which organised joint

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<sup>14</sup>For example, a study by one Boston opinion research firm, commissioned by Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament, noted that '[m]ost Americans derive their information about the arms race through news coverage of the issue' and concluded that: 'If American attitudes are to be changed ... they must be changed primarily through the nation's press.' 'Strategic Recommendations,' Marttila & Kiley, Inc. November 1985, Box 4, Women's Action for Nuclear Directions Records, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

<sup>15</sup>Matthias Neumann, "Peace Child – American Soviet Youth Encounters during the Cold War" (paper presented at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies [ASEEES] convention, Boston, December 2018).

<sup>16</sup>Helen Broinowski Caldicott, *A Desperate Passion: An Autobiography* (New York: Norton, 1996), 296–7; and Carol Stocker, "Peace Talks in Leningrad: Western and Soviet Women Discuss the Nuclear Threat," *Boston Globe*, 27 September 1984.

<sup>17</sup>Postcard from Sayre Sheldon, received 15 January 1985, and Sheldon to Ksenia Proskurnikova, 19 January 1985, f. 7928, op. 3, d. 6551, State Archive of the Russian Federation (Moscow: GARF).

American-Soviet wilderness adventures, including successful climbs of Mount Elbrus, Europe's highest peak. In 1987, with the support of Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-Colorado) and Reagan administration officials, Lazaroff arranged for American, Soviet, and Hungarian youths to climb in the Colorado Rockies and then to receive awards at a high-profile ceremony in the Capitol in Washington DC. As a brochure explained, the US-USSR Rocky Mountain Exchange provided an opportunity 'for Soviet and American young people to develop the mutual trust, cooperation and understanding which is essential for improving US-USSR relations'.<sup>18</sup>

In 1986, moved by fear of nuclear war and a desire to make the world a better place for her daughters, Susan Eisenhower, president of the Eisenhower World Affairs Institute and granddaughter of President Dwight Eisenhower, helped to sponsor Chautauqua Institution exchanges that brought hundreds of prominent Soviet citizens to the western part of New York state and took hundreds of leading Americans to the Soviet Union for lively and sometimes heated discussions. Although some other participants lobbed hostile accusations, Eisenhower focused on trying 'to make a breakthrough beyond superpower point-scoring and one-upmanship'. The exchanges succeeded in promoting better mutual understanding and fostering close relationships, including Eisenhower's own bond with Soviet physicist Roald Sagdeev, whom she married in 1989 in a ceremony that many saw as a symbol of the ending of the Cold War.<sup>19</sup>

In 1988, Grace Kennan Warnecke, daughter of diplomat and historian George F. Kennan and Executive Director of the American-Soviet Youth Orchestra, led an effort that brought 52 Soviet musicians, aged 17 to 23, to the United States, where they rehearsed with 58 young Americans and then performed a series of joint concerts. First Lady Nancy Reagan, honorary chairperson of the orchestra, hailed the programme as a 'step toward further peace for mankind'. As they toured America the Soviet musicians stayed in the homes of American families. The musical exchange programme generated extensive and favourable press coverage, with journalists praising the 'remarkable project' and anticipating that 'great and lasting good' could come from it.<sup>20</sup>

Although such citizen diplomacy projects were important, this article will discuss at greater length three organisations that undertook even more ambitious, wider scale efforts: (1) Peace Links: Women Against Nuclear War; (2) Beyond War; and (3) the Centre for U.S.-U.S.S.R. Initiatives (CUUI).

## Peace Links

In 1981 Betty Bumpers, wife of Senator Dale Bumpers (D-Arkansas), first realised that she had to do something to prevent nuclear war when her 19-year-old daughter asked

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<sup>18</sup>'First Joint Mountain Climbing Expedition for American, Soviet and Hungarian Youth,' press release, 17 June 1987; Stephen H. Rhinesmith to V.A. Aksenov, Chairman, Committee of Youth Organizations, 10 December 1986; Patricia Schroeder to Cynthia Lazaroff, 19 March 1987; 'The US-USSR Rocky Mountain Exchange: June 1987,' all in Box 122, Patricia Schroeder Papers, University of Colorado, Boulder. For a profile of Lazaroff, see Gale Warner and Michael Shuman, *Citizen Diplomats: Pathfinders in Soviet-American Relations and How You Can Join Them* (New York: Continuum, 1987).

<sup>19</sup>Susan Eisenhower, *Breaking Free: A Memoir of Love and Revolution* (New York: FSG, 1995), quotation on p. 16; and Ross Mackenzie, *When Stars and Stripes Met Hammer and Sickle: The Chautauqua Conferences on U.S.-Soviet Relations, 1985-1989* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup>Press release, July 1988, Box 122, Patricia Schroeder Papers, University of Colorado, Boulder; Rushworth M. Kidder, 'US, Soviet Youth Tune Up for Fine Music - and More,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 March 1988; Robert Commanday, 'The Russians Are Coming! The Yanks Are Coming!' *San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle*, February 1988.

how the family would reunite if a nuclear disaster occurred. Although it was unusual then for the wives of prominent politicians to question the policies of men on issues of war and peace, Betty Bumpers decided that she could not remain silent while Ronald Reagan's rhetoric and his administration's policies seemed to heighten the danger of nuclear war.<sup>21</sup> Influenced by a trip to the Soviet Union with her husband and a meeting at the United Nations with former cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, who headed the Committee of Soviet Women (KSZh), Bumpers founded Peace Links in 1982.<sup>22</sup> From its base in Arkansas, Peace Links quickly grew to have scores of affiliates across the United States, approximately 35,000 participants, and more than 150 supporters among congressional spouses.

In 1985 Bumpers launched a bold citizen diplomacy project by inviting the Committee of Soviet Women to send a delegation of 15 women to the United States. Bumpers requested that the delegates be from different sectors of Soviet society and include women who had not travelled to America before. The Committee selected some of its members and other women recommended by members. They were then briefed by staff of the KSZh who had previously visited the United States. The high-level delegation, led by biologist Antonina Khripkova, included minister of education Oydin Abbova, Dr Larisa Skuratovskaya, a member of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and Vera Soboleva of the KSZh leadership. Shortly before their departure, Svetlana Askol'dova, a professor of history, learned that she had been denied an exit visa – which she attributed to her husband, Aleksandr Askol'dova, having made a film ('The Commissar') that had been banned.<sup>23</sup>

After flying to America in mid-October, the Soviet women split into groups of three that each visited several cities, including Nashville, Tennessee; Norman Oklahoma; Cleveland, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Asheville, North Carolina; Detroit, Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Salt Lake City, Utah; Phoenix, Arizona; and Las Vegas, Nevada. Accompanied by the wives of members of Congress (including Teresa Heinz, Barbara Levin, and Jeanne Simon), the Soviet women spoke at churches and colleges, attended luncheons and dinners, and met with community leaders.

As they crossed America the Soviet women repeatedly made statements that highlighted beliefs, worries, and goals that they shared with the women of Peace Links. At a welcoming ceremony in Pittsburgh, Malakhat Shakhobova, a petite 57-year-old professor from Tadjikistan, declared: 'Our goal is to preserve this beautiful planet for our children and our grandchildren. Women are the givers of life and now the time has come for women to preserve life.'<sup>24</sup> In Iowa three days later Vera Soboleva delivered a similar

<sup>21</sup>Anna L. Eblen and Martha Jane Eblen, eds., *Betty Bumpers: Champion of Childhood Immunization and Peace* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 27–8; Dale Bumpers, *The Best Lawyer in a One-Lawyer Town: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 2003), 243–4; and Paula Curlee Barnes, "Educating the Conscience: Betty Bumpers and Peace Links, A Study of Feminist Peace Work" (PhD dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1996).

<sup>22</sup>Bonnie Halprin, coordinator of Nashville Peace Links, letter to the editor of *The Tennessean*, 17 October 1985; Vickie Kilgor East, "Four Soviet Women To Be Guests of Peace Links Group," *The Tennessean*, 5 May 1985.

<sup>23</sup>Emails to author from Vera Soboleva and Larisa Skuratovskaya, 6 November 2019; Larisa Skuratovskaya, "Kind Acts From Betty," in Eblen and Eblen, eds., *Betty Bumpers*, 137–8. The other Soviet visitors to the United States included: Galina Bezrodnaya, Dina Protsenko, Elena Ershova, Ekaterina Orlova (wife of journalist Vladimir Pozner), Uta Renzer, editor of *Youth*, Zoya Samoleta, Malakat Shakhobova from Tadjikistan, Margarita Zabelina, and Margarita Ziborya from IMEMO.

<sup>24</sup>Sylvia Sachs, "A Message of Peace: Soviet Women Downplay Differences between Nations in Visit Here," *Pittsburgh Press*, 22 October 1985.

maternalist message: 'Women are givers of life and are interested in providing a secure future for their children. Women should say the decisive "no" to war.'<sup>25</sup>

In addition to having that common bond as mothers, the Soviet and American women tended to share beliefs about the differences of women from men. Although the Soviet women were much less inclined to criticise or blame male political leaders, they agreed with the women of Peace Links about some special traits of women. Thus, much as Betty Bumpers maintained that women were 'experts in communication, in human relations, in conflict resolution', Antonina Khripkova asserted that it was 'easier for women to find a common language'.<sup>26</sup>

The top priority for the Soviet women was to overcome suspicion and antipathy. 'We must break down the barriers of mistrust and fear,' Khripkova declared at a news conference upon arriving at an airport in Iowa.<sup>27</sup> As if echoing Khrushchev's remarks in the United States 25 years earlier, Elena Ershova of the USA Institute told 250 Nashville residents at a 'peace dinner': 'I am Communist, but I have no tail and I have no horns.'<sup>28</sup>

Middle-aged mothers and grandmothers speaking about their desires for peace might seem unthreatening, yet the visits of Soviet women provoked some strident opposition. As Soviet visitors were treated to an outdoor musical reception in Nashville, protesters stood at the entrance to a park with signs reading, 'You Can't Trust the Communists' and 'Peace Through Strength'.<sup>29</sup> In Pittsburgh the Soviet women were confronted by seven members of the John Birch Society with placards reading 'Roses are Red So are Peace Links' and 'Peace Links Overlooks Soviet Treachery'.<sup>30</sup> Some columnists and letter writers insisted that no communist could be sincerely for peace and that the Soviet Union was 'interested only in world domination'.<sup>31</sup> As such reactions indicated, the Soviet visitors' presence challenged conservative anti-communists' deeply held convictions and their identities as Americans, which centred on contrasts to demonic images of the Soviet Union.

Despite the intense opposition in some places, the Peace Links tour had a widespread and positive impact. Since the four teams of Soviet women typically appeared at at least two events each day for about two weeks, and since 100–300 people attended most events, the tour led to more than 10,000 personal encounters with Americans. The Soviet visits also led journalists, including wire service reporters, to write scores of favourable articles and a number of editorials or columns that endorsed key Peace Links messages.<sup>32</sup> As four Soviet women arrived in

<sup>25</sup>Blair Kamin, "Soviet Women Promoting Peace during Visit to Iowa," *Des Moines Register*, 25 October 1985.

<sup>26</sup>Patricia McCormack, "Wives, Mothers Key to Fostering World Peace, Women Leaders Say," United Press International dispatch in Columbus, *Indiana Republic*, 26 December 1985; Judy Hagey and Janine Calsbeek, "Soviet Delegation Receives Sample of NW Iowa Living," *Sioux City Journal*, 25 October 1985. Betty Bumpers made a more complete statement about these beliefs two years later in a speech to the Soviet Committee of Women in Moscow on 13 October 1987. Fond 7928, op. 3, d. 7212, GARF.

<sup>27</sup>"Soviet Women will Sample Iowa Life," *Sioux City Journal*, 24 October 1985.

<sup>28</sup>Vickie Kilgore East, "Soviet Visit Bridges Gap," *The Tennessean*, 27 October 1985.

<sup>29</sup>Vickie Kilgore East, "Soviet Visitors 'Touched' by Welcome," *The Tennessean*, 18 October 1985.

<sup>30</sup>Sylvia Sachs, "A Message of Peace: Soviet Women Downplay Differences between Nations in Visit Here," *Pittsburgh Press*, 22 October 1985.

<sup>31</sup>John Gillis, "Peace, Indeed," *Sioux City Journal*, 30 October 1985; and Arie J. Oliver, "Reaction to 'Links'," *Sioux City Journal*, 3 November 1985.

<sup>32</sup>The Soviet women were surprised by the extent of the media attention they received. See "U.S., Soviet Women Express Hope for a Successful Summit," *Newport News Daily Press*, 29 October 1985.

Nashville, for example, the city's major newspaper commended Peace Links for making the visit possible 'and for reminding all people that the goal of peace is far too important to be the sole responsibility of politicians'.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most striking columns was published in the *Arizona Republic*, a paper that had promoted conservative anti-communist views for decades. After spending two days with Oydin Abbsova, Larisa Skuratovskaya, and Zoya Samoleta, columnist Ginger Hutton reported that the fact that the women toed the party line about the invasion of Afghanistan mattered much less to her than seeing how similar the warm, affectionate women were to American women. She was especially struck by how the Soviet women hugged children at a grammar school and by how Skuratovskaya returned repeatedly to a store in a mall to buy eyelash curlers for members of her family. As a result, Hutton wrote: 'It seemed strange to think that these women, so like us in so many ways, are called our enemies, and we are called theirs.' Hutton stressed that her liking for the Soviet women did not make her blind to their government's atrocities, but she also expressed optimism that 'getting to know each other as people may help us avoid violence.' Beyond all the governmental rhetoric, she concluded: 'We are all human beings hoping for happiness for ourselves and our children.'<sup>34</sup>

Not all of the Soviet women simply exuded sweetness and light. Some sharply criticised American ignorance about the USSR, particularly American lack of knowledge about the Soviet role in the Second World War.<sup>35</sup> However, the Soviet women's views of the United States became more favourable as they saw American cities for themselves and generally received friendlier receptions than they expected.<sup>36</sup> For example, although they had been concerned about crime in America before they arrived, they learned that criminals were not rampant on the streets in the cities they visited. Perhaps most importantly, they realised that there was a dynamic and influential movement for peace in the United States. Elena Ershova of the USA Institute exclaimed: 'I am thrilled there is a peace movement here. Now I can go back and say there is.'<sup>37</sup>

Members of the Soviet delegation submitted a very enthusiastic report about their trip to the leadership of the Soviet Women's Committee. They glowingly noted that the wife of Secretary of State George Shultz participated in the first meeting after their arrival in America and that very prominent and wealthy people, including Eunice Kennedy-Shriver and members of the Rockefeller family, provided financial support for their travels. Thanks in part to the holding of press conferences in almost all of the 16 cities they visited, their tour generated very wide mass media attention, including an appearance on the public radio show 'All Things Considered' and an at times 'sharp' three-hour discussion with the editor of a newspaper in

<sup>33</sup>"Strengthening the Links of Peace" (editorial), *The Tennessean*, 17 October 1985.

<sup>34</sup>Ginger Hutton, "Soviet, U.S. Women Join Together in Peace Links," *Arizona Republic*, 30 October 1985.

<sup>35</sup>Yekaterina Orlova quoted in Sylvia Sachs, "A Message of Peace: Soviet Women Downplay Differences between Nations in Visit Here," *Pittsburgh Press*, 22 October 1985; and Antonina Khripkova quoted in Blair Kamin, "Soviet Women Promoting Peace during Visit to Iowa," *Des Moines Register*, 25 October 1985; and Vera Soboleva to the author, 9 April 2019.

<sup>36</sup>Elena Ershova said that "Americans were more friendly and hospitable than she expected," according to an Associated Press dispatch, "U.S., Soviet Women Express Hope for a Successful Summit," *Newport News Daily Press*, 29 October 1985.

<sup>37</sup>Vickie Kilgore East, "Soviet Visit Bridges Gap," *The Tennessean*, 27 October 1985.

Detroit. The report concluded that the visit to the United States undoubtedly contributed to the development of mutual understanding.<sup>38</sup>

Participants in the Peace Links-sponsored tour by Soviet women agreed that it changed attitudes on both sides. Vera Soboleva, who served as the main interpreter, recalled: 'It is difficult to overestimate the importance of exchanges of "Peace Links" and the SWC [Soviet Women's Committee] delegations for breaking mistrust, even sometimes fear that people of our countries felt towards each other.' Barbara Levin, wife of Senator Carl Levin (D-Michigan), recounted how the warm welcome of the Soviet visitors 'popped that bubble of misconception' they had about American hostility. More broadly, the many positive encounters during the tour strengthened Levin's faith in the possibility of moving beyond mutual demonisation. 'Instead of dehumanizing them and seeing them as adversaries,' she told a reporter, 'you see them as humans ... that they're not implacable enemies, that we can coexist.'<sup>39</sup>

As such comments suggest, the initial Peace Links exchange in 1985 achieved its objectives of changing the way many Americans viewed the Soviet people, altering how 13 prominent Soviet women saw the United States, and inspiring more confidence among Peace Links activists about the possibility of ending the Cold War. In the following years, Peace Links organised more exchange projects, including a visit by American women to the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1987, which built upon the success of the first tour.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, other groups formed to pursue similar goals in different ways.

## Beyond War

Moved by worries about nuclear war, in 1982 a group of Silicon Valley professionals and housewives formed an organisation called Beyond War, with headquarters in Palo Alto, California. Some of the senior women in the group had earlier been involved in Woman to Woman Building the Earth for the Children's Sake, which had opposed the Vietnam War in the 1960s and urged peace in Ireland and the Middle East in the 1970s. But the leaders and almost all members of Beyond War were not typical American peace activists. They included advertising executives, venture capitalists, two former White House fellows, electronics engineers, and the founders of technology companies that had major Pentagon contracts. In earlier decades many of them, including some who had served in the US armed forces, had thought of the Soviet Union as an enemy and an evil, oppressive state.<sup>41</sup> Although in political affiliation they ranged from liberal Democrats to conservative Republicans, the members of Beyond War tended to be socially and morally traditional. As one of them explained, Beyond War members did not fit 'the stereotype of the peace movement member, someone who's

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<sup>38</sup>Report on delegation to US by invitation of Peace Links, f. 7928, op. 3, d. 6398, ll. 249–260, GARF. According to one of the leaders of the Soviet Women's Committee who frequently travelled to the United States, 'reports about those exchanges reached persons who were on the decision making level at that time in our country for sure.' Vera Soboleva to the author, 4 April 2019.

<sup>39</sup>Vera Soboleva to the author, 9 April 2019; Thomas Grose, "Levin's Wife Says Soviet Women Enjoy Warm Reception In U.S.," Saint Joseph, Michigan *Herald Palladium*, 7 November 1985.

<sup>40</sup>The autumn 1987 visit was featured in the KSZh magazine: see Nelya Ramazanova, "A Step Towards Each Other," *Soviet Woman*, no. 2 (1988): 7.

<sup>41</sup>Description of William Busse, a retired architect who had been a Navy pilot patrolling for Soviet submarines, in Ward Parker, "Joint Program Stresses Need for Peace," Longmont, Colorado *Times-Call*, 17 January 1988; and author's interview with Rick Roney, 5 February 2019.

been on the left. What we've really tried to do, and with some success, is reach into the mainstream of society.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond War puzzled and sometimes frustrated more politically minded peace groups because it focused on changing fundamental ways of thinking rather than passing legislation or supporting particular candidates. Taking inspiration from astronauts who had seen the earth from space, Beyond War urged people to recognise that many nations shared one planet and a common humanity. As an advertisement placed in major newspapers declared, solutions to international problems required 'a basic shift in our thinking from "us against them" to a recognition that we are in this together. We will survive together or perish together.'<sup>43</sup>

From its base in the San Francisco Bay Area, Beyond War rapidly expanded to have local groups in 25 states and 18,000 subscribers to its newsletter. Drawing on the technological skills of members, Beyond War organised a 'spacebridge' – a teleconference by satellite link between San Francisco and Moscow – in December 1984 in order to present an award to the Soviet and American co-founders of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Public Broadcasting Service stations throughout the United States televised the spacebridge in September 1985, thereby disseminating across the country the message that Americans and Soviets could and must talk to each other in order to survive together on the planet.<sup>44</sup>

In 1985 Beyond War launched an even more ambitious project by establishing contact with the Committee of Soviet Scientists for Peace Against the Nuclear Threat and proposing to collaborate on a book that would articulate the principles for building a peaceful world. Initially, leaders of the Soviet committee hesitated to work with Beyond War because they thought a statement of general principles would have little effect and they favoured stronger action against the arms race. Yet in 1986 and 1987 15 prominent Soviet scientists and scholars participated in a total of eight weeks of face-to-face discussions with the Americans, including one 17-day session in Moscow and an April 1987 meeting at the Beyond War mountain retreat in California. The Soviet participants who contributed to the book included physicist Sergei P. Kapitza, academic and diplomat Anatoly A. Gromyko (son of the Soviet foreign minister), physicist Boris V. Raushenbakh (who had contributed to the Sputnik satellite programme), political scientist Fyodor M. Burlatsky, and researchers at the Institute of USA and Canada Studies such as Andrei V. Kortunov.

At their first meetings, the Soviets and Americans clashed over issues such as the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the American 'secret war' against Nicaragua. But they soon agreed to set aside such disagreements and to focus on the common goal of cooperation for the sake of survival.<sup>45</sup> The 30 essays published in the book, titled *Breakthrough/Proryv*, at the end of 1987 centred on three main themes: (1) the inevitability of nuclear

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<sup>42</sup>Colby College Professor Charles Hauss quoted in John Lovell, "Group Hopes Book Brings End to War," *Portland Press Herald* (Maine), 22 January 1988. See also Chris Leppke, "US, Soviet Activists Envision 'Beyond War'," *Intermountain Jewish News*, 22 January 1988; and Deirdre McCrohan, "'Beyond War' Group Explores New Way of Thinking," *Tiburon Ark*, 20 January 1988. For a sometimes misleading early account of Beyond War and its predecessor, the Creative Initiative Foundation, see Steven M. Gelber and Martin L. Cook, *Saving the Earth: The History of a Middle-Class Millenarian Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

<sup>43</sup>*On Beyond War*, no. 22, September 1986, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>*On Beyond War*, 15 August 1985.

<sup>45</sup>Elena Loshchenkova quoted in Abby Haight, "A Journey for Peace," *The Olympian* (Washington), 22 January 1988.

war if the United States and the Soviet Union did not change course; (2) the need for new global thinking, including recognition of interdependence and the importance of mutual security; and (3) the imperative of overcoming Soviet and American images of each other as enemies.<sup>46</sup>

The timing of the book's publication was auspicious. On 10 December 1987, the last day of the summit between Gorbachev and Reagan in Washington, DC, Gorbachev's aide Georgy Shakhnazarov published a positive review of *Breakthrough/Proryv* in *Pravda* that endorsed its message. The initial printing of 30,000 copies in the USSR quickly sold out and an additional 50,000 copies were published. According to Soviet contributors, the book became 'a sensation' and had 'a big impact' in the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> 15,000 copies of the book were printed in the United States.

In January 1988 10 of the Soviet authors came to America to publicise the book in extremely ambitious tours alongside Beyond War members who organised and paid for the trips. Visiting more than a hundred cities in every region of the country, the authors met and spoke directly to almost 300,000 Americans, gave interviews to 14 television and radio stations, and had 15 additional stories about them broadcast on television. Journalists wrote more than a hundred articles and editorials in local and regional newspapers about the Soviet visitors, who were in many cases the first Soviet citizens the reporters had ever encountered personally.<sup>48</sup>

The Soviet authors' appearances provoked intense suspicion and opposition in some areas. Anatoly Gromyko's role as an editor-in-chief was often cited as evidence that the book was a Soviet propaganda exercise and the Soviet delegation was not independent of the Soviet government.<sup>49</sup> One conservative in Massachusetts asked how Americans could believe in Soviet overtures for better relations after Soviet actions in Afghanistan and Berlin, as well as restrictions on rights to emigrate.<sup>50</sup> A woman in Washington state declared that 'the conservatives in America realize the peace movements are just a Soviet ploy for world domination' and claimed Beyond War was being used by Soviet 'masters of deceit'.<sup>51</sup> Other parents in Washington complained to their local school boards that *Breakthrough* was one-sided Soviet propaganda and succeeded in delaying placement of the book in the high-school library.<sup>52</sup>

Despite such objections, the Soviet scientists and scholars succeeded in dispelling many stereotypes. An editor in Iowa vividly described the impact of seeing and hearing

<sup>46</sup>Boris Raushenbakh cited in Don Kazak, "A Challenge to Build a World Beyond War," *Palo Alto Weekly*, 10 February 1988; Elena Loshchenkova and Craig S. Barnes, "Writing This Book," in Anatoly Gromyko and Martin Hellman, eds, *Breakthrough/Proryv: Emerging New Thinking. Soviet and Western Scholars Issue a Challenge to Build a World Beyond War* (New York: Walker and Company, 1989), 269–72.

<sup>47</sup>Raushenbakh and Gromyko quoted in Don Kazak, "A Challenge to Build a World Beyond War," *Palo Alto Weekly*, 10 February 1988; and Stanislav K. Roshchin quoted in "Is 'Beyond War' Really Possible?" *Marin Independent Journal*, 18 January 1988.

<sup>48</sup>Beyond War staff collected the newspaper articles, editorials, and reviews in a 'Press Information' book, which is in the possession of the author. Gromyko and Hellman, *Breakthrough/Proryv*; Rick Roney, "Task Force to Soviet Union," 23 March 1988, Beyond War Papers, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Santa Barbara, California; Doug Ireland, "Soviet Author Visits Portsmouth," *Foster's Daily Democrat* (Dover, New Hampshire), 23 January 1988.

<sup>49</sup>Andre Stepankovsky, "American, Russian Hope to Change Attitudes Toward War," *Longview WA Daily News*, 15 January 1988; Craig Carter ("Old Message, New Friends," *The Metro*, 21–27 January 1988) and Edward Luttwak claim that the Soviets were controlled individuals cited in "Authors Discuss Peace," *Davis Enterprise*, 4 January 1988.

<sup>50</sup>Charles A. Radin, "Gorbachev's Shifts are Akin to New Deal, Russian Says," *Boston Globe*, 21 January 1988.

<sup>51</sup>Doug Levy, "Soviet, American Co-Editors will Discuss Nuclear Threat," *The Columbian* (Vancouver, Washington), 7 January 1988.

<sup>52</sup>Bruce Westfall, "Advocates of World Peace Voice Optimism," *The Columbian*, 17 January 1988.

a professor of psychology from Moscow State University: "Television taught me that all Russians are either fat, balding men or tall, tree-like Cossacks. Imagine my shock, then, when I met Dr. [Vladimir] Ageev, a small, soft-spoken gentleman. He looked like a college professor at any U.S. university."<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, a columnist in Oregon who attended an event at a Rotary Club reported that Alexander Nikitin of the USA Institute 'quickly shattered stereotypes (Commissars are boring, poker-faced and long-winded) by revealing a delightful wit and a surprising readiness to poke fun at the folks back home'.<sup>54</sup> Just by being unlike the burly and boorish Nikita Khrushchev, another Soviet author was more successful than Khrushchev in dispelling negative images. As a reporter in California recorded, the Soviet physicist

was not wearing an ugly, baggy suit. He did not take his shoe off and beat on the table with it. . . . To everybody's delight, the Russian seemed to be quite a bit like them. He was a real person, this Boris Raushenbakh, not some type of cartoon propaganda monster.<sup>55</sup>

The candour, humour, and humane spirit of the Soviet visitors sometimes had more impact than the ideas they presented or the words they used. Although an editor in North Carolina had been deeply suspicious of Soviet violations of treaties, he found Natalia Bekhtereva, director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine in Leningrad, 'a convincing emissary'; after hearing her speak he agreed that the United States and USSR needed to know more about each other.<sup>56</sup> The message novelist Ales Adamovich brought to the coast of California sounded familiar, a journalist observed, 'but it was the person advocating the message . . . that made the message ring clearer'.<sup>57</sup> It was one thing for the Soviet authors to say 'we are people like you'; it was more powerful for them to show that.<sup>58</sup>

However, many journalists did directly engage with and endorse the central messages of the Soviet and American authors. Reporters in North Carolina called *Breakthrough* 'a seminal book' and a 'monumental book'.<sup>59</sup> In central California, journalists described it as 'an eloquent plea for peace' and a compelling warning about the danger of nuclear war.<sup>60</sup> More elaborately, an editorial in an Oregon newspaper enthused about how the 'remarkable book' offered an inspiring message about the importance of citizen diplomacy: 'Social, cultural and economic commerce between just plain citizens is important.' Through such engagement, the editorial continued, 'we can help move our countries toward a less dangerous and more productive relationship.'<sup>61</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Jan Castle Renander, Editor, *Red Oak Express* (Iowa), "Perception Doesn't Match Reality," 29 January 1988.

<sup>54</sup>Jonathan Nichols, "Reds Not under Beds – at Rotary!" *The Oregonian*, 21 January 1988. Nikitin felt from the warm receptions that something had changed in comparison since his six earlier trips to the United States. Joan Herman, "Soviet Writer Gives Message of Peace," *Daily Astorian* (OR), 22 January 1988.

<sup>55</sup>William Johnson, "Bringing Glasnost into the American Living Room," *Peninsula Times Tribune*, 17 January 1988.

<sup>56</sup>John Gates, Editorial Page Editor, "Changing the Way People Think About Nuclear War," *Winston-Salem Journal*, 24 January 1988. Bekhtereva's lack of bitterness about her family's suffering during the siege of Leningrad made another journalist 'believe in the "new thinking"'. Ray Jenkins, "New Thinking," *Baltimore Sun*, 23 January 1988.

<sup>57</sup>Keith Muraoka, "Soviet Author Urges End to Nuclear Arms," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 13 January 1988.

<sup>58</sup>Alexander Nikitin quoted in Tim Preso, "Teens see Glasnost with Scholar's Visit," *Deschutes County Bulletin* (Oregon), n.d.

<sup>59</sup>Bob Gingher, "Soviet-American Dialogue Promotes Global Thinking," *Greensboro News & Record*, 27 December 1987; and Linda Brinson, "Essays by Scientists Face Challenge of War," *Winston-Salem Journal*, 10 January 1988.

<sup>60</sup>Paul Craig, "Empathy Pulls in New Thinking on Peace," *Sacramento Bee*, 7 January 1988; Elisabeth Sherwin, "This Book will Convince You to End Nuclear War," *Davis Enterprise*, 24 January 1988.

<sup>61</sup>*The Daily Astorian* (Astoria, Oregon), 26 January 1988.

Beyond War leaders felt greatly heartened by the success of the project. Retired architect William Busse commented that with the Reagan/Gorbachev summit in December 1987 and the book tour in January 1988, '[w]e can now say we've turned the corner' in promoting the concept of a need to move beyond war.<sup>62</sup> Harold Sandler, former chief of biomedical research for the NASA Ames Research Centre, was even more enthusiastic. 'I feel like the Cold War is over right now,' he remarked at an event at a high school in Washington state.<sup>63</sup> By 1989 many in Beyond War felt that they had achieved their mission of changing American thinking about the Soviet Union and that they could therefore shift their focus to other issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or even close their headquarters in Palo Alto.<sup>64</sup>

Although full analysis of the impact of the *Breakthrough* project inside the Soviet Union is beyond the scope of this article, a brief glimpse can be offered. When Beyond War teams toured the Soviet Union in March and April of 1988 they found that the book and their visits to a number of cities had striking effects. Former ROLM Corporation executive Rick Roney was especially impressed when, after a meeting in Novosibirsk, an elderly Soviet man came up to him with a beaten-up copy of *Breakthrough/Proryv* that looked like it had been read by a thousand people even though it had been published only a few months earlier.<sup>65</sup> The Beyond War visits to Moscow, Leningrad, Tallinn, Vilnius, Kiev, and other cities garnered extensive coverage from the Soviet media. Soviet journalists welcomed how the Americans affirmed key messages of Gorbachev's 'new thinking' and contributed to the overcoming of old propaganda clichés (at the very moment when Nina Andreeva and other orthodox Communists were clinging to traditional verities).<sup>66</sup> The effectiveness of Beyond War's work made a strong impression on the leadership of the Soviet Peace Committee (*Sovetskii komitet zashchity mira*), which resolved to try to broaden cooperation with the American group (even though Beyond War leaders had kept their distance from the committee).<sup>67</sup>

### 'Soviets Meet Middle America!'

Soon after the establishment of Beyond War in Palo Alto, a little further north in California a woman was inspired to address American-Soviet enmity. Sharon Tennison, a nurse and mother of four children, was deeply troubled by the severe tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union in the early 1980s. Fearing a nuclear war between the superpowers, she decided to take action. Disregarding warnings from Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and U.S. Information Agency officials, in September 1983 she led a group of 20 Americans to the Soviet Union. There they not only met with leaders of the official Soviet Peace Committee, but also visited churches, schools, markets, and parks in order to talk with a wide array of Soviet citizens.

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<sup>62</sup>*Intermountain Jewish News*, 22 January 1988.

<sup>63</sup>Bruce Westfall, "Advocates of World Peace Voice Optimism," *The Columbian*, 17 January 1988.

<sup>64</sup>Author's interview with Rick Roney, 5 February 2019.

<sup>65</sup>Interview with Rick Roney by author, 5 February 2019.

<sup>66</sup>"Nuzhno bol'she znat' drug o druge," *Sovetskaiia Sibir'*, 5 April 1988; "Mir stroitsia na doverii," *Vechernii Novosibirsk*, 5 April 1988; "K novomu myshleniiu," *Nauka v Sibirii*, 14 April 1988; Pat Stromberg, "Report #1 from Novosibirsk," 3 April 1988; *Beyond War Papers* (Santa Barbara, California: Nuclear Age Peace Foundation).

<sup>67</sup>"O khode realizatsii Sovetsko-amerikanskikh proekhtov i rabote na SSHa v 1988-1989 gg.," fond 9539, opis 1, delo 2213, GARF.

The success of that first visit inspired Tennison to found the Centre for U.S.-U.S.S.R. Initiatives (CUUI) in late 1983 and to organise about 20 trips to the U.S.S.R. in each of the following years.<sup>68</sup>

In 1987 Tennison decided to launch an even more audacious venture that would bring 400 Soviet citizens to 240 towns and cities across the United States between January 1988 and early 1989. With initial funding from a San Francisco Bay Area philanthropist, she offered to the Soviet Peace Committee to bring delegations of Soviet citizens to the United States.<sup>69</sup> Tennison sought to keep the participation of Communist ‘bureaucrats’ to a minimum and to maximise the number of non-Communist citizens who would visit America. However, the first delegations that arrived in the United States early in 1988 consisted almost entirely of Peace Committee officials and Communist Party members they selected. After wrangling for months with Peace Committee leaders to increase the number of non-Party friends of CUUI in the delegations, Tennison cancelled the partnership with the Peace Committee and began working directly with Gennadi Alferenko, director of a pioneering Soviet non-governmental organisation, to secure visas for CUUI’s Soviet friends to travel to the United States for the first time. Since very few non-Communists had been allowed to travel abroad in previous years, this was a major breakthrough.<sup>70</sup>

Many of the local organisers of the ‘Soviets Meet Middle America!’ project in 1988 had been members of CUUI delegations to the Soviet Union in 1987 or earlier. They tended to be middle-class professionals – including many owners of small businesses, lawyers, teachers, and ministers – or housewives. Some of them emphasised that they were ‘not peaceniks’.<sup>71</sup> Speaking to reporters, they explained that their goals were to ‘erase the kind of distrust that feeds on “strangeness”’, to ‘destroy the image of an enemy’, to lift the ‘veil of misunderstanding’ between the Soviet and American peoples, and thus to make war between the superpowers less likely.<sup>72</sup>

In March 1988, when residents of Redding, California learned that four Soviet citizens would come to their northern California community as part of an exchange programme, many were alarmed. Anti-communists, many of them members of a group called Citizens for America, began bombarding the Redding newspaper with letters and columns warning about the dangers of having a team of ‘KGB controlled’ agents ‘spouting the Communist Party line’ in their city. Invoking the saying, ‘be aware of the wolf in sheep’s clothing’, Barry Hawkins urged Redding residents not to be taken in by Soviet visitors

<sup>68</sup>Sharon Tennison, *The Power of Impossible Ideas: Ordinary Citizens’ Extraordinary Efforts to Avert International Crisis* (Temple, Texas: Odenwald Press, 2012); Interview with Tennison, 22 December 2015, San Mateo, California. For a portrait of Tennison see Gale Warner and Michael Shuman, *Citizen Diplomats: Pathfinders in Soviet-American Relations and How You Can Join Them* (New York: Continuum, 1987), 131–51.

<sup>69</sup>Some correspondence between Soviet Peace Committee officials and CUUI leaders is preserved in the records of the *Sovetskii komitet zashchity mira, fond 9539, opis 1, delo 2204*.

<sup>70</sup>Tennison, *The Power of Impossible Ideas*, 67–71. On the ideas of the Bay Area philanthropists who supported Tennison, see Don Carlson and Craig Comstock, *Citizen Summitry: Keeping the Peace When It Matters Too Much to Be Left to Politicians* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc., 1986). On Alferenko and his Foundation for Social Inventions, which was supported by Gorbachev, see Gale Warner, *The Invisible Threads: Independent Soviets Working for Global Awareness and Social Transformation* (Washington, DC: Seven Locks Press, 1991), 189–215.

<sup>71</sup>Barbara Rinman, director of the Chicago chapter of CUUI, quoted by Jim Quinlan, “Oak Park Residents Prepare ‘Glasnost’ for Soviet Guests,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 22 March 1988.

<sup>72</sup>Leon McFadden quoted by Rebecca Lloyd in “Four Russians visiting Yreka in citizen project,” *Mail Tribune Extra* (Medford, Oregon), 7–13 January 1988; Carol Swanson paraphrased by Marjorie Morris in “Soviet-American Exchange Seeks to Shatter cultural Myths,” *Carrollwood News* (Florida), 13 April 1988; and Ray Gatchalian quoted by Sam Delson in “Soviets Take Aim at Culture Gap,” *Hayward Review* (California), 15 April 1988.

propounding the ‘moral equivalency’ of the United States and the Soviet Union. Suann Prigmore cautioned that the Soviet objective in ‘showing us that its people are just like us’ was to foster the illusion ‘that we can just sit down with them and talk things out’. Concurring with Hawkins and Prigmore about the importance of remembering ‘the difference between a Free Society and a brutal dictatorship’, Clair Hill implored: ‘Let’s not be sucked in by the charm and wit of these carefully selected “visitors”.’<sup>73</sup>

Clearly, the impending visit of a handful of Soviet citizen diplomats posed a grave threat to the anti-communists’ identities as Americans. Other Redding residents, ‘shocked at the level of paranoia and controversy’, appealed to their neighbours to be calm and give the Soviets a warm welcome. ‘Is our faith in a democratic republic so weak,’ one woman asked, ‘that we cannot expose ourselves and our children to other views?’<sup>74</sup>

When the day finally came for a public forum with the four Soviet visitors on Saturday, 16 April, a dozen protesters picketed outside the high-school auditorium. In addition to passing out some of the 3000 pamphlets they had printed, they held up a 30-foot banner, emblazoned with a hammer and sickle, that warned: ‘BEWARE OF THE BEAR’S HUG’. As the forum began a cosmetic surgeon who had been a prisoner of war during the Korean War stood and interrupted the opening comments because he considered the programme, with only written questions allowed, a ‘farce’. However, he was shouted down by the audience and then strode out of the auditorium. For the next hour and a half the mostly friendly audience of 150 people listened to answers to their questions from a political scientist from Moscow, an art student from Tbilisi, a student of law, and the vice president of the Georgia Peace Committee. At the end, the audience gave the Soviet visitors a standing ovation and the Soviets warmly said good-bye. The forum moderator, a Shasta College instructor, reported the next day that the reactions to the visit he heard were ‘about 97 percent positive’, with people everywhere effusively ‘extending their feelings’.<sup>75</sup>

The editor of the Redding newspaper conceded that if the purpose of the forum was ‘to stage a kind of love-fest between Soviet Communists and members of the local peace lobby, then it was a booming success’. Concerned by how many in Redding had succumbed to the notion that the Soviet visitors were ‘just like us’, the editor quoted a conservative Chico State University professor’s explanation that ‘[t]he whole political, social and economic traditions of the two countries are so different that we couldn’t possibly be the same.’ While acknowledging that the Soviet Union was then undergoing massive internal change, the editor insisted that ‘nothing has really changed in terms of the competition between the two societies’ and that no revolutionary changes in Soviet foreign policy should be expected.<sup>76</sup>

On the other hand, the reporter who covered the forum was struck more by the extreme suspiciousness of the protesters, which he contrasted to the good humour of the

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<sup>73</sup>Ralph R. Patterson (chairman of Citizens for America), “Be Civil to Soviet Visitors; Don’t Forget Communist Goal of Deception,” 7 April 1988; Barry B. Hawkins, “Visit by Four Soviets a Cause for Concern,” 24 March 1988; Suann W. Prigmore, “Time to Explore Real Reason for Soviet Visit,” 24 March 1988; Clair A. Hill, “Soviet Brainwashing Teams Headed Our Way,” 18 March 1988; and Alger N. Johanson, “Ambassadors Really Agents of Deception,” 1 April 1988, *Redding Record Searchlight*.

<sup>74</sup>Patrick Moriarty, “People Should be Nice to the Soviet Visitors”; and Joan Lauer, “Community Should Not be Afraid of 4 Soviets,” undated letters, *Redding Record Searchlight*, clippings files, Center for Citizen Initiatives Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California.

<sup>75</sup>John Lawson, “Soviets Leave Redding with Good Feelings,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, 18 April 1988.

<sup>76</sup>Robert W. Edkin, “Soft Questions Spawn Fuzzy Answers,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, 19 April 1988.

Soviet visitors. The encounter reminded him of the movie ‘The Russians are Coming, the Russians are Coming’ (1966), which had ridiculed anti-communist Paul Reveres and envisioned Soviet-American cooperation.<sup>77</sup>

Although the suspicion and alarm expressed in Redding were more intense and widespread than in any other community that participated in the SMMA programme, anti-communists vehemently voiced their opposition in several other areas. When one of the first teams of Soviets came to Yreka, California (near the Oregon border) in January 1988, someone phoned in a bomb threat to the community theatre where a question and answer session was to be held. In addition, three residents brought a group of four Afghans to confront the visitors over the brutal Soviet war in Afghanistan.<sup>78</sup> In May 1988, after four Soviets visited Orange County, California, several residents of Huntington Beach and Newport Beach wrote to the *Los Angeles Times* to vent how ‘profoundly disturbing’ they found it that ‘Soviet bigwigs’ were being brought to America by private groups. Since the Soviets were ‘masters at manipulating’ people, the letter writers feared ignorant, gullible Americans would be duped by the Soviets’ statements about their system. There was no point in talking with Soviet citizens, R. C. Cochran argued, because individual opinions did not count in the harshly repressive Soviet Union and the ‘opposite philosophies’ of the two countries ‘can never unite us’. These southern Californians, like other conservatives, continued to deny the possibility of significant change in the Soviet Union long after Gorbachev had proclaimed policies promoting freedom of expression (*glasnost*) and economic restructuring (*perestroika*).<sup>79</sup>

Opposition erupted in one area as late as December 1988. When three Soviets arrived in northwestern Indiana, irate residents of one city flooded their mayor’s office with calls protesting the visit. Concerns about the possibility of violence led the Munster police department to station four armed officers at each corner of the auditorium where the Soviets spoke. Outside, 15 demonstrators chanted anti-Soviet epithets, carried signs, and held up a huge banner that read, ‘RUSSIANS OUT OF AFGANISTAN’ [sic].<sup>80</sup> (Apparently the demonstrators were not aware that Soviet troops had begun leaving Afghanistan in the spring of 1988, a withdrawal completed by February 1989.)<sup>81</sup>

Yet the Indiana protesters reflected the feelings of only a minority in their community. The Soviet visitors – an English teacher from eastern Siberia, a writer from Kazakhstan, and a deputy mayor of a Moscow district – received several rounds of applause and numerous gifts from the 125 people in the audience. A spokesman for the demonstrators

<sup>77</sup>John Lawson, “‘Glasnost’ Lacking in Visit to Redding,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, 20 April 1988.

<sup>78</sup>“Soviets, Afghans to Debate in Yreka,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, 6 January 1988; and “Yreka’s Theater Filled for Soviets,” *Redding Record Searchlight*, 9 January 1988.

<sup>79</sup>“Getting Close to the Soviets in This Country and Theirs,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1988 (four letters). Other letter writers expressed similar sentiments after four Soviets visited Irvine, California in early June. “Glasnost in Irvine: Varied Views of the Soviet Union,” *Los Angeles Times*, no date, Center for Citizen Initiatives (CCI) Papers, Hoover Institution Archives. The most vehement opponents of the Soviets often had names that suggested their families came from Russia or Eastern Europe. See, for example, the letters from Vera Melnykovycz and Bogdan Shepilov, *Orange County Register*, 28 June 1988, B12.

<sup>80</sup>“Against Visit,” *Hammond Times*, 1 December 1988; “Closer Ties is Theme Voiced by 3 Soviets Touring Area,” *Northwest Indiana Post-Tribune*, 4 December 1988; “Soviet Visit,” *Hammond Times*, 5 December 1988; and “Soviet Visitors Encounter First Protesters,” *Northwest Indiana Post-Tribune*, 5 December 1988.

<sup>81</sup>Artemy Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011).

acknowledged that they represented a minority sentiment when he told a reporter: 'We are here to balance out the liberal media that has given them such a positive review.'<sup>82</sup>

As the generally enthusiastic reception of Soviet visitors even in areas with the most adamant anti-communist opposition suggests, the 'Soviets, Meet Middle America!' Project succeeded in dispelling negative stereotypes across the United States. Many members of the Soviet delegations, expecting to encounter hostility, were surprised by the warmth and hospitality of Americans. Dina Fotina, a construction manager from Moscow, had thought that behind the smiling faces of American men 'were greedy and cruel hearts', but found the people of Laramie, Wyoming to be 'friendly inside' as well. Nadezhda Pashinova, a 31-year-old ophthalmologist who had believed Americans were individualists preoccupied with creature comforts, was amazed that Kentuckians were 'so people oriented'. Valentin Kuchin, a Peace Committee official who specialised on Latin America, had envisioned money-mad Americans 'racing around like squirrels on the wheel', but did not see that in upstate New York. Marina Barchenkova, a Moscow teacher, expected Americans to be dogmatic, materialistic, and unromantic but had those preconceptions shattered, too.<sup>83</sup>

Numerous Americans reported that their stereotypes about Soviets – grey, dour, humourless – were even more dramatically disconfirmed. It may not be surprising that one of the hosts of Soviet visitors to Cheyenne, Wyoming declared that 'we all experienced a breaking down of "enemy images"'. More remarkable is how newspaper editors in centrist or conservative states were affected by seeing and hearing the Soviet visitors. After a teacher, a choral synagogue director, and the rector of a medical institute toured Owensboro Kentucky for three days in April 1988, an editor of the local paper reflected that: 'By realizing how little our community meets the visitors' preconceptions, we can come to understand how we also stereotype the Soviet Union.' A few days later, an editorial in the student newspaper of West Texas State University began by noting that it was 'all too easy to harbor hatred and fear towards the Soviet Union', America's 'arch-rival'. However, after talking with four Soviet visitors, including two journalists, the editor concluded that

once Americans and Soviets alike begin viewing each other not as enemy nations but rather as groups of people with diverse lifestyles – lifestyles that will never be the same – perhaps a greater understanding between the citizens of the two world-leading nations can be achieved.

The editor of a northern Texas newspaper was more emphatic. 'I expected to receive four hard-line Communists with chauvinistic views about the superiority of their system and the defects of ours,' reported Perry Flippin. 'That's not what I found.' Instead, the presence in Sherman, Texas, of four Soviet citizens – including an old professor from Georgia who acknowledged that the Soviet government had made 'many mistakes' –

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<sup>82</sup>"Soviets Tell their Views of America," *Hammond Times*, 2 December 1988; and "Soviet Visitors Encounter First Protesters," *Northwest Indiana Post-Tribune*, 5 December 1988.

<sup>83</sup>"Soviets give Nashoba Teens a Powerful Lesson in World Peace," *The Beacon* (Vermont), 16 June 1988; "Stow Embraces Soviet Citizens," *The Stow Villager* (Massachusetts), 24 June 1988; "Soviets Visit," *Laramie Daily Boomerang*, 16 January 1988; "Soviets visit Hardin to Meet People of 'Middle America,'" *Elizabethtown (Kentucky) News-Enterprise*, 18 January 1988; "Touring Soviet Activists Laud Peace – and Quiet – in Visit to Fredonia," *The Buffalo News*, 12 July 1988; and "Soviet Visitors Bring Hope for Better Relations," *The Lawrence Ledger* (New Jersey), 19 July 1988.

struck him as ‘irrefutable evidence that startling changes are occurring behind the Iron Curtain. And in Sherman’.<sup>84</sup>

Participants in the ‘Soviets, Meet Middle America!’ project believed that they were playing important roles in the broader process of changing American views of the Soviet Union. ‘The people of the Ojai Valley probably accomplished more in the past two weeks than President Reagan did on his recent visit to the Soviet Union,’ the editor of a southern California newspaper glowed in the aftermath of a grass-roots ‘mini-summit’ in his area in July 1988. Five months later, after giving three Soviet guests a tour of his newspaper, the editor of a Texas paper concluded: ‘As important as the presidential level summits are to the pursuit of world peace, we plain old folks can have some influence also.’<sup>85</sup>

While arch anti-communist Ronald Reagan’s stroll on Red Square with the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union made for eye-catching stories on American televisions and in American newsmagazines, direct personal encounters with Soviet citizens in American homes, schools, churches, and newsrooms made deeper and more lasting impressions. Many hosts had tears in their eyes as they said farewell to their new Soviet friends and some vowed to make return trips to the Soviet Union in order to maintain the friendships. As the news editor of a paper in northwestern Texas put it in a lead front-page story: ‘The lives of four Canyon families changed forever when they welcomed strangers into their homes.’ After sharing a pizza and a long Saturday night conversation with a Soviet journalist in October 1988, the editor of a paper on the central California coast recorded: ‘My heart went out to him as he shared with us his life in Moscow.’ Moved by both ‘the underlying sadness and sense of fear that goes with life in a totalitarian society’ and his visitor’s new, greater freedom of expression, the editor closed: ‘It was one of the most memorable evenings of my life.’<sup>86</sup>

Implicit in much of the coverage of the ‘Soviets, Meet Middle America’ visits was a sense that the breaking of stereotypes, the dismantling of emotional barriers, and the realisation of the shared humanity of Americans and Soviets entailed an ending of the Cold War. Some made the point explicitly. In July 1988, a northern California reporter wrote: ‘In [a] gesture symbolic of melting the Cold War, the city of Arcata extended a warm hand of friendship to three visiting Soviet citizens.’ A few days later, a journalist in Boulder, Colorado had breakfast at the Lick Skillet Café with a doctor from Moscow whose husband was directing a documentary critical of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. ‘The more Soviets and Americans learn about each other,’ the reporter then observed, ‘the harder it will be for two countries with mutual interests in preserving the world to convince its people that the other guys are evil.’ The headline for his column read: ‘From Cold War to Lick Skillet.’<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup>Andrea Cook, “Peace-Making Project a Success,” *Wyoming State Tribune*, 26 January 1988; “Visit Reminds us of Interdependence,” *Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer*, 9 April 1988; “U.S.S.R.-U.S. Relations Helped by Dialogues,” *The Prairie*, 13 April 1988; and Pery Flippin, “Soviets Find the Summit,” *Sherman Democrat*, 23 October 1988. Sharon Tennison, founder of CUUI, had been raised in Owensboro.

<sup>85</sup>Verne Peyser, “Peace Initiative Promoters Deserve Tip of the Hat,” *Ojai Valley News*, 13 July 1988; and Glenn Dromgoole, “Getting to Know You,” *Abilene Reporter-News*, 1 December 1988.

<sup>86</sup>Ed Sterling, “Hosts Reflect on Soviets,” *The Canyon News*, 17 April 1988; and “Along the King’s Highway,” *Atascadero News*, 12 October 1988.

<sup>87</sup>Lisa Ladd, “Mayor: ‘Arcata is a City of Hope, Peace,’” *The Union*, 5 July 1988; and Bill Scanlon, “From Cold War to Lick Skillet,” *Boulder Daily Camera*, 10 July 1988.

By that point in July 1988 only 4% of Americans still believed that the Soviet Union remained an ‘evil empire’ with which the United States should have no contact. Although citizen exchanges were not solely responsible for the shift in attitudes, they contributed significantly to the movement away from demonising the USSR and treating it as a pariah, which both reflected and encouraged changes by leaders of the two countries.<sup>88</sup>

## Reagan, Gorbachev, and citizen diplomacy

When Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev became the top leaders of their countries neither of them recognised how significant travel and exchanges between the US and the USSR could be for changing attitudes and images. However, eventually both of them came to realise that, in part because of their contacts with citizen activists and other intermediaries.

In December 1982, Ronald and Nancy Reagan’s daughter Patti, a supporter of the popular American anti-nuclear movement, invited activist Helen Caldicott to the White House. While the president found Caldicott a nice, caring person, he told her that his intelligence reports showed American anti-nuclear activists were dupes of the KGB. After failing to sway either Caldicott or Patti about his nuclear weapons build-up, Reagan recorded in his diary his fear that his daughter had ‘been taken over by that whole d – n gang’ in the peace movement.<sup>89</sup>

13 months later, at the start of a presidential election year, after witnessing the peak of popularity of the nuclear freeze movement and watching the powerful movie ‘The Day After’ about the effects of nuclear war on a Kansas community, Reagan made a televised address to the American people about his desire for better relations with the Soviet Union. In the most striking passage of the speech, the president urged Americans to imagine two Americans (Jim and Sally) meeting two Soviets (Ivan and Anya) and deciding not to debate the merits of their political systems but to take out photographs of their children and talk about their hopes for the future. Although Reagan coolly confided to his diary that the speech was intended ‘to reassure the eggheads & our European friends I don’t plan to blow up the world’, he soon became more keenly interested in meeting with Soviets himself, in part because of tutoring by art historian Suzanne Massie.

While Massie had been a critic of the Soviet regime and of détente, meetings with Soviet officials in the autumn of 1983 caused her to be so alarmed by the dangerous tensions between the two countries that – like many citizen diplomats – she resolved to do something to counter the mounting mutual demonisation. Beginning in January 1984, she repeatedly met with Reagan, humanised the Russians ‘so that he no longer viewed them as faceless communists’, and encouraged his support for more encounters between American and Soviet citizens.<sup>90</sup> Reagan endorsed that idea in a speech in June 1984. Then, in preparation for a summit with Gorbachev in 1985, he eagerly proposed a huge

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<sup>88</sup>“U.S.-Soviet Relations: A Shift From Confrontation to Cooperation,” National Survey No. 7, July 1988, Americans Talk Security Project, Robert Teeter Collection, Box 42, George H. W. Bush Library, College Station, Texas.

<sup>89</sup>Entry for 6 December 1982 in Douglas Brinkley, ed., *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 117; and Caldicott recollection in “The Cold War: Star Wars,” CNN documentary, 1998.

<sup>90</sup>Entry for 6 January 1984 in Brinkley, ed., *The Reagan Diaries*, 210; and Suzanne Massie, *Trust But Verify: Reagan, Russia and Me* (Rockland, Maine: Maine Authors Publishing, 2013), 16–9, 78.

expansion of student exchanges. After Gorbachev accepted ambitious US proposals at Geneva in November, the President's U.S.-Soviet Exchange Initiative supported numerous exchanges of students, professors, artists, athletes, and others.<sup>91</sup>

During the following years, when Reagan's approval ratings plunged because of the Iran-Contra scandal in the autumn of 1986, Reagan acquired an additional motive for meeting with the popular Gorbachev, including a summit at the White House in December 1987. Then in May 1988 Reagan travelled to Moscow. As he walked with Gorbachev in Red Square, a journalist asked the president whether he still considered the Soviet Union an evil empire and he said no, that was another time, another era. When the president spoke about the importance of human rights and democratic values at Moscow State University, students were touched by his warmth and humour, which contrasted so starkly with earlier Soviet propaganda depicting him as a maniacal ideologue and war-monger. As one of the students later recalled, 'the Cold War ended in that very room during Reagan's address.'<sup>92</sup> Thus, Reagan's impact resembled the effect of citizen diplomats in the preceding months and years.

In 1984, Alexander Yakovlev, who had become director of the prestigious Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) after serving as Ambassador to Canada, published a harshly anti-American and deeply pessimistic book about how the world was *On the Edge of an Abyss* because the American 'ruling clique' was propagating hysteria about a Soviet threat in order to justify a war for world supremacy. Although Yakovlev recognised that some Americans had reservations about US militarism, he believed that the Reagan administration's virulent 'chauvinism' was 'not evoking any notable moral protest by American public opinion' and that its maniacal anti-Soviet policy was therefore unconstrained.<sup>93</sup>

However, when Mikhail Gorbachev became the top Soviet leader in March 1985, Yakovlev advised him that there was an 'anti-war mood both in the Congress and outside of it'.<sup>94</sup> In the next two years, as Soviet officials noted a dramatic expansion of American citizen diplomacy, Gorbachev and Yakovlev gradually grew more optimistic about the influence of American opponents of the arms race and hard-line policies.<sup>95</sup> When Gorbachev first met Reagan in Geneva he also made time to receive a group of prominent women, including anti-nuclear activists from Peace Links and Representatives Patricia Schroeder and Bella Abzug, who had formed a coalition called 'Women for a Meaningful Summit'.<sup>96</sup> Subsequent meetings with members of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and American scientists persuaded Gorbachev to continue a moratorium on nuclear weapons tests and

<sup>91</sup> Jack Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 92–3, 98, 139, 175; and "When Diplomacy Begins at Home," *New York Times*, 28 May 1986.

<sup>92</sup> Svetlana Savranskaya quoted in Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Superpower Illusions: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray – and How to Return to Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 46.

<sup>93</sup> Alexander Yakovlev, *On the Edge of an Abyss: From Truman to Reagan. The Doctrines and Realities of the Nuclear Age* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985), 11–4, 394–9. First published in Russian as *Ot Trumena do Reigana* in 1984.

<sup>94</sup> "12 March 1985 memorandum for Gorbachev, "About Reagan," in Svetlana Savranskaya, "Alexander Yakovlev and the Roots of Soviet Reforms," National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 168 (posted 26 October 2005), 14 March 2020.

<sup>95</sup> Already in September 1985 the Soviet Peace Committee noted a significant increase in the number of foreign, and especially American, delegations to the USSR. Stenogramma zasedaniia Prezidiuma Sovetskogo Komiteta Zashchity Mira ot Sentiabria 1985g, f. 9539, op. 1, d. 2170, GARF.

<sup>96</sup> Alan H. Levy, *The Political Life of Bella Abzug, 1976–1988* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 225–6. Levy scornfully dismissed the idea that Abzug and the other women could have had any impact on Gorbachev.

convinced key Soviet advisers that anti-nuclear activists had significant influence in the United States.<sup>97</sup> Months after the Reykjavik summit of October 1986, when Yakovlev recommended that Gorbachev separate Soviet concerns about the US Strategic Defence Initiative from negotiations on intermediate range nuclear forces (INF), he cited a visit to Moscow by members of Congress and explained that the Soviet Union could protect itself 'from the worst' dangers by supporting forces in the US ruling class who opposed Reagan administration militarism.<sup>98</sup>

In contrast to Gorbachev's occasional frustration and anger at Reagan, his meetings with Americans helped to inspire and sustain his vision of transforming international relations not only through official diplomacy, but also by altering foreign images of the USSR and encouraging activism by educated people in foreign countries.<sup>99</sup> By December 1987, when Gorbachev came to Washington to sign an INF treaty, Georgy Arbatov, head of the Institute for US and Canada Studies (ISKRAN) began repeatedly telling Americans that the Soviet government had a secret weapon to 'deprive America of The Enemy'.<sup>100</sup> Although Soviet propagandists had only recently reduced their attacks on the United States, when Gorbachev met with American media executives he sharply criticised their stereotypical portrayals of the USSR.<sup>101</sup> He also affected attitudes by getting out of his limousine on a Washington street, shaking hands with Americans, and stoking the widespread 'Gorbymania'. Upon his return to Moscow Gorbachev reported to the Politburo that Americans' vast interest in the Washington summit and their enthusiasm over his presence showed that the 'image of the enemy' and the 'myth' of a Soviet military threat were dissolving.<sup>102</sup> In the following year Soviet officials closely followed the continuing erosion of American images of the enemy through the activity of many anti-war groups in America, including SANE/Freeze, Greenpeace, the American Friends Service Committee, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and the American Committee on East-West Accord.<sup>103</sup>

## Conclusion

As historians of the Cold War have long recognised, Gorbachev and Reagan played vital roles in the termination of the US-Soviet conflict. However, the top leaders were not solely responsible for the ending of enmity between their peoples. Before Gorbachev came to Washington in December 1987 American attitudes already had changed

<sup>97</sup>Evangelista, *Unarmed Forces*, 271–5.

<sup>98</sup>Memorandum to Gorbachev, "To the Analysis of the Fact of the Visit of Prominent American Political Leaders to the USSR," in Savranksaya, "Alexander Yakovlev and the Roots of Soviet Reforms." The undated memorandum was written 'almost half a year after Reykjavik'. Gorbachev met with US scientists and senators, including Alan Cranston, on 11 March 1987. *Otvechaia na vyzov vremeni. Vneshnaia politika perestroiki: dokumental'nye svidetelstva* (Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2010), 181–2.

<sup>99</sup>*The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev*, 28 August 1987; and M.S. Gorbachev, *On My Country and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 194–5.

<sup>100</sup>William Safire, "The Risks of Distrust," *New York Times*, 9 December 1987; see also Jean Davidson, "UCI Scientists Told Moscow's Aim Is to Deprive U.S. of Foe," *Los Angeles Times*, 12 December 1988.

<sup>101</sup>Warren H. Phillips, "Gorbachev Faults U.S. Media Coverage, Discloses Barbs in Talks with Reagan," *Wall Street Journal*, 10 December 1987.

<sup>102</sup>Louis Sell, *From Washington to Moscow: US-Soviet Relations and the Collapse of the USSR* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 233; and William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017), 411.

<sup>103</sup>Report from P.G. Bogdanov, deputy director of ISKRAN to G.A. Borovik, head of the Soviet Peace Committee, "Nekotorye momenty v ideino-politicheskikh pozitsiakh antivoennogo dvizheniia v SShA," 1988, Sovetskii komitet zashchity mira, F. 9539, Op. 1, d. 2213, GARF.

significantly: only 6% of those surveyed in September 1985 had positive thoughts about Russians, but by December 1987 a majority felt positively towards Soviet citizens.<sup>104</sup> The further warming of opinions over the next two years did not stem entirely from super-power summitry: barely half of Americans had heard of the INF treaty by December 1987 and after Gorbachev met President George H. W. Bush in Malta in December 1989, pollsters found that ‘the summit didn’t change people’s attitudes very much.’<sup>105</sup> Although it is impossible to determine precisely the relative impacts of developments inside the USSR, events in Central and Eastern Europe, statements by top leaders, and citizen exchanges, it was not simply Soviet policies that were ‘dissolving the image of an enemy’, as Georgy Arbatov claimed, and opinions in the United States did not change mainly because ‘Reagan could persuade the American people and the American Congress to appreciate the changes under way in the Soviet Union,’ as one historian concluded.<sup>106</sup>

As this article has shown, Soviet citizens who visited small towns and major cities across the United States from 1985 to 1989 and the American activists who organised their tours had major impacts on the attentive public’s attitudes towards the Soviet Union, particularly by dispelling negative stereotypes and highlighting possibilities for effective cooperation between the two nations. By focusing on three of the most important of the many exchange programmes, this study has demonstrated how devoting more attention to the neglected and underrated influence of citizen diplomacy is vital to enhance understanding of the multifaceted and multi-level processes that ended American-Soviet enmity. American and Soviet citizens were not merely spectators of the ending of the Cold War; they helped to make it happen in their own homes and communities.

## Disclosure statement

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## Notes on contributor

*David Scott Foglesong* is the author of *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”* (2007) and *America’s Secret War Against Bolshevism* (1995).

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<sup>104</sup>David Shipler, “The View from America,” *New York Times*, 10 November 1985; and “Americans, Soviets Are of a Mind,” Associated Press story in *Rutland Daily Herald* (Vermont), 7 December 1987.

<sup>105</sup>Richard Morin, “Americans View Soviets As Threat, Poll Shows,” *Washington Post*, 7 December 1987; and Michael McQueen, “Summit, Changes in East Bloc Leave Americans Hopeful but Skeptical About Soviets, Cold War,” *Wall Street Journal*, 6 December 1989.

<sup>106</sup>Terry Atlas, “Gorbachev Winning Greater Western Support,” Chicago Tribune article reprinted in *York Daily Record* (Pennsylvania), 29 November 1987; and Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 462.