



*Aaron Rhodes, Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Yuri Schmidt. © CTK*

### **Yuri Schmidt Received “Recognition Award” from the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights**

Russian lawyer Yuri Schmidt received the first “Recognition Award” of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, presented by IHF president Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Director Aaron Rhodes at the opening ceremony of the IHF General Assembly 2000 in Prague on 2 November 2000.

The “Recognition Award” was established by the International Helsinki Federation to allow the Federation’s network of national organizations throughout the OSCE region to honour an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the cause of human rights protection within the countries of the OSCE.

#### **Yuri Schmidt**

The St. Petersburg-based lawyer Yuri Schmidt (born 1937) grew up in Leningrad (St Petersburg) as the son of a political prisoner who spent 19 years in a Soviet Gulag.

In his 40 years as a practising lawyer, Yuri Schmidt has been associated with many prominent cases involving the defence of human rights. Most recently, he gained international attention for the successful legal defence of Alexander Nikitin, a former naval submarine officer charged with “treason”, in a whistleblowing case involving the safety of Russia’s nuclear submarine fleet. Schmidt conducted Nikitin’s defence from 1996 until the resolution of the case in his favour in October 2000. The lengthy Nikitin case evolved into a campaign for legal reform which achieved notable successes.

Among those whom Yuri Schmidt has also defended are Arkadij Manucharov, then leader of Nagorno-Karabakh (1988-89), Torez Kulumbekov, leader of South Ossetia (1991) and prominent journalist and human rights defender Abdumanov Pulatov in Uzbekistan (1992-3). He has also successfully defended Afghan refugees in Russia, and was chosen to represent the family of murdered State Duma deputy Galina Starovojtova, during the investigation into her death.

Yuri Schmidt has shown consistent commitment to human rights advocacy, setting up the Russian Committee of Advocates on Human Rights (of which he is still chairman) in 1991, and working closely with the Moscow Helsinki Group, as well as publishing articles on human rights and the law, campaigning for human rights to be included in school curricula and gaining international media attention for human rights issues throughout the former Soviet Union.

### **The Award**

The text of the award reads:

For courage, integrity and professionalism in the defence of human rights throughout a long career;

For leadership in the Soviet and Russian legal community that has moved the society toward human rights protections, justice and the rule of law;

For the development of legal strategies on behalf of human rights that have given the human rights movement inspiring victories; and

For his generous and profound character and penetrating intellect

YURI SCHMIDT

is given the first International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Recognition Award.

General Assembly Meeting, Prague, November 2-5, 2000

Ludmilla Alexeyeva  
President

Aaron Rhodes  
Executive Director