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ON A LIGHTER NOTE? SOVIET JEWISH HUMOR

compiled by

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American Jewish Committee

and

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Monterey Institute of Foreign Languages

PREFACE

The secret source of Humor itself is
not joy but sorrow. There is no humor in
heaven.

- Mark Twain

Few Americans realize how vital a role political humor plays as a commentary on society and an emotional outlet for people behind the Iron Curtain. Deprived of opportunities for self-expression through the ballot box, the press, assembly or cultural forms, political humor becomes a treasured, if private, means of conveying anger, frustration or criticism in an often hostile environment.

Soviet Jews, finding themselves unable to live as Jews or to leave the country in substantial numbers, long ago turned to humor to deflate the extraordinary pressures and tensions in their daily lives. In doing so, they have drawn on two long-standing traditions: the anecdotes, vignettes and stories of Jews in Russia since time immemorial, and the poignant black humor that is so much a feature of life in every communist country.

The jokes recounted here are part of a much larger collection we have amassed since beginning our collaborative work nearly a decade ago. They were selected to illustrate how Soviet Jews are responding through humor to their current plight.

Shortly after Abram left Kiev for a business trip to Eastern Europe, his friend back home received a telegram from Poland: GREETINGS FROM FREE WARSAW, ABRAM. A few days later a second telegram, this one from Czechoslovakia, arrived: GREETINGS FROM FREE PRAGUE, ABRAM. Several more days passed before a third telegram, from Hungary, came: GREETINGS FROM FREE BUDAPEST, ABRAM. Then followed a long period of silence before the friend in Kiev received a telegram from Israel: GREETINGS FROM JERUSALEM, FREE ABRAM.

* * *

Gorbachev received a present of very expensive material for a suit from a foreign leader. He went to all the best tailors in Moscow to have the suit made, but at each he met with the same response -- there simply wasn't enough material to make a two-piece suit. Finally, having exhausted all the tailors in Moscow, Gorbachev went to Odessa. Fortunately, he ran into Khaimovich, an old tailor, who agreed to make the suit. In a few days' time, Gorbachev returned to Khaimovich's shop and found that not only had a two-piece suit been prepared but also a vest and even a cap from the same material.

- "Comrade Khaimovich, how is it possible that you managed to make the suit, a vest and a cap from the material I gave you when all the tailors in Moscow insisted that there wasn't even enough material to make a two-piece suit?"

- "Comrade Gorbachev, it's only in Moscow that you're a big man. Here in Odessa you aren't so big!"

* * *

A Russian, a Ukrainian and a Jew were called to Communist Party headquarters.

- "Comrades, you are aware that you may soon be called to give up your lives for your beloved motherland and for the father of our country, Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev. Should this be so, do you have any last wishes?"

The Russian and Ukrainian remain silent.

- "I do," said the Jew. "Just a small wish. Couldn't I be left as an orphan instead?"

* * *

A meeting of personnel directors of the local offices and factories was called by the local Party committee in order to discuss the difference between a Zionist and a Jew. The Party spokesman began to inveigh against Zionism, Zionist infiltration in all walks of Soviet life, and Zionist aims internationally.

- "But, comrade, could you please explain how we personnel officers can distinguish between such a demonic Zionist as you have described and a simple, everyday Jew?"

- "It's really very simple, comrades. You surely have many Jews working in your offices and factories. There is no problem with them. They are all normal members of our Soviet society. But a Zionist can readily be identified as any Jew who comes to your personnel office looking for a job."

* * *

Three prison inmates began talking.

- "What are you here for?," asked one inmate of another.

- "They put me in for beating up some old Jew named Khaimovich."

- "And why are you here?," asked the second of the first.

- "For having defended some old Jew named Khaimovich in a fight."

- "And what were you arrested for?," the third inmate was asked.

- "For being Khaimovich."

* * *

Khaimovich is at Moscow's airport going through customs on his way to Israel.

- "You," barked the customs official to Khaimovich, "why are you taking this picture of Comrade Gorbachev with you if you are emigrating?"

- "Oh that. That's in case I get homesick for the Soviet Union. All I have to do is look at the picture and I'll be cured of the homesickness."

* * *

A class at the Soviet War College.

- "Professor, I have a question. How can we, 260 million people, ever rebuff an attack by almost one billion Chinese?"

- "Easy. Just look at how the three million Jews in Israel have handled 100 million Arabs."

- "Yes, you're absolutely right, but where are we going to find three million Jews to fight the Chinese for us?"

* * *

There was a knock at the door of Shapiro's apartment at 3 a.m. He put his head under the pillow and tried to ignore it, but the knocking persisted. Reluctantly, he put on his slippers and robe and went to the front door.

- "Who is it?," he asked.

- "The postman."

Shapiro opened the door and was promptly set on by five hulking KGB agents.

- "Tell us, Shapiro, what is the greatest country in the world?"

- "Our homeland, of course."

- "And what is the best political system yet invented?"

- "Communism."

- "And in what country do the workers enjoy real freedom?"

- "The Soviet Union."

- "Then tell us, Shapiro, why have you applied to emigrate to Israel?"

- "Because at least there the postman doesn't wake you up at 3 a.m."

* * *

The Kharkov District Party Committee wanted to deter Jews from gathering at the synagogue. On Rosh Hashannah, a notice was hung on the main door of the synagogue: "Closed due to holiday."

* * *

Soloman Isaakovich Abramovich was called to the factory office.

- "Abramovich, we must fire you."

- "But why? I'm not a Jew. I'm a Russian. Here, have a look at my passport."

- "That's just the point. If already we employ a Solomon Isaakovich Abramovich, at least he should be a Jew!"

* * *

The chairman of the regional committee on religious affairs was getting angrier and angrier. It seemed that none of the applicants for the vacant position of rabbi was well-suited for the job. After going through a big pile of applications and rejecting every one, he turned to his deputy and shouted:

- "Why must you keep giving me the applications of Jews?"

* * *

A new Soviet passport has been issued to reflect the fact that the final stage of communism has been reached and all the 150 nationalities in the USSR have been joyously blended into one nationality -- the Soviet people -- thus permitting the authorities to eliminate all references to nationality. The information indicated in the new passport is as follows:

Surname: _____

Name: _____

Patronymic: _____

Date of birth: _____

Nationality during period of socialist transition:
Jewish or non-Jewish (underline appropriate category)

* * *

- "What's your name, little boy?"

- "Abram."

- "So young and already a Jew!"

* * *

Question: Why are there no Jewish cosmonauts?

Answer: The Soviet authorities are afraid that they would never return.

* * *

Khaimovich applied to emigrate from the USSR. He was called to OVIR and notified that his application had been refused.

- "But why?," protested Khaimovich.

- "Because you are in possession of state secrets from your place of work," explained the OVIR official.

- "State secrets? You must be kidding. In my field, the Americans are at least 20 years ahead of us."

- "That's precisely the secret."

* * *

- "Soviet intellectual development is much more advanced than Israeli," said the director of Odessa OVIR to his wife. "For example, in Israel the debate about who is a Jew has been going on for years but in our office we can decide the question in less than 5 minutes."

* * *

Rabinovich was summoned to OVIR after submitting an application to emigrate.

- "Rabinovich, how could you possibly want to go to a country like Israel? Do you realize that the sun is so strong in the summer that you won't be able to stand it? And in the winter it does nothing but rain. The climate is just awful."

The lecture continued in the same manner for several more minutes during which Rabinovich did nothing but lean from one side to the other while muttering "yes," "no," "yes," "no,".....

- "Excuse me, Rabinovich, but can you please explain to me why you are acting in this strange manner?"

- "Sure," came the answer. "I was only trying to decide on the basis of what you were saying whether or not it would be worthwhile taking my umbrella with me."

* * *

Rabinovich was called to OVIR to discuss his application to emigrate to Israel.

- "Isn't everything good for you here, Rabinovich? Don't you have all that you need?," asked the OVIR official.

- "Well," began Rabinovich, "the fact of the matter is that I have two reasons for wanting to emigrate. The first is because of my neighbor who comes home stone-drunk every night and starts cursing the Jews. He always says that as soon as the communists are overthrown he and his Russian friends will go out and hang all the Jews."

- "But, Rabinovich, you know that we communists will never be overthrown."

- "And that," said Rabinovich, "is my second reason."

* * *

Khaim emigrated to Israel, but returned to Odessa after a few months. Then he re-emigrated to Israel, but was back in Odessa before too long. And then he re-re-emigrated to Israel, but returned to Odessa within a few weeks.

- "Khaim, why did you leave the USSR in the first place?," his friend Abram asked.

- "Because life here was just terrible."

- "But then why did you leave Israel? "

- "Because I didn't speak a word of Hebrew and found the weather too humid."

- "But then why do you insist on going back and forth between two countries in which you are unable to live?"

- "Because of the wonderful stop-over in Vienna!"

* * *

Abramovich was summoned to OVIR.

- "Why, Abramovich? Why do you want to leave us, to leave the land that nurtured you?"

Abramovich remained silent.

- "Don't you have a job?"

- "I do."

- "And don't you have a place to live and cheap rent?"

- "I do."

- "And free medical care?"

- "That, too."

- "And schooling for your children?"

- "Uh-huh."

- "Then why could you possibly want to leave, you dirty Jew?"

- "Now you've reminded me, comrade. That's the reason."

* * *

A Jewish wife in the Soviet Union is not a luxury but a means of international transport.

* * *

There are two groups of Jews in the Soviet Union: the brave.....those who leave the country, and the very brave.....those who don't!

* * *

The Russians have been claiming that the Jews are the lucky ones. After all, they have a country of their own to which they can emigrate, but to what country can the Russians emigrate?

* * *

Brezhnev and Kosygin met to discuss the Jewish question in the Soviet Union.

- "Kosygin, how many Jews do we have here?"

- "About 2 1/2 million, I think."

- "And if we opened the borders to let out the troublemakers among them, how many do you think would leave?"

- "Probably no less than five million!"

* * *

Khaimovich was called to the OVIR office.

- "Khaimovich, I want to know why you have decided to leave the country," asked the OVIR official.

- "No, no, you've got it all wrong. I don't want to leave; my wife does."

- "So divorce and let her emigrate by herself."

- "Yes, but...it's not quite that simple. It's not only my wife who wants to leave but also her mother."

- "What's the problem? Let those bloody Zionists go. We don't need them here, do we Khaimovich?"

- "Yes, well...but then there is also my wife's brother's family and then there are my wife's in-laws and their other children."

- "So, they'll go and you and I will remain to build communism."

- "But there's a problem."

- "What?"

- "They can't leave without me. I'm the only Jew among them."

* * *

- "Khaim, what would you do if the borders were opened tomorrow?"

- "I'd jump into the nearest tree."

- "But why?"

- "So as not to be run over by the stampede."

* * *

A delegation of American industrialists visiting the USSR asked to see a factory. The Soviet hosts selected a suitable factory and arranged with the factory manager for the committee to visit the next week. The factory manager set about getting everything in perfect order, but, suddenly, to his horror, he realized that he had not a single Jewish employee in the plant. How would he respond if the Americans asked to meet a Jew? After all, the Americans were always going on about the Jews in Russia and how they are being discriminated against. So the manager hurriedly called a handful of employees into his office and told them that they would be issued with new passports for the next couple of weeks wherein would be written "Jewish" as their nationality. This way, even though none of the employees looked particularly Jewish, they could all show their passports to any of the Americans who might question whether these Soviets were, in fact, Jews. The delegation came and inspected the factory, and there were no incidents. A week later, the manager summoned the "Jewish" employees to his office to give them back their old passports, but none of the employees could be found. He called his assistant.

- "Where are they?"
- "Uh, uh . . .," hesitated the assistant.
- "Out with it!"
- "They've all emigrated to Israel."

* * *

Khaimovich had a parrot. One day while Khaimovich was at work the neighbors heard the parrot saying: "We are fed up with this socialist paradise. We want to go to Israel....." The neighbors promptly called the KGB. Several agents came over and waited for Khaimovich to return home from work. When he finally arrived, the agents warned him that if the parrot continued to say such anti-Soviet things Khaimovich would be in great trouble and so, too, would the parrot.

But Khaimovich was a wise man and decided to put the parrot in the refrigerator overnight. The next morning, the KGB agents returned and demanded to see the parrot. When Khaimovich opened the refrigerator door, the parrot, without a moment's hesitation, began to shout: "Down with Zionism. Up with Angela Davis. Down with Zionism. Up with Angela Davis....." The KGB agents were satisfied and left. Khaimovich turned to his parrot and said:

- "I'm very glad to see that one night in the 'fridge made you realize how things would have been for us in Siberia."

* * *

Returning from a trip to the Soviet Union, American communist Goldberg was summoned to the headquarters of the U.S. Communist Party.

- "Comrade Goldberg, did you have the chance to meet any real, unshakable Marxists during your three-month official tour of the Soviet Union?"

- "Only one."

- "And who was that?"

- "Kogan, a tourist from New York."

* * *

Question: Do you know Khaim, the fellow who lives across from the prison?

Answer: Yes, but now he lives across from his house.

* * *

- "My Khaim is such an anecdote teller," boasted Sarah. "A few years ago, he was sentenced to three years for just one anecdote. And last night he told an anecdote that was worth at least eight years!"

* * *

Store director Rozenblit was arrested and charged with embezzlement of state funds. After being found guilty of the charge, he was permitted to send a telegram to his wife in the Crimea. Afraid to further incur the wrath of the authorities, he cautiously composed the following text: SOVIET JUSTICE HAS ONCE AGAIN TRIUMPHED. The next day, he received a reply from his wife: FILE AN APPEAL IMMEDIATELY.

* * *

A competition of hammer throwers was held. All the best Soviet athletes participated, but the competition was won by Khaimovich, an old and scrawny fellow.

- "Khaimovich, how could you possibly have thrown the hammer far enough to win the competition?" asked a journalist.

- "If you gave me a sickle," replied Khaimovich, "I'd throw it even farther."

* * *

Abram telephoned the KGB.

- "Hello. Is that the KGB there? I wonder whether by any chance a parrot has come to your office."

- "No."

- "If he should come, I just want to let you know in advance that I don't share his political views."

* * *

Question: What is the longest street in Odessa?

Answer: Bebelya.

Question: Why?

Answer: Because Abramovich went down it five year ago to KGB headquarters and still hasn't returned.

* * *

Question: What's the definition of a Soviet string quartet?

Answer: A Soviet symphony orchestra just returned from a tour of the West.

* * *

- "Shapiro, we know you have a brother abroad," said the KGB official.

- "I do not."

- "Don't lie to us, Shapiro, We even have these letters from him addressed to you and postmarked Jerusalem."

- "Ah, but you see, it's not he who is abroad, it is I!"

* * *

To show to the world the true equalitarian spirit of the Soviet Union, an orchestra of representatives of various nationalities was organized. Each member was then introduced to the foreign press corps in Moscow by the conductor, Ivanov.

- "This is Fyodorov the Russian," he began "And this is Murzhenko the Ukrainian, Saroyan the Armenian, and Chikvili the Georgian. And here is Rabinovich the violinist."

* * *

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Additional copies of this publication can be obtained from:

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New York, NY 10022

THE ANTI-ZIONIST CAMPAIGN IN THE USSR
(ACCORDING TO THE MATERIALS OF THE SOVIET PRESS)

March 1986

S. J. S. J.

Anti-Zionist Committee

The Committee issued a press release, "To Put an End to Israeli Terror on Palestinian Lands" ("Pravda", 30 March 1986), to mark the "Land Day" marked by Palestinians on 30 March. The statement was an attack on Israeli policy in the Arab territories and, in particular, against its settlement policy. A number of Zionist organizations were mentioned in this connection and, among them, the World Zionist Organization. The main conclusion of the statement was: Israel will have to bear responsibility for its crimes.

Zionist and Jewish Organizations

The magazine "Problemy Mira i Sotzializma" ("Problems of Peace and Socialism") is an organ of Communist and workers' parties published in Czechoslovakia in 40 languages. It focuses on theory and information. The March issue (No. 3) in 1986 carried an article by the representative of the Israel Communist Party, Ali Ashur, on the magazine, entitled "The Instrument of World Reaction" (subtitled "International Zionism: Organizations and Activity"). The purpose of the article was to show that Zionist organizations were behind terrorist acts and threats. Detailed references to various Zionist organizations are therefore made in this connection.

The magazine itself is directed at a very specific audience and is intended mainly for readers living outside the Soviet Union.

ISRAEL IN THE SOVIET PRESSFebruary 1986

The most significant characteristic feature of Soviet press coverage of Israel in February was the drastic reduction in the quantity of publications dealing with the subject in all Soviet mass media.

In addition to this quantitative change, the existing tendency of restricting the coverage to items dealing with specific events which took place in Israel and the Middle East, has continued and it has become even more pronounced than in the past. All this replaces the anti-Israel and anti-Zionist campaigns, to which we have become so used in seeing in the Soviet media in the past.

It is to be noted, though, that the decline in the scale of the press coverage and change in its form did not modify the wholly negative image of Israel, its leaders and their policies, usually presented by the Soviet media. Thus, there has been no change in the content of Soviet anti-Israel propaganda, at least, not the kind of change that can be detected on the pages of Soviet papers.

The main issues in the Soviet press coverage of Israel in February 1986 were as follows:

- a. Israel's involvement in Lebanon
- b. the hijacking of the Libyan airplane carrying terrorists
- c. the state of the Israeli economy.

To: The United Nations Organization!

On 10 November 1975 the UNO adopted a resolution describing Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination.

We, members of the Jewish nation, were expelled from our country. For 2 000 years we have been subjected to repressions, persecutions and pogroms for belonging to our people, for our belief in our Torah and our Lord. During all these centuries we remained a nation without a state and a people without rights and during all these centuries we carried in our hearts the desire to return to Zion, to go back to Israel. It is this very movement that is defined by the word "Zionism".

The UNO resolution evokes the most sinister pages in our history and, in particular, the history of the blood libels. Have not our Prophets, kings and leaders declared in our holy books the ideals of love, brotherhood and friendship among the nations?! These very ideals were included in the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, the Land of Zion.

The resolution in question contributed greatly to the fact that in the XX century Jews in some countries have been deprived of the basic right to repatriate, to have a national culture of their own and to remain Jews.

We hereby urge you - cancel this resolution!

Signatures: Burshtein, E.S., Ksido, S.V., Rokhlin, L.Yu., Shvartsburg, E.A.,
Gorodnitskii, V.A., Burshtein, A.E., Flsburg, S., Akhiezer, O.A.,
Sheinin, A.B., Dynin, A.R., Makushkin, M.N., Tsivin, M.L., Kliuzner, E.V.,
Babrina, G.M., Lifshits, A.M., Lifshits, B.V., Novikova, E.D., Deviatov, B.I.,
Astrakhan, P.M., Slobodov, A.A., Kleiman, M.I., Vainerman, B.A., Sal'man, M.F.,
Sigalov, L.I., Manusevich, S.G., Vilenchik, G.A., Demin, N., Paikin, P.Z.,
Klainman, A.L., Cherniavskaia, L.E., Tsivina, G.A., Pitov, /N.A. ?/, Frumkin, S.P.,
Kats, M.Sh., Averbukh, M.B. -- from Leningrad.

Zunshain, T.A. -- from Riga

March-April 1986

CAMPAIGN TO THE SUMMIT

"Our fight must go on . . . every Jew in the Soviet Union who wishes to leave must be given that right. Together we will do it."

Natan Scharansky, Jerusalem

CONTACT: Deborah/Jerry Strober
(212) 679-6122

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MEDIA BULLETIN II
November 19, 1987

QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED BY MEDIA CONCERNING THE MOBILIZATION

WHO IS ORGANIZING THE EVENT?

Dec. 6
Virtually every national and local Jewish organization is involved in this summit. A Summit Task Force is coordinating the planning. Member agencies include the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ), which organized the Summit Task Force; the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), United Jewish Appeal (UJA), National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC), Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ), Synagogue Council of America, and the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews. Elie Wiesel is Honorary Chairman. Morris B. Abram, Chairman of the NCSJ and Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, will serve as chairman of the December 6 event. Shoshana Cardin, of Baltimore, President of the CJF, and Robert Loup, of Denver, past National Chairman of the UJA, serve as co-chairs. Jacqueline K. Levine, of West Orange, New Jersey, immediate past-chair of NJCRAC, serves as Chair of the Washington Mobilization; and David Harris, Washington Representative of the American Jewish Committee, is the Mobilization coordinator.

WHEN AND WHERE WILL "FREEDOM SUNDAY" BE HELD?

"Freedom Sunday" will be held on Sunday, December 6, 1987 in Washington, D.C. on the eve of the third Summit meeting between President Ronald Reagan and Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. Tens of thousands of concerned citizens will gather at the Ellipse (Constitution Avenue between 15th and 17th St., N.W.) between 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and will begin a one mile march at 1:00 p.m. along Constitution Avenue. The march will culminate with a rally at the Mall area between 3rd and 4th Streets, N.W.

WHAT WILL THE RALLY ENTAIL?

Beginning at 2:00 p.m., celebrities, entertainers, prominent public officials and citizens, religious leaders and community activists will join former Prisoners of Conscience and refuseniks Natan Scharansky, Ida Nudel, Vladimir and Mariya Slepak, Yuli Edelshtein and others in expressing support for the Soviet Jewish community. The program will conclude at approximately 3:45 p.m.

- over -

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF "FREEDOM SUNDAY?" WHAT IS ITS GOAL?

Summit III will be an unusual opportunity to change history. We will assemble to protest to the Soviet leader that although the American people welcome the fact that the Jewish Prisoners of Zion were released, that emigration has begun to grow, and several long-term refuseniks have been granted permission to emigrate recently, hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews continue to be refused permission to emigrate and live freely as Jews in Israel, and be reunited with family. International agreements to which the U.S.S.R. is signatory and basic humanitarian principles should require the Kremlin to issue exit visas without undue hindrance or delay to all those who seek to leave. Moreover, the absence of adequate religious and cultural opportunities, including the right to teach and study Hebrew freely, is unacceptable.

WHY IS THE MOBILIZATION BEING HELD ON DECEMBER 6TH RATHER THAN DURING THE ACTUAL SUMMIT?

The Mobilization is pro-Soviet Jewry; it is not an act of protest against the Summit itself. We share the hope of all citizens for a reduction of global tensions, and we do not seek to interfere with the Summit deliberations. We believe we will make a powerful, dignified statement on December 6th, a statement that will receive world attention, and that will underscore the breadth and depth of American concern for the Soviet Jewry issue to the Soviet leader during his first visit to the U.S.

WHAT ARE THE MEDIA FACILITIES FOR THE MOBILIZATION?

We will operate a press center from Friday afternoon, December 4th, through Sunday evening, December 6th. This center will be adjacent to the Mall. There will be press check-in points at the Ellipse, which is the staging area, and at the Mall. Press materials will be available at both locations and at the press center. At the Mall, we will have a platform for TV and special seating for media. We plan to hold a press conference at the Capital Hilton Hotel, on Friday, December 4th at Noon, and a post-Mobilization press conference on Monday, December 7th at 11:00 a.m., also at the Capital Hilton.

ARE LOCAL MEDIA WELCOME?

By all means! We encourage you to invite local media to travel with you to Washington. They will be accommodated in the media section and will have full use of all facilities. Please advise us if you know of specific individuals coming to the Mobilization. For further information please refer media to Deborah/Jerry Strober (212) 679-6122.

CAN SUCH AN EVENT HELP SOVIET JEWS?

Yes! It represents a lifeline for them and insures that the issue remains in the public arena. Soviet Jewish activists have urged us to continue such public activities which have already contributed to the redemption of 275,000 Soviet Jews in the past 20 years.

HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU EXPECT TO ATTEND?

We are not estimating attendance. Current indications suggest that tens of thousands of Americans -- Jews and Christians, Blacks and Whites, public officials and private citizens -- will participate in the Mobilization. Obviously, factors such as weather conditions and short notice of the date make it impossible to estimate total attendance, but the prospect is for the largest demonstration ever organized by the Jewish community and held in Washington.

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3136815353 POM TDBN WEST BLOOMFIELD MI 40 10-080846A EST 9:47

PMS PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

WHITE HOUSE DC 20500

WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE PLACE THE PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWS AT THE VERY HIGHEST PRIORITY DURING YOUR ICELANDIC SUMMIT. PLEASE DON'T FORGET OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS - THE SOVIET JEWS. THEY ARE CLAMORING FOR FREEDOM. OUR PRAYERS GO WITH YOU.

JUDGE AND MRS GEORGE D KENT

2031 KLINGENSMITH

BLOOMFIELD HILLS MI 48013

0846 EST

Soviet Jewry

To: The Secretary General of the Central Committee of the
CPSU, M.S.Gorbachev

Dear Mikhail Sergeevich!

In the period from September 1971 to December 1972 I worked in an organization affiliated with the Ministry of Geology of the USSR. The organization engaged in registration and processing of seismographic data pertaining to underground nuclear explosions. This work was considered classified and I received an appropriate clearance. In my capacity as a mathematician, I took part in the development of algorithms and programs for the computer processing of this data. Thus, the moratorium declared by you and a number of the verification measures, such as, for example, the placement of an American seismological station in the Semipalatinsk region, directly affect me. It so happens that in 1979 I applied to the OVIR office with a request to be permitted to leave the USSR. I received a refusal based on "regime considerations". Moreover, following several other applications for emigration and several refusals, I was informed in 1983 that my case will not be considered at all anymore.

I assume that your new policy directed towards banning nuclear weapons will allow this question to be reconsidered. After all, the contents of my work constitute a component of the very verification measures which you have suggested. And these are the very components which are still considered classified after 13 years (since I left my job)!

If you wish to use these verification measures as an instrument for building up trust, they can hardly go on being considered classified material. The removal of the "secrecy" clause in my case can become one of the practical steps in building up trust towards your initiative and trust is such a delicate matter that even a fly - a case like mine - can spoil the whole ointment.

I urge you to issue instructions for my application to be reconsidered.

Moscow, 26 Bakinskikh
Komissarov 6, corp. 2, apt. 5.

Victor Fulmakht

AN OPEN LETTER

18 November 1986

To: The Delegates Attending the Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet
From: Mikhail Dinaburg
Aliona Khasina

Dear Sirs:

In 1973 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, thereby giving it recognition as law on the territory of the USSR. Ten years have passed since the Covenant came into force in 1976, but it is obvious that none of the Deputies to the USSR Supreme Soviet has shown any interest during all this time in how this Covenant is being implemented in practice. This is especially so in regard to Article 12, paragraph 2, which declares that every person has the right to leave any country, including his own.

For many years our parents have been trying to get permission to emigrate to Israel. But they have always been refused on the pseudo-legal pretext of "holding secrets of the state."

In 1985 we applied to emigrate to Israel separately from our parents. We presented to OVIR all the documents it demanded, even though its demand for a "vyzov" (invitation, affidavit) from relatives in Israel was not legal. This is because we were not asking for our case to be considered out of turn, as a family emigrating for the purpose of reunification. Nevertheless, we presented the "vyzov" demanded.

Eight months after submitting our applications to emigrate we were refused exit visas. Since OVIR had no legal grounds for this refusal, they told us that the reason for it was that our parents were remaining in the USSR.

Taking into consideration the fact that our parents themselves have been trying for many years to get permission to emigrate, such a reason for refusal as we were given can only be considered cynical harassment of us.

We, of course, complained about this illegal refusal, to the CPSU Central Committee, to the Ministry of the Interior, and to the Foreign Ministry. But all of our letters of complaint, in violation of the Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, were passed on to OVIR, the body we were complaining about. (Note: The Decree on the Order for

Examining Complaints forbids their being passed on to the instances which are being complained about.)

We were also refused an interview with the Deputy Minister of the Interior.

Thus, the CPSU Central Committee, the Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry of the Interior encourage the illegality being perpetrated by OVIR.

We wish to direct your attention to the fact that the illegal acts being perpetrated by OVIR, a body subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, entail severe consequences for many people, who are brought to despair of ever getting permission to emigrate legally, and try to leave the USSR illegally.

Evidence for this is the fact that many Soviet citizens do not return from abroad and families are broken up. And there are trials of people who tried to cross the border illegally, having despaired of getting permission to emigrate.

In all these cases, in the dock alongside those who broke the law should be those who brought them to such a state, i.e., the employees of OVIR.

So we ask, Why is the Supreme Soviet ignoring all these facts and thereby encouraging the criminal activity of the Ministry of the Interior, which pushes Soviet citizens into illegal acts?

We both grew up in families where our whole lives centered for many years around one goal - emigration to Israel. We studied in Soviet schools and institutes, while at home and among friends one thing was said, and in school and among our fellow-students another thing was said. We had to answer the questions in our lessons according to the textbook, with no regard at all for what we ourselves really thought.

We have had enough of this life, and we do not want our children to live through the same thing. We want our children to have a harmonious life, with one language - Hebrew, one Homeland - Israel, one education - Jewish, one ideology - Zionism. And this is our full right.

We do not intend to try to convince you that we miss our aunt in Tel Aviv very much. No, we want to leave the USSR for Israel because we do not want to live in the USSR. We hate Soviet illegality. We hate it the way an innocent prisoner hates his jailer. Indeed, this is the situation we find ourselves in right now.

We do not want to live in this "paradise." Let us go!

Aliona Khasina & Mikhail Dinaburg

18 November 1986



Soviet-American Relations

A Pre-Summit Push on Emigration

By DAVID K. SHIPLER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 9 — Rarely has there been as much harmony between an administration and an interest group as there is now between the Reagan Administration and the organizations campaigning on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

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As the Dec. 7 summit meeting between President Reagan and Mikhail S. Gorbachev approaches, few disagreements have emerged over how to pursue the effort to press the Soviet leadership to relax emigration restrictions. Secretary of State George P. Shultz's strategy of persistent diplomacy and minimal rhetoric has satisfied the mainstream of the movement, leading to remarkable accord between the lobbyist and the lobbied.

To underscore its concern on the rights issues, the Administration is sending Deputy Secretary of State John C. Whitehead to Moscow on Sunday for several days of talks on the subject. He is expected to press for changes in emigration laws and regulations and to present lists of individual cases of political prisoners, religious prisoners, divided families and others who have come to the State Department's attention.

"Basically," a senior Administration official said, "our objective in all this is to make this issue come up on the Politburo's radar screen."

An Extensive List

Although Jewish organizations form the major American constituency for pressure on the Russians, the Administration's human rights concerns reach far beyond the Jewish issue. The lists of cases include nine couples who have been split by the Soviet authorities' refusal to allow Soviet citizens to leave the country to join their American spouses, four Soviet-American couples whose marriages have been blocked by the authorities, 18 Americans who have not been allowed to leave the Soviet Union because they also have Soviet citizenship, 260 political prisoners and 240 religious prisoners. The prisoners include 101 in psychiatric hospitals, a State Department official said.

Two of the religious prisoners are Alfonas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevicius, Roman Catholic priests from Lithuania who were arrested in 1983 for belonging to a dissident group, the Catholic Committee to Protect the Rights of Believers. One of the political prisoners is Petro Ruban, a Ukrainian artist arrested after carving a wooden replica of the Statue of Liberty as a gift to the United States on the Bicentennial in 1976. The State Department says he is

in Perm 36-1, a notorious special regimen labor camp for criminals considered particularly dangerous to the state.

But the most vigorous political activity is aimed at increasing the numbers of Jews allowed to emigrate, a cause that has drawn considerable support on Capitol Hill. Last month, for example, Sen. Timothy E. Wirth, Democrat of Colorado, teamed up with the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews to hold a 50th birthday party in absentia for Benjamin Charny, who suffers from cancer and heart disease and has been denied an exit visa.

'Major Mobilization' Planned

Jewish organizations are planning "a major mobilization for Soviet Jewry" in Washington on Dec. 6, the day before Mr. Gorbachev arrives. Unlike most big demonstrations in the capital, this one is conceived not as a protest against the Administra-

Groups on Soviet Jewry find a willing ally in the White House.

tion's approach but as a complement to it, one that may help President Reagan drive his point home to Mr. Gorbachev that freedom of emigration has widespread political support in the United States.

"The demonstration will be in support of this American policy," said Morris B. Abram, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, and of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "I have nothing but respect for the way they've been handling this. We are watchful, waiting and determined."

Both the Administration and Jewish organizations worry that after giving exit visas to most Jews who have previously been refused, the Soviet authorities intend to cut off emigration almost entirely. This has led American officials to adopt a strategy of pressing Moscow to relax three regulations.

One is the law's requirement that a Soviet citizen be eligible to emigrate only if he has a close relative living abroad — a parent, a spouse, a sibling or a child. A second is the broad ban on the emigration of those with "state secrets." And the third is the requirement that even adult children must



"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."

—Allen H. Neuharth
Chairman and Founder
Sept. 15, 1982

John C. Quinn
Editor

John Seigenthaler
Editorial Director

OPINION

Wakeup Dec. 6
yib

J. 10
Jan 7

DAVID A. HARRIS

Guest columnist

Peace, human rights cannot be separated

ATLANTA — The Dec. 7 summit may prove to be a historic step in reducing global tensions and promoting high-level dialogue between the superpowers. The anticipated signing of the first-ever nuclear arms reduction agreement has understandably been hailed as an important step toward nuclear containment.

It is important to point out, however, as the Soviet-U.S. announcement indicated, that the meeting will also address other compelling matters, including "human rights and humanitarian issues."

Why human rights? Because our government has rightfully insisted that human rights is not simply an internal matter, as the Kremlin contends, but a legitimate subject of international discussion. Civil and political liberties are enshrined in international agreements to which Moscow is signatory.

Moreover, our own country's uniqueness is rooted in its dedication to democracy, freedom, and the rights of the individual. As President Carter said in his farewell address to the nation in 1981: "America did not invent human rights. ... Human rights invented America."

If the Kremlin truly seeks fundamental improvement in its relations with the USA and an increase in mutual trust between the two countries, it can well demonstrate its sincerity by permitting Jews and others who seek to emigrate from the USSR to do so, and by according those who stay genuine religious and cultural freedom.

David A. Harris of the American Jewish Committee is coordinator of the National Summit Mobilization Task Force.

Until now, Gorbachev's strategy toward the 2 million Soviet Jews, despite a number of well-publicized gestures largely benefiting individuals, has involved no basic changes, even within the limited liberalization provided by *glasnost*.

Yes, there has been an increase in emigration to about 800 per month, but this must be compared to the 1979 figure of more than 4,000 per month. A number of well-known prisoners of conscience and refuseniks have been released, in a timing shrewdly staggered to maximize favorable publicity for the Kremlin. Such minimal steps, while surely welcome, must not deflect our attention from the tens of thousands of other Soviet Jews who continue to be prevented from leaving by unreasonable restrictions and an arbitrary and capricious bureaucracy.

These Jews seek to exercise a fundamental freedom that we take for granted — the right to choose our place of residence and to be masters of our own destiny. On Dec. 6, a day before the summit, a mass mobilization will take place in Washington. Jews and Christians, Democrats and Republicans, blacks and whites, public officials and private citizens will gather in the capital to remind the Soviet leader that, for Americans, peace and human rights are indivisible.

CAMPAIGN TO THE SUMMIT

dec. 6

*"Our fight must go on . . . every Jew in the Soviet Union who wishes to leave **must** be given that right. Together we will do it."*

Natan Scharansky, Jerusalem

SUMMIT ORGANIZATION MOVES AHEAD

Our preparations for Summit III are moving ahead. As we await news from Secretary of State Shultz, in Moscow, we are continuing to plan for a major Washington event at the end of November or in early December. We know it is difficult to plan without having a specific target date, but our goal is to mobilize on the Sunday before or during the summit.

Of great importance is the fact that the Task Force has created an operations committee consisting of professional staff from national agencies and local communities. We are pleased that David Harris, the Washington Representative of the American Jewish Committee, and former Director of NCSJ's Washington Office, will serve as the national coordinator.

Several specific assignments have already been assumed by different agencies, within this operations committee, while others are in the planning or negotiating stages.

1. The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council has the logistical responsibility for coordinating attendance from local communities. Participating will be other agencies, of course, such as the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews, with responsibility for the metro New York area, the Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal, and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry, to ensure the broadest possible participation and a massive presence in Washington.

The NJCRAC, with the CJF, will also work with CRC's to organize municipal authorities in a special effort prior to a Washington mobilization.

2. Working closely with local CRC's, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith will coordinate a special program with state officials, especially governors and state legislatures. In addition, the ADL's advertising committee is developing ads for national and local use.
3. The American Jewish Committee will integrate the involvement of Christian organizations, to stimulate interfaith support and create an interfaith presence in Washington.
4. The basic logistics for the demonstration, including inner city transportation, parking and permits, will be coordinated by Buddy Sisen, Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington. We will not, however, be able to book housing.
5. The work with the Congress and the Administration is the responsibility of the NCSJ's Washington office, together with the Washington reps of other national agencies.

Barbara Gaffin in the NCSJ Washington Office will serve as liaison to the operations committee, providing administrative support, and handling inquiries and materials.

-over-



6. The Coalition to Free Soviet Jews, drawing from its expertise in organizing the huge, annual Solidarity Sunday demonstration in New York, will be actively involved in program planning and promotion for the Washington event.
7. The PR sub-committee, chaired by Morton Yarmon, American Jewish Committee has begun its work; Jerry Strober, NCSJ's PR Director serves as secretary.

We are already creating flyers for premobilization distribution, as well as buttons to be available in Washington. The PR committee is working on information kits, sample editorials, interpretive memorandums for the media, etc. As soon as these are available they will be sent out.

8. The Task Force will continue to be responsible for developing the basic policy concerning the mobilization. We are also seeking outside production staff to work with the appropriate volunteers and professional staff to carry out the program for the day.

If you have questions, contact David Harris, c/o SUMMIT TASK FORCE, 2027 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 Tel: (202)265-8114. While periodic updates will be sent, don't overlook proposals in earlier communiques from the Summit Task Force, the NJCRAC, the Coalition, etc! We will also share ideas and program initiatives from any national and local agency helping with summit preparations. These are important tools for making the mobilization a success.

The arrival in Israel of Ida Nudel, and the permission given to the Slepaks, shows that we can make the difference. But, only if we focus on our goal.

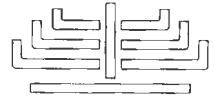
We must all devote time and energy in promoting attendance at a Washington mobilization, whenever it takes place. While it could be on Sunday, November 22, as has been proposed, there is no certainty.

If we cooperate and work together there will be a turnout that is massive and impressive. We cannot lose the historic opportunity to press for the resolution of those outstanding issues which concern the survival and rescue of 1/6 of world Jewry.

Summit/RK

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M. Green
(#41)



Atlanta Jewish Federation

May 4, 1987 ^{1753 Peachtree Road, Northeast/Atlanta, Georgia 30309/404-873-1661}

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Reagan:

Attached you will find petitions signed by Atlantans concerned with the fate of Jews in the Soviet Union.

These signatures were collected at a monthly ceremony conducted on behalf of Soviet Jewry. The session consisted of lighting a candle for refuseniks, signing petitions and writing letters to Soviet officials connected with this issue. The focus of the ceremony was calling our "adopted" refusenik. (Each Jewish organization in Atlanta is paired with a refusenik in the Soviet Union.) The telephone connection reinforced our feelings of intimate association and identification with our brethren in the Soviet Union.

In addition to the ceremonies, the community is conducting a fast in solidarity with those that are holding protest fasts for their freedom.

Our struggle on behalf of Jews in the Soviet Union who are not only restricted in their ability to practice their religion and to educate their children to what it means to be a Jew, but are severely punished for such expressions, will continue until every Jew who so desires is set free.

We are proud to be citizens of a country that has made the issue of Soviet Jewry a factor in ongoing negotiations with the Soviet Union, and we urge you to continue to keep freedom for Soviet Jews in the forefront of your discussions with Soviet leaders.

Sincerely,

Jack Horowitz, Chairman
World Wide Jewish Affairs
ATLANTA JEWISH FEDERATION

PRESIDENT—Betty R. Jacobson/FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT—William E. Schatten/VICE PRESIDENTS—S. Perry Brickman, Herbert R. Elsas/TREASURER—Gilbert Bachman/ASSISTANT TREASURER—Martin Isenberg SECRETARY—Billie Feinman/ASSISTANT SECRETARIES—David N. Minkin, Martin M. Pollock/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR—David I. Sarnat

A PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

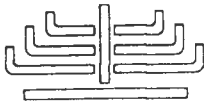
Dear Mr. President:

We thank you and your Administration for your continued efforts to rescue the Jews in the Soviet Union—the world's third largest Jewish community.

As you plan your forthcoming meetings with General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, we urge you to continue to insist that human rights remains a key issue of East-West relations.

You can count on our support as you press for Jewish emigration and the protection of cultural and religious rights in the Soviet Union.

| Name | Address | City/State | Telephone |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Ben Rabinowitz | 1404 Lively Ridge | ATLANTA | 321-3020 |
| Mr. C. Gettinger | 1281 Briardale Ln. | Atlanta | 378-5662 |
| Barbara P. Pines | 1570 Northhella Ct. | Atlanta | 325-7071 |
| Karl L. Swan | 4942 Cambridge Dr. | Dunwoody, GA | 391-0529 |
| Michelle Blarun | 4942 Cambridge Dr. | Dunwoody GA | 391 05 29 |
| Howard Sachs | 5975 Riverwood Dr | ATL GA | 252-0092 |
| Annie Schneider | 851 Victoria A. | Denton GA | 673-8504 |
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A PETITION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

President Ronald Reagan
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

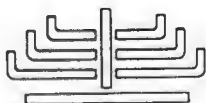
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| Name | Address | City/State | Telephone |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Judith Cohen | 310 Highland Ave NE | Atlanta, GA 30328 | 404-256-2666 |
| Lynnda Walker | 2655 Canaan Ridge Dr | Atlanta, GA 30345 | 404-491-6833 |
| Chloe Kaplan | 2460 Peachtree Ct #901 | Atlanta, GA 30305 | 404-231-1857 |
| Julia Roth | 1978 Vanishing Dr NE | Atl, Ga 30309 | 404-634-4812 |
| Bernice Levitzky | 808 County Park Dr | Decatur, Ga 30030 | 404/432-0644 |
| Andrew Craine | 5092 Norcross Circle | Marquette Ga 30067 | |
| Richard Bone | 1175 21st St NE-1 | Atlanta, Ga 30312 | |
| Jack Horowitz | 439 Sharon Pl | Atlanta, Ga 30221 | |
| Beth Sugarman | 760 Old Creek Ln | Atlanta, GA 30328 | |



Atlanta Jewish Federation

1753 Peachtree Road, Northeast / Atlanta, Georgia 30309 / 404-873-1661

April 15, 1987

p. 5A

Passover ceremony will focus on Soviet Jewry

Northsider Jack Horwitz, chairman of the Soviet Jewry and Worldwide Jewish Affairs Committees, will be officiating Passover ceremonies April 17 at the Atlanta Jewish Federation, 1753 Peachtree Road.

The ceremonies, to be conducted from noon to 12:45 p.m., will include the lighting of a candle, writing of letters and postcards, the signing of a petition to the President of the United States and the telephoning of a refusenik.

The event, the first of a series of monthly ceremonies to actively support freedom for Soviet Jewry, is free and open to the public.

Over 100 refuseniks are linked with community groups ranging from South Gwinnett High School and the National Conference of Christians and Jews to the American Jewish Community.

The federation is concerned about the plight of Alexsey Magarik,

cellist and "underground" Hebrew teacher currently serving a three-year sentence on drug possession charges.

It is illegal to teach Hebrew in the USSR.

Magarik will be called during the ceremonies.

As of Feb. 19, the federation received word Magarik's case was being reviewed. The federation is in

constant contact with his wife, Natasha Ratner, who reported on March 19 that Magarik has served 15 days in a punishment cell.

No further word has been received as to Magarik's case review. His father and sister live in Israel.

The Soviet Union is home to the world's third largest Jewish population. Soviet Jews are persecuted and denied their right to free expression of religion.



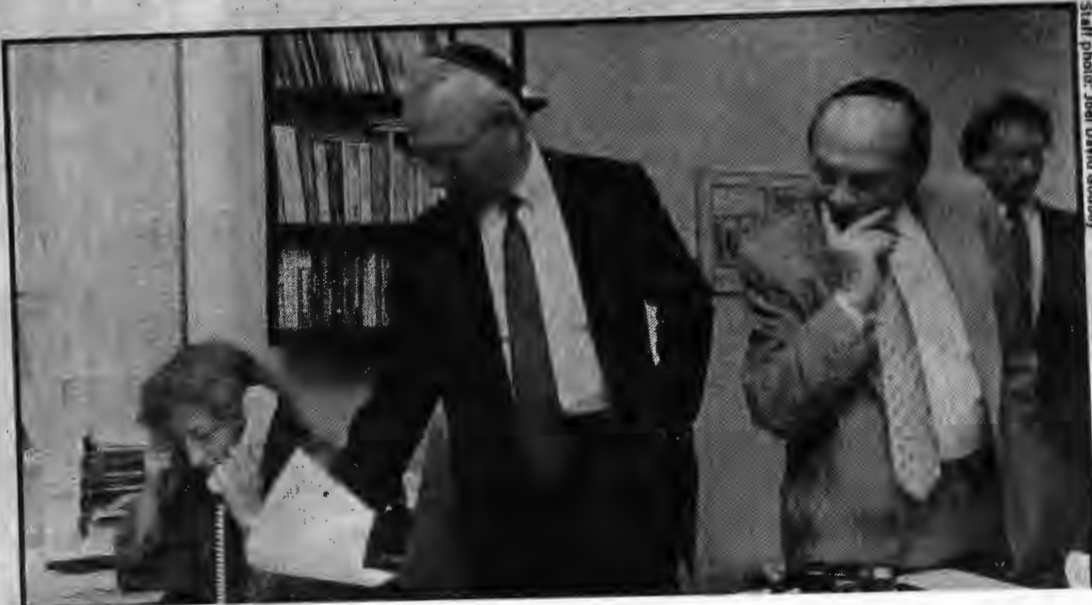
BJT 4/24/87

'Hello, Leningrad?'

Roza Burmenko and Cantor Isaac Goodfriend, members of the Atlanta Jewish Federation's Soviet Jewry Committee, place a call to Natasha Ratner, wife of jailed Soviet refusenik Alexsey Magarik. The phone call, placed last Friday, is the first of a series of monthly ceremonies to actively support freedom for Soviet Jewry. In addition, letters and post cards were sent to Soviet officials and a petition was sent to President Reagan encouraging American support for Soviet Jewry.

April 25, 1987 7A

CREATIVE LOAFING



Staff photo: Joel David Gopher

The Controversy Over Refugee Status of Soviet Jewish Emigres

David A. Harris

Soviet Jewry



David A. Harris is Deputy Director of the International Relations Department of the American Jewish Committee. On July 1, he will become AJC's Washington Representative.

This paper is one of a series of American Jewish Committee on publications on Soviet Jewry. A listing of the current titles appears on the inside back cover.

Against a backdrop of increasing Soviet Jewish emigration, Prime Minister Shamir has called for a U.S. reversal of the recognition of refugee status accorded Soviet Jews. At the same time, speculation about possible direct flights to Israel that would avoid Vienna and thus presumably prevent an opportunity for Soviet Jews to "drop out" en route, has been fueled by recent press reports.

Few issues in Jewish life arouse such emotion on all sides as the "drop-out" question. Until now, the prevailing American Jewish view has been to avoid tampering with a system that insures freedom of choice for every emigrating Soviet Jew. The Israeli contention is that the drop-out rate itself, reaching as high as 80-90% in some months, has contributed to the Soviet decision to reduce emigration in recent years, and denies Israel its most important resource, people. What most participants in the discussion do agree on is that, given the issue's complexity, there are not likely to be any easy solutions.

* * *

One of the most extraordinary chapters in modern Jewish history began unfolding in the mid-1960s. Soviet Jews, previously thought to have been destined for disappearance through a deliberate Soviet policy of spiritual genocide, began to awaken. Almost miraculously, the Kremlin's effort to force assimilation among the roughly two million Jews, by denying them even the limited access to religious and cultural self-expression afforded other religious and national groups in the USSR, had proved a failure.

Slowly, gradually, individuals and small groups of Soviet Jews began to demand the right to be reunited with their relatives and to return to the historic Jewish homeland, Israel. From Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and other outlying areas, and from the heartland cities -- Moscow and Leningrad -- Jews formulated appeals and petitions to Soviet and Western leaders, engaged in previously unheard of demonstrations, and contacted Western correspondents based in Moscow. Motivated by such diverse factors as deep-rooted Zionism, desire for reunification with family members dispersed as a result of the Second World War, religious fervor, pride in Israel's lightning victory in the Six-Day War, and the growth of Soviet anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, Jews claimed the right of repatriation to the Jewish State, consistent with their interpretation of previous Soviet accords on repatriation with such countries as Poland and West Germany. Further, they asserted that the right to leave any country, including one's own, was a right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international accords to which the USSR had given its assent.

When the gates were finally opened, in 1971, tens of thousands of Soviet Jews rushed to leave. Overcoming innumerable obstacles, including an antagonistic and unpredictable bureaucracy, denunciations by former

classmates and colleagues, loss of jobs, the fear of isolation and arrest, many Soviet Jews succeeded in departing for Israel. Others, victims of Soviet arbitrariness, were denied visas on grounds ranging from alleged possession of state secrets to absence of parental permission, regardless of the age of the applicant. And, as is well-known, some were imprisoned for their activities in support of Soviet Jews' leave.

Jewish activism in the USSR was directed almost exclusively at the desire to live in Israel. The petitions and letters, the study groups focused on Israel as the center piece of the movement. And, indeed, until the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, the tens of thousands of Soviet Jews who left the country by plane or train proceeded to Vienna, the Western transit point. Within a few days, with the help of the Jewish Agency for Israel, the operative Israeli institution dealing with arriving Soviet Jews in Vienna, they were on their way to Israel. Only a miniscule number announced in Vienna their desire to proceed to other countries, principally the U.S., largely for reasons of immediate family reunification. These cases were so few in number that the Jewish Agency hardly gave them a second thought. After all, there were not many such cases and they appeared to involve humanitarian considerations. To assist these migrants, the American Jewish community, with the support of the U.S. Government, stood ready.

Few could have foreseen that this trickle of "drop outs" would, within a very few years, become a flood. From 1974 to 1986, nearly 100,000 Soviet Jews arrived in Vienna and declared their intention to proceed to countries other than Israel. The reasons were many and varied: [a] fear of the turbulent Middle East situation in the wake of Israel's decisive but costly victory in 1973, which shattered the image of Israel's invincibility fostered by the 1967 war; [b] the limited number of truly committed Zionists among Soviet Jews, partly a result of forced assimilation and vicious anti-Israel propaganda, particularly after 1967; [c] critical letters from Soviet Jews in Israel to their friends and relatives in the USSR focusing on difficult resettlement experiences -- the legendary Israeli bureaucracy, declining economic opportunities, an ambivalence among Israelis about any new group of immigrants, placement in unappealing smaller towns and cities [these letters not surprisingly managed to pass the Soviet censor far more frequently than those praising Israel]; [d] exploitation by the Soviet authorities in the press and elsewhere of stories of difficult adjustment by Soviet Jews in Israel; [e] growing awareness of the U.S. option, previously unknown to most prospective Soviet Jewish emigrants; [f] the snowballing effect of ever increasing numbers proceeding to the U.S. and, to a lesser degree, to Canada, Australia and other Western countries; [g] stories of the tragic circumstances of those Soviet Jews who left Israel seeking to emigrate to other countries, but were unable to benefit from the financial assistance of American Jewish organizations and no longer recognized by the U.S. Government as refugees eligible for priority admission into the U.S.; [h] the realization that it is easier to first resettle in the U.S. and then, if desired, move to Israel than vice

versa; and [i] the growing number of mixed marriages among the emigrants.

By 1976 the increase in noshrim ("drop outs") had become the focus of major attention by the Israeli Government and a source of considerable friction between the Jewish State and large segments of American Jewry. International committees drawn from the interested parties were formed to seek answers to the challenges posed by the drop-out phenomenon. The Israeli and Anglo-Jewish newspapers were filled with op eds, letters to the editor and articles on the subject. Rarely had an issue in Jewish life creates such sharp controversy, such bitter polemics, such heated charges. After all, the issue was not simply a question of whether the Rabinovich family of Minsk or the Khaikin family of Leningrad chose to resettle in Israel or the U.S. It went well beyond. At stake were such issues as the very relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry; the validity of Zionism as a mass movement of Jews in the mid-20th century; the apparent clash of Zionist and democratic interests -- Israel's need for new immigrants vs. an individual's freedom of choice; and, perhaps, the very future of Israel, for the Soviet Jewish community of two million represented the greatest single hope for the desperately-needed, large-scale immigration Israel has required for its moral and physical well-being.

Essentially, the arguments broke down into two categories: political and philosophical. In the first, the debate revolved around whether it really mattered to the Kremlin where exiting Soviet Jews resettled. Those who contended it did argued that the high drop-out rate would lead the Soviets to curtail emigration altogether. The Soviets, according to this view, were not happy with any of their citizens seeking to leave, but could make accommodations for those who might be characterized as repatriates. At least in such cases, there could be justification offered to the Soviet citizenry who might otherwise demand for themselves the same right of emigration. After all, it is not just Soviet Jews who would leave the USSR if given the chance.

To illustrate the point, a joke circulated in Moscow shortly after the decennial census in 1979. Brezhnev called Kosygin into his office and asked how many Jews were listed in the census. "Nearly two million," responded the Soviet premier. "I have an idea," said Brezhnev. "Why don't we let all those who want to leave, emigrate. That will solve two problems at once. We'll get rid of all the troublemakers here, and we'll win some favorable publicity in the West. What do you think?" "Fine idea," replied Kosygin. "But how many of the two million do you think would actually leave?" asked Brezhnev. "Surely no less than five million!" answered Kosygin.

Thus, given that others surely want to emigrate -- Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Pentecostalists, and a score of other religious and national groups, not to speak of an unknown number of everyday citizens who desire improved political or economic conditions -- Soviet Jews, exiting the USSR with visas for Israel but choosing instead to resettle

in a third country, were no longer repatriates. If not, they became indistinguishable from other Soviet citizens. Guilty of deception, they could, by their avoidance of Israel, jeopardize the chances for those left behind who legitimately desired to live in the Jewish State.

Now, according to this view, Soviet Jews in the USSR do have a measure of choice: On January 1, 1987, the Soviets introduced new exit and entry regulations. Any person with immediate family abroad can apply to be reunited. Let Soviet Jews with parents, children, spouses or siblings in the U.S. apply this way rather than for an Israeli visa. Let them petition for the right to proceed to the U.S. in the same way that others had fought for the opportunity to go to Israel.

Opponents contend that the key question for the Kremlin's decision-makers is not the final destination of Soviet Jewish emigrants; rather, it is whether to let Jews, or anyone else, leave the country that represents the fundamental issue. From an ideological viewpoint, should anyone at all be quitting the "socialist paradise?" Or, for that matter, from an economic perspective should the country permit often valued and scarce professionals and workers to leave? In this view, once they leave, the Kremlin can be no happier if they proceed to Israel, where they strengthen a Soviet adversary and strain relations between Moscow and the anti-Israel Arab states, than to the U.S., where they are welcomed as refugees by the Soviet Union's most powerful foe. The central question, then, for the Kremlin is not the matter of repatriation, but rather the Soviet-American relationship. Look, for example, at the current rise in emigration during the first months of 1987. It can in no way be linked to the issue of destination since 75% of the emigrants are not proceeding to Israel and the Soviets continue to issue exit visas at a stepped-up pace. If Soviet Jewish emigration is one of the prices to be paid for improving ties, the Kremlin may not like it, and may, at times, balk, but it recognizes the linkage. Thus, the ebb and flow of Soviet Jewish emigration is not dependent on the final destination of the emigrant but rather on the state of superpower ties.

On a philosophical level, an equally intense debate has raged. Those who most vigorously oppose the high drop-out rate and seek remedies argue that in a world where a Jewish State exists to welcome Jews, there can be no discussion of Jewish refugees. Refugees are those who have fled persecution or the threat of persecution based on racial, religious, national, political and ethnic grounds, and seek a new home. But Soviet Jews are in a different category from, say, fleeing Poles or Cambodians. These Jews leave their native country with a visa stamped Israel as their destination, and Israel stands ready to welcome them. It is an offense to the State of Israel, contend many leading Israeli officials, to recognize an Israeli-visa holder as a refugee. Let Soviet Jews first come to Israel and, if they later decide to leave, they are free to do so, though they would obviously have to qualify for entry into another country. Israel is a democratic society and the hundreds of thousands of yordim (those who have left Israel) give sad testimony

to the right of Israelis to resettle in another country. In addition, by making it relatively easy for Soviet Jews to bypass Israel in favor of the United States, the American Jewish community is, in effect, competing with Israel, thereby unwittingly contributing to the weakening of the Jewish State. First, fewer Soviet Jews proceed to Israel, a country heavily dependent on immigration. Second, more American Jewish philanthropic dollars must be spent in the U.S. for resettlement costs rather than in Israel.

The opposing viewpoint maintains that it is unfair to accuse exiting Soviet Jews of deception if they leave the USSR with visas marked Israel but proceed elsewhere. How else could they have realistically left the country? Is not the overriding goal to bring out as many Jews as possible, regardless of their final destination? Does world Jewry have the ethical right to turn its back on fellow Jews in need simply because they have decided not to resettle in Israel, where, after all, no more than 30% of the world's Jews live? What would be the symbolism of the U.S., 42 years after the Holocaust, again closing its gates, even if only to some Jews? Is it fair of those American Jews who oppose the drop-outs to do so from the comfort and security of their Diaspora homes?

Today, more than ten years after the issues began to surface and the first of several committees was founded, the controversy continues. Each side remains adamant, hence the status quo prevails. The prevailing view in the American Jewish community, with some dissenting voices, has been to leave the present system alone, while seeking ways of making Israel more attractive to potential olim (immigrants).

One possible route that provides the chance for a compromise is direct flights from Moscow, possibly through Romania, Hungary or Poland, to Israel. For a brief period, until 1973, several thousand Soviet Jews, primarily from Moldavia, proceeded to Bucharest rather than Vienna and boarded planes for Israel. Romania is the only Warsaw Pact nation that not only did not sever diplomatic ties with the Jewish State after the 1967 Six-Day War, but continued to maintain a wide range of links, including flights between Bucharest and Tel Aviv on both El Al and Tarom, Romania's national airline.

Such flights, which would likely preclude the possibility of Soviet Jews' dropping out en route as they now do in Vienna, where the Austrian Government has always insisted on the right of every arriving refugee from the East to complete freedom of choice of destination, have been a longstanding Israeli goal. Absent diplomatic ties, and perhaps unwilling to jeopardize relations with Arab states, Moscow has hitherto been unwilling to introduce such flights. Yet, in late 1985, reports began to circulate of possible flights via Warsaw, which was in the midst of re-establishing low-level diplomatic links with Israel. Though nothing materialized, recent reports of the possibility of direct flights have surfaced as a result of visits to Moscow earlier this year by several Jewish leaders, though as of this writing no change has occurred.

Interestingly, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesmen have neither acknowledged nor disputed the reports, but have made clear that the initiative came not from Moscow but from Israel.

American Jewish organizations have, virtually without exception, voiced support for direct flights, recognizing that there would be few serious grounds on which to object. At the same time, if the Soviets were to fulfill the provisions of the recently-promulgated exit and entry regulations regarding family reunification, there might be a modicum of freedom of choice for Jews in the USSR: Those who desire to emigrate to Israel would apply for visas for Israel in the traditional fashion; others seeking to join first-degree relatives in, say, the United States would apply under the new regulations.

Still, some problems would remain. What about a third group, namely, those Soviet Jews who do not have first-degree relatives abroad yet want to leave for countries other than Israel? What if the Soviets fulfill only erratically the provisions of the new regulations and Soviet Jews determine that their chances for emigration are greater with an Israeli visa, even if they have no intention of resettling in the Jewish State? Would Soviet Jews -- even those with immediate relatives in the U.S. -- lose their refugee status the moment they landed in Israel? If not, could Israel accept the notion that some Jews landing on its territory might still be regarded as refugees were the American Jewish community and the U.S. Government to reach an accord on this sticky point? What would be the public relations impact if Soviet Jews desirous of living in the U.S. arrived in Israel and promptly held demonstrations demanding their right to emigrate elsewhere? Would some Soviet Jews choose to remain in the USSR rather than proceed to Israel if that were their only option? If so, should that be a matter of concern, or do we simply shrug our shoulders and scoff at such fools?

Notwithstanding these serious questions, none of which, in my view, lend themselves to easy answers, there is a clear majority American Jewish view that the twin options of direct flights to Israel and immediate family reunification from the USSR to other countries would provide the basis for a possible compromise to the vexing problem of the drop-out debate. But even so, both possibilities depend on Soviet assent, which has not yet been forthcoming.

* * *

The challenge to world Jewry is compelling. First, if as some assert, the issue of destination itself is a major contributing factor to Soviet decision-making on whether or not to permit Jewish emigration, then the matter is obviously immediately relevant. Second, an inability to reach an accommodation within the Jewish community will only increase the chance for the Kremlin to manipulate the emigration rate by playing off one Western Jewish faction against another. Third, the issue not only affects exiting Soviet Jews, potentially substantial as that group is, but also has surfaced with increasing frequency in the Israeli press and

from Israeli Government spokesmen in respect to emigrating Iranian and South African Jews. While the circumstances of these latter two groups are considerably different from those of Soviet Jews -- and no exit visa for Israel is involved -- the calls for increased Israeli efforts to attract olim have a familiar ring. The high drop-out rates in both groups, especially among South Africans, who had been expected to provide substantial numbers of newcomers to Israel, and calls for greater Israeli Government efforts to find the right package of incentives, spiritual and practical, suggest that the drop-out issue has implications that go well beyond Soviet Jewry. And fourth, in light of Prime Minister Shamir's recent public statements and appeal to the U.S. Government to reverse its recognition of *Soviet Jews as refugees eligible for priority entry into the U.S., it is incumbent on the American Jewish community to consider all aspects of the issue in the nearest future.

* It should be noted that federal financial assistance in resettlement would not be available to Soviet Jews were they to enter the U.S. as immigrants rather than refugees. Currently, such assistance is only available for resettlement of entrants to the U.S. who arrive as refugees.

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Papers on Soviet Jewry currently available from the American Jewish Committee's International Relations Department include:

- * Anti-Jewish Discrimination in Soviet Higher Education
- * A Basic Guide to Soviet Jewry
- * Crisis in Soviet Jewry: A Call to Involvement
- * Gorbachev and the Jews
- * The Jackson-Vanik Amendment: Questions and Answers
- * On a Lighter Note: Jewish Humor from the Soviet Union
- * Oral Histories of Recent Soviet Emigres in America (a catalog of the AJC's William E. Wiener Oral History Library)
- * Soviet Anti-Jewish Propaganda, 1979-1986
- * Soviet Jewry After Shcharansky: Winds of Change?
- * Soviet Jewry: Back to Square One?
- * Soviet Jews: An Overview
- * Soviet Jews: Beneficiaries of Improving Soviet-American Relations?
- * Soviet Jews: Nyet Again?
- * The USSR and Israel: A New Beginning?



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
 Institute of Human Relations
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May 1987

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To : Mr. M. Green
From : J. Pratt

I thought you might find
this of interest

with
the Compliments of the
Embassy of Israel
at Washington

10/11/77
J. Slepak

To: The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR
From: Vladimir Slepak

STATEMENT
REGARDING SECRECY RESTRICTIONS

My wife and I have been denied the right to leave for Israel for the last 17 years. According to what we have been told at the OVIR office, the reason for this was my "regime", i.e. my knowledge of classified information.

Until April 1969 I worked in the Moscow Television Research Institute, (affiliated with the Ministry of Radio Industry), where I served as head of a laboratory and had access to "closed" information.

18 years have passed since then, but I am still being told that I know some sort of secrets. I shall try to show here the absurdity of such statements.

There can be two aspects of the "secrecy" applied in my case: a) the technical aspect, i.e. information about equipment, its construction and the parameters involved;
b) information on the location of the closed sites which I visited.

The equipment which I helped to develop consisted of discrete elements (transistors, diodes, resistors, condensers, etc.). Electronics have progressed so much during this period that not only special equipment, but even home appliances are being constructed on the basis of solid-body integral schemes. Thus, all the parameters of the equipment have changed accordingly and, therefore, to speak of the classified nature of the equipment which I helped to develop would be equivalent to speaking of the classified nature of a stone axe.

Regarding the question of location: in view of the availability of modern space satellites, which can photograph (by optical, infrared and other beams) tiniest details on the

surface of the earth, as well as under its surface, the location of closed sites which I visited (one testing ground and one functioning site), is hardly a secret by now and is known to all the countries which have such satellites.

In addition, the testing ground where we tested our equipment was visited by Felix Kandel (who both visited it and worked there), who left for Israel after receiving official permission to do so in Moscow in 1977.

As far as the functioning site is concerned, Solomon Rozin, a former resident of Leningrad, worked there together with me. He also received official permission to leave and left for Israel in 1975 or 1976 (the exact date can be obtained in the Leningrad OVIR office).

In view of the above, it becomes clear that the secrecy restrictions have been used in my case for many years as merely an artificial pretext to prevent our family from leaving the Soviet Union.

25 March 1987
Moscow 121020,
Vesnina 8/10, Apt. 51.
Tel. 241-84-34.

Vladimir Slepak

INFORMATION FROM THE USSR

(TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH N. KHASINA

7 APRIL 1987)

1) RIGHT AFTER THE VISIT OF E. BRONFMAN AND M. ABRAM MANY REFUSALS WERE ISSUED ON THE GROUNDS OF REGIME CONSIDERATIONS (SECRECY) TO PERSONS WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD RECEIVED REFUSALS ON OTHER GROUNDS (FOR EXAMPLE, THE MOTHER OF VLADIMIR PRESTIN RECEIVED A REFUSAL ON ACCOUNT OF REGIME CONSIDERATIONS, AS DID THE SON-IN-LAW OF BERENSHTEIN).

THE REFUSENIKS IN MOSCOW ARE CONVINCED THAT THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE "REGIME" REFUSENIKS WERE NOT DISCUSSED DURING THE TALKS WITH BRONFMAN AND ABRAM. THEY ARE ALSO CONVINCED THAT THESE REFUSENIKS WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE "QUOTA" WHICH EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT.

BY DOING THIS BRONFMAN AND ABRAM CAUSED HARM WHICH, IF THIS IS UNDERSTOOD IN ISRAEL, COULD BE CORRECTED BY SHULTZ DURING HIS VISIT IN MOSCOW. BUT DOUBTS HAVE ARISEN ON THIS SCORE, THAT PERHAPS BRONFMAN'S POSITION HAS THE AGREEMENT OF ISRAEL.

IN MOSCOW THEY KNOW FOR SURE THAT BRONFMAN'S POSITION WAS COORDINATED WITH SHAMIR. THEY ALSO KNOW THAT THE JACKSON AMENDMENT WILL BE ANNULLED IN RETURN FOR A "QUOTA," FROM WHICH REFUSENIKS-ON-THE-GROUNDS-OF-SECRECY WILL BE EXCLUDED.

2) AN ARTICLE SIGNED BY A CERTAIN ANTONOV APPEARED IN THE NEWSPAPER SOVETSKAIA ROSSIJA ON 4 APRIL 1987. THIS NEWSPAPER IS THE ORGAN OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF THE RSFSR AND THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THE ARTICLE ASSERTS THAT ALL THE REFUSENIKS AND NON-REFUSENIKS WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE THE USSR, EXCEPT THOSE WHO WERE REFUSED ON THE GROUNDS OF REGIME CONSIDERATIONS. EVEN THOSE WHO ARE NO LONGER INVOLVED WITH SECRETS CANNOT BE ALLOWED OUT, BECAUSE ALL THOSE WHO LEAVE ARE INTERROGATED BY THE CIA. USING SPECIAL QUESTIONNAIRES THE CIA PUMPS INFORMATION OUT OF THEM, AND BY EMPLOYING THE MOSAIC METHOD IT PUTS TOGETHER A PICTURE OF THE SITUATION IN THE USSR, WHICH IS DANGEROUS FOR THE USSR.

IF SHARANSKY WAS A SPY AND SPIED "OPENLY," THEN THESE REFUSENIKS ARE FORCED TO DIVULGE SECRET INFORMATION. WHILE EACH ONE OF THEM INDIVIDUALLY MAY NOT HAVE ANY SECRETS, ALTOGETHER THEY DO REVEAL SECRET INFORMATION, FALLING INTO THE CLUTCHES OF THE CIA.

THIS IS PRECISELY WHY SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN FIGHT FOR THEM. THE SENATORS RECEIVE LISTS FROM THE CIA INDICATING THOSE PEOPLE HAVING ESPECIALLY VALUABLE INFORMATION. BUSINESSMEN WHO ASK FOR REFUSENIKS TO BE LET OUT ARE INVOLVED IN THIS SAME THING. THEY BASICALLY ASK FOR THOSE WHOM THE CIA NEEDS. COLLECTIVELY THESE PEOPLE MIGHT THREATEN THE SECURITY OF THE USSR, EVEN THOUGH THE PERIOD OF SECRECY HAS ENDED FOR SOME OF THEM.

REGARDING THE COMMISSION ON SECRECY: ITS STATUS HAS NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED AND IT IS NOT KNOWN WHO IS HEADING IT. IT MAY BE FICTITIOUS.

- END -