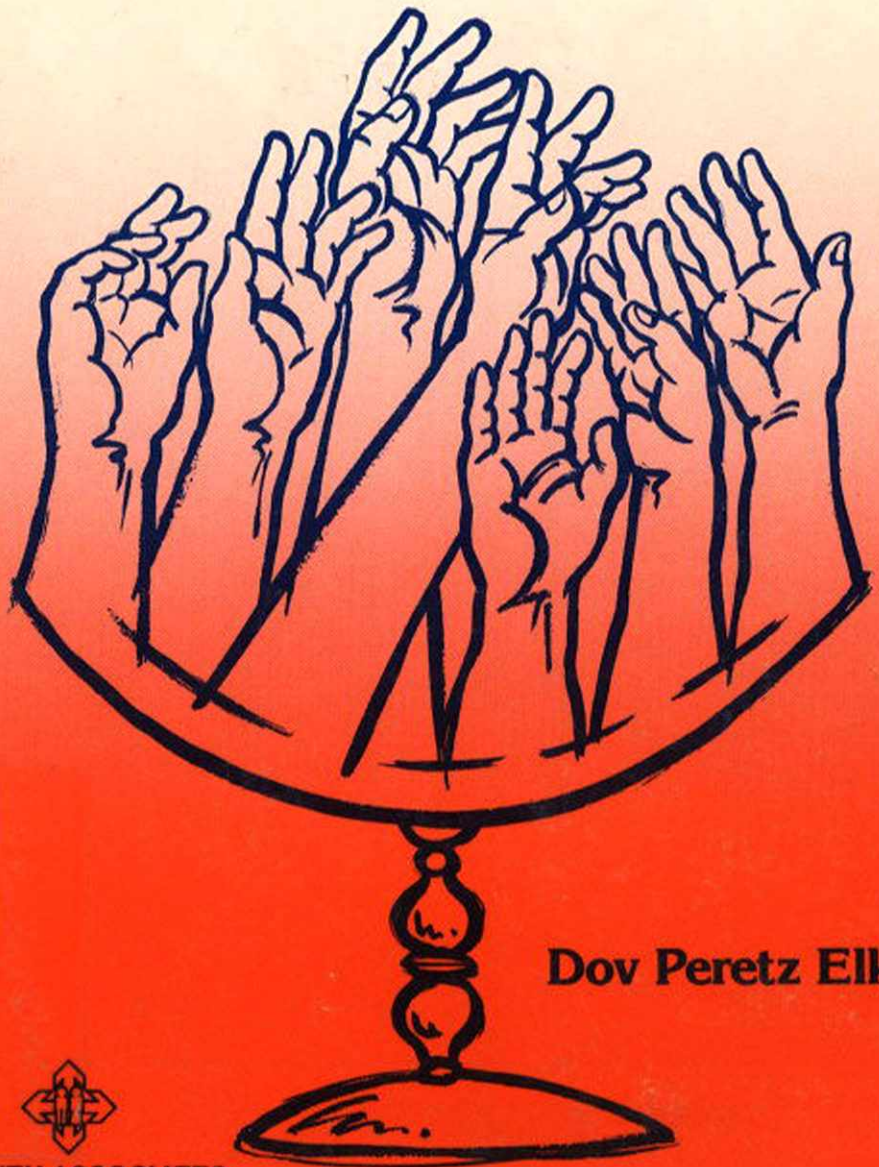
MY SEVENTY-TWO FRIENDS

Encounters with Refuseniks in the U.S.S.R.



Dov Peretz Elkins

GROWTH ASSOCIATES

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DOV PERETZ ELKINS

Preface by Joseph Smukler

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Dr. Dov Peretz Elkins is author and editor of sixteen books on theology, education, psychology and human development. He has lectured and facilitated training workshops in North America, Israel, the U.S.S.R., and Europe. Dr. Elkins is Senior Rabbi of The Park Synagogue, one of the largest Conservative synagogues in the world.

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To Maxine

Who shared this trip, and everything else.

APPRECIATION

I am deeply grateful to my friend Peter Rzepka, who encouraged me to publish this Diary of our trip to the U.S.S.R. He and many others who travelled with us helped this book see the light of day. These include:

Peter & Aliki Rzepka
Sally Ann Good
Robert & Carol Kichler
Charles & Ilana Ratner
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Alvin & Laura Siegal
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Victor & Joan Gelb
Gertrude Mann

Stephen Hoffman, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, and my good friends Bernard & Marjorie Loewenthal were also supportive of my efforts in this publication.

To all of them go my deepest gratitude for their friendship and encouragement.

REFUSAL

Yelena Keiss-Kuna

Refusal - is not an expectation
Refusal - is not a struggle
Refusal - is a state
Refusal - is your fate

Refusal is a concentration of will
It is an examination of ideas,
Refusal is life in bondage
In the power of others -

Refusal is a hymn of freedom
Which you sing -
Refusal is the best years
Which will never return...

Refusal - is bitter separation
And also - alas! loss
Refusal is a terrible torment
Believe me, sister, I know

Refusal is night without break
It is fire without a flame
Refusal - my planet
Refusal - my trap

(Translated by Jeanette Goldman)

I the Lord have called you in righteousness,
And have taken hold of your hand,
I created you, and appointed you
A Covenant People, a Light to the Nations -
To open the eyes of the blind,
To bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
And those who sit in darkness from confinement.

Isaiah 42:5-6

And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen the plight of
My people in Egypt, and have heeded their outcry....
I am mindful of their sufferings. I have come down to
rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of
that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with
milk and honey."

Exodus 3:7-8

God spoke to Moses, saying: "I have now heard the moaning of
the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage,
and I have remembered My covenant. Say thus to the people
of Israel: I am the Lord. I will free you from the labors of
the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem
you with an outstretched arm....And I will take you to be
My people, and I will be your God."

Exodus 6:2-7

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PREFACE

Joseph Smukler
former Vice-Chairman, National Conference on Soviet Jewry

Nearly twenty-five years have passed since I first met the author. He was my Rabbi. It was before Elie Wiesel brought back the cry of the Soviet Jews in his *Jews of Silence* and before the Ad Hoc Commission on the Rights of Soviet Jewry wrote "The future of Soviet Jewry is in grave jeopardy."

He was then, as he said in the title of one of his books, *So Young to Be a Rabbi*. Yet he was, I believe, the first rabbi that I had heard bring the Soviet Jewry issue to his congregation.

In the years that followed, though he left my congregation (Har Zion Temple, Philadelphia) in 1970, we remained in touch with each other. Our mutual interest and efforts in the cause of Soviet Jewry brought us together over the intervening years.

My Seventy-Two Friends captures a dramatic moment in the history of the Soviet Jewry movement, that moment in late 1988 which may mark its most crucial turning point. The visits to the Refuseniks which Rabbi Elkins records, may be the last of their kind. The almost twenty years of interaction between non-Soviet activists and the Refuseniks deserves the careful documentation which he accords it. Future historians may well conclude that such interaction played a crucial role in bringing about the present "new reality" to which the author refers in his Epilogue.

Rabbi Elkins wrote an earlier work entitled *God's Warriors*. He and the thousands who went to the Soviet Union over these last twenty years in support of Soviet Jews deserve that appelation.

PROLOGUE

I am a Russian Jew. My father's parents, Max and Sarah Elkins, came to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, around 1901, from Kamenets-Podolsk in the Ukraine. Their first two children, Kay and Hannah, were born in Russia, and their two sons, Edward (my father) and Max, were born in Pennsylvania in 1904 and 1906. (My grandmother was pregnant with her youngest son - Max - when her husband, a baker in Phoenixville, was shot and killed by a robber late one night while baking the next morning's goods - some time in 1906. Thus she named her child Max, after her late husband).

My mother's great-grandparents, Judah and Fanny Bakerman, came to Alliance, New Jersey, in 1881 from Minsk, to help found one of Baron de Rothschild's Zionist-oriented farming colonies.

Had the Elkins and Bakerman families decided, for whatever reason, not to make the pilgrimage to the Golden Land of America, I would no doubt be among the Refusenik families who were visited by the Cleveland Federation mission in October, 1988. When I visited Refuseniks in Leningrad and Moscow, October 7-13, I could not help but feel that there, but for the grace of God, go I.

Though I would have loved to have visited the places of my ancestral roots, it was not possible during this trip. Perhaps a future visit will permit me to trace some of the sites of my grandparents and great-grandparents and delve more deeply into my family background. Just being in Leningrad and Moscow, however, gave me a strong sense of returning (not "going home" - there is a big difference - the Ukraine is hardly a place a Jew would feel at home).

Besides the unspoken and perhaps unconscious desire to "return" to my ancestral roots, I have been wanting to visit the Soviet Union for some twenty-five years - ever since my interest in Soviet Jewry was awakened in the early 1960s by my late teacher, mentor and friend, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

During an international convention of the Rabbinical Assembly in about 1962, a group of Conservative rabbis (I was still a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary - from which I was ordained in 1964) decided to travel to Selma, Alabama, to march alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as a demonstration of solidarity with the movement

for black civil rights. Dr. Heschel was a strong supporter of human rights for all God's children, and became a close collaborator and personal friend of Dr. King. The two men worked together on many important international causes, such as promoting civil rights, protesting the War in Vietnam, and later, supporting Israel and Soviet Jewry.

At this convention, Rabbi Heschel presented to his colleagues an eloquent, passionate and moving plea not to forget the three million Jews languishing behind the Iron Curtain. If we had the compassion and sense of justice to pick up at a moment's notice and run to Selma, a very laudable act in Heschel's view, were we not also compassionate enough to be concerned about the fate of our brothers and sisters in the U.S.S.R.? In Heschel's stirring and unforgettable words:

> I do not want future generations to spit on our graves saying: "Here lies a community which, living in comfort and prosperity, kept silent while millions of their brothers were exposed to spiritual extermination."
>
> Over and above the noise of our banquets and testimonial dinners I hear the cry of Russian Jews: "The Jewish People has forsaken us, the Jewish People has forgotten us." Their dismay is mixed with disdain for those whose voice is loud but whose hearts are made of stone.

Heschel's plea became a rallying cry to mobilize American Jewry. His heartfelt appeal became implanted deeply in my heart, and I have never been able to forget it, day or night. Having roots in Russia myself deeply intensified my personal involvement even more so.

Thus, when I joined the rabbinate of Har Zion Temple in Philadelphia in 1966, I petitioned the Philadelphia Board of Rabbis to appoint a Soviet Jewry Committee, and I became its first chairperson. I spoke from the pulpit, in the community, and wrote prolifically about the issue of the plight of Soviet Jewry. Among my first articles were two published in the *American Zionist*. The March 1968 article, "Imposed Anonymity," was about the governmental attempt to obliterate the identity of Soviet Jews. In the same journal in October 1968, "We Have Written Off Soviet Jewry!" was an impassioned plea to raise the level of consciousness of American Jewry for our Soviet brothers and sisters.

I do not know what small part my writings may have played in

arousing American Jewry at the time, but the fact is that in the early 1970s a great increase in political activity took place, and all the major national Jewish organizations became much more involved in the Movement to save Soviet Jewry. I am particularly pleased that two people who were in regular attendance at my Shabbat sermons on Soviet Jewry in the late 1960s at Har Zion, Joseph and Constance Smukler, have become international leaders and eloquent spokespersons for the cause, which has become the major mission of their lives.

The reader may be interested, if for none other than historical reasons, to read the four chapters I published on Soviet Jewry in my 1973 book of essays, *A Tradition Reborn* (Cranbury, NJ: A.S. Barnes, pp. 226-258).

After Rabbi Heschel's speech at the Rabbinical Assembly convention, the novelist (and later Nobel Peace Prize winner) Elie Wiesel, a close friend of Dr. Heschel, made his first visit in 1966 and published his now-famous *The Jews of Silence*. I remember the deep impression Wiesel's book made on me and on the entire generation of the 1960s.

When I moved to Jacksonville, Florida, in July 1970, to occupy my first solo pulpit, it did not take long before my voice was raised, and I became the first chairperson of the Soviet Jewry Committee of the Jacksonville Jewish Community Council (later the Jewish Community Federation). The same thing happened in Rochester, New York, when I became spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in 1972. I soon became chairperson of the newly-appointed Soviet Jewry Committee of the Federation, and began a wide range of public activities to publicize the cause. Later, in Norfolk, Virginia, while Rabbi at Beth El Temple, I took the Confirmation Class of 1987 to the annual Soviet Jewry March down Fifth Avenue in New York City, and trumpeted the cause of the Movement there as I had in other cities.

For all the many years, twenty-five now, of my rabbinical career, and of my involvement in Soviet Jewry, I have wanted to make a personal pilgrimage to Russia to see first hand the plight of Soviet Jews. Many of my colleagues who were less involved than I, and who came much later to the Soviet Jewry Movement, had already gone and returned with dramatic stories of the painful oppression taking place there. For a number of reasons, each time I wanted to make the trip, circumstances arose which prevented me from doing so.

Finally, in Spring, 1988, Stephen Hoffman, Executive Director, and Charles Ratner, Campaign Chairperson, of the Jewish Community

Federation of Cleveland (where I serve as Senior Rabbi of The Park Synagogue, Anshe Emeth Beth Tefilo Congregation), approached me and my wife, Maxine, to be spiritual leaders of a Federation Mission to the Soviet Union and Israel, in conjunction with the Jubilee Anniversary of the United Jewish Appeal. Maxine had visited the U.S.S.R. once before in 1978, and has been extremely active in the Movement for more than a decade. She was chairperson of the Soviet Jewry Committee at Har Zion in Philadelphia, and a member of the Executive Board of the Soviet Jewry Council of Philadelphia. For Maxine this would be an opportunity to visit some of the same Refuseniks whom she had visited ten years before - still languishing in the Soviet "prison." Others of her friends had already left, and she has been in close touch with them since their arrival in Israel. One couple, Vladimir and Masha Slepak, have now, through Maxine, become dear friends of mine as well. For both of us it was a dream we had been waiting and praying for for many years - for me a first visit and for Maxine a return.

Despite a quarter-century of activity, speaking, preaching, writing, and community involvement, the personal experience of meeting and speaking with Refuseniks in their apartments, getting to know them and hearing their stories first hand, was almost beyond description. It was an experience, in a brief six days - three in Leningrad and three in Moscow - that shook all of us to the quick.

The Federation Mission consisted of forty-four people, in four different groups with four separate itineraries (Moscow-Leningrad, Leningrad-Moscow, Kiev-Moscow). Not one of us left the U.S.S.R. untouched by the experience, and all returned determined to make the cause a more important one, not only in our own lives, but also in the lives of the members of our synagogues, of the Jewish Community Federation leadership, and of the Jewish and non-Jewish community in Cleveland and beyond.

We want to raise the consciousness of our people and of all peoples about the plight of the remnants of Soviet Jewry. Though it is a cause that began seriously for me twenty-five years ago, I can never feel that I have done my full share until every Jew who wants to has left or can live a free Jewish religious and/or cultural life in his home community in the Soviet Union.

We also want to build a strong travel program in our community, and, perhaps, by using our community as a model (as we learned from the Philadelphia example - North America's leading activist community for

Soviet Jewry), promote travel to the U.S.S.R. among other North American Jewish communities.

To whatever extent this book can serve as a guide and goad to others, it will have amply served its purpose. Though many of the people we visited have already received permission to leave, or better yet, have already left - even in the short space of three months - our story may nevertheless serve as an example of what kind of experiences one can expect, how to prepare for such a visit, some things to do and not to do while there, and some ideas on what to do after returning.

This personal diary is offered to the public, thus, for a number of reasons: to heighten our awareness of the need to do more for Soviet Jewry; to promote greater and more informed travel programs on a very carefully coordinated and centrally orchestrated basis; and to help to intelligently establish priorities on the American Jewish, and world Jewish agenda, in aiding Soviet Jews.

I want to offer appreciation to a number of people who helped make the experience so meaningful and inspiring. First to Stephen Hoffman, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Federation, and to Charles Ratner, Campaign Chairman, who together conceived and organized this trip; to the other members of the Federation staff who accompanied our mission, Jim Lodge and Ed Cushman; and to Marvin and Carol Lader, and Mort and Carol Frankel, chairpersons of the Cleveland Mission. Margaret Singerman was very gracious in permitting me to utilize her stirring speech which she gave to the Women's Division upon her return. Cliff Savren, former chair of the Federation's Soviet Jewry Task Force, gave a great deal of his time in providing briefings to the group. Our dear friend, Enid Wurtman, now on the staff of the Israel Public Council for Soviet Jewry, was extremely helpful in providing names of Refuseniks to visit, and in arranging for the gathering of relatives in Jerusalem upon our arrival there. Since our return she has been in constant touch, letting us know on an almost day-to-day basis the latest news of who has received permission to leave.

My good friend and congregant, Peter Rzepka, who travelled with us, was extremely gracious in understanding the need to help this publication see the light of day, and in providing support, as well as enlisting the support of other generous members of our group to help him. Mr. Marvin Karp, President, and the Executive Committee of The Park Synagogue, were very understanding and supportive of my taking time from my busy congregational ministry to help lead this important

Mission. I am delighted that I was able to get to know the other Mission members in a very special way, including sixteen members of my own congregation. My devoted and efficient secretary, Lori Abramovitz, deserves special thanks for transcribing my tape-recorded diary, and re-drafting the manuscript as I edited it.

My son Jonathan, who had taken a similar trip two years ago, was very helpful in sharing experiences and insights from his visit, and in reading through the manuscript of my diary for suggestions in content and style. My son Hillel and daughter Shira suffered through many lunches and dinners during our winter vacation while I edited the transcript, and gave me their suggestions for improving the grammar and style. I am grateful to Joseph and Constance Smukler, Dr. David Ariel, Enid Wurtman, and Molly Berger, for reading portions of the manuscript and giving me the benefit of their knowledge and ability.

Most of all, my beloved wife Maxine encouraged me to make this trip from the minute I met her in September, 1984, and to make Soviet Jewry an even higher priority in our lives and in the life of our congregation and community. Her extensive knowledge of people, events and methods of increasing community activism for Soviet Jewry have been a constant source of wisdom, motivation and inspiration. Sharing the Mission with her made it incomparably more meaningful.

Finally, I am grateful to Almighty God for granting me the privilege of participating, in a small way, in one of Judaism's great mitzvot, *tikkun olam* - mending the world. On the airplane from Copenhagen to Tel Aviv I looked through my notebook as I was dictating portions of my diary, and noted that the number of Soviet Jews we visited came to seventy-one, the number of the members of the Sanhedrin, the ancient judicial and legislative body during the period of the Talmud. Perhaps in some symbolic way this group of Refuseniks was issuing a Sanhedrin-like judgment upon the oppressive regime holding my people in painful exile.

I also recollected the midrashic passage which notices a discrepancy in the Torah between the number of sixty-nine souls who went into Egyptian exile with patriarch Jacob, and the number given in the Book of Exodus (1:5), which is seventy. The ancient rabbis explained that the difference between sixty-nine and seventy in the two passages meant that God himself went into exile with His people, and must be counted among them.

I truly believe that God's presence hovers closely above His people in

Russian exile, and that His spirit is manifesting itself in the miraculous renewal of Jewish life which we witnessed there. I cannot honestly say, therefore, that I met only seventy-one souls while in the U.S.S.R. I must count God Himself who all through Jewish history has been with His people in their pain, in their oppression, and in their darkness.

I dedicate this diary to my seventy-two friends, including the Friend of all humanity who has been our Redeemer from the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh. My life is immeasurably enriched by knowing these friends. I salute them for their courage, their bravery, their heroism and their inspiring example of living active and committed Jewish lives under the most difficult and formidable circumstances. May God our Redeemer always be with them and with us as we all do our small part in mending the world.

THE DIARY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1988

THURSDAY

It is hard to believe. After all the studying, preparing, reading, hoping and dreaming, the day of our departure is here. Our four huge suitcases are fully packed with everything imaginable that will make this trip as successful as possible. We arrived at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, along with the other nine members of our sub-group, and began to get acquainted. We reviewed the rules, procedures and arrangements and embarked on Pan Am for Kennedy Airport.

It wasn't long before some minor mishaps occurred which we hoped would not auger ill for the balance of our experience. One of the group lost a passport, another had a raincoat stolen in the United Red Carpet Lounge. A third person was delayed in coming. Finally after all the glitches were smoothed over and worked out, the lost articles were found and we were prepared to take off. However, we soon discovered that Finnair is not much different than US Air, American, Piedmont or other airlines. Instead of leaving at 9:00 p.m., we took off after midnight. The extra time gave us the opportunity to discuss in greater detail some of the things we wanted to accomplish in the Soviet Union.

We reviewed the names, biographies, and other important information about each Refusenik; what to do, what not to do, what to say, what not to say. How to keep strictly within Soviet regulations and not get into any trouble with the authorities. After all, we are law abiding citizens, and this tour was to be a cultural adventure that we hoped would bring great satisfaction to many people. I reviewed the Cyrillic alphabet one last time, having been told that it is important in order to use the very beautiful and advanced subway systems in Leningrad and Moscow. If one cannot read the alphabet, one cannot know when one has arrived at the right stop. Many of the letters are the same, many are not. I studied my own name on my visa, compared the letters, and after I could read my own name fairly well, I had already added several letters to my ability to recognize Cyrillic.

My son Jonathan, who had made a similar trip eighteen months before, called this morning before departure. I remember speaking with him in a similar way before his trip. This time the tables were turned. Before it was I who was anxious, concerned, worried, afraid. This time it was he, although since the coming of Glasnost things have changed considerably, and I don't think there was any serious panic on the part of either of us. Jonathan wished us well and reminded us of some of the important things that came out of his experience. He told us that

we would enjoy the beauty of Leningrad, the uniqueness of Red Square, the awesome veneer of the Kremlin in Moscow, and mostly the extraordinary people we were likely to meet.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER, 7, 1988

FRIDAY

The flight to Helsinki was uneventful. Maxine and I managed to get in at least a few hours of sleep. When we arrived seven hours later, it was already one in the afternoon, because of the time difference. Due to our delay at Kennedy, instead of three hours in the Helsinki airport, we had only about forty-five minutes. We grabbed a quick bite to eat and boarded for Leningrad. The flight over the Gulf of Finland to Leningrad was a short forty-five minutes, and tension began to mount as soon as we reached Soviet air space.

A dramatically different feeling began to form in our hearts and minds. It was as if our plane had flown through some kind of invisible spiritual barrier, which took us into a different culture, civilization, Weltanschauung. We didn't know exactly what to expect, in spite of all our discussions, readings, and briefings. What would happen? Whom would we meet? What would occur? At this point, everything was yet to happen. Most of the next days' experiences were completely unknown, and unpredictable. When we got off the airplane in Leningrad we saw a city that was dark, dismal, cold, shabby and unpleasant. Several military guards stood at the bottom of the plane's ramp as we descended, which made us uneasy. We got on to a People Carrier that transported us to the Customs Office, and there about one hundred and fifty people began to go through the process through eight or ten different lines.

We picked what looked like the shortest line, but when someone in that line was examined very thoroughly and forced to open all of her luggage, while 90% of the others were passing through with little difficulty, we decided to change lines as inconspicuously as possible, to a longer line on the other side which might, we hoped, have more of a pressured rush to pass through. Unfortunately, the strategy did not work very well. Of all the one hundred and fifty people, we were the second ones asked to open all of our luggage, piece by piece.

Our anxiety level rose, mainly that some of the precious gifts we brought would be taken from us by customs officers. But I must say that we felt no personal danger. The customs agent mainly took out books and tapes, one by one, searching underneath coats, shirts, underwear, reaching into various pockets. Looking mainly for literature, for the written and the spoken word, he called over a higher official to examine the material piece by piece. It was very anxiety provoking now, a slow, tedious process. We were very much concerned that all the effort of bringing the materials we so laboriously acquired

would be for naught.

We explained very carefully that we are students and scholars, and that we bring alot to read. We told them that we had long flights, long delays between flights, expected to have some rest time in the hotel, and therefore prepared ourselves with a great deal of reading material.

"How long will you be in the Soviet Union?" "Four or five days", we answered. He motioned with his hands to a huge pile, expanding the size by pulling his hands apart, and saying "all this literature you will read in five days?" We answered by saying that we may travel to other places after we leave the country. We will also be in New York when we return, and spend some time there. The entire trip will be much longer than five days. He seemed very skeptical.

He asked me if the audio tapes were blank. I said "Yes, they were." They had no labels and we did have a tape recorder, so it was all perfectly understandable that we have a large number of tapes. He asked me to read some of the Hebrew contents of the books to make sure they were mine. I gladly complied, which easily convinced him. He then asked, "Do you have friends in the country to whom you want to bring gifts?" I said "No, of course not, I don't know anybody here, these are all my own." We were greatly relieved when we were finally able to re-pack our suitcases, including every one of the seventy-five books. One of our group, Gert Mann, later described our book collection as "enough to open a Moscow branch of Frank's Hebrew Book store." We took a deep breath, boarded the bus to Hotel Pribaltiskaya, and checked in.

Even though it was Friday night, and we would have to travel on Shabbat to see our first Refusenik family, we decided it would be worth a minor violation of Shabbat to be able to begin our task immediately. We stepped outside quietly and used the telephone to call Boris Kelman. We told him we were friends from the U.S. and that we would like to come over very soon for a visit. He very happily told us to please come. After dinner, settling in and unpacking our luggage, we found a cab and went over immediately .

Boris is an extraordinary human being. The connection between us was strong and immediate. He is an intellectual person with deep passion and commitment. We spoke on many different subjects, including the history of the Refusenik movement, the current needs, and where things are heading. Boris's feeling was that there is enormous assimilation in the Soviet Union and that the number of

Refuseniks is diminishing rapidly because of the Soviet strategy to give permission to emigrate to the leaders of the Movement. There are very few teachers left, very few students.

There are some twenty teachers in Leningrad, and some eighty Refusenik families, not a large number. Of course there are probably many more waiting to follow. Boris's point of view was fairly pessimistic, namely that it was anti-Semitism that was the main cause of people wanting to leave. *Pamyat*, a very strongly anti-Semitic organization, is most powerful in Leningrad, more so than in Moscow. They publish leaflets, arrange demonstrations, and organize counter demonstrations when there is a Jewish protest meeting. There is a great fear on the part of many Jews about the potential consequences of this *Pamyat* group. It frightens them and convinces many young people to leave.

It should be noted that Boris is not a teacher of Hebrew, as was indicated on the sheet we were given, but rather he is a teacher of Jewish history. He has a very deep understanding of our history and particularly the trends and the vicissitudes of the Soviet Jewry Movement. It is his feeling that the next stage requires a different approach.

Until now we have been making much noise about emigration. Now the need is for legalization of large cultural events within the U.S.S.R. We should press our legislators to request cultural exchanges. For example, let an Estonian or Ukrainian dance group come to the U.S., and let a major Israeli or Jewish cultural troupe appear publically in the U.S.S.R. This would give a great deal of legitimacy to Jewishness, and bring out some of the assimilated types. It would give an opportunity to make Jewish life visible and make it possible for all those who are hiding, or who are subconsciously self-hating, to come out of the woodwork and begin to have some kind of positive Jewish identity of their own.

Boris told us that there is a tremendous gap now that most of the teachers are gone, and the people are not motivated to want to learn. The few teachers that are left are poorly educated, and ill prepared for the major task that they have. But even more importantly, the people need some kind of injection of desire, which is not there. The gap between the small number of leaders and large numbers of people whose interest has not yet been awakened, is huge. Thus, says Boris, we need a major impetus such as large cultural events.

Furthermore, he suggested that another major strategy to be utilized by the American Jewish community is to have our Government push for legalization of the importation of educational materials. A list of acceptable books can be created which can be kept at all customs offices and points of embarkation, so that if a package is labeled, "Material approved by Soviet Dept. of Customs," that package will have no difficulty, and not be slowed down or examined. It should not be difficult to prepare such a list of the major popular works of fiction, history, theology, Hebrew language instruction and non-propaganda books, video tapes, audio tapes, and other such materials.

Boris impressed upon us the need to enlarge the base of involved people. There were some four thousand Jews who appeared at Simchat Torah services in Leningrad, the major Soviet Jewish holiday observance. But these are what he calls the "once-a-year Jews", the same as we in the States refer to "Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur Jews." They will not likely return to the synagogue, and have no identification unless something is promoted. It was quite a surprise to him that so many people did come on Simchat Torah, and he saw it as an indication that there is hope for further deepening of interest.

One of the sad things Boris reported was that while there was a fairly decent crowd of people in schul at the one large Choral Synagogue in Leningrad on the High Holy Days, the service was chanted by a very poor Hazzan, and there was very little to spiritually inspire the people that came. One wonderful gift American Jewry could provide would be to send a competent Hazzan for Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur 1989, to give those who come once a year a spiritually and esthetically pleasant experience, and to associate Jewish worship with something very positive.

Boris reported that there were many new faces in the crowd at Simchat Torah, which is another very hopeful sign. Three large posters were displayed trying to attract people back for more intensive programs during the year. One was to register for the Hebrew classes. They are sponsored by a public cooperative, which is not, interestingly enough, an underground organization, and not government, but a private enterprise group, run by a Refusenik.

Therefore they permit the teaching of the Hebrew language as long as it will be cost efficient, and it will make money for the cooperative. The Hebrew class sign gave the phone number of Mikhail Blank, the young cardiologist who is now the central registration person for all Hebrew teaching in Leningrad. The second sign gave the number of

the Israel-Russian Friendship Society at the home of Edward Markov. A kind of ZOA of the U.S.S.R. And the third sign was for those interested in Jewish music, at the homes of Gregory Dikker and Anna Dubrov. We later met Gregory's wife, Olga, and their beautiful little daughter, Katya, about ten years old, at the home of Anna Dubrov.

Boris does not believe there is a strong future, if any future at all, for Jews in Leningrad, or anywhere in the Soviet Union. The purpose, he feels, of stimulating Jewish culture would be mainly to stimulate emigration through the raising of Jewish awareness and consciousness. He sees the present moment as a very crucial, now-or-never kind of time. The slight lessening of restrictions has made it possible for certain minor concessions to be made culturally, such as the shipping in of books within the last six months (since March, 1988). Unless there develops some kind of cultural movement on a mass level, the only impetus for emigration would be anti-Semitism, particularly through *Pamyat* which is now so strong that some 20% of the emigration comes from Leningrad where the *Pamyat* is most pernicious.

Since there have been no mass Jewish cultural events in the last sixty years, it is amazing that the degree of Jewish identity that exists today has been established, and has been so successful. It has come about through such things as the establishment of the State of Israel, the presence of the Israeli Embassy and its diplomatic visitors until 1967, and the Six Day War.

What needs to happen, according to Boris, is for Jewish cultural associations, such as those established in Vilna, Tallin and the Baltic states, which are officially recognized, to be created in such cities as Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. The Lithuanian Jews always had more freedom than the Russian Jews. One reason is that the Lithuanians wanted the Jews on their side against the Russians.

One of the themes that we were to hear often during our visit, from Boris and from others, is that there is now a need for Jewish content materials in the Russian language. The exceptional scholars and teachers who are able to read English have educated themselves with English books brought by American visitors. However, the Russian Government has permitted many of these people to leave, and they are now in Israel. In order to reach the next level of people and the Soviet masses, it is necessary to begin a new phase of education which would involve the creation of study materials in Russian, and the shipping in from Israel of already existing Jewish content materials in the Russian language in large quantities. We must prepare a list of books of

Jewish history, culture, and language, to be approved by the Soviet Government. We must then lobby our ambassador in Washington to press to have this list be made official. Then, by merely writing on the parcel that these materials are "approved" by the Soviet Government, they will have less chance of being confiscated at the border, whether through the mail or in person.

There are two Jewish public libraries in Leningrad. One is in the home of Yitzchak Abramson, and the other in the home of Alex Tzver. There are two similar libraries in Moscow, one in the home of Uri Sokol, and the other in the home of Vladimir Moshinsky. However, there are no such libraries in Riga, Kishinev, Tallin or Ufa. Without such new efforts the fear is expressed by Boris that the only force for emigration will be *Pamyat*. In Leningrad, demonstrations, leaflets, meetings and counter Jewish demonstrations are common, and anti-Semitism is very strong. *Pamyat* has its own bodyguard system and is creating terror in the hearts of many Jews in the U.S.S.R., and causing them to think seriously about leaving.

I asked Boris to try to set up a teachers' seminar for me to lead in Leningrad on subjects of Jewish content. He indicated that it would be very difficult, since the regular teachers meeting is Thursday nights and we arrived on Friday, and would be leaving Sunday night. We would only be there for a two-and-a-half day period. However, he did contact Anna Dubrov and arranged for her to get a group together on Saturday night of some of the students in her adult classes. That evening would prove to be an extraordinarily exciting and inspiring one.

Anna is very close to Mikhail Blank, the cardiologist and head of the Hebrew movement since Lev Furman left for Israel. Unfortunately Blank was not available Saturday night for this meeting. We will try to meet him another time. He is a key figure and I am very anxious to make contact with him and leave him some materials, as well as get to know him, establish contact for some future exchange, and to bring out whatever information and needs assessment he can supply.

I asked Boris about the advisability of visiting the synagogue Saturday morning: whether Refuseniks attend there, who would be coming, what the nature of the service is, etc. He told us, to our surprise, that even though he himself is not religious (many of the teachers are not), nevertheless they like to support the one central address of the Jewish community, the Choral Synagogue of Leningrad on Prospectiva Street, where some Refuseniks do go - those who are religious certainly, and even others from time to time. There are many elderly people who

attend but a fair degree of young people as well, and he said it would be quite a worthwhile experience. It did turn out to be so.

I asked Boris if he thought it would be a good experience for me to lead services; that is, if they would enjoy having someone much younger than the average davener there, who could lead services with a pleasant voice even though not hazzanic. He said that we should ask and see how they replied, that it might be a nice idea. I asked if it would be advisable for me to give a sermon or talk to the group. Would it be safe for me to say things that might be interpreted as propaganda, such as Zionistically-oriented remarks? He said that I should check with a person named Avraham Abba who is the retired shamash. He would tell me if it were safe or not.

One of the reasons we wanted to visit Boris Kelman was that Maxine's very dear friend, Shari Lorch, in Melbourne, Australia, is having her son twinned with the twelve-year-old son of the Kelman family. Shari asked Maxine to make contact with them and see if she could deliver photographs of the Lorch's child, and in return take back with her pictures of Maxim, the Kelmans' son. Maxim was sleeping at the time, so we did not get a chance to see him or photograph him, but Alla Kelman, Boris's wife, was kind enough to give us some photographs to send to the Lorches. This was a very exciting achievement for Maxine to accomplish, and she was certain that the Lorches would be delighted that we succeeded in making this contact and in bringing out the photographs.

After about two hours it was time to go. We had prearranged with our taxi driver to pick us up at 11:45, both for the sake of the Kelman family, not to impose on their kind hospitality, and because we had just arrived in the U.S.S.R. several hours before, were quite exhausted, and were ready to call it a night.

When we parted we felt that we were leaving a close friend, who just a few hours before was a total stranger. We had shared so many deep things, ideas, feelings, hopes and opinions. We parted with tight hugs and *Lehitraot.*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1988

SATURDAY MORNING

We had an early breakfast. The official program on our itinerary was a bus tour of the city. Some of the group decided to go along with that so that they would not miss seeing whatever parts of Leningrad they might see. They did not know if they would ever return there again.

About five of us indicated to our intourist guide, Svyeta, that we did not want to participate in the bus tour, but would go off on our own. We arranged transportation to several different points. A few people went to visit Olga Shostakovsky. Ilya, her husband, was out of town for a couple of days. Since they are one of Park Synagogue's adopted families, it was important that we at least see her, even if her husband and their daughter, Karen, were out of town. Ilana Ratner, a member of our group, brought Karen a very expensive tennis racket, which they were thrilled to receive. Karen is one of the leading tennis players in the Soviet Union in her age category .

I went directly to the synagogue. Upon arrival I witnessed a very large, old, impressive building, very similar to what I had anticipated. What I had not expected was the terrible state of disrepair in which I found the building. It was a very depressing sight, especially inside, with everything falling apart. I thought to myself, How could anyone want to pray in a building such as this? However, one must take into consideration the fact that most of the Soviet Union is in a very poor state of disrepair, including private apartments and public buildings, so that people are accustomed to shabby appearances and poor quality buildings. I approached the main door, which had no handle, and seemed to be bolted closed. I then walked around to the side, and saw several men walking, whom I followed and found to be going to the small chapel in back of the main Choral Synagogue. In the small chapel were about five or six very elderly men, the type one would see perhaps in Brooklyn or Meah Shearim. I was about twenty minutes late and had expected to walk in on a service that had already begun. However, they were still waiting for a minyan.

By about 10 a.m., the service had begun, with a small group of elderly men and one or two young people. There was one young physician, Dr. Guttenstein, a tourist from Boro Park with whom I shared very interesting information about our trip.

I was told that the main sanctuary was not used during the year, except during major holidays, and that the small chapel was where the services took place. We eventually prayed with a minyan of about

twenty people, very disappointing to say the least. Shortly before noon some other Clevelanders entered the small Bet Hamidrash, and when I asked them where they had spent the morning, they said in the main synagogue, much to my shock and chagrin. This was a good lesson on the accuracy of information available on Jewish events in the U.S.S.R. Since the service was still going on I was able to walk over there and catch about a half hour of that part of the service. There were many more people there, perhaps about two hundred, mostly older people and tourists and a very elderly hazzan with a fairly nice voice, and a four piece male choir whose average age seemed about eighty-five.

One extremely interesting point of note was a Hebrew prayer on the wall from 1953---the prayer for the Government of the U.S.S.R. Apparently done in the days of Stalin, certainly by force. An extremely depressing sight was the state of the *siddurim* (prayer books) and *chumashim* (Bibles). The paper was so crinkly, dry and yellowed that it almost fell apart in my hands. When I asked the young *shamash* for a copy of a *siddur* with which to pray he handed me, much to my pleasant surprise, a copy of the Rabbinical Assembly *siddur*. It was comfortable with which to pray, and at the same time disappointing that for a tourist there was such a new, modern, clean, updated prayerbook, and for the local worshipers there were old tattered, almost useless *siddurim*. I asked Avraham Abba, the old *shamash*, if he would like me to daven at the beginning of the service, and he said there was a yahrzeit, so one of the elderly gentlemen led the service. I also asked him, in accordance with the suggestion of Boris, if it were possible to speak and say anything that might be controversial, and he replied with the traditional Talmudic expression, *Dai Le-Chakima Be-ramiza* - meaning: a word to the wise is sufficient. I took his advice, and kept silent.

Being a Levi, they honored me with the second aliyah, which was a very touching experience. I was called by my Hebrew name, and when the old *shamash* gave me a blessing, I was very moved.

During the reading of the Torah, performed by the elderly *shamash*, the fifteen or so people in the room at the time huddled around the Reader's Desk as if some extremely momentous event were occurring, and responded to everyone's *beracha* with a loud *amen*. The old men who were davening rattled off the prayers much like some of the elderly gentlemen in small chapels and synagogues throughout the world. As they raced through the service with their mouths going up and down, in almost mechanical fashion, with hardly any understanding of the words being recited, I wondered how much of a of religious

experience it was. On the other hand, there is certainly a degree of comfort and security for these elderly folks who have suffered so much, some comforting structure to their lives which no doubt serves a very worthwhile purpose.

I was to learn later that soon after I left, which was about ten minutes to 1:00, Maxine had arrived in time to meet the American Consul General in Leningrad, who was there visiting the service. Unfortunately I did not get to see him, or another woman who worked for the American Consulate, a Jewish woman from Brooklyn, and a very pious member of Chabad. I had seen her in the balcony of the sanctuary, and was told who she was. I am sure she is very helpful to the Jews in Leningrad. Maxine told me later that she had discussed with the Chabad woman Boris's idea of forming a list of acceptable books.

I returned to the hotel for lunch and all of us exchanged tales of our different experiences. It was nice being together with our group after being alone in a strange city. Even being in *schul* did not give me any great comfort or security, partly because of the possibility of some KGB agent being present, and partly because there were very few young spirits there with whom I could identify and feel at home. It was more like stepping back into history than participating in a meaningful worship experience.

We took a short Shabbat nap, and then went to our meeting at the home of Anna Dubrov, a most extraordinary and powerful young woman.

SHABBAT AFTERNOON

Maxine had arranged to see Anna Dubrov, not remembering that she was the one at whose home I had arranged to meet Saturday night. We decided to keep the appointment, because this would give us an opportunity to meet with her privately before the large meeting in the evening. We brought some gifts...books, tapes and things that we thought she would find useful, and would feel more comfortable accepting without the presence of others. There we met Anna and her husband, Boris, and their two-and-a-half year old daughter, Leah, as well as Olga Dikker, whose husband kept one of the Jewish music libraries, and the Dikkers' daughter, Katya, who was about ten years old. Katya knew some Hebrew words and delighted in sharing them with us. Words like *shalom, lehitraot, toda rabba.* She looked like a typical young Russian girl, very beautiful, with a sweet young face and lots of smiles and laughter. One wonders sometimes how Refuseniks can be so full of joy under the circumstances in which they live.

I recall a story that my son Jonathan told me when he returned, about Elana Dubinskya of Moscow, whose dog seemed so happy that Jonathan was compelled to ask why. Whereupon Elana replied, "Because he doesn't know he is a Refusenik."

Anna is a lovely young woman about twenty-four years old. Much more confident and "in charge" than her husband, Boris, who is rather shy and retiring, but is also very sweet and gracious. We came to visit her and her family with a small group of other Clevelanders. We were all very impressed with her. Being young, inexperienced and in refusal only about one-and-a-half years, it was a different kind of experience than the meeting the night before with Boris Kelman. She was much more reserved, and, it seemed to me, somewhat more interested in the family agenda of getting to Israel and learning Hebrew, than the broader ideological goals of the Kelmans and others. It could be that she was just less expressive about it all. She did take great pride in being a Hebrew teacher, and was most impressive in her ability to speak a very fluent and accurate grammatical Hebrew. For a woman of twenty-four to have achieved that level of proficiency in such a short period of time was remarkable. She also spoke excellent English, and communicated with most of our Cleveland group very eloquently in English.

Anna told us about a free school, a private enterprise cooperative, that was developing, in which she was an official Hebrew teacher. She was

hoping that in the next week or two they would receive results from their advertisements on the radio and at the central Leningrad synagogue for registration for their Hebrew courses. We asked her where she learned her Hebrew. She said from Lev Furman and many other teachers who had already left the city for Israel. It was clear that her destination would be Israel when she received permission. She hoped that would not be too much longer, although she really didn't know for sure when it would be. She seems to be one of the key teachers of Leningrad, and I hope she has a chance to do some important work before she leaves, and succeeds in teaching others to take her place.

What is most remarkable to me is that there is a whole generation of Jewish people with deep commitment and knowledge who have emerged almost out of nowhere. Where in the world did a young person like Anna get the inspiration, the commitment and the motivation to want to learn Hebrew and leave the country to go to Israel? Her parents were neither religious nor Zionistic, and were very assimilated. She developed these Jewish commitments on her own. In fact, her father was the product of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Technically, at least, her father was thus not even Jewish. And yet she not only espouses the doctrines of the Movement, but immersed herself in the Hebrew language, is a major collector of Jewish music in Leningrad, and seems to be a remarkable young spirit. We had a pleasant but short visit in the afternoon, and told her we would return about 8:30 that evening to meet with the other teachers-in-training whom she was inviting to her home.

Anna's flat was a very spacious two rooms, larger than many of the others we had seen, but it was a communal apartment - meaning that they had one bathroom for five families and apartments. Thus while the two rooms they had were fairly large, the bath facilities were quite limited.

We came back to the hotel, rested up, packed our bags for our evening visit, selecting things we thought would be appropriate for her and her class, and back we went.

One of our missions during our U.S.S.R. visit was to find out what needs the Refuseniks had, so that visitors who came after us would know what to bring. Some of the teaching materials that Anna Dubrov expressed a need for include:

25 copies of *Ani Be-Yisrael*
30 copies of *Habet U-shma*
blank video cassettes (VHS pal-secom) with Israeli films, Fiddler on the Roof, the Israeli movie called *Hamsin*, other Israeli films about everyday Israeli life; and any other Jewish films on video cassette for educational purposes.

The Refusenik community has several centers, homes in which people gather for video evenings and watch films. They also copy video cassettes and distribute them, thus the need for these video materials.

After a while, another visitor came in, Yuri Osterfeld, who had received permission recently and will be leaving in three or four months.

SATURDAY EVENING

The Saturday evening meeting was different than we had anticipated, but a very exciting one nevertheless. My expectation was that there would be a group of Hebrew teachers to whom I could present a seminar of some depth on issues of pedagogy or Jewish content. What it turned out to be was Anna's friends and students, contemporaries, people in their early 20's. Their Hebrew level was lower than I expected, with the exception of a few.

Leah Dinina, a very lovely young woman, showed us a picture of her recent wedding. Her Hebrew was excellent, and she returned again on Sunday to join the group at the home of Yelena Keiss-Kuna. Another young man was Grigory Vilenchik, whose Hebrew was excellent. He appeared to be a very fine teacher, and is studying pedagogy at the Poly-Technik Institute. Grigory is an expert on electronic equipment. His apartment is the repository for the video cassette library in Leningrad.

From time to time the Jewish Cultural Association holds what they refer to as "video-salons". This means that they receive video tapes on Israel, and invite others for "public" showings. They report a desperate need for blank video cassettes (VHS Pal-Secom) on which to copy some of these tapes and distribute them more widely throughout Leningrad and the entire U.S.S.R., and to make wider use of the few tapes that they have. They also would like to get more titles of movies about Israel.

Our experience in customs taught us that it is very difficult to bring in blank video tapes without a machine on which to show them, so that travelers should not bring blank video cassettes without a video recorder. The Refuseniks can use both kinds of VHS blank video cassette tapes, both the American and the European kind, but strongly prefer, and have much more use for, the European kind which is called VHS Pal-Secom.

Of the ten Refuseniks who gathered, two besides Anna and her husband Boris, knew a lot of Hebrew: Leah Dinina and Grigory Vilenchik. The others were students of Hebrew who were at an early stage of their studies and knew very little.

Their story is most interesting. What happened was that they were all on vacation together in the summer, and Anna somehow persuaded them to become more Jewishly involved, and to begin to be interested

in studying Hebrew and attend her class. It was obvious that she was a very charismatic person, who exercised great influence, and was able to bring them into her circle, under the wings of the Movement.

My original intention was to do something more advanced for the teachers, such as to demonstrate pedagogic techniques. These are modern experiential exercises that are fairly new in U.S. educational circles within the last ten or twenty years, with which they would not be familiar. Alternatively I'd hoped to give a lecture on some topic that they would be enriched by hearing about, such as Shabbat, Tallit, Israel or something of that nature. It became quickly apparent that these people were not on that level, except maybe three out of the ten, and therefore most of them would be left out of the discussion if I were to proceed with my planned agenda. Therefore, I decided to lead a Havdalah service.

Interestingly enough, most of the people were not at all familiar with Havdalah. Perhaps I should not have been surprised, but I was. The two or three knowledgeable ones knew something about it, and perhaps saw a Saturday night service once or twice. We must remember that these are not people who are "religious" in any conventional sense. They are interested in Hebrew culture and Hebrew language, probably with a desire to go on Aliyah, and to immerse themselves in Hebrew ethnic culture, but not necessarily out of deep traditional or religious conviction. Religious people to them meant *Chabad* or other very Orthodox types. As in Israel, many of them are not very familiar with other approaches between the extremes of Orthodoxy and secularism. We did find some here or there who knew what the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements were.

I began with an extended explanation of the meaning of the word *Havdalah*, separating the Sabbath from the rest of the week, the mood which Shabbat afternoon holds in Jewish tradition, the somber, dirgeful musical key of the time when Sabbath departs, and all the songs and rituals that attend this most beautiful ceremony. I explained the place of Elijah, the precursor of the Messiah, and the fact that Shabbat afternoon, according to tradition, was the time most like the days of the Messiah. We lowered the lights and did a Camp Ramah-style Havdalah service, with singing and humming first, chanting the prayers and more singing afterwards. I asked each person to repeat each of the blessings after me in Hebrew, to teach them how to recite the prayers.

They seemed to be very touched by the entire ceremony. My intention was to provide a positive Jewish religious experience, and help them

actively participate in a meaningful, esthetically appealing, religious ceremony. They enjoyed it very much, and it was moving to me to be able to look in their eyes and to see their reactions. We sang a few more songs, which they enjoyed very much (we had a few song sheets which we passed out so those who didn't know them could follow the words).

We then proceeded to a discussion about Eretz Yisrael. We tried to deal with some of the objections they had regarding settling in Israel as opposed to the United States. Grigory Kheifetz, for example, said that his wife (who was not present), considered herself a universalist. It took him a while to persuade her to leave the U.S.S.R., and when he did, she agreed only to go to the U.S. He said that she had a great deal of respect for Israel, but when she heard that they were promoting direct flights from Moscow to Tel Aviv, thereby forcing emigrants to settle in Israel, she was very disappointed, felt that this was a very undemocratic act, and did not want to live in a place where there is coercion. We talked with him at great length about the need for Western and Russian immigration to Israel, and why Israel wants and needs so desperately to have educated and trained, intelligent people to live there, and how different it would be for them to live in a totally Jewish climate.

One of the strong impressions we received from many of the people with whom we spoke was that their information came exclusively from local television, newspapers, and other local media. They knew very little about the positive aspects of Israel. They need books, audio and video cassettes about life in Israel, about the average daily existence of the Israeli men and women, and what Israel looks like, what its agricultural, cultural, scientific, economic and other aspects of Israeli society are really like, in order for them to get a positive feeling and desire to want to move to Israel. Of course, the very deeply committed Zionists and Hebraists are already totally committed to Aliyah.

Grigory also said that his wife objected to the notion of the "chosen people" and that she therefore liked the Reconstructionist movement which had an ideology that eliminated the notion of "chosenness".

To illustrate the amazing up-to-date Jewish information that is available in the Soviet Union, I relate the following incident: When I explained that it was important to Israel for Jews not to live in the Diaspora, but to come there directly, they pointed out that in the book *Emet Ve-Emunah*, which is the new statement of ideology of Conservative Judaism just published this Spring (1988), there is a paragraph saying

that Conservative Judaism believes in the equality of the Diaspora and Eretz Yisrael. Grigory was trying to refute the point that I was making about the centrality of Eretz Yisrael. He was quite right, and the new Conservative pamphlet does stress the equality of the Diaspora in order not to negate Jewish life for six million Jews in the U.S.A. The up-to-date and highly sophisticated information of some of these people enabled us to have very deep and meaningful discussions on Jewish theology and ideology.

It is interesting to note that during a good part of the evening, before we got into the discussion about Israel, and especially when I was explaining the Havdalah service, Anna Dubrov continually requested that I speak in Hebrew so that the students could stretch their linguistic capacities to try to understand, even though it was difficult. As I spoke in Hebrew, Leah and one of the others who understood Hebrew very well would translate phrase by phrase for the people who did not understand.

As I am taping this diary on a bus tour through Moscow, I checked with another group member to see if she could recall any other important details about Saturday night that I might have forgotten. Dorothy Soclof reminded me of how interesting it was to her that when I taught the people parts of the Havdalah, and asked them to repeat after me the *baracha* for wine, *Boray p're ha-gafen*, many of them had never even heard that simple, well-known *baracha*. This is a stark example of the amazingly low level of the religious knowledge, including the Hebrew and religious vocabulary, of some of these young people. To realize that they are coming from such a dearth of Jewish knowledge to an awareness of their Jewish background is extremely inspiring. Dorothy also reminded me that one of the things that I tried to teach the group was a simple phrase that is used often to congratulate someone, *"Yishar Koach"*, and the response *"Barukh tihyeh"*. Each person repeated that to his neighbor, shaking hands, and the other person responded, to learn the expression. It is obvious that the young uneducated Soviet Jews need training in the most rudimentary Jewish vocabulary and religious experiences.

All in all it was a very interesting, stimulating, engaging and exciting evening. It was a taste of what these extremely bright young, budding Jewish leaders are like. We distributed our names and addresses, took theirs in return, and promised to keep in touch, to do whatever we could for them, and that we hoped to see them in Eretz Yisrael.

We also gave out many gifts: a dual-cassette tape recorder to Anna so

that she could make copies of the educational tapes that she has to distribute, blank cassette tapes, some musical cassette tapes of our world-renowned Park Synagogue cantor, Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi, children's games and toys with Hebrew letters on them, some chains with Chai, and Magen David, and other types of Hebrew and Jewish jewelry. They were quite pleased to receive all these things, and the human warmth and sharing was much in evidence.

Note: For the record, the following are the names and telephone numbers of the members of Anna Dubrov's study group Saturday night:

Leonid Kolton	293-7304
Masha Schwartz	293-7304
Simon Levine	534-3594
Grigory Kheifetz	553-7767
Leonid Berkovitch (Estonia)	590-148
Mikhail Krivinosov	470-1657
Anna and Boris Dubrov	315-0170
Leah Dinina	588-6130
Grisha Vilenchik	126-1926

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1988

SUNDAY MORNING

Sunday morning there was a bus tour to the Hermitage, the former palace of the Russian Czars, which was an extraordinarily exquisite series of huge buildings with the greatest collection of Western art in the Soviet Union. It was a short two-hour tour with our guide, Svyeta, and we managed to only scratch the surface. We saw some paintings of the impressionists, including Rembrandt; a special Picasso exhibit; several huge staterooms where meetings took place for the visiting dignitaries with the Russian Czars; large counsel rooms for military leaders; and the very impressive and luxurious quarters for the Czars and their guests. All in all it was a very profound esthetic experience.

Some of the group returned in the afternoon to see what is referred to as the "Gold Room", where some of the expensive, precious jewelry is stored, for which there is a $25 per person admission charge. We did not attend, because our main mission was to spend time with Refuseniks, and Sunday afternoon turned out to be, until this point, the highlight of our experience. Even as I say this I find it difficult to use the word "highlight", because it seems that there was one highlight after another. Sunday afternoon was certainly one of them.

(All the material until this point has been dictated inside the Soviet Union. The material that follows is being dictated on Scandanavian Airlines, from Copenhagan to Tel Aviv, Thursday, October 13).

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Sunday afternoon we were picked up at our hotel by Edward Markov. He took Maxine and me, as well as several other members of our group, to the home of Yelena Keiss-Kuna and her husband, Giorgi Kun. Maxine had requested that a number of other important Soviet Refuseniks join us, so that we could meet many of them together in one afternoon. After we had all introduced ourselves, and spent a few moments chatting with one another, we sat down, and Maxine requested that each Refusenik briefly tell his or her story for the benefit of the five or six of our group who had not known all the details about them.

The first to speak was Yelena Keiss-Kuna. Yelena is a small, wiry, vivacious and fiery woman, who is one of Leningrad's leading Hebrew teachers. Her spoken Hebrew is not on an advanced level, but she seems to understand fairly well. During the initial social hour she described to me how classes are arranged: namely, through the sign-up program on Simchat Torah at the Leningrad Choral Synagogue. She told me that more and more people want to study Hebrew because it is now easier to emigrate, and those thinking of going to Israel want to know Hebrew in advance of their arrival in Israel.

According to Yelena, five years ago there were four or five Hebrew study groups, while today there are many more. They typically use a book called *Elef Millim*. Other popular Hebrew texts are *Habet U-Shema*, and *Ani B'Yisrael*. They also use simple Hebrew reading books published in Israel known as the *Gesher* (Bridge) series. Yelena has taught many elementary groups, and each time she completes a group, they receive their visas and leave for Israel, whereupon she begins again. My impression is that she is capable of teaching only the most elementary level of Hebrew.

Yelena's report, as well as that of many others throughout the trip indicates that those who apply now for the first time receive their visas fairly quickly. It is the long-time Refuseniks, those who have been waiting five, ten, fifteen years, who are the ones who are having the most difficulty.

There are many reasons why those applying now are receiving their visas without much delay. First of all, the OVIR (Emigration Dept.) rules are fairly well known now, and only those who think they have a good chance of being accepted will apply. Secondly, the Soviet

Government wants to hold the old Refuseniks as hostages to use them as political pawns in negotiations with the West. Thirdly, the long-term Refuseniks are very idealistic, committed people, who have given much trouble to the Soviets over the years, such as public demonstrations, contacts with Western visitors, letters to every branch of the Soviet Government, and they have generally made themselves fearless and courageous warriors in their battle for emigration. To the Soviets they are known as "nudniks", and the Government wants to have their sweet revenge on these individuals.

Yelena's story is one of the most pathetic of any Refusenik. Her sister, Anna Rosnovsky, was given permission to leave in 1974. Being an accomplished violinist, Anna and her mother, Meita Leikina, tried to smuggle a priceless three hundred-year-old violin with her. Though Anna left, her mother was caught and imprisoned in March, 1975. In May, 1975, there was an amnesty, and she was released from jail but still could not go to Israel, because she was accused of trading "illegal currency". The trauma was too much for the elderly woman, and she was placed in a psychiatric clinic, where no one could see her for a three-year period. There she became seriously ill emotionally, and at the end of the three years she was released from the clinic and put on trial.

In 1977 Yelena's father was permitted to emigrate. Her mother was released in 1979, and has since then been in a hospital for the chronically mentally ill in Rishon Le-Zion (Israel). Her father passed away in 1986, after not having seen his daughter, Yelena, for seven years. It was now almost ten years since Yelena has seen her hospitalized mother, and unfortunately never got to see her father from the time of his emigration. Neither has she seen her sister, Anna Rosnovsky, now in Israel, in some fourteen years, nor her nephew, Yuval, eleven years old, since his birth.

Yelena, Giorgi, and their nineteen-year-old son, Andrei, have been refused many times on the grounds of having "state secrets". After Reagan's visit in 1988 she applied again, without success. When she came to the OVIR office and protested, demanding to know the reason, the OVIR official said to her, face to face, without embarrassment, that she is simply too active in the Refusenik movement. (Over the years Yelena has been among those who has participated in hunger strikes, demonstrations and other public activities to demand her internationally-recognized, legal right to emigrate.)

At the end of her story, Yelena described her deep disappointment,

despair and depression; she feels like a hostage and a slave. She is totally cut off from her family in Israel, and her son is eligible very soon to be drafted into the military, which means that if he is, he will not only have to serve for three years, but then have five years or more, during which time he will not be able to leave, because of standard regulations that people who serve in the Army cannot leave for a minimum period to preserve their "secret" military information. Usually it is longer than five years.

I am happy to add the following addition to Yelena's story in the final stages of editing this book (it is now December 15, 1988).

Our Cleveland Federation Mission group left the U.S.S.R. for Israel on Thursday morning, October 13. One of our sub-groups, however, left the day before, Wednesday, to travel to Israel. The group that left on Wednesday arrived in Israel in time to witness a spectacular outdoor concert at the foot of Masada, with Zubin Mehta conducting the Israel Philharmonic, a sound and light show, and a gala celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the State of Israel.

One of the highlights of the evening, we were told by one of the Clevelanders who was there, was a telephone conversation, broadcast to the entire audience of thousands, between Yelena Keiss-Kuna and Zubin Mehta, and then between Yelena and her sister Anna, who now plays violin for the Israeli Philharmonic.

Just four days before, the Cleveland group had heard the depressing remarks of Yelena about her long-term refusal, and about the possibility of her son being drafted, and becoming virtually stuck in the Soviet prison for another five to eight years. During the telephone conversation Yelena announced that on that very morning her son received his draft notice, and that her worst fears were realized.

The reaction on the part of the entire audience was of shock and dismay. The Clevelanders, however, who had just experienced Yelena's pain and anguish personally a few days before, in person, were overwhelmed with emotion, shock, sadness and grief. When our group met with the others on Friday morning, and they told us the story, we too joined in their grief. For days we could think of nothing but Yelena and her untenable and crushing burden.

I am happy to be able to report a happy ending to the story. Some weeks after our return to the United States we read in the papers that Yelena and her family had been given permission to leave, along with

so many other long-term Refuseniks and very difficult Soviet Jewish cases. The permission included her husband, Giorgi, and her son, Andrei. By the time this book gets into your hands, dear reader, you will probably have read of their family's safe arrival in Eretz Yisrael!

A happy ending to a long and bitter struggle!

The next person we spoke with was Zachary Levin. Zachary's parents left fifteen years ago. (We met Zachary's parents in Israel a few days later, and they were ecstatic to receive personal greetings and information on his well-being). He has been a Refusenik since 1978. Six months ago he was told to reapply, so perhaps there is some hope for him.

Yevgeny and Irina Lein, both have Ph.D.'s and are among the better known Refuseniks in the U.S.S.R. Yevgeny is a mathematician and Irina a biologist. He reports that every few years there are different reasons he is given as to why he cannot leave. The Soviet tactic is to constantly change their explanations and reasons and make a mockery out of any sense of human decency and rationality. At one time they told him he could not go because of the "brain drain." After they lost their positions, they and their daughter worked in menial jobs and were told that they could not leave because the Soviet Union needed cheap workers.

In 1981 emigration slowed down considerably, almost grinding to a total halt. They have continued to be Refuseniks since. In 1983 they were released from their status of possessing Soviet secrets, but were refused permission again, this time on the basis of having "insufficient kinship". (Applicants are required to furnish evidence of close relations in Israel in order to receive a visa). In 1987, their daughter, Nechama, was released after Margeret Thatcher met Gorbachev. Apparently Mrs. Thatcher gave the General Secretary the name of the Leins. Nechama Lein and her husband now live in Jerusalem with their children, but Yevgeny, Irina and their son, Alexander, remain in Leningrad. Yevgeny requested from us continued support to withdraw the Soviet law regarding state secrets. At the very least it should be reduced to a maximum period of ten years.

At present the Soviet Government restrains people from emigration who supposedly have "state secrets" from fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago. The standard joke in the Soviet Union is that the main secret is that their scientific standards are far behind the rest of the world. Irina is still refused because of secret knowledge, even though ten years ago,

at the biology institute where she worked, the director clearly stated that she knew no state secrets. Just two days ago, he received a written document from the director stating that she had no state secrets. This letter was sent because of the pressure of world scientists who were writing to him for such a letter. At this point, OVIR has no more pretext for restraining the Leins. Their son is now almost of military age. When he was sixteen he applied on his own, and was told he was too young and could not leave without his parents. At this point, when he is almost eighteen, that excuse melts away and they will almost surely find another one.

Yevgeny states that the real reason is to make an example for others, potential visa applicants, that the Government can keep whomever they want, whenever they want and however they want. Yevgeny requests that people in the West mention specific names to the governmental leadership in various countries. It is very important for the sake of the emigration movement that young people and new prospective emigrants see the long-term Refuseniks leave so they will be encouraged and see that is possible for them to leave. There is also a great need, according to Yevgeny, for help from abroad for second generation Refuseniks, the children of Refuseniks, who have applied on their own. There is now in Leningrad and Moscow a formal group for these children of Refuseniks called "Second Generation."

Mr. Gorbachev knows that he can no longer use psychiatric hospitals to put away stubborn Jews so now he uses other techniques, such as refusing military deferrals for students. Even under Stalin's regime, students were deferred from military service, but right now they are not.

The next person to speak was Alexander Blinov. His parents are in Israel. He has been refused since 1978. Last year he formally divorced his wife, Galina Ostrovskaya, for legal purposes so that she and their daughter, Anna, could leave. They left the Soviet Union in January 1988 and now live in Haifa. Anna is a student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Alexander's parents have since died, and his wife and daughter have no relatives in Israel. Two weeks ago, he received another refusal, on the grounds of "secret information" relating to his former job, which he held thirteen years ago - an utterly ridiculous assertion.

Anatoly Beliatsky also had to divorce his wife according to Soviet law to enable her to receive permission. She and their two daughters, who are twenty-two and fifteen, left for Israel in January 1988. They had

been Refuseniks for ten years. Anatoly worked in the Leningrad Radium Institute, with a very low level security clearance. All his work was published in the press, thus making charges of secret information completely absurd. Anatoly said that every day OVIR changes its rules and policies and is totally unpredictable. His daughters in Israel are now very active on his behalf.

Anatoly asked us to send his regards to his wife in Israel, whom we hoped we would be seeing in a few days. His wife's name is Tamara, and his two daughters, Maria and Sofia. Their address is Merkaz Klita, Mevasseret Zion #70, Jerusalem, Israel. Unfortunately, our brief five-day itinerary in Israel did not permit us to travel to Mevasseret, and Tamara was not able to attend our special reception at the Jerusalem Hilton.

Edward Markov talked about his wife, who is also a Refusenik. The two of them have been denied visas since 1978. It is now ten years. He reports, among other things, that since the early 1980's things have been very difficult, that there is little hope of emigration for them.

In April, 1987, Edward was called by OVIR at their initiative and told to re-apply, and that the reason for his refusal had been removed. Only two months later he was then told that this was a mistake, that his name was mixed up with another name. He knew this was a patent lie. He went to the OVIR office and said face to face to the OVIR official, "I don't believe you." The person did not answer, indicating his awareness that it was a lie. At that point he requested emigration permission for his son, and within six weeks his son left (August 1987). (We met the young Markov in Israel, a most intelligent and articulate young man, who was working very hard for his parents' release. It was so exciting to bring him personal greetings just a few days later.)

Since June, 1988, Edward has written many letters to various Government departments. All the letters were referred to the Department of the Prosecution (something comparable to the Attorney General's office). He was told that he could re-apply in 1989. Markov reports that this is a society in which there is no law or firm ground on which to base hope for any sense of justice. The only hope that they have is the natural human hope that they harbor in their hearts. There is no external reality, in their view, upon which this hope can be based.

The Government apparently thrives on providing uncertainty,

randomness, arbitrariness. They decide people's fate as if they were God. They keep people within their borders in order to have leverage with the West. It is a lawless country, which plays political games. Even if the State has some reason to protect its security, how long can "secret" information remain reasonably classified? Is ten years not sufficient? No matter what law one finds for his protection, the authorities find some loophole on which to base their denial of permission.

Alexander (Sasha) Yampolsky is one of the longest term Refuseniks and one of the most difficult cases. He applied to leave in 1973, at which time he was already far removed from his profession as an electrical engineer. Whatever possible secrets he could have known at the time, had certainly been forgotten and outdated. He has been repeatedly refused. This year again, in May, just before the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit, he was summoned by his former employees and told that his secrecy status had been removed. On May 25, 1988, he was notified that it would only be two to four weeks until he would be allowed to leave. It is now more than five months, and OVIR claims that they have no knowledge of any previous promises.

Sasha's brother, Arkady, died of leukemia four years ago as a Refusenik. He too was refused because of "state secrets." Sasha reports that some twenty-eight people have now died in refusal. On a happier note, eight months ago Sasha, who appears to be a man in his mid-40's, married a lovely Russian Jewish woman named Irina, who was with him at our meeting.

After hearing Sasha's pathetic story, and the cruel and capricious inconsistencies of OVIR and other Soviet Government officials, Gert Mann, one of our Cleveland group, told the assembled Refuseniks the following. "I am a teacher of the Holocaust," she said, "and one of the things the Nazis did was to keep Jews off balance, by constantly changing the rules and keeping them in a terribly psychologically uncertain condition, causing them much psychic pain and anguish. But," she continued, "there is a big difference between then and now. Now, the Jews in the outside world *know* what is happening, and we will do everything in our power to help." All the assembled Refuseniks nodded in appreciation and agreement that help from the West does indeed make these times considerably different from the 1940s.

If only we take that lesson seriously enough, to do everything in our power to help our brothers and sisters, and not sit back and let history repeat itself! Would that not be a terrible, terrible tragedy for us and

for humanity, not to have learned the hard lesson of history?

Sasha's phone number is not given on the information sheets provided by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, because he lives in a communal apartment and his neighbors do not like to hear him speaking (in English or Hebrew) on the telephone to his friends abroad. His neighbors are typical Russian peasants, often intoxicated, and give him a hard time. He therefore requests that he not be called directly at his home on a regular basis. However, Illya Shostakovsky often invites him to his apartment when he has guests. Anyone wishing to see Sasha can contact him through Shostakovsky. Yampolsky did indicate, though, that people can call him at his home if it is an important matter, of if they have difficulty reaching him at Shostakovsky's. His phone number is 272-1827. It is best to call him in the afternoon, before 4:00 p.m. Moscow time, when most of his neighbors are out. There are five families living together, and they are not very friendly.

Lazar and Tamar Kazakevitch are a lovely couple around sixty-one or sixty-two. They were befriended by Cleveland Rabbi Melvin Granatstein a number of years ago and have been in frequent contact with him since. Dorothy Soclof, a Clevelander, was accidentally seated next to Lazar and Tamar. She was so patently touched hearing how Rabbi Granatstein, her own Rabbi from Cleveland, had such a strong impact on their lives.

Lazar is a very cheerful soul with a big smile on his face. One can read the tragic irony beneath the broad grin, even though he makes every effort to keep up an optimistic appearance. Laughingly he says that he is a furnace stoker in the public bath house, the same one where Abba Taratuta, (now in Israel), worked. Many Jews, intelligent Ph.D.'s with brilliant and creative minds, have been assigned to extremely menial positions since their applications for exit visas. Since many of them work in places like public bath houses, one of the humorous lines that Soviet Jews like to repeat, is: Isn't it wonderful that Jews are so concerned with the cleanliness of the Russian people?

Lazar's wife, Tamar, had a good position in electronics. In 1970 she lost her job. The last time she saw any secret documents was in 1968, and even at that time the scientific information with which she worked was already long out-of-date.

Their son, Leonid, age thirty-three, applied in 1975. He subsequently married and now has a son of his own, named Elyiahu, who is five

years old. Lazar and Tamar also have a daughter, Galina, age twenty-five, and a grandson, Maxim, who is four years old. His son and daughter have been refused because of their "secret mother." He laughs as he says "secret mother." "I am married to a secret mother," he chuckles. Their five-year-old grandson, Elyiahu, unfortunately suffers from diabetes. In the Soviet Union there are no instruments with which to deliver insulin (which he receives from abroad). They presently have enough equipment and insulin for about six months. Because of the constant flow of American Jewish tourists, there is no concern about getting enough medicine. However, Lazar thinks that when he gets his exit visa, hopefully soon, he will have to consider going to live in New York, because a hospital there has offered very specialized treatment for their grandson. I tried to explain to him that Israel has extremely up-to-date medical care, but he replied that he has investigated the situation and finds that the offer made by the N.Y. hospital, the kind of care provided there, and the research program they are engaged in, may make it necessary for him to live in New York.

Mark Yosilevich is a physician, an anesthesiologist. He is a man in his mid 40's, and has been refused for some seventeen years. He does not speak English very well and was one of the people for whom the other Refuseniks had to translate.

Following the formal part of the meeting, we had some more casual conversations one to one. Edward Markov reported to me that he keeps an official up-to-date list of Refuseniks, and that there are, as of October 5, 1988, one hundred and thirty-two Refusenik families in Leningrad. This is, however, only a minimal figure, since not every Refusenik wants to report his application, and others simply are not known to the Jewish organizers. Of these one hundred and thirty-two families, Edward Markov says that approximately ninety are told that they are refused because of "security considerations."

Markov keeps in touch with the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry on a regular basis and provides them with current information including the list of Refuseniks. He transmits the names of those who are added to the list and those who are permitted to leave. Sandy Spinner of Cincinnati, from the Union of Councils, calls him every Friday. Every Tuesday he receives a call from Pam Cohen and Marilyn Topper in Chicago. Lynn Singer also calls periodically from Long Island. David Wachsberg, of San Francisco, calls about every two weeks. Thus information is transmitted regularly in both directions.

SUNDAY EVENING

Sunday evening we had set up an appointment with the leader of all the Hebrew classes in Leningrad, a young physician named Mikhail (Misha) Blank.

We wanted to see Misha Saturday night after the teachers meeting, but it turned out to be too late. He is a physician working in a clinic and is trained as a cardiologist. In the Soviet Union that means that during his six years of university and medical training, he did some specialty work in cardiology. He informs us that that doesn't mean very much. If he wanted to practice cardiology in the United States he would have to undergo a four year residency. He tells us that in Israel, where he definitely wants to settle, there is a program in Beersheba which trains Soviet physicians in a special one year program to update them with the latest techniques to meet the high standards of Israeli medicine.

Misha was working all day, but was kind enough to arrange to leave his medical clinic for a short time Sunday night for a brief meeting. Maxine and I had arranged to meet him downstairs in a Metro Station near his clinic. We were fifteen minutes late, and I realized that I had not asked for a description of him, nor had I given him a description of us. When we arrived late we were quite worried that we would not find him. However, it seems that Russian Jews very easily find American Jews, and he walked over to us and said to us in a questioning voice, "Cleveland?" "Yes," we said, "Misha?" "Yes," was his reply.

It was a very exciting and relieving encounter. Misha turned out to be younger than we expected, only twenty-seven years old. The previous head of the Hebrew teacher group left Russia and handed over to Misha the responsibility for organizing and heading the Hebrew teaching program in Leningrad. They refer to their group as *Iggud Ha-Morim* (Hebrew for *Society of Teachers*). There are many such organizations in the Soviet Union, including one in Moscow and one in Leningrad. The overall head of both groups is Aryeh Gorodetsky in Moscow. Misha Blank works closely with Aryeh in procuring study materials, arranging classes, comparing notes, and assisting each other in a variety of ways.

Our meeting with Misha turned out to be absolutely delightful. He is a wonderful, dedicated, brilliant young man who works extremely hard both in his profession and in seeing to it that everything goes well with

all the Hebrew classes in Leningrad. It is truly remarkable that a young man like Misha Blank gives so much of himself.

Misha is married to Yelena Greenberg. They have one child, Yosef, born May 1, 1988 (Yelena's birthdate is 16 November 1964, Misha's is 17 July, 1961).

Misha told us that there are twenty-three Hebrew teachers in Leningrad with over two hundred students. That means that there are twenty-three different classes going on every week - an amazing phenomenon. Even though there are some one hundred and fifty thousand Jews in Leningrad, to have this many people committed to learning Hebrew in a society which has had no official opportunity for access to Jewish culture, language, religion or ethnic identity, is totally beyond comprehension, and astoundingly inspiring.

Misha described his wife, Yelena, who is now a computer technician. Her work is not something she does because she particularly loves it, but only to keep a paying position. Apparently she did this work up until the birth of her child in May. She is very talented in sewing, and hopes one day to study in Ramat Gan at the Fashion Design Institute.

Misha related to us the same kind of problem that other teachers in Leningrad and Moscow did: namely, that the battle to win the hearts and minds of the assimilated masses is a very tough one, and that we must do everything we can to assist them. Among the most effective educational devices are video cassettes on Israeli life. The only information most Soviet citizens get about what is going on in Israel is from the local media, and that is extraordinarily negative. Most Soviet citizens truly believe that Israel is a backward country of farmers with no industry, a poor standard of living, and militarily a brutal Nazi-like state. They know nothing of the religious, cultural, or economic lifestyles of the Israeli people. It would help tremendously in the cause of winning these people over to Aliyah to Israel rather than going to America if they would have a better image of what Israel is really like.

Therefore their education needs to be broadened with information from travelers and tourists, video cassettes about Israeli life, movies from Israel such as comedies, detective stories, love stories, stories about the simple people, not just the famous generals, members of Knesset, or Mossad (secret service) operations. It is hard to bring such video cassettes in, but of every ten travelers who attempt it, eight will succeed and it is definitely worth the effort.

Misha also repeated to us the need for blank video and audio cassettes for the teachers to make copies of existing programs, and distribute to a wider range of people in the community. His opinion, confirmed by many others, is that within the past six months, Hebrew and English books on religious subjects have been getting in through the mails. It is not yet permissible to send through the mail printed materials in Russian, or cassettes of any kind. But English and Hebrew books definitely can be sent. He would very much like to have copies of:

> Habet U-Shema, especially Part I
> Ani B'Yisrael
> Elef Millim
> Sifron La-Student (Israeli publication)
> Ivrit Chaya (for the smaller cities to which the teachers association distributes materials. Ivrit Chaya should be accompanied if possible by a cassette for people who live in communities outside the major cities and want to learn by themselves.)

Books may be sent either from Israel or the USA. It is suggested that book packages be *registered*, but I would like to repeat, not in *Russian*, only Hebrew or English. (Activists should always be in touch with Soviet Jewry organizations for updated information regarding currently acceptable mailing practices regarding books and other subjects.)

There is also a great need for current magazines in Hebrew. Brightly illustrated, positively oriented journals and magazines on such subjects as high industrial equipment, medical studies, material for engineers, books with professional Hebrew terminology for people who want to pursue their careers in Israel and want to learn their Hebrew now and be prepared. There is a need for some of the newer journals and magazines for various professionals such as *Ha-Refuah*, Hebrew magazines on architecture, engineering, computers, industry, agriculture and other professional and technical subjects.

Magazines and books should be sent in small packages with no more than two at a time. Otherwise they will appear suspicious and be rejected. In addition to dual-cassette tape recorders for teachers to use to copy cassette tapes for their students, it is also necessary to have small, mono-cassette tape recorders, to give out to students in small communities to study Hebrew on their own, or to students in the larger cities who want to practice listening to their lessons in Hebrew at home.

Misha, like other teachers, has approximately six to eight students at a time. When the class term is finished, or when the students receive a visa, he begins again with a new group. Of the eight pupils in his current class, six are medical students. Many people "prosletyze" their friends and colleagues to become Zionists, study Hebrew and consider Aliyah. It is obvious that they are very enthusiastic and inspired in their work of encouraging others to follow in their footsteps. This is how there are so many students and leaders who become Refuseniks when others leave, and thus the leadership constantly replenishes itself.

After sitting on a bench in the Metro for an hour we asked Misha if he didn't have to return to his clinic, because he had told me that he could only meet us for a short time, that he was getting away from the clinic during a brief break. "Well," he answered, "I could stay a little bit longer, maybe I can stretch it another hour." He probably had some leeway in the clinic, and even if he returned late, it seemed that it would be O.K. Maxine and I were quite pleased that our affection seemed reciprocal, and all three of us wanted to continue to talk, and share our thoughts, ideas and feelings. It would have been very frustrating to part at this moment, and I was so happy that we were able to continue.

We then decided to enter one of the nearby hotels and go into a small coffee shop where we sat for another *two hours* and talked about the Soviet Jewish Emigration Movement. When we said good-bye it was a very sorrowful parting. In those three hours we felt that we had created a very intense relationship with a remarkable human being. Misha is one of the people we hope to be in touch with by telephone, as well as by mail, and to do everything we can to supply him with his educational needs and other necessary materials. We left him one of the cameras that we had brought in, which he might use in exchange for quite a bit of xeroxing and photographing of other Hebrew materials, and purchasing audio and video cassettes which he did not receive from tourists.

Part of the funds provided through the sale of such cameras is to give "tips" to people who work in offices with duplicating machinery who will make copies of needed educational materials. The financial need is very great, and these people give so much of their own time with no personal financial reward, that what we do is a tiny contribution by comparison. Our gifts of equipment, books, cameras and tape-recorders, constitute an important source to enable them to continue their important educational work.

Sunday was our last evening in Leningrad. We proceeded to the Moscow train station for an eight hour ride to Moscow. The train left at 11:30 p.m. and we arrived 7:30 Monday morning to begin a whole new series of extraordinary adventures.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1988

MONDAY MORNING

Monday morning we took a two hour bus tour of Moscow. Clearly our purpose in coming to the Soviet Union was not to see the "sites". We had very little interest either in terms of time or mood to play the role of the typical tourist and be taken to every medieval church, fancy art museum, sprawling universities, stately government buildings and all the rest. But since we arrived in Moscow at 8:00 a.m. by train, and had not yet made any contacts, we decided to go along with this one brief tour just to get a flavor of the city and the sense of the directions in which we might be traveling to visit Refuseniks in the next few days.

I even begrudged the time we could not be using to visit Refuseniks during this two-hour bus tour. But I suppose that seeing the Kremlin and Red Square was something that should be included even on a Refusenik visit like ours. And I wanted to have a visual conception of the Headquarters of the Masterminds of the demonic plot to squelch my people's spirit.

After seeing the carefully-cadenced goose-stepping soldiers change the guard at 11:00 a.m. at Lenin's tomb, and other such depressing sights, our tour came to an end, and now I could honestly tell my friends back home, that yes, I had seen the Kremlin walls, and Red Square, etc.,etc.,etc. (I don't deny that seeing the famous St. Basil's Cathedral, now a museum, was very impressive).

TUTTLEMAN LIBRARY OF GRATZ COLLEGE
Melrose Park, PA

MONDAY AFTERNOON

Someone had given us some medications to bring to Anatoly Genis. I called him just before our bus tour and made arrangements to meet him in front of the hotel in the afternoon. He told me he would be carrying an El Al bag, and wearing a blue jacket with blue slacks. I gathered some of my gifts, such as a *chai*, *mezuzot* on chains, maps of Jerusalem and Israel, a Shabbat *challah* cover, a pot holder with Hebrew writing, a Jewish art calendar, put it all together in my bag with the medications, and then went downstairs to meet Anatoly.

For some reason I did not expect this to be one of our more significant meetings. It was a mission that I had been requested to accomplish by someone else, and not a Refusenik whose meeting I initiated. As in many other instances, I was completely surprised.

Anatoly turned out to be a leading personality in the Refusenik movement, an extraordinary human being, a person of enormous spiritual strength, deep convictions, and a brilliant intellect. In addition there was a simple, engaging warmth and sweetness about Anatoly. We exchanged the usual questions about background and he proceeded to tell his tale.

Anatoly has been a Refusenik for a long time, as many others. His wife, Galina, is suffering from various illnesses, which complicates their situation. He has a Ph.D., but has not worked in his field for a long time. He spends his time primarily as a Jewish activist. Anatoly participated in several demonstrations in Spring, 1988, as well as during the Moscow Summit in September of last year. During the Spring demonstration, he and others were arrested and put into jail for fifteen days. During several of those days, two of them participated in a hunger strike.

Anatoly showed me a group of photographs which he said I could keep if I wished. Naturally I did. The photos depicted his being taken into custody by the KGB, photographed by his son from his apartment room toward the street below. Other photos were of his wife and friends greeting him as he emerged from prison, presenting him with a bouquet of flowers. He also showed me several photographs of people holding slogans during the demonstration. These were very moving. The slogans on the posters made reference to the contradiction implicit in the policies of the Soviet Government: cultural and religious oppression on the one hand, and the new, highly flaunted innovations in Soviet society, Perestroika and Glasnost. With great joy Anatoly

reported to me that a number of very important Refuseniks had received permission within the last day or two. These included the Nadgornys, the physics professor and his wife (I did not realize at the time that I would be meeting the Nadgornys two days later, and have one of the most profound experiences of the trip.) Secondly, Boris Chernobilsky, who received permission by phone (which is not as firm and reliable as written permission). Our meeting the next day with the Chernobilskys was another important highlight. I asked Anatoly if he were a participant in the weekly scientists' seminar which I had heard about. He replied that he had been an active member for a long time, but in recent days the seminar met less frequently and was on a much lower academic level. This is because the leader of the seminar, Victor Brailovsky, and other leading scientists, had emigrated to Israel. Thus, a number of leading scientists who were part of the group had left and the initiative to keep it going was flagging. Anatoly found that it was not as interesting and attended less frequently.

On the one hand, there was disappointment about this because the seminar kept some leading scientific figures up to date in their fields, and kept their minds active and stimulated. On the other hand, the reason behind the reduction of the seminar's numbers and the diminution of its quality, namely that some leading scientists had emigrated, made the net result a positive one.

Anatoly and I were strolling along the street in front of the Belgrade Hotel as we were talking, and at that point I asked him if he would be willing to wait a moment while I went upstairs to the hotel to find a few more members of our group who were interested in meeting him. He naturally agreed, and I went upstairs and brought down Bob and Carol Kichler, and Jay and Toby Segal, who were delighted to meet him, listen to his fascinating story, and see the photographs which he had given me.

Anatoly told me that he had another appointment with an American at the very same place a few hours later, and that when we were finished, he would make his second rendezvous. However, it seems as though his second guest recognized the El Al bag, decided to inquire if this were Anatoly Genis, and he joined our discussion. He was a cardiologist from Los Angeles, Dr. Daniel Barman, who was visiting the Soviet Union to participate in a high level medical seminar with an Institute that is comparable to our NIH (National Institutes of Health). Dr. Barman's close friend in Los Angeles, Dr. Eli Ginsburg, had been in touch with Anatoly on a previous trip and asked Dr. Barman if, while in the Soviet Union, he would please contact Anatoly and

transmit to him some gifts.

It is so comforting and fascinating to meet other American tourists in the Soviet Union that part of the ensuing conversation was between Daniel Barman and me and our other Mission members, just getting background detail on how we came to be where we were at that moment. What an interesting phenomenon, that a Refusenik Jew in Moscow brought together two Americans half way across the world to meet on a street in front of a shabby Moscow hotel. We suddenly felt deep bonds of attachment because of our shared mission: to do what little we could to help save Soviet Jewry.

It was a warm and beautiful October afternoon, and we found a park a few blocks away to sit on some benches and continue our conversation. The six Americans in the group felt that we were encountering a special personality and an extraordinary Jewish leader. Our time together became exceptionally meaningful. Seeing the photographs of Anatoly's imprisonment and release gave an additional dramatic dimension to the whole episode.

I had brought with me some additional gifts which were not designated for any specific individual, but which I was prepared to pass along to anyone who I thought might have additional needs. Thus I left a Timex watch with Anatoly as well as some additional small gifts I was carrying. I entered the Soviet Union with a watch on either hand, having been told that it was easy to explain that the regular watch that I wear on my right hand (being left-handed) was to keep American time, and the additional watch on my left hand was to keep local time. As long as one had reasonable explanations for the things which one was bringing, the Soviet customs authorities would not present any serious difficulty. That proved to be the case for us.

Dr. Barman and I exchanged business cards, said good-bye, wished each other good luck, and promised to maintain contact in the States. One of the very enriching side aspects of being active in the Soviet Jewry Movement, as in other philanthropic and humanitarian endeavors, is the very memorable relationships that one establishes with colleagues and co-workers in the Movement. I had a distinct feeling that I would meet Dr. Barman and his colleague Dr. Eli Ginsburg in the U.S. at some future time.

We then all said good-bye to Anatoly in a very emotional parting scene, with hugs and vigorous handshakes. He was visibly moved by our concern for his welfare and that of his wife and family, and was



The first night in the U.S.S.R., the Elkins visited Boris and Alla Kelman as soon as they arrived in Leningrad.



Members of the Federation Mission group visit in the home of Anna and Boris Dubrov. Left to right: Carol and Robert Kitchler, Boris Dubrov, Jay Siegel, Anna Dubrov and Harold Krause.



The Saturday night Study Group in the Dubrovs' apartment. Rabbi Elkins explains Havdalah to the young teachers-in-training.



Dov Peretz Elkins and Alexander (Sasha) Yampolsky discuss the problems of long-term Refuseniks. On the wall is a Hebrew poster. Sasha is one of the longest waiting Refuseniks remaining in the U.S.S.R. His brother died waiting in refusal.



Meeting at the home of Yelena Keiss-Kuna. Left to right: Rabbi Elkins, Yelena, Alexander Blinov and Lazar Kazakevitch. Yelena and her husband Giorgi are now in the Beit Milman Absorption Center in Ramat Aviv. They arrived in Israel in February, 1989, only four months after this photo was taken.



Rabbi and Mrs. Elkins met Dr. Mikhail (Misha) Blank, a young Leningrad cardiologist late Sunday evening (October 9, 1988) before boarding the midnight train to Moscow. Misha is head of Hebrew teachers in Leningrad.



Jay and Toby Siegel and Rabbi Elkins meet with Anatoly Genis outside their hotel Monday afternoon October 10 in Moscow. Anatoly identified himself by carrying a blue and white El Al bag - evidence of the courage of the Refuseniks to be identified in public with Israel and Jewish causes.



The Elkins met with Julian and Victoria Khasin in their Moscow flat and heard about Julian's Jewish Book Lovers' Club. Julian is the leading private publisher of Hebrew, English and Russian educational materials for Refuseniks and other Jews in the U.S.S.R.

encouraged by our supportive words as we parted. This proved to be one more unbelievably deep and joyous, melancholy and hopeful meeting with a person who would join a large pantheon of friends in our shrinking globe whom I knew I would see again in the future. Each time we left a Soviet Jew, we would say, "*La-shana Ha-Zot Be-Yerushalayim*" (This year in Jerusalem!)

Note: I am dictating the pages that follow sitting outside of the Jerusalem Hyatt Regency Hotel on the porch of my room in the blazing seventy-five degree sun, overlooking a stream of Israeli flags, gorgeous Jerusalem stone buildings and a cloud-free sky, near a green, tree-lined mountain, Mt. Scopus, resting from our seven-day adventure in the U.S.S.R. What a contrast this is! I can now sit comfortably in a relaxing chair, with no fear of what I can say, no fear of being heard, no fear of having my notes discovered or investigated. The calm and tranquility are a much welcome relief!

MONDAY EVENING

I suppose that it should not be a surprise that each and every Soviet Refusenik whom we met was so extraordinarily different from every other one, as different as human beings are, one from the other. Each has his or her own story, particular philosophy, interests and peculiar experience.

The remarkable variety of people we met, and the different directions in which they were working as Soviet Jewish activists, made each and every visit a great adventure. I think that I expected to meet people who would be telling me more or less the same thing: namely, that they applied for visas five or ten years ago, have been waiting ever since, lost their jobs, do menial work, are living in despair, are separated from their loved ones who have emigrated already, to Israel or America, and so forth. Yes, some of the basic outlines were similar, but the individuals were live, breathing, flesh-and-blood human beings as different from one another as the members of our own Mission group were different from one another. Some more committed, some less. Some more knowledgeable, some less, as variegated as all of God's creatures.

Monday night's story is yet another special and unique one. Julian and Victoria Khasin are among the most energetic, ambitious and innovative activists in the Moscow Jewish community. Their apartment was about a forty-minute Metro ride from our hotel. Their son Alexander (Sasha), 23 years old, was to have met us in the front car of the Metro at the last station on the red line. (The subway system in Moscow is world renowned, and reminded me of my three years living in Washington, D.C. - the red line, the blue line, the yellow line, the orange line, and the deep subway escalators that took one into the bowels of the earth, hundreds of feet below the surface of the street, with all the modern technological advances of rapid transportation. The Moscow subways, as in Washington, are clean, technologically perfect - and in most cases the most efficient way to travel.)

Alexander was a few minutes late and we began to worry that we were in the wrong place, or that something had occurred to prevent him from meeting us. However, as happened in so many other cases, he found us. "I am Alexander, Shalom." That word *shalom* is so magical! It is so splendid to hear it in a land stifled by Communism. It is so comforting, so sustaining, so relieving.

"Shalom", we answered. "We are Dov and Maxine Elkins, so thrilled to

meet you!"

"Come," said Alexander, "We will go to my home and you will meet my family."

Sasha (the common Russian nickname for Alexander) and his wife, Anna, have a young son, Moshe. Sasha has a sister, Irina (Ira is her nickname), age fifteen, who was not home at the time. His parents, Julian and Victoria, greeted us at the door with open arms. We knew this was going to be a pleasant evening, but we did not realize how stimulating it was to be.

One of the first things we learned was that Sasha, Irina and Moshe had received their permission that very day! This was a sign of the times. Just a day or two before we left for the Soviet Union, Mr. Gorbachev elected himself President of the U.S.S.R. Many things were changing. Emigration was increasing, and more and more Refuseniks looked forward to getting out of the Soviet prison. Repeatedly, they would tell us of the larger numbers of people getting out. Often the families would tell us of the granting of the visa just a day or two before. This time, it was that very day. How exciting to be there with them, to share their joy on the very same day that they received their wonderful news!

In the apartment, when we arrived, were four other members of the Cleveland delegation, Mort and Carol Frankel, and Marvin and Carol Lader, who had been chatting with the Khasins for a while and discussing the possibility of bringing him a computer on which he could do some of his private publishing. The conversation we entered was obviously quite enthusiastic and at a high pitch of excitement. The other two couples left shortly after we arrived, and we continued a very intense dialogue with the family.

Victoria told us that Julian had been on television last December 6, 1987, during a demonstration demanding the legal right of emigration. There were some forty people in that demonstration near the Foreign Ministry Office. The Government wanted to show the nation what terrible people these were who desired to leave the sacred Motherland. They showed the people demonstrating, and Julian was interviewed by one of the local Moscow reporters. That may account, in part, for the delay in his own emigration. He was rather proud of his "notoriety", as he certainly should be.

Julian is a small, partly graying, bespeckled man with a very serious

facial expression. His small, wiry figure made it easy for us to believe that he is so energetic in accomplishing a large number of remarkable things. At the beginning of his return on the path to a fuller Jewish life he was neither religious nor Zionistic. It has been a gradual growing process, he reports. He sat with a kippah on his head and spoke in animated fashion about all the exciting things he was engaged in.

Julian was one of the few Jews we met who was more religiously inclined. Not an Orthodox Jew, he insisted, but one returning more closely to traditional Jewish life. He was now both a religious Jew and an ardent Zionist.

Julian has a Ph.D. in computer science and is a systems analyst. He and his family have been Refuseniks since 1978. In the first several years he did not receive visitors from abroad, and it was very frustrating for him as he watched so many of his friends receive such visits. One of the things we learned from Julian emerged from his complaint that there is an uneven degree of visitation from abroad. Many of the better known Refuseniks are frequently visited. Some of the lesser known people are seen much less so. Consequently, moral support from abroad is too narrowly focused. One of the things we need to do on a national and international basis is increase our data base of names of Refusenik families and spread them out more carefully, so that all of them receive frequent visits.

The activist leaders, naturally, should receive more visits in order to receive and give information about the current situation. But there are many highly deserving, seriously suffering, Refusenik families who are hardly seen at all. There seems to be a serious gap in our system of transfer of information in the Jewish community between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The system is far less sophisticated than I would have imagined, knowing the great energies that our national organizations have put into this Movement. Like many things in Jewish life, there is enormous disarray organizationally, and it borders on sinfulness.

Not only is the exchange of information between the Refusenik community and the outside world grossly insufficient. The exchange of information among Refuseniks themselves could stand some improvement, especially in terms of sharing educational materials and equipment. American visitors need to be more helpful, and the Soviet Refusenik community itself needs to be more efficient in the distribution of electronic audio and visual hardware and software, as

well as textbooks and other educational materials. Both within Moscow, and between Moscow and other cities.

Having said all that, I was nevertheless consistently astounded by the degree to which such exchange of equipment and information did take place. This does not negate the need for an even greater and more efficient system, however, since the resources are pitifully small and the needs so enormous.

Julian began his activist efforts in the late 70s and early 80s, after work. In recent years, having lost his job, he has had more time to devote to his Jewish educational projects, which is fortunate for the Jewish community. However at the same time, the degree to which he sacrifices his scientific career for his political and educational endeavors is unfortunate.

Julian is one of the major Jewish publishers in Moscow. Being mechanically and electronically inclined, with a computer background, he has devised methods of reproducing Jewish and Zionist books in an amazingly prolific fashion. He takes pictures of books and reproduces them in hundreds of copies. Often he translates Hebrew material into Russian and mass produces them. He then distributes them throughout the U.S.S.R. Julian showed us several long films of books that can, with the proper equipment, easily be turned into a paperbound book, with a string binding.

Julian has now established a new enterprise called the Jewish Book Lovers Club (JBLC) for which he needs tremendous international support, especially financially. With proper connections and technological know-how, he has been responsible for the mass production of Russian reading and study material on Judaism, Jewish history, Zionism and Jewish cultural themes.

Julian is also active now in teaching. Since 1981 he has been studying traditional Torah literature and commentaries on the Bible. Since 1984 he has been teaching a seminar on Torah-oriented subjects. His JBLC has over fifty members who meet weekly to produce books on Israel in Russian. They copy some books already translated and translate others themselves. He desperately needs a personal computer (P.C.) to do his work of translation more efficiently. There are now at least three or four computers in the city of Moscow used by Jewish activists, but there is need for many more.

One of the messages that came through loud and clear from Julian was

that while there is much drama for American Jews who come to visit Refuseniks, the concomitant follow-up action is considerably less. Julian feels that many Americans make the pilgrimage out of great sincerity, to give moral support, but the needs of the Refuseniks go well beyond spiritual concerns. That is not to minimize the effect of their very presence and the need for a stream of tourists to come and bring *Chizzuk* (spiritual support). But with very little extra effort, much more can be done.

First of all, visitors need to be given better information about the material needs of the people they visit. Some need things that they can turn into cash, others need specific literature which is unavailable in the Soviet Union. Others need audio and video equipment for educational programs. The Soviet Jews have a division of labor system, so that they are able to transmit to visitors the specific needs that they have. However, my impression is that this system needs a great deal of streamlining. Information about who needs what, and for what purpose, is not at all clear to the average tourist or even to the more experienced, well-briefed people.

Julian exhibited a high degree of demoralization and frustration. During the last two years the number of visitors he received has picked up considerably (after some of the more well known people had left). His name rose higher on the list of people visited, yet there has been inadequate follow-up after these visits. He has made numerous requests of dozens, if not scores, of visitors for various items which he still has not received. His impression is that sometimes the Soviet Refuseniks get caught in the politics between the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry, and suffer from the general apathy that occurs after a visit is completed and tourists return to their own busy schedules.

There is, we all know, a common human tendency to delay, and sometimes never accomplish the important follow-up action that is required after such visits. It is not only the visit itself that is important, but the action plans, organizational structures that are strengthened, and follow-up work that is so crucial after the visit of American Jewish tourists to the Soviet Union. Even as I say the word "tourists", I realize that there is such a broad difference between some who come just to visit a Soviet Refusenik, to be among the elite of the Jewish community who can say "I have been there," and others whose commitment level is far, far greater and whose potential for follow-up action is much greater.

Julian has become cynical and disheartened by the number of people that have come through - even very serious and committed travellers - who have promised him certain specific items that he has not yet received, six months or a year later. Travellers must realize the seriousness of these visits, and not make them unless they intend to follow through and make good on their promises after they return.

Julian says "Don't tell me, "I'll do my best"." This is a phrase he has come to despise, because of bad experiences. We need to do more in both our briefing and debriefing processes to see to it that the net effect of our visitations is not to create disappointment and cynicism, but rather to do the job that is needed, to bring encouragement, as well as moral and material support.

Julian is a rabid Zionist. His opinion is that Soviet Jews should go directly to Israel, and that the emigration pattern should be so structured that Soviet Jews, who get out on Israeli visas, should be going to Israel, and not "dropping out" in Vienna. We told him about one young couple in Leningrad who complained that if Israel is such an undemocratic country that it propagandizes the United States to support direct flights from Moscow to Bucharest and on to Israel, or even Moscow to Tel Aviv nonstop, without giving Soviet Jews a choice between America or Israel, then they may not want to live in such an undemocratic country. Julian's reply was that the only information that Soviet Jews get (as I have heard before, and have reported above) is very negative propaganda. He feels that there is no real *free* choice if Jews have such a poor picture of daily economic and social life in Israel: that it is not undemocratic to have them go to Israel to see for themselves the vibrant, exciting life that exists among our people in their Homeland. Furthermore, he says, people who absolutely want to go to America can apply now to the U.S. and get visas for going directly there. It is wrong for them to leave Russia on an Israeli visa, and then change streams in Vienna and go to the U.S.A.

In discussing the reasons why the vast majority of Soviet Jews go to America rather than Israel, Julian lists several causes. One is the bad propaganda to which they are exposed by the Soviet Government about Israel. Secondly, some fear Israel's constantly being under military pressure from its neighbors. They do not want to go to a country whose neighbors want to throw its inhabitants into the sea. Many with teenage sons fear losing them in one of Israel's frequent wars. On this score, they are partly under-informed with regard to Israel's military strength. Thirdly, there is an enormous dearth of literature and audio-visual materials on the more positive and beautiful aspects of life in

Israel. It is for this reason that Julian works so hard with his private publishing efforts.

Julian then made another very important point. American Jews, often with good intentions, bring expensive equipment for resale for Jews who need funds to support their families, or for support of greatly needed educational work. Since Julian is an expert in technological equipment and audio-visual materials, he says that awareness of the market in the Soviet Union for such items needs to be updated much more frequently. People bring in such things as tape-recorders, calculators, and cameras. The make, style, type, size and sophistication of these items are often very out of date, or have a very small market. This is, in his opinion, a tragic waste of American funds.

What we need to do, on a weekly basis, is to let outside visitors know which particular items would bring the greatest amount of exchange on the market. For example, a certain flash attachment, the Nikon CB24, as well as Canon cameras 650 and 620, are very inexpensive in the USA and bring a 7 to 1 return, whereas other equipment may bring a 4 to 1 return. Thus, there is a great need for American and other international visitors to keep up to date with the trends in the Soviet equipment exchange market. A person like Julian can be a very good contact person for this. But besides having the information, it needs to be disseminated nationally so that tourists can find out on a day-to-day basis from the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the Union of Councils, from their local Federations or chapters of American Jewish Committee, etc., what equipment is needed this week for: a) educational purposes b) resale value.

An example of the inefficient system of information exchange, it seems to me, is that Julian asked us to help support the efforts of a visitor from Bellaire, Texas, who is opening a special bank account for Julian's Jewish Book Lovers Club. He suggested that anyone in the U.S. who wants to contribute to this Club to help Julian mass produce more Jewish books through his photography system, should send contributions to this gentlemen in Bellaire, Mr. Bennett Greenspan, 1303 N. First St. Bellaire, TX 77401. Phone number: 713-957-0656 (home), 713-664-5678 (office). In the interim this may be an effective means in helping Julian. However it seems to me that such maverick projects on the part of individuals are not as effective as establishing a more centralized, nationally and internationally coordinated instrument for channeling various resource materials to the Refusenik community.

Julian needs English books with Jewish commentaries for his Torah

study group. For example, a full set of Nechama Leibowitz's Torah commentaries in English.

Two nights later, our last night in the Soviet Union, when we had completed our visit at Abe Stolar's, we stopped by again at Julian and Victoria's home to give them our new Fuji camera with which we had taken our slides in the Soviet Union. Julian seemed the perfect person with whom to leave it. I don't think I will ever again be able to think of subjects such as the traditional Jewish love of books, the distribution of Jewish books, the spread of Jewish learning, and the intense fervor our people have always had for Jewish learning without thinking of Julian Khasin and picturing the very special and beautiful night we spent with Julian, Victoria, Sasha and Anna.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1988

TUESDAY MORNING

Yuli Kosharovsky is the Dean of the Refusenik movement in the U.S.S.R. Certainly one of the longest Refuseniks, he has been waiting in refusal for almost eighteen years!

We had a difficult time finding his flat. The Russian system of numbers for addresses - blocks and apartments - is very confusing. Many buildings have the same address, but a different "corpus". We finally resorted to a telephone call from a nearby grocery store, and Yuli came out on the street to meet us. We climbed three flights to his flat, and he and his wife Inna welcomed us very graciously.

Yuli is a small, serious-looking man, with a full head of salt-and-pepper hair, a scraggly beard, and thick glasses. He gives the appearance of a typical college professor.

Yuli is a very aggressive, efficient and committed activist. To some he is known as the Father of the Movement, especially today when people like Ida Nudel, the Slepaks and Natan Sharansky are gone. Yuli's linguistic facility is amazing. He sat at his computer and showed me how he has programmed it to deliver word processing programs in three languages: English, Russian and Hebrew. Yuli was married to his present wife, Inna, in 1975. The three Kosharovsky children, Moshe, twenty-one, Eliezer, ten, and Matityahu, seven, were not at home.

We sat down, and Inna served us tea and cake, with much graciousness. I chatted with Yuli, and Maxine with Inna. The Park Synagogue has adopted the Kosharovsky family, and so we had a special relationship with them. After about an hour of conversation we presented them with many gifts, not only for themselves but for other Refuseniks to whom they would be distributed. We gave them such things as two down jackets, six sweat shirts which read "Park Synagogue for Soviet Jewry," a large lavishly-illustrated gift volume on modern Israel, audio cassette tapes, Hebrew text books, children's toys, and much more.

They were very grateful and presented us, in return, with a very beautifully illustrated book on Moscow. We were very deeply touched and surprised. Maxine tried to explain to them that it was not necessary to give us any gifts, that we had come to present things to them, on behalf of our Synagogue and our Jewish community, as well as ourselves. They insisted, however, that this was something they very much wanted to do. Knowing that this was a very unusual thing, we

were very moved by their warmth and generosity. Finally, after much resistance, we accepted the book with great appreciation. Together we joked about how looking through the pages of this very beautifully illustrated book of Moscow would be the only way we would get to see the city, since our entire three day visit was spent visiting Refuseniks, and we did not have any time to see most of the sites of Moscow.

As we were sitting and chatting my eye happened to catch a copy of a book on the desk with a dark blue cover, and a picture of an elderly rabbi with a long beard. It looked familiar, and as I looked more carefully I saw it was my own biography of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. I was a bit startled and pointed out to Yuli that he had already obviously received a copy of the book I had written about Rabbi Kook. He picked up the book and showed it to me as if to question, "This is yours, you wrote the book?" "Yes," I replied, "I am the author of this book." His eyes widened, and it seemed as if he felt honored to be in my presence, whereas the truth is that it was I who was honored to be with him.

I then gave Yuli copies of some of the other books I had written, collections of classroom exercises using methods of experiential education *(Clarifying Jewish Values, Jewish Consciousness Raising,* and *Experiential Programs for Jewish Groups*). He was most happy, since he is the founder of all Hebrew and Jewish education in the Soviet Union. He has subsequently relinquished the organizational and administrative responsibility for Hebrew classes in Moscow, and transferred it to Aryeh Gorodetsky. His finger is, however, still very much in the pot.

Yuli has now moved on to a wider range of political and cultural activities. He is the founder of the Israel-U.S.S.R. Friendship Society, "*Chevrat Ha-yedidut Le-medinat Yisrael.*" He reported to us that the Soviet-Israel Friendship Society had just started this past Israel Independence Day, May, 1988, with sixty-five founders, and now comprises over three-hundred members, a startling number! He is also the founder of the Jewish Cultural Association (*Associatzia Le-tarbut Ivrit Bevrit Ha-mo-atzot*). The Jewish Cultural Association has a journal of its own which announces activities, programs and current news on the Refusenik community. It is distributed to approximately one thousand people. Yuli also reports that there are seven monthly magazines in the U.S.S.R. Refusenik community. He says that there are some fifty to sixty Hebrew teachers in Moscow, and several hundred students. Yuli himself teaches a weekly class in Jewish culture.

Another person in Yuli's flat was Mikhail Volkov. Mikhail is a young man who looks about twenty-six or twenty-seven, and works with Yuli on a number of special projects. He is more religious, but nevertheless works very closely with the secular Jewish community. I discovered that there was little or no conflict between many secular and religious Jews in the U.S.S.R. When Yuli had to answer some phone calls, I engaged Mikhail in a conversation about himself, his background, his work, etc.

Yuli and Mikhail organized a most remarkable project over the last five years. It is a summer camp (they call it *Kaytana*). They bring young people, approximately twenty-five to thirty years old, to a suburban residence outside of Moscow. People attend from all over the U.S.S.R. for two to four weeks of intensive study. They then return to their communities to be leaders and teachers. They come from places such as Kishinev, Kharkov, Penza, Rostov, including some twenty different cities. Besides intensive learning they are given teaching materials and other necessary equipment to do their job.

In addition to this, Mikhail, with another gentlemen who assists him, Valentin Lidsky, whom we did not have the privilege of meeting, now run a project started by Alexander Kholmiansky and Leonid Volvosky, both former Prisoners of Zion, now in Israel. This is called the Field City Outreach Program or *Mifleget Aray Ha-sadeh*. Volkov and Lidsky travel to some twenty-five communities in the Soviet Union to give one, two and three day seminars, distribute additional materials and check on the progress of the various groups and individuals studying Hebrew and Torah. Their emphasis is on Torah as much as Hebrew, since they have more of a religious bent than Yuli and others.

We learned of yet another interesting organization called *Machanayim*, which stands for: *Merkaz Ruchani Le-olay Brit Ha-mo-atzot*, the Spiritual Center for Russian Emigrants. There is a branch in Moscow and a branch in Israel. Its purpose is to prepare emigrants to lead a religious life in the State of Israel, and to send people to Israel who can help the recently arrived emigrants to find a more religiously-focused existence than the normal secular life they might find there.

One of the things that interested me very much was that Volkov talked about how the approach of *Machanayim* was that of a more moderate Orthodoxy. They did not want the Russian emigrants to come to Israel to find only the extreme choices of fundamentalist Orthodoxy and rabid secularism. Their traditionalism is moderate and rational, and therefore much more acceptable to the masses. The people who are active in

Machanayim include Piotr Polansky in Jerusalem and Vladimir Dashevsky, who is still in Moscow. They want Jews to be religious Zionists, to teach Judaism without coercion. There is a great need for this kind of traditionalism, and I was delighted to know that this reasonable approach is being fostered in Moscow. There is an equally great need for it in Israel.

Vladimir and Yuli stressed to me the immediate need for video and audio cassettes to help foster greater intensity in their teaching efforts, especially in Russian. There are obviously many who understand neither Hebrew nor English and could benefit from learning about Jewish culture and religion and the Hebrew language from audio and video tapes in their own Russian language. Good examples would be the video of a program like "The Chosen", TV programs from Israel, or audio cassettes with music for children. There is a great need for all these things in the U.S.S.R.

Yuli talked of the need to spread Israeli and Zionist information to wider numbers of people. There are, he claims, a hundred thousand people who have close relatives in Israel. This is a tremendous potential pool for developing greater interest in Zionist activities.

With the recent spirit of Glasnost growing, Yuli feels that it is worth making an effort to try to establish legalized Jewish organizations. He is now petitioning various Government agencies to have the Soviet-Israel Friendship Society and the Jewish Cultural Society officially recognized so that they will have fewer problems receiving materials from the outside and in conducting their ongoing work. The Jewish Cultural Society was founded only thirty days ago (September, 1988) and Yuli has had the courage to announce its existence in many journals which he and others publish to help conscript new members. They have already submitted papers to the proper authorities. If they are approved, it will become a major step forward in fostering active Jewish life in the U.S.S.R., as well as for furthering emigration.

Knowing that Yuli was one of the founders of Hebrew teaching and Jewish education in the U.S.S.R., I asked him to give me some of the historical background of this movement. He reported that in 1976 he conducted the first seminar for Hebrew teachers. In 1979 it became a regional program involving three cities. A year or two later it included nine different cities, and now there are dozens of cities included in the teacher training program. Many of the teachers have left the country, and there is a constant need for replenishment and the conscripting of new young talent.

We talked about the fact that The Park Synagogue of Cleveland, Ohio has adopted the Kosharovsky family, and Yuli asked me if I had a membership card for him. He wants to be a full member with all rights and privileges, and in turn he would make me a member of the Soviet-Israel Friendship Alliance. I was delighted and told him that as soon as I returned home, I would send him a Park Synagogue membership card, and I would look forward to receiving a membership card from the Soviet-Israel Friendship Alliance.

Mikhail Volkov's parents are opposed to his involvement in Zionist and Jewish religious activities. His father has reluctantly given him permission to apply for emigration, while his mother has not yet agreed. This makes it impossible for him to apply for emigration right now.

Mikhail cannot be visited at home, but can be contacted by telephone (438-2732). It is possible to send him materials through the mail: USSR Moscow 117513, Prospect Leninsky #123, Corpus 1, Apt. 136. Any mail, books or other materials can also be sent to Valentin Lidsky, (telephone 114-1825). Lidsky's address: U.S.S.R., Moscow 115 142, Kolomenskaya Naberezhnaya #10, Apt. 258.

Volkov suggested that there is a need for the following items for his and Yuli's work: 1) Dual- and mono-cassette tape recorders, 2) blank video and audio cassettes, 3) Jewish calendars, pocket and wall, 4) Jewish stars, hanukkah menorahs, *mezuzot* (extremely important), *tefilin*, *talitot*, 5) postcards with pictures of Israel, 6) maps of Israel, 7) books in Hebrew, English and Russian (Russian materials cannot be sent through the mails), 8) Russian/Hebrew Bibles (there is a translation in Russian published in Jerusalem by the Mosad Ha-Rav Kuk. One such Bible can be sent in a package through the mail, but not more than one), 9) Hebrew/Russian dictionaries are needed greatly 10) Siddur with Russian translation (although many books are printed in the U.S.S.R. through photographic copying, it is uncomfortable for prayer services to use a photographed Siddur, and printed ones are in great need).

Mikhail wanted us to know that he believes that there are many potential Refuseniks, like himself, who do not apply because their parents have not yet given them written permission.

We departed very reluctantly from Yuli, Inna and Mikhail and promised to keep very close contact. Here again, in a very short space of time, an extremely close sense of connection was established. Through our

mutual friends, Enid and Stuart Wurtman of Jerusalem, who were the first to visit Yuli fifteen years ago, we felt that we had known Yuli a long time, and now we knew him in person. I am sure that we will not forget each other.

In fact, in several phone calls to Enid, here in Jerusalem, where I am now dictating, we have received phone greetings from Yuli, and it is obvious that our warmth and affection for him were very much reciprocated.

Yuli's wife, Inna, is the sister of Anatoly Genis, whom we had met the afternoon before. There are very close connections in a wide area of the Refusenik Movement. Enid Wurtman, who works in Tel Aviv for the Israel Public Council for Soviet Jewry, indicated to us that Yuli was the spokesman when a group of Refuseniks was invited to the U.S. Embassy to speak with President Reagan. For that reason, she believes, Yuli is being delayed for an especially long time in his application for an exit visa. His most recent refusal is until 1992. Enid asked me upon returning to Cleveland to please call Richard Schifter of the State Department in Washington, who is in charge of the human rights desk, to press Yuli's case very strongly. Representations have been made to the State Department previously, but perhaps now having visited Yuli in person, I can pass on the sense of despair he is experiencing to Schifter and others, and get Schultz to bring up his case when he next meets with the Soviets. I also contacted Senator Howard Metzenbaum and other American officials to see what we can do to expedite Yuli's departure. I hope and pray that our next reunion will be in Jerusalem.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Our visit on Tuesday afternoon to Boris and Leah Chernobilsky was as special as any of the others - in fact, more so. They had received word just two days before that their daughter Chana and her husband Yaakov (Alexander) Sinichkin had just received permission, and hoped to leave the country in November. In addition, Boris, Leah and their other daughter, Geula (age fourteen), and their son Yosef (age three-and-a-half), were given phone permission a few days before as well. Phone permission is not a hundred-percent guarantee. That comes only with the official written documents, but they were very optimistic that they would receive them very soon.

The Chernobilskys had invited a close friend of theirs, Vadim Ploskich, to their flat to meet us. Vadim worked very closely in certain educational projects with Boris. I will relate Vadim's story below. It is a phenomenal tale.

Boris and Leah are among the better known Refuseniks and are very great Jewish heroes of modern times. Boris's description of the past decade was typical of his heroic personality. "It is good for every Refusenik to be in prison before leaving," he told us. What could he mean? In explaining his dramatic statement he told us that until one is imprisoned, one cannot fully grasp the depth of depravity of the Soviet system. Prison is a microcosm of Soviet society, and it is merely an exaggerated form of what happens in everyday life.

In 1980 Jews were not allowed to meet for any kind of group celebration. They would frequently go into the forest outside of Moscow for festive occasions. On Israel Independence Day, 1980, sixty Jews, including the Chernobilskys, were chased from the forest by the KGB. When they were chasing them, one of the militia men cried out "Schnell, schnell!" Boris, knowing that this was a German word used by Hitler's thugs in treating Jews brutally during the period of the Holocaust, yelled back in anger and frustration to the soldier, "You are a Nazi!" Boris was arrested by the KGB one month later. He was put in jail for three days and given a trial date. In order to create a maximum amount of time for world opinion to build up support for his case, he went on the run. He would not tell us where he hid at that time, because some of the people who gave him shelter are still in the Soviet Union. During that three month period, his wife, friends and family were able to get word to their Jewish contacts around the world. The Jewish political network began to function immediately, and

contacts were made with high officials and governments throughout the world. Demonstrations were held in major cities throughout North America, Israel and elsewhere.

When Boris returned from hiding three months later, and his trial was held, the prosecutor asked for a sentence of five years. However, such enormous pressure had been built up by world opinion that the sentence was reduced to one year. There was no doubt in Boris's mind that it was the support of the system of world Jewry that enabled him to have this reduced sentence, and he was clearly very grateful. After the trial and before his sentence was to begin, he lived at home for a few months. He hoped against hope that the authorities in the confusion of the events of those days would forget about him, and he would never have to serve his sentence. However, this was not to be. He was arrested and placed in a prison on the Kalimar River near Alaska. It is as cold there as in Siberia. He remained in prison for the entire year. He describes it as a painful, but very educational experience. Together with him at any one time there were about forty other Prisoners of Zion.

Leah Chernobilsky traveled to prison to see him once during Boris's year of incarceration. She had to take a seven hour flight, stay overnight in a place where there was no bed to sleep in, and then take another short flight the next day. She was told that she would be able to see him alone for three hours. When she arrived, she found out that she could see him for only one hour, in the presence of a policeman. This brutal treatment, Boris and Leah tell us, was the Soviets' way of getting revenge because they could not give the full five year sentence for which they had asked. Instead they sent him to a prison which was in no-man's-land, impossible to reach, and made his wife travel two full days in order to have one short hour, not even alone with her husband.

In 1974 when the Chernobilskys first applied for emigration Boris was a radio engineer, and in subsequent years worked as a plumber, janitor and in other menial jobs. Most of his time has been spent as a Hebrew teacher.

One of the most fascinating stories about Boris was his discovery at the OVIR office of a group of Jewish farmers from a small town in the Soviet heartland, Ilyinka, some ten hours from Moscow. In Ilyinka lives a group of simple Jews who are religiously disposed and who had not had a great deal of contact with the rest of the Jewish community of the U.S.S.R. Some two hundred of them now live in Israel in Neve

Yaakov. Boris became their teacher and leader. He would travel the ten hours to stay with them for days at a time, to organize their community, and teach them Hebrew and Jewish culture.

Now that he had received permission he was anxious that his co-worker in the Ilyinka project become better known and receive more visits and help from the outside world. Thus he brought along to our visit his friend, Vadim Ploskich.

Vadim has been a Refusenik since September 1 of this year (1988). His wife and two sons have been in Israel since March, 1987. He was forced to formally divorce his wife in order to have them receive permission to go. His wife is Zipporah Zemsky, Ramot Gimel No. 345, Flat No. 19, Jerusalem, Telephone 869-464. We met with Zipporah a few days later in Jerusalem, showed her pictures of Vadim just taken that same week, and I cannot describe the joy and delight in her heart during this meeting. Their children are Yehezkel Tzvi (age twelve) and Daniel (age two-and-a-half).

Vadim's address: Moscow, U.S.S.R. 109004, Ulyanovskaya No. 43, Corpus 3, Apt. 39, Telephone 227-8071 (he lives with his wife's sister Maya and her children).

Vadim has a Ph.D. in radio electronics, in multi-layer circuits. He decided to apply for Aliyah in 1979 and lost his job. For a short period he was placed by the KGB in Lefortova prison. Apparently he is a friend of Nicholas Daniloff, the reporter who was jailed on the pretense of being an American spy in 1985. During the Daniloff affair many of Daniloff's friends were similarly jailed for a short period, perhaps only a few days. Vadim was subjected to twelve straight hours of questioning. There were consecutive shifts of KGB every few hours who subjected him to high pressure interrogation.

Vadim had an excellent position in a managerial slot, prior to losing his job, but since 1979 has worked as a janitor and other jobs similar to many of his peers. In the last few years Vadim has managed to develop a private business for which he is compensated handsomely and arranges for money to be sent to his wife and children in Israel.

Vadim and Boris described their work with the Ilyinka Jews. These farmers now hate the soil because they see it as a symbol of their Soviet oppression. They have a representative in Moscow who is trying to help them. Leah chimed in to say that to them Boris has been their savior and messiah. They are grateful that although Boris may soon

depart, they have Vadim to replace him.

One day, when Boris and Vadim are both free and living in Israel, I would love to hear the full story of their heroic work with the Jews of Ilyinka.

In Ilyinka there are four separate villages where Jews farm. The local officials in these villages know that the Jewish workers are much different than the other people who farm the soil there. The Jews are hard workers, and the others apparently are not. Furthermore, the young Jews return to their homes, whereas the others apparently leave the community upon maturation. Thus, the officials are reluctant to have the Jews go and are therefore antagonistic toward Boris and Vadim. At one point, Boris had his internal passport taken away by the officials, which was an illegal act. He eventually got it back.

Because Ilyinka is not high on the priority list of Moscow officials, they may at this moment be prepared to let more of the Jews there go. Thus, this is a good time for Boris and Vadim to complete their work of trying to get the Jews of Ilyinka out. The Israel Public Council for Soviet Jewry is very active in sending over materials so that the Jewish leadership in Moscow will have the resources with which to do their work.* Boris and Vadim are in need of expensive cameras, tape recorders and film which they can use to their advantage. These materials should be sent to Vadim after Boris leaves the U.S.S.R. Further information about Ilyinka is available from The Soviet Jewish Education and Information Center, 3 Diskin Street, Jerusalem; telephone 636-279. Three former Refuseniks in that group who are very active with regard to the problems of Ilyinka are Yosef Mendelevich (telephone: 536-197), Yuri Stern (telephone: 765-768), and Shmuel Azarkh (telephone: 864-545).

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*The Israel Public Council for Soviet Jewry, 1 Yisrael Bak Street, Tel Aviv, (telephone 03-561-8473) encourages and assists people to send items throughout the U.S.S.R. every day for spiritual sustenance, such as Israeli, Chazzanic, and Yiddish music, books, postcards of Israel, children's toys, Shabbat challah covers and table cloths, Tu Beshvat and other holiday foods; in addition to bedding, clothing packages, and other vital materials. They deserve our fullest support, and are an excellent source of information for Soviet Jewry activists throughout the world.

TUESDAY EVENING

Lev (Aryeh) Gorodetsky is now in charge of Hebrew education in Moscow. Edward Markov and Mikhail Blank called him from Leningrad on Sunday to say that I would be arriving Monday morning in Moscow, and asked him to please set up a meeting of teachers so that I could lead a seminar in Hebrew on Judaism and/or Pedagogy. When I called Lev he told me that one of his students would meet me at the hotel at 7:00 p.m. and go with me and Maxine to the home where the seminar would be conducted.

We were met at the hotel by Pinny (Pinchas) Crasnopolsky and his girlfriend, Julia Katz. Pinny is a very young man, perhaps in his early twenties, warm and gracious, with a big smile. He was very helpful as we traveled to the place of rendezvous for our teachers meeting. His friend Julia did not speak any Hebrew and was not a regular member of the group that I would be teaching, but he brought her along perhaps to help awaken her interest, perhaps also just for social reasons.

The home in which we met was very close to Moscow University, a very large and beautiful campus, and there was a double irony to the situation. First of all, here I was teaching a seminar on Jewish language and culture right in the bailiwick of Moscow University. Perhaps we should have called it an Unofficial University Extension Course.

Secondly, right across the street from the apartment complex was the Swedish Embassy. On the wall was a design comprised of three beautiful crowns. I remembered the well-known statement in The Ethics of the Fathers, "There are three crowns. The crown of kingship, the crown of royalty, and the crown of Torah, but the crown of a good name surpasses them all." Maybe the Swedish Embassy was welcoming us in our efforts to teach Torah and to preserve the good name of the Jewish heritage in the heart and soul of Soviet Jewish citizens, as well as preserving the good name of the Soviet Union by so graciously providing us with an opportunity to meet on the campus of the University.

The seminar took place in the home of Lev (Liova) and Julia Kyempner, and their two daughters, Sonya (age seven), and Ida (age four), two delightful little girls. The "blackboard" which we used was a long sheet of poster paper taped to the inside of the door leading from

the living room. Sonya and Ida kept coming in and out of the room during the course of the evening to check out the events inside, and were excited with all the company in their home. Rather than seeing them as a disturbance, however, I periodically would stop writing on the "blackboard," and we would take a pleasant brief break by watching the comings and goings of these two cute little devilish girls.

Also taking part in the seminar, beside Lev and his wife, was Natasha Marcuzan, with whom I was to have a very interesting dialogue, both during the session and afterwards, during the refreshment period. Natasha is a bright, assertive and self-assured young lady who spoke English better than anyone else in the group. Her parents spoke English at home. Our subsequent dialogue revolved around the question of whether she was interested in Aliyah or whether she would go to the U.S.A. Apparently she had not yet applied for an exit visa and was considering when would be the right time to do that.

Part of our task in the U.S.S.R. was to persuade as many Soviet Jews as we could of two things. First, that this was an excellent time to apply because most new applicants were receiving permission. The positive spirit of detente and friendship developing between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. made this an opportune moment to get out as many people as possible. Secondly, we tried to persuade them to go to Israel.

Natasha's question to me was "Am I planning to go on Aliyah?" She had a bit of a smirk on her face as she asked the question. Here I was, an American Jew, trying to tell others to do what I was obviously not willing to do (at least for now). Later on during the refreshment period, when I reminded her that I thought she should consider Israel very seriously, she said to me: "When you go let me know, and then I'll follow after." We both chuckled.

I explained to Natasha and the others during the group session that it is obviously very difficult to pull up roots for anyone, and change one's national homeland. However, as long as one was doing it, the choice whether to go to the U.S.A. or Israel was different from the choice whether one should move at all. If one is moving already, then it seems to me that Israel is the natural place for a Jew to go. After all, I reasoned, why exchange one place of *Galut* (Exile) for another? The Jews in the U.S.S.R. are a tiny minority and so are the Jews in the U.S.A. While there is great freedom in the U.S.A. and more opportunity for Jewish life than in Russia, still it is very easy to assimilate and that is what actually happens with many of the Russian

Jews who come to America. Unfortunately they have very little Jewish identity. There is a higher degree of assimilation among former Russian Jews in the U.S.A. than there is among native American Jews (for whom assimilation is very common). She did not seem terribly convinced at the time, but promised to give the matter due consideration. Nevertheless, Natasha was a very avid student and a delight to share the evening with.

Another member of the seminar was Leib Shimanovitch. He and his wife, Svyeta, have a one-year-old boy named Yitzchak. Leib wanted very much to make Aliyah, but Svyeta's father would not let them apply to leave.

Bella Kogen is a tall, strikingly attractive, and very pleasant person, who was deeply interested in the entire content of what we were discussing during the course of the night. Her husband, Yuli Schwartz, came in toward the end of the evening. The two of them have received permission and were to leave for Israel the very day that I am now dictating this part of my report, Wednesday, October 19, on El Al from Tel Aviv to New York. We rejoiced with them about the prospects of their new life in Eretz Yisrael. How disappointed we were though that they would not be arriving earlier so that we could be at the airport to greet them.

I have heard from many of my friends that the experience of being present when Soviet Jews descend the El Al ramp at Ben Gurion Airport is an extremely moving one. When it is someone that you have seen in the Soviet Union, the experience becomes all the more intense and joyous. Perhaps we will have this experience with other Refuseniks, but meanwhile we were very happy for Bella and Yuli.

Also present in the seminar was Yelena Bau. All in all, they were an enthusiastic and warm group of young people whose Jewish commitment apparently came from their own peer group and was not a product of any Jewish home environment. How remarkable!

I gave the group a choice of what we could discuss in the few hours that we had, roughly from 8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. One possibility was to review some pedagogic techniques for teaching Jewish subject matter, as well as exercises and activities for Jewish consciousness raising, which is the subject of one of my books. It is an area in which I have become very proficient, in educating group leaders and professionals, including teachers, rabbis and others. The second option was to discuss the differences between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and

Reconstructionist Judaism. The third possibility was just to leave things more opened ended and answer their questions, or deal with some specific topic of interest or of urgency in their own Jewish development. Their level of Hebrew was very modest, and therefore while the seminar was conducted in Hebrew, I spoke very slowly, and Pinny often translated for the group. His Hebrew was on the highest level, since he was a close disciple of Aryeh Gorodetsky.

The group decided to explore the differences between the streams of American Judaism. We spoke about some of the theological and halakhic distinctions between these various groups, and they found the material extremely interesting. We noted the amazing similarity between Judaism in Israel and in the U.S.S.R. Namely, that there seemed to be two extremes: that of the very religious, and that of the non-religious. The various shades and gradations of the different modern movements, such as Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist, were not available. However, even without the name and categorization of these different streams, the people present liked to consider themselves somewhat religious Jews and not secular Jews. They were happy to learn more about the Jewish religion, ritual practices, festival observances, and biblical and rabbinic literature.

There is a certain mentality among people who do not recognize the various distinctions and gradations between the most secular and the most fundamentalist Jews who scoff at anything less than the most rigid orthodoxy, even if they themselves do not observe traditional Judaism. This kind of reaction came during the evening's discussion from Leib Shimonovitch, as I described the fact that Conservative rabbis and congregants may drive an automobile to synagogue on Shabbat morning, rather than stay home and worship alone when the synagogue is too far to walk. His reaction was "only in America are there such rabbis." Even when we disagreed on the feasibility of alternatives other than Orthodoxy and extreme secularism, the discussion was very warm, friendly and at times filled with much humor.

I tried to stress to the group that there is a higher unity among the Jewish people that transcends these denominational affiliations, and that the most important thing was not which group one identified with, but rather the notion of "family" among our entire people in whatever country they may live and whatever their ideological and theological persuasions might be. In the course of the evening I remember writing on the "blackboard" some well known Hebrew sayings that I wanted to leave with them. One of these was *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lezeh*, (all Jews are responsible one for the other).

I was pleased to have been able to discuss the possibilities of various options of Jewish belief and practice to people who, as teachers, will have an influence on many others, and who themselves, being so young, are struggling to walk the path of discovery in Jewish life. Perhaps none of them will eventually become full-time professional teachers. My impression is that they are part of the group of young people learning Hebrew to teach others so that they can spread Jewish culture as well as prepare themselves for Aliyah. At some point in their lives they will probably discontinue being teachers.

I think, for example, of Mikhail Blank, in Leningrad, a cardiologist, who is the Director of Jewish education in that city. He will, hopefully, not remain in Leningrad too much longer, and at some point will resume his full time medical career. He certainly cannot keep up the busy pace that he is keeping now in pursuing a dual career. Even though these people may not ultimately remain Hebrew educators, I felt that it was very worthwhile to have them become aware of the sociological and ideological picture of the Jewish people, both in America and now in Israel and other countries as well, as progressive Judaism begins to spread beyond the borders of North America.

Our experience with Pinny and his group was most delightful. During the course of the evening Aryeh Gorodetsky called on the telephone to say that his father was ill, and apologized for not being able to attend the seminar, but hoped that all went well. It certainly did. We left a dual-cassette recorder so that they could transcribe educational audio cassettes, and they were extremely delighted to have this piece of equipment. We also left many audiotapes, books and other Jewish religious objects. The members of the group were delighted to receive these concrete objects of Jewish association so that their growing Jewishness could be displayed more prominently on their person, in their lives and in their studies.

We all wished each other *Lehitraot* (au revoir) and promised to see one another again in Jerusalem some day - hopefully very soon. Maxine, Pinny, Julia and I left after our period of refreshments and discussion, and Pinny took us back to the hotel in a taxi cab. Then he and Julia continued on their way home.

The night was memorable, one more spiritual high during this adventurous journey to connect with our people for too long separated from us.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1988

WEDNESDAY MORNING

This was our last day in the Soviet Union. Thursday morning we were to get up very early, fly to Copenhagen, and then to Israel. Thus, we wanted to make the most of the very precious time left to us.

The day was tightly packed with a large number of very exciting experiences, and we certainly were not disappointed with this last small segment of one day's time. Some of the people we met and the experiences we had were among the highlights of the entire journey.

Wednesday morning a few of us went to visit Edward and Nina Nadgorny. These are two beautiful human beings, heroic in quality, stately in manner, and clearly gigantic figures among Soviet Jews. Their apartment was larger and more attractively appointed than the others we had seen. It seems that Edward's position in the Soviet Union had at one time put him among the hierarchy of the scientific community. His professional accomplishments and scientific advances are known throughout the world.

Nina is a star in her own right, and I fully expect that one day very soon the world will know the entire story of Nina's extraordinary contribution to this movement.

Edward's fate is more fortunate than that of many others. During the highlight of the Khrushchev era, 1956 and 1957, it was easier for a Jew to find a job. That was a short period of easing of the pressure on Soviet Jews. Edward had graduated with high honors and was ready to pursue his Ph.D. thesis. He was sent to a factory to work, and when Khrushchev appeared on the scene, Edward applied for graduate school. Initially he was refused, but only a year later was accepted. Ultimately, Edward became head of the Department of Physics at the Solid State Physics Institute of the Academy of Sciences, an extremely elevated position in the scientific world in the U.S.S.R. When he and Nina applied for exit visas in 1981, he was demoted to a technician.

Their son Boris, twenty-five years old, left for the U.S. March 1, 1988, where he is doing graduate work in physics at Princeton University. Boris's story is one of the most dramatic and exciting ones I have ever heard, and I will relate it below shortly.

One of the first things the Nadgornys told us was that only three days before they were called by OVIR (Emigration Department) and told that

the way had been cleared for them to leave. Their excitement was unbounded. It seemed to them as though it were out of the clear blue sky, since they had been told only a short while ago that it would be at least a year before they would hear anything. When OVIR called three days ago, Edward thought that the inquiry was to fill in some details on his application which would remain in a file somewhere, but the woman who called said that he would probably be allowed to leave. He pressed her, "What do you mean *probably*, will I or will I not?" She finally said "Yes, you can leave." She had been using such language as "Your case is solved", but again pressing her, she indicated that they would definitely be leaving very shortly.

The Nadgornys repeated what we had heard often before, that the Soviets often tried to keep people off balance, giving them little hints, now and then, and then retracting their offers. This time Nina called back, and was told that they are not sure, that they were uncertain, but when she pressed and said that her husband had just received a call and she wants to know, she demanded the precise information, the woman responded again, yes, you are definitely going, you can prepare for departure.

Like the case of many other Refuseniks, they were denied a visa only on a pretext. The Institute for which Edward worked is an open one, devoted to pure science, and there is nothing classified about what he did. The charge of secrecy was a patent smoke screen.

When they were finally convinced that the exit permission was "for real", they immediately called Pamela Cohen in Chicago of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry. As Nina was describing how Pamela cried over the phone when she heard the news, Nina herself began to break down and cry in front of us, and we could not hold ourselves back from sharing this deeply emotional time for such a wonderful couple. They would be able to see their son, be free, and resume their careers after a short visit in New Jersey. They were not sure whether they would be settling permanently in Israel or in the United States.

Both Edward and Nina made it very clear that the permission which had been received by Boris six months ago, and by them now, was the work of many, many people in the U.S. and throughout the world who worked very hard to assist them. Not only did many people write to their Senators and Congressmen, which they felt meant a great deal, but there were also letters sent to Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and other Soviet officials. At one point a letter was sent and signed by seventy U.S. Congressmen requesting that the Nadgornys be given their



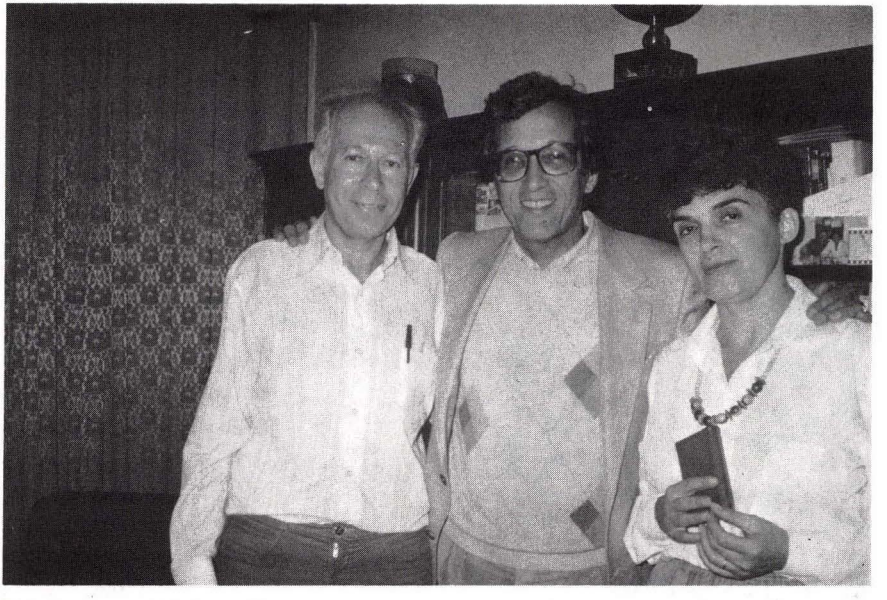
At the Kosharovskys' apartment Yuli models the Park Synagogue sweatshirt, after he and Inna held a long discussion with the Elkins on Yuli's pioneering work in disseminating Jewish culture through the newly-formed Israel-U.S.S.R. Friendship Society and the Jewish Cultural Society.



Boris Chernobilsky and his close friend Vadim Ploskich, with Yaakov Sinichkin, his son-in-law, his daughter Channah, and his wife Leah. Boris and Vadim have been working hard to spread Jewish culture to the Jews living in Ilyinka, a small farming village ten hours from Moscow.



The Study Group held in the Moscow home of Lev and Julia Kyempner on Tuesday night, October 11, 1988. The group discussed the religious streams of American Judaism - demonstrating a deep awareness of and interest in Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism.



Edward and Nina Nadgorny discuss with Rabbi Elkins their recent news of receiving an exit visa. They arrived in the United States in February, 1989. Edward is a leading physicist in solid state physics. Nina, at Rabbi Elkins suggestion, is writing a book about her experiences as a Refusenik. She has been a columnist for the London Jewish Chronicle and is the only Refusenik to have had an official foreign Press Card.



At the home of Abe and Gita Stolar, on the last night of the Elkins' visit in the U.S.S.R., a group of Refuseniks gather to tell their stories, including (top row) Oskar Mendeleev, Abe Stolar, Igor Uspensky; Gita Stolar, Gregory Mendeleev, Maxine and Dov Peretz Elkins, and Mikhail (Misha) Kremen. Igor Uspensky has been on a long fast to protest his long-term refusal.



At the home of Yehudit Luri, an English teacher, Cleveland visitors Maxine Elkins, Joan Mann and Margaret Singerman, hear about the long, frustrating wait of Yehudit, her husband Emmanuel, and their daughter Bella. Their other daughter, son-in-law and grandson arrived in Israel in January, 1989. The Luris are among the few long-term Refuseniks still waiting for an exit visa. Yehudit is the leader of the Jewish women's support group in Moscow known as JEWAR (Jewish Women Against Refusal).



Soon after arriving in Israel the Elkins met Lev and Marina Furman, and brought them greetings from their former Hebrew students still in Leningrad. Lev Furman was one of the first to hold signs in front of the synagogue to attract students to his classes in the Hebrew language.



Members of the Cleveland Federation Mission who are members of Cleveland's Park Synagogue: Daniel Polster, Harry Steiger, Sally Ann Good, Deborah Coleman, Peter and Aliki Rzepka, Maxine and Dov Peretz Elkins, Victor and Joan Gelb, Marilyn Cagin, Charles and Ilana Ratner. Missing from the photo are Dr. Ruth Miller and Rabbi Philip Horowitz, Stella Shifrin and David Shifrin

freedom.

When Richard Schifter, George Schultz's man in the State Department in charge of human rights, comes to Moscow, he brings with him lists of people that are given to him by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry. Many high level officials, such as Schifter, represented the Nadgorny case to the Soviet leadership. Groups of world scientists wrote to the President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and other scientific institutes in the U.S.S.R.

"This is the way that people can help the best" said the Nadgornys, "by pressing each individual case *by name*, providing background and details with biographical and professional information as well as a detailed history of the struggle of these particular individuals for freedom."

Their long ordeal soon coming to an end, the sense of relief on the faces of the Nadgornys was a pleasure to behold. At the same moment they were very concerned that descriptions of what life was like for Refuseniks in such a precarious position must be disseminated more widely so that the world will really understand the plight of their long suffering peers. Each case was different, but it was the same story. There was enormous emotional pressure in having no information, no details, no dates, no reason to be hopeful, applying again and again, and being refused again and again. Not having a time table, or a plan of action, not having any future point, even long term, to look forward to - all kept the long term Refuseniks of five, ten, fifteen and twenty years in a state of helplessness, hopelessness, depression and despair. Then when the phone call comes, totally unexpected, it is almost impossible to believe. It takes a long time until it really sinks in that it is true, that they will be leaving this prison called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

As I sat and listened to some of the segments of Edward and Nina's story, I found myself sitting on the edge of my seat, waiting to hear the next episode in each chapter of their struggle. I suggested to Nina that when she reaches the United States she contact me and I would be happy to help find her a literary agent to put her story between two covers. My guess is that it will be a best selling book.

The Nadgorny story is a very dramatic one. One evening Edward and Nina went to the theater with tickets in a certain row, seats 12 and 13. As it happened they switched seats and Nina ended up sitting next to someone who spoke with an accent. She was convinced that he was

Polish, but it turned out that he was a foreign diplomat who happened to speak Russian fairly well, and remarkably enough she shared some of the details of her story with him. He became very interested and offered his help. As the story evolved, he was a fairly high-level diplomat.

During a five-year period, he was very helpful to them in many ways, especially in the publication of Edward's book, which came out only a month before our visit. He showed me a copy, published by Pergamon Press of London. He had signed a contract with Pergamon before his refusal, but once he applied for emigration he was forbidden to submit his manuscript, or even parts of it, to outside publishers. He then decided to take a courageous step and get the manuscript smuggled out of the country, chapter by chapter, through the kind agency of the diplomat who had become their personal friend. And here it was in my hand, the final product. Edward's book is not one that is easy bedtime reading, but nevertheless seeing his name and the complexity of the footnotes and esoteric physics signs leads one to believe very easily that this is a very important work. It is called *Dislocation Dynamics and Mechanical Properties of Crystals*.

Edward is not the only writer in the family. Some years ago during a visit to Moscow, the editor of the London Jewish Chronicle, Mr. Finkelstein, met with the Nadgornys and asked Nina if she would be willing to write an article about the plight of her family and others like hers. At first she was diffident and reluctant to attempt to be a professional writer, but after pressing her she agreed, and laboriously put her thoughts on paper.

On March 6, 7, and 8, 1988, Nina and fourteen other woman participated in a three-day hunger strike to attract world attention to the plight of Soviet Jewish Refuseniks. Nina subsequently dictated an article on the telephone to the London *Jewish Chronicle*. Later, during the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit, another article of hers appeared in the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. For the past six months she has been a regular contributor to the London *Jewish Chronicle*, and has become a bit more comfortable and proficient in sending dispatches abroad. Her eyes seemed to light up when I suggested that her memoirs and autobiography would make a best-selling book in the United States, and it would be a great service to her cause if she would take the time and effort to put such a book together, and then do a speaking tour not only to promote the book, but, more importantly, to promote the cause about which it is written.

I used the example of the Anne Frank story, of how one individual and her plight can be a microcosm of a much larger national and international problem which may not receive as much attention or interest unless a human interest story based upon the life of one individual, one flesh and blood person, can be written to draw people's attention. I look forward eagerly to the publication of Nina's book.

One of the fascinating aspects of the life of the Soviet Refuseniks is their spiritual fortitude, which both Edward and Nina exhibit in such great measure. They had a conversation with several of their neighbors who could not understand why they wanted to leave the Soviet Union. Here they were, some seven or eight years ago, in a very envious position professionally. Scientifically, Edward was at the pinnacle of his career. Economically, they did extremely well. They were highly respected and well accepted in the social, scientific and economic circles of Moscow. Had they not applied, who knows what greater heights of importance they could have reached? They had traveled abroad for Edward's scientific work, to Germany, Japan, and many other important centers of scientific research. On the surface they had everything a Soviet citizen could wish for. Why then ruin it all, and jeopardize what it took so long to build up, by applying for an exit visa? They knew, and everyone knew, that merely by application everything they had worked so hard to achieve would go down the drain in a moment's time.

But for the Nadgornys there was more to life than social status and professional achievement. Inside their heart and soul was a grievous, mortal wound. To live in a totalitarian society which denied personal freedom, and which made Jews into objects of scorn, made the entire rise to professional prominence a hollow shell. It all amounted to nothing if inside there was so much frustration, injury, insult and pain.

The decision grew slowly. It was not an easy one for them, to throw it all away. But as time passed, it became clearer and clearer that their spiritual values were indispensable, and if they were being suppressed, denied and crushed, as they were, there was no way that they could ever be satisfied and live a happy life in this dark, dangerous, unpredictable and oppressive land.

Nina sat on the sofa calmly with a felt lion sitting in her lap, which she stroked gently, yet compulsively, as if to gain some degree of comfort and security through this toy animal and the soft gentle pleasure she received from stroking it. Her son Boris was gone now since March,

and though they kept in close contact by phone, it was obvious that she missed him desperately and could not wait until her reunion with him.

Boris's story is one that by itself could make Nina's future autobiography a best seller. Here is a clear example of how world pressure can be miraculously effective. Boris was "adopted" by the students at Oxford University in London. Jews and non-Jews at Oxford worked very hard to bring his case to the attention of the world. He was a brilliant, young physics student who could never achieve his full potential in the shadowy halls of Soviet academia.

Boris's case soon became well known among the Oxford student body. Among their many action programs was a phoning campaign to the Soviet Embassy in London. On a daily basis, students would call and ask why Boris Nadgorny was not let out. They wore badges all over the campus saying, "I phoned the Embassy twice today, have you?" All eight thousand students, Jewish and non-Jewish, participated in this wonderful daily phonathon.

Besides all the normal procedures for political action, Oxford students came up with an ingenious plan. The student body invited a Soviet official to the Oxford campus to report on Glasnost. He did not realize that their real aim was to ask him during the question-and-answer period about Boris. They caught him, in the presence of the five hundred students listening in the hall. Mr. Sergei Shilov, the cultural attache of the Soviet Embassy in London, was the speaker. He was asked about Soviet Jewish Refuseniks, and then about Boris.

"No," he said, "Boris was not refused, it is not true, and he can go any time he wants." In the hall at the time was Irina Brailovsky. She stood up and said that she was a former Soviet Refusenik, and that she had accurate information that Boris had just recently been refused. Next, the chairman of the meeting came into the room and announced that Boris was at that moment on the telephone, and a loud speaker had been set up so that he could speak to the gathered group. The voice of Boris was the next one heard. "Yes, I was refused just two weeks ago." The date was 26 November, 1987. The people present asked the Soviet official if Boris was indeed allowed to leave. It was impossible for a Soviet official to lie so blatantly in front of a large group of people. It would have been plastered all over the British press the next day. They asked him to speak directly to Boris and tell him that he could leave, which he then did, having no choice.

Boris was out of the Soviet Union within four months of that telephone

call.

Boris himself, after his arrival in the United States, helped organize similar protests for his parents and has been extremely active for them. He made many important contacts which helped to further his parents' case for freedom. He even made a special trip to Oxford to enlist the help of the students who had previously helped him.

Boris applied to the University of Chicago, University of California at Berkely, and Princeton University, all of which accepted him. Already at his young age, he has published some important scientific articles, even before completing his Ph.D. Here is a perfect example of what the fruits of hatred are. One of the best young minds of the Soviet Union has left his country, as so many brilliant people have left countries of oppression before him, depriving their national states of their best sons and daughters. Witness the Germany of Einstein, the Austria of Freud, and on and on. There is a spiritual decay, an inner narrowness, which hatred brings to the spirit. It destroys a society from within and ultimately causes its decay and demise. I am reminded of what Dostoevsky once wrote about the inner corrosion of evil societies:

"Tyranny is a habit, it has the capacity to develop and it does develop, in the end, into a disease. I maintain that the best of men may become coarsened and degraded, by force of habit, to the level of a beast. Blood and power are intoxicants; callousness and perversity develop and grow; the greatest perversions become acceptable and finally sweet to the mind and heart. The man and the citizen perish eternally in the tyrant, and a return to human dignity, to remorse and regeneration, becomes almost completely impossible to him. Besides this, example and the possibility of such arbitrary power act like a contagion on the whole of society; such despotism is a temptation. A society which contemplates such manifestations calmly is already corrupted in its roots."

Now very happily ensconced at Princeton, Boris has been treated magnificently by Professor Robert Sokoloff, a physics professor there who took him under his wing, invited him to live with his family for six months, and arranged for him to receive a graduate fellowship. Dr. Sokoloff has been to the Soviet Union, and the Nadgornys are very anxious to express their gratitude to him as soon as they reach the United States. (Note: The Nadgornys reached the U.S. early February, 1989).

The Nadgornys asked us to please see what we could do for two other Refuseniks now that they are being released: Yuri Chernyak and Giorgi Samolovich. Giorgi suffers from malignant lymphoma and each day he is deprived of an exit visa his condition worsens. He needs good medical care desperately! (Boris Nadgorny can be reached at 58 Dorann Avenue, Princeton, NJ 08540, telephone: 609-924-4567. Edward and Nina's telephone is 203-359-1193).

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Since Wednesday night was our last evening, we wanted to take advantage of every minute. We had an early evening appointment with the Luri family, and a later one at the home of Abe Stolar.

We arrived at the Luris' and met Yehudit, a most dignified, gracious, and attractive woman, thin, intelligent and well spoken. Her husband, Emanuel, who is an organic chemist, was away on a business trip. The Luris have been in refusal since 1979. In 1980 they received visas; their mother in Riga was to meet them in Moscow, and they were to fly together. A few days before the departure date they received a phone call saying "Sorry, there has been a mistake." Their mother left, but Yehudit and Emanuel are still in Moscow.

The Luris have two daughters. Bella is twelve, a sweet, lovely young girl, who spoke some English. She walked in and out of the room during our conversation. We took her picture and asked her if it would be O.K. to have her twinned with B'not Mitzvah in America, to which she happily agreed. The older daughter, Anna, who is twenty-one, is married with a six-month-old baby. Anna's husband is David Schwartzman; their baby is Daniel (birthdate: March 22, 1988).

Yehudit teaches English and thus speaks it beautifully. We were running so much we did not have time to have anything to eat, so Yehudit set out a lovely dinner for us. It was quite a feast, and we were very much embarrassed to put her to this trouble and expense. She thought nothing of it, and was most delighted to host us.

Yehudit Luri is a leading member of the Moscow women's group which met on March 6 to 8, 1988, for a three-day hunger strike. Since she is an English teacher, she is looking for materials with which to teach the English language. Her husband does have a job in his field, but it is on a much lower level than he deserves. Emanuel has no equipment to work with, and he is basically acting as a technician, just doing paperwork in the Ministry of Agriculture. We had walked by the building of the Ministry of Agriculture that afternoon, and remarked that it looked like a broken down old barracks. I can imagine the frustration of a brilliant scientist working under those conditions.

Yehudit's mother in Israel is Rika (Rachel) Kulbakh who lives at Rehov Katznelson 63/201, Ramat Yosef, Bat Yam, telephone: 597-849.

Yehudit related to us that her women's group (JEWAR: Jewish Women Against Refusal), decided this year to take a pilgrimage to Babi Yar near Kiev on September 29, the anniversary of the massacre of 34,000 Jews by the Nazis in 1941. Last year there were only a few people there, she tells us. This year some five hundred people appeared spontaneously. No one got up to speak. It was a meeting with no planned program. Those present all stood in silent mourning, which, Yehudit tells us, was a very powerful experience.

In Moscow, she says, there was a committee organized to have an official commemoration of Babi Yar, but a Soviet group dispersed the Jewish crowd, a group called the anti-Zionist Committee which was initiated by the Government to "tame" the Jewish population.

Our meeting with Yehudit was a pleasant but sad one. Here was a most lovely, attractive, sweet, gentle, delicate woman with such great potential and intelligence, languishing in an oppressive land where she could hardly find spiritual contentment. Her young daughter, Bella, and her married daughter, Anna, and Anna's family, all could be contributing significantly to the State of Israel. They could be living happy and productive lives, and building for the future in a stable, permanent society. Unfortunately they sit and wait, and one never knows when their time will come. We departed with hugs and kisses, with mutual expressions of appreciation, after having left several gifts, and promised that we would continue to be in touch. We took several pictures together, and sent them back to Yehudit after our return.

I look forward to the day when I can meet Yehudit, Emanuel, Bella, Anna, David, and Daniel in Israel, God willing, very soon.

(Additional note: Anna, David and Daniel arrived in Israel December 1, 1988. The Luris have still not received permission. Anna has back problems and her mother's presence to help care for the baby would be extremely helpful!)

WEDNESDAY EVENING - LATE

From Yehudit's flat we took a long taxi ride to the home of Abe Stolar. His is one of the most well known cases in the Soviet Union. Abe is a man now of seventy-six and is an American citizen. He and his wife, Gita, have been Refuseniks since the early 70's. Born in Chicago in 1911, he was brought to the U.S.S.R. at age twenty by his Communist parents, and lived in Moscow for forty-four years before he decided to leave.

His case has become world renowned as he has appeared on national TV, being interviewed on many famous talk shows through satellite. Abe is quite verbal, speaks English as well as any American, and puts on a happy front, if inside he may not be - and probably is not so happy. Abe and his family received permission in 1975 to leave. They even went so far as to get on the plane. On the plane they were told that their visas were rescinded and that they would have to wait another two years because his wife had supposedly done some secret work in prior years. They were then physically removed from the plane.

Their Soviet citizenship was taken away, and all their worldly goods are now in Israel, where they have been sitting in storage for thirteen years. Their citizenship was taken away in exchange for the Israeli visa. The Soviets call this "renouncing Soviet citizenship." Abe claims, however, that it is really impossible for anyone to renounce their Soviet citizenship. There is no legal way that one can do it even if he wants to, he argues.

He has been trying to get out by writing everyone conceivable, including every Government official, leaders of the Communist party, members of the Ministry of the Interior, and even officers in the Foreign Ministry, since he is an American citizen. At every important international meeting he writes letters to the leadership to bring his case to their attention. So far he has not received a single reply from any Soviet official. However, he has heard often from Americans such as the President of the United States, Senators, Representatives, and several American Ambassadors in Moscow.

The Stolars' son, Moshe (Mikhail), is one of the leading religious teachers in the Soviet Union. Moshe was married in 1983, and now has two young children. His wife, Julia, has a very poor relationship with her mother, who refuses to sign papers agreeing to let her

daughter go. At one point the Soviets asked Moshe and his children to leave, but without Moshe's wife. Abe says that they refused to leave her in the Soviet lions' den.

Now their struggle is to get their daughter-in-law out. A few months ago the authorities phoned, and they were told again that the three of them could go, but not Julia. They claimed that she was not married, because her marriage was performed by an American rabbi in Moscow (who now lives in Israel), Rabbi Yitzchak Faigenbaum.

Abe explained that the papers that parents sign permitting their children to leave mainly indicate that the children do not have any financial debts to their parents. The irony of the situation, says Abe, is that one can write the most sordid things about one's child, such as that you hate your daughter. You can call her terrible names, but as long as you say that she does not owe you any money, she is permitted to go. That is the legality of the situation. Abe went to several courts to prove that his daughter-in-law did not owe her mother any money and the courts agreed. They then presented that evidence to OVIR which in turn refused to accept the evidence, and still refuses to grant the exit visa to Julia. (Note: Julia finally received permission to leave December 31, 1988)

The group of people in the Soviet Union who are not permitted to go because of the refusal of parents to sign permission are called "Poor Relatives." He says that there are some fifty Poor Relatives in Moscow and around two hundred in the entire U.S.S.R. The "Poor Relatives" group have regular meetings to give each other support. They also sometimes hold demonstrations at the work place of family members who refuse to sign financial waivers.

Abe told us that the U.S. Embassy has been working for some eighteen years for him, but that their hands are tied. Officially and formally the Embassy can have contact only with the Foreign Ministry and not with any individual or any other office of the Soviet Union.

We told him that we had read in the papers recently about a promise by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze to repeal the "Poor Relatives" law and let people out even without permission of their family. Abe replied though that all new laws in the U.S.S.R. are only passed in order to legalize an illegal practice, and it ends up to be of no serious assistance whatsoever. For example, the 1987 Emigration Law actually made things worse, demanding that people receive invitations from abroad not just from any distant relative, but now only from an *immediate* relative.

He thus has no hope or trust in any new laws that the Soviets will pass in the guise of liberalization.

In Abe Stoler's view the situation under Gorbachev really has not improved. Prior to Gorbachev you would never hear the word Refusenik. It was a forbidden topic. Now with Glasnost the word appears very often in the media. The Refuseniks are referred to frequently as crooks, cheats and liars. Thus Glasnost had done nothing but help them receive greater notoriety and more negative attention.

A story about Julia appeared in the paper, claiming that she had changed her name many times. It was written in order to villify her, making it appear that she was constantly disguising her identity. Abe explained the change of names very naturally. First she had the name she was born with. When she reached age sixteen she took her parents name, which is a common practice. At a later time her mother gave her a Russian name in order to deny her Jewishness. When she was previously married (before marrying Moshe), she had another name, and when she was divorced she went back to her former name. All of these were natural name changes, but the papers made it into something ugly and dirty. Julia has not had contact with her mother in almost a decade. All that is really needed is for Julia's mother to sign a paper saying that Julia doesn't owe her any money. Her mother refuses.

Abe Stolar's address: Vernadskogo 117, Apt. 151, code 148, telephone: 433-5449. Phone number of Moshe Stolar: 151-7381.

Abe was kind enough, at our request, to invite several other Refuseniks to his home, and we were able to hear several touching, personal stories in the course of the evening.

Gregory Mendeleev came with his father, Oskar Mendeleev, but his twin brother, Valeri, was not present. He was born in 1970 in Moscow. At age two his parents and grandparents decided to emigrate. Now that he is of age, he applied on September 16, 1988, on his own. His twin brother chose to apply together with his parents. Gregory is a sophomore at the Moscow Railway Institute. He has no "secrets", and is optimistic that he will be able to leave within the next six months. If he doesn't get out soon, he will have to go into the Army. That would mean, of course, several years of service plus a minimum of five more years before he would be given permission. He wants to live in Israel, but desires first to receive college training in the U.S.

Gregory quizzed us intensively about several colleges that he had heard about, one in California called Pitzker, which had sent him an invitation. He has also received invitations from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and from Cambridge. His special interest is math and computer science. He is a lovely, gentle young man who seems to have weathered a great deal of pain and sorrow through all the agony of his family's ordeal.

The conversation turned to a discussion of the number of Refuseniks in Moscow. Some of the people in the room indicated that there is one list in the hands of an activist woman named Resnikov, another list of people over the age of sixty held by someone named Yevgeny (last name unknown), and a third list kept by Vladimir Kislik, who has three to four hundred people on his list. Altogether, people who are in refusal in Moscow, he claims, are approximately a thousand families.

There are regular meetings now of the Second Generation Group, children of Refuseniks who are now themselves Refuseniks. At the last meeting Gregory says some thirty people attended. They sometimes meet with people from abroad to get ideas about how to get out, and deal with the problem of applying separately from their parents. A veteran Soviet Jewry women's activist group called "The London Thirty-Five" met with them recently.

Apparently the list of Refuseniks is constantly changing, and it is difficult to keep up to date. In addition, the rules of leaving are constantly in flux. For example, what possessions one may take out is not very clear. Even when one receives permission, he/she has many difficult hours ahead, because one has to buy many things, sell other things, and rearrange one's entire life. One can imagine how difficult it was for Abe and Gita Stolar to have done all that and then to be told that they have to remain!

Next spoke Gregory's father, Oskar Mendeleev. Oskar had worked in the Moscow Radio Institute as a research engineer. His parents had decided to leave for Israel. He changed his job for a non-secret one in 1969. In 1972 he was a computer programmer and applied with his parents and wife. Their twin sons were then two years old. They were refused, as "Poor Relatives," because someone in the family refused to sign the papers.

In 1976 Oskar was dismissed from his job. His boss told him he didn't want to do it, but couldn't help himself. He appealed the decision to

leave, and it was again denied. He sent letters to the Party Congress, the Supreme Soviet Presidium, and to everyone conceivable. At one point, this past March, 1988, his application was finally accepted, but in May he was told that the invitation he received from abroad had expired and he needed a new one. This is apparently another illegal step, because foreign documents cannot expire. He was told recently that he was released from secrecy, and that he would be receiving a visa soon. It is now sixteen years since he first applied. Colleagues with whom he had worked at the time are now long gone. In 1979 both of Oskar's parents died, twenty-five days apart.

Oskar's wife, Schelly (named after her grandfather Shepsel), was on that evening at the hospital having a gall stone operation. Schelly was expected to remain there for another two or three weeks. Just last month, on September 16, he received a fresh invitation from Israel from his sister and was optimistic that he might be able to leave soon. His sister (who is really his cousin, his father's brother's daughter, who was adopted by his father when his father's brother died) now lives in Israel. Her name is Ella Mendeleev-Birkenfeld. Ella emigrated in 1971.

He told us that he had spoken to his sister just ten days before. She knew of the recent news that his secrecy had been removed, and that there were new hopes for his arrival. His sister's address: Rehov Meltzer 14, Apt. 1, Rehovot, Israel. Oskar's wife, Schelly, is a pediatrician, and because the country is short of pediatricians she has been able to keep her job. They are eagerly looking forward to resettling in Israel when their hopes are realized. Oscar Mendelev's address: Raynisa 16/2, Apt. 184, Moscow, Telephone: 490-6337.

Misha Kremen is a very sad case. He speaks mainly Russian and is one of the few Refuseniks for whom people had to translate. He applied in 1972 and left his job, which had some secret information attached to it. His parents left in 1973 for Israel. In the following year, 1974, his sister emigrated. He thought it would be a few years later when he would leave. It is now fourteen years later, and he is still waiting.

Misha says that he is just an ordinary engineer, and it should have been a short time before permission was granted. He works in radio electronics for space craft remote control. After the joint U.S.-Soviet Soyez flight in 1975, everything he had been working on became known to United States scientists. There was no longer any secrecy to Misha's scientific involvement, nevertheless here it is years later and he still

waits.

In 1978 his father died in Israel. At that time he applied to the Soviet Government to go to the funeral in Israel. He sent many cables to Government officials, but was denied. The answer they gave him was that "260,000,000 Soviet citizens cannot sacrifice their lives for your father's funeral" - as if his trip to Israel for his father's funeral would enable him to take any great secret information to that country. In reality everyone knew that there was no longer any such secret information. He reported very regretfully that during these past fourteen years he could have made such great contributions to the State of Israel. The best years of his life, his prime years of creativity and contribution, he said, have been spent sitting and waiting in refusal. At this point he is extremely far behind in his field. He was then thirty-five and is now fifty-one.

Misha told us of an incident that occurred in December, 1976, when he went to the OVIR office and protested. The officials drove him fifteen miles from the city and left him and some friends in the forest. The next day they came back and the same thing happened. This time they refused to get off the bus. There were some thirty Refuseniks and ten KGB men in the same bus. When they refused to get off, the KGB beat them up and broke their bones. The following day they went to the Interior Ministry to complain, and the day after that to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, with long written statements, boiling with indignation. Four of them were arrested and remained in prison for fifteen days. Included among this group were Boris Chernobilsky and Yosef Ahs.

Misha described the conditions in the prison. Prisoners received two very meager meals each day, and were permitted a fifteen minute walk in the prison yard. In 1978 he was arrested again when he was participating in an observance in honor of the International Year of the Child, June 1, to demand reunification with families in Israel. Several people were arrested at that time, including Masha and Vladimir Slepak and Ida Nudel. Masha had a poster on her balcony saying "Viva Israel". She was placed under house arrest and the sign was torn down. Vladimir Slepak and Ida Nudel were imprisoned and banished to remote regions of Siberia.

A cute note: This took place, they said, before *Perestroika*. There was no *Perestroika* yet, only *Stroika*, meaning that it was before restructuring; there was only *structure*.

Misha is a man with a handlebar moustache. His hands reached out passionately and desperately as he spoke. He spoke in Russian, and Oskar Mendeleev translated for him.

Next he described a very tragic episode in which his son was in a fist fight with neighborhood boys. The police came, and when they saw the list of names of the boys involved, and realized that Kremen was an activist Refusenik, the KGB took over the case and made a cause celebre of it. The KGB took advantage of the situation and decided to punish Misha's activism. They sentenced his son to four years in prison, over a minor teenage fist fight. During the investigation, when his wife addressed the judges, she asked them, "What are you doing with the boy?" They answered, "You know who you are." This was a clear indication that the punishment was in retaliation for their activist involvement.

All four years the boy served in Siberia. During those four years they saw their son only once, in July, 1984, and it cost them two thousand rubles to make the trip. In 1986, when his term was completed, he was released. He was physically well, but had many psychiatric problems. He is now twenty-three and has an emotional scar deeply burned into his psyche due to these four years of horror.

On July 11, 1988 the Ministry in which Misha worked told him that they would release him from his secrecy status. In September of the same year, OVIR told him that he was refused again on grounds of secrecy. There just seems to be no rhyme, reason or logic behind these cruel and illegal dealings of the Soviet Government.

For the past sixteen years, Misha has served in many simple jobs as have so many others. He requested a copy of Sharansky's book, *Fear No Evil*, since there are only two copies in all of Moscow, and it is a wonderful source of inspiration and emotional support for them. He says that non-Jews traveling to the Soviet Union are checked less frequently and perhaps books can be sent through them.

Their younger son is now eighteen, and he is applying for himself.

Misha's sister, Sima Grishina, lives in a small town near Haifa. (Rehov Ha-Bikkurim 5/20, Kiryat Ata, Israel).

Misha Kremin's address: Molostovich 11/2, Apt. 64, Moscow, Telephone: 303-7981.

The next speaker was Igor Uspensky. Igor is a very intense person, with a soft side to him, but showing very strong feelings. He and his wife Inna (she was not present), are biologists, both with Ph.D.'s. Their field is medical entomology. His mother, who is now seventy-six, had been a professor of plant diseases and was the head of a laboratory in the Ministry of Agriculture. She has been on pension over twelve years. They have a son named Vyatcheslav (Slava, for short) who is nineteen. They applied in 1978, and have been waiting ever since. Slava applied on his own, which is legal once one reaches the age of eighteen. However, in their case, the authorities refused to let Slava complete his application out of revenge. Slava has a medical exemption from military service. He is very religious and his parents are making efforts now to see what they can do to help him go to Israel.

We asked Igor how his son became so religious, and he replied that it began some five years ago, in a very gradual process. He began to attend lectures and become influenced by a series of very inspiring teachers, such as Vladimir Dashefsky who is still here, and Piotr Polansky - now in Israel. Slava is now a teacher in a Sunday school.

Igor told us that what was needed was a maximum amount of publicity on a regular basis. Each individual case needs a great deal of attention. Were it not for visitors like us, they could not possibly have survived, he said. American Jewish tourists are the most important supports in their lives. This was indeed very encouraging for us to hear.

Igor Uspensky is the individual who is the central address for receiving and distributing medications for many Refuseniks. He told us that at the moment they have enough, and that it is not wise to bring in medicine without a specific request. Other things that are needed, he says, are clothes and shoes for children, all sizes. Whatever doesn't fit, they give to others, and make exchanges. Some people need material support, because having lost their jobs, they have no food or rent money.

Here was just one more very powerful individual who was an extremely inspiring human being. Uspensky lives very close to Abe Stolar, on the same street, number 125, apartment 237. His phone is 434-8357. (Beginning November 25, 1988, the Uspenskys began a hunger strike to protest the refusal of their son's application. As of this date - December, 15, 1988, their protest continues and many of their admirers

around the world are deeply concerned for their health.)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1988

THURSDAY MORNING

We flew out of Russia on Aeroflot, and when we left Soviet air space there was great joy among us. Still being on an Aeroflot airplane, we could not totally release our tension, until we actually stepped off the plane into the Copenhagen airport. That night we flew into Israel with a sense of release and freedom that we had never experienced in our lives.

We remained in Israel for five days. Much of our time was taken up in trying to purchase some of the books that the teachers had requested from us that are available only in Israel. I was able to acquire thirty copies of *Elef Millim* and other texts, and books and magazines requested by the people we met. Our Cleveland Federation Mission group spent one evening addressing and stuffing book envelopes, and preparing them for mail into the Soviet Union. It was a joyous, triumphant, celebratory occasion.

However, the beginning part of that evening was even more exciting. Enid Wurtman, an old friend from Philadelphia and a staff member of the Israel Public Council for Soviet Jewry, had arranged a meeting of all the relatives whose names we had given her of people we had met in the Soviet Union. We invited them to dinner at the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem, and they were ecstatically happy to know that just a few days before we had seen their husbands, children, parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and so forth. This was such a joyous and fulfilling event! We felt that we were able to do something immediate for the people whom we had just left.

Among the people we met were the son of Edward Markov, the parents of Zechariah Levin, relatives of Alexander Blinov, the wife of Vadim Ploskich, and quite a few others. We had our film developed in Jerusalem that afternoon and showed them photos of their families. I cannot describe the joy that they experienced in seeing photographs of their loved ones taken just a day or two before. They riddled us with every question imaginable. How did they look? What did they say? How is it going for them? What did they report? What messages did they bring? What is new? What is happening? When will they get out? And on and on and on. Our conversations were animated, excited, and filled with a sense of camaraderie and unity. It felt as if we were bringing news out of prison to a long lost relative. This is precisely what we were doing, and it was extremely rewarding.

Now our task is to return to the United States and spread the message.

My seventy-two new friends desperately need help. We cannot do enough for them. They are heroic human beings, and their heroism demands concomitant heroism and activism on our part. These are not Jews of silence anymore, in Elie Wiesel's term. They are vocal, proud, staunch, committed Jews who are shouting to the world: Let my people go! Furthermore, let my people *know*. They not only want freedom, they want knowledge. They want immersion in Judaism and Jewish culture. They want to be reunited with their people. It is an ancient request. It is a nobel request. It is one which they deserve to have fulfilled.

We must devote every effort and spare nothing to bring them the freedom they so richly deserve.

EPILOGUE

The most overwhelming and dramatically sweeping conclusion I reached as a result of my visit to the Soviet Union, including the events in the few months since my return, is that there is a completely new reality today for Soviet Jews.

Events are changing so rapidly today that world Jewry must completely re-think its approaches toward helping the Jewish community in the U.S.S.R.

It is not only that emigration has increased under Gorbachev. The numbers have still not reached the level of 51,000 in 1979 under Brezhnev. At this writing all but some one hundred long-term Refusenik families have emigrated, and at the present rate, all of them may very well be out during the first half of 1989. This is not a naive estimation, but one that is shared widely within the Movement.

Even more than the rise in emigration is the startling increase in the legalization of Jewish religion and culture. Within the past six to nine months agreements have been reached between World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman and Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze in Moscow that promises to make possible an entirely new phase in the legitimization of Jewish religious and cultural activities.

When Julian Khasin and his colleagues leave (hopefully they will be in Israel by the time you read this), there may no longer be a need to illicitly reproduce Jewish reading material in Russian, English or Hebrew. When Yuli Kosharovsky is comfortably settled in Jerusalem, his Soviet-Israel Friendship Society will probably have become a functioning, legalized and accepted institution in the U.S.S.R. His Jewish Cultural Society will have its own building, and Jews will, for the first time in over fifty years, be able to study Hebrew and Judaism openly and freely.

In brief, the situation for Soviet Jews is completely and totally different than it was when Rabbi Heschel made his first plea in 1962. Many of those who want to leave have already left, or will be leaving shortly. If the recent rise in emigration figures is an indication for the future, many more thousands of Jews will continue to stream out of the U.S.S.R. From the moment we returned from our trip we began to read in the newspapers about the release from secrecy, or the receipt of an exit visa, for one after another of the families we visited. The

same is true for those whom we did not visit. On the basis of this evidence, it is not unlikely that even the one hundred hard cases still on the docket will be receiving permission soon. We will not let up pressure until they do, but it is realistic to believe that they will. And if they do, what then?

What we need today is a radical shift, a new focus, and a new understanding of the needs, problems and future of Soviet Jewry. As Isi Leibler, President of the Australian Jewish Community, and vice-president of the World Jewish Congress, stated recently (he was in Moscow the same time we were, in October, 1988), it may very well be that it is not the Soviets who need Glasnost today, but the Jewish community, which must revise its attitude, understanding, and strategy for the future in a spirit of open dialogue and creative debate.

There are currently two points of view among Soviet Jewish activists. People like Boris Kelman, whom we met the first night of our Soviet visit, believe that there is no future at all for Soviet Jewry inside the U.S.S.R., and that emigration is its only hope. Others, like Isi Leibler, believe that the majority of the two million or more remaining Jews do not, at present, wish to emigrate, and that if they are not to become the eleventh lost tribe of Israel, Soviet Jews must develop a program of active Jewish cultural and religious life in their present communities.

In my view these two views are not irreconcilable. I believe that what we need right now is a two-pronged approach.

Every activist we met on our trip stressed the need for intensified Jewish education, particularly for the large mass of people who have had no exposure to Jewish life from birth to the present, and who have received little objective information about the positive aspects of the State of Israel. They want more video and audio tapes, more books, more Jewish ritual objects, such as chai's, magen davids, mezuzot, siddurim, chumashim, etc. They need these items for classes that exist already, and for reaching out to those currently uninvolved and uninterested. These materials are needed because there is a powerful revival of interest in things Jewish among Soviet Jews. They are also needed because those who believe that there is no hope for Soviet Jewry in the U.S.S.R. feel that Jewish education and culture are the only hope for winning new souls to the cause of emigration.

What both views are expressing is that we must intensify the level of Jewish religious and cultural life in the U.S.S.R. For some it may be in order to promote emigration. For others, to enable the vast majority

who do not wish to emigrate to constitute a viable Jewish community with all the institutional apparatus required to sustain an active Jewish existence. In both cases it means a bold new effort to bring Jewish knowledge and Jewish observance into the lives of those who have drifted away, and who have been cut off from their Jewish heritage and Jewish roots for several generations.

Those who have been stressing emigration for the past twenty-five years must recognize, however, that exclusive emphasis on emigration is no longer sufficient. Many of those wanting to leave, if current predictions are accurate, will be gone by the middle of 1989. (It is also very possible that successful and easier emigration will create a greater demand for emigration in future years). Furthermore, as Isi Leibler has stated so well (Boston *Jewish Advocate*, 12-15-88), "the Soviet Jewry movement is not a travel agency, and the transfer of one diaspora to another, even from a communist society to a democracy, is not a pressing national Jewish objective. This is especially true if the overwhelming majority of Jews wanting to leave - currently over 90 percent - do not want to go to Israel, do not particularly care about their Jewish identity, and have doubtful prospects of even remaining Jews once they end up in the West."

Reports now emerging from Russia indicate that we are on the threshold of a broad new level of expansion of Jewish culture. The Moscow Jewish Musical Theatre recently appeared in several Australian cities. A building housing a center for Jewish culture, the Solomon Michoels Center, was recently dedicated, which will publish journals, establish a public Jewish library for books and video cassettes, an art gallery, a bookshop, film festivals, seminars and a social center and coffee lounge. Isi Leibler, one whose word is highly respected in world Jewish circles, predicts that this Center "is only the first of many future Jewish cultural centers in the U.S.S.R."

When we were in Moscow the esteemed Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz of Jerusalem was also in the city, negotiating for the establishment of a rabbinical yeshiva to train indigenous rabbis for the Soviet Jewish community, staffed by visiting scholars from Israel, selected by Rabbi Steinsaltz. In addition, it is well known that the Lubavitch organization has been doing important missionary work among Soviet Jews for decades, and continues to do so. Perhaps their sacred work will no longer need to be clandestine, as more Glasnost filters down to the Jewish community.

But if Soviet Jews are like the Jews in the rest of the world, neither

the moderate, rational and intellectual Orthodoxy of Rabbi Steinsaltz, nor the rabid fundamentalism of Chabad will satisfy the vast majority of those who hunger for Jewish spiritual nourishment. We who represent the vast majority of world Jewry, the non-Orthodox, must begin to do more to offer books, courses, institutionalized classes and informal educational opportunities, to those who are waiting to be reached. We must increase our program of sending rabbis, educators, teachers, scholars, hazzanim, social workers, and lay leaders, including those of our Federations, who have such vast experience in community organization. Our rabbinical seminaries, our Hebrew teacher training colleges, and our national lay organizations, such as Hadassah, B'nai B'rith, ORT, Naamat, National Council for Jewish Women, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and others, must all work towards sending people into the Soviet Union on a more formal and sustained basis, to help organize a network of Jewish cultural, educational and religious instrumentalities in light of what is becoming possible today under Glasnost. Such visiting leaders can also bring objective information on life in Israel, and about the successful absorption of Soviet Jews.

Two days after we left Moscow we were visiting the apartment of an Israeli friend who was watching the evening TV news. An announcement was made that starting in a few weeks there would be direct telephone dialing from Israel to the U.S.S.R. This is just a small example of the daily transformations that have been taking place in the past few weeks and months, since the middle of 1988.

Communication is suddenly opening up between Soviet Jewry and the rest of their scattered brothers and sisters in Israel, North America and elsewhere. Receiving mail, including letters and package shipments, telephone communication, even temporary travel to the West and Israel, have all become possible for Soviet Jews in the very recent past.

From all indications it seems that our lost brothers and sisters will now once again be part and parcel of the Household of Israel, with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities pertaining thereunto. We simply cannot afford to deal with them in the same ways we have in the past! They must be from now on more than the subject of special prayers in our synagogues "for our oppressed brothers and sisters behind the Iron Curtain," or the victimized children whose only Bar/Bat Mitzvah can be celebrated in absentia with an American twin. If things progress as they seem to be, they may soon be sitting at international conferences with us agonizing over the same problems of apathy, assimilation and

intermarriage that are prevalent in free democracies throughout the world. They will soon have rabbis and educators attending seminars with our rabbis and educators trying to figure out how to motivate the unsynagogued, how to attract those who absent themselves from classes in adult Jewish education, and how to encourage them to make Aliyah.

In other words, if what we now see in its incipient stages bears the rich fruit which we hope and pray it will, *the major problem of Soviet Jewry may become not how to force the Government to let more people go, but how to convince the Jews to want to remain Jews, either in the U.S.S.R. or in Israel.*

This will require an entirely different approach, a new vision, and a brand new and imaginative strategic plan for "saving Soviet Jewry."

Those who believe that Aliyah is still the only viable answer may need to concentrate their efforts on a broad educational endeavor geared toward persuading the Soviet Jewish public that Israel is a spiritual center which can nurture their deepest personal and religious longings, rather than only a place of refuge for persecuted Jews. The Israeli Government will have to place a much higher priority on competent and comfortable absorption of Soviet immigrants, so that others will be motivated to follow them.

The world Jewish community, particularly in Israel and North America, will have to join together as never before in developing this new strategy, setting aside the petty jealousies and outmoded rivalries that have characterized its behavior until now. Our Federations and other funding agencies will have to rearrange their priorities to make the *education* of Soviet Jews one of the highest priorities in Jewish life today. As Yosef Begun eloquently expressed this idea at a gathering of former Soviet Jews which I attended in Israel last summer (1988), the most prominent slogan for Soviet Jewry will no longer be the biblical plea, "Let My People Go," but rather a new and revised *cri de guerre*, "Let My People *Know*!"

The rose-colored portrait I have painted above is one that takes into account the new realities of a Soviet Union ruled by Mikhail Gorbachev who recognizes that the key to modernization and economic progress rests on opening up their political system and developing closer ties with the West. But even with all of Gorbachev's grandiose plans for economic development for his languishing countrymen, none of the gains which have been secured for Soviet Jewry until now would have been possible without the unrelenting pressure of world Jewry, upon

our own democratic Governments, on the press, the clergy, the scientists and every segment of the free world; without housewives, the women's groups, the students' associations, the synagogues, the Federations, the conferences, protests, marches, advertisements, buttons, bumper stickers, envelope slogans, all-night vigils, travel programs, publications, political advocacy, and every other kind of private and public pressure we have wielded as a powerful, informed and alert Jewish community.

Though we see a brighter future ahead of us, we cannot stop for one minute the forceful advocacy which we have promoted over the past twenty-five years. It may take new directions, and it may require different emphasis here and there. It may also have to make public acknowledgment to the Soviet leadership for the achievements produced thus far. But it cannot stop.

What we have described is a reality in its very infancy, and until it blossoms and proves itself in the fullest and broadest possible manner, we cannot let down our guard for even a second.

David A. Harris, Washington representative for the American Jewish Committee, put it well in a recent AJC publication:

> Whatever the good news, the need for advocacy continues. Long-term Refuseniks remain; a second generation of Refuseniks has emerged; capricious bureaucratic rules persist; restrictions on Hebrew culture continue, and the specter of anti-Semitism, generated particularly by nationalist groups such as Pamyat, has arisen. While most of the best known Refuseniks and those prisoners whose plight came to symbolize the larger movement have exited, tens of thousands of Soviet Jews, perhaps many more, seriously are considering emigration today.
>
> Unless we continue to make our voices heard, there is no guarantee the gates will remain open. The Kremlin's decision to permit greater emigration was not a sudden humanitarian gesture. Rather, it was a carefully calculated acknowledgement of the priority the issue is accorded in the West's dealings with Moscow. Our challenge will be to maintain Soviet Jewry as a priority matter on the West's conscience and, more practically, on its political agenda.

This report thus ends on a note of mixed sounds. My diary presents a picture of a changing reality, and one of great hope for the future. But that optimistic portrait was created only on the foundation of decades of hard word by thousands of people, fighting for justice and freedom. To maintain that hope, and to guarantee its continued reality, we need to work just as hard - perhaps in entirely new directions - with the same kind of devotion, dedication, commitment and clear-minded thinking that has brought us to this new level of achievement.

One of the oldest and most honored phrases which our Jewish Tradition has handed down to us is that *"Kol Yisrael Chaverim,"* "All Jews are one fellowship." A similar phrase, one which I taught in the small apartment of Lev and Julia Kyempner in Moscow on Tuesday evening, October 11, 1988, informs us that *"Kol Yisrael Arevim ze la-zeh,"* "All Jews are responsible one for the other."

These have been more than slogans for the past four thousand years. They continue to call upon us to bring out the best that is within us for the redemption of our faith and our people. For the sake of my seventy-two friends, and for all their millions of friends, who constitute one world-wide fellowship, a millennia-old universal family of the Jewish People, there can be no nobler statements than these for the Household of Israel in our day.

LAUGHING FOR SANITY

Dov Peretz Elkins

When Abraham and Sarah in their advanced age are informed that they are to have a child, they laugh. "How ridiculous for us!" Abraham is one hundred years old and Sarah is close to that age. "For us to have a child?" Yet if Isaac were not born to Abraham what would have happened to the Jewish people? Abraham would have been the first and the last Jew, and we wouldn't be here today. So Abraham and Sarah had to have a son. When this was predicted by an angel of the Lord to the couple, Sarah laughed. How absurd it is! But ultimately when she does have a child, as God predicted, she names him Yitzchak, which means *laughter*. It was a joke to her when she was first informed, it was funny. How interesting and ironic it is that the second patriarch of our people is given that name, laughter, Yitzchak.

Yitzchak is one of the three names that we repeat on a regular basis, every time we recite the Amidah, three times a day, elohay Avraham, elohay Yitzchak, elohay Yaakov. Our God, the God of our people, is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. We don't realize sometimes that what we are saying is "the God of Yitzchak," *laughter*. Imagine how difficult it must have been for him to walk around with that name all his life! Even Sarah said: when people hear that name they are going to laugh continually.

One of the commentators looks upon this whole story and makes a very interesting observation. He reads into the account of the life of Isaac the anticipation of the fate of the descendants of Isaac, the Jewish people. All through four thousand years of Jewish history, often being doomed to extinction by their oppressors, the Jewish People would laugh at those who wanted to destroy them, and would mock the person who said that Judea is no more, the Jewish people is destroyed. Thousands of years ago they said that. When the first temple was destroyed, and when the second temple was destroyed, the Jewish people was without a homeland, without a capital, without a temple, without a sanctuary, without a place to relate to God. And what did

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Sermon delivered at The Park Synagogue, October 29, 1988

the Jews do? They laughed. It was painful, it was a great loss, it was a time of great grief and enormous suffering. Our people endured much over these past four thousand years of persecution, wandering, and displacement. Yet somehow the name of the great ancestor and patriarch of our people gave them that precedent to laugh at those who tried to subdue us and destroy us.

My friends, a group of us were in the Soviet Union a few weeks ago. It was my first trip there. I spent only six days and met seventy-two Refuseniks. One of the remarkable aspects of this experience was how so many of these seventy-two people whom I am now honored to call my friends, having met them and having recognized their enormous courage, suffering through the things that they endure, how they're able to laugh, and to tell jokes to one another about the leaders of the Soviet Union, about the oppressive Soviet society, and about all the terrible things that happen to them. As Isaac before them, they are able to mock the people who call themselves their leaders. A whole genre of stories has grown up, known now as Refusenik humor. Somebody has even gone to the extent of collecting into a booklet all the stories and jokes the Refuseniks tell as they look upon the tragedy with a certain point of view, that enables them to endure.

In Abe Stolar's home in Moscow, on our last night in the U.S.S.R., several Refuseniks gathered, including Misha (Mikhail) Kremen. Misha Kremen had suffered greatly, his son was in prison in Siberia for four years as a teenager, and a second son is now in jail just because they were getting revenge on their father for being a Jewish activist. He endured all the things that he did with amazing courage.

Misha told of an event some ten years ago, on June 1st, the International Day of the Child, when Soviet Jews in their masses came together to protest the treatment of Soviet Jewish children and families, and he put a poster on the balcony of his apartment that said "Viva Israel". Then he took a loud speaker and a tape recorder and he played a song by Shlomo Carlebach, called "Let My People Go," as loud as he could. As he was describing this, speaking in Russian, (he was one of the few people who could not speak English, so someone translated for him), 99% of it was unintelligible, but those of us from Cleveland were able to pick up one little phrase. When it was translated it was obvious what he meant. He said "They punished me for what I did, they put me under house arrest." Of course, now things are a little easier, and you're allowed to demonstrate a little bit, and some lightening has taken place, but in those days, in the 70's, that was when there was *stroika*, there was not yet *perestroika*, when there was

structure, no *re-structuring*. Everybody present got a little chuckle as he made a play on the word *perestroika* and put a little jab into Mr. Gorbachev for this society which the Soviets are running today.

One of the members of our group noticed that we were always looking behind us to see if we were being followed, or looking for bugs in our hotel room or in other places. And someone said, "You know something, there really is nobody around, there really isn't any surveillance, but we keep looking around. Maybe we're developing *paranoika*." The kind of humor that we developed in the presence of Soviet Jews was able to lighten this very heavy and oppressive experience, even for us who were there for just six days.

We went from person to person and asked them "Why is it that you have been incarcerated, or denied your exit visa, or kept from leaving the country?" Some of them would say, the classic Soviet excuse is that we have "state secrets" or "scientific" or "military secrets". What is the secret? Here is a person who worked as a low level technician twenty years ago, and all the information that he knew has been published and is known to the world. One scientist said to us something that I had heard many times. It has become a classic story, about his so-called secrecy, which is such a ridiculous pretext upon which they keep Soviet Jews from receiving their visas. He said I worked fifteen years in an area of medical science that even in that day, in 1973, was twenty years behind the United States and the rest of the world. So what secret could there possible be? He said to tell you the truth, that's the secret, that we're twenty years behind the United States! The Refuseniks are able to take the stuff of their life and make it into something light and humorous, and, following the tradition of Isaac, scoff and mock the people who oppress them.

We were riding in a cab one afternoon on the way to the flat of one Refusenik, and we asked the driver, one of the few who spoke English, "What do you think of Glasnost?" We were trying to ask this question as frequently as possible to get a sense from the local population how they were relating to Mr. Gorbachev, and whether Glasnost would really survive. He said, "Well I'll tell you what we say here in Russia about Glasnost. We say that they have extended the leash a little bit farther." Well, what does that mean? That is a very interesting image, "extended the leash." It means that we are a bunch of animals being controlled by our masters, and maybe we have a little bit more freedom because the leash with which they control us is a little bit longer. But also, together with the saying that they have extended the leash, is that they have put the plate of food a little farther away from us. That,

they say, is Glasnost. They have extended the leash, but have put the food plate a little farther away, which is his way of joking at the changes that are being made today.

In addition to having heard some of the humor of the Refuseniks myself, I have subsequently collected a few stories that friends have told me about what they have heard from the Refuseniks.

We know in our own experience, those who traveled with me, that there are always long lines everywhere, in the supermarkets and department stores, long, long lines. To buy a couple of potatoes you wait hours, and what you get is hardly worth eating in the end. One story tells that an American tourist entered a Moscow butcher shop and he said: "I am giving a party tonight for some friends, please wrap up ten steaks." Whereupon the clerk said, "I'd be happy to, just give me the steaks, and I'll wrap them up."

The convoluted theology of revolution in the U.S.S.R. is a subject which they frequently talk about. What is the necessary transitional stage between socialism and communism? The answer, alcoholism. Why are there no Jewish cosmonauts among those who go on these around-the-world missions? Obviously because the Soviet authorities are afraid that the Jews would never return if they travelled into space.

Once Zeligman was asked to recount the most significant details of his life. "I was born in Odessa in 1920, and on the eighth day of my life my chances of ever getting a good job in the Soviet Union were cut drastically."

What is the definition of a Soviet string quartet? A Soviet symphony just returning from a tour of the West.

There are a few words about optimism, which is in quite short supply. You look around, and you see grim faces, miserable people, just walking along the street. Not only the sky is cloudy, but the expressions on their faces are dark and cloudy. The Soviet Jewish definition of an optimist is a person who is insufficiently pessimistic. Or: What is the difference between an optimist and a pessimist in the Soviet Union? An optimist believes that things have gotten as bad as their going to get, and a pessimist believes that they can still get worse.

What is the meaning of this kind of humor, that is found everywhere you go? I think it is an aspect of the heroism of these people, who, in spite of everything that happens, have a strong underlying faith. We

met men who had to divorce their wives in order to permit them and their children to receive exit visas and go to Israel. Families were separated for many, many years through this torturous procedure, and yet they are able somehow, through it all, to laugh about it.

During the 70s I attended a lecture by the very prominent Protestant minister, William Sloan Coffin. Coffin was a very active war protester in the Viet Nam days, and he spoke at a local Unitarian church. He was very well known as a strong activist, and a peace-nik. He spoke very beautifully, and mixed into his speech was always a joke or two or three. At the end, during the question-and-answer period, someone turned to him and said: "Reverend, you're talking about the cream of American young men who are dying over there in Southeast Asia, and here you are making speeches, which is wonderful, but why do you need all the jokes? Aren't you demeaning the very essence of the sacrifice that these people are making in Viet Nam?" He was a very brave man, Mr. Coffin, and he answered this way. Humor and faith are two sides of the very same coin. Faith enables us to overcome the long-range incongruities of life, and humor enables us to overcome the short-term incongruities of life. But they both achieve for us the very same thing.

What I saw in the hearts and souls of the Jews I met in the Soviet Union is a very deep faith, a very deep sense of courage. Even more than that was a victory of one set of values over another. And what I heard between all the lines and stories and sayings which were humorous, was a sense that said: No matter what you do, you can be as miserable, inhuman and torturous as you can be, and I am going to stand straight and tall and laugh at you and mock you, because you can not break my spirit! It is often stated that Refuseniks are the only people who stand proud and tall in the U.S.S.R., because they believe that their inner freedom results from their free Jewish spirits and their dream of living a free life with their people in Israel. What a stark contrast it was to see, all during our Soviet visit, the lack of laughter in the somber faces of people walking the streets of Leningrad and Moscow.

You can break my body, you can take my life, you can separate me from my children and my wife, but you cannot break my spirit! I will laugh, whenever and wherever I choose to do so. Well that is the great legacy that Yitzchak left our People. Sarah said that God made me laugh, so that all who are hearing what happened can laugh with me. Maybe, in a sense, as we watch Titus, Chmielnitski, Torquemado, Hitler, Stalin and Arafat, and all the rest who predicted our demise

centuries ago and today, maybe together with Sarah somehow there is a little quiet laughter taking place in all the ranks of the Jewish people throughout the world. Not only do we Jews laugh at such people, but God himself, the Bible tells us, laughs with us. In the second psalm in the biblical Book of Psalms we read: "He that sits in heaven laughs at the oppressors of the world." The Lord of the Universe mocks them, as do we, the Children of Yitzchak. Amen!

NEVER AGAIN

Margaret Singerman

We came into this world naked and leave this world naked. We all only make a difference for a short time. It is what we leave behind in caring and giving children and grandchildren and the other people whose lives we have touched that is our lasting contribution to this world and to mankind. Our children will spend the money we leave them and will sell the possessions that don't fit into their decor, but our values can never be sold or spent!

I have often said how lucky we are to be free American Jewish women and I truly have meant it. But never did I really know or appreciate the magnitude of that statement until *now*. My wish is to be able to drop each of you in the Soviet Union for even just one day. It would change your life forever. Don't all of our Jewish brothers and sisters have the right to feel as free and grateful as we do? Now, for the first time in many years, there is the strong possibility that more Jews will be released from the Soviet Union, and if the gates do open wider we must be prepared to take in our fellow Jews.

We can never let what happened to the ship St. Louis happen again, when men, women and children were turned away by all countries including the United States and returned to Europe, where many of these innocent victims perished in the ovens of the Holocaust! It is a responsibility we must carry as American Jews and make sure we do as we say, **NEVER AGAIN!** We must be there and ready, for the gates in the Soviet Union could close again any day. Soviet Jews could perish behind them. The burden is ours.

Yes, we are the chosen people, but we, in this room, are certainly the chosen few. It is a small price to pay for the daily lives we live in freedom and comfort. A freedom and comfort beyond the comprehension or desire of our fellow Jews in the Soviet Union. What is significant to us isn't even within their realm of comprehension.

Delivered November, 1988, to Women's Division, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, Ohio

These wonderful and courageous people have *one* goal: to be free, to be Jews, free to have their children play openly with other Jewish children, free to make a contribution to society. They want to be free to give of themselves.

When I told one Refusenik family we have Jewish schools, hospitals, and homes for the aged, and mentioned all the other services we provide from counselling families to job placement, they looked at me in disbelief. To them it was like hearing about a place that exists only in one's fantasy. We take all of this for granted! But we shouldn't! Believe me, it is a privilege, a gift, to be able to live this way. To have this freedom. To be able to form the agencies we have and to have the freedom to use them. But with this gift, this privilege, comes a responsibility. It is our responsibility not to take them for granted. We must nurture them and make them secure.

I have been where our way of life, as we know it, doesn't exist. Please believe me, you cannot appreciate what we have until it is gone. I thank God I have had the chance to feel isolated and oppressed in that other life for one week. It was unbearable. It was suffocating. As one Jewish man who has been in refusal for fifteen years said to me, "You would die within one month living as I do in the Soviet Union." He was right.

In one week I saw and felt that slow death. Yet it still wasn't real, because I knew it was only for one week, and I was lucky enough to be an American Jew. My grief was terrible when I left our fellow Jews behind in the Soviet Union and returned to fantasy land. The only reason I was leaving, and not they instead, was a quirk of fate many years ago. One that none of us can take credit for. Other Jews helped our ancestors, and that is why we are here in this room today. Don't we have the same obligation and responsibility to our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union and wherever they are being oppressed? Don't we have the responsibility to see that they can be here with us and in Israel where Jews can be free?

Israel is a miracle itself - a country formed because no one in the world wanted us - not even the United States of America. A nation and a home open for any Jew in the world. Israel is the hope and the dream that keeps the Soviet Jews alive and fighting, against all odds, to maintain their Jewishness. Israel is the mother who pays the plane fare for her released ch0ildren to come home; who, when she brings her children home, absorbs, assimilates them and provides for them.

Not only are Soviet Jews being starved intellectually in their given professions, but they are starving for any knowledge - pictures, even maps and newspapers, anything having to do with Israel. Because there is an Israel there is hope for all Jews in oppression anywhere in the world. Israel doesn't know about quotas when Jewish lives are involved. Even we, the most secure group of Jews in the world, are only as secure as we are because the State of Israel survives and thrives. Our good fortune exists because another Jew helped us. How can we do less? What makes us entitled to freedom and not other Jews in the Soviet Union and around the world?

We do make a difference to human lives, and not in a small way. Every family, and I met with fourteen of them, said they are alive today because of us, the American Jews. We are their insurance policy. The ones that are getting out are getting out because of us. Those are large shoes to fill, and a burden that is a privilege and honor to bear.

Pretend you were with us in the Soviet Union, and that your pledge and what I am asking for beyond that is a camera, cassette recorder or watch you would have given away from your hearts, without even batting an eyelash, on a cold night in the Soviet Union, had you been lucky enough to have been with us on what was the most meaningful and worthwhile endeavor I have ever participated in. It has changed my life and values forever. I'm only sorry that it happened as a result of the bondage and pain of our fellow Jews. But I know all of you would feel as I do, and would have done as I did.

Thank you.

Appendix A - Suggestions for Future Trips

1. In previous times there was a contact person in Moscow, such as Yelena Dubinskaya, who would make calls, arrangements and appointments for incoming American Jewish tourists. Since Yelena is now in Israel, there is a great lack. Others were supposed to have filled that role, but there seems not to be any information about who is to do it. That is a very important facet of traveling, because such a person can facilitate meetings and appointments, save much valuable time, and prevent needless aggravation.

2. It should be known to rabbis, teachers and scholars who wish to give seminars for the teachers groups, that they meet for seminars in Leningrad on Thursday nights, and in Moscow on Sunday afternoons. For those who wish to be of service in leading these seminars, there ought to be advance contact to make sure that the people are at the right place at the right time. Unfortunately, I did not have this information. I arrived in Leningrad on Friday and thus missed the Thursday night group, and arrived in Moscow on Monday and missed the Sunday afternoon group. Had I been given the correct information, this would not have happened.

3. It is very important to brief people about what to bring. a) Cassettes for which there are no instruments in which to play them, for instance a video cassette recorder, will be confiscated, as our blank video cassettes were. b) When purchasing tape recorders and cameras for re-sale, the information regarding these items needs to be checked in advance to find out what the up-to-date market values are and what the greatest needs are.

4. People should know that it is possible to buy audio and video cassettes in the local Beriozkas, the stores in which only foreigners are permitted to enter and use only foreign currency. They can then be given to local people. That means that you can acquire things in the U.S.S.R. beyond what you bring in your suitcase.

5. To the extent possible, travellers should have a list of names and specific needs of book titles, audio and video cassette titles, and who should be given what. People's names should be listed as to who needs things like Russian material, or Hebrew or English educational materials. Who needs tefillin, mezuzot, havdalah implements, medicine, children's books, clothing, etc., so that proper distribution can be made.

6. Briefings should be very extensive and coordinated with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, Abraham J. Bayer of NJCRAC, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry, the Soviet Jewry Council of Philadelphia, (Dr. Bernard Dishler), or with a local Jewish Community Federation Soviet Jewry Committee. Inadequate local briefing makes for a poorly prepared trip. We were told, for example, that if we saw one or two families in each city, that would be sufficient. With a little extra effort on our own, we were able to see twenty-nine Refuseniks in Leningrad and forty-three in Moscow, totaling seventy-two Refuseniks in one seven-day trip.

7. There seems to be available from the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, and from the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry, a small number of names of Refuseniks. A small group of people receive visitors, books and other materials, while others receive none. There has to be a more accurate, appropriate and up-to-date way of receiving current information so that everyone can be seen and the right people get the right things.

8. It was not made clear that besides all the materials and things that people need themselves, the OVIR office can be "influenced" in such matters as getting people out of jail, receiving exit visas for various categories of people, and for bringing things through customs. Great care should be exercised in this regard, of course.

9. Many people gave us names of individuals who needed invitations from Israel. We were not told enough about that during our briefings, and to whom to give the information in Israel. Luckily, we knew Enid Wurtman, and she took care of it for us. We were happily able to bring many such names of people into Israel, who would then receive invitations and hopefully receive permission to leave.

10. The selection of participants in any mission to the Soviet Union needs to be done very carefully. If the people are not deeply committed it will be very difficult. They have to be prepared to do hard work, to see many Refuseniks, to be very well-briefed, and to forego many of the tourist sites that they would see otherwise. If this is not the case, then they should be invited to go on their own, but not be sent under the auspices of the Jewish community.

Appendix B - Items taken in by Maxine and Dov Peretz Elkins

1. Two Fuji automatic cameras
2. Fifteen AA batteries
3. Five chains with Magen Davids
4. Two Aiwa dual-cassette recorders
5. Approximately seventy-five books for children and adults
6. Ten chai's
7. A chain with one-hundred and ninety Jewish stars
8. Two tallitot
9. Two pairs of tefillin
10. Various over-the-counter medicines, such as aspirin, bandaids
11. Jewish toys for children
12. Two Hanukkah menorahs
13. Booklets about The Park Synagogue (our congregation)
14. Six Park Synagogue sweatshirts
15. Five sweaters
16. One Timex watch
17. Fifteen blank audio tapes
18. Six audio tapes with Hazzan Alberto Mizrahi's chanting
19. Five video tapes (which were confiscated), four blank and one about the life of Sakharov
20. Two kiddush cups
21. Ten boxes of Hanukkah candles
22. Two boxes of Shabbat candles
23. Three spice boxes for Havdalah
24. Seven shalom key chains
25. Twelve pens, regular and felt tip
26. Eight packages of children's magic markers
27. Two down ski vests
28. Three dozen alef-bet decorated pencils
29. Several Jewish star magnets for the refrigerator
30. Six matzah covers
31. Two Shabbat challah covers
32. Two potholders with Hebrew writing
33. Two Russian-Hebrew Siddurim from The Park Synagogue
34. A Jewish art calendar
35. Several Jewish pocket calendars
36. Ten pocket cards of Birkat Ha-Mazon
37. Four pocket calculators
38. Two boxes of various electric converters and European plugs

Appendix C - Soviet Jews Visited by Maxine and Dov Peretz Elkins

LENINGRAD

Friday night, October 7, 1988

Boris and Alla Kelman

Saturday, October 8, 1988

Avraham Abba
Olga Shostakovsky
Marina Limberg
Sam Kolka
Boris & Anna Dubrov & daughter, Leah
Olga Dikker, and daughter, Katya
Yuri Osterfeld
Grigory Kheifetz
Leah Dinina
Grigory (Grisha) Vilenchik
Leonid Kolton & Masha Schwartz
Simon Levine
Leonid Berkovitch (visiting from Estonia)
Mikhail Krivonosov

Sunday, October 9, 1988

Giorgi Kun and Yelena Keiss-Kuna
Edward Markov
Lazar and Tamar Kazakevitch
Zechariah Levin
Alexander Blinov
Yevgeny Lein
Anatoly & Tamara Beliatsky
Alexander & Irina Yampolsky
Mark Yosilevich
Mikhail (Misha) Blank

MOSCOW

Monday, October 10, 1988

Anatoly Genis
Julian & Victoria Khasin
Alexander (Sasha) & Anna Khasin & son, Moshe

Tuesday, October 11, 1988

Yuli & Inna Kosharovsky
Mikhail Volkov
Boris & Leah Chernobilsky, & son, Yosef
Channah Chernobilsky & Yaakov (Alexander) Sinichkin
Vadim Ploskich
Lev & Julia Kyempner, & daughters, Sonya and Ida
Natasha Marcuzan
Julia Katz
Pinny (Pinchas) Crasnopolsky
Leib Shimonovitch
Bella Kogen & Yuli Schwartz
Yelena Bau

Wednesday, October 12, 1988

Edward & Nina Nadgorny
Dimitri Orlovsky
Yehudit Luri & daughter, Bella
Abe & Gita Stolar
Oskar Mendeleev & son, Gregory
Mikhail (Misha) Kremen
Igor Uspensky

Appendix D - De-Briefing Memo

MEMO TO: Soviet Jewry Activists

FROM: Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins

RE: My visit to Leningrad and Moscow, October 7 - 13, 1988

DATE: October 26, 1988 - 15 Heshvan, 5749

Prior to completing my full debriefing report, I am hastening to send the following information gleaned from various Refuseniks, specifically regarding needs and requests for materials:

I - Leningrad

1. Anna Dubrov

Anna expressed a need for Hebrew text books for her Hebrew classes - about thirty copies of each, such as: *Elef Milim, Ani B'Yisrael, Habet Ushma.*

2. Mikhail Blank

Head of Hebrew teachers in Leningrad. Needs many things, including educational materials as well as saleable items for funds. The funds he uses to duplicate materials for all the classes. He could use good cameras, tape-recorders, etc. Also dual-cassette tape recorders for transcribing Hebrew video-cassettes. Mono-cassette tape recorders for students to use at home to practice their Hebrew. Blank audio and video cassettes (VHS Pal-Secom).

There is a great need for video-cassettes on life in Israel to combat anti-Israel propaganda. Not stories of Entebbe or Mossad, but daily life in

Israel - including Israeli TV programs. A film on El Al I saw on my way home this past week would be perfect, showing every aspect of scientific, agricultural, industrial, educational, social life and fashion-type scenes.

He also expressed a need for professional magazines from Israel, such as *Ha-Rofe*, magazines in Hebrew on computers, agriculture, architecture, engineering, science and other professions - both professional and popular journals, to help people keep up to date in their professions and get a positive image of Israel.

3. Grigory Vilenchik

Grigory is the focus person for audio-visual equipment in Leningrad, and he needs equipment such as video and audio cassette players, blank cassettes for both, etc. He has special expertise in electronics, and is being trained as one of the up-and-coming Hebrew teachers in Leningrad.

II Moscow

1. Julian Khasin

For his private publishing house, in which he uses films to reproduce Jewish books translated into Russian, he needs funds for paying for photography and reproduction. Things such as cameras and Seiko watches are helpful. Julian states that he has passed on such requests for over a year, and has received very little help. He also states that much money is being wasted because Americans are not up to date on what the market brings in the U.S.S.R. Thus they bring cameras and other equipment that brought a good return previously, but which now is flooding the market and new items bring a far greater return. He suggests that people call in advance before leaving the United States to get the best return on their dollar by

purchasing the most marketable electronic and other equipment.

Julian is also a teacher of Torah and can use English commentaries on the Torah, such as those of Nechamah Leibowitz, for his classes.

2. Mikhail Kremen

Needs children's clothing of all sizes for Refusenik families who have no means of support. Very hard to obtain clothing for children in the USSR, including shoes of all sizes. Cigarettes help for sale and "shmeering." His son is in prison and he can use things to give guards to get extra visits: flat bottles of Smirnoff Vodka, cigarettes, and saleable items such as cameras, watches, etc.

3. Mikhail Volkov

Mikhail is in charge of Torah-oriented education in Moscow and leads the Outreach Program for smaller cities. Desperate need for blank audio and video cassettes (VHS Pal-Secom); video recorders; dual- and single-cassette tape recorders (more of single-cassette for students in cities without teachers). Music for children. Video cassettes in Hebrew and Russian, in addition to "The Chosen", "Exodus", "Fiddler on the Roof", and TV programs from Israel. For religious people he needs: pocket and wall Jewish calendars; Jewish stars (Magen Davids); hanukkiyot; mezuzot with kosher klaf; tallitot and tefillin; postcards and pictures of Israel; maps of Israel; books in Hebrew, English and Russian; Russian-Hebrew Bibles (available in Israel from Mosad HaRav Kuk); Hebrew-Russian dictionaries needed greatly; Siddur with Russian translation; copies of *Ivrit Chaya* and accompanying audio-cassettes for small cities.

Address: Mikhail Volkov
USSR
Moscow 117513
Prospect Leninsky 123
Corp. 1, Apt 136
Tel: 438-2732

Similar materials can be sent to his friend and co-worker, Valentin Lidsky.

Address: USSR
Moscow 115 142
Kolomenskaya Naberezhnaya 10
Apt. 258
Tel: 114-1825

Volkov and others told us that English and Hebrew books are now being received through the mail. Packages should be small, no more than two books and one or two magazines. Russian materials are not yet permitted, nor are audio and video cassettes. Others told us that they could receive cassettes, but that they paid high customs fees for them, and they would do much better being brought in in person.

4. Vadim Ploskich

USSR, Moscow 1009004, Ulyanovskaya 43, Bldg. 3, Apt. 39, Tel: 227-8071

Vadim became a Refusenik in Sept. 1988. We met him at the home of Boris Chernobilsky. Boris invited him for us to meet him and speak with him, because Boris had received phone permission to leave a few days before. Boris's role as mentor, leader and "savior" of the six hundred Ilyinka Jews, to whom he travels ten hours all night and with whom he spends several days at a time, is being passed to Vadim - a quite wonderful human being.

For the Ilyinka Jewish community, Vadim, who

has already made several visits there with Boris, tells us his needs include funds to use to "shmeer" Ilyinka and OVIR officials (i.e. expensive items such as tape-recorders, cameras, watches, film, etc.)

For the religious community at Ilyinka he also needs the same kind of things I listed for Volkov, : mezuzot, siddurim, chumashim, chai's, magen davids, wall and pocket calendars, etc. His work is expensive and funds are most helpful.

5. Yuli Kosharovsky

Yuli has founded a Jewish Cultural Society, and is applying for official status through the Government. The papers have already been submitted. He needs a personal computer, audio-visual equipment of all kinds, blank tapes, etc. He publishes seven different journals for various groups, such as the Israel-USSR Friendship Society, and has large circulation, up to one thousand for some of them. All this is expensive and funds and tradeable items are needed.

6. Aryeh (Lev) Gorodetsky

Head of Hebrew teachers in Moscow and Leningrad. Needs dual-cassette and mono-cassette tape recorders, blank audio and video cassette tapes; Hebrew books of all kinds, texts, etc. Most Hebrew classes in U.S.S.R. seem to be using *Elef Millim, Ani B'Yisrael, Habet U'Shma*, and *Ivrit Chaya* with cassette. The latter is needed by people who send materials to cities outside main centers for people to learn on their own.

7. Igor Uspensky

Central person for distribution of medicines. Asks that we please check first before bringing in any prescription medicines. No use bringing things without calling and asking first.

8. Anatoly Genis

Is living from hand to mouth, with a sick wife, and needs funds to help support himself and family. Spends enormous amount of time working for Jewish community, running demonstrations, distributing literature, etc. Saleable gifts in order.

General note: Many people asked for small Hanukkah gifts for children for Hanukkah parties in various Sunday Schools - especially person who heads children's schools in Moscow. Also, there is a major battle going on to win the hearts and minds of the general folk who know nothing about Israel, and who need to have a more positive image of Israel if they are to be motivated to emigrate to Israel. Educational and general literature is needed for such people. They need to see pictures of daily life in Israel in a positive vein, read positive things, and see appealing photos, movies, etc.

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