

TERROR IN MINSK



КГБ (Комитет Государственной Безопасности)

(KGB: Committee On State Security)

KGB Case Number 97:

THE JEWISH OFFICERS "PLOT"

Edited, With An Introduction, by Moshe Decter
Foreword by Morris B. Abram

National Conference on Soviet Jewry
Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews

STOP PRESS! GO PRESS!

As we go to press on June 1, the most gratifying news has arrived: "Case Number 97" has been closed and the charges against its principal victims dropped. The news obviously fills us with delight.

This could only have happened because the Soviet regime, eager to improve relations with the United States on the eve of Leonid Brezhnev's visit here, seeks to assuage Western concern over the fate of Soviet Jewry. It is a measure of the power of public opinion in this cause.

Why, then, do we proceed with this publication on a closed case?

The anti-Semitic propaganda is still being churned out all over the USSR. The harassment and intimidation continue. The atmosphere of hostility to all things Jewish hangs heavy still. The policy of discriminatory selection of emigrants stands. In a word, the arbitrariness and irrationality persist.

Moreover, who knows when the Minsk Case may not be reopened. The very fact that it was ended on the basis of Article 6 of the RSFSR Code of Criminal Procedure is most disquieting. That Article states that any criminal case may be terminated by the authorities "if it is deemed that, because of a change in the situation at the time of the investigation, the act committed by the guilty person has lost its socially dangerous character, or the person has ceased to be socially dangerous." [Emphasis added.]

This vaguely and thus dangerously formulated Article unmistakably presumes the guilt of the investigated person, tacitly assumes that either the person or the act committed can be described as socially dangerous, and leaves the victim dangling with the investigation mysteriously stopped "because of a change in the situation". But suppose that "the situation" should change back again?

This is, in fact, the very Article invoked to suspend the 1971 investigation of the Rostov Jewish activist Lazar Liubarsky -- only to have the case reopened in 1972, with Liubarsky getting four years in prison.

Who knows what might happen in Minsk, or elsewhere, when there is no Brezhnev visit in the offing, when the Soviet desire to accommodate Western opinion may not be so keen, when the Soviet need to gain something from the West may not be as compelling as it appears today? Who knows what the future may bring?

Let us say, therefore, that this publication is a cautionary tale -- of what might have happened in Minsk...and actually did happen in other Soviet cities...and might yet happen somewhere else. This booklet is a token, for the record, of the need to keep public opinion on the alert for the otherwise vulnerable and utterly defenseless Jews of Russia.

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National Conference on Soviet Jewry
Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews

New York, N. Y.

MORRIS B. ABRAM, prominent New York attorney and civic leader, has had a distinguished career of public service in humanitarian causes. An early and major legal champion of civil rights in his native Georgia and a close friend of the late Martin Luther King, Jr., he has served as President of the American Jewish Committee, President of Brandeis University, and United States Representative on the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

MOSHE DECTER, journalist and writer, is a specialist on Soviet affairs and Communist history. He has focused much of his research and publication of the past fifteen years on Soviet Jewry. A former editor of the New Leader, he is the author of two books and his studies have appeared in Foreign Affairs, American Heritage and other national journals.

The NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY, at 11 West 42nd Street, New York 10036, is the coordinating body of all major Jewish organizations and speaks for the overwhelming majority of the American Jewish Community. It was founded in 1964.

The CONFERENCE ON THE STATUS OF SOVIET JEWS, at 16 East 85th Street, New York 10028, is a private group of eminent intellectuals, academicians, scientists and artists, labor and civil rights leaders. It was founded in 1963, by such persons as Norman Thomas, Walter Reuther, William O. Douglas, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Arthur Miller.

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Foreword

by Morris B. Abram

During my service as United States Representative on the United Nations Human Rights Commission, I had the melancholy responsibility of calling the Commission's attention, in 1964, to the publication in Kiev in late 1963 of a blatantly anti-Semitic book, Judaism Without Embellishment, by Trofim K. Kichko, the Soviet Ukraine's "specialist on the Jews."

As a consequence of that original exposure at the United Nations, the book achieved international notoriety and became the object of protests all over the world, including by many Western Communist parties. The affair ended in the censure of aspects of the book by the Ideological Commission of the Soviet Communist Party and its temporary withdrawal from circulation inside the USSR. Unfortunately, just a few years later Kichko was rehabilitated and was once more publishing "scholarly" works of the same ilk about Jews.

During this same period, we at the Human Rights Commission had to contend with an alarming new theme in Soviet propaganda -- the equation of Judaism and Zionism with Nazism. This ghastly amalgam equates the victim of the Holocaust with its perpetrator. In the decade since the publication of Judaism Without Embellishment, that equation has become one of the central themes of Soviet propaganda on Jews, Judaism, Zionism, Jewish history and Israel.

In that decade, literally thousands of publications of all sorts -- articles, reviews, brochures, booklets, books -- as well as radio broadcasts, motion pictures and public speeches, have sought to inculcate the doctrine

that the ancient Jewish religion has spawned an abominable ideology, Zionism, which is racist and aggressive and which in turn gave birth, in alliance with world capitalist imperialism and colonialism, to the State of Israel, whose practices are comparable only to those of Hitler's Third Reich. And the Zionist movement, at the behest of Israel and its allies, is the cutting edge of a vast international conspiracy to subvert the Communist regimes, the independent states of Africa and Asia, the various national liberation movements around the world, and all other progressive forces.

In this dispensation, anti-Zionism has become the code word for anti-Semitism. And the bitter irony is that this ugly doctrine is being propagated and disseminated throughout the world, perhaps in tandem, by the propaganda machines of the Soviet Union and the Communist world and of the extreme right-wing and fascist movements of various countries.

Now, just one decade after Kichko in the Ukraine, one learns of a Vladimir Begun propounding the same evil doctrine in Minsk; and he is not alone. This malign propaganda has become part and parcel of a larger campaign of harassment of Jews in Minsk and Moscow and other Soviet cities who have been proudly asserting their Jewish identity and actively seeking exit permits for Israel.

One thing should be clear: Their right to leave the Soviet Union is a fundamental human right, which no government may confer upon or withdraw from any person.

The policy of harassment is arbitrary and irrational, and ultimately unavailing. Presumably, its purpose is to intimidate and discourage Jews from seeking to leave. Yet the experience of recent years, when we have witnessed the manifestly growing desire of scores of thousands of Jews all over the country to go to Israel, ought to inform the Soviet authorities that harassment

and intimidation can work, if at all, only in the short run. In the long run, this is a historically irreversible movement.

Surely we are within our rights to speak out to the Soviet authorities with this reasonable candor:

The Jews of your country are a tiny, fragmented minority. They cannot conceivably pose any threat to the power and security of the Soviet state, nor can the departure of those who wish to leave represent any significant loss. Why, then, are they hounded so?

Why, when a person applies for permission to emigrate to Israel -- in short, to exercise that elementary human right to leave a country which all governments, including your own, recognize in theory -- why is he publicly denounced at his place of work, then dismissed from his job, then required to beg his former boss for a letter of professional approbation, and to submit an affidavit with his parents' approval? Why are so many applicants arbitrarily and repeatedly refused the right to leave, or given an endless bureaucratic run-around, frequently on the most patently absurd pretexts. And why are some applicants told they cannot be allowed to leave for security reasons, when they never had access to security information or have not been privy to it for many years? Does such a policy of humiliation befit a Great Power?

This policy of hostile propaganda, harassment and intimidation can only be self-defeating. It solves nothing and only creates worse problems for you. For it leads more and more self-respecting Jews into resentment, resistance and defiance, and is even condemned by your own intelligentsia.

Not least, this policy is an insuperable moral and emotional obstacle to the improved relations and peaceful contacts between the United States and the Soviet Union which all reasonable people desire. To proceed now with the

trial of honorable Jewish officers in Minsk, or in other cities, will only inflame passions and, understandably, exacerbate tensions.

Thus we say to you: Take a humane, logical and statesmanlike lead in solving this problem. Put an end to the harassment and intimidation and propaganda. Stop the trials. Open the doors wide for those who wish to leave.

This would be an act of historic justice for the last remnant of East European Jewry.

TERROR IN MINSK

KGB Case Number 97: The Jewish Officers "Plot"

by Moshe Decter

In 1945, Yefim Aronovich Davidovich was a Hero of the Soviet Union.

In 1973, he is being accused of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, anti-Soviet slander, and possible anti-Soviet conspiracy. If tried and convicted on the first charge alone, he could be sentenced to as much as seven years at hard labor, with an additional term of five years of Siberian exile.

How did it happen?

* * *

Davidovich was eighteen years old in 1942. A dashing, brave junior officer, he had just joined the Red Army to fight the Nazis, who had attacked and occupied huge portions of the Soviet Union and engaged routinely in mass murder, pillage, deportations and slave labor. The Davidoviches were Jews from Minsk, capital of the Bielorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), the third most populous and strategically vital of the fifteen constituent republics of the USSR.

While the boy was at war, his family were trapped, along with 200,000 other Jews, in the Ghetto which the Nazis had set up in 1941. By 1944, the Ghetto had been liquidated and Minsk liberated by the Red Army. But -- despite an extremely active and effective Jewish resistance movement inside the Ghetto and among the Jewish partisans in the forests, virtually the only resistance in Bielorussia -- all those Jews, including the Davidovich family, had been slaughtered. They were among the one-two million Jews killed by the

Germans on Soviet soil.

In 1945, Yefim Davidovich returned to Minsk and saw the shards of the carnage. With him were some 70,000 other Jews, huddling together for emotional and spiritual creature-comfort after the Holocaust. Remnants of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had inhabited all the many cities and towns of Bielorussia. Remnants of a Jewish community whose culture and religion -- in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and Polish -- had once upon a time thrived, among the host of great Jewish centers of learning and culture and piety in Eastern Europe, now all silent.

Davidovich was a war hero. He fought all over the Ukrainian and Bielorussian fronts and in Germany. He participated in the capture of Czechoslovakia and the 1945 liberation of Prague. He was wounded five times and was awarded fifteen military honors and medals. A mere stripling of a second lieutenant when he joined up, he had at war's end attained the rank of major.

As a Soviet citizen and as a Jew, he determined to put the horrors of the immediate past behind him and to dedicate himself to rebuilding Soviet Bielorussia. By helping his homeland he would also help his fellow Jews of Minsk.

So loyal and patriotic was he that he decided he could best serve his country by becoming a career military officer. He enrolled in and was graduated from the Frunze Military Academy, the USSR's West Point. Over the years, he served with distinction in various commands, until in 1966 he became a full colonel in command of the model regiment of the Bielorussian Military District. But a serious heart condition culminating in a heart attack led to hospitalization and his withdrawal from active duty in 1969.

His military days were over, and now he had time to reflect on the events of a quarter-century, from war's end until his retirement. What did Yefim Davidovich have to contemplate during his long convalescence?

As a Soviet citizen, he could have taken a rather optimistic overview of the dramatic physical progress since the war, from devastation and exhaustion to rehabilitation and reconstruction. But in the spiritual realm, so to speak, he would not have been so sanguine. Like any intelligent and sensitive person, Davidovich could only contemplate grimly the regression of the regime into the grayness of a repressive and bigoted dictatorship -- no doubt a vast improvement over Stalin's insanely bloody tyranny, but a far cry from the hopes and dreams entertained just a few short years earlier.

His reflections as a Jew would have been even more bitter. He would remember the last five years of Stalin's life as especially horrible for Soviet Jews; they called them the "Black Years" -- of anti-Jewish propaganda and purges, of the destruction of the few remaining Jewish cultural institutions, of the judicial murder of the two dozen most eminent Jewish intellectuals, and the slave labor to which hundreds of others were doomed and from which many never returned and those who did came back broken in body and spirit.

Davidovich would know that to this day there are no Jewish communal institutions where Jews can learn, teach and transmit -- as Jews always have in the past and still do everywhere else -- anything of their history, religion, culture and moral tradition.

He would sense that a profound and subtle, but nonetheless painful, key to the Soviet attitude to the Jewish people, its history and its deepest feelings, is the total official silence about the Holocaust, and about Jewish martyrdom and Jewish heroism. He would know the 1961 protest of the Russian poet Yevtushenko that "no memorial stands at Babi Yar," the Jewish mass charnel-house at Kiev -- and that no memorial stands either at the site of the ghetto of his own city of Minsk.

That silence, he would understand, is a form of denigration and diminution.

To ignore so historically unique and monumental a phenomenon as the Holocaust is to despise it and its Jewish protagonists.

Moreover, he grew increasingly resentful of the atmosphere of hostility toward Jews whipped up by what he called "an unrestrained anti-Semitic orgy in the press." And so disillusionment and disgust led to alienation, to a feeling that there could be no future for Jewish life in the USSR; finally, to a passionate rediscovery of his Jewish roots and identity and a fervent desire to settle in Israel -- a phenomenon characteristic of a growing number of sensitive Soviet Jews in recent years.

Davidovich's troubles began in 1971, when he started penning protest letters to Soviet authorities about anti-Semitic propaganda in Minsk. Some of these documents he sent to his military superiors, and when they ordered him to take them back and destroy them and to remain silent, he refused. In the course of the ensuing year, he was subjected to occasional interrogations about these activities. Thereafter, the sinister dimensions of the case began to unfold.

In the summer of 1972, the Minsk Regional Military Registration and Enlistment Office threatened to deprive him of his rank and pension if he persisted in his "slanderous" activities.

In October 1972, he was summoned to explain himself at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Bielorussian Communist Party of which he was a member. Later he wrote down a note of that inquiry.

On November 29, 1972, Gedalia Kipnis and his wife, an elderly couple who had just received exit permits and were travelling by train from Minsk to Vienna (the way-station to Israel), were stopped at Brest on the Soviet-Polish border, searched, forcibly removed from the train and brought back under arrest to Minsk: Copies of Davidovich's notes and letters, as well as a pistol,

were found on Kipnis. He was charged with illegal transfer of anti-Soviet material and of illegal possession of a weapon (the latter charge was subsequently dropped).

On December 1, Davidovich's home was searched. The KGB (Secret Police) confiscated copies of his notes and letters, as well as a diary that documented his year-and-a-half-long "ordeal in party organs in connection with these letters" exposing and protesting anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and particularly in Minsk.

On December 8, Senior KGB Investigator I. I. Nikiforov formally charged him with "activity directed at the undermining of the Soviet regime by spreading among his entourage for many years slanderous fabrications vilifying the Soviet social and governmental system, the production and distribution of literature of that sort, as well as the illegal possession of firearms."

In a letter of December 19 -- the first of the documents appended here -- Davidovich explained himself fully to Soviet Communist Party Secretary General Leonid Brezhnev. He denied all the charges, except that he acknowledged owning a rusty 1941 revolver as a souvenir of the War. And he eloquently poured out his bitterness at the lot of Soviet Jews. That letter is particularly worth studying for its revelations of the mood of scores of thousands of other Soviet Jews.

As though to confirm and bolster Davidovich's charges of anti-Semitism, the monthly organ of the Bielorussian Writers Union, Nieman, published in its January 1973 issue a very lengthy monograph by one Vladimir Begun, entitled "Invasion Without Arms." In the crudest way imaginable, Begun accuses the Jewish people ("Zionists") of cultural aggression against the nations among whom they live, of an international conspiracy to "invade without arms" and subvert the culture and thought not only of the Soviet Union and such of its

East European friends as Poland and Czechoslovakia, but of the United States to boot.

The Begun monograph, appearing as it did in a major establishment publication, was tantamount to an official revival in Bielorussia of the notorious Tsarist anti-Semitic doctrine of the "Elders of Zion" conspiracy. It was a tip-off to the kind of case that was being prepared against the Jews of Minsk.

Since January, the KGB has stepped up its pressure campaign. Provocations, blackmail, threats and intimidation have been used against Jews in Minsk and elsewhere. Many Jewish homes have been searched, with confiscation of all Hebrew textbooks and any books that mention Jewish culture or history, and even books in Yiddish published in the USSR in recent years.

Scores of Jews, including many who have no connection with Davidovich or Kipnis, have been repeatedly detained for questioning. Many of the questions are unrelated to the original inquiry. Now Jews are being asked such questions as: What brought them and their children to the point of wanting to leave for Israel? How did they agitate other people to seek emigration? Who wrote some of the collective letters seeking exit permits? How were the signatures collected?

Some twenty families who already had exit permits have been prevented from leaving. They are constantly questioned, and efforts are made to force them to appear as witnesses for the prosecution and to give false testimony. The adult members of these families, having obtained exit visas, had either been dismissed from their jobs or, in anticipation of departure, had quit them. So they are all without means of subsistence.

As recently as May 10, fifty Minsk Jews were promised by the KGB that they would receive exit visas if they signed statements implicating Davidovich. They were warned, however, that they are themselves under investigation and

that their refusal to "cooperate" would result in their being placed in the dock with him.

The principal figures in the case continue to be subjected to overwhelming harassment, chiefly the endless and exhausting interrogations and threats. In March, Davidovich himself was forced to undergo a psychiatric examination by a team of KGB doctors, who are notorious for perverting medical and scientific evidence to suit the requirements of their political masters in the Communist Party. But the whole case may soon be seen to turn on the sad fate of Gedalia Kipnis.

Kipnis is a weary and sick man of sixty-nine who just a few months ago was eagerly on his way to spend the remainder of his life in Israel. He is one of the few prominent Jewish intellectuals and artists to survive Stalin's 1952 anti-Semitic purge. Kipnis has been held incommunicado in prison for six months. He has reportedly been broken and is "confessing."

At the very center of the case is a group of retired Army officers all of whom have in recent years been travelling the same route of Jewish self-discovery and pride as Colonel Davidovich and who, like him, have begun to learn or relearn Jewish history, the Hebrew language, and a sense of kinship with the Jewish people and with Israel. In a sane and rational society this is accepted as natural and normal. In the Soviet Union it is profoundly suspect.

Alongside Davidovich there is another full colonel in the Army reserves, Lev Patrovich Ovishcher. He served twenty-five of his fifty-four years in the Army. He was wounded several times, including at the Battle of Stalingrad, and received fifteen military honors and decorations. From the moment he applied to leave for Israel, in April 1972, he was stripped of his rank and demoted to private, deprived of his military pension, expelled from the Communist Party, and downgraded at work. When Ovsishcher complained to a KGB man

of the confiscation of his Jewish books, he got this telltale reply: "We shall return all the books, but we shall allow only those who do not engage in anti-Soviet activities to go. People like that can leave, but those who get into trouble -- they will sit an old Soviet popular expression for imprisonment⁷."

The other Jewish officers include: Lieutenant Colonels Naum Alshansky and Semyon Aluf; Major Solomon Poliachek; Captain Yosif Kuchmar. The broken Kipnis is himself a retired captain. All have been interrogated repeatedly, as have their neighbors. Poliachek's 17-year-old son was so intimidated during his questioning that he became emotionally distraught and was committed to the psychiatric section of a Minsk hospital. Kuchmar, dying of cancer, has refused the KGB demands that he testify that Davidovich stirred him up against the Soviet Union.

Others who may be implicated in the case include an elderly couple who have been Jewish activists for some time -- Nikolai Poletika, a well known professor of history, and his wife Tamara, also a historian. Among their activities has been the frequent dispatch of letters of protest to the Soviet leadership, with copies to the outside world. The typewriter on which the letters were allegedly written has been confiscated from their home and will doubtless be introduced as evidence of anti-Soviet activity.

What makes this case even more potentially ominous is that the interrogations have spread to other cities. During late March and early April, two KGB men -- one from Vilnius and the other from Minsk (the same Nikiforov who formally accused Davidovich) -- interrogated four Jewish activists in Riga. All four -- Anna Heimanson, Mikhail Ulman, Vladimir Gelfandbein and Mikhail Kuzinets -- have been repeatedly refused exit permits. All were told by the KGB that no one selected as a witness at the forthcoming trial would be

allowed to leave even if they had already received an exit permit when the trial began.

The purpose of this interrogation: to prove the existence of "an illegal underground Jewish organization." To engage in anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda is bad enough. But to be accused of being part of an illegal organization could bring a life sentence or even the death penalty.

It is no wonder, then, that an atmosphere of terror prevails among the Jews of Minsk.

The tragic fact is that the KGB in Minsk are cooking up a new anti-Semitic trial. Already this year, there have been two other trials of Jews whose only crime was their proud Jewish identification and their determination to leave for Israel. One man, Lazar Liubarsky in Rostov (RSFSR), was sentenced to four years in prison; the other, Isak Shkolnik in Vinnitsa (Ukraine), was sentenced to ten years. But the impending trial in Minsk threatens to be even more sinister, because a group of high officers are involved and because of the political and geographical ramifications linking Jewish activists in Minsk, Riga and Vilnius into what could be portrayed as a dangerous Zionist subversive conspiracy.

* * *

This booklet is a documentary report on the new frame-up. It is intended as a direct response to the repeated pleas of Colonel Davidovich -- see, for example, the appended transcript of a recent telephone conversation he had with a friend in Israel -- to alert world opinion lest a tragedy occur.

The trial may already be under way, or perhaps even over and done with, by the time this report reaches the presses. But it is our hope that it will be published before that, so that aroused public opinion may help avert a trial, or at least help to mitigate the harshness of the sentences. That, at any rate, is our prayer.

TO: L. I. BREZHNEV, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE CPSU
FROM: Y. A. DAVIDOVICH, MINSK

Dear Leonid Ilyich!

On December 1, 1972, the workers of the KGB made a search of my house. I was held in the KGB prison for 24 hours. During the search they took away copies of letters sent by me in the spring of 1971 to various Soviet bodies and to the organs of the Soviet press. These letters had been provoked by the unrestrained anti-Semitic orgy in the press which led to bloody crimes in Minsk: the murder of Professor Mikhelson, of the brother and sister Kantor (students), and of the 16-year old schoolboy Grisha Tunik. A little later, after an explosion in a radio plant shop, the anti-Jewish atmosphere in the town became even more heated. Only the urgent measures taken by the Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU, headed by Com. Ustinov, prevented worse things happening.

In my letters I called upon the Soviet organs of mass information to refrain from publishing anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli materials of home and foreign production, called upon the Soviet press to join actively in the struggle against anti-Semitism. I received no reply to my letters. In addition to the copies of the letters, documents taken away from me contain a brief notation of my year-and-a-half of ordeals in party bodies in connection with these letters, as well as many other documents concerning Jews and anti-Semitism.

On December 8, 1972, the senior investigator of the KGB, Nikiforov I.I., presented me with a formal charge where it is stated: "By documents to a sufficient degree has been established the activity of Davidovich E.A., directed at the undermining of the Soviet regime by way of spreading among his entourage

for many years slanderous fabrications vilifying the Soviet social and government system, the production and the distribution of literature of such sort, as well as the unlawful keeping of fire arms."

Yes, for ten or fifteen years I have kept my TT pistol, the one that, at my request had been given to me by the retired Captain Kipnis Ts. Ya., before his departure for Israel. I needed a pistol in order to be able to end my life in a manner suitable for an officer, in case of a sharp deterioration of my illness, and also in case of my deprivation of my military rank and pension, with which the leadership of the Minsk Regional Military Registration and Enlistment Office threatened me in the summer of 1972.

All the rest of the charge I categorically deny. All my conscious life, with my blood, with all my health, I always defended and strengthened the Soviet regime. All my letters and personal notes contain the truth and only the truth. I don't understand, is telling the truth an anti-Soviet action? Is the criminal murder of the great actor Mikhoels a lie? The liquidation of all the sources of the Soviet Jewish culture and the physical liquidation of its best representatives: Bergelson, Markish, Fefer and others - is this slander? The anti-Jewish campaign under the flag of struggling against cosmopolitanism, the doctors' affair - "the murderers in white coats," the passing over in silence of the innumerable sacrifices and of the great heroism of the Jews in the years of the fight against Hitlerism, of the great contribution of the Jewish people into the progress of the world civilization and into the revolutionary movement - are all these "slanderous fabrications"?

There is no memorial at Babi Yar or in the Minsk Ghetto either, where 200 thousand Jews perished, including my mother, father, three small brothers and 78 close relatives of mine. For me, and not only for me, the blood of the 200,000 Minsk Jews, barbarically murdered by the Hitlerites and their

accomplices, is not at all cheaper than the blood of the 200 Frenchmen from Oradour, the 160 Czechs from Lidice and the 149 Bielorussians from Khatyn, where great memorials have been built.

My grave illness forced the KGB to release me from prison under a signed obligation not to leave. Plain clothes spies, from green youngsters to very old men, have surrounded my house and follow me step by step whenever I am able to go for a walk, and follow the members of my family, my friends and my acquaintances. In the sick minds of the organizers of this "operation" there is evidently the impression that I had been preparing big terrorist acts; the murder of all the sportsmen of the USSR, the setting on fire of all the houses of old people in the city, the placing of hydrogen bombs in the Komarovsk market, physical violence against the chairman of the Municipal Council and the presenting of his post to Ben Gurion. And, with the help of the TT pistol that was found in my possession, a pistol of 1941 model with eight rusted bullets, I am preparing the widening of the Israeli borders from the Nile to the Euphrates, the annexation of Bielorussia to Israel and the carrying out of the missions set to me by the Sages of Zion on the complete scale of what is stated in the "Protocols" -- the establishment of Jewish mastery over the entire world. All this is not so funny, as it is sad. The anti-Jewish hysteria under the slogan of anti-Zionism is continuing.

The twenty-four hours spent in the KGB prison and the many hour long interrogations are not suitable to my physical possibilities. After each interrogation my wife brings me home more dead than alive. Her selflessness and her great medical experience (incidentally, she is a Russian) bring me back to life with great difficulty. You understand that during one of the KGB interrogations, or after it, I shall die. My death will not bring laurels to anyone. Willingly or unwillingly I shall become a martyr, a victim of anti-

Semitism. The Soviet and the world public will place my death in the same rank as that of the victims of the vile crimes of Ezhov, Beria and Riumin. I have committed no crimes and I had no intention of committing them. To write or even to say the truth is not a crime.

My experience of life brought me to the conclusion that my family and I can live a life worthy of a human being and a citizen only in the Jewish national State. Help us to go to our historical Homeland, to Israel. And anyhow, I would not deny the truth, deny my words, even if I had to suffer everything from the beginning.

In the hope for truth and justice.

Y. A. Davidovich

December 19, 1972

* * *

TO: THE WORLD COMMITTEE OF THE VETERANS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR
THE NATIONAL COMMITTEES OF THE VETERANS OF THE WAR AND OF FIGHTERS
AGAINST FASCISM IN THE USA, GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND ISRAEL
THE SOVIET WAR VETERANS
THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN ISRAEL AND THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE WORLD

Dear Friends!

This appeal is made to you by a veteran of the War and of the Soviet Army, five times wounded in battles against the German fascists, decorated for distinction in battles with fifteen orders and medals; invalid of the second group, a person who during his military service suffered three myocardia attacks; forty-eight years old, a retired Colonel, a Jew, resident of the town of Minsk, Yefim Davidovich.

The threat of judicial reprisal looms over me -- reprisal for telling the truth, for my struggle against anti-Semitism.

My complaints to the higher bodies of the Soviet Union have remained unanswered: evidently they have not reached the addressees.

The "investigation" is continuing and a court trial is being prepared. For forty days scores of KGB agents have been keeping my house under siege, have been dogging the footsteps of the members of my family, my friends and acquaintances. Day and night they do not take their eyes off me, as if I were a dangerous criminal, ready at any moment to blow up the entire town. But the "criminal" is bedridden for nearly twenty-four hours a day and is kept alive only by injections.

I have committed no crimes and I had no intention of committing any. An attempt is being made to present my implacable hatred for anti-Semites and

anti-Semitism as "... actions directed at undermining the Soviet regime by way of spreading slanderous fabrications vilifying the Soviet social and government system."

I consider that the fight against anti-Semitism cannot "undermine the Soviet system" -- it is in full accord with the testament of V.I. Lenin. I have repeatedly quoted his words: "Shame on those who sow enmity toward the Jews, who sow enmity toward other nations!" The fight against anti-Semitism is also in full accordance with Article 123 of the USSR Constitution.

An honest person cannot stand by and ignore the numerous Trofim Kichkos, Bolshakovs, Yuri Ivanovs and Ivan Shevtsovs who appear daily in the pages of newspapers, brochures and books, crudely and insolently distorting the truth, slandering the Jewish people, and violating the testament of Lenin as well as Soviet laws.

The material confiscated from me by the KGB -- personal notes, letters to the government and party bodies, to the organs of the Soviet press -- contains only facts of anti-Semitism that are known to the entire world: for instance, the campaign against the so-called "cosmopolitans," the destruction of all sources of Soviet Jewish culture and the physical violence against its best representatives, the affair of the Doctors Plot - ("the murderers in white coats"), and many other things. I have also cited scores of examples of the manifestation of unpunished anti-Semitism toward my comrades and acquaintances, that were and are committed not only by members of the Black Hundreds acting on their own, but also by officials.

The passing over in silence and the distortion of the truth about the Jewish people, its great history and its great contribution to world civilization, is also a direct act of anti-Semitism.

When I, in my notes and statements, including those made to the Bureau of

the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bielorussia, spoke about the great sons of the Jewish people, of whom all of progressive mankind is proud, I was told that this was Zionist propaganda. And now, they describe this as a "crime against the State."

In our country almost nobody knows, for instance, the name of Mordekhai Anilevich, leader of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. The great majority of the Soviet people do not even know about the revolt itself, even though the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, armed with stones, sticks and a few rifles, resisted the Hitlerite Wehrmacht longer than all of Poland!

On every convenient occasion it is stressed that Marx, Heine and Einstein are Germans, Spinoza a Dutchman, Newton an Englishman [sic], Isaak Levitan and Pavel Antokolsky Russians. Nobody knows that the hero of the battle for Moscow, General Lev Dovator, is a Jew. When on Victory Day in Minsk the portraits of war heroes are hung out, under the portrait of General Dovator stands the inscription -- "Bielorussian."

It is never and nowhere mentioned that the glorious intelligence agent and anti-fascist, Lev Manevich, is a Jew from Rogachev.

In connection with the passing over in silence and the distortion of the truth about the Jewish people, anti-Semitism is increasing in the country and tragedies take place in Jewish families as well. I wrote and spoke about this. And in this lies my "crime against the State."

Can I, a Soviet Jew with a clear conscience, who from the age of eighteen fought against the worst enemies of mankind, the Hitlerite fascists; who lost his parents, three under-age brothers and seventy-eight close relatives in the Minsk Ghetto; can I without indignation listen to the appeals of various Ahmed Shukairys and Yassir Arafats for the destruction of the Jewish National State and its people?

This was what I wrote and said. This is my "crime." Not the feeling of national exclusivity, but the elementary human dignity and feeling of duty to my much-suffering people have forced me to raise my voice against lies and slander.

I am tied to my people by the trenches in which the Hitlerites buried old women and babies. In the past -- rivers of blood; in the present -- the malignant weeds grown from racist seeds, the hardness of prejudices and superstitions. The struggle against these carriers of prejudices and superstitions, whether they are "individual" anti-Semites and hooligans or highly placed officials, is the duty of every honest person. I wrote and spoke the truth and there is an attempt to present it as "slandorous fabrications."

Dear Friends!

I appeal to you for help. Stop the judicial reprisal. I am a very sick man, I suffer from acute heart attacks; in connection with the latest events the attacks have become more acute and more frequent. Even one month, or one week of imprisonment is for me a sentence of death.

After the victims of the Nazis in the Minsk Ghetto, I alone have survived out of all my relatives and dear ones. My death will be the "final solution of the Jewish question" on the scale of my family.

I hope for your assistance and I believe in the triumph of the truth and of justice.

Colonel Yefim Davidovich

Minsk, January 7, 1973

* * *

TO: THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF GREAT BRITAIN, ITALY, RUMANIA, HUNGARY,
YUGOSLAVIA, ISRAEL

FROM: Y. A. DAVIDOVICH

The exhausting investigation of "Case No. 97" is continuing. I am accused of anti-State activities only because I raised a voice of protest against anti-Semitism, against the torrents of lies brought down upon the Jewish people and the Jewish national state.

My letters sent to Brezhnev and to the Procurator-General of USSR Rudenko were left unanswered. The officials sent these letters to Minsk -- to the very organizations about which I complained. I think that neither Brezhnev nor Rudenko has ever seen my letters.

The war veteran, the 68-year-old Jewish painter Gedalya Kipnis, is spending his third month in prison. I am, in fact, under house arrest, under the constant watch of KGB agents who surround my house and follow every step made by members of my family without even trying to conceal it. Dozens of Minsk Jews are called for questioning. The apartments of some of them were searched; in some cases there was more than one search in the same apartment. My friends, the former combatant officers Lev Ovsishcher and Naum Alshansky, are threatened that their status will be changed from "witnesses" to accused because of their desire to go to Israel, and they have also been deprived of their ranks and pensions. Fear and confusion are spreading among the Jewish population of the town.

I have been subjected to repression and taunting for more than a year and a half, since May 1971. From the beginning it was done by public organizations and since December 1, 1972, the KGB has openly entered this witchhunt.

More than a 100 years ago Heinrich Heine wrote: "The modern history of the Jewish people is tragic, but if someone will try to write about this tragedy, he will be laughed at. This is more tragic than everything else." Today also, writes the Soviet poet Y. Yevtushenko: "Even the ragged whore yells at the old Jew: 'Zhid'" (Novy Mir, No. 4, p. 77, 1970). But today the tragedy is not only this. The endless baiting of the Jewish people in the press by various Kichkos, Yevseyevs, Shevtsovs, Kolesnikovs; the anti-Semitism of the officials of various ranks; all these actions are not only left unpunished but have become a kind of fashion, a norm of "good behavior," an evidence of loyalty. I openly spoke and wrote about this tragedy. During Heine's time people were laughed at for this. Today a person is declared a criminal, put in prison, or declared not normal and placed in a psychiatric clinic.

It is still not clear from the interrogations at the KGB which one of these awards is being prepared for me. I am afraid, though, that the plan of my tormentors will not be realized. My health is deteriorating from day to day. I have reached the state where I suffer from heart pains during interrogations, at the office of the KGB. At the interrogation on February 7, I had to have an injection, and my wife and an ambulance were called. I had to be sent home, where the ambulance staff looked after me. All this happened in the KGB offices, under Lenin's portrait. Unwillingly one remembers the lines from Yevtushenko's poem "The Bratsk Power Station":

"My boy, don't ever forget it:

Changing before Lenin's portrait

These bastards tortured me by the light

Which I was installing for happiness...."

(Yunost Magazine, No. 4, p. 56, 1965.)

I will be the first Jew of the post-Stalin period tortured to death -- tortured to death for his convictions, for his hate of the anti-Semites, for the voice of truth against the torrents of lies and slander brought down on his people and the State of Israel, heroically defending its freedom, its right to independence and the life of its citizens.

Although the people who are repressing me are indeed sitting under Lenin's portrait, they are violating in the gravest way his ideas and theories. I reminded them of the words of Lenin that "nothing prevents so much the development and strengthening of class solidarity as national injustice, expressed either in simple negligence or even as a joke, and it is most important because of this to listen carefully and with patience to the opinions of the workers -- representatives of different, and first and foremost, small nationalities."

But these people have learned how to give these words and ideas a completely contrary sense.

Dear friends! Only the strong voice of progressive public opinion -- Jews and non-Jews, veterans and anti-fascists, communists and non-communists, people of goodwill -- will be able to stop the ruthless machine of death, to prevent in Minsk the conducting of a shameful anti-Jewish trial.

As far as I am concerned, whatever will happen to me, I will repeat till my last breath the words of one of the first revolutionaries of Russia, Radischev:

"I am the same one as I was and will be all my life --
Not an animal, a tree, a slave -- but a man."

Y. A. Davidovich

February 10, 1973

* * *

TO: LEONID I. BREZHNEV, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CPSU

FROM: YEFIM A. DAVIDOVICH, MINSK

As I have already said many times and written in vain, I am accused of libellous fabrications in defaming Soviet reality only because I had raised my voice against anti-Semites. The KGB officials of the Bielorussian SSR tell me at the interrogations that there is no anti-Semitism in the country, that it is all my malicious invention. Yet the anti-Jewish campaign conducted in the press under the banner of anti-Zionism is broadening and this includes the press of the Bielorussian Republic. Thus, for example, I will cite the article by Begun "Invasion Without Arms" published in Neman magazine, No. 1, for 1973. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion are innocent babble compared with Begun's article. Julius Streicher, the chief ideologue of the anti-Semitic Third Reich, would have envied Begun if he had not been hanged by the sentence of the International Tribunal. Begun tries to prove in numerous ways that all the evil, all the troubles and sorrows, are brought upon the world by the Jews. "It is customary to think that Rasputin ruled the Tsar and Tsarina. The truth is that in reality Nicholas II was, in fact, ruled by Rasputin, but first and foremost it was Simanovich who ruled over the Tsar." So it turns out that the Jews are the ones who are guilty of all the crimes of Russian Tsarism.

Begun also tries to convince his readers that the Jews are guilty of causing all the mishaps in the modern world. He writes about the well-known events of 1968 in Poland: "It was they, the Jews, who took the cheated and disorganized students into the streets." Gomulka made the 15,000 remaining Jews a scapegoat and expelled them from the country. Thus he completed the mission of

Gauleiter Frank, and Poland became "Juden-rein." This shameful act was condemned by the progressive forces of the world and by numerous Communist Parties, including the new leadership of the Polish Workers' Party. The "Jewish plots" in Czechoslovakia are described in the article in great detail. According to Begun, these plots brought about the events of 1968. As far as Jewish culture is concerned he considers it a major subversion, an invasion without arms. He considers the very opportunity to develop a Soviet Jewish culture, to have a Jewish press and publications, a national theatre, to be "an act of subversion" and writes: "Jewish culture is reactionary and pursues goals of subversion and sabotage." One cannot help remembering Hermann Goering's thesis No. 2: "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun."

Begun is even indignant at the position of the Jews in the USA. No, he is not enraged by the anti-Semitism in this country. Something else bothers him. He bitterly notes that the Jews constitute only 3% of the USA's population and but supposedly supplied 70% of the country's lawyers, 70% of the doctors; and 80% of the Jewish population lives in fourteen cities, and so on. He is unhappy about the absence of a "numerus clausus" in the USA, as he would have been much happier, of course, if all these non-Aryan physicians and lawyers would have been compelled to clean latrines and be expelled from the fourteen American cities into a new Maidanek. He has supporters of the same view in the USA -- the John Birch Society's members.

In accordance with the Art. 123 of the Constitution of USSR Vladimir Begun is subject to be tried for instigation of national antagonism, defamation of a whole ancient nation which made an enormous contribution to the development of world civilization, progress and revolutionary movement.

Yet the trial is being prepared not for him. He and his accomplices will not be tried. I will be tried.

Many officials are using Begun's ideology in their every-day practice. Thus, for example, I was told at the interrogation on February 12, 1973 by one of the KGB interrogators, Artur Grigoryevich Nikiforov, that the Jews who worked in the NKVD in 1937-38 are to be blamed for the crimes of those years and that they, the Jews, according to his words, are guilty of spilling innocent blood. He thinks that the centuries-long sufferings of the Jewish people are a natural development. "Other nations that existed at the same time as the ancient Jews did vanish from the earth a long time ago, and you Jews," he said, "still persist as an historical anachronism." Artur Grigoryevich can hardly bear this fact. As for the killing of Mikhoels the Jewish cultural leader of the 1940s, the "Doctors Plot" and the provocation-al role played in these matters by Beria, Ryumin and Timashuk, the same inter-rogator stated: "We have yet to find out who was right and who was to blame." Nikiforov also very much resented the fact that many Jewish children were evacuated during the War deep into the country, to the rear. He would have been much happier, most probably, if they had been in Babi Yar. And this man is one of those who are planning the death of a very sick honored war veteran who had enough courage to say the truth loudly. These examples again confirm the presence of individual instances of anti-Semitism.

My protest against this poisoned weapon is natural and does not constitute a crime, as Nikiforov identifies himself with the Soviet regime and declares me to be its enemy. For them I am, in fact, an enemy, as they are anti-Semites and I am an anti-fascist. They are Jew-haters and I am a Jew. They are not able to understand that it is not I but they who bring great harm upon the Soviet regime by their actions, that it is not I but they who defame socialism, for socialism and anti-Semitism are incompatible.

Case No. 97 is an immoral act of unheard-of violation of the elementary

norms of human dignity, of the basis of communism and morality. While I am still alive, so long as the torments at the interrogations do not finish me off, I request that this shameful anti-Jewish case should be stopped. Let me leave, to go to my national state. Such a decision would be evidence that the ideas of internationalism and humanism have prevailed. My death will become the unforgettable shame of my tormentors -- anti-Semites.

I am waiting for a just decision and an answer.

Y. A. Davidovich

February 17, 1973

* * *

TO: COMRADE BREZHNEV, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE
CPSU

COMRADE PODGORNYY, CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET OF
THE USSR

COMRADE KOSYGIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

COMRADE RUDENKO, PROCURATOR GENERAL OF THE USSR

FROM: Y. A. DAVIDOVICH, A JEW IN MINSK, INVALID, RETIRED COLONEL

Dear Comrades!

On December 1, 1972, on the initiative of the KGB of the BSSR /Bielorussian Soviet Socialist Republic/, criminal Case No. 97 was instituted against a group of Minsk Jews, consisting mainly of senior officers in retirement or in the reserves, veterans of the War.

I have repeatedly written to you that this case has no more moral or legal grounds than the Dreifus or Beilis cases, or the case against the physicians, the "murderers in white coats." Because of my protests against the arbitrariness of the anti-Semites and against anti-Semitism, the KGB of the BSSR chose me as one of the chief accused.

April 1, 1973 marks the fourth month that my exhausting investigation has been going on. In essence, this is deliberate murder of a gravely ill person who, because of his state of health -- in the opinion of the physicians of the District Military Hospital (the Honored Physician of the BSSR, Col. Gursky; Honored Physician of the BSSR, Col. Komarov; the Head of the Therapeutic Department of the Hospital, Lt. Col. Leonov; and others) -- is in need of absolute calm and for whom any physical exertion or the slightest emotion of a disturbing nature can be fatal.

After almost every interrogation by the KGB, I was revived by first aid and intensive heart care units. After one such interrogation, conducted on February 21, 1973, by three KGB men led by the Head of the Investigative Section, the heart care unit brought me to the hospital in a state of agony. The physicians had to work very hard to save my life. As soon as I was a little better, and was again able to go from my bed to the toilet, the KGB investigators and the psychiatric commission created by them began to come to see me. This commission has not yet concluded its work and I do not know what decisions it will reach.

I was in the hospital for twenty-four days and on March 16, at my insistence, I was allowed to leave.

In the last electro-cardiogram No. 2232, made on March 15, 1973, it is written: arteriosclerotic and post-infarctional cardiosclerosis, chronic coronary insufficiency of 2-3 degrees, low voltage electrocardiogram in standard behaviors, scar changes of the rear and side wall of the left ventricle, partial blocking of the right foot of the GIs bundle, chronic coronary insufficiency in the front partitional top area and in the left wall of the left ventricle.

The KGB interrogations will evidently be renewed in the next few days. They are conducted on the fourth floor of a full-size building without an elevator, and they last many hours each day. Every interrogation is a real threat of death for me.

I ask you to appoint urgently a medical commission of qualified BSSR physicians-therapists, independent of the KGB, to ascertain whether I may continue to be subjected to the investigation in Case No. 97. Until this commission reaches its conclusions, I ask you to put a stop to the interrogations and thus to prevent the deliberate murder of an honored veteran.

You know that I have never committed and have had no intentions of committing any crime. My alleged crime is my struggle against criminals, anti-Semites.

The closing of Case No. 97 and permission for my family and me to emigrate to the State of Israel would demonstrate to all of progressive mankind the triumph and vitality of Leninist ideas. My forcible death at one of the interrogations or during the trial would leave an indelible stain of shame on the initiators of this affair, persons with Party cards in their pockets and calling themselves the followers of Lenin.

I ask for your firm and urgent intervention.

Respectfully yours,

Colonel Y. A. Davidovich

March 17, 1973

* * *

TO: L. I. BREZHNEV, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE CPSU
FROM: LEV PETROVICH OVSISHCHER

Born in 1919, a Jew from the city of Minsk, over 25 years of service in the Soviet Army, participant in the Great Patriotic War, wounded in the battle of Stalingrad, awarded 15 orders and medals of the USSR, retired to the reserves with the rank of Colonel in 1961.

It will soon be a year that I have started making vain efforts to obtain permission to emigrate to the State of Israel. For this desire of mine, I have been deprived of my military rank of Colonel and demoted to the ranks, deprived of my pension for years of service, and in my place of employment I have been demoted.

As a consequence of these and other measures applied against me in a country which I have blamelessly served for many years and to which I have been devoted, for whose sake I shed my blood in the fight against the fascist invaders, and for which, in spite of everything, I have kept my feeling of profound devotion, I have found myself in an extremely difficult material and moral situation.

I have been deprived of everything, and in spite of this, permission to emigrate is stubbornly denied to me. The only explanation given for the refusals of my request is my former service in the army. The groundlessness of this motivation is obvious, as I was retired from the Soviet Army twelve years ago, and the information remaining in my memory has lost all value because it is outdated. The action of the authorities, which has placed me and

my family in an extremely difficult situation, is groundless and essentially immoral.

I have already applied to you and to other leaders of the Soviet State, but in vain. Moreover, instead of satisfying my lawful and natural desire, the Bielorussian KGB is trying to incriminate me for allegedly having violated the law. A search has been made in my apartment; I was repeatedly called for interrogations; during the search Soviet literature in the Yiddish language and Hebrew textbooks were confiscated; my right of free movement over the country has been limited; for more than three months persons acquainted me have been summoned for interrogations, and attempts are made to get from them "admissions" vilifying me; and other rights as well, rights guaranteed to me by the Constitution, are being violated.

What am I guilty of? My guilt is that I, having become aware of my national identity, want to live in the Jewish State, in the historical homeland of my ancient people; I want to be useful to it in the cause of its national revival and sincerely hope to participate as much as I can in the struggle for the reestablishment of peace in the Near East. I am not violating the laws and the moral principles accepted in the USSR.

I therefore appeal to you again and I ask you: Order a careful examination of the motives for the refusal, and ensure a positive decision on my application.

I want to hope that this letter, unlike the preceding ones, will be transmitted to you personally and that in the mass of State affairs a little time will be found also for the solution of the fate of one person and his family.

L. P. OVSIŠCHER

Minsk, March 30, 1973

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TELEPHONE CONVERSATION OF YEFIM DAVIDOVICH WITH A FRIEND IN ISRAEL

APRIL 4, 1973

Israel: Shalom, Yefim Aronovich!

Davidovich: Shalom, shalom!

I. How do you feel?

D. Not so good.

I. Do you feel better after the heart attack?

D. It's not that I feel better, but I have left the hospital. It is more comfortable to be in bed at home. The care is better.

I. What is new?

D. It seems they have no intention of stopping the cases. I suppose that until they get an order from Moscow, they will not stop. I think you should collect all the material, and make it known to the Soviet leadership through all possible channels.

I. We know only what you tell us over the phone. Details, what is said at the interrogations, etc., are not known to us.

D. Scores and perhaps even hundreds of people are now called for interrogation. The most varied methods are applied -- threats, blackmail, intimidation -- so as to get the testimony they need. People are called whom neither I, nor Alshansky, nor Ovsishcher are acquainted with. Alshansky's neighbors were called six or seven times. Yosif Kuchmar was called for interrogation four times.

I. Who is he, what connection has he with you?

D. He's an acquaintance of mine, he met me in the street several times. One of his kidneys has been removed, and the remaining one is also cancerous.

He is a person living his last weeks...He too was threatened, they demanded that he should testify that I had read something out to him, that I had propagandized him....

I. Is he too a war veteran?

D. Yes, he is a retired captain....So this is the atmosphere now. They summon people, and KGB agents follow everyone.

I. But how long can such an "Investigation" be dragged out? After all, except for some letters, there has not been any evidence.

D. Well, it is a matter of the letters, and of my personal notes, which they confiscated during a search, and about my pistol....

I. We have the impression that they simply need a pretext to detain as many Jews as possible.

D. You do not see the whole picture clearly. A very serious trial is being prepared.

I. But no crime has been committed!

D. Dear friend! Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria taught: "What one needs is a person, the case will be found." There is no need for crimes, they can always be "made," if there is a wish to do so!

I. And what do you think is the goal of this trial?

D. I repeat: a very serious and big anti-Jewish trial is being prepared. The goal is to intimidate. Of course, the defendants will be not only Kipnis and I, there will be a very large group of people. In the main it is former officers. Perhaps a number of others as well...In my view, Moscow does not know the true state of events. Even if they know that something is being prepared in Minsk, they know it only from KGB reports. Therefore I consider that it necessary to bring this to Moscow's attention.

- I. I think that Moscow will know about it.
- D. There is no time to wait! When the trial has already begun, they can no longer be stopped by anything. If they decide to make a trial, if they decide to risk disgrace, then no telegrams, no protests will help. What is necessary now is not to allow things to come to a trial. Should there be a trial, many hundreds of people are going to suffer....For instance, at the interrogations, not all submit to blackmail; some people say: "Why do you need such a disgraceful case? This will be a world-wide disgrace. The world public will be outraged." They answer: "We spit on world public opinion. Kipnis has been sitting for four months, how has the world public helped him? It won't help other Jews either...."
- I. Who says this?
- D. They say it at the interrogations. It is necessary to appeal to statesmen, to leaders of international organizations, to prominent personalities.
- I. What is heard about Kipnis?
- D. Nothing is heard about him. Kipnis has been isolated from the entire world for four months.
- I. If the charge of keeping a pistol has been withdrawn, then there are no other charges against him?
- D. The pistol charge has not been removed. Today I saw the Procurator. He said that this charge has not been dropped against me -- because I have committed another "crime" as well. Since I condemned anti-Semitism and anti-Semites, they consider that I criticized the Soviet regime. Therefore they have not dropped the pistol charge against me.
- I. And against Kipnis?
- D. Against Kipnis, evidently yes.

- I. But, in addition to the pistol, there are no other charges against him?
- D. I don't know. Probably there are. Otherwise he would have already been released...In general, after all, we have the same case against us: "Case No. 97." For the time being, Kipnis and I have been officially charged in this case. However, other people will evidently also be involved in it, such as Ovsishcher, Alshansky, Aluf, Poliachek and many others.
- I. Poliachek, is he your neighbor? Is he also an officer?
- D. Yes. He has been summoned many times. His son was also called and, after being subjected to intimidation, he became deranged. At present he is in the psychiatric section of Clinical Hospital No. 2.
- I. What is his name? How old is he?
- D. Robert, he is 17 years old....Well, this is how things are. For instance, I was taken to the hospital from an interrogation on February 21. Well, this time I survived. I shall be called again, and who can guarantee that I shall again survive?
- I. You should not go to such interrogations!
- D. I have now tried to create a medical commission. And such a commission has been appointed. I shall be examined, I don't know what the result will be.
- I. Yesterday I read that four "witnesses" from Riga are involved. Is this true?
- D. I haven't heard about it. I know that KGB people from the Mogilev region are taking part in the investigation. If the case isn't stopped, it will be very bad. You must understand this! Reprisals are being prepared against a huge group of Jews.
- I. Everything is clear. Not a single word of your story will get lost....
- D. It is necessary to act! Don't forget us. Shalom!

National Conference on Soviet Jewry

11 West 42nd St.
New York, N. Y. 10036

Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews

16 East 85th St.
New York, N. Y. 10028