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AMERICAN ISRAEL PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE 500 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, N.W., SUITE 300 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001 Telephone (202) 638-2256

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With the compliments of

DAN COHEN

Legislative Liaison

אלון שבות גוש עציון

הועד המקומי טל: Alon Shvut, Israel

ב"ה

Mr. Ronald Reagan
The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C.
U.S.A. 20500

January 9, 1987

Dear Mr. President,

In the light of your ongoing concern for Soviet Jewry, we wish to call to your attention the plight of Prisoner of Zion Yuli Edelshtein, who has been an adopted member of our community since 1984. A few of us who, as Americans (approximately 10% of our community are American citizens), were able to visit the Soviet Union were priveleged to meet Yuli prior to his imprisonment two-and-a-half years ago, and we were aware then as we are now that he exemplifies the kind of courageous human being that the Soviet Union is trying to suppress and subdue.

His process of self-discovery through the Hebrew language and Jewish culture and religion, his assumption of a leadership role in the renascent Jewish movement in which he served as a Hebrew teacher, and his application to return to this homeland in Israel resulted in sustained KGB harassment and, in the end, imprisonment on false charges of drug possession. The transcript of his "trial" smuggled out to the West dramatically documents the process of perversion of justice in a police state.

After many months of maltreatment in the inhuman conditions of a remote labor camp to which he was sentenced, the inevitable happened. In what authorities described as a work accident, Yuli suffered multiple fractures and serious internal injuries. At first medical treatment was cruelly denied and then, subsequent to Western outcry, it was provided, albeit inadequately, in a Siberian prison hospital.

Now the struggle for his welfare continues and remains in a critical stage. In a recent telephone conversation with his wife, we learned that despite humanitarian pleas from the West, the Soviet authorities have chosen to ignore his poor condition (see enclosed medical report) and have returned him to a labor camp. (Better treatment is bromised him only if he would sign a "confession" of it is pressession and his life would desist from maintaining contact



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Therefore, as concern for his health and his very life mounts, we turn to you, Mr. President, and to the United States government to continue and to intensify your efforts to alleviate his terrible suffering and bring him to freedom. Natan Sharansky's contention that Anatoly Marchenko was allowed to die in prison because "the Soviet authorities were convinced that no serious Western response would be forthcoming" (New York Times, Jan. 4, 1987) burns in our ears and we know that we must do everything possible for Yuli and other heroic prisoners of conscience.

Like Sharansky, Yuli Edelshtein has bravely refused to abandon the principles of human freedom and conscience that Judaism and democracy hold so precious. His battle, of course, is not that of a single dissident but or all or us who maintain that adherance to international agreements of human rights is a pre-condition for meaningful interaction, cooperation and trust among modern nations. His life and our just cause depend on our continued unrelenting efforts.

May these determined efforts and God's help enable us one day soon to greet Yuli Edelshtein and his fellow Prisoners of Zion, as we greeted Natan Sharansky, in health and in the freedom we hold so dear.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we appeal to you to do all that is in your power to promote the immediate release of Prisoner of Zion Yuli Edelshtein from his unjust imprisonment and help him to fulfill his dream of settling with his family in his national homeland.

Gratefully,

David Netiv

Tand Residents of Alon Shvut Israel

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לג רולוז

שבו בנים לגבולם.

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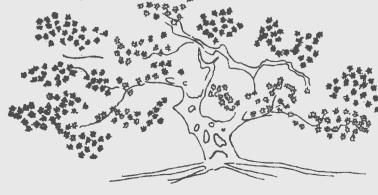
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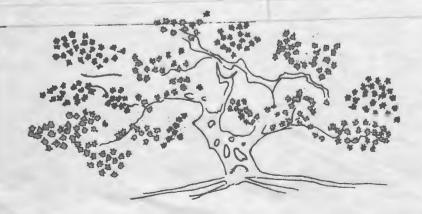
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The New York Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 1987

LAW ON EMIGRATION IN EFFECT IN SOVIET

U.S. Sees Tightened Rules — Earlier Preference for Jews Now Apparently at End

By DAVID K. SHIPLER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1 — American officials remain concerned that recent steps by Mikhail S. Gorbachev to liberalize some elements of Soviet society may not touch restrictions on emigration, a major obstacle in relations between the two countries.

Emigration from the Soviet Union in general is heavily restricted, and the State Department estimates that only 30,000 to 40,000 people would be eligible to leave under a new emigration law that took effect today, according to Richard Schifter, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.

"I have heard disparaging remarks from Soviet officials about the migration policies of the Brezhnev era, that they were disorganized and 'What did we get for it?'" Mr. Schifter said.

He was alluding to the former Soviet leader, Leonid I. Brezhnev, who, as an exception to the general curbs on emigration, allowed 260,000 Jews to leave from 1969 through 1979. Soviet officials have said that "they are not going back—no large-scale emigration," Mr. Schifter reported.

Previous Official Hints Recalled

Last fall, before the text of the new law became known in the West, there was a hint from a Soviet official that a rise in emigration was possible, Mr. Schifter said in an interview.

"It was not a clear statement; it was a vague hint," he recalled.

Another Administration specialist speculated that there could be a one-time surge in emigration under the new law until the reservoir of those eligible was empty.

The Soviet Union's continuing barriers on free emigration and foreign travel in general have been a counterpoint to the relaxation that has occurred under Mr. Gorbachev, represented most recently by his ending the exile of Andrei D. Sakharov, the physicist and human rights advocate.

Other political prisoners have been freed. The Soviet press has been given increased latitude to debate public issues, and there has been some loosening of restrictions on film and theater, including some frank productions about the Stalin era.

New Chapter in De-Stalinization

Stephen F. Cohen, a professor of Soviet politics at Princeton, sees this as a second chapter in de-Stalinization, the first of which was written by Nikita S. Khrushchev in 1956 when he denounced Stalin's repressive policies.

"Gorbachev is trying to rally the intelligentsia that share his values and his views to his side," Professor Cohen said. "I saw with my own eyes people in Moscow. Established reform intelligentsia were just elated."

If no steps are taken by Mr. Gorbachev to relax movement across the Soviet border, the domestic changes may not affect the political dynamics between Washington and Moscow, for the emigration issue occupies an important place among the irritants in Soviet-American relations.

Under American law, relaxation of emigration restrictions is a prerequisite for easing trade barriers with the Soviet Union.

And when it comes to the emigration of Jews, no other human rights question has such a well-organized American constituency.

U.S. Jewish Groups Active

Groups such as the <u>National Conference on Soviet Jewry</u> and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews conduct intensive information and lobbying campaigns with the Administration, Congress, the public and news organizations, and they have threatened to stage demonstrations if Mr. Gorbachev ever visits the United States.

Among the exceptions to the curbs on Soviet emigration have been not only Jews, but other minorities such as Armenians and ethnic Germans. The flow of Jews, in particular, reached a peak of more than 51,000 in 1979, but dropped to 914 in 1986, according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

The exceptions have usually been allowed on the ground of "family reunification," with Soviet citizens permitted to join relatives abroad, often distant or even fictitious kin. What has made the new law more restrictive is that the definition of family has now been narrowed to close relatives, such as a parent, sibling, child or spouse.

The law contains a section barring discrimination on racial, ethnic, religious or other grounds. This has been interpreted abroad as ending the preference given to Jews in the past. Now, Mr. Schifter said, the 30,000 to

Now, Mr. Schifter said, the 30,000 to 40,000 people estimated to have close relatives abroad include Jews, Armenians, ethnic Germans, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Ukrainians. It is not known how many of them would want to emigrate.

Fewer Jews Are Being Held

In the midst of Mr. Gorbachev's liberalization, Jewish campaigners in the emigration movement have had mixed experiences, according to Jerry Goodman, executive director of the National Conference. No Jewish activist has been arrested, tried and imprisoned since last summer, Mr. Goodman said, although some have been locked up for 15 days on charges of hooliganism.

The number of Jewish campaigners in prison is down to 14, "the lowest in many years," he said. The usual level has been about two dozen. At least four of the prisoners have been beaten, according to information reaching here.

In addition, "There has been a lot of harassment of Jews in the religious sphere," Mr. Goodman noted. Those attending study sessions after services in synagogues have been threatened with arrest, he said, as have Hebrew teachers.



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1986

SECOND FRONT PAGE

The high price of freedom

Soviets who left USA found it a 'tough' burden to shoulder

By Pat O'Driscoll USA TODAY

Life in the USA is "tough freedom," one of 55 Soviet emigres said Monday night after arriving back in the U.S.S.R.

"You have to worry about your life and your apartment, your bills every month, everything," artist Valery Klever said after an Aeroflot jet brought him, his wife and son back to Moscow.

The returnees are the largest of three Soviet groups in as many months to leave the USA for their motherland. Although

most of the 100,000 Soviets who've immigrated to the USA since 1970 adjust, some can't cope with freedom's heavy responsibility.

In Russia, "they care for them from cradle to grave," says Cathy Fitzpatrick of Helsinki Watch, a human rights group that helps emigres relocate. "These people come here not really understanding what they're getting into."

Ten-year emigre Larissa Shenker of New York adds that some in the Soviet Union accustom themselves to a "slave psychology — They want to be

ruled. They want somebody to think for them."

Fear of violent urban crime, culture shock, menial jobs, language barriers and homesickness are among other reasons cited by Soviets going home.

Most returnees left the New York area, where they lived in Russian-Jewish enclaves in Brooklyn's Brighton Beach, Manhattan's Washington Heights and Jersey City, N.J. And most are working-class, not dissident intellectuals or professionals.

"We're talking about people who drove cabs, fixed cars.

rode on the subway every day, who saw the underside of U.S. life," says Vladimir Kozolovsky, a reporter for Novoye Russkoye Slovo, New York's Russian-language daily paper.

Emigres who've stayed behind say hints of new openness in Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's Kremlin may have contributed, too.

"There is new hope with new people like Gorbachev," said actor Oleg Vidov, the "Soviet Robert Redford" who defected to Hollywood in 1985.

Jerry Goodman of the National Conference on Soviet



BACK HOME: A tearful Rebecca Katsap arrives in Moscow

Jewry disagrees: "It's still a one-way street. There are still people in the Soviet Union, thousands of people, especially Jews, who wish to leave."

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