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The International Parliamentary Group For Human Rights In The Soviet Union  
*Le Groupe International De Parlementaires Pour Les Droits De L'Homme En Union Soviétique*

**Report on**  
**CURRENT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN THE USSR**

**Issued by the International Parliamentary Group**

**for Human Rights in the Soviet Union (IPG)**

**on the occasion of the summit meeting between**

**President Ronald Reagan of the United States**

**and**

**General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union**

**November 1985**

**Edited by:**

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The IPG is a voluntary association of parliamentarians from North America, Western Europe, Israel and other countries who are committed to increasing public awareness of the human rights situation in the USSR.

*L'IPG est une association de parlementaires bénévoles de l'Amérique du Nord, d'Europe de l'ouest, d'Israël dont le but est de mettre le public plus au courant du statut des droits de l'homme en Union Soviétique.*

Report on  
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## Introduction

The International Parliamentary Group for Human Rights in the Soviet Union (IPG) is a voluntary association of 700 parliamentarians in 16 countries who are committed to increasing public awareness of Soviet human rights performance and to promoting Western and neutral unity in support of human rights in the Soviet Union.

This report is intended to provide an assessment of the current status of human rights in the Soviet Union on the eve of the Reagan/Gorbachev summit in Geneva, Switzerland (November 19-20, 1985). The report focuses on three major issues in Soviet performance under the Helsinki Accords and the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights: 1) Family Reunification with regard to Soviet Jews and ethnic Germans; 2) Religious Freedom; and 3) Free Flow of Information and Human Contacts.

Family reunification for Soviet Jews and ethnic Germans, as measured by emigration statistics, is currently at the lowest level since the 1960's. The monthly average for Jewish emigration has declined from over 4,000 per month in 1979 to 89 per month in 1985. German emigration has been reduced from 600 per month in 1979 to less than 40 per month in 1985. The report estimates that there are more than 300,000 Soviet Jews and 100,000 ethnic Germans who have been unable to exercise the internationally recognized right to emigrate.

There are more than 350 prisoners of all religious faiths in the Soviet Union who have been silenced for attempting to act upon their rights to religious freedom as defined by both the

Helsinki Accords and the Soviet Constitution. Accompanying this repression has been an increasing level of anti-religious regulations and propaganda sanctioned by the Soviet government in an effort to restrict, if not destroy, the free practice of religious beliefs.

The Soviet Union has also attempted to prevent the free flow of information and peoples, which is a fundamental prerequisite for the exercise of individual liberty and freedom. The jamming of foreign broadcasts into the Soviet Union, the harassment of and limitations on journalists working in the Soviet Union, the reduced access to and prohibition of foreign periodicals and newspapers, the elimination of direct dial telephone service to and from the USSR, and the ongoing violations of the International Postal Convention with regard to the non-delivery of mail are in direct contradiction to the letter and spirit of the Soviet Union's commitments as a signatory to the Helsinki Accords and other international agreements.

This report has been transmitted to President Reagan by Senators Charles E. Grassley and Dennis DeConcini, and Representatives Tom Lantos and John Edward Porter, the co-founders of IPG. The report reflects IPG's view that Soviet human rights performance is an issue of major concern in East-West relations and should be given a priority at the Reagan/Gorbachev summit which is consistent with the United States' historical commitment to human rights as the cornerstone of American and Western foreign policy.

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

"The participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion...

Within this framework the participating states will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief, acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience."

From the Helsinki Final Act

Within the Soviet Union today, religious freedom is an extremely sensitive issue. Religion is the only alternative ideology to communism in the Soviet Union, providing opposing theological positions and competing for the support of the Soviet people. Because of this role, the authorities are very concerned with religious activity in the Soviet Union.

Despite the official separation of church and state under the Soviet Constitution, the government attempts to control and subordinate all facets of religious life through a series of laws and official codes. These laws require that every religious community be registered with the state and conform to the following regulations: congregations may not own their churches but must rent them from the state, which can revoke the rental agreement at any time; no one under the age of 18 is allowed to be inside a church; children can only be taught religion by their parents at home; all religious leaders and literature must be approved by the state; and the state controls access to seminaries. These regulations result in shortages of churches, religious literature and leaders for all religious groups. In this way the authorities strictly limit the activities and influence of the various churches.

There are almost 100 million religious believers in the Soviet Union, representing most of the world's major religions. There are 52 million Christians, with the Russian Orthodox Church having 40 million members. The other major Christian religious groupings include the Roman Catholic Church (five million members); the illegal Uniate or Ukrainian Catholic Church (three million members); the Lutheran Church (one million members among Estonians and Lithuanians); and Evangelical Protestants. Many of the Evangelical Protestants, including groups of Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists and Pentacostals, have refused to register with the State and are thus considered illegal. Estimates of the membership of these groups are 100,000, 130,000, and 500,000 respectively. The Soviet state also has the power to decide which religious groups have the right to exist. Outlawed religious groups include Jehovah's Witnesses and the True Orthodox Church.

The second largest religious group in the Soviet Union are the Moslems. There are nearly 45 million people that belong to the "Moslem nations" within the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities have attempted to regulate the Moslem believers in the Soviet Union by controlling the number of operating mosques. Before coming under Soviet rule there were almost 25,000 mosques; presently the Soviet government only permits between four and five hundred mosques to remain open.

While the Soviet Constitution guarantees certain individual rights, the Soviet Penal Code can, in practice, negate the freedoms of the Constitution. The Soviet authorities have tried and sentenced individual believers to lengthy prison terms or



hard labor for a number of deliberately fabricated crimes. These convictions violate both the Helsinki Final Act and the provisions for individual religious freedom in the Soviet Constitution. Examples of this practice include Boris Razveyev, a Russian Orthodox Christian, who was sentenced on September 3, 1985 to three years in prison for "circulation of deliberately false concoctions, slandering the state and Soviet order" and "infringement of the person and rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious rituals." Ukrainian Catholic Activist Iosyp Terelya was sentenced to seven years in prison for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda."

Conditions in Soviet prisons, labor camps and psychiatric hospitals can be extremely brutal and ill treatment often results in death. Ukrainian prisoner of conscience Vasyl Stus died in a labor camp near Perm, USSR on September 4, 1985. Religious prisoners are often placed in confinement with convicted murderers and violent criminals and many have been severely injured or killed. Yakov Levin, a Jew from Odessa, was so brutally beaten in a holding prison that his condition was diagnosed as "irreversible." The repression targeted against religious activists is not limited to the activists themselves. Their families are often subject to harassment by local police, loss of employment, forced eviction or arrest.

One of the most recent tactics used by Soviet authorities is the systematic attack on Hebrew teachers. The campaign launched in 1984 by a series of searches, threats and arrests has not subsided under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. In fact, four

more Hebrew teachers have been arrested since Gorbachev's rise to power, including Aleksander Kholmiansky, who was sentenced to 18 months in a labor camp on charges of "illegal possession of ammunition."

The Soviets have also begun to re-arrest religious believers and sentence them to additional time in prison before they are even released from their original sentence. Nikolai Boiko, a Soviet Baptist, has been sentenced to an additional two and one half years of hard labor for "persistent violation of camp regulations."

N.B.-- This report was based on materials provided by Keston College (United Kingdom), Amnesty International and the Human Rights Internet Reporter.

#### FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION/HUMAN CONTACTS

The Soviet Government, in signing the Helsinki Final Act, pledged to "facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds, to encourage cooperation in the field of information and the exchange of information with other countries, and to improve the conditions under which journalists from one participating state exercise their profession in another participating state." Contrary to the letter and spirit of the Final Act, the Soviet Government has tried to restrict and control all facets of information flowing into and out of the country. The Soviet government fails to fulfill its

international obligations by restricting the free flow of information and human contacts in three areas: 1) the broadcast and reception of international radio programs within the Soviet Union; 2) the dissemination of Western information including newspapers, periodicals and television; and 3) the working conditions of journalists within the Soviet Union.

There are several major international broadcasting services which transmit programs into the Soviet Union: the British Broadcasting Company, Deutsche Welle and Deutschlandfunk, the Voice of America and Radio Liberty. The Soviets have tried to restrict the flow of information from these services by preventing the clear reception of their signal. This involves "jamming" the incoming signal by causing deliberate interference in the form of noise on the same frequency as the signal. Jamming prevents the reception of the signal and therefore makes listening to the broadcast difficult. Between 1975 and 1979, during the period of detente in East-West relations, the Soviets ended the jamming of western broadcasts, with the exception of Radio Liberty. Since 1980, the Soviets have increased the intensity and scope of their jamming by building additional local jamming stations and by blanketing the signal over a large area with a network of "skyway" transmitters. The Soviets have also tried to discourage radio reception by making it illegal to disseminate "false" information based on these broadcasts. Although it is no longer a crime to listen to the broadcasts, an individual can be arrested and sentenced to prison for discussing the contents of the broadcasts. The Soviets have also used

intimidation tactics against broadcasters throughout the West.

The Soviets keep tight control over all other forms of information entering the country. There are few Western television programs or films shown in the Soviet Union today. Those that are shown often contain an anti-Western bias and have been screened and edited according to strict ideological standards. The Soviet authorities also maintain close control over the dissemination of printed materials such as Western newspapers and periodicals. Although the Helsinki Final Act calls for "the improvement of access by the public to periodical and non-periodical printed matter," Western publications are often kept in "closed stacks" at public or university libraries. Soviet citizens are prohibited from subscribing to Western publications.

Improvement in the working conditions for journalists is also a provision of the Helsinki Final Act. However, the Soviets continue to delay, deny and curtail entry visas on the basis of past or present articles written by journalists. There are also several areas of the Soviet Union that are officially closed to Western journalists. The actual conditions under which journalists in the Soviet Union work can often be considered harassment. Western journalists are questioned at length and threatened with prosecution on baseless charges. Access to local sources, both official and unofficial, is made extremely difficult for foreign journalists. Soviet officials often refuse to respond to questions or agree to interviews. Soviet authorities also strongly discourage contacts between journalists and unofficial sources. Soviet journalists are subject to severe

harassment, including confinement in psychiatric hospitals, for writing any article critical of the Soviet regime. Currently there are several Soviet citizens awaiting trial or in confinement for articles they wrote concerning such topics as economic problems in the USSR or Soviet performance in the Helsinki process.

Finally, the Soviet authorities have limited human contacts by discontinuing the ability of people inside and outside of the USSR to use direct dial telephone service. They have also introduced new postal regulations which have made it extremely expensive for Soviet citizens to receive mail and parcels from outside the Soviet Union, and continue to refuse to deliver mail to and from human rights activists.

N.B.-- This report was based on materials supplied by the United States Congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

#### JEWISH EMIGRATION

The right of Soviet Jews to emigrate from the Soviet Union is based on three major agreements which the Soviet Union has signed. These are:

- \* The U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)
- \* The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

\* Basket III of the Helsinki Final Act (1975)

Since 1968, the Soviet Union has granted 264,764 Jews permission to emigrate from the Soviet Union. In order to apply for emigration from the Soviet Union, a Jew must have an invitation (vizov) from Israel and must prove that he is emigrating for the purpose of family reunification. Since 1968, Israel has sent more than 600,000 invitations to Jews inside the Soviet Union who have requested them. Thus, there are currently over 300,000 Jews who wish to emigrate from the Soviet Union and are unable to do so because of the Soviet government's refusal to adhere to its international obligations. The Soviet authorities claim that all Jews who wish to emigrate have done so, thus explaining the decline in the number of visas issued.

There is a link between the USSR's emigration policy and overall East-West relations. Emigration peaked in 1974 at the height of East-West detente and again in 1979 as a result of progress in arms control and trade. As East-West relations deteriorated during the late 1970's, due to Soviet policies in Afghanistan and Poland, Jewish emigration declined drastically, from a high of 4,277 Jews per month in 1979 to the current rate of 89 per month (January-September 1985). The following chart illustrates the recent decline in emigration:



DFP —  
LIST

PHYLLIS V. ROBERTS  
PRESIDENT-ELECT

GENERAL FEDERATION  
OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

(MRS. JAMES B.)  
8516 CRESTVIEW DRIVE  
FAIRFAX, VA 22031  
(703) 560-3369

JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PERSONS</u>	<u>MONTHLY AVERAGE</u>
1968-		
1970	4,235	118
1971	13,022	1,085
1972	31,681	2,640
1973	34,733	2,894
1974	20,628	1,719
1975	13,221	1,102
1976	14,261	1,188
1977	16,736	1,395
1978	28,864	2,405
1979	51,320	4,277
1980	21,471	1,789
1981	9,477	787
1982	2,688	241
1983	1,315	110
1984	896	75
1985 (Jan.-Sept.)	795	89

There are currently at least 10,000 Jewish refuseniks (individuals who have been refused exit visas) in the Soviet Union. Recently the Soviet government has stepped up its campaign of harassment and anti-semitic propaganda against the refuseniks and their families. This campaign has taken the form of press conferences linking Zionism with the Nazis, the loss of employment for Jews that have applied for emigration visas, restrictions on university enrollment for Jews, continued illegal searches of Jewish homes, confiscation of property, and the arrests of many Jewish activists on baseless charges. In the past year, these arrests have included: Vladimir Brodsky, sentenced to three years for "malicious hooliganism"; Yuli Edelshtein, sentenced to three years for "trafficking in drugs"; and Leonid Volvosky who was arrested for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda." The human rights conditions for those Jews waiting

to emigrate from the Soviet Union have continued to deteriorate since General Secretary Gorbachev ascended to power, despite his recent statement that "I would be glad to hear of Jews enjoying anywhere such political and other rights as they have in our country."

N.B.-- This report was prepared with materials supplied by Keston College (United Kingdom), the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews and the Human Rights Internet Reporter.

#### GERMAN EMIGRATION

There are almost two million people living in the Soviet Union who list "German" as their ethnic group; 57% of these state that German is their native language. The vast majority of the ethnic Germans are descendants of settlers invited by the Czars to live and work in Russia during the 18th and 19th centuries. These Germans were accorded special rights, which included religious and cultural tolerance and communal self-determination. These special privileges were gradually abolished after 1871. These communities maintained their cultural identity and national characteristics until 1941, when 545,000 Germans from various regions of the Soviet Union were deported to forced labor camps in Siberia and Central Asia. The 1941 Decree of Deportation termed ethnic Germans "Enemies of the Soviet Union" and accused them of "active support for the Fascist Conquerors", while providing for the confiscation of their property and the complete abolition of their rights. It was not until 1955 that



the deportation order was rescinded and the Germans were allowed to move south into warmer regions. The Germans were not permitted to return to their prewar homes, and were not given compensation for their properties seized during the war.

Currently, the ethnic Germans are still denied their national autonomy and have been unable to establish their own German schools and cultural life. Because of general statutory and administrative restrictions and official anti-religious propaganda, the Germans cannot provide for the religious education of their children, a major component in preserving their national identity.

In order to receive a visa to emigrate from the Soviet Union, an ethnic German must receive an invitation (vizov) from the government of the Federal Republic of Germany and must prove that emigration is for the purpose of family reunification. Additionally, the official application process is extremely cumbersome and can take many years to complete. There are also passport and denaturalization fees which can amount to 9 months salary per person. These factors combine to prevent large numbers of ethnic Germans from completing the application process, and even those who do so are often not allowed to emigrate. The decline in German emigration and the obstacles within the application process are contrary to the provisions of:

\* The German-Soviet Repatriation Agreement (1958)

\* The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

\* Basket III of the Helsinki Final Act (1975)

The overall number of exit permits granted from 1955 through September 1985 is 94,227. The average annual figure has varied greatly from year to year and is related to East-West relations. The USSR has claimed that the rapid decline in emigration during the 1980's is due to the fact that most of the ethnic Germans willing to emigrate have done so. In fact, the German Red Cross estimates that there are over 100,000 ethnic Germans who have applied for emigration and been denied their rights under the international agreements signed by the Soviet government.

GERMAN EMIGRATION FROM THE SOVIET UNION

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF PERSONS</u>	<u>MONTHLY AVERAGE</u>	<u>TOTAL FOR FIVE YEAR PERIOD</u>
1955	608	51	
1956	800	67	
1957	1,221	102	1955-1959: 13,270
1958	4,681	390	
1959	5,960	497	
1960	3,460	288	
1961	451	38	1960-1964: 5,342
1962	927	77	
1963	242	20	
1964	262	22	
1965	365	30	
1966	1,245	104	1965-1969: 3,616
1967	1,092	91	
1968	598	50	
1969	316	26	
1970	342	29	
1971	1,145	95	1970-1974: 15,941
1972	3,420	285	
1973	4,493	374	
1974	6,541	545	
1975	5,985	499	
1976	9,704	809	1975-1979: 40,644
1977	9,274	773	
1978	8,445	705	
1979	7,226	602	
1980	6,954	580	

1981	3,773	314	1980-1984:
1982	2,071	172	15,060
1983	1,447	121	
1984	815	68	
1985	354	39	(Jan.-Sept.)

N.B.-- This report was based on materials supplied by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany.