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Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 59, Folder 15, Iceland summit, 1986.

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Pass Given to M.I. David

The Summit and Human Rights

President Reagan says that despite the apparent failure of the Reykjavik summit "real progress" was made toward arms reductions and toward another summit--this time in Washington. Not all observers share the President's optimism although it is hard to argue with his view that prior to the meeting's break-up over "Star Wars," dramatic and sweeping advances were made in the arms control area. As Reagan put it, he and Gorbachev had come "closer than ever before to agreements that could lead to a world without nuclear weapons." Specifically, the two leaders had agreed to ban all medium range missiles from Europe and to abolish all ballistic missiles over a ten year period. That tentative agreement fell through but Reagan maintains that the "door is open and the opportunity to begin eliminating the nuclear threat is within reach."

It can only be hoped that Reagan is right and not only because a nuclear-free world would remove the greatest threat to life on this planet. The arms control process is also important because, at this point, the human rights agenda remains linked to it. David Harris, Deputy Director of the American Jewish Committee's International Relations Department who represented the AJC at Reykjavik, puts it this way: "Whether we like it or not, human rights is a boxcar pulled along by the locomotive of arms control. It shouldn't be this way. Human rights is a separate issue. However, in the current climate, this is reality. And it's one we have to live with."

That is why human rights activists are concerned that the failure at Reykjavik could also have a negative impact on Soviet Jews and others whose human rights are being violated inside the Soviet Union. Prior to the summit's breakdown, both President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz let their Soviet counterparts know that human rights--including Soviet Jewish rights--were high on their agenda. As the President reported in his Oct. 13 speech, "We discussed violations of human rights, refusal to let people emigrate from Russia so that they can practice their religion without being persecuted, and letting people go to rejoin their families...."

The Soviets appear to have been more receptive to U.S. overtures in this area than in the past. Soviet officials accepted lists of Soviet Jews seeking to emigrate. One was handed to Mikhail Gorbachev by President Reagan. According to Reagan Administration sources, the Soviets agreed--for the first time--to discuss "humanitarian and human rights issues" and also agreed to "continue to discuss these issues and keep them under review."

David Harris said that the Administration deserves a "great deal of credit for its persistence" on this issue. He also said that Soviet Jewry activists--from the United States, Israel, and Europe--who came to Iceland also helped contribute to the atmosphere. According to Harris, the activists managed to make their presence felt at virtually every Soviet press conference. "The Russians saw that there just was no way to dodge this

issue," he said. "The Jewish voices were heard."

Harris said that there is no way to predict what has been any of this means for the future of Soviet Jews. "The Soviets ~~are~~ seeking to redefine the issue from the overall question of Soviet Jewry to one of specific cases. Reykjavik represented a step forward and we welcome it, ~~including the willingness to talk about specific cases.~~ But the Soviets are still far from where we want them to be. Our concern is not only with some of the more prominent refuseniks and activists but also with the hundreds of thousands of other Jews who want out of the Soviet Union."

He also said that it is crucial that the issue of Soviet Jewry not be held hostage to the state of the overall arms control process. "Even if it turns out that no progress on arms control came out of Reykjavik, we still must not abandon the human rights agenda." Fortunately, it seems unlikely that the Reagan Administration has any intention of doing that.

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date October 20, 1986

to Area Directors

from Sonya F. Kaufer

subject GORBACHEV'S VIENNA WALTZ

The Helsinki Accords conference is coming up very shortly. Please take advantage of the special timeliness of the attached op-ed.

Regards.

Sonya

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86-965

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
VIEWPOINT
INFORMATION AND OPINION TO PONDER AND SHARE
SONYA KAUFER, Director
PUBLICATIONS SERVICE

GORBACHEV'S VIENNA WALTZ

When the conference to review compliance with the Helsinki Accords gets underway in Vienna, in early November, human rights is likely to be a featured topic. And so is the Soviet Union's non-compliance with the human-rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords.

Mikhail Gorbachev, unlike his predecessors, has shown an awareness of Western concern about human rights. Not only has he agreed to address the issue; he has sought to portray himself and his country as champions of human rights. The Soviet Foreign Ministry has established a "Department of Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs," and during his meeting with French President Mitterrand last July, the Soviet leader predicted that "the theme of human rights" will become "ever more acute on the threshold of the 21st century."

Thus, it is inevitable that the Soviets will try to parade their "achievements" in human rights at the Vienna conference, and try to tar Western countries for alleged misdeeds. It's up to the U.S. and other countries to counter this gimmickry and tell the truth about Soviet restrictions on reunion of families, harassment of religious believers, and imprisonment and torture of political dissenters. Only when Mr. Gorbachev realizes that his public-relations gambits will not solve his country's image problem, will he consider improving treatment of his own citizens.

80th YEAR 1906-1986
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, Institute of Human Relations, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022

SOVIET JEWS: NYET AGAIN?

These are hard times for Soviet Jews. But the struggle goes on. And there is cause for hope.

DAVID A. HARRIS

In 1979, more than 4,000 Soviet Jews were permitted to leave the USSR each month; in 1986, that number has dwindled to less than 100. Natan Shcharansky is free, but arrests of Hebrew teachers and other activists have continued, and harassment of those engaged in religious and cultural study has intensified. How are we to understand what is happening? And what can we do about it?

Recent visitors, Western diplomats stationed in the USSR and refuseniks themselves, are agreed that the situation of Soviet Jews has deteriorated since Mikhail Gorbachev's accession to power in March 1985. Indeed, some refuseniks now talk of a modern-day version of Konstantin Pobedonostsev's alleged solution to the Jewish question at the turn of this century. Pobedonostsev, the influential procurator of the Holy Synod, formulated the infamous "third-third-third" strategy: one-third will emigrate, one-third will be assimilated, and the last third, rejecting either option, will die.

Today, the Kremlin's approach remains three-pronged, though with somewhat different content and proportions. First, Moscow technically retains the emigration option. Although it keeps the exit door only slightly ajar, it claims that its policy conforms to the applicable international agreements to which it is a signatory. When challenged on the low emigration rate, it explains that few now leave because "the process of family reunification has almost been completed." Moscow concedes that it delays emigration for family reunification from five to ten years "where state secrets are involved." It has also alleged it restricts emigration because so many Soviet Jews have gone to the United States rather than to Israel despite their Israeli visas, according to, among others, former foreign minister Gromyko in September 1981; former Soviet envoy to Canada Yakolev, who is now a key Party secretary; and Victor Louis, the Soviet Journalist.

By carefully manipulating emigration, the Kremlin seeks to enhance its image overseas. The staggered and well-publicized releases of even a few well-known refuseniks, former prisoners of conscience, and other compelling humanitarian cases bring Western media attention. The Kremlin hopes this will deflect attention from the country's true human rights picture. And by issuing exit visas to some refuseniks (e.g. Essas, Gorodetsky, Mesh and the Goldshtein brothers), the Kremlin is attempting to reinforce Gorbachev's assertion that long-standing cases are resolved against a backdrop of rapidly declining demand. Second, Moscow is also eager to accelerate the process of assimilation. By reducing emigration to a trickle, the Kremlin seeks to drive home a point to those who would apply for exit visas, a point made explicit in the offices of OVIR, where such applications are reviewed: "You have no chance to leave, so why not resume 'normal' lives as Soviet citizens. There are jobs and educational opportunities available to you. Housing, pensions, medical care and safety are at a much higher level here than in the West. Just look at the experiences of those former Soviet citizens who were duped into leaving their motherland only to suffer the consequences of living as unwanted, unemployed, unhappy strangers in a decadent, dangerous and often anti-Semitic new world. Here, nationalities live happily together and we value [as Gorbachev himself said in October 1985] the contributions of the talented Jewish minority." The message is strikingly clear: The time of high emigration is over, and there is no realistic alternative to reintegration.

Third, terror continues to be employed against those who refuse assimilation. No one today speaks of the annihilation proposed by Pobedonostsev, nor of the mass deportation of Jews to Siberia that Stalin had been planning on the eve of his death. The current approach is neither that of Stalin's mass terror of the 1930s nor of the massacre of Jewish cultural figures of the early 1950s. Rather, it is a policy of selective terror. The weapons are isolation, harassment, harsh sentences, remote

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camps, rigorous prison conditions, and physical assault from common criminals placed in the same cells.

There is no need to arrest every Jewish troublemaker, the authorities reason. Arrest a few key figures and shock waves will spread throughout the emigration movement. To make life unpredictable for those contemplating the teaching or study of such "subversive" subjects as Hebrew language, Judaism or Jewish history–and unpredictability is key–all that is required is to arrest some who do not even seem deserving of the KGB's attention. That will deter the rest.

When Gorbachev came to power, there were those who thought Soviet policy towards the Jews might be liberalized. After all, here was a "modern" leader, one concerned with image and sensitive to public opinion both at home and abroad. Plainly, such hopes have been disappointed. Yet it is precisely with such a Soviet leader–firmly in control, open to change and likely to be around for years to come–that the chance of striking some kind of deal is enhanced. The prospect of significant change in Soviet policy continues to depend, as it has all these years past, on superpower relations. U.S.-USSR relations chilled in 1979 and remained frigid until the spring of 1983, when a partial thaw set in. A five-year grain agreement was signed, a cultural pact was in the offing, and the United States lifted some restrictions on the export of oil and gas equipment. The thaw, however, was interrupted by the shooting down of the Korean airliner in September 1983. It was not until 1985 that superpower dialogue began in earnest, providing the first serious opportunity since 1979 for consideration of, among other issues, the vexing question of Soviet Jewry. Although bilateral relations remain rocky, there has been a significant change in both their substance and tone in the last year. A structure is now in place for more frequent official contacts and further summits. President Reagan appears to have come a long way from the days of his "evil empire" speech. Now, we are told, he seeks to assure his place in history as a peacemaker. And Gorbachev, faced with the monumental task of energizing the perennially anemic Soviet economy, which is plagued by declining foreign currency earnings due to lower oil prices, burdened by the high cost of the Chernobyl clean-up, and reportedly preoccupied with the staggering challenge posed by America's Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars"), just might be open to further dialogue with Washington, leading to improved ties. If so, then it is possible–just possible–that the next two years will prove an especially important period in Soviet-American relations. Obviously, the thaw is only partial, and could quickly be interrupted by any number of developments, including unplanned events quite distant from the borders–and intentions–of both powers. Or, perhaps, Reagan's own firmly rooted views or pressure from his right might deter him from moving "too far." Or Gorbachev, who will be closely watching the 1986 and 1988 U.S. elections, might decide that he can get a better deal by waiting until January 1989.

Still, the next two years may be years of uncommon possibility for Soviet Jewry and for its advocates abroad.

And the timing is good. Soviet Jewry once again appears to be an ascending issue in the West. For some time it had languished. After so many years of struggle, fatigue had set in, and frustration as well. How long can even the best-intentioned people be expected to sustain a feverish pitch of commitment on an issue that has persisted for two decades and that, despite spectacular results from 1971 to 1979, now seems immune to Western influence?

Yet a number of national and community-based agencies led by a group of devoted individuals have succeeded in maintaining the visibility of the issue of Soviet Jewry and its priority on the Western agenda. And now, energized no doubt by the release of Natan Shcharansky in February 1986, the plight of Soviet Jewry is gaining increased attention. Almost singlehandedly, Shcharansky has galvanized public opinion, recharged the advocacy movement and unified often disparate groups. The extraordinary reception accorded him in Washington in May, the electricity he generated in the record crowd of 300,000 at New York's Solidarity Sunday demonstration, and the lavish press attention he has received have all served to restore hope, and even optimism, within the movement, and to restore interest in the issue of Soviet Jewry among government leaders and the general public.

It is also worth noting the growing commitment of the major Jewish philanthropic, religious and community-relations agencies to the advocacy movement. As awareness of the stark reality facing Soviet Jews takes root and all hope of a sudden reversal is dashed, a new level of response has emerged: heightened interagency cooperation; increased travel to meet with refuseniks; more appeals to the administration and Congress; greater participation in local and national demonstrations, vigils and petition campaigns; and increased efforts to educate and mobilize constituencies.

The success of the Soviet Jewry movement–and it should be noted that this nonviolent movement has been among the most successful in modern history–has always been dependent on four interconnected factors.

The first is the struggle that Soviet Jews themselves undertook in the mid-1960s to assert their Jewish identity, refuse assimilation and demand–consistent with international covenants and the concept of repatriation as the Soviet government itself defines the term–to be permitted to depart for Israel. Their willingness to risk retribution by writing appeals to Soviet and Western officials, demonstrating, petitioning, fasting, meeting with Western diplomats and correspondents, and engaging in study groups captured the world's imagination and sparked Western efforts on their behalf.

The second is the vital role Israel has played. Not only would there be no legal basis for this emigration if Israel did not exist as a sovereign state (Soviet Jews formally apply for an exit visa based on an affidavit notarized by the Israeli government for family reunification with relatives

resident in Israel), but Israel also provides invaluable information and support for the advocacy movement. The third factor is the actions of Western governments, led by the United States. One can only wonder if any Soviet Jews would have been granted exit visas had the U.S. administration and Congress not shown such concern for their fate. Other countries too have played important, if less publicized, roles. The Netherlands has been quietly representing Israeli diplomatic interests in Moscow since 1967. Belgium was the first country at the Madrid Review Conference of the Helsinki Final Act publicly to express concern over Soviet anti-Semitism. Australia, Canada and Great Britain have sent their Moscow-based diplomats to monitor the trials of some Jewish activists. France's President Mitterrand was the first Western leader to include a Jewish communal leader, Theo Kelin, as an official member of his delegation during a 1984 state visit to the USSR. West Germany helped secure Shcharansky's release. And Austria has maintained open borders to emigrating Soviet Jews, providing transit to hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews and other East European refugees for decades. Finally, the role of voluntary organizations and public opinion has been an important factor. American agencies such as the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, Coalition to Free Soviet Jews, National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry, Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, Committee of Concerned Scientists and their counterparts in other Western countries have stimulated public attention, lobbied governments and helped draw Christians and Jews, blacks and whites, scientists and artists, public officials and private citizens into the advocacy ranks. What more needs to be, and can be, done, especially in light of the current gloomy situation?

A key concern is to avoid a situation wherein, notwithstanding the current commitment of the U.S. government to Soviet Jewry's rescue, Soviet Jews become the victims and not the beneficiaries of improving Soviet-American relations. In the last year alone, several bilateral agreements have been signed; Moscow has succeeded in raising more than $600 million in credits from American banks; the National Academy of Sciences, reversing its earlier decision to curtail exchanges because of Soviet treatment of Orlon, Sakharov and other dissident scientists, has resumed ties with the Soviet Academy of Sciences; American cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington are considering sister-city ties with Soviet cities; American travel to the USSR was expected to rise considerably, had it not been for the Chernobyl disaster; the United States, in contrast to the Olympic boycott in 1980, did participate in the 1986 Moscow Goodwill Games; ballet and opera companies, orchestras and art exhibitions are beginning to travel back and forth; and some U.S. corporations are exploring business opportunities in the USSR. Yet all of this has occurred against a backdrop of unrelenting repression of Soviet Jews and, for that matter, of religious, peace, labor, Helsinki and other dissident Soviet groups, of the continued exile of Nobel Laureate Andrei Sakharov, of the brutal occupation of Afghanistan, and of the crushing of Solidarity in Poland.

During this period, what positive behaviors–or even gestures–have the Soviets displayed? A handful of divided family cases resolved, a few refuseniks released (Shcharansky's prominence should not blind us to the fact that he is but one–and one who was "traded," not freed–and the rest of his family, scheduled for freedom at August's end, only five more); a six-month visit to the West for Elena Bonner, Sakharov's wife; and very little else. From Moscow's viewpoint, things have not been going badly. If it can achieve most of its desired aims in other sectors of the bilateral relationship while paying only a minimal price in the areas of Soviet Jewry and human rights, what incentive could it have for increasing emigration?

The Kremlin is seeking to focus attention on arms control, security and trade, as well as on areas that confer international respectability, such as tourism, culture, sports and science. Through a combination of disinformation, counterpropaganda and tiny concessions, Moscow is seeking to mute criticism of its emigration and human rights policies and push forward in other sectors of the bilateral link.

Moscow has sought, as well, albeit so far unsuccessfully, to persuade American Jewish organizations to take a leading role against "Star Wars" and in favor of a return to detente. The bait here has come in the form of vague hints of increased emigration. From its inception, the Soviet Jewry movement has always tried to make clear that its agenda was pro-Soviet Jewry, not anti-Soviet, and that the difference was more than academic. It has also sought, persuasively, to portray its goals as attainable, not as mere fanciful thinking. And it has always underscored the full compatibility between its goals and the objectives of American foreign policy. In recent years, for example, the movement did not seek to block the long-term grain agreement or the new bilateral accords, and has stated that it will not enter into the debate over arms control, even though issues of credibility and trust of the Soviet word do appropriately arise (e.g., if the Soviets cannot be trusted to abide by the Helsinki Accords, how can they be trusted to abide by other agreements, including arms control accords?).

But what if there is no progress on emigration? What if the internal situation facing Soviet Jews remains as it is, or even worsens? It then becomes impossible to defer debate over very difficult questions. Are larger demonstrations alone a sufficient response? Are more nonbinding Congressional condemnations and appeals going to have an impact? Or must the advocacy movement consider proposing to the Administration and Congress–and the American people–shifts in one direction or the other in American policy towards the Soviet Union? Should the movement press for additional nonstrategic carrots or should it propose punitive measures? And would the government even be responsive to such proposals, especially if they were punitive in nature, at a time

There is no room for unilateral gestures until the Soviets show that they are willing to protect those human right to which they gave their pledge at Helsinki.

when bilateral ties are otherwise improving? The focus on strategy becomes more immediate because of the current opportunities and challenges, including, of course, a second summit meeting. Every major Soviet Jewry organization and the World Jewish Congress endorsed in May a statement on the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, the 1974 act that links the granting of most-favored-nation trade status for Communist countries to emigration performance. Written in part for Congress and as a response to business groups' demands for repeal of the act, the statement asserts: "We vigorously reiterate our support for the principles and the policies represented by the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and affirm that we would strongly oppose any legislative effort to repeal or modify it. The Soviet Union must be shown that unless and until it has complied with the terms of the Amendment, U.S. policy will remain as it is. There is no room for unilateral gestures until the Soviets show that they are willing to abide by the rule protecting these human rights to which they gave their pledge at Helsinki . . ." The support of the World Jewish Congress, an organization that the Soviets have been in contact with for several years, is especially important. In July 1983, Edgar Bronfman, WJC chairman, wrote an op-ed article in *The New York Times* calling for repeal of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment "as a sign of good will that challenges the Russians to respond in kind." That position was publicly challenged by, among others, Morris Abram, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, and Leon Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency and head of the International Council of the World Conference on Soviet Jewry. The significance of the WJC's participation in the 1986 statement, therefore, could not have been lost on the Kremlin. Some others have taken different positions with regard to Jackson-Vanik specifically and detente more generally. On the one hand, for example, we have the advertisement of an organization called "The International League for the Repatriation of Russian Jews." The ILRRJ took a quarter-page ad in *The New York Times* in March calling for: waiver of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, thus permitting the USSR to benefit from reduced tariffs on exports to the United States; repeal of the Stevenson Amendment, which limits extension of government credits to the USSR to $300 million in a four-year period and increased nonstrategic trade. The May statement of the Soviet Jewry movement effectively makes clear that the ILRRJ ad does not represent the views of the organized Jewish community. At the same time, by recognizing the president's ability to waive the most-favored-nation restriction in response to increased emigration, the statement implicitly repudiates the position of *The New Republic*, as expressed in a lead editorial in April 1985. A month earlier, four major American Jewish organizations had placed an ad in *The Washington Post*, timed to coincide with the visit to the United States of a Soviet delegation led by Ukrainian party chief and Politburo member Shcherbitsky, which stated: "We believe many people in this country would be responsive to positive changes, especially in your emigration policy. Why should emigration continue to be a barrier to improved trade and investment relations, and to expanded cultural and scientific exchange?" *The New Republic* attacked this approach in a vehement argument: "Well maybe that is good for the Jews of Russia, though maybe not. But what about the Soviet citizens whose rescue is a part of the proposed transaction? What about those left in Russia for whom no one speaks? . . . And just because no one cares for the dozens of endangered ethnic and national groups submerged under Soviet rule–truly captive nations, these, with no diaspora to invoke their destiny in world capitals–this doesn't justify a human rights transaction made exclusively for Jews. What would an expanded cultural exchange look like if it were to be accompanied by a stream of departing Russian Jews and a torrent of Russian bombs over Afghanistan?" The editorial went on to charge the Jewish organizations with moral and political obtuseness, haughtiness, naivete, and single-

The time may yet come when the Soviet Jewry constituency in this country will again have to consider challenging other interest groups concerning their respective agendas with the USSR.

mindedness. In effect, *The New Republic* editorial proposed that until every admittedly despicable feature of Soviet life was corrected, all of us should stand still. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment, to which the *Washington Post* ad had made implicit reference, was not passed by Congress in 1974 to procure the release of every dissatisfied Soviet citizen or to foment revolutionary democratic change, as much as its sponsors may have privately shared these goals. It was prompted by the imposition in 1972 of an onerous education tax on Soviet Jews seeking to leave, and its primary focus, as its legislative history clearly indicates, was directed at the particular plight of Soviet Jews. The Amendment's sponsors also believed that Soviet Jewish emigration was a realistic goal, not fundamentally threatening to the Soviet system.

In sharp contrast to that kind of realism, the *The New Republic* editorial did not offer a single constructive word on how to deal with the current impasse facing Soviet Jews–or Pentecostalists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. (And, as it turned out, a cultural agreement was signed despite "a torrent of Russian bombs over Afghanistan" and with no "stream of departing Russian Jews"–or anyone else, for that matter.)

Thus the May statement articulating a centrist position is welcome because it artfully navigates between the extremes of unilateral repeal of Jackson-Vanik, a repeal that would almost surely leave Soviet emigration at its current near-zero level, and retention of Jackson-Vanik no matter the Soviet effort to satisfy its terms, an equally unproductive stance. Indeed, the statement conveys to the Kremlin the now widespread recognition that in 1979, at the peak of emigration, the American Jewish community was slow to acknowledge the outflow, that it might well have recommended implementation of Jackson-Vanik's waiver provision (notwithstanding disturbing internal repression of Jewish activists), and that its position today is more flexible. This is a very important signal, since the Kremlin almost certainly concluded that its effort to soften U.S. public opinion by permitting record-level emigration had failed to achieve its primary goals in 1979–Senate ratification of the SALT-II treaty and granting of most-favored-nation status. It is reasonable to conclude that Moscow's decision to curtail emigration followed from its perception of this failure.

But is such a statement, however broad the agreement it reflects and however significant its wording, enough? Obviously not. After all, much as the Soviets may desire a waiver of Jackson-Vanik, whether for purposes of trade advantage or of prestige, they have in the meantime learned to live with the Jackson-Vanik restrictions. And though their current economic situation might be improved by reduced tariffs and easier access to U.S. government credits, they are managing without either. Moreover, if private credit with which to finance purchases abroad is made available to them, as seems quite likely, their need for U.S. government credits will diminish.

It would be wise, therefore, for the American Jewish community to avoid single-minded preoccupation with Jackson-Vanik, and to focus as well on the broad range of non-strategic bilateral ties. What is needed is the formulation of a calibrated set of positive and negative responses to changing Soviet conditions vis a vis emigration, which is the principal, though not the only yardstick used in assessing the Soviet Jewry picture. And the time may yet come when the Soviet Jewry constituency in this country will again have to consider challenging other interest groups concerning their respective agendas with the USSR, just as happened with the business community in the early 1970s. At the same time, greater effort should be directed at enlisting broader support from both Western European governments and leading political, intellectual, religious, scientific, human rights and peace figures. Since Moscow has been engaged in a long-term, although thus far rather unsuccessful, effort to wean America's NATO allies from Washington and to capture the high ground in the battle for Western public opinion, such an approach becomes especially important. The 35-nation

Vienna Review Conference of the Helsinki Final Act–the successor to the Belgrade and Madrid Review Conferences–provides a useful immediate target for Western European initiatives. And it is equally true that the U.S. advocacy movement, which has for years relied on the support of indomitable figures like Sister Ann Gillen and Bayard Rustin, desperately needs an infusion of new participants drawn from key segments of American society. Finally, the wild card in any discussion of the future of Soviet Jewry is the state of Israel's relations with the USSR. Admittedly, when Moscow and Tel Aviv maintained diplomatic ties from 1948 to 1967 (with a brief interruption in the early 1950s) there was virtually no Soviet Jewish emigration. Still, were any diplomatic deal between the two to be struck today, it would almost certainly have to contain some provision for emigration. Otherwise, the Israeli government would have great difficulty in selling the arrangement. For its part, the Kremlin, according to a variety of Soviet sources, belatedly recognized its short-sightedness in severing ties with Israel in June 1967. It could have found other diplomatic means short of a complete rupture to express it displeasure with Israel's action in the Six-Day War. By breaking off ties, the Soviets dealt themselves out of half the Arab-Israeli equation and have been relegated to the sidelines during many key events in the last two decades. In the second half of 1985, a flurry of speculation suggested the possible resumption of ties between Jerusalem and Moscow. There was a meeting between the Israeli and Soviet envoys in Paris in July. This was followed by Prime Minister Peres's publicly expressed desire to establish contact, voiced in the fall at the UN General Assembly session, and a statement by Soviet Justice Minister Soukharev in a Geneva press conference in November that the USSR, which "helped in the creation of the Jewish State, was interested in reestablishing diplomatic relations." Word began circulating of possible flights from Moscow, via Warsaw or another East European point, to transport Soviet Jewish emigrants directly to Israel. Then there was a report of a meeting between a representative of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and an unnamed Soviet diplomat attached to the Soviet Embassy in Washington during which the latter reportedly spoke of the prospect of full diplomatic relations between Israel and the USSR in Feburary 1986 and large-scale emigration (*The New York Times*, Dec. 26, 1985). Further, talks between Israel and Polish officials in the fall, leading to the reestablishment of low-level diplomatic ties, the first Israeli diplomatic breakthrough in Eastern Europe since 1967, fueled rumors that Hungary and Bulgaria were likely to follow Warsaw's lead. Since none of this could have happened without Moscow's assent, could ties with the USSR be far behind?

Indeed, the announcement on August 4 that the USSR and Israel would be holding talks on the establishment of consular ties signals a potentially important new dimension in the bilateral relationship. Though both sides have sought to play down the significance, and progress may be slow, the very fact that formal discussions will be held after 19 years without diplomatic links, and given the complex web of Soviet-Arab relations, Soviet domestic policy and East-West ties generally, introduces an intriguing element into the Soviet Jewry picture.

Twenty years ago, only a few visionaries might have foreseen the redemption of the world's third-largest Jewish community; most people had reluctantly written off the possibility of any Jewish future for a community consigned to forced assimilation.

Today, believers can speak proudly of 270,000 Jews enjoying new lives outside the Soviet Union, of the remarkable emergence in the USSR of self-taught Hebrew teachers, of a growing number of mostly young observant Jews, of a spreading national consciousness–all this nearly four generations after the Bolshevik Revolution. Apparently, miracles still can and do happen, aided and abetted by faith, commitment, endurance and very hard work. ✱

There are times when, wrapped up in our own work on behalf of Soviet Jewry, we lose the capacity to assess the significance of the issue to others. In that connection, it is worth noting Lawrence Elliot's article, "Buried Alive: The Plight of Soviet Jews," in the June 1986 issue of *Reader's Digest*. Elliot writes that "Anatoly Shcharansky's walk across Berlin's Blienicke Bridge to freedom on a stinging cold morning last February exhilarated the non-communist world . . . Millions rejoiced; some even hailed his release as proof that freedom was an irrepressible idea. If so, it was an idea whose time had not yet come for the rest of Soviet Jews–and Shcharansky was the first to say so . . . Can we in the West help? . . . Do we have the will? Let your voice be heard. Public opinion can be a vital force–even against the USSR. To make your feelings known about the persecution of Soviet Jews, write to the Soviet Ambassador to the U.S." The full text of the article appeared in a full-page ad in *The New York Times* in June, paid for by *Reader's Digest*, under the banner headline: "Soviet Jews are damned if they do and damned if they don't. You can make a difference."

The circulation of *Reader's Digest* is fifty million.