



NEWS from Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

Call to Venyamin Zakharin, Leningrad
Received by Sandy Spinner

January 7, 1991

New refuseniks in Leningrad in the past two weeks: Yakov Blyakhman, (family of four).

Venyamin's wife and sons will leave the USSR without him at the end of February.

There was a group of American teenagers visiting in Leningrad and he met with them three times. On January 6th Venyamin met with Hillel Kotlyar, B'nai B'rith coordinator from Washington D.C. B'nai B'rith's purpose in Leningrad is to teach Hebrew. They are running classes in several parts of the city.

Many people are confused and worried about the ever-changing rules for applying to the US for refugee status and entry to the country.

Call to Alexander Falkovich, Kharkov
Received by Sandy Spinner

January 10, 1991

Kushnirov is still mayor. He will in fact have two posts: Mayor and Chairman of the Executive Council. He will be responsible for the Legislative and Executive posts.

Last week the community received a parcel Moscow, presumably from the Joint Distribution Committee. It contained food, candles, menorahs. The parcel was addressed to Elkin (who is now in Israel) so it was delivered to Sofiya Chernaya. Sandomirsky proposes that a committee be created to help the old and poor Jews in Kharkov and that parcels and such should be opened by two or more people so that no one can claim any underhanded things are taking place.

They need food parcels if they can be sent.

Lakhovitsky and Falkovich wrote to Philipchuk to ask if they could be included in a delegation to the USA.

Dima Kahn would like a copy of the Black Book edited by Ilya Ehrenberg.

Cut off after 30 minutes, as usual.



NEWS from

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

Call to Dima Kahn, Kharkov

Received by Sandy Spinner

January 17, 1991

Sofiya Chernaya is a delegate to the Va'ad Meeting in Moscow, which is the umbrella group for the Jewish organizations in the USSR.

Valery Pospelov is the Chairman of the Invalid Society. Bob Reiner knows him. Pospelov has a proposal to create Kosher foods in Kharkov. They are breeding chickens, meat and they would like to create a Kosher restaurant in Kharkov. Pospelov has connections in officials circles but they need someone with religious background who would advise them and be willing to invest money in the project. The major part of the money could be raised in Kharkov. Would anyone in Cincinnati be interested?

Oleg Spinner is applying to OVIR for permission and wants to know about purchasing tickets to the USA.

Call to Venyamin Zakharin, Leningrad

Received by Sandy Spinner

January 21, 1991

New Leningrad refuseniks include: Igor Gopp, Anna Traylina, Vladimir Baber and Yuri Ishutov. All have been refused permission to emigrate for access to secret information at their places of work. In some cases members of the family have been given permission to emigrate, thus breaking up families.

The events in the Baltics have made the whole country tense. "At any moment our freedom can end." The intelligentsia is against Gorbachev; only his Communist officials support him. All supporters of Gorbachev are from the right. The major part of those supporters are high level officials, the directors of plants and the KGB. There is no law.



NEWS from Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

January 31, 1991

Call to Sofiya Chernaya, Kharkov

Received by Nick Kapustin for Sandy Spinner

Starting tomorrow Soviet troops will be patrolling Kharkov along with other settlements, cities, and populated areas all over the country. It was announced in the media that this was for the safety of the population because in fact, the situation is dangerous for people. There is banditry, and robbery and the people are afraid to go out. The people are also afraid of the troops and interpret their presence as another step away from democracy and towards dictatorship.

Sofiya says that the whole procedure in Kharkov OVIR takes more than a year. Now OVIR is inviting people who applied to them in October 1989. She will get answers to questions about how many people apply and are seen each week.

People going to Israel have got help from the Israeli Consulate in Moscow. A representative of the Israeli Consulate comes to Kharkov regularly and helps people through the process of applying for emigration to Israel. The representative takes documents and has been very helpful to would-be emigrants.

It is estimated that there are 45,000 Jews in Kharkov now. Sofiya says that if half of the Kharkov Jews emigrate, there will still be 25,000 Jews. Therefore, it is very important to have an operational synagogue. Yet nothing has been done to repair the synagogue. The community is very grateful to have received the building but they are short of money to hire people to run the synagogue, let alone to repair it. The synagogue account, which is a foreign currency account, has no money in it. No repairs have been started, although it was believed work would start a month ago.

Sofiya believes that money was sent to the Jewish community of Kharkov from the Jewish community of Cincinnati and wonders why they did not get a penny. Is this correct?

Sofiya is on the committee that deals with the erection of a new monument at Drobitsky Yar and she says that they are not going to erect the monument which was given second prize at the contest. Instead, they will erect their own monument. If it comes to it, the area is so vast, that it would be possible for the Jews to erect their own monument in addition to the one the city plans to put up.

She said that the Jewish community could have an account for the building of the monument and that other countries might give financial help to this project, besides Cincinnati.

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There is a committee to help the poor which Sofiya serves on. Sandomirsky is helping and she and he work well together. They have received help from Switzerland in the form of medicines. She would like help from us.

The Children's Operatic Studio very much wants to be invited to come to Cincinnati to perform.

Regards to Bob Spinner. She sent letters to Alice Abrams and Sandy Spinner with to New York. They should be received soon.

Call to Venyamin Zakharin, Leningrad
February 4, 1991

Received by Sandy Spinner

Venyamin reports that Marina Rayer, Leningrad received permission to emigrate.

Three families in Leningrad have registered as new refuseniks on the basis of "state secrecy and state security" during the past weeks. The member of the family refused for access to secrets is: Vladimir Berezin, Minna Sub and Roman Manyuk.

Mina Sub's family and Roman Manyuk's family received permission to emigrate without them, but will stay together in Leningrad until the whole family can leave together.

Leningrad People's Deputy Kiril Goldovsky's assistant is in the United States. His name is Genrich Gurevich and his phone number is: (608) 274-6913. Marina Levina will be Goldovsky's assistant now.

Solomon Smolyar, Leningrad, received a new refusal. He applied for medical treatment in Israel, suffering from ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) and received an invitation from Rambam Medical Center in Haifa. He has a letter from the Soviet Deputy Health Minister, Lepatin dated December 10, 1990 (Human Rights Day) saying that there was no objection to him going to Israel for treatment. The number of the letter is 225/60-975. The letter was addressed to Mr. Savitsky, the Head of the Leningrad OVIR and gave Smolyar the right to apply without a personal invitation, which Smolyar did in December, 1990. In spite of everything, last week Savitsky refused permission for Solomon to leave the USSR. Solomon asks that we try to do something to help him get to Israel for treatment.

According to Zakharin there are probably more than 150 families in Leningrad who are refused for having "secrets" learned at their jobs or former jobs.

Venyamin's wife received her entry visa for the US on February 1. She and the boys will emigrate without Venyamin who continues to be refused for secrets.



NEWS from

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

February 14, 1991

Call to Alexander Falkovich, Kharkov
Nick and Inna Kapustin, translators

Received by Sandy Spinner

Alex Falkovich put an advertisement in the local Jewish newspaper in Kharkov where he addressed all his friends and acquaintances regarding information about new refuseniks and Poor Relatives in Kharkov. Two Poor Relatives contacted him but they do not want publicity because their plans are to leave on guest invitations from Israel and remain there permanently. (ed. note: Poor Relatives do this sometimes because they cannot get their relatives in the USSR to give them the documents necessary for them to apply to emigrate) As for the new full list of refuseniks and Poor Relatives in Kharkov, Alex would be able to give it to me in about three weeks. He will get in touch with the Moscow Joint Bureau on Emigration, Human Rights and Rule of Law and give them the information about Kharkov refuseniks also.

Alex reports that the OVIR in Kharkov only takes about three or four months to approve applications for emigration and get an exit visa. He says that Sofiya's information that the process takes one year is not correct.

Alex will get in touch with Oleg Spinner and try to find out his status with OVIR.

Alex' Cultural Group is still fighting for a place in the synagogue. The Kharkov authorities will not allow the Cultural Group to have another place to meet since the synagogue is large enough to accommodate all the Jewish groups. However, Falkovich says that the twenty elders who make policy for the synagogue have put obstacles up in order to keep them from having a place there.

Falkovich says that in the Ukraine in general, it is still much quieter and safer regarding anti-Semitism than in Russia, because there is no such organization as Pamyat in the Ukraine.

The general situation is awful. The stores are absolutely empty. To buy anything in the way of food in Kharkov you must go to the private market and pay very high prices.

Alex confirms that there has been no patrolling by troops in the Kharkov streets.

Danil Khalatov has still not applied to OVIR soon. He probably will get permission relatively quickly.

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NEWS from

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

~~Call to American attorney David Leopold, in Moscow~~
Received by Sandy Spinner

February 5, 1991

Cleveland attorney David Leopold has been in Moscow for three months working in the Bureau office. He reports the following:

Dmitri Berman is still in the Canadian Embassy where he was granted asylum from the officials who are trying to rearrest him. The Berman case must be watched closely because it could be used as an excuse to close the gates. Berman is a sacrificial lamb, according to David. He was arrested for the murder of a soldier killed in the Ukrainian town of Nikolaev because he is a Jew and wants to go to Israel. The Soviets don't want to anger the army so they are throwing Berman to them. Also, Berman is a stereotypical Jew in their eyes.

His status in the Canadian Embassy is temporary and he is there by the good graces of the Canadians. There is no reason for the Soviets to let him go and they are being difficult about giving correct information about the case.

There are several new Prisoner cases to watch. The Masover case is another one. He is a psychiatrist who was arrested for taking bribes, a trumped-up charge. The case of Samuil Rombe is another. He was arrested on the even of leaving the USSR for allegedly speculating in foreign currency. Since Rombe has served time in jail before, he makes a less than sympathetic case. This is the new wave of "criminalizing" cases of people who are actually arrested because they are Jews seeking to emigrate.

HIAS representative, Debbie Marx was in Moscow and visited with SPATE last week to work out some of the problems with buying tickets to the US.

David will be back in the States in the next two weeks.

----- Sergei Komraz, Kharkov
Translation by Nick Kapustin

February 7, 1991

Received by Sandy Spinner

According to report from Kharkov, everything is very quiet. There are no patrols in the streets in Kharkov, as had been promised to begin last Friday. There doesn't seem to be any patrols in other cities, either. In other cities, sometimes, one can see some policeman or a group of soldiers patrolling around with an officer or a militiaman, all appear unarmed. On the whole, things have been very quiet in the Ukraine.

No one knows anything about Pavel Lukinov or the status of Oleg Spinner's situation.



NEWS from

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

February 28, 1991

Received by Inna Kapustin for Sandy Spinner
Call to Sofiya Chernaya, Kharkov

Sofiya said that the first step in the reopening of the synagogue was scheduled to be on the 21st of August 1991 but it has been postponed because some people raised questions regarding the structure beneath and wanted the partitions removed so the understructure of the building could be checked. In order to do this they will have to postpone the finishing of the first step.

On February 18th there was an preliminary organizing meeting to plan for the March meeting of the All-Union Jewish organizations meeting in the Soviet Union. The delegation from Kharkov went to Moscow and took part in the preliminary meeting.

The Kharkov delegation met with Rabbi Shayevich about the monument at Drobitsky Yar. They showed Shayevich the project that Gorespolkom approved which still does not acknowledge anything specifically Jewish about the place. The group also showed Shayevich the plans for the project which the Jewish community wants erected and Shayevich approved the community plan and gave them a letter to the Ukrainian Cultural Fund which controls the funds for erecting a monument. The letter states that Shayevich approves of the Jewish community's design, not the City Council's.

Yesterday, during the Purim celebration at the synagogue, the Synagogue Council gathered signatures on a petition agreeing with Shayevich's position on the Jewish community's proposed design. More than 1,000 people signed.

There were over one thousand people at the synagogue yesterday to celebrate Purim.

The members of the Synagogue Council are eagerly awaiting the arrival in Kharkov of the two architects from Cincinnati on March 19th.

The Jewish community continues to need money to pay the salaries of workers in the synagogue.

Addresses were checked for Oleg Spinner and Pilot Bondar.

Sofiya's daughter filled out and sent documents for Sofiya and Sofiya's mother to Washington. She had previously sent documents only for Sofiya.

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Call to Falkovich, Kharkov

February 14, 1991

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Falkovich, himself, is working and trying to raise two children. He will probably remain in Kharkov for a while because of his Jewish activities as well as for personal family reasons.

Alex reports that Kol Yisroel said that HIAS applied to the US Government in order to raise the ceiling on the number of refugees allowed to come to the USA. He wanted to know if this was true. He also said that a lot of people who have small children and who have already applied to OVIR and hesitating about leaving for Israel and are looking for word that the rumor is true.

(ed. Note: While Inna and Nick spoke with him, I called Leonid Stonov in Chicago and he said there was no basis for this rumor, as far as he knew. Stonov is Director of the Joint Bureau office branch in the USA.)

Hebrew teachers from Israel continue to come to Kharkov. His Cultural Society managed to organize courses that are being taught by these Israeli teachers.

Alex asked that I try to get his Cultural Society accepted by the Synagogue Board in Kharkov so they could use the facility for meetings and classes. He suggested that I contact GORESPOLKOM or Chernaya to try to accomplish this. He also asked that he and Yuri Lyakhovitsky (the editor of the local Jewish newspaper, which is in great demand in Kharkov and distributed through Soyuzpietchat- State owned magazine and newspaper kiosks) be included in the list of those who will come to Cincinnati from Kharkov in September for the International Sister Cities meeting.

The Drobitsky Yar Martyr's Book is going to be published soon.

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NEWS from Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

Call to Venyamin Zakharin, Leningrad
Received by Sandy Spinner

March 4, 1991

New Leningrad refuseniks who registered during the past two weeks : Khatskely Abromovich Naret (family of four) and Alexander V. Presnyakov (family of three). Both are "state secrecy" refusals connected to their former work.

Yefim Rokhvarg, Leningrad secrecy refusenik received permission to emigrate about 10 days ago.

In January there were many refusals. Since the beginning of the year there have been ten new refusenik families registered. This does not count those who are afraid to be listed publicly. Of the ten, two had stopped their secret work more than five years ago.

The Soviet media reported that the United States Immigration Service has told Panamanian, Polish, Hungarian and Nicaraguans to leave the United States in the next month because democracy has come to their countries, so they don't qualify for asylum. Zakharin asked if this was true. I told him it was an outrageous statement and was not true. Disinformation is circulating once again.

Zakharin was pleased with the Union of Councils "one time evacuation proposal" for Soviet Jews who have first degree relatives in the USA and are already in the WPC computer. He believes that the situation can deteriorate into a dictatorship at any moment and the Jews will be the first victims.

He reported that in the elections in Estonia and Latvia, the preliminary data showed that most people voted for independence. More than 75% voted for independence in Estonia. Latvia's results were similar. Of course Gorbachev announced that the elections were void, even before they were held.

In Leningrad, some of the pro-democracy programs seen recently on Leningrad television, have now been banned. Although the situation continues to deteriorate, catastrophe is not at hand yet. The amount of products available to the consumer seems to be increasing in Leningrad and elsewhere. Yet the people are in a bad mood.

Venyamin's wife Irina and his two young sons, Boris and Sasha arrived in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. I promised to call, deliver messages from Venyamin, and see how they are. Regards to Maya Gleyher in Cincinnati.

March 7, 1991

Received by Inna Kapustin for Sandy Spinner
Call to Pilot Bondar, Kharkov

Pilot Bondar, a 60 year old invalid on crutches tried to apply for emigration at the end of 1979 but OVIR refused to accept his documents without any reason. The family did not attempt to leave again for ten years, during which his son served in the Soviet army. At the beginning of 1990 the family sent their documents to the Washington Processing Center for entry into the USA. He had an interview at the US Embassy in Moscow on May 15, 1990 at which time he received refugee status. Case No: WP-111089. He has been waiting for sponsorship and recently got it from the Washington Catholic community. His packet is in Moscow.

Bondar will invite other refuseniks to speak with us next month when we call him again.

OVIR in Kharkov is accepting applications once a week now instead of two days.

Call to Alex Falkovich
Received by Inna Kapustin for Sandy Spinner

March 14, 1991

There were reports that Kharkov post offices were not accepting letters for mailing abroad. Falkovich said that from time to time the Post Offices in Kharkov do not accept letters for mailing to some countries abroad. He thinks it has something to do with the fact that postal rates may be changing and they don't know what to charge. He didn't seem to have precise information though.

Earlier reports from other people said that there was a notice in the Main Kharkov Post Office declaring they would not accept letters for mailing abroad. There was no indication of why or for how long.

Alex reports that there was no response to the ad that he placed in the Jewish newspaper asking people who were refused exit visas to call him. However, he reports two families of refuseniks whose names were given to Alex by his Hebrew students in the past few days. He has not checked with the families to see if they want to be publicly identified, but said he will and will give me their names in the future, if they agree.

At the end of March there will be a meeting in the Synagogue of the Board of the Synagogue and Alex is invited to attend this meeting. He thinks a decision will be made regarding whether his group should have a place in the synagogue and "not on the street."

The general situation in Kharkov is rather calm. Two or three days ago there was a big meeting regarding Gorbachev's referendum which will take place Sunday. Many of the participants were soldiers and military personnel. No one else took part in that meeting.

Soon a rabbi from Israel will come to spend Passover in Kharkov. The rabbi will have meetings with about 200 people during his stay.

Alex would like to organize and open a Hebrew high school in Kharkov. He has already met with the Education Department in Kharkov and they did not oppose



NEWS from Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews

Call to Venyamin Zakharin, Leningrad
Received by Sandy Spinner

March 18, 1991

There are two newly registered secrecy refuseniks in Leningrad: Vsevolod Tsilon and Daniil Levitan.

Tsilon's wife, son and wife's father have permission to emigrate and will leave this summer for Israel. Tsilon's mother was refused along with her son.

Levitan's wife and daughter will stay in Leningrad along with him, although they too have permission to leave. His son, Boris lives in Petah Tikvah, Israel.

Zakharin says that in the months since he took over keeping the list of Secrecy refuseniks in Leningrad, the number of cases has gone from 30 to 50. In the first two months, ten new cases registered. Some people don't want to be registered because they are afraid or unwilling to be identified publicly. He will speak to People's Deputy, Kirill Boldovsky, the Head of the Human Rights Commission in Leningrad and try to get more complete numbers of people who are actually refused permission from OVIR.

Today the radio announced that yesterday's referendum "gave positive results throughout the country." Venyamin says that he voted "against Gorbachev and for presidential rule in Russia." He said the referendum has no influence on the situation in Leningrad.

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Rev