

soviet jewry report

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews



CHANUKAH 1988



FREE AT LAST

Recently Edie Solomon wrote about her friend Elena Keiss-Kuna who first applied for permission to leave the Soviet Union in 1974. In early November Elena, her husband George, and son Andy received the long-awaited permission. In Israel Elena will be reunited with her sister Anna whom she last saw fourteen years ago.

Elena's ordeal has been a long one. In recent years, as her desperation to leave for Israel before Andy was drafted into the Soviet army increased, she became more active. Last February Elena met with U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz about Andy's situation. In May, Elena was warned by Soviet authorities not to travel to Moscow for President Reagan's visit; police stopped her at the train platform in Leningrad and detained her for three hours. Elena's son Andy did go to Moscow and met with President Reagan there.

Encouraged by the continual efforts of her sister Anna, a large network of supporters developed in the United States and Europe. Elena has been visited in Leningrad by many Cincinnati tourists. The Young Leadership Council of Federation adopted her in December, 1985, and has been an active advocate on her behalf.

CCSJ Board members, Frank Harkavy and Richard Shenk visited Elena in April, 1988. In mid-October, they were in Israel and attended a performance of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra on Masada. Thousands of people listened as violinist Anna Rosnovsky (Elena's sister) and conductor Zubin Mehta placed a call to Elena in Leningrad. It was an incredibly moving moment for everyone....

We look forward to the day when Elena will live in Israel and can travel to Cincinnati to meet and visit with her many friends.



Cover illustration by former Leningrad refusenik, Sima Konson, now in Israel. The Konsons were visited by CCSJ Board Members, Frank Harkavy and Richard Shenk in April, 1988.

REFLECTIONS OF A FORMER REFUSENIK

by Igor Kotler

My first refusal was received in September of 1980. Before it, we had a long struggle with OVIR to apply. The first time our mood was O.K. We thought that our waiting would be half a year or maybe some more. But we were waiting more than 7 years.....

Very quickly we found many friends among Leningrad refuseniks and we began to be visited by Jewish tourists from the United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium and other countries. How pleasant it was to hear over the telephone: "Shalom, we are friends from America!" Or hearing the doorbell and asking in Russian, "Who is there?" to hear in English: "Is this Kotler's apartment?"

And once I met two American Jews, one of whom said: "My name is Judith Bluestein. I am from the Hebrew Union College." It was amazing! I knew of HUC before and to meet a person who was working there was a dream. We discussed many problems dealing with Soviet and American Jews and Israel.

Later that year I was visited by two Cincinnati Jews again. They were Dr. Benny Kraut and Dr. Jonathan Sarna, with whom I was corresponding. Unfortunately we had only a short talk but I was happy. They gave me a telephone number and said: "It's Sandy Spinner's number. If you have any problems or trouble, call her." And I did it when I applied the last time. Spinner's name was known among us as the name of a person whose defense on behalf of Soviet Jews is extremely active. Through my conversation with her the authorities recognized that American Jews supported me and my family very much. Soon I received permission to leave the U.S.S.R.

All of my life I shall remember that help and support which I received while a refusenik. Also I remember how important such help is for Soviet Jews who are refuseniks now. How nice it is to know that the Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews continues its struggle. For example, while in Leningrad, Frank Harkavy visited my friend Sergei Kochetov who could not apply and let him know that we support him. After his visit, Sergei applied.....

Editor's note: In August Igor, Alla, Benjamin, and Jacob Kotler moved to Los Angeles in order for Igor to begin working on a Ph.D. From Los Angeles Igor and Alla are continuing to help CCSJ....and Sergei Kochetov has received permission to emigrate.



LOCAL GIRL VISITS SOVIET EMBASSY

by Jennifer Rosen

On July 12, 1988, with the help of The Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews and Sandra Spinner, I was able to deliver a petition with 800 signatures to the Soviet Embassy in Washington D.C. Along with Representative Thomas Luken and Sandra Spinner, I had a meeting with the Assistant Ambassador for Congressional Affairs, Georgi Markasov.

Mr. Markasov accepted the petitions collected at Walnut Hills High School, by my classmates and me, and pursued an open conversation about the refuseniks still in Russia, and the fate of the Kilberg family of Leningrad, for whom the petitions were collected. Even though the meeting seemed to be positive and productive, the Kilbergs received another refusal.

Mikhail Kilberg, father of the family, wrote that it was very frustrating that they were refused again, and that they hoped for more support in the future.



Jennifer Rosen, Rep. Thomas Luken and Sandy Spinner.



AREA LAWMAKERS AID SOVIET JEWS

"Intercession by our elected officials on behalf of Soviet Jews has been extremely helpful in gaining their release," according to Sandy Spinner, CCSJ director. CCSJ works continuously with both Senator John Glenn and Senator Howard Metzenbaum, various members of the House of Representatives, and the Governor in order to maximize our leverage with the Soviets regarding Jewish emigration.

Typically, CCSJ contacts officials and provides information about the plight of a refusenik. In this way, the official becomes an advocate for that refusenik. "Ohio's officials and their staffs are very responsive to our requests," says Spinner. "In turn, their offices rely on our information updates so they can stay current regarding changes in the status of individual cases.

As advocates for individual refuseniks, many elected officials have written letters to the leaders in the Kremlin, placed phone calls to refuseniks and Soviet officials, collected signatures of colleagues in Congress on petitions, visited the Soviet Embassy in Washington, and traveled to the Soviet Union to speak with leaders and refuseniks."

Following is a partial list of cases which Ohio public officials have worked on during 1987-88. We salute them for their important role in the human rights struggle.

Gov. Richard Celeste:

Sen. John Glenn:

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum:

Rep. Thomas Luken:

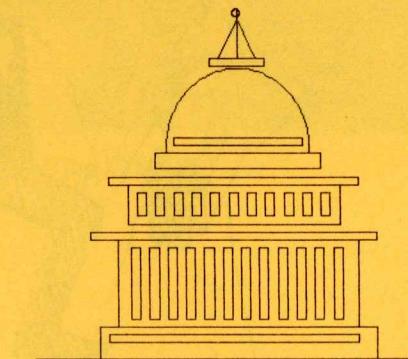
Rep. Willis Gradyson:

Rep. Lee Hamilton (SW Indiana):

Rep. DeWine (Dayton):

Rep. Tony Hall (Dayton):

Elbert family* (Kiev)
A. Blinov, S. Chudnovsky*,
B. Lobovikov & I. Rozhanskaya,
E. Markov (Leningrad)
Yakir family* (Moscow),
E. Markov (Leningrad)
Matskyn family* (Leningrad)
M. Kilberg, (Leningrad),
B. Lifshitz (Moscow)
Yakir family* (Moscow)
B. Sherman (Leningrad)
I. Uspensky (Moscow)
Genis family, (Moscow)
I. Zamanskaya, (Leningrad)
E. Keiss-Kuna, (Leningrad)
A. Arkhipova, (Leningrad)
V. Lerner family* (Moscow)



*emigrated.

CINCINNATI CELEBRATES WITH THE PARITSKYS

by Josh Minkove

Alexander and Polina Paritsky had many times been action alerts on pieces of paper. They were the objects of constant attention for us to rally our politicians. The media, both print and electronic, highlighted their plight. We spoke of them in meetings and in synagogues and wrote letters of encouragement to aid their spirit. They were voices on the other end of a phone line.

Suddenly from November 1 through November 3 they entered our lives with a visit. They reminded us that behind the letters, calls, action alerts and heroic efforts are two very kind and gentle people. Their arrival at Greater Cincinnati Airport was covered by the media which conveyed their experiences and their plea not to forget those they left behind. Later that evening, these two very gentle individuals sat in our living room with the board members of Council and told of harassment, physical and verbal abuse, jail, Siberian work camps, solitary confinement, and other forms of persecution we only read of and hear about on the 6 o'clock news. As they spoke to us they told of the encouragement they received from their friends in the west. They thanked us for our help but urged us to continue on behalf of others they left behind.

Wednesday started early and at each stop they thanked their new friends for all the help given to their family. At Hebrew Union College they told an audience that they must continue the struggle for Soviet Jews. Later in the day in discussions at City Hall and with the Enquirer Editorial board their themes were repeated.

That evening a small but enthusiastic dinner was held on their behalf by the Gulf Manor Synagogue where again they thanked the Congregation for their sponsorship and activities on their behalf.

Thursday was spent with the Paritskys visiting Cincinnati Hebrew Day School, Yavneh, and The Hillel Jewish Student Center bringing their message of thanks and continued vigilance to students both young and old. Lunch was held at the Federation for a small group of community leaders to sensitize them to the human side of the plight of Soviet Jewry.

At all stops the Paritskys were wished a Mazel Tov as they were heading toward their daughter Dorina's wedding. (Dorina visited us last year on behalf of her parents.) As they left we all felt that these simple, gentle people were truly modern day heroes who expressed their Jewishness against tremendous persecution. We were enriched by their visit.



Dr. Alexander and Polina Paritsky with Rabbi David Indich and Dr. Jonathan Sarna.



Dorina Paritsky.



Dorina Paritsky, her husband, Vadim Marchenko, and CCSJ Director Sandy Spinner.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE RESNIKOV'S

One October day, recently, Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews received a message on our fax machine announcing that the Gennady Reznikov family of Moscow had been granted permission to emigrate after a nine year wait.

We immediately notified Barbara Rabkin (Mrs. Mort) who, along with her son, Michael, visited the Reznikovs in October 1987, and had been phoning them regularly since then. Barbara quickly called the Reznikovs in Moscow. When she congratulated Gennady, he seemed shocked. "How did you know?" he asked. "We only just found out a few hours ago and only told one person!"

Our network heard the news from Moscow, passed it around the country and within a matter of hours the information had gone full circle.

The Reznikov's first became active in 1986. Gennady, a metallurgist, has been active in the Scientific Seminars, organized by the refusenik scientists. Sulamit, his wife, has been actively involved in the Women's Movement, which emphasizes the special difficulties of women in refusal. Their sons are members of the "Second Generation" movement, comprised of the young, adult children of refuseniks, who are themselves refused.

ACTION NEEDED

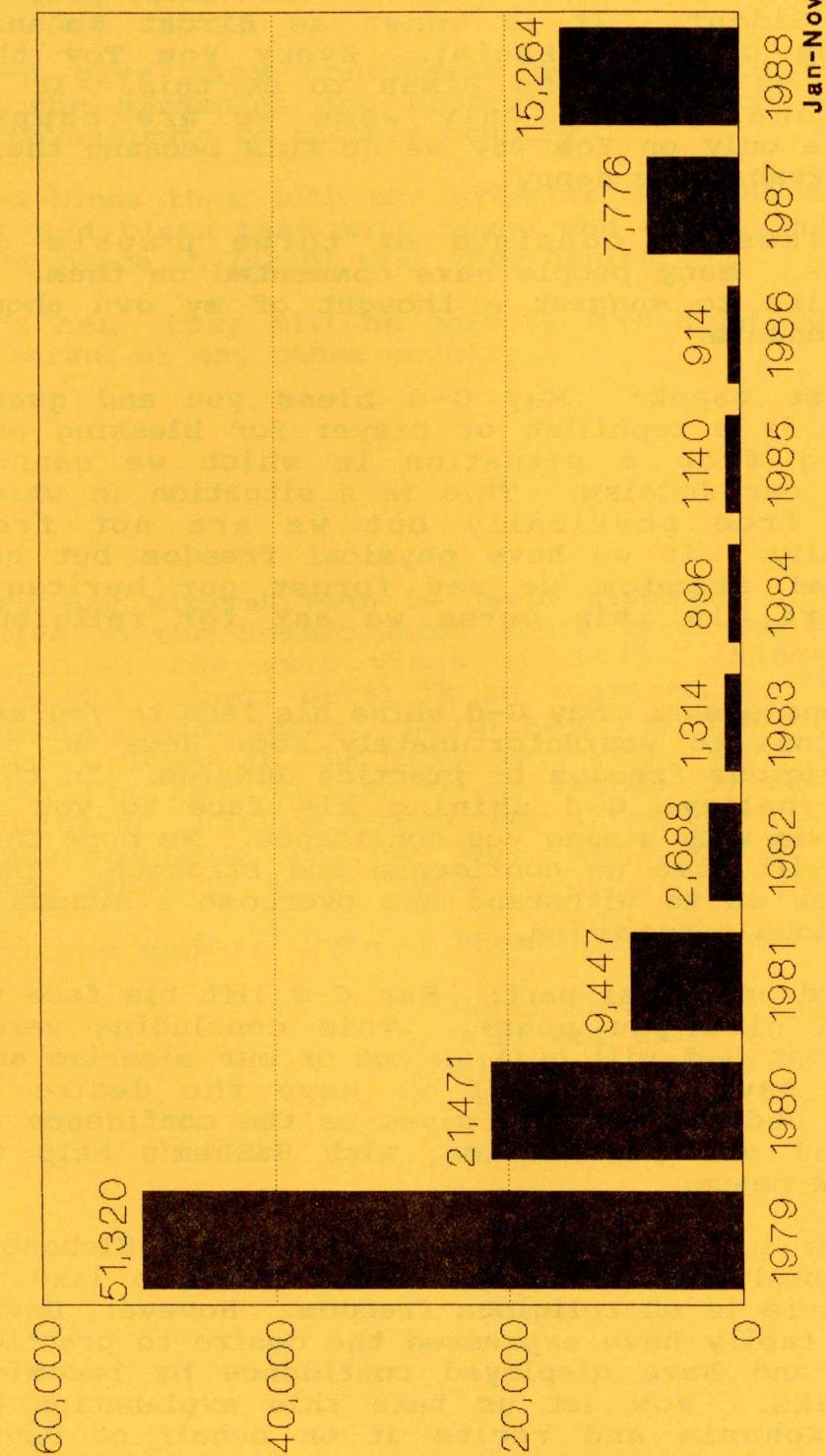
Despite the growing number of permissions, most long-term refuseniks continue to be refused. Many of those leaving the Soviet Union today are first-time applicants with a sprinkling of "names" thrown in.

As a result of a recent change in U.S. Immigration Policy, Soviet Jews are now required to present proof that they have a "well-founded fear of persecution" in order to receive emergency refugee status.

Meanwhile, the back-up of Soviet emigres in Moscow and Rome continues. According to reports from HIAS --the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society -- there were approximately 4,236 individuals waiting in Rome for determination of their "refugee status" by U.S. government officials, as of November 17th. HIAS reports that decisions are made on a case-by-case basis and more than 150 individuals had been refused refugee status because U.S. authorities determined that they did not have a "well-founded fear of persecution." The truth is that anti-Semitism is rampant in the Soviet Union and every Soviet Jew has a well-founded fear of persecution.

Please write to: ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD THORNBURGH
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
10th AND CONSTITUTION AVENUES, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20530

Soviet Jewish Emigration from 1979 to 1988



Compiled by the Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews
2615 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

SHABBOS SPEECH

given by Michael Appel
on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah

This Parashah, Naso, contains many subjects. It contains Nazir, Sotah, and one of the oldest prayers in the Siddur. It is known as Bircat Kohanim (Blessing of the Kohanim). Every Yom Tov the Kohanim go up on the Bimah to do this. It is traditionally done only when we are happy. Therefore only on Yom Tov we do this because there is a mitzvah to be happy.

This blessing consists of three p'sukim or sentences. Many people have commented on them. I would like to suggest a thought of my own about Bircat Kohanim.

The first pasuk: May G-d bless you and guard you/This is a tephillah or prayer for blessing and guarding from a situation in which we cannot practice our Judaism. This is a situation in which we are free physically but we are not free spiritually. If we have physical freedom but not spiritual freedom we may forget our heritage. Therefore, in this verse we ask for religious freedom.

The second pasuk: May G-d shine his face to you and be gracious to you/Unfortunately some Jews do not have religious freedom to practice Judaism. In this case, I believe G-d shining his face to you is synonymous with giving you confidence. We hope that HaShem will give us confidence and strength. This will allow us to withstand and overcome a situation of religious persecution.

The third and final part: May G-d lift his face to you and give you peace. This concluding verse states that G-d will pull us out of our miseries and we will have peace. If we have the desire to practice Judaism and G-d gives us the confidence to withstand our persecution, with HaShem's help we will have peace.

This ties into my Bar-Mitzvah Twin David Klebanov. Unfortunately, he is in the Soviet Union, a land in which there is no religious freedom. However, David and his family have expressed the desire to practice Judaism and have displayed confidence by becoming refuseniks. Now let us take this explanation of Bircat Kohanim and recite it on behalf of David Klebanov and his family.

...May G-d bless and guard them physically and spiritually so they can practice Judaism as they desire.

...May G-d give them confidence and strength to overcome the hardships and problems they face as they try to emigrate to another country.

...May G-d bless them with the greatest berachah of all. May G-d bless them with peace and grant them the life of peace in Israel that they desire.

With G-d's help, they will be able to live a life of peace in Israel or any other country....



My Bar Mitzvah twin is David Klebanov. He and his family live in the Soviet Union where they are refuseniks. They applied for exit visas in 1979. Since then, although David's father, Gerzl is an engineer, he is forced to work doing menial tasks. David also has a brother, Mikhail, who was drafted in the army in 1985. Since he has relatives outside the U.S.S.R. he is forced to serve in the labor brigade. David's mother was a teacher. I am not sure but she probably lost her job. There was no reason given for the denial of their visa.

If you wish to write to them their address is:

Gerzl Klebanov
Post Box 2570
Cheliabinsk 454085
RSFSR, USSR



SOVIET REFUSENIK IDA ZAMANSKAYA DENIED JOB

- The Soviet Constitution guarantees the right of each citizen to work -- independent of race, religion, or nationality.

- Jewish refuseniks are denied this Constitutional right while they are not allowed to emigrate.

Ida Zamanskay lives in Leningrad with her 78-year old mother and 7-year old daughter. Her husband died in 1985. Ida, who first applied to emigrate in September, 1987, was refused again in August, 1988. Seven years after the end of Ida's "secrecy obligation," while employed at the State Optical Institute, Soviet authorities still claimed "secrecy" as the reason for refusal.

Ida is a computer programmer with 20 years' experience. In May, 1987, she was fired from her job with the Northwest Forest Accounting firm where she worked for the last seven years. The termination, on the pretext of staff-reductions, followed Ida's refusal to accept a security clearance which would inevitably have prevented her from getting permission to emigrate.

Since that time Ida has tried unsuccessfully to find a job. As is required by law, the Local Labor Bureau (i.e., employment agency) provided Ida with job leads, but at least 12 of her applications were purportedly declined, in spite of the high demand for computer professionals. She appealed to the Court, accusing the Labor Bureau and the organizations which refused her applications with discriminatory treatment.

Ida wrote: "I can only see my ethnic origin as a Jew as an obvious explanation for my quite abnormal position." The Soviet Court failed to act on her claim, thereby denying Ida the legal protection of her constitutional right.

Ida desperately needs a job to support her family while waiting for permission to emigrate. She was led to believe, by a high-ranking emigration official, that she would be provided with a job if she withdrew her application for emigration to Israel.

Send letters of support to Ida:

USSR
194064 Leningrad
Prospekt Raezkogo 6, Apt. 28
Zamanskaya, Ida
194064 Leningrad
USSR

and to the Director of the State Optical Institute, requesting the termination of Ida's security term, since she has not worked there since 1980:

USSR
RSFSR Leningrad
Tuchkov Pereulok 1
Director of the State Optical Institute
Leningrad
USSR

1988 BAR AND BAT MITZVAH TWINNINGS

The Soviet Union continues to deny youngsters the opportunity to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah. This year in Cincinnati, forty-nine of our B'nai Mitzvot chose to symbolically share their special occasion by TWINNING. To arrange a Soviet twin please contact CCSJ at 2615 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220.

Tiffany Amazon
Jennifer Apseloff
Melissa Apseloff
Rebecca Benenson
Michelle Better
Jerome Bukstein
Joshua Burton
Dustin Callif
Karri Clark
Jeff Cohen
Mary Ann Feuerburg
Elisa Gallon
Rebecca Gelfand
Jenny Good
Sarah Gootzait
Marci Haas

Barbara Hauser
Michelle Herman
Yehiel Kalish
Avi Kogan
Racheli Kraut
Vivian Lasse
Andrea Lee
Scott Lyons
Debby Mayer
Eren Meyer
Eric Mills
Jennifer Miller
Amy Mitman
Alyssa Monnie
Lynn Neuman
Jeremy Ostrow
Jodi Peerless

Daniel Permutter
Gail Pinales
Rachel Reiner
Benjamin Richman
Jennifer Rosen
Adam Rosner
Alan Roth
Doug Rozen
Ethan Schwartz
Adam Schwartzman
Micah Selya
Steven Shapiro
Michael Shriberg
Robyn Siegel
Elizabeth Sirkin
Bryan Yonka

CONGRATULATIONS!



Ida Zamanskaya and her daughter.

SERIOUSLY ILL REFUSENIK DENIED TREATMENT

Georgi Samoilovich, a 66-year-old refusenik from Moscow, was diagnosed in mid-July of this year as having large-cell lymphoma, a form of cancer. Samoilovich, along with his wife and 35-year-old son, has been a refusenik since 1972. They were denied permission to leave based on "state secrets" related, the Soviets say, to his service in the Soviet Air Force during World War II. As typically occurs in this situation, Georgi has not worked as an engineer, his chosen profession, for many years.

The Russian authorities have denied him treatment at the Blikhin Cancer Institute of Moscow and on Thursday, September 8, 1988, denied him an emergency medical visa for treatment at the Hackensack Medical Center. This decision, if not reversed, amounts to a death sentence for a man whose only "crime" was his request to leave.

On September 18, 1988, four physicians, a rabbi and three others were arrested as they blocked the street in front of the Soviet UN Mission in Manhattan to dramatize Georgi's plight. When they refused to move as ordered they were arrested and were scheduled to stand trial in November for disorderly conduct. They later returned to the Soviet Embassy stating that "for Jews, changes in the USSR are marginal, cosmetic. Restrictions on emigration remain severe." Parallel demonstrations were held in Philadelphia, Washington and London.

The Soviet "Decree on Entry Into and Departure From the USSR," enacted on January 1, 1987, states that "A request for temporary entry into the USSR and exit from the USSR on private business is considered within the shortest possible terms and, as a rule, within one month, and, if the trip is connected with the serious illness or the death of a relative, within three days." Presently, there is no explicit provision for a Soviet citizen to seek medical attention abroad, even in life-threatening instances. He or she is only allowed an emergency exit in the case of a relative's illness. Can it be that, under the existing laws, the Soviets give higher priority to a foreigner's state of health than they do to that of their own citizens?

The Soviets must be urged to change their emigration laws. Among the international standards proposed in the draft of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Follow-Up meetings to the Helsinki Final Act, they would be expected to honor the three-day turn-around rule for Soviet citizens. If they're prepared to let Georgi die now, can we expect a transformation after they sign the Concluding Document?



DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 1988
TO: THE LEADERS, GOVERNMENTS, AND PARLIAMENTS OF THE FREE WESTERN NATIONS, AND TO ALL HONEST PEOPLE OF GOODWILL

Recently leaders of the major nations of the world made a statement commemorating the 50th anniversary of Crystal Night. There was no statement from the President or the Government of the Soviet Union, although millions of Soviet Jews perished in the fire of the 20th century Inquisition ignited by Crystal Night.

While the fire of Hitler's incinerators, where millions of Jews were burned was still smoking, the 'crystal dusk' started to fall on Soviet Jews. A large portion of Jewish elite perished in KGB concentration camps and only a miracle saved the rest of the Jewish population from the forced deportation to the East (Russian Far East). The years of 'crystal dusk' helped many Jews recognize that Israel is their real homeland and that it is not in the Russian Far East, where Stalin's evil planned their graves.

When many Jewish people decided to go to Israel they only found themselves to be refuseniks for long years. We, Soviet refuseniks recognize that only the support of the Jews and non-Jews of the free nations helps us survive and keep alive our dream to be free and able to emigrate to Israel.

Until recently there were tens thousands of us; today there are only thousands of us. If one takes only a thousand refuseniks and multiplies them by five years of the average refusal period (clearly, an underestimated figure) it will constitute 5,000 refusal years. The 5,000 years of refusal is about equal to the duration of human civilization on the Earth. This figure is a measure of Soviet cruelty to the Jewish refuseniks.

All this is happening at the end of 20th century, in the age of perestroika (renovation) and democratization in the USSR. Today, purely for purposes of propaganda, some refuseniks are let go in order to create an image of the so-called constructive approach to the problems of disarmament, economic cooperation and human rights. The Jewish refuseniks become valuable political currency. However, any attempts by Soviet authorities to justify and defend the refusal of emigration from the USSR cannot hide the slave-owning nature of the institution of refuseniks.

The firm position of the U.S. Congress and President Reagan's strategic vision helped rescue thousands of Prisoner's of Zion, avoiding a massive tragedy for Soviet Jewry. However, the moderate approach of some European leaders only helps the USSR to maintain its disgraceful institution of refuseniks. It is precisely this spineless strategy of limited political demarches at the time of Crystal Night which failed to prevent the greatest catastrophe in the history of human civilization.

Boris and Galina Lifshitz
(10-year refuseniks)
USSR
Moscow 111578
Svobodny Prospect 9/1, Apt. 144
Tel. 307-1952

1988-89 OFFICERS AND BOARD

The Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews proudly welcomes its officers and board for this year. Serving will be:

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Vice President, Special Events
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Sandra Spinner



MEETINGS

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews holds meetings which are open to our membership and we strongly encourage all to attend. Meetings are held at the Rose Warner House/Hillel Jewish Student Center, 2615 Clifton Avenue in Clifton at 7:30 p.m. Future meeting dates are: February 4, April 4, and June 13, 1989.

TELEGRAM NOTICE

During the past several years, the Telegram Bank of the Cincinnati Council of Soviet Jews has been one key and effective component in our struggle to obtain freedom for Jews. This past year in particular, telegrams were sent on behalf of Georgi Samoilovich, the Paritsky family, the Keiss-Kuna family, the Lein family and the Lifshitz family. The Paritskys have left and the Keiss-Kuna family will be leaving soon, we hope.

I should like to personally ask you for your continued support.

Telegrams cost \$14.00 each. This includes the cost of an International Cablegram to the Soviet Union, an acknowledgement from the council, and if possible, an acknowledgement from the recipient of the telegram. Will you please take a moment and fill out the attached form below?

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Raphael Warren
Telegram Bank Coordinator

Telegram Bank

I authorize the Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews to send telegrams in my name. You may send (please check):

1 - \$14 2 - \$28 3 - \$42 4 - \$56 5 - \$70

telegram(s) during 1988 - 1989. Enclosed is a check for the amount indicated.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Please return this stub with a check to:

Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jews
2615 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

REFUSNIK NOTICE

HOW MANY REFUSNIKS CAN YOU FIT IN A PHONE BOOTH?

We don't know. But we do know that as many as 9 refuseniks have lined up to talk to us in a single call. We call Moscow and Leningrad regularly. We would love to make our next call in your name, or to honor someone you love. Or to help celebrate a simcha. An average call costs \$50. Please send your check to us at 2615 Clifton Avenue, 45220.

If you are available to come to our office when we make the call, then you can listen in and take part in the conversation.

AMERICAN JEWISH
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Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

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Rabbi Judith A. Bluestein
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