

UNION OF COUNCILS FOR SOVIET JEWS

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NEWS RELEASE

March 3, 1972

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Roman Rutman

"I HAVE STOPPED BUILDING CITIES FOR PHARAOH"-- SAYS SOVIET JEW

Following is the text of a message received today by Dr. Louis Rosenblum, Chairman of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews from Roman Rutman, Pokrovsky Bulvard 14/5, apt. 47, Moscow, USSR.

"On Feb. 18, OVIR, the office dealing with the departure from the Soviet Union, informed me that my family was refused the right to repatriation to Israel. The OVIR official justified this refusal by the nature of my work: I am a scientist in the field of automated controls and refusals in such cases are connected with alleged knowledge of 'State secrets.' However, I have not dealt with classified work since 1960 and my wife had never anything to do with such work.

"Thus the reason for the refusal is quite apparent--they do not wish to let scientists go. It seems that if I had not done my best during my professionally active career, if I had not been chief of the Laboratory in the Institute of Machinery of the Academy of Sciences, if I had not been a lecturer in the Institute of Radio Engineers, and if I had not obtained my B.S. and Ph.D. degrees, but had been spending my time collecting stamps, then OVIR would not have had reason to detain my family.

March 3, 1972

"The approach used to refuse me the right to leave is also used against many professional people wishing repatriation to Israel. The most transparent expression of this, in my case, came from a statement provided to OVIR by the Management and Trade Union Committees of the Central Scientific Ministry of the Cotton Industry where I was employed most recently. They objected to 'Rutman's departure to Israel as he is a specialist of the highest abilities.' Such a high evaluation of my abilities did not stop the Institute of Machinery management from removing me from the post of chief of the laboratory, nor of prohibiting me from teaching in the Institute of Radio Engineers.

"Since February 21, I have begun a strike. Following the refusal by OVIR to permit my family repatriation to Israel, I have given up my present job where I am not allowed to work in my profession, where they keep trying to fire me under contradictory pretexts, and where elementary norms of behavior toward me are violated. It is written of my ancestors in the Book of Exodus that the Egyptians 'did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses.' Now, I have stopped building cities for Pharaoh. I demand simply that my wife, my 12 year old son, and I be allowed to go to Israel, our homeland."

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WASHINGTON COMMITTEE FOR SOVIET JEWRY
2129 F STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20037

UNION OF COUNCILS FOR SOVIET JEWS
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February 23, 1972

The following appeal was received by phone from Moscow today, 12:15 p.m. E.S.T.:

To: Commission on Human Rights, U.N.
International Labor Organization
Federation of Trade Unions of Israel
International Lawyers Commission
Israel Association of Engineers and Architects

Today in the session of Prunzelsky Regional Executive Committee of Moscow, in the presence of the Regional Procurator, Vladimir Slepak was told that he was a parasite. This "parasite" is a highly qualified engineer, former chief of the Laboratory of the Science Institute for TV Research, a man who had worked in the State enterprises for over 20 years, and who was compelled last September, as a result of the persecution, to leave his job at the Institute of Organic Chemistry of the Russian Academy.

At present, Vladimir Slepak earns his living as an officially registered tutor in physics and mathematics. According to Soviet law, this is considered a "socially useful" activity. However, those who enforce the law do not abide by the law.

Vladimir Slepak is well known for his struggle for Jewish repatriation to Israel and for defending the rights of the Jewish minority in the USSR. For all this he was repeatedly cautioned, searched, and arrested. Now a further reprisal is being prepared based on the law on parasitism (intended originally to clear the cities of vagrants, alcoholics, and workers guilty of absenteeism). This so-called parasitism is punishable by imprisonment up to one year.

We appeal to everybody who treasures human rights. To Jews and non Jews:

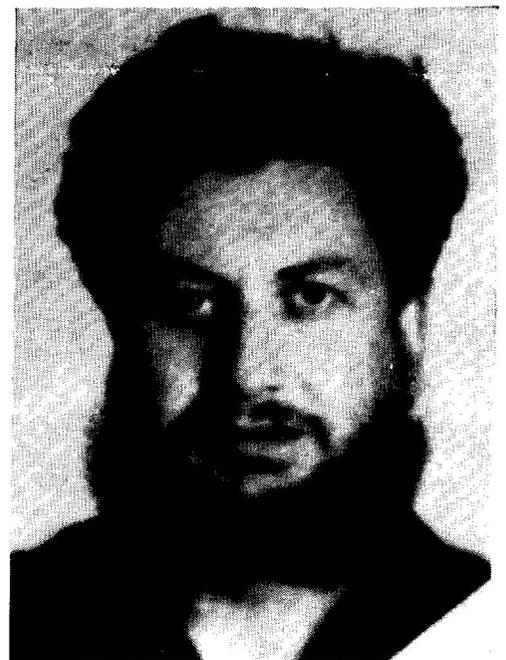
DO NOT LET THE REPRISALS AGAINST VLADIMIR SLEPAK TAKE PLACE.

(64 signatures)

Please send a cable or night letter to those listed below. Ask that the reprisals against Vladimir Slepak stop and that he and his family be allowed repatriation to Israel.

Mr. V. A. Kirillin, Chairman
State Committee of the USSR Council of
Ministers for Science and Technology
Kremlin
Moscow, USSR

Dr. M. V. Keldysh, President
USSR Academy of Sciences
Leninskiy Prospekt 14
Moscow V-17, USSR



Vladimir Slepak

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SOVIET JEWRY--SOME LEGAL ASPECTS

by Leonard W. Schroeter

Word received from Moscow of a People's court decision, highlights a new and ominous problem in the unrelenting effort of Soviet Jews to secure their right to leave the Soviet Union. The case--unique in the annals of Soviet Law and the Jewish repatriation movement--was filed on November 25th, and decided in peremptory fashion on the same day by the Court of the Kirovsky Region (Moscow). One of four identical suits brought by Vladimir Slepak, Victor Polsky, Ilena Polskaya, and Mikhail Klatchkin, it placed squarely in issue the Soviet effort to prevent some Jews from being granted their right to leave on the grounds that their departure would constitute a security risk for the USSR.

Although the court's decision applied only to the petition of Mikhail Klatchkin, similar results are imminently expected as to the other three. Klatchkin, a highly trained scientist, contended that in 1966 he signed a routine security agreement in connection with his engineering work at a Moscow area industrial plant. Such agreements provide that the employee will not discuss technical details associated with his work and will not reveal any "secrets" connected with the plant. No provisions were included, and no oral warnings were given, that upon completion of employment there were any restrictions on leaving the USSR. However, when he requested an exit visa from OVIR (The Department for Visas and Registrations of the Ministry of the Interior) he was advised that he had no right to leave because he had signed an agreement clearing him for "secret work." Klatchkin contended that he had no way to become aware of the restriction on his freedom of movement, it not having been included in the agreement or published in government regulation, and that he had never been advised of such a consequence until he applied to OVIR. Thus the agreement was invalid under Section 57 of the Civil Code of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic). This provides that "a transaction entered into under the influence of a mistake of a substantial kind" will be declared invalid at the instance of the party acting under the influence of the mistake.



From left to right: Vladimir Slepak, Michael Zand (now in Israel), Victor Polsky, Vladimir Prestin, P. Abramovich.

The background of the case, and the problem it poses, has grave significance for Soviet Jews as well as the scientific community. It is not coincidental that scientists comprise much of the leadership of the Jewish repatriation movement and the democratic movement in the Soviet Union. Among the foremost activists of the Jewish movement must be numbered 4 Moscow scientists--Vladimir Slepak, Victor Polsky, Vladimir Prestin, and Pavel Abramovich. Yet all four, and three of their wives are present victims of the Soviet claim that their "secret work" prevents them from leaving. Others prominent in the Jewish resistance such as Klatchkin, and Gabriel Shapiro, are similarly situated.

Slepak, a 44 year old radio (electronic) engineer, has worked in planning and use of control equipment for TV research. From 1957 to 1968, while at the Scientific Institute for TV Research, he signed a security agreement. (In the USSR, there are three categories of security status, in all of which there are typical security prohibitions against discussion, document usage, etc. However, since applications for exit visas commenced, the KGB has insisted that associated with each class are restrictions against leaving the USSR even after completion of the work or resignation. These restrictions, although unpublished, are said to run from 3 to 5 years). Slepak, as chief of a laboratory for development of TV and impulse apparatus; as the author of nine articles in "closed" Soviet journals; and the person responsible for issuance of a patent, worked in an installation where his work was classified as Class I Security. In 1968, he resigned, also choosing not to finalize his doctorate because of his involvement in the Jewish movement. He worked in the Geophysics Trust, a non-security position from which he was fired in March 1970 for requesting a character reference--a pre-requisite for OVIR application. He then did non-security work in the Special Design Bureau of the Institute of Organic Chemistry of the Russian Academy, planning nuclear magnetic resonance, until in September 1971, he was forced to resign. One of the organizers and signers of the historic letter of 39 on March 10, 1970 (in which Moscow Jews openly criticized and attacked a stage-managed press conference of Soviet Jews denying anti-Semitism), Slepak has participated in virtually every Moscow petition and demonstration since that time. He was jailed from March 26 to April 10, 1971 after demonstrations and sit-ins at the USSR Procurator-General, concerning detention of Jewish political prisoners, and maintained a 12-day jail hunger strike. On June 15, 1970 (the day of the Leningrad hi-jacking arrests) the KGB searched his apartment. Interrogated numerous times by the KGB, he was summoned in September 1970 as a witness against the Leningrad defendants, but refused to cooperate. Although no reason was given by OVIR when he was first refused an exit visa, the 8 subsequent refusals have all orally been stated to be security regulations. Originally, KGB advised that he would be issued a visa 3 years from the date of his 1968 resignation from his "security" job. That time having now passed, the KGB still cites security reasons. These appear no more valid than the classification of his original employment as top secret.

Slepak's case is similar to Victor Polsky's. Polsky, a 41 year old physical engineer with a doctorate in photo electronics, has taught at the Institute for Energetics and, while chief of a laboratory doing research in non-destructive tension, signed a security agreement. Demoted after asking for his OVIR required character reference, he was forced to resign in March 1971, and since then has taught at one of Moscow's dozen burgeoning Hebrew ulpans. Like Slepak, he has signed all recent petitions, demonstrated, been arrested, and has led delegations of protest to Russian officialdom. Refused exit visa permission, he has been given the routine "security" explanation, even though he had originally been told that his restrictions ceased when he terminated his laboratory work, and though he has presented evidence that his research didn't involve security issues. Like Slepak, Prestin, Abramovich, Klatchkin and Shapiro, he was one of 11 signers of a November 10th letter to the Committee on State Security which criticized the "stereotyped refusal (that) you are

all working in places handling secret work." Labelling this decision as "irresponsible" the signers state that their being permitted to leave will not disturb USSR security and that they will prove with reasoned evidence that this is the case. They have had no answer. In a recent telephone conversation, Polsky said: "We are in their power. If they want to keep us a year, they keep us a year. If they want to keep us three years, they will keep us three years. We can do nothing about it. But we want our situation to be known throughout the world. We need support to keep up the fight." Polsky's wife, a 36 year old electrical engineer, also signed a security agreement in connection with her work on radio relay lines at the Institute for Communication Research.

Thirty-seven year old Vladimir Prestin, an electrical engineer; the author of numerous articles and the holder of three patents, worked in "closed" (security) institutions until 1969 when he resigned because of his Jewish involvement. Since then he has worked at the Geophysical Trust and at the Computer Centre, where he was forced to resign because of his activities. He, too, now teaches Hebrew in a Moscow Ulpan, and has joined the petitions, demonstrations and jail terms of his colleagues. He has been refused four times by OVIR on security grounds, and though originally told that he could leave in April 1972, the KGB has recently extended that time. His wife, Ilena, also an electrical engineer is in a similar situation. So is Pavel Abramovich, a 32 year old radio engineer and expert in computers, who worked from 1962-1970 in a closed institute of computer research. Forced to resign from a non-security computer job in September, he too teaches at an Ulpan. Although he signed a security agreement, Abramovich, whose Jewish-activist record is similar to his companions, has vigorously insisted that the KGB is wholly unable to prove that his work was secret or had top security implications. Much of the research has been done in parallel or advanced form in Western countries and has appeared in public scientific journals, available throughout the world.

It is commonly believed in Jewish circles, as well as in scientific ones in the Soviet Union, that the "security" reason is a pretext to prevent emigration. Soviet scientists are concerned about official use of such an explanation because of their efforts to liberalize Soviet science from its blanket of secrecy and obscurantism. Deprived for years of contacts with their foreign colleagues, and arbitrarily assigned to military-oriented research, some Soviet scientists, in recent years, have valiantly sought to limit KGB security control of their activities. Some eminent Soviet physicists like Andrei D. Sakharov, Andrei N. Tverdokhelbov, and Valery N. Chalidze, founded and led the Soviet Committee on Human Rights which has energetically championed the right of Jews to leave. To them, the right of free repatriation is part of the recognition of the community of world problems and human rights. Sakharov, and others have authored an appeal of scientists stating:

"It is in seeking exchange of information and ideas that we come up against the greatest stumbling block in our country. Truthful information about our shortcomings and negative phenomena is classified as secret. Exchange of information with foreign countries is restricted....Freedom of information and creativity are necessary to the intelligentsia because of the very nature of its work, because of its social function. The State, however, counteracts this and brings to bear all kinds of restrictive measures, administrative pressure, dismissal from work, and even court trials."

Little wonder then, that there is deep concern about Soviet limitations on the mobility of scientists. These restrictions amount practically to detention and are akin to arrest. When they are justified in the name of "secrecy" (something scientists doubt exist and, in any event, abhor), or "security" (which scientists view as a term impeding research into questions openly discussed, and further advanced, in

other countries), the complications for both freedom and science are ominous.

There are those who defend restrictions on the right to leave when the restraints are for reasons of State Security, as a justifiable limitation of the human right. The classic 1963 UN "Study of Discrimination in Respect of the Right of Everyone to Leave Any Country, Including His Own" by Judge Jose D. Ingles, acknowledges that such restrictions are not unusual. Many countries refuse permission to leave on the grounds of national security, and a few countries prevent the departure of persons with high technical or scientific skills or qualifications. Judge Ingles criticizes such limitations, asserting that the national security claim can only be made where the person's activities are punishable under penal law. As to scientists working on vital defense projects, the UN study requires that any limitation on the right to leave must be part of the contract of employment and must end with the termination of employment. As to the contention that people may possess military or state secrets, Judge Ingles places a heavy burden upon the State to justify any restraint by meeting "the test of clear and pressing danger to the national security." If this cannot be done, Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been violated.

Gavriel Shapiro is one of those detained. He worked as a chemical engineer without access to secret documents. He was given the "secrecy" reason long after OVIR had rejected his earlier applications for "bad behavior", for "being involved in demonstrations" and only after he advised OVIR that he had received a grant of Israel citizenship. Shapiro has complained to the UN Commission on Human Rights. He has forwarded his petition to Tamar Eshel, Israel's representative on the Commission. One might hope that Israel will make the petition public; raise the "security" question with its important human rights implications; and protect its citizen. Shapiro, Slepak, Polsky, Prestin, Abramovich, and Klatchkin all await concerned voices everywhere in the world, insisting that a minimum standard of humanity would permit them to prove that their repatriation could not adversely affect the land where they are detained.

January 1972

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Mr. Schroeter is principal legal assistant to the Attorney General of Israel, an expert on Human Rights issues and the Soviet Jewry problem. He is a free lance writer.

UNION OF COUNCILS FOR SOVIET JEWS

Western Region	Central Region	Eastern Region
Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry	Cleveland Council on Soviet Anti-Semitism	Washington Committee for Soviet Jewry
Southern California Council for Soviet Jews	Chicago Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry	South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry
Orange County Commission on Soviet Jews	Toronto Council for Soviet Jews	Greater Philadelphia Council for Soviet Jews
California Students for Soviet Jews	Pittsburgh Voice for Soviet Jewry	Montreal Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry
San Diego Council for Soviet Jewry	Cincinnati Council for Soviet Jewry	Long Island Committee for Soviet Jewry
		Zechor-S.E. Virginia Council for Soviet Jews