

Russian Slavery

BY SUSAN GLASS

A leading Soviet Jewish activist has asked the American Jewish Congress to transmit his message that the world "must do everything in its power to convince the U.S.S.R. that the reinstatement of slavery in the 20th century is not in its own best interests."

In commenting on the new exit fees ranging to \$37,500 required of educated Soviet Jews, Lev Lerner, an engineer, told an American Jewish Congress spokesman on a recent two-

week fact-finding mission to the U.S.S.R. "These new fees amount to virtual bondage for all Soviet Jews. We have now become the slaves of the 20th Century."

"The Soviet Union has always taken pride in her system of free education for all her citizens. Only now we are informed that Jews must pay the government for 'free education,'" Mr. Lerner told Joel Brooks, director of the AJ Congress' Northern California Division, headquartered at 40 First Street, San Francisco. Mr. Lerner declared:

"The truth is that free education in the U.S.S.R. has always been a myth. We receive an extremely low salary for our labors. The difference between what our labor is actually worth in terms of productivity and our actual take-home pay is a form of compulsory repayment to the government for 'free education,'" he asserted.

"We are now actually asked to pay three times for our education: salary differential, contributions to society, and ransom."

Mr. Lerner said that even the few Jews who could raise the money now required for an exit permit would receive "no guarantee that they would be permitted to leave."

Mr. Lerner noted that the average wage for a young professional in the Soviet Union was 140 rubler per month (one ruble equals \$1.11) and said this meant he and his wife would have to work more than 20 years, and during this entire period not spend any portion of their salary on food and clothing, to earn the money to leave.

"It is virtually impossible for any Jewish student, regardless of her personal qualifications and brilliance, to gain admission to a Soviet University. This situation even applies to the children of high-ranking Jewish communists and government officials."

The order was carried out to such an extreme that several prominent Jewish military officers were physically removed from trains and planes destined for Moscow and Leningrad while the President was there, the AJ Congress regional director twas told.

Mr. Brooks said he encountered a "strong feeling of hopelessness and despair" in all segments of Soviet Jewish society, "even among those who formerly did not wish to leave the Soviet Union."

"I do not wish to leave Russia. It is my home. But because I am a Jew they will not let me live in peace. Some of my patients now see other physicians. I am a man without a country aor a future."

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