

Russian Jew Writes

(VIKTOR BRAILOVSKY AND HIS WIFE, IRMA, APPLIED TO LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION IN MARCH, 1972. A DOCTOR OF PHYSICS AND MATHEMATICS, BRAILOVSKY WAS DENIED AN EXIT VISA AND HAS BEEN UNEMPLOYED SINCE THEN. THE FOLLOWING LETTER FROM HIM WAS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY.)

It seems to me that a Western man would find it very difficult to understand the spiritual development, the thoughts and the personal problems of a person living in the USSR in the 1950s. It was in these very years that I tried to understand the world we are living in and my place in this world. The world standing before our generation was a terrible "material" world, deprived of God, full of fear; a world where one could not say what one felt and what one thought. It was a world controlled by one true ideology, a world deprived of other information (the Bible was not published and it was not available in libraries) and therefore even the dissidents in it were Marxists. The situation became even more difficult for the Jews because the beginning of the 50s was a period of intensive anti-Semitism. It was not only the struggle against "kinless cosmopolites," which was then a synonym of it all, not only the dismissals from work, but some sort of a specific pre-pogrom atmosphere where I, a 16-17 year old boy, felt almost physically. I think that it was this feeling that created the background against which I saw and thought about the tragedy of Jewry in World War II and the

situation of the Jews in the USSR as well as my own Jewishness.

Stalin died in 1953 and the "thaw" came. After two years of trying to find an outlook within the framework of liberal Marxism, I realized the spiritual poverty and inadequacy of this philosophy. As I had no other information, then a cooling-off period came and I stopped my intensive search in this field. At that time, an endless belief in cybernetics started to spread among the intelligentsia, when, even in the scientific societies dealing with this field, reality often became mixed up with boundless and open fantasy. I became interested in these questions and soon after finishing university studies in 1959, I started working on the recognition of these forms and the usage of these methods in medicine. The first results appeared and in 1965 I defended my Candidate's thesis.

I married. My son was born. All this time, the endless and outwardly hardly noticeable process of developing a world outlook was going on within me. This involved, first of all, a rethinking and a destruction of all those stereotypes received during childhood, a deeper understanding of the essence of an open and a closed society and, finally, an understanding of the situation and the perspectives of Jewry's existence here, in the USSR. This process went on at the time when liberal tendencies appeared in our society for the first time. The process led me to quite pessimistic prognoses.

I understood the strength of my Jewish feelings during the Six-Day War. I observed with great interest the Jewish movement for repatriation which started at the end of the 60s. However, it was only at the end of 1970 and the beginning of 1971 that I clearly understood that I must follow this road. I was led to this decision by my rethinking of Russia's historic development and the historic development of the Jews, understanding the lack of perspective for the existence of the Jews here and, at last, the fact of Israel's existence. This decision became a purely internal necessity despite the clear practical considerations which were against it: our family had reached a certain level of material well-being, both I and my wife had the opportunity to engage in creative scientific work, and,

finally, there were relatives and friends who did not intend to leave and who could fail to understand my decision. There was also the potential threat of a refusal and years of unemployment, the constant risk of being subjected to repressions and also the uncertainty of work possibilities in Israel (what is going on there anyway, it is not socialism there, is it?) and the language problem.

In 1972, our family had submitted an application for emigration and immediately afterwards both I and my wife were dismissed from work. During that time, I had to get used to the totally new role of a man fighting for civil rights (could I have foreseen it only several years ago!) and living under the constant threat of persecution. During that time my daughter was born. She still cannot understand that the struggle is, in fact, for her rights as well.

I participated in hunger strikes, spent two weeks in prison and felt on my own back what KGB threats and provocations mean. During that time, I also discovered Jewish solidarity and the fact that we have so many friends in different countries of the world. Unfortunately, I engaged too much (?) in my professional work during this time. It seems to me sometimes that during that time, I lived through a second life, which was so different from my first one. Somehow I would very much like to start the third life - so unlike the previous ones - a life in my Jewish land.

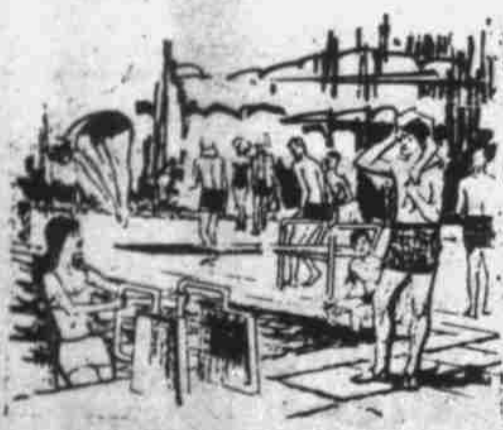
JERUSLAEM (WNS)--Attempts by Kiryat Arab Jewish residents to increase the Jewish presence in Hebron have been prevented by the Israel military government.

WASHINGTON (WNS)--The Senate rejected by a slim majority a \$31.2 billion Defense Department appropriations bill which included an 18-month extension of the President's authority to provide arms and credits to Israel.

NEW YORK (WNS) -- Resistance to the Arab boycott is not just a Jewish responsibility since international intimidation strikes at the foundations of free societies, Edgar Bronfman of New York told the 63-member Governing Board of the World Jewish Congress during a meeting in Geneva.

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