

SOVIET JEWS' CONDITIONS HARSHER

LOS ANGELES -- Former Soviet "Prisoner of Conscience" Joseph Mendeleovich told a group of educators here recently that Soviet Jewish dissidents are now being faced with the most severe forms of oppression "since the days of Stalin."

"The recent mass arrests of prominent Soviet refuseniks and the virtual cutoff of exit visas for Jews is a distressing sign of the type of policies we can expect under the new leadership of (Yuri V.) Andropov," he said. Mendeleovich spoke in Los Angeles at

the Simon Wiesenthal Center as part of a national tour sponsored by Yeshiva University of Los Angeles to publicize the plight of Soviet Jewry since Andropov's rise to power as the No. 1 Soviet leader late last year.

"Many of the thousands of Jews who have applied to leave for Israel are now being threatened with their lives," he said. "I know of several recent immigrants from Soviet Russia who tell me that many of Stalin's policies are already returning."

The 35-year-old

Mendeleovich, a native of Soviet Latvia who now lives in Israel, has focused his U.S. tour on the fate of one dissident, in particular, Iosif Begun, who was arrested at the beginning of this year for "anti-Soviet agitation."

"Begun's crime," he said, "is that of being an observant Jew and trying to influence others to this lifestyle. They (the KGB agents) searched his apartment and found what they considered 'anti-Soviet propaganda.' That 'propaganda' turned out to be Jewish books and Hebrew materials such as the Kuzari, the story of Ahad Ha'am and Reflections of the Rav by Rabbi Joseph Soloveichik (the leading Talmudist in the United States)."

Mendeleovich also said that Andropov was, in fact, running the Soviet government well before Leonid Brezhnev died in late 1982.

"One only has to understand Andropov's position as head of the KGB to see how he gained power," Mendeleovich said. "The drastic decline in Jewish emigration and the crackdown on dissidents for the past year has been a direct reflection of Andropov's policies."

To reverse the current Soviet policies, Mendeleovich urged American to hold mass demonstrations against the U.S.S.R. and to send cards, letters and telegrams to the country con-

stantly.

"These tactics are effective," he said, "because the Soviets closely monitor the views of Americans."

Mendeleovich was one of the persons involved in the notorious "Leningrad Trial" in 1970 in which a group of Jewish dissidents were tried for attempting to leave the U.S.S.R. illegally in an empty airplane. He and the others were sentenced to several years of hard labor in various Soviet prisons and forced labor camps. In 1980 he was expelled from the Soviet Union and when he arrived in Israel a couple of days later he was greeted by the largest throng ever to welcome a new immigrant.

His Los Angeles appearance in front of 100 educators was jointly sponsored by the Wiesenthal Center/Yeshiva University, the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles' Commission on Soviet Jewry - Community Relations Committee and Bureau of Jewish Education and the Southern California Council for Soviet Jewry.

"FIRST" FOR TURKISH JEWS

With the participation of representatives of the Jewish community of Turkey at the recent session of the World Jewish Congress Governing Board, the 22,000-strong community was for the first time represented at an international Jewish gathering.

RABBI BLECH TO RECEIVE AWARD



RABBI BENJAMIN AND ELAINE BLECH

Rabbi Benjamin Blech, spiritual leader of the Young Israel of Oceanside - together with his devoted wife, Elaine, will be honored at the 71st Anniversary Banquet of the National Council of Young Israel, Sunday, March 20, with the Silver Shofar Award. It will be presented at the Sheraton Centre in Manhattan before over 1200 representatives of the Young Israel movement, and is the highest rabbinic honor that it can bestow.

Rabbi Blech has been the spiritual leader of the Oceanside community since 1957, and, under his leadership, it has grown into one of the foremost Orthodox communities in the Metropolitan area. Rabbi Blech served for three years as the chairman of the Council of Young Israel Rabbis. Since 1966, he has been an associate professor at the James Striar School of Jewish Studies of Yeshiva University. He has served as an executive officer of the Israel Committee of the Rabbinical Council of America and the Long Island Commission of Rabbis. For four years, he was president of the International League for

the Repatriation of Russian Jewry.

Rabbi Blech has achieved a reputation as an outstanding educator. He has lectured across the U.S., Europe and Israel, and published in leading Jewish and mass circulation magazines. He is considered to be one of the most effective pulpit rabbis in the United States today.

Elaine Blech, a descendant of Reb Shmelke of Nicholsberg, has been a source of strength and support for her husband and an inspirational example for the Oceanside community. She was the first President of the Maimonides School Women's Organization. The daughter of Emma and the late Simon Wang, Elaine is a devoted wife and mother of four.

The Blech's take great pride in the accomplishments of their children: Tamar, a student at Columbia Law School who is engaged to be married to Steve Harris; Yael, a student at Stern College; Jordana, who is studying at Machon Gold in Israel; and Ari, who attends the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach.

The proceeds of the gala banquet and ad journal will be dedicated to the support of the numerous programs of the National Council of Young Israel.

For reservations and further information contact the Banquet Committee of the National Council of Young Israel, 3 West 16th Street, New York, New York, 10011, or call (212) 929-1525.

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BAR MITZVAH AT TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM

Brian Blut, son of Mr. Jerome Blut and Mrs. Beth Peck, became a Bar Mitzvah during services at Temple Beth Sholom, March 5, 1983.

Rabbi Kalman Appel, spiritual leader of the Temple, officiated and Cantor Simon Bergman chanted the liturgy.

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