

## Soviets To Demolish Synagogue

WASHINGTON (WNS) — Soviet authorities are planning to bulldoze one of the few remaining synagogues in the Soviet Union and build a public square in its place, the Simon Wiesenthal Center was recently informed.

In a letter sent to members of Congress last month, the Center reported that the Ashkenazic Synagogue in Tbilisi, the capital of the Georgian Republic, was slated for demolition. Closing the building, the letter noted, would have "obvious tragic impact" on the Tbilisi Jewish community of some 20,000.

The report of the planned demolition came from Isai and Grigory Goldstein, two brothers from Tbilisi who were recently granted exit visas after seeking to emigrate to Israel for 15 years, according to Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center, who sent the letter to Congress. The Goldsteins are to arrive in Vienna, and it is expected they will have news on the status of the synagogue, Cooper said.

The Tbilisi synagogue is one of two

synagogues in the Georgian capital and one of only 55 in the Soviet Union for a Jewish population of some 3 million. According to Cooper, the synagogues in Tbilisi are unusually well attended and have attracted many younger Jews

who have developed an intense interest in their religion.

Since the Goldsteins were told they would be permitted to leave, two Jews have been arrested in Tbilisi — one a 22-year-old resident of the city who was charged with draft evasion, Beazalel Shalashvili, and the other a visitor from Moscow,

Alexei Mzgarik, who was taken in on trumped-up drug possession charges, Cooper said.

Responding to a request from the Wiesenthal Center, Sen. Carl Levin (D. Mich.) circulated a petition that was forwarded to the President of the Council of Religious Affairs in Moscow with the

signatures of 14 of his colleagues. Other Senators have sent letters of their own urging that the plans be reversed.

# Hebrew Academy Purim Celebration



Photograph by Marvin

(L-R) Joel Poster, Mark Kasminoff, Lillian Strange, Bryna Fluett, Elad Yerushalmi, Jonathan Ellis, J. J. Rieker and Hayim Mizrahi.

WASHINGTON (WNS) — Soviet Jewish refusenik Vladimir Lifshitz was convicted and sentenced on March 19 to three years in prison for anti-Soviet slander, according to the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. Lifshitz was arrested on January 8 on his way to work.



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