

Shcharansky Kin Granted Permission To Leave

NEW YORK (WNS) — Soviet Jewry activists here responded with delight to the news that the family of Natan (Anatoly) Shcharansky has been granted visas to leave the Soviet Union for Israel. But they stressed that the move had little significance in the context of Soviet policy on Jewish emigration.

"We're delighted and excited for both Ida Milgrom (Shcharansky's mother), Leonid Shcharansky (his brother) and family, who struggled long and hard for the whole Shcharansky family to be united again in Israel," said Myrna Shinbaum, Associate Director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Natan Shcharansky, who has been living in Israel since he was

freed in a prisoner exchange last February, has said he was told by U.S. officials involved in negotiating his release that the exchange agreement included a promise from the Soviets that visas would also be given to his mother and brother, as well as his brother's wife and children.

After months of waiting, the Shcharansky family was informed, earlier this month, that the visas would be issued. Milgrom and her son Leonid have said the family was planning to fly to Vienna on August 24 if possible.

Coming in the wake of Shcharansky's decision to go public with Moscow's promise, the Soviet move was not

viewed by observers here as offering any signs of a let-up in Jewish emigration restrictions or the continuing harassment of refuseniks, Hebrew teachers and other Jewish leaders.

Glenn Richter, who heads the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, stressed that Milgrom and Leonid Shcharansky have been given a run-around in their efforts to leave for Israel since February and even now "there may be harassment to the end." The Soviets aren't doing anybody a favor by releasing them," Richter said.

"They seem to be holding true to what we believe is their principle of operation, which is to gain maximum positive publicity at minimal cost."

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