

A Refusenik Cancer Patient Is Awaiting An Exit Visa That Was Promised More Than Three Weeks Ago

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK (JTA) — Refusenik cancer patient Rimma Bravve is still "nervously and anxiously" awaiting the exit visa promised her more than three weeks ago, says her sister, Larisa Shapiro of Rochester, N.Y.

Viktor Kashlev, the Soviet Ambassador to the Helsinki Accords follow-up talks in Vienna, announced almost three weeks ago to the talks that Bravve, 32, and her husband Vladimir of Moscow had been granted visas. Rimma is terminally ill with ovarian cancer. Since Kashlev made that statement in a public speech before 36 delegates to the Vienna talks, the Bravves have not been given their visas.

Shapiro told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that Vladimir has repeatedly lodged complaints at the OVIR emigration office and the Communist Party headquarters in Moscow. Vladimir most recently returned to the OVIR last Thursday, Shapiro told the JTA Sunday. At that time, officials spoke to him "much more softly than before," Shapiro said. Previously, she said, he had been told "Don't come here and don't bother us. We have no news for you. Just sit and wait."

Shapiro said the change in attitude at the OVIR might indicate that emigration officials had probably heard about a decision. "Still," she said, "They did not tell him anything."

Shapiro told the JTA that an oncologist at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Dr. Jackson Beecham, sent a letter to Kashlev in which the cancer specialist told Kashlev of the extreme importance of Bravve's release and arrival in the United States as soon as possible.

Beecham advised Kashlev that Bravve not receive any more treatment in the Soviet Union because it would jeopardize the possibility of a bone-marrow transplant, which would be given at the Rochester hospital. Bravve has been receiving chemotherapy treatments at a Moscow hospital.

A Life-Saving Transplant

Bravve met in October with Dr. Robert Gale when he was in Moscow to see the patients on which he had performed bone-marrow transplants following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. At that time, Gale said he felt that her condition required such a bone-marrow transplant to save her life.

A New York oncologist, Howard Bruckner, has also expressed willingness to treat Bravve at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, according to Dr. Gerald Batist of Montreal. Batist, founder of the International Cancer Patients Solidarity Committee, saw Bravve last spring and was told that Soviet doctors could do nothing further to stop her cancer.

Batist and Shapiro, accompanied by others,

TORONTO (JTA) — The three-year-old Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism has opened its first office outside the United States here. The office was founded by a 20-member steering committee.

went to Vienna last month to press the case of Bravve and other Soviet cancer patient refuseniks.

Shapiro said that the State Department indicated to her that the Soviets, both in Vienna and the USSR, have confirmed that her sister will be granted a visa, but "They don't give any dates."

Behind The Headlines Of Bravery, Humanity And Survival

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Macugowskis, "we thank them for reminding us what human standards should be." He read a statement from Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, in which he honored the couple for their "bravery and dedication," which "has won our admiration."

The Macugowskis, appearing dazed by the attention and not speaking a word of English, said through interpreters that they had saved the Jews because "it was the right thing to do." They said that there would have been many, many more people who would have helped Jews during the war years, but that they were afraid to lose their lives and their children's, citing the case of a non-Jew in a nearby town who was executed immediately after being found out to have harbored Jews.

'We Owe You Our Lives'

Sarah Wiener's daughter, Dr. Gila Wiener Kriegel, at 27 the eldest of the three sisters' children, paid homage to the couple by saying: "We owe you our lives. I am speaking here not only for those of my family who survived in your bunker, but mainly I speak for the younger generation, for the generation that followed ... And even now, so very many years later, we who have never been in Nowy Korczyn comprehend the ignominy of those events ... The Talmud says 'Whosoever saves even one soul, it is as if he saved a whole world.' You saved many Jewish souls and you made it possible for generations that would have never seen the light of day to live and to make their contributions to society."

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