

Three Jewish Groups Planning Events To Focus On Plight Of Soviet Jews

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Three leading Jewish organizations are planning events here in January and February 1987 to alert public opinion to the continuing plight of Jews in the Soviet Union, the duplicity of the Kremlin on that issue and to let Jews in the USSR know they are not forgotten.

On January 23, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ) will convene a "Commission of Inquiry" composed of outstanding representatives from the American academic, judicial and political sectors to hear testimony from former refusenik Natan Shcharansky and other prominent Soviet Jewish emigres about worsening conditions of Soviet Jews in the 20 months since Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union.

On February 26, B'nai B'rith International will stage a giant rally here in conjunction with similar rallies all over the United States and in 42 other countries at which the names of some 12,000 Soviet refuseniks will be read aloud. It will be preceded by candlelight vigils on college campuses the night before.

The Student Coalition for Soviet Jewry, an arm of Hillel Foundation of Brandeis University, will hold its fifth annual Washington Lobby for Soviet Jews here February 26, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) announced. University of Florida activists will spend the day lobbying individual Congressmen to raise awareness and support for the human rights of Soviet Jews, the SSSJ said.

Situation Has Not Improved

In announcing the February rally, B'nai B'rith International president Seymour Reich and B'nai B'rith Women president Irma Gertler, noted that despite the discussion of the issue at the last two U.S.-Soviet summit meetings, Soviet Jews "are no better off. They still cannot freely emigrate or observe their religion."

Reich and Gertler said that the names of the refuseniks will be read by governors, mayors, legislators and Jewish and Christian clergymen who will also state the case for Soviet Jewry. They said it was important that every community group participate if they are concerned for the future of Soviet Jews. The rally will be held with the participation of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Reich and Gertler stressed that "despite Soviet talk of change, and an occasional token gesture, we see absolutely no signs of relaxation of the policies of the Soviet Union. Indeed, every indication is that the repression will continue unabated."

The UCSJ made the same point in a statement in connection with its Commission of Inquiry. "It is becoming apparent to many of us who are

Jewish Groups Establish Committee To Counter Japan's Boycott Of Israel

NEW YORK (JTA) — Several national Jewish organizations have joined forces to counter Japan's adherence to the Arab boycott of Israel. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Congress established the "American Steering Committee on Freedom of Trade with Israel," to monitor the Arab boycott.

U.S. State Department officials have confronted Japanese officials about the boycott but were informed that the issue is a non-governmental matter, according to the "Boycott Report" published by AJCongress.

Representatives of the Steering Committee told members of the U.S. Congress that Japan is consistently loyal to the Arab boycott. In 1985, Japan's trade with Israel amounted to only one-tenth of one percent of its total exports and imports. Japan purchased last year \$200 million of Israeli goods, 70 percent of which were cut diamonds.

Japanese companies are reportedly hesitant to import Israeli goods. A Japanese purchaser of Israeli potash recent-

ly cut off its imports citing the "diplomatic reasons" for the break, according to the Boycott Record.

Auto Firms Won't Sell To Israel

But Japan's major exporters, notably the auto manufacturing giants of Toyota and Nissan, refuse to sell to Israel. Additionally, Mitsubishi, Itoh, Nippon Steel and Hitachi all avoid trade with Israel, the Boycott Reporter said.

closely involved with the question of Soviet Jewish emigration that Mikhail Gorbachev is a skillful manipulator of American public opinion," said Pam Cohen, UCSJ president.

Similar To The Times Of Stalin

"Gorbachev would have us believe that emigration restrictions are being loosened and that Soviet Jews and other religious groups are enjoying a heretofore unimagined religious and cultural renaissance. Despite a carefully constructed campaign of Soviet disinformation, the truth is that conditions for Soviet Jews today are reminiscent of the worst excesses of anti-Semitic fanaticism that marked the Stalin regime," the UCSJ said.

"The Union of Councils feels strongly that this Commission of Inquiry is an important means of enabling the American public and the international community to cut through the Soviets' rhetoric and disinformation to the truth regarding their flagrant abuse of human rights."

The SSSJ noted that in the past, University of Florida activists were under-represented at Soviet Jewry rallies because few could afford the air fare to Washington. It appealed to temples, synagogues and Jewish organizations for help by subsidizing each student in the amount of \$50.

It asked that contributions be made to Hillel Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla. Information can be obtained from Michael Armel at 904-395-8644 or Rysia Schnarch at 904-376-9756.

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