

## A New Russia?

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the U.S. Embassy, was noteworthy in part simply because Rechetov received three American attorneys traveling as tourists. It was also fascinating substantively. We talked at length about emigration questions and about other possible reforms of the Soviet legal system.

Rechetov informed us that a special commission of the Supreme Soviet is reviewing appeals of visa denials and that emigration procedures are in the process of revision.

When we pressed him, he provided several examples. Invitation to emigrate could now come from distant relatives or even friends, not just immediate family members. According to the refuseniks, while OVIR offices in Moscow have been acceding to such invitations, the

change has yet to be written into the January 1987 emigration decree. The decree provides that invitation must come from a parent, child, sibling or spouse living abroad.

We pointed out to Tchetov that international legal instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the USSR has ratified, say nothing about invitation and provide that everyone has the right to leave any country including his own. His response was: "I get your message," adding that he foresees the day when every Soviet citizen will be free to leave temporarily and return, and fewer will wish to emigrate.

As to secrecy, Rechetov volunteered that the Soviet government perceives a need to formulate clear rules and that the process is underway. Rechetov noted that Gorbachev himself has said that, with a few limited exceptions, no one

should have to wait longer than 10 years. Rechetov's words were welcome, but we knew -- and he knew -- that many refuseniks have been waiting much longer.

Our conversation also included such issues as reform of the Soviet judiciary, revisions in the Soviet criminal code and the Soviet desire to host a human rights conference in Moscow.

Through it all, the tone of Rechetov's remarks was as interesting as their content. He seemed to be trying hard to convince us that real change is taking place. Indeed, if some of the reforms he described -- such as repeal of certain criminal code sections commonly used against refuseniks and dissidents -- actually occur, they will reflect important positive steps. The fact that such possibilities are even being openly discussed is significant, but as we conveyed to Rechetov, actions speak louder than words.

Moscow was different from what I remembered in 1982. It was easier to get around, to talk to people, to pursue a human rights agenda. In five days we met a large number of refuseniks -- including distinguished scientists Aleksandr Lerner, Naum Melman and Yakov Alpert; community leaders Aleksandr Ioffe, Yuli Kosharovsky, Viktor Fulmakht and Natasha Khassina; former Prisoner of Conscience Vladimir Kislik, and Vladimir and Maria Slepak, who were permitted to emigrate a week after our visit, and with a Soviet law professor, dissidents, American Embassy officials, and the Moscow correspondents for The New York Times and The Washington Post.

We spent an hour and a half with Andrei Sakharov and his wife Yelena Bonner. Everyone, including Sakharov, talked about Gorbachev and glasnost.

Sakharov's message -- of special note because of his stature and the respect he commands -- was basically consistent with that of the refuseniks. The West should support the current Soviet move toward reform, he said, with particular emphasis on the need for changes in emigration policy and in the criminal justice system. No one in the West should expect such changes to occur overnight, nor, he cautioned should anyone misinterpret the release of a Nudel or a Slepak as representing a fundamental shift.

Nevertheless, according to Sakharov and everyone else we met, there is a greater potential for fundamental change today in the Soviet Union than has existed in a long time. We in the West should encourage it with whatever leverage we have.

(This article is reprinted from the December 1987 issue of the ADL Bulletin, national publication of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.)

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## Nazi Hunter Demands Waldheim Resign

VIENNA (JTA) — Nazi-hunter Beate Klarsfeld affixed a poster to the front door of Kurt Waldheim's office demanding that the Austrian president resign.

The poster displayed a photograph of Waldheim in his World War II German army uniform alongside one of Austrian Jews being forced to scrub the pavements after Austria became part of the Third Reich by the 1938 Anschluss.

The poster read: "No more liar-president with a war criminal file. Waldheim must resign." It was removed from the door by a policeman.

A plain-clothes officer took Klarsfeld's name, examined her passport and asked her to leave the premises. There was no further police action, the World Jewish Congress reported.

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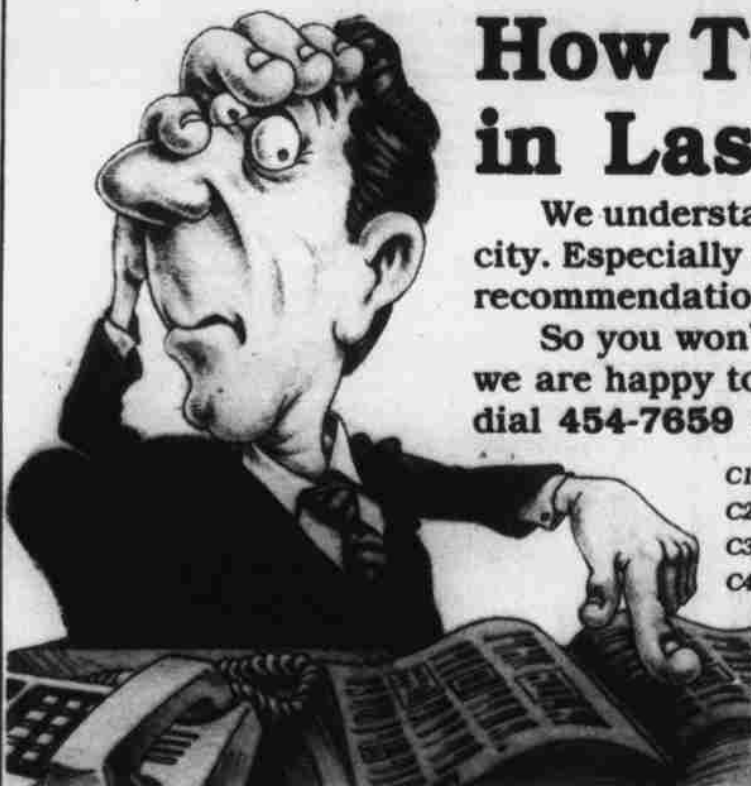
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