



## INTERGROUP FOR SOVIET JEWRY INTERGROUPE POUR LES JUIFS SOVIETIQUES

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PARLEMENT EUROPEEN

*Vice-President  
Elise Boot  
Jas Gawronski*

*Eva Gredal  
Enrique Sapena Granell*

PRESS RELEASE

Strasbourg, 12th of October 1987

On the occasion of the visit of a Delegation of the Supreme Soviet to the European Parliament, the Vice Presidents of the EP-Intergroup for Soviet Jewry Elise BOOT, Jas GAWRONSKI, Eva GREDAL and Enrique SAPENA GRANELL have together with Michail KHOLMIANSKY, an eight years refusenik who just has left the Soviet Union, presented to Mr. Lev TOLKUNOV, chairman of the Soviet Delegation a petition in which they ask him to discuss with Soviet authorities responsible for granting exit visas the case of the long term refuseniks and to do everything that is in his capacity to solve the problem.

Attached to the petition is a list with nearly 300 names of refuseniks who still live in the Soviet Union after they applied for exit visas to Israel and were refused more than five and even more than ten years on grounds of alleged 'State secrets'.

The Intergroup calls in this week's debate in an urgent Motion for a Resolution on the Soviet Authorities to publish a list with details of the period that every person known on Western lists of refuseniks is to be kept in the Soviet Union on grounds of 'State secrets'. Members of the Intergroup think there is no better sign of glasnost than to publish such a list'.

Mr. Michail KHOLMIANSKY will give a press conference at 5 p.m. in room 9 (Palais), immediately after the Briefing on this Week by Mr. Guido NAETS.

The Intergroup for Soviet Jewry will held a session today, Monday the 12th of October from 5.30 p.m. till 7 p.m. in room 200-IPE. The speaker is Mr. Michail KHOLMIANSKY who will give more facts about the life of refuseniks in the Soviet Union and who will analyse the political situation in Moscow.

The Intergroup draws attention to the fact that today the 12th of October there will be a simultaneous activity of the Solidarity Committee for Soviet Jewry in Amsterdam. Members of this Committee will present continuously the above mentioned 300 names of long term refuseniks on a big screen on the 'Dam' in Amsterdam.

The Intergroup will also draw attention to a Symposium organised by the International Federation of Scientists for Soviet refuseniks on November 22, 1987 at 11.00 hrs at the Fondation Universitaire, 11 rue Egmont, 1050 Brussels. Scientist of high level will discuss the major obstacles facing refusenik scientists who apply to emigrate. The organizers are particularly honoured by the fact that Victor BRAILOVSKY former long term refusenik will attend the Symposium. Further information from Joan DALE, 33 Seymour Place, London **W11** 6AT, Telephone (01) - 723 5874. The Intergroup is affiliated to the European Inter-Parliamentary Conference for Soviet Jewry

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To: Mr. Lev N. TOLKUNOV  
Chairman of the Soviet of the Union  
of the USSR Supreme Soviet  
visiting the European Parliament  
in Strasbourg on invitation of the Socialist Group

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On behalf of the Intergroup for Soviet Jewry, an All Party Group of Members of the European Parliament, we would like to welcome you here in Strasbourg. We much appreciate your visit and we hope that the discussions during last week have contributed to more understanding.

We would like to present to you a petition in the field of Human Rights concerning Soviet Jews waiting on exit visas for Israel during a too long period. After applying to emigrate to Israel they were refused for more than five and even more than ten and seventeen years on the ground of being party to 'State secrets', although it is far but clear what is a state secret.

We would like to ask you to discuss with the appropriate Soviet authorities the attached list with of nearly 300 names and do everything that is in your capacity to solve the problem in the near future.

In addition to the list we like also to mention the following names of refusenik persons living in Moscow: Pavel Abramovich, Boris Begun, Igor Gurchich, Alexander Ioffe, Alexander Kholmiansky, Gedi Kun, Emma Landsman, Jakov Rakhlenko, Inna Rozanskaya and Valery Soyfer.

Looking forward very much to receive an answer from you.

Sincerely Yours,

Elise Boot.

On behalf of the vice presidents of the Intergroup,  
Elise Boot. Enrique Sapena Granell

M. Holmgren by

Derek Piraly  
DEREK PIRALY

On behalf of the former refusehiks now living in Israel  
Michail Kholmiansky.

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**Mr. President, Distinguished members of the European Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I'm lucky to come to Israel from the USSR 5 weeks ago, with my wife and my son.**

**During these weeks I was often asked: Shall we be grateful to Gorbachev and the new leadership for what they have done? Shall we give them credit for the release of the political prisoners and the increase in the emigration?**

**Such questions surprise me. Why shall I be grateful to the authorities that grant me exit visa 8 years later than they should do it? They even don't apologize and pretend they do me a favour. And what about tens of thousands of other refuseniks most of whom have been waiting for that favor more than 8 years?**

**And why shall we be grateful for the release of the prisoners who should *never* be imprisoned? Somebody apologized before them? Somebody was punished for framing the charges? May be somebody at least admitted that injustice took place? No!**

**And more than 10 former prisoners, including my brother Alexander Kholmyansky, are still deprived of their right to come to Israel, some of them more than 15 years.**

**And still I'm grateful to the Soviet Government. I'm grateful to them for the Summer Time they introduced when I left, and that enabled me to leave their country an hour earlier than it would be otherwise.**

**It's a great honour for me to be here and to speak before you, and it is a great responsibility. Bearing that in mind, I'll try to explain you my understanding of the situation.**

**Jewish population in the USSR is now some 2-3 millions. How many of them want to emigrate? Nobody knows exactly, like nobody knows the exact meaning of the word "want". The fact is that about**

400.000 expressed their will in a very clear form: they asked to send them an invitation from Israel.

In the USSR this step was and is connected with a certain risk, so who knows how many of those, who want to leave, didn't dare even ask for it?

Next step - application for exit visa - is much more dangerous, so only some ten thousand Jews of the 400.000 used their invitations and applied. Most of them did so in 1979 and before, so they are refuseniks for 8 years and longer.

In order to finish this general review I want to stress that the problem of Jewish emigration from the USSR has now two aspects: 1) an urgent, short term one for Refuseniks, waiting 8 years and more, in many cases quite in despair; and 2) a long term aspect for those hundreds of thousands (at least) who "want", whose names are not known to us from the headlines of the news, but whom we mustn't forget celebrating the arrival in Israel of Joseph Begun and Ida Nudel.

Now I'd like to be more specific and point out the main problems of the present situation, most of them are important for both short and long term aspects.

First of all, the present policy of the USSR emigration authorities is to give visas mainly to well-known refuseniks and to activists. There are two evident purposes of such policy: 1) to produce the impression in the West that the problem is nearly solved (which is far from true) and 2) to leave the movement without leaders, and here I want to stress that Jewish emigration from the USSR is a national movement and not a problem of a handful of individuals, like the Soviets try to present it. Despite the quantitative change during the last 8 months the most characteristic feature of the Soviet emigration policy is arbitrariness, like it was from the very beginning in the late 60ties.

The authorities use two main levers to manipulate the emigration. One lever is widely known, it is so called "security" or "secrecy" or "regime" refusals. No need to say, that in most cases such refusal is only a pretext. Still I'll mention one case with my friend Vitaly Degtyarev. He' got "security" refusal until 1992 last spring, and a few weeks later - a permission. I know a Rais family from Vilnius, that got "security" refusal until 2005. And it doesn't mean that in 2005 they are guaranteed visas. It only means that their case will not be revised until that date.

I needn't say that the authorities can give such refusal to anyone, literally. They don't prove anything, and there is no control.

Another lever to manipulate the emigration is much less known, though it is not less important, potentially even more important because it works not only against those who applied, but also against those who only want to do so. This lever is so called "permission from relatives".

I'll illustrate how it works in my brother's case, which I naturally know well.

My brother Alexander Kholmyansky first applied for an exit visa in 1978. Being refused, he began to study Hebrew, Jewish history, culture, religion, and later began to teach others. This activity brought him to prison in 1984. But because teaching Hebrew is formally not a crime in the USSR, a pistol with ammunition was planted and "found" in his room in the course of house search. When Alexander learned about that, in prison, he started a hunger strike that lasted 2 months. Alexander's hunger strike and protests in the West forced the authorities to give him relatively short term, 1,5 years. He served all the term and after

he returned to Moscow, it took more than a year to recover after his hunger strike more or less.

In July 1986 he got married and last summer his daughter was born. And now he still can't go to Israel because that second lever works: his father-in-law refuses to sign a statement, that he has no financial claims to his daughter, Alexander's wife. Though she has no outstanding obligations towards him, the authorities insist on his personal statement and don't recognize any other proof of the fact. It brought my brother, after so many sufferings to a kind of a "Catch 22".

**This trick can stop anyone who wants to emigrate: each one has remaining relatives. The Soviets present this trick as highly moral care for those who stay. In reality it is a kind of medieval serfdom: grown-up person depend on good will of their relatives.**

**Alexander's wife Anna feels herself guilty: it's because of her he can't go, and with him also our parents, who are now divided from me and my family. In this desperate situation she decided to start an unlimited hunger strike from October 18, though she is a nursing mother.**

**I think it necessary to mention here one more fact, connected with my brother and showing an ominous aspect of new Soviet policy towards Jewish emigration. In the official daily "Izvestiya" from September 18 an editorial was published, mentioning Jewish refuseniks, including my brother. It is said that Jewish refusenik activists are paid agents of world Zionist centers and Western special services that use them for anti-soviet propaganda. We don't remember such charges in Soviet official of so high a rank after Scharansky case.**

**Let me make a final remark. After so many years of stagnation of the Jewish emigration from the USSR it is only natural that we are happy to see little progress. But we shouldn't permit ourselves to be only emotional. We should be also rational enough not to reduce our standards.**

**I apply to the members of European Parliament to work hard and to use their influence within this highly respected International body and in the countries they represent to help the Jewish national movement in the USSR: to prevent new false charges and arrests; to let the former prisoners and long term refuseniks go now and not in 5 more years, as it will be with the present rate; to let all those who want to leave the USSR do so, and to do so with dignity and without harassments. The Soviets shouldn't be recognized by the Free world as equal and credible partners until at least these goals would be achieved. How can Western democratic countries possibly take part in an International Conference on Human Rights in Moscow, as recently proposed by the Soviet authorities, as long as the problem we speak about, which is a problem of basis Human Rights is so far from being solved? Let me thank the members of the Intergroup for the Soviet Jewry in the European Parliament for their highly important activity in support of the Jewish emigration from the USSR. Though we don't always see immediate result, scorning from Moscow I can testify it has tremendous impact on resolving our difficult and painful situation. I'm personally grateful to all those, who supported our struggle, for my coming out to Israel. I'm here also because of your efforts. Let's go ahead and help others who are still there.**

**Thank You.**

**I'm willing to answer the questions if there are.**