

Benny Kraut
Jonathan D. Sarna

MISSION TO THE SOVIET UNION
March 20 - March 27, 1986

1. CUSTOMS

We passed through customs fairly routinely and smoothly. Our custom declaration forms were checked but no comments by the inspector were added. It was a good idea to have us declare something, so we were not asked, "anything to declare." Standing in line for Soviet customs, we saw a black male American whose luggage was being thoroughly searched; apparently on account of his attempting to bring video cassettes into the country. It was a slow process and the man was sweating. We watched him as we waited our turn at the gate.

Benny proceeded first: The inspector arbitrarily chose to search his carry-on piece, after all luggage pieces had been x-rayed. They discovered two Hebrew books, tallit and tefillin and U.C. stationery. The two books were immediately set aside and a call for the supervisor went out. In the meantime, his tallit and tefillin were closely examined, as were the U.C. envelopes. Benny was asked if he was carrying "documents" but Benny answered him that the stationery was all University work and letters. The tallit and tefillin caused no special problem because the officials realized they were dealing with personal religious articles and left them alone. We expected more trouble with the Hebrew books. The official turned them over and over, held them upside down, and once again consulted his superiors. But Benny insisted that he was a professor, and this apparently carried great weight -- especially since he had many university documents to prove it. The rest of his luggage sailed through.

Jonathan had decided to carry the mezuzah in his passport case. It was discovered, and the customs official clearly believed that he had found gold bullion. "Good luck," Jonathan insisted, pointing to the mezuzah, but once again the customs official called in his superior. The mezuzah was tested, closely examined, and then handed back with the reply, "Good luck." Perhaps that was an omen. The rest of our luggage went through unchallenged.

We changed money at the airport, but only at the last minute. We knew the bank closed at 9 pm so as soon as Benny cleared customs, he exited the area with his luggage (to make sure that if Jonathan's luggage got held up, at least one person's stuff would have cleared) and went to the airport bank. It might have been better had we been armed with a few five kopeck coins, so that even had we not been able to change money, we could still have boarded a Metro. Then we boarded the car sent to bring us to the Intourist Hotel. We checked into the hotel, went up to our rooms, and immediately prepared to make a late night visit to our first Refusenik.

2. NATASHA BECKMAN

We arrived at Natasha Beckman's small apartment at about 11:00 at night. Her husband was not at home, but there were two or three other people in the apartment who withdrew upon our arrival, allowing us to see Natasha in her bedroom. She was in bed, sick with the flu. It was apparently rampant in Moscow. It was one of many ailments that she had had during the course of the year, she claimed, yet her spirits were undampened. She was alert, vigorous, and alive with information.

"The news is not good," she began, and she proceeded to tell us that Yuli Edelstein had his thigh and urethra broken while in prison. She

encouraged us to organize a body of specialists in the United States who would act as consultants in Edelstein's case. She also informed us of the arrest of Bezallel Shalomasvili in Tbilisi on charges of evading military service. Shalomasvili had never received any draft papers. In fact, he was told he could leave Russia for Israel, even though he had written to the authorities on December 20 saying he would go to the army when called up. But on January 10 (or February 10, Natasha was not sure), criminal proceedings against him for draft evasion were initiated. Just before his scheduled departure, he was arrested and imprisoned. Alex Magaric had also just been imprisoned in Tbilisi. Magaric was accused of transporting hashish in his luggage. He had passed through internal customs and was on his way when he was called back by the Soviet officials who opened his luggage and "found" the hashish -- obviously planted there. He was arrested, his apartment was searched, as was his mother's apartment, and items were taken. Magaric's father is in Israel and he has a newly born baby son. The only positive news from Natasha Beckman was that numerous new babies had been born. Supplies for babies are thus urgently necessary. We gave Natasha items for herself, for the Gan, and for Dina Zisserman. We arrived back at the hotel at about 1 a.m. [Natasha told us Yuzefovitch still has a phone: 3018 742.]

3. DINA ZISSERMAN

We arrived at the home of Dina Zisserman early in the morning, thanks to the directions given to us by Natasha Beckman. Dina had not yet gotten up, but she invited us in and we saw her young baby. We also brought her a variety of small items, and informed her that the bulk of her supplies were with Natasha Beckman. Dina reported that her husband, Vladimir Brodsky, had been refused medicine that he needed, but that she

would try a second time. Her husband has a stomach and heart condition but has the ability to work as a doctor in the prison. Paritsky had come down with heart arhythmia and needs pulsnorma. Her own baby needs mylax which we later purchased at the Berioszaka. She also reported that Dania Edelshtein had returned from the prison camp where she visited her husband, Yulee. Yulee is paralyzed, and needs to be released so that he can recover. Protests in the West may be able to gain this release since he has already served half of his sentence. As for Brodsky, he has heart and stomach problems but works as a physician in the prison and is therefore treated better than most people are.

Dina asked us to purchase sausage and candy for Natasha Radner's husband as well as diaper cream for the baby. We managed to procure all three items, and gave them to Viktor Fulmacht who promised to deliver them. Neither Beckman nor Zisserman receive any mail.

4. LEONID YUZEFOVICH

We had called Yuzefovich and knew that we would not find him at home, only his wife. We were greeted by Ekaterina and three year old Ariel. Because Leonid was not home, and Ekaterina was obviously uncomfortable, we only stayed a short time. We delivered our materials, and heard the same news as before about Shalomasvili. We also learned that Lev Sud had his phone disconnected, that a Purim spiel had been carried on in the Gan, and that Yuzefovich received only letters from her parents in Jerusalem. Much of his mail does not get through.

We went shopping for Dina Zisserman at a Beriozka. The most complete one is found in a fabulously Western hotel, the International Hotel, which is not listed in any Beriozka literature that we found. We ended up on a Beriozka on Bolshovskaya Street, but that is only for

diplomats with coupons. We had no trouble entering the International Hotel and were not asked for our hotel passes as we were at Hotel Intourist and Leningrad Hotel.

5. MICHAEL REIZER

Michael Reizer was obviously delighted to hear from us. He gave us directions to his home, but we could not follow him and called him from the nearest Metro Station (Rizkaya) where he came to pick us up. His home turned out to be on the bus line of the #18 near the department store "Maynski."

Reizer was obviously delighted to see us. He does not receive as many visitors as he would like, and we found him charming, bright, and convivial. His son, Eugene, now just a few years away from army service, joined us as we sat in his living room and kitchen.

Reizer is a solid state physicist whose works have been published in the West. He was very pleased to meet the son-in-law of James S. Langer, whose articles he proudly displayed, and he also told us of several other friends in New York including

Marilyn and Marvin Himmel

12450 SW 68 Ct.,

Miami, Florida 33156

(305) 238-9195

and his aunt

Rebecca Hinich

Bavly Hazohar, 36:2

Tel Aviv, Israel 62914

Other names dropped during the afternoon were that of

Vladimir Kresin

767 Hillgirt Circel #3

Oakland, CA 94610

(415) 763-7610

and Elie Wiesel, whom Reizer considers a friend. Reizer receives no mail from but would like to send regards to:

Rena Kahn
1317½ Oak Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201

and

Vladimir Lazaris
Herzl St. 29 #7
Rehovoth, Israel 76560

Reizer told us that he is out of work, but he nevertheless continues to research his beloved physics, and to publish. His home was not that of a poor man, perhaps because his wife works, and perhaps because they are fastidious. We had jelly reportedly grown on a honey farm operated by Refuseniks, and were offered various other delicacies, most of them home-made by Irene Reizer whom we did not meet. Reizer's two articles, that he wanted brought to the attention of James S. Langer, were in Solid State Communications (44, 237, 1982); and The Journal of Low Temperature Physics, (58, 273, 1985).

Reizer feels that noise in the West won't get him a job, but very much wants contacts especially with scientists in the West. He has some gentile colleagues as ^{(well as} friends who help him get physics literature from time to time.

We spent a quiet Shabbat together, eating barbecued chicken that Benny had brought from Cincinnati, and on the morrow attending a tour.

6. YEVGENY YAKIR

We left for Yakir's home directly after Shabbat. In retrospect, we should first have telephoned him, but we thought that he knew we were coming. His home is extremely difficult to find, since it is far back away from the street, and we arrived there late. He was happy to see us, but had expected us on Friday night and was sorry that we had come without warning him.

We delivered necessary items to Yakir, and were informed that we had missed Polina Paritsky who had been there earlier in the day. Her daughter, Anna, was a contestant in a biology contest. We later learned that she had not won the prize.

Yakir was delighted to hear the news about Senator Dole, and told us the story of his cordial meeting with Ovir. He will be reapplying for an emigration permit after his son, Alex, is released on June 18th. Having recently seen Alex, he assured us that he is well. Paritsky does not feel well, but is not in critical condition. He is working as a boiler room operator. Tarnopolsky is home and in very good condition.

Yakir is thinking of entering a new business, involving photography, and wants a telephoto lens for a Nikon camera. He wants to be able to photograph tennis action from a distance -- a potentially lucrative business.

As we were leaving his wife, Rimma, appeared, and we spoke briefly with her. They were clearly delighted by what we bought.

Yakir stressed, in recounting the story of Yulee Edelshtein, that he simply fell from an unsafe height in the prison camp. This is very common, he said, and admitted that he worries about his son, who works under equally unsafe conditions. Yakir hasn't received mail in three

years from the United States, but does receive telegrams from the U.S.A. and letters from Israel.

7. ALEXANDER IOFFE

Ioffe was delighted to see us, and sent special regards to Jonathan's future father-in-law, James S. Langer. He told us that Yuri Tarnopolsky had not been with him, for he felt unwell after his release and went straight home. There was no indication of a serious malady. With respect to Magarik, he suggested that the family sought no publicity. Ioffe himself continues to receive phone calls from all over, and is very active in the seminar of scientists. While Benny shot 3 rolls of film of scientific papers given at a Refusenik science seminar in honor of Maimonides to be published in England, Ioffe told Jonathan about the ongoing seminars. There are two seminars, one dealing with physics and mathematics, the other with biology and medicine. They meet every other week, and about 15 to 25 people attend the physics-math seminar. What was unusual about the seminar in honor of the birth of Maimonides was that it was a joint session of the two seminars and a special session dealing in part with a humanities subject. Non-science talks had previously been barred from the seminars since the arrest of Brailovsky. The Maimonides seminar involved 40 people, included two talks and various poster sessions, lasted for five hours, and included two visitors from the West. The seminar was reported in Nature, V. 319 (Feb. 20, 1986) p. 611, and will be published in England thanks to Mr. Neil Bradman, 88 Baker Street, London, N1.

Ioffe was "moderately hopeful" regarding political change. He thought that the situation in Moscow was improving.

8. VIKTOR FULMACHT

Ioffe kindly telephoned to Viktor Fulmacht advising him that we would be arriving later. Although we did not get there until very late at night, Fulmacht had only just himself returned.

The correct address for Viktor Fulmacht is: 6 Twenty-six Bakinskikh Komissarov, Korp. 2, Apt. 5. The lock code is 428. The telephone no. is: 433-6639.

Fulmacht is one of the leading Hebrew teachers in Moscow. He involves himself in the humanities, and particularly stays abreast of Jewish subjects. By profession he is a computer programmer, but now he does very simple work. His wife, who formerly worked for a Nobel Prize winner, now screens films in schools.

Fulmacht was eager to receive volumes of Kiryat Sepher (from Vol. 60), as well as other kinds of textbooks. He also was interested in knowing more about the UNESCO Resolutions on Maimonides; perhaps, he thought, this would offer an opportunity for teaching Maimonides' work in Moscow. His wife needs books on holidays and other school materials for her teaching. His daughter, Miriam (Miri), teaches children in the neighborhood about Jewish holidays and Hebrew; she herself is religiously observant. She is now learning flower arrangement, and is eager for materials dealing with art.

Fulmacht has taught many of the Hebrew teachers in Moscow and Leningrad. At the moment he has 12 students. Two months ago he received an official warning regarding his activities, was brought to the KGB Center, and after a long discussion, was given a written warning to cease and desist. Instead, he held a press conference with newspapers from across the world. His home was searched and papers on Refuseniks found. This may have been in connection with the Lifshitz trial.

Fulmacht told us that Mikhail Bezer is a key person in the study of Jewish history and culture in Leningrad which was later corroborated by Igor Kotler. Fulmacht also said he wants to establish a Jewish history study circle in Moscow: Hebrew language and religion can be seriously studied, but not Jewish history as yet.

Fulmacht is a friend of Magarik and called the latter one of the leading students of Hebrew in Moscow and a great teacher. What was of special concern, he said, was that Magarik was not a political figure. He suggested a new phase in Soviet crackdown activities. Magarik also has a newborn son.

Fulmacht is a friend of Martin Gilbert, and is obviously delighted to have visitors.

II. LENINGRAD

9. EVGENY LEIN

Our first day in Leningrad, Sunday, March 23, was our most frustrating of the trip. We arrived in Leningrad on Aerofloat and settled in at the very commodious Leningrad Hotel about 3:00. By 4:00 we were on our way to Evgeny Lein. He was out, so we went to see Igor Kotler. He was out, so we went back to Lein, who was still out, and then returned to Kotler with the same negative result. This was, of course, deeply frustrating, and we returned home at midnight tired, cold, and dejected. We traveled by trolley and buses -- using the Russian maps. It is important to note that Leningrad maps on one side show the city with bus routes and on the other side with trolley routes. Since taxis are hard to find in Leningrad, a traveller must use these maps to maximum advantage.

Next morning we took a required tour of Leningrad, and then set out again for the home of Evgeny Lein. As we walked towards his building, Benny cried out, "That's him." He recognized his photograph from Martin Gilbert's book. Benny walked up to Lein, who said "My name is Evgeny Lein," and we introduced one another. Walking back to Lein's apartment, we saw two policemen. Lein had us duck into another building entrance (not his) and we waited. He later called us out when the coast was clear, and we went up to his apartment.

It is important to know that Lein's apartment requires a code to enter. The code changes monthly, so it is best simply to buzz the apartment and wait for Lein to come down.

Lein was all alone when we visited him, for his wife had gone to Moscow. His home is small and rough. His life is his human rights activities, and he punctures his arguments with proof texts from Soviet law. He made a great point of showing us how Refuseniks benefit from "noise" generated in the West. Those who are silent, he emphasized, suffer far more.

Lein began by telling us his version of the Lifshitz trial. The trial was, in Lein's opinion, a great success, although Lifshitz received a harsh punishment -- three years in prison. There were cries of "Shalom" and "we are with you" heard in the courtroom. When Lifshitz demanded that the letters purported to be anti-Soviet be read in open court, the request was denied, suggesting to many that the case was weak. The testimony offered at the trial had little to do with the main accusation. Lifshitz's repeated requests that the evidence be displayed in open court made a great impact, according to Lein.

Before the trial, 100 Jews came to the courtroom, prepared to sit

in. When they reached the trial room, it was crowded with KGB men who had obviously packed the court. Only 8 Refuseniks were able to get in. Lifshitz requested that the trial be moved to a larger room, as per Article 18 of the Soviet Constitution which calls for an open trial. The judge replied that no room was available, but Refuseniks outside discovered that a room seating 160 people was empty. Thirty-four Refuseniks subsequently petitioned the judge protesting that they had been barred from attending the courtroom. The judge, it should be noted, also serves as chairman of the Leningrad Court. The trial lasted until 5:00 p.m. Lifshitz was accorded a "last word," and took the occasion to tell the court that this was not his private case alone, but that the Soviet authorities had accused him because they were unable to solve their own internal problems. He had only written facts. Whatever he had said about his family, he insisted was true. Lein found Lifshitz brave and clever throughout the trial and praised Anna Lifshitz who sent in many protests and stood strong throughout. All who heard about the trial, he claimed, were renewed in their strength.

Lifshitz's nose was broken in a beating he received while being held in detention. Anna Lifshitz refused to be a witness in the case because she had learned from Galena Zelichonik's experience. There the judge had used her statement versus her husband, proof to Anna that it was wrong to testify at all. The judge threatened to bring suit against Anna for refusing to testify, but subsequent to the trial, the special prosecutor sent her a message by personal courier assuring her that she would not be prosecuted. Semyon Borovinsky, who also refused to testify although he had given pre-trial testimony, may yet face suit for contempt of court. He would possibly have his salary docked as punishment. He would get

only one-half salary for six months. Lein found Lifshitz's Soviet lawyer to be one of the best he had ever seen. The lawyer was honest, and made a brave speech insisting that Lifshitz had not violated Soviet Law. The lawyer was obviously much more sympathetic than Zelichonik's had been. But what he could do was severely limited. Lifshitz will continue to appeal his sentence, and there must be renewed struggle for him all over the world.

Boris Lifshitz's problems were aired in court. He was denied a job, despite his computer training, and during the trial, the prosecution chided Boris for his lack of a position. Lifshitz explained why Boris did not have a job, and the latter received one just one day after the trial concluded.

Lifshitz had been kept in jail since the 8th of June, in violation of Soviet Law, and he was physically and psychologically pressured to prevent him from preparing a full defense. He had asked for three days release time to prepare his defense, but was denied. Although Lein doubts that Lifshitz's sentence will be shortened, he pointed out that he knows people in Leningrad who received five years in jail because there was no world wide interest in their cases. To him, this proved the efficacy of world wide pressure.

Lein believes that the situation in Moscow has gotten worse. A turning point came in June 1984 when Israeli President Katzir was stopped from visiting Refuseniks. Other guests have also been arrested, and there have been some efforts to isolate the Refuseniks. Twelve telephones have been disconnected; many attempts made to frighten the Refusenik community. In November of 1983, Lein himself was openly beaten in full view of camera men whom he was aiding in preparing a documentary.

Lein protested, and the foreign movie makers backed up his story. In recent months, Lein has felt renewed pressure because of his assistance to Anna Lifshitz. His phone has been disconnected, and he feels that his situation now may get worse. Anna Lifshitz was stopped from going to Moscow, and freedom of movement generally has been curtailed.

Galena Zelichonik has gone to Moscow to ask for special privileges for her husband. As far as Lein knows, there has been little change in the status of the case. Clearly, he and Galena are not on close terms. Boris Yelkin secretly made a tape of the Lifshitz trial. He is an important activist, whose phone has also been disconnected (it has since been restored). Lein promised to set up a meeting for us with him.

Lein told us of a protest to the Ministry of Soviet Communications against the disconnection of telephones. About 15 telephones were disconnected in Leningrad, some have been returned. The protest, signed by 10 people, insist that this is a violation of Soviet Law. In some cases individuals have been hindered from making telephone calls at the post office as well.

Lein told us that Boris Lifshitz had been taken to hospital with a stomach ailment. We later learned that he was all right.

Lein had clearly forgotten that Monday night began the holiday of Purim. But when we reminded him of the fact, he suggested that we meet him at the Leningrad Synagogue. He would try to set us up with a family for the evening. Lein himself is not observant, but he graciously agreed to show us around.

Oddly, Lein claims that he still gets mail.

10. PURIM IN LENINGRAD

We took a taxi from our hotel to the Leningrad Synagogue. It is an

imposing building on a side street and is obviously well kept up. We watched as many young people, and some old people (but few in between) gathered at the synagogue and began milling about. When Lein arrived he showed us both the big synagogue and a smaller bet midrash in a back building where a few very orthodox Jews continue to hold prayers. I later learned that this small synagogue is much older than the main one, and it is also far less well kept up. As we milled around, Lein pointed to one man, a Refusenik, who is seeking to marry off his daughter to someone who will help her emigrate. He held brief conversations with other individuals, but was clearly not at home. When the doors to the sanctuary were opened, it became clear that TV cameras had been set up in the synagogue. Lights and cameras were focused on the front of the synagogue, so many stayed behind them, either because they sought to avoid being part of a Soviet propaganda effort, or because they were afraid to be seen in the synagogue. Lein arranged for us to be introduced to various Refuseniks, and when we sat down an 18 year old girl, whom we later learned was named Sarah (Sophie) Belyatskaya sat beside us. She spoke flawless Hebrew. The synagogue itself was not filled, perhaps because some knew in advance of the television taping. There was a good deal of talking, and it was evident that most of those present were unable to follow the service. The service itself was conducted by an aged cantor with a choir. Midway into the service the television lights went on, and many individuals left. Because the front was mostly empty, the cameras and lights turned around to face the back. This led to a mass exodus.

We saw very few printed copies of the megillah. People listened, and made noise whenever they thought they heard the name Haman mentioned

(often they were wrong). At one point early in the service we were introduced to Chaim Burshtein. He was so young looking, that we initially thought that he was the son of the Burshtein we were to meet. Only later did we learn the truth.

A few chapters into the reading of the megillah, Chaim Burshtein came up to us and asked if either of us could read the megillah. He later told me that the young group of whom he was a part believed that the service was a propaganda effort, and that the reading of the megillah under these circumstances was not kosher. Although Jonathan was not prepared to read the megillah, he reluctantly agreed, and Benny, who had a copy of the text with him, made necessary corrections. It is difficult to describe the feeling one has reading the Book of Esther at a protest service in the back of the Leningrad Synagogue surrounded by young people who hung on every word. The book itself is full of possible ^{דברים} entendres, and in some cases one had a sense that the more learned members of the congregation realized them. Benny ~~led~~ the group in those sentences that are traditionally said aloud by the congregation. Everyone joined loudly at the end in the statement, "The Jews had light and joy, gladness and honor." One sensed that this was as much a prayer for the present as a description of the past. At the conclusion of the reading we were all warmly congratulated and embraced. We left the synagogue and saw considerable singing and dancing outside. The song "Am Yisrael Chai" -- The People of Israel Lives -- reached my ears, but we could not stay, for we had been invited by Moshe Averbuch to a Purim party at his home. He personally brought us to his house (a reckless move) and six others were already assembled there. The home was obviously Orthodox, covered with pictures and charts that likely came from Lubavich. We learned that the

house had earlier been search in connection with the investigation of Lifshitz. Averbuch's parents had been taken to give testimony in the Lifshitz trial. His father remained silent, but his mother, Bayla, did testify. There was obviously some embarrassment at the way her testimony was used against Lifshitz [something we learned more about later from Anna Lifshitz]. At the party we met a variety of young Russians, most of them Refuseniks, who were clearly pleased to meet us. One of them quietly asked Jonathan if we were going to see Lev Furman. Another, Hillel Kalbovsky, sent regards to his brother in St. Louis. Another, when asked if she feared getting mail from the West replied, "I've lost everything already; there is nothing left to lose." Her name is Anna Rozhansky (f. Boris, m. Ella), PR. Kosmonavtov 15, #41, Leningrad 196211, Phone: 299-6958.

One additional note on Moshe Averbuch. He told us proudly that he was engaged to Sarah Belyatskaya. Indeed, he wrote in my book the name "Sophie Averbuch." When we congratulated Sarah, the next time we saw her, she obviously was embarrassed. We later learned that the two of them are not at all engaged, and that Averbuch had confused his fantasies with reality.

11. IGOR KOTLER

Since Purim was to be a very full day for us, we arose early and reached the home of Igor Kotler at 8:00 in the morning. We rang the doorbell, and received no answer. We went back to the bus stop and sat there for half an hour, since our next appointment was at 10:30. Benny then suggested that we go back to Igor "just in case." This proved to be a very fortunate move, for this time our ring was answered at once.

Igor Kotler was clearly delighted to see us. He wears a yamulka,

but is not otherwise deeply involve in Jewish religious activities. He is a historian by avocation (he wishes that it was his vocation) and his associates are largely those kinds of people. He has a fine library and is particularly interested in onomastics, Jews in various Soviet republics, and contemporary Russian Jewish history. He works as a low level engineer, and is supported by his parents. He has relatives in Be'er Sheva, would like to be on a Congressman's list to leave Russia. But he is not enormously active, fearing that his papers and scholarly materials will be confiscated. His most recent refusal, he told us, came just a week before, and he had also written to the Party Congress, seeking the right to emigrate. But since his parents were not eager to leave with him, he was always denied. He and his family have been Refuseniks for five years, but they shun publicity. Alla Kotler, whom we saw briefly, is about to give birth to another baby.

Kotler told us a great deal about the circle of historians in Leningrad. One of its leaders, and Igor's friend is Michael Beizr, Rubinstein 23, Apt. 75, Tel. 535-7854. Beizr is also a friend of Viktor Fulmacht in Moscow. His area of study concerns the Jews of St. Petersburg-Leningrad. Michael Solomon studies Polish Jewish history. Daniel Romanovsky studies the holocaust [he is not a Refusenik]. Abraham Dyomin, himself a convert to Judaism, studies other gerim. He is a Jew with a long beard whom we had seen the night before and is also not formally a Refusenik. Simian Frumkin studies Jews in the revolutionary movements pre-1917. Michael Makushkin, who is half Jewish, and who is a historian by professional training, studies Jews in Crimea and Jews of medieval Russia, particularly as reflected on ancient tombs. His wife, Talyana, studies Jews in printing.

Igor has been working closely with Martin Gilbert, and has recently sent him two pieces of his research. He was also friendly with Anatoly Chazanoff, and would like to receive a copy of his writings on the Jews of Crimea. He also gave us a copy of a book in Russian, in which he had written an article on Onomastica as a Source of Jewish History and asked Jonathan if he could have it reviewed.

Kotler has a fine library, reads Yiddish, and is eager to meet other Jewish historians. He already corresponds with several. He also has a telephone (247-8481). While he would have been glad if we could have spent another evening with him, this proved impossible to arrange.

12. BORIS YELKIN, ANNA LIFSHITZ, EVGENY LEIN

From Igor Kotler's home we went to the house of Boris Yelkin (3 Zavushkin, Apt. 39 (Tel. 249-9950). The home is close to a Metro stop, and is on the top floor. It is immaculately kept, and is clearly a nerve center of Refusenik activities. Yelkin told us that on some occasions 20 Refuseniks meet in the house. Several doors have special locks and sound proofing. Yelkin had appropriate lights and set-ups for filming documents, and had a variety of documents dealing with the Lifshitz case and other Refusenik activities that Benny filmed. In passing, Anna Lifshitz mentioned how helpful Congressman Barney Frank had been, and how a lawyer in the Netherlands had offered to represent Vladimir, but his letter arrived after the trial was complete. Anna hopes that the lawyer will plan on being in Leningrad for the defense.

Yelkin informed us of a new organization titled "Mutual Aid." This is a community of 15 people, all of them Refuseniks, who have pledged to assist one another, and have sent a variety of letters to leading Soviet officials and Ronald Reagan regarding their needs and special problems.

They are committed to obtaining as much publicity as possible for their plight, and gave us the rules of their community to film. Evgeny Lein, although a close friend of Yelkin, was not part of Mutual Aid. He told Jonathan privately that he opposed some members in the organization who sought to emigrate to America. He would prefer an organization composed entirely of emigrés destined for Israel. Still, Lein urged that Mutual Aid obtain maximum publicity.

Lein suggested that expensive cameras not be sent quite so frequently to Refuseniks. He pointed out that the cameras are no more expensive in Russia than in America, and that they therefore do not sell at a profitable premium. He advised, instead, bringing in running shoes that may be sold in the Soviet Union for a great deal more than they are worth. Lein also underscored the importance of using registered mail. He sends letters out of the Soviet Union via registered mail, and claims to have already collected 16 compensations for undelivered letters.

Anna Lifshitz then began to talk about the trial of her husband. He was beaten prior to the trial, and his nose is still out of shape. He has high blood pressure, suffers from many headaches, but looks "not bad." Permission to pass medicine to him has been refused.

Over 100 Jews stood in the corridor outside of the court where Lifshitz was to be tried. The KGB and Militia kept them out, on the excuse that the courtroom was filled. Anna, her son, and her mother, were also told that there was no room for them. She began to cry, and voices in the crowd urged that she be let in. She was then told that one seat would be made available. Anna said, "Take my son in" -- not what the KGB expected. The son presently came out and said, "I found one more seat." The officer threatened and cursed him, but Anna's mother went in

and sat down. Then the lawyer came through and complained that he couldn't find any room. Anna asked her lawyer to tell the judge that she would not take part in the proceedings unless she was admitted. Anna asked the judge to change courtrooms but was refused; the judge replied that all the other courtrooms were in use. Those in the hall, however, found a 150 seat courtroom empty. They wrote a complaint to the judge, but to no avail.

Lifshitz sought to refuse a lawyer and defend himself, but was refused. The lawyer took his seat, Anna later was admitted, and witnesses were called in. The first witness was Mrs. Averbuch, probably called as a means of intimidating her son, Moshe, who is actively involved in running a young men's history seminar and in other Refusenik activities. Mrs. Averbuch said she never saw Lifshitz prior to the trial. She was then questioned about her own son and his activities. As part of the questioning it came out that Mrs. Averbuch had held her job in a nursery school consistently for twenty years. This was later used as evidence against Lifshitz, for his letters claim that he had lost his job when he applied to emigrate. Of course, Anna Lifshitz told us, nursery school position are poorly paid and of little prestige, which is why Mrs. Averbuch continued to hold hers even after she had applied to go to Israel.

The second witness was a woman from Lifshitz's job. The Prosecution tried to get her to say negative things about Vladimir, but all she admitted was that he disliked listening to Soviet Radio in the office and preferred the Voice of America. A third witness was also positive in what he said about Lifshitz.

Semyon Borobinsky, the next witness to be called, said that the

investigation was one-sided and not objective, and that he would, therefore, refuse to testify. The judge attempted to frighten him by asking about his family, threatening to punish him, and stating that the family would suffer on account of Borovinsky's actions, but he remained silent.

Anna Lifshitz, the next witness to be called also refused to testify. She claimed that her husband was being persecuted for a crime that he never committed, and that her husband was heavily beaten. She said that that revealed the true aim of the court, and that it was in any case immoral to ask a wife to testify against her husband. She too was threatened with prosecution, but a letter from the state prosecutor arrived a few days later assuring her that she would not be held in contempt of court after all.

Lifshitz, himself, was now called to the stand. The charge against him was "slander against the Soviet State and national politics," although Anna believes that he was really arrested because lectures in Jewish history had taken place in his home, and he was the center of other Refusenik activities. Lifshitz explained that Soviet law was broken many times in reference to his family, especially when he was denied a visa to emigrate to Israel. He also described his unemployment, and his son's problems getting a job. All of this explained, Lifshitz told the court, why he wrote what he did in his letters. There was not discussion of National politics in his letters, he pointed out only facts about his own family.

The Prosecution, in summing up, repeated the earlier accusations against Lifshitz, and underscored the dangers of his "crime." The Defense, what Anna saw as a surprisingly sympathetic address, proved that

no Soviet law had been broken in this instance. Lifshitz, in "last words," told the court that the case was not his private case alone. It was rather a demonstration of the problems of the Soviet authorities, who accused him rather than solving the problems. He accused the officials of ignoring facts, and reminded them that in an age of information the facts will come out in any case.

Anna recounted one additional story that underscored Lifshitz's heroism. While he was out of work, he was visited by the Militia which warned him that he would be considered a parasite. The very next day, he applied to the Militia for a job. According to Anna, they tried hard to find him one, but since he was a Refusenik, they were unable to accommodate him.

13. CHAIM (ALBERT) BURSHTAIN

Burshtain's apartment is extremely difficult to find, and we had to take a taxi from the Metro stop (the last stop on the red line). We arrived, to be met by the youthful looking 20 year old Burshtain, but as soon as he began talking we realized that his youth belied his intelligence and importance. He spoke of his constant telephone conversations with Pam, his ties to Tanya Zunshein, and his activities on behalf of her husband. He talked about the campaign to send spoons and soap to the prison, and said that the situation with regard to Zunshein is basically good. He is strong, but has been beaten and is under guard. What is feared most is a second trial. Zunshein is forced to write his "misdeeds" five times a day. Tanya Zunshein is currently in Moscow studying Hebrew.

Vladimir Gorodnitsky, whom we were not able to visit, was said by Burshtain to very much want visitors. He does not know English

particularly well, so is best off receiving visitors who speak Hebrew. Boris Friedman, on the other hand, is not part of the religious community. While Burshtein knows him, he did not encourage us to visit him. Those whom Burshtein felt closer to were Gregory Wasserman, whom he considers the leader of the Leningrad religious Jewish community, and Eliezer Kesidoh, who is an important religious functionary for the Leningrad religious Refuseniks. Burshtein told us that his family had been close to the Lifshitz family, and that when he (Chaim) was in prison Lifshitz had been active in stirring up support and getting him out. Chaim had also been close to Gorodetzky, and when the latter was permitted to emigrate to Israel, Chaim succeeded to his position.

Burshtein claimed that the televising of the Purim service at the Leningrad Synagogue was a propaganda move connected to the United Nations Committee investigating religious rights. He also spoke of his campaigns to provide prayer shawls, tefilin, and prayer books for prisoners. He has written to the Committee on Religious Cults asking that religious materials be made available to prisoners. His five page letter tried to prove on a judicial basis that those in prison had rights to have religious articles.

He also wrote to the Leningrad synagogue, a letter signed by thirty others, saying that in the entire world synagogues were promoters of religious observances and should it not support the possibility for such activity amongst Jews in prison. He pointedly wanted to put the synagogue on the defensive, either showing them up as not really supporting Judaism or forcing them to act in some positive way. Burshtein believes that the Leningrad authorities are seeking to crack down on religious Jews in particular, and seeks to open a world wide

campaign for Russian Jewish religious rights. He does not want this publicized until all of the plans are ready. Burshtein also seeks to encourage pressure on behalf of the Jews in the Ukraine, and to gather more information about Jews in this region. He argues that the current effort by the United States to discredit the Ukrainian delegation to the United Nations would enhance the opportunity to get information regarding Jewish conditions in Kiev and Odessa.

Burshtein, himself, revealed plans to travel around Russia delivering lectures and collecting names of Jewish prisoners. He assumes that he will be arrested.

Burshtein asked us to find out whether it was correct that Purim spiel activities had been forbidden in Odessa and Kiev. He also wondered why rabbis who come to Moscow from England (e.g. Rabbi Friedland) do not come to Leningrad. (In Leningrad, he saw the religious group as numbering somewhere around 10-15 active people who are tied to 40 other Jews who study and participate.

Burshtein discussed his own situation, as a citizen of Israel, whose grandparents were British. He was particularly upset that the Holland Consul did little to aid Jews, although Holland represents Israel's interests in the USSR. He wants U.S. Congressmen to sign appeals to Garbacher inquiring about frequent arrests of refuseniks. He feels they should ask for information that either demonstrates their guilt, or if none is forthcoming, to demand the cessation of threats and harassment.

Burshtein believes that the arrest of Lifshitz, and the freeing of Gorodetzky to go to Israel was an effort to suppress the Leningrad Jewish Refusenik community. To some extent, he claimed that the strategy had succeeded, for the study of Hebrew had declined somewhat and fear had

risen. He believes that in the future there will be more arrests and more releases until the entire leadership is broken. Burshtein, himself, is under constant watch and has had his apartment raided, as have various other activities. He expects to be arrested, and hopes that congressment traveling to Russian will appeal to Gorbachov to stop the harassments that he and other Jews suffer. When we asked him who succeed to his position if he were arrested, he had no answer.

Officially, Burshtein repairs computers and attends night school. He expects, however, to be expelled both from this school and from his job, especially since he has more warning than is usual from his employer. Since he refuses to work on Shabbat, Jewish holidays, or late Friday afternoon he frequently is absent without permission.

Burshtein is clearly a headstrong young man of iron will and resolve. He told us the following two stories:

On Nov. 7, 1985, the anniversary of the Russian revolution, he went on a three week labor strike because of his being refused permission to emigrate, and the refusal of the USSR to recognize his claim of British citizenship. He left a note on his work bench indicating what he was doing and why.

After three weeks, he was arrested for a fifteen day detention period on the charge of disrupting the factory in which he works by publicly and brazenly displaying anti-Soviet literature. In prison, he first went on a hunger strike and then demanded kosher food, tallit and tefillin -- he did everything to make himself a nuisance and attack the system. That seems to be his clear orientation. He himself recounts the story of a Christian also imprisoned for fifteen days who possibly accepted his fate. When urged and challenged by Chaim to protest, he

answered, "we don't have an organization or network that supports us like you do." In truth, Chaim's prison got calls daily from the West asking about his condition. That Christian is still in jail; Chaim is out.

A second story also is revealing. Chaim will not work on Shabbat so he calls in sick. The KGB visit him and find the "sick" man not home, so naturally they are curious. At any rate, they demanded that he check in to the local clinic to see if he really is too sick to work or not. He literally is playing cat and mouse with them. Moreover, he has already received three warnings re: his job absenteeism; two warnings generally are sufficient to get one fired from the job. Chaim seems to be living on borrowed time in this regard.

Gregory Wasserman, age 35, is clearly the man that Burshtein looks up to in terms of religious life. Wasserman is self-educated, and highly cultured, works as a radio engineer but actually puts his time into printing and producing Hebrew religious books for his students. He has been aided by Jews from Lubavich and Agudah, and has been harassed by the KGB.

Edward Burshtein, Chaim' father, speaks only limited English, but have us additional information of considerable interest. He was clearly proud of his son, and made the revealing comment that "We do not give our children Judaism, They give It to Us." He also pointed out that his generation had worked to give its children Russian identities and Russian names. His sons generation seeks to be Jewish and to have Hebrew names.

Edward Burshtein told us that at Lifshitz's trial, where he had been among those admitted into the courtroom, it was he that informed the judge that Anna and her son were not in court. "Aren't you ashamed?" he

told the judge. Spectators in the courtroom laughed. The judge claimed that the hall was big enough for everyone, but Edward said, "There are 100 Jews outside." The judge then warned him that if he continued to speak out he would have him thrown out.

Edward had also attended the trial of Lev Shapiro two days after Lifshitz had been tried. Shapiro was apparently arrested for preventing his daughter from attending a Russian school. He was fined 30 rubles at his trial, and used the trial to publicize the plight of Refuseniks. Lev Shapiro's father, in Israel, is assistant to the Chief Rabbi. While we were at the Burshtein home, an inspector came to inquire after Chaim Burshtein's health. Burshtein had not worked since it was Purim, and had called in sick. The inspector required him to go to the clinic, and we went along and stood outside. "I am going to go there and make a revolution," Burshtein told us confidently, but when he emerged, he had not made a revolution, and he apparently was in store for yet another "warning."

A friend of Chaim, named Chana, stood with us outside of the clinic and told her story. Her parents disagree on the issue of emigration: her mother wishing to emigrate to Israel, her father not. They have literally divided their apartment into two, and Chana naturally sides with her mother. "I wish I had not been born," she told us at one point. Had she not been born, she believes her parents would have gotten divorced and her mother would have emigrated to Israel when this was still relatively easy to do. On the other hand, Chana reminded us that she had to have hope. "Without hope, there is no life."

When Chaim and his father emerged from the clinic we took a long Metro ride to the home of Gregory Wasserman. Some 16 people were

assembled there for a Purim seudah. Wasserman, a Jew who wears a gartel and tsitsit, has an infectious smile, and a typical rebbe-like demeanor. He told stories, taught, and frequently used phrases and illusions that indicated his deep awareness of events in the Orthodox world of New York. Many of those at the seudah were not nearly as religious as Gregory, and not interested in studying Jewish texts either, but they clearly enjoyed his company, and wanted to get together as Jews and to celebrate Purim. Those around the table were almost all young and many of them were clearly delighted to see two Americans. There was less singing than we would have expected at a Purim seudah, both because Wasserman had a tiny baby in the next room, and because neighbors would have alerted the KGB. On the other hand, there was both "Purim Torah" and a more serious word of Torah from Benny (translated into Russian).

14. GREGORY WASSERMAN

Following the seudah we had some chance to speak privately with Wasserman. He told us that Bezallel Shalomasvili in Tbilisi had been tried for refusing to serve in the army. In fact, Shalomasvili had never been drafted! He was jailed on March 14 and is age 22. Earlier Shalomasvili had been expelled from the agricultural institute on account of his request to emigrate. He had many relatives in Israel. Just two days before his arrest, Ovir had assured Shalomasvili that his own emigration was in order. Now he will be two years in jail. Isaac Shalomasvili, Bezallel's brother, has been active in Refusenik affairs and maintains ties to the West. He has now been warned that any noise will lead to his own imprisonment. The Goldsteins of Tbilisi, formerly leading Jewish figures in the city, have now been released to go to Israel. This creates a void which the arrest of Shalomasvili only

widens. Once again, the Soviet authorities are apparently pursuing a strategy of "arrest or release," according to which Jewish leaders are either put in prison or sent out of the country, with the hope that this will quiet the Refusenik situation. Wasserman wanted Benny to film various documents relating to Moshe Abramov and Gregory Stechenko of Krivorug in the Ukraine. The latter, a Refusenik age 24, has heart and stomach diseases and has been hospitalized. He has now been placed in a mental hospital and given KGB drugs. Protests have lead to his release, and Wasserman wanted the documents involved to be known in the West, and to be sent to Jacob Goredetsky in Jerusalem. Wasserman also gave various other items for Goredetsky, including his tefilin.

Wasserman is involved in a high level Talmud class of seven people that meets on Wednesday night. The class involves himself, Gorodnitsky, Rochlyn, Burshtein, Ksidoh -- the "big 5" of the Leningrad religious community. Wasserman also teaches half a dozen other classes in Jewish texts. Some of his students are actually only one half Jews. Wasserman teaches them and includes them in his activities, but does not recognize them as Jewish. Other teachers are Rochlyn, who also read the megillah at a private service in Wasserman's home, and Gorodnitsky. Wasserman complains that many of those who follow him are happy to observe but do not wish to learn. All of the leaders and many of his followers must talk to the KGB, and face problems, both with the army and in their work. Boys are particularly persecuted, which is why many of those who attend events are women. Some 30 people, most of them women, attended a pre-Purim lecture at his home. Wasserman discussed the problem of educating small children Jewishly, a crime according to Soviet law. He personally works as a watchman ("shomer Yisrael") and others in Leningrad hold like positions.

15. BORIS YELKIN

Next morning we returned to Boris Yelkin's apartment to film some addition documents; specifically, the speech of Lifshitz's lawyer, named Ostrovsky, and the last word that Lifshitz delivered in the court. Yelkin was clearly disappointed that we did not have a double cassette recorder for him to use in giving us a copy of the entire Lifshitz trial. He showed us, in passing, a book he had completed filled with documents related to N. Fradkova. He was not ready to allow us to film this, however, but suggested that this and related volumes on Refuseniks would be available in the future.

Yelkin said that he would be delighted to have other visitors from the West come to his apartment, which is very easily accessible and even gave us his card in English and Russian.

16. ELIMELECH ROCHLYN

Rochlyn's wife, Golda, is pregnant with their first child. They have no telephone, but do get letters. We held our conversation in Hebrew.

Rochlyn teaches, and also delivers lectures. He finds that the lectures bring in more people. A series he delivered regarding the Jewish holidays in the fall brought dozens to his apartment. Golda teaches Hebrew, he teaches Jewish texts. The classes are held on two levels and he has about 12 students. He, himself, had been a student of Wasserman, and continues to study with him. Eliezer Ksiboh, who serves as the sofer of the community is now also studying to be its shochet. The other shochet is a man named Isaac Cohen. The mohalim of the group are Gorodnitsky, and Sheinin. Rochlyn believes that the community numbers tens of families, and would be far larger except that so many

fear to be part of it. Two old rabbis in the Leningrad Synagogue, both of whom have Semicha, sometimes give guidance to the group, but are not always listened to because they have not practiced as rabbis for so many years.

Rochlyn, himself, became a ba'al teshuva (a term he does not like) thanks to a Jew now in Israel who revealed Judaism to him. He became interested in his own history, in Judaism, and in the greatness of the Jewish people. He was also influenced by his friends. Although by trade he is a chemist, he, like so many others, serves as a watchman, a "shomer Yisrael." Rochlyn is learned, and eager for religious books. He is also interested in news from the West, and once got into trouble for having a letter in the Wall Street Journal. His own reading of the situation in Leningrad is rather bleak. He fears greater problems, and believes that Gorbachev's economic reforms will lead to a general tightening of the situation, with negative implications for Jews. Rochlyn was one of those at the trial of Lifshitz, and believes that the trial was, in part, an excuse for collecting information on the religious community. Rochlyn believes that Russian Jewery ultimately must depend on its own cultural resource. Thus he insist Russian Jews must deepen their own Jewish knowledge, for that is what is most vital for the survival of the community. He sees the Moscow religious community as both bigger and stronger than that of Leningrad but laments that it is divided into many parties and groups that fight with one another. A serious split, for example, divides the followers of Pinchas Polonsky, and the recently released Esses. In Leningrad, by contrast, there are far fewer disagreements; the community is far too small.

We spoke with Rochlyn for about two hours, enjoyed the leftovers of

his Purim shalach manot, and experienced for a while the strange sensation of forgetting that we were in Leningrad; we could have had a similar conversation anywhere in Israel. But then we got up to leave and we realized that Rochlyn could not. His heart may have been in the West, but he and his wife were still behind the Iron Curtain, without any immediate hope of release.