

REDEMPTION!
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Jewish Freedom Letters
From Russia

Foreword by Bayard Rustin

Edited by Moshe Decter

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Bayard Rustin, Executive Director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, is the eminent leader and philosopher of the civil rights movement and of the campaign against poverty in America.

Moshe Decter, Executive Secretary of the Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews, has served this cause for many years, in research, publication and public education.

In October 1963, one hundred distinguished Americans in academic, intellectual, religious and public life gathered together to spend a full day discussing the plight of Soviet Jewry and what might be done about it. The Conference was convoked by the Founding Sponsors listed on another page, plus Justice William Douglas, President Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers, and the poet-novelist, Robert Penn Warren. Bishop James Pike and Norman Thomas alternated as chairmen of the sessions. Speakers included eminent scholars of Soviet studies Louis Fischer, Max Hayward and Maurice Hindus, as well as Saul Bellow, Moshe Decter, Ralph Ellison, Lewis S. Feuer and Justice Douglas. The Conference concluded with an Appeal of Conscience to the Soviet leadership. Since then, the Conference has sponsored and published scholarly materials, and has contributed to the education and mobilization of public opinion in the cause of Soviet Jewry.

The American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry speaks for the overwhelming majority of the American Jewish community. Established at a national convocation in Washington in 1964, with the participation of Senator Abraham Ribicoff, Senator Jacob K. Javits, and the then Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, it is a coordinating body of the twenty-six major national organizations—religious, secular, community relations and youth. It has initiated and stimulated a wide variety of activities on behalf of Soviet Jewry, ranging from national and regional conferences to petition campaigns, demonstrations and rallies, and the production and dissemination of educational materials.

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AMERICAN JEWISH CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY

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CONFERENCE ON THE STATUS OF SOVIET JEWS

FOREWORD by BAYARD RUSTIN

It is man's fate to suffer and his nature to endure. And as William Faulkner has told us, it is his destiny to prevail — to prevail over the wearing burdens of time and fortune and the ultimate indignity of man's inhumanity to man.

The twentieth century is strewn with the victims of human cruelty, and it is also replete with examples of human triumph. The worldwide struggles against war, racism, poverty, colonialism, and totalitarian repression all testify to the truth that while men may be oppressed by slavery, the urge for freedom will persist undiminished; and that while death may break men's bodies, it shall have no dominion over their souls. This was Martin Luther King's message to his people, and it is also the meaning of this collection of Jewish freedom letters from Russia.

One reflects upon the story of the Jewish people with the sense of mystery that is reserved for all great epics. The theme of redemption runs throughout this story and seems both to explain and ultimately to justify human existence. It tells us that freedom will follow slavery, that in suffering we shall find joy, and that death shall give birth to life. To some degree, all of our lives attest to this reality, but rarely if ever has it been demonstrated with such shattering force as during the last fifty years of Jewish experience.

The destruction of European Jewry and the founding of the State of Israel stand together as a monument to what is base and evil in mankind — and to what is good, beautiful and strong. They are also a declaration of the universal human will to survive and be free. For if redemption can follow the Nazi Holocaust, then certainly there is hope for the oppressed throughout the world.

The authors of the letters in this volume suffer from a form of oppression far more subtle than that exercised by the Nazis. The pogrom is still a reality in Soviet society, especially during a period like the present, when the government is deliberately inflaming in-

cient anti-Semitism as part of its anti-Israel propaganda campaign. But the major threat to Soviet Jewry is not the destruction of life but the obliteration of the Jews as a *people*. The prohibitions placed upon Jewish education and religious observance and culture, combined with discrimination in employment, politics and schooling have given new meaning to the old maxim that it is not easy to be a Jew.

The cry for redemption in these letters takes the simple form of the request to go to Israel. The request has been firmly rejected (and many of those who have made it have been subjected to increased persecution), since it conflicts with what is expedient for Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet Union wants to increase its influence among the Arab nations, the Arab nations want to cut off the flow of immigrants to Israel, and the largest source of such immigrants today can be found among the three million Soviet Jews. The Jews, therefore, are pawns of Soviet foreign policy.

Beyond this, Russia has denied exit permits to the Jews for internal political reasons. An important part of Communist mythology is that no national problem exists in the Soviet Union. This myth of equality for all nationalities applies to Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Armenians and Georgians as well as to Jews, and its credibility would be totally undermined were the Jewish minority to leave the "socialist" fatherland for the State of Israel. The irony here should not be lost. Jewish emigration to Israel is being restricted in order to buttress what is thought to be the ideal of socialism in the Soviet Union. But that ideal has been perverted by totalitarianism and is far better represented by the democratic social and economic system which has been developed in Israel.

The letters in this volume are like freedom songs, and the voice of Soviet Jewry that emerges from them will be recognized as a kindred voice by the oppressed in many different lands. The moving stories of Ionas Damba and the poet Kerler, Kochubiyevsky's passionate cry of "Let me go!", the courageous example of men like Polsky and Rabinovich who protest against injustice in a country that does not tolerate any words of opposition — these are only a few of the instances in this volume that bear eloquent witness to the irrepressible longing for human freedom.

There will be this longing wherever social and political conditions deny fundamental human rights. That such conditions exist is a measure of our inhumanity toward each other. But it is also a measure of our transcendent humanity that such conditions are resisted. It is in this way that the authors of these letters, without intending it, have contributed to the humanity, perhaps even the redemption, of us all.

INTRODUCTION by MOSHE DECTER

The Jews of Audacity

Something momentous is happening with the Jews of the Soviet Union — something new and grand and stunning. It is a watershed of history for this last great remnant of East European Jewry.

In the January 1967 issue of the democratic socialist periodical, *Dissent*, one of its editors, Stanley Plastrik, wrote of his visit to the USSR the preceding summer: "Many young Jews, including Kom-somol members, say openly, 'I do not go to synagogue; I do not believe in Judaism as a religion. But I am a Jew and want to be known as a Jew.'"

That proud cry — "I am a Jew and want to be known as a Jew" — has been ringing down the centuries of Jewish history, and in echoing it today Soviet Jewish youngsters are making it the hallmark of their own generation. Time was, until quite recently, when fear dominated the hearts of Soviet Jews and those who guarded the flame did so in secret and stealth.

The fear is undoubtedly still there for large numbers, especially the older people. But a new generation is rising, demonstratively proud, with an open acceptance of Jewish dignity and honor. They are without any real Jewish knowledge but are possessed of a profound yearning for it. These young people are true latter-day Maccabees, in their defiant resistance to spiritual attrition and cultural impoverishment.

The entire civilized world is long since fully aware that there is being perpetrated a profound violation of the basic human rights of the community of three and a half million Jews in the Soviet Union. The crux of this aching problem can be stated briefly. It is forcible assimilation. That phrase means two things. It means that a people is

placed in the position of losing its cultural heritage and its historical group identity. And it means that that process of attenuation is the result of a deliberate, official policy of force.

In sum, the personality and character of the group is thus seen to be violated, its future gravely jeopardized. These facts have been spelled out and protested time and again by such human rights and peace leaders as Martin Luther King and Norman Thomas and Bertrand Russell, all of blessed memory — by world bodies like the Socialist International, the Council of Europe and the International Commission of Jurists — and even by many Communists and other friends of the USSR all over the world.

It has been made impossible for Soviet Jews to live with natural pride and dignity as Jews. But they have no intention of submitting meekly to the attrition of their spirit, and they have reached the limits of their endurance. Indeed, they are now engaged in a magnificent historic struggle — to resist the forcible submergence of their identity, and to attain a full measure of self-respect.

This is the meaning of the extraordinarily daring letters published here. They are documents of the unquenchable human spirit.

These impassioned letters come from all over, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, from Georgia, from Moscow, from Leningrad, from Riga. And they share certain characteristics. The writers emphasize that they are Jews and want to live in a Jewish ambience. At great risk and sacrifice and hardship, they have all repeatedly applied for exit permits, for it is to Israel that they want to go, for family reunion and national reunion. They place much reliance on the United Nations and its institutions and pronouncements, such as the Human Rights Commission, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. And thus it is that so many of the letters are addressed to U Thant, the UN Secretary General.

They insistently stress their right to leave the Soviet Union, and they are justified. For the right to leave any country is absolutely fundamental, intrinsic, irreducible and unalienable. It is a right which the Soviet government itself recognizes, in theory.

This is but the latest chapter in the age-old story of the obdurate persistence of the Jews in the face of oppression by tyrants. How did it come about? What led to this revival of Jewish national feeling, this renaissance of Russian Zionism, after decades of enforced silence?

This new expression of the Jewish will to survive occurs within a context of subdued but not insignificant ferment among a variety of other groups in the USSR. There is the ferment of small groups of Christian idealists, resisting the tyranny of the regime and the acquiescence of the Orthodox Church. There is the stirring of the quest

for the enhancement of national-cultural rights of certain ethnic minorities, such as the dispossessed Crimean Tatars. There is, above all, the small but irreversible movement for civil liberties and free expression led by a hardy band of the noblest spirits of the Soviet intelligentsia.

This ferment is in the air and there can hardly be a doubt that Jews, especially younger ones, are affected and stimulated by it.

But there are older and deeper causes as well. What might be called a Curse and a Blessing.

The Curse is Soviet Jewry's intimate and uninterrupted knowledge and experience of anti-Semitism in this past quarter-century. Soviet Jews bear the indelible mark of the Holocaust. They are among its prime victims and survivors: More than a million Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis on territory that is part of the USSR. Scores of thousands of families survived in a shattered condition. In the USSR today there are numerous parents, brothers, sisters, even husbands and wives, pleading to be reunited with their dearest ones in Israel. There are children who have waited in vain for years to see their parents again. There are Jewish boys and girls who do not marry for fear this might further reduce the prospects of reunion with their families in Israel.

The Curse did not end with the Holocaust. There were the last five years of Stalin's life, 1948-53, which Soviet Jews themselves called the "Black Years" — when, as Svetlana Alliluyeva has now confirmed from her own recollections, there was the widespread fear that Stalin planned to deport all Soviet Jews to Siberia. As it was, this was a period of anti-Semitic purge and propaganda not only inside the USSR but in much of the Soviet bloc. And even after Stalin's death, the Curse of anti-Semitism has persisted, in the suspicion, distrust and hostility with which the regime views the Jews, in the virulent "anti-Zionist" propaganda, in the systematic attempt to destroy Soviet Jewry's ties to the Jewish heritage and its historic bonds with world Jewry.

But if the Curse of anti-Semitism has served to thrust Soviet Jews back in upon themselves, it is the Blessing of Israel that has transformed negative frustration and resentment into creative ferment and positive striving. It is extremely difficult for us who breathe the air of freedom to grasp what Israel means for vast numbers who live in oppression. It transcends inspiration and approaches the messianic. Since its inception, Israel has been a hope and a dream for masses of Soviet Jews. But it was the Six-Day War that transformed a wish into a source of pride and determination.

Now "the time of fear has passed; the hour for action has come." So write the heads of eighteen Georgian Jewish families, in one of the letters published here, and they bespeak the mood of all the other letter-writers who proclaim their Jewish identity and kinship with Israel — and of the scores of thousands who have not yet found the audacity to dispatch open letters but who share the same ardent aspirations.

Tens of thousands of Soviet Jews have applied for exit permits to Israel, and the ranks of the daring constantly grow. No amount of propaganda and pressure is likely to undo this historic spiritual transformation.

On December 4, 1966 — after a day of public hearings at which ten expert witnesses testified, and following a period of investigation and examination of a wealth of documentary and scholarly materials — the Ad Hoc Commission on the Rights of Soviet Jews rendered its Judgment. The Commission had been set up by the Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews, and consisted of John C. Bennett, President of Union Theological Seminary; George B. Ford, civil libertarian leader in the Catholic Church; Emil Mazey, Secretary-Treasurer of the United Automobile Workers; Telford Taylor, Professor of Law at Columbia University and Chief United States Prosecutor at the Nurnberg Trial; Norman Thomas, inspirer of a host of movements for social justice in America. The Chairman was Bayard Rustin. At the conclusion of their Judgment, they wrote:

A Great Power such as the Soviet Union, precisely because it presents itself to the world as a revolutionary force that seeks to enhance the dignity of man, must surely accept a basic obligation toward certain fundamental individual and group rights.

Among these is the natural human right of a historic people, such as the Jews, to perpetuate its group life and culture. Closely linked with that is another basic human right — the right of individuals to find self-realization through their natural kinship with such a group.

Many individual Soviet Jews have assimilated into the national cultures of the Russian, the Ukrainian or other nationality in the USSR, and have made honorable contributions to those cultures. No one can quarrel with, or gainsay, their right to have taken that path.

Yet there can be little doubt that a vast number of Soviet Jews would choose, in one form or another, to exercise their natural right to group life and the equally natural right to seek self-fulfillment through their group.

These are, in fact, rights which the Soviet Union accepts as cardinal principles of its domestic and foreign policies, frequently subsumed under the heading of the right to national self-determination. What we ask for the Jews is simply these basic rights in practice and not just in principle. What we seek is that Jewish rights be observed no less than those of all other Soviet national and religious minorities.

For many Soviet Jews, this would mean the opportunity to perform their religious duties and maintain religious associations without administrative hindrances.

For a much larger number of Jews, this would mean the opportunity to establish — with the kind of support and encouragement which the USSR gives to all other nationalities — cultural, educational, communal and artistic institutions that would assure to succeeding generations a knowledge of Jewish history, literature, languages, culture and traditions.

And for those Soviet Jews who can find self-realization only in a Jewish State, this would mean the right to leave the USSR in order to create a new Jewish life for themselves in Israel.

These are rights which Jews possess in virtually all countries of the world. It is their absence in the USSR which causes such deep concern and which has given rise to the protests which will surely not cease until this tragic injustice is rectified.

These words were written by those six eminent Americans nearly four years ago. How much greater bearing do they have today!

Yosef Tekoah, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, relates a gripping story of a visit he made to Kutaisi, in Soviet Georgia, when he served as his country's ambassador in the USSR, in 1962-65. It reveals in a flash what exactly he represented to the Jews. It tells — *in one word* — all there is to say about the scores of thousands of Soviet Jews for whom the return to the ancient, now reborn, Jewish Commonwealth would be a historic fulfillment.

At the conclusion of the Sabbath service in the synagogue, Tekoah walked slowly through the town. Soon he was followed by a growing crowd of Jews, men, women and children, then surrounded by them as they together formed a spontaneous emotional procession. As they walked, he heard them whisper, then it was a murmur, then a rumble, then a shout — and finally, a joyous, exalted, vaulting roar, unmistakable in its thrust:

"GEULAH! GEULAH! GEULAH!"

"REDEMPTION! REDEMPTION! REDEMPTION!"

THE LETTERS

NOT A GREAT DEAL IS KNOWN ABOUT MOST OF THE LETTER WRITERS BEYOND WHAT THEY THEMSELVES REVEAL IN THEIR LETTERS. WHERE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE, IT IS PRESENTED AS A PREFATORY NOTE TO THE TEXTS. THE LETTERS HAVE COME TO OUR ATTENTION THROUGH TRAVELERS, JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS WHO HAVE EMERGED FROM THE USSR; IN SOME CASES, THEY HAVE EVEN COME OUT BY ORDINARY MAIL. THEY ARE PRESENTED HERE ESSENTIALLY IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, EXCEPT IN CASES WHERE A SERIES OF LETTERS OBVIOUSLY BELONGS TOGETHER.

**1. Letter of Twenty-Six Lithuanian Jewish Intellectuals —
February 15, 1968.**

A word is in order about the historical references in the first paragraph of this letter. Ponar is the site on the outskirts of Vilna, Lithuania's capital, where the Nazis massacred tens of thousands of Jews of the city and its environs. The Ninth Fort was a military structure in a suburb of Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania's second city, where a similar Jewish holocaust occurred. The signers of this letter refer here to the well-known Soviet policy of imposed silence about Jewish martyrdom under the Nazis — a psychological gambit used in an attempt to eradicate Jewish consciousness from among Soviet Jews. The same policy applies to Babi Yar, near Kiev. Finally, the letter-writers refer obliquely to the fact that in many cases it was the Germans' Lithuanian henchmen who actually performed the mass executions, under Nazi supervision.

This letter was first brought to world attention by the Academic Committee on Soviet Jewry.

To Comrade A. Snietskus, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party.

We, Communist and non-Party representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia who have discussed and signed this document, address ourselves to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party because of our great anxiety about the rising wave of anti-Semitism in Soviet Lithuania. We draw the attention of the Central Committee to the fact that the earth has not yet grown cold in Ponar and in the Ninth Fort of Kaunas, the soil that had been watered with the blood of our parents, brothers and sisters; we draw the attention of the Central Committee to the fact that at the sites of mass murder, where tens of thousands of Jews lie buried, no monuments have been built thus far similar to that in Piritiupys, which was erected to commemorate one hundred innocently murdered Lithuanians; we draw the attention of the Central Committee to the fact that 25,000 Jews living in Soviet Lithuania have not forgotten who carried out the mass murders.

We realize that the anti-Israel propaganda conducted by the Soviet press is not intended for internal consumption and is not directed at Jews who live in the Soviet Union. However, we should not ignore the fact that, despite all the stylistic nuances, the anti-Israel propaganda, and especially the cartoons in the central press, have revived anti-Semitic passions in a certain part of the Lithuanian (and not only Lithuanian) people. Therefore we can not be silent at a time when in the

present tense situation new notes emerge that give a local character to the entire matter. We can not be silent when the press publishes material that nourishes local judeophobia.

The weekly newspaper *Kalba Vilnius* (*Vilnius Speaking*, No. 7, page 14) has published quotations depicting Jews as a traditional object of mockery, which ethnologist S. Skrodenis has painstakingly selected from the writings of Lithuanian classics. As one reads them, one gets the idea that mocking Jews is an old "tradition" of the Lithuanian people. The author Skrodenis knew what he was doing in his article, "Winter, Winter, Get Out of The Yard." In the traditional Shrovetide processions, the personages of a drunken Russian bureaucrat and "honorable" Polish landed gentry figured next to Jews, gypsies and Germans [among those mocked — ed.], and sometimes even dominated the event. The cited writings of Zemaite, Jucevicius and Valancius are full of anti-Russian and anti-Polish statements. All one needs to do is to select them properly and present them together in one place.

However, the author Skrodenis and the editors of *Kalba Vilnius* know that it is not allowed to mock a drunken Russian bureaucrat or an "honorable" Polish landowner, while one can write about Jews now. Only in this way can one explain the painstaking ethnographic selection.

More than that. The editors of *Kalba Vilnius* express regret about the following: "Such processions of costumed people have almost completely disappeared today; and while somewhere deep in the Zemaitija region some still do it, they are a little afraid. It is because in some regions the keepers of public order simply forbid it." The newspaper urges the "revival of beautiful popular traditions." What is this — an open invitation to stage anti-Semitic manifestations under the cover of reviving "popular traditions"?

On this occasion we would like to point out that, because of the onesidedness of our propaganda, objective conditions have been created for the flourishing of anti-Semitism. Individual leading personalities, Communists, are quite openly promoting it and are personally willingly expressing it. Here are several facts out of many:

When the Deputy Minister of Trade, Kazbaras, was reproached for not observing the Leninist principle of selecting cadres on the basis of their political and technical qualifications, he replied publicly: "To be a Lithuanian in Soviet Lithuania is a political qualification."

The Deputy Chairman of Television, Kuolelis, openly criticized a correspondent in a meeting for his Jewish mannerisms on the screen.

The President of the Pedagogical Institute, Uogintas, bluntly told one of the instructors: "It matters little that today you excel others in

the German or English languages, in physics or mathematics, chemistry or music. We will develop our own cadres so that tomorrow Lithuanians will be more qualified than you." All Uogintas did was to give public expression to a principle that has been in force for a long time in cadre [employment] policy.

Here are the facts. During the entire postwar period, not a single Jewish student living in Lithuania (except for a few children of privileged persons) was given a state scholarship to continue his studies at institutions of higher learning in Moscow or Leningrad. Not a single Jew originating from Lithuania has taken post-graduate courses in the institutes of Moscow or Leningrad. Not a single Jewish Communist has attended the Academy of Social Sciences or the Party University of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee (except M. Bordonaitė).

And here are the facts about the distribution of cadres. Ten percent of the inhabitants of Vilnius are Jews. Until now not a single Jew has ever been elected chairman, deputy chairman or secretary of the city or of the city's four regional executive committees. Since the dismissal of Atamukas, not a single Jewish Communist has ever been elected secretary of a Party city committee or a city-region committee, nor have any been appointed department heads by the corresponding plenums.

Not a single Jew has been elected judge of a people's court. Not a single Jew has been elected to any higher position in the trade unions. During the entire postwar era, not a single representative of the Jewish youth has risen to a leading position in the state, party or trade union activity — while at the same time the mass of Lithuanian cadres has been educated and promoted during the postwar years. In fact, only a handful of meritorious Jewish revolutionaries of the older generation are still merely tolerated in higher positions, and they are now being hurriedly pushed out to pension as soon as possible.

We know that the Jewish cultural institutions in Lithuania were destroyed not at the initiative of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, and therefore we do not think there is any need to raise this question now. Yet none of us have forgotten the summary punishment of Ceserkas — violinist, veteran Communist underground fighter, veteran of the Fatherland War — who had dared (as the Lithuanian clandestine teachers had done in 1863-1905, when the press was prohibited in Lithuania) to teach a group of young Jews the alphabet of their native tongue. He was dismissed from the Party and thrown out from everywhere.

As for the protection of Jewish cultural monuments, it must be stated that not a single synagogue structure that survived the Occupa-

tion has been declared an architectural monument under state protection, whereas a considerable number of Catholic churches-architectural monuments are protected by the state and repaired at its expense. Moreover, one of the most outstanding architectural monuments of 16th century Lithuania, the underground synagogue of the Gaon of Vilna (at the intersection of Muziejus and Rudininkai Streets), was deliberately destroyed and desecrated during the doctors' trial in Moscow in 1952.

Local authorities, with the obvious connivance or even silent consent from above, are destroying Jewish cemeteries, while the cattle of the townspeople graze on those that remain. Tombstones are used as building materials even for the construction of public buildings. Even the Hitlerites had left Jewish cemeteries untouched throughout the period of their occupation of Lithuania. The Jewish cemeteries of Sovietsk (formerly Tilsit) or Cherniavski (formerly Insterburg) in East Prussia remained untouched through all the thirteen years of Hitler rule. Only now have they been completely destroyed, and not a trace remains. Quite recently, the Jewish cemetery in Jonava was destroyed without warning (even the foreign radio commented on that). Pink marble from the old Jewish cemetery in Vilnius was used for the pedestal of the Pushkin monument, erected at the foot of the Gediminas Hill in Vilnius. This act of vandalism insults not only the Jews but everyone who respects Pushkin's genius.

We do not wish to over-state the case. By no means. We know that the situation of the Jews is considerably better in Lithuania than in other parts of the USSR; especially terrible is the discrimination against our compatriots in the Ukraine. During the entire postwar period in Lithuania there was only one bloody pogrom, in Plunge in 1958, while, according to our information, not fewer than twenty pogroms occurred in the Ukraine. (Victims were especially numerous in Shachty; Gorkovka and other towns.)

We highly value the Lithuanian Communist Party, the traditional internationalism of its Central Committee, and the national tolerance of the Lithuanian people. Nevertheless, as the chairman of the state security committee, Petkevicius, stated at the plenum of the Lithuanian Communist Party's Central Committee — emigrational tendencies are increasing among the Jewish inhabitants. It is known that if the borders would be opened for emigration today, some eighty per cent of the entire Jewish populace would leave Soviet Lithuania and depart for Israel. These people would leave everything here — despite the unsettled conditions in the Near East, despite the fact that our people in this country are used to a damp climate and would find it difficult to acclimatize there, despite the fact that almost no one

among the Lithuanian Jews knows Hebrew anymore or observes religious traditions, despite the fact that their present qualifications (most economically active people are employed in service occupations) would not make it easy for them to become integrated into Israel's society.

We are confronted with a paradox here. We are not wanted here, we are being completely oppressed, forcibly denationalized, and even publicly insulted in the press — while at the same time we are forcibly kept here. As the Lithuanian proverb goes, "He beats and he screams at the same time."

We are not speaking to you about the noble Communist ideals, about the equality of men and nations, about proletarian internationalism. All those slogans have been thrown into the dust-heap of demagoguery long ago. They have been replaced now by one slogan: "Love for the great Russian people, and what is left from that 'love' let us divide up among ourselves." The authors of this document are appealing only to you and your colleagues' universal human, democratic convictions. Do all in your power to put down the menacingly rising wave of anti-Semitism. It is not too late yet. If that is not done now, Lithuania will again "adorn itself" with new Ponars and Ninth Forts.

It has been decided not to make public the surnames of the twenty-six signers of this document. We know well how people who had protested against flourishing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union at one time or another were dealt with summarily. The Party has taught us to be watchful, and we have to be watchful now as we write to the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party.

What painful irony.
Vilnius, February 15, 1968

2. Letter from Yakov Kazakov — May 20, 1968.

3. Letter from Kazakov's parents — December 9, 1969.

Yakov Kazakov was exactly twenty-one years old when, on June 13, 1967, he renounced his Soviet citizenship, in reaction against Soviet enmity to the State of Israel and the virulent propaganda campaign waged against it as a result of the Six-Day War. Nearly a year later, he wrote the following letter to the Supreme Soviet, reiterating his renunciation and demanding an exit permit for Israel. On December 19, 1968, the Washington Post published a lengthy report on this letter.

Within a few weeks, he was given his exit permit, and he arrived in Israel in February 1969.

Inspired by his example and encouraged by the fact that many other Moscow Jews were beginning to do the same, Kazakov's parents also applied for exit permits to Israel. After being refused, they appealed to Prime Minister Golda Meir of Israel for help. The publication of their letter and the focusing of attention on their plight is one means of rendering assistance.

Comrade Deputies!

I am again applying to you, and I shall continue to apply until my request is granted. I demand what is mine by right, and any negative reply, no matter in what form it is given, is unlawful and contrary both to the Constitution of the USSR and to the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which the Soviet Union has undertaken to observe and to respect.

I, Yakov Yosifovich Kazakov, a Jew, born in 1947, residing at No. 6 Third Institutskaya St., apt. 42, Moscow 2R-389, renounce Soviet citizenship, and, from the moment that I first announced my renunciation of USSR citizenship, that is, from June 13, 1967, I do not consider myself a citizen of the USSR.

Whether to be, or not to be, a citizen of this or of another country, is the private affair of every person.

By not agreeing to accept my renunciation of Soviet citizenship, you cannot force me to become a loyal citizen of the USSR. Independently of your decision, I am not a citizen of the USSR, and I act, and shall act, as one who does not have USSR citizenship.

I am a Jew, I was born a Jew, and I want to live out my life as a Jew. With all my respect for the Russian people, I do not consider my people in any way inferior to the Russian, or to any other, people, and I do not want to be assimilated by any people.

As in the Soviet Union there are no conditions for the existence of the Jewish nation, Jews who wish to leave the USSR should be given the possibility to do so (just as this is done in other countries: Rumania and Poland, for example).

I am a Jew, and, as a Jew, I consider the State of Israel my Fatherland, the Fatherland of my people, the only place on earth where there exists an independent Jewish State, and I, like any other Jew, have the indubitable right to live in that state.

The Jewish people has a right to its own, independent State and every Jew, no matter where he lives and no matter where he was born, has the right to live in the Jewish State.

ments and obligations. Our family is the victim of a violation of the rights set forth in the above-mentioned Convention.

We request you to use any means which you may consider necessary to obtain permission for us to leave for Israel, which we consider as our *Fatherland*.

We hereby give our agreement for this letter to be broadcast by radio and published in the press. We are firmly convinced that support for our request to leave for Israel by such a highly-placed political figure as yourself, together with the support of the world public, will ensure that we obtain permission to leave the USSR for Israel.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

(Signed) Yosif Yakovlevich KAZAKOV, born 1922

Sofia Yakovlevna KAZAKOVA, born 1926

Our address: USSR, Moscow ZH.-389

3rd Institutskaya St. No. 6, apt, 42

9 December, 1969

4. Letter of Boris L. Kochubiyevsky — November 28, 1968.

Kochubiyevsky dared even more than all the others, and has consequently paid a greater price. From the Six-Day War onward, he repeatedly and publicly defended Israel's position, which brought down upon him enormous hostility and pressure, which ultimately forced him out of his engineering job, and his wife out of her pedagogical institute and the Young Communist League. In September 1968, in the face of provocations, he staunchly insisted, at a memorial meeting for the scores of thousands of Jews slaughtered by the Nazis at Babi Yar in 1941-43, that this was a unique tragedy for the Jewish people.

A week after he wrote this letter he was arrested. Ultimately, he was brought to trial in Kiev from May 13-16, 1969, on charges of disseminating anti-Soviet slander. He was found guilty and sentenced to three years of forced labor camp. Since then, he has been virtually incommunicado.

November 28, 1968

TO: The Secretary General of the CPSU Central Committee—

Brezhnev

The First Secretary of the (Ukraine CP) Central Committee—

Shelest

COPY TO: The Investigator of the Prosecutor's Office in the
Shevchenko Region of the city of Kiev—V. V. Doroshenko
FROM: The Accused of Slander of Soviet reality—
B. L. Kochubiyevsky, Jew

I am a Jew. I want to live in the Jewish State. This is my right, just as it is the right of a Ukrainian to live in the Ukraine, the right of a Russian to live in Russia, the right of a Georgian to live in Georgia.

I want to live in Israel.

This is my dream, this is the goal not only of my life but also of the lives of hundreds of generations which preceded me, of my ancestors who were expelled from their land.

I want my children to study in a school in the Hebrew language. I want to read Jewish papers, I want to attend a Jewish theatre. What's wrong with that? What is my crime? Most of my relatives were shot by the fascists. My father perished and his parents were killed. Were they alive now, they would be standing at my side: Let me go!

I have repeatedly turned with this request to various authorities and have achieved only this: Dismissal from my job, my wife's expulsion from her Institute; and, to crown it all, a criminal charge of slandering Soviet reality. What is this slander? Is it slander that in the multi-national Soviet State only the Jewish people can not educate its children in Jewish schools? Is it slander that there is no Jewish theatre in the USSR? Is it slander that in the USSR there are no Jewish papers? By the way, no one even denies this. Perhaps it is slander that for over a year I have not succeeded to obtain an exit permit for Israel? Or is it slander that nobody wants to speak to me, that there is nobody to complain to? Nobody reacts. But even this isn't the heart of the matter. I don't want to be involved in the national affairs of a state in which I consider myself an alien. I want to go away from here. I want to live in Israel. My wish does not contradict Soviet law.

I have an affidavit of invitation from my relatives; all the formalities have been observed. Is that why you are instituting a criminal case against me?

Is that why my home was searched?

I am not asking for mercy. Listen to the voice of reason:

Let me go!

As long as I live, as long as I am capable of feeling, I shall devote all my strength to obtain an exit permit for Israel. And even if you should find it possible to sentence me for this — I shall anyway, if I live long enough to be freed, be prepared even then to make my way even on foot to the homeland of my ancestors.

Kochubiyevsky

- 5. Letter from David S. Drabkin — April 18, 1969.
- 6. Letter from David S. Drabkin — September 28, 1969.
- 7. Letter from David S. Drabkin — October 1969.

To: The President of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet,
N. V. Podgorny
From: D. S. Drabkin — A Jew living in Moscow,
6, Fadeyev Street, Flat 32.

DECLARATION

On December 17, 1968, I appealed to the Moscow OVIR at the MVD, asking for an exit permit for myself and my family (wife and twelve-year-old daughter) to leave in order to join my family in Israel.

On April 15, 1969, I received a postal card with no identification of the sender, but containing a hand-written sentence saying "Please telephone to OVIR, 297-85-71." There was no signature. I telephoned that number the same day at about 10:30 A.M. I gave my name and that of my wife. A woman asked me to repeat my address, and said that we had been refused exit permits. In reply to my expressions of disappointment, that person added, "There are too many of you Jews. We shall not let you out. We shall finish you off here."

That person was most probably Katerina Pavlovna Arkhipova, an officer of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR. As a rule, it is she who replies from that telephone, and I had several times inquired of her as to whether "there was already a decision in my case."

I am not sure to what extent this threat to finish off the Jews in the USSR corresponds to the present reality. But this threat was made from an office of the MVD of the USSR, and this compels me to take this behavior of an officer on duty very seriously and to ask whether it is (or may be) the expression of Government policy.

In these circumstances, we, myself, my wife and child, are forcibly kept in the USSR and threatened with destruction. In such circumstances, I can no longer consider myself a citizen of the USSR.

I hereby declare that I consider myself a citizen of the Jewish State of Israel.

I hereby request to be deprived legally and as soon as possible of Soviet citizenship because it is no longer possible to remain here.

With feelings of revulsion from racism,

D. S. Drabkin
April 18, 1969

To: The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR,
A. N. Kosygin
From: D. S. Drabkin, A Jew residing in Moscow,
6 Fadeyev Street, Apt. 32

STATEMENT

I hereby request that you instruct the Ministry of the Interior, which is subordinate to you, to permit me and my family to emigrate to the State of Israel for permanent residence.

On December 17, 1968, my wife and I applied to OVIR in the city of Moscow with the request that we be granted exit permits for Israel. The right to leave was denied us and no reasons were given. Repeated requests to the OVIR and the visa department of the Ministry of Interior resulted in further refusals of exit permits, with no reasons stated.

The absence of stated legal grounds for the refusal of exit permits confirms the fact that in the Soviet Union there are no laws on the basis of which Jews may be denied their right to emigrate to the Jewish State.

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that the attaching of people to the land was abolished in Russia in 1861. Before the abolition of the right of serfdom (please note the word "right") — that is, of the legally established order according to which people were not permitted to leave the territory where they lived — they had been able to ransom themselves out or they could be ransomed by someone else. Now, however, my wife and I and our child are deprived of this right as well.

We would like to understand on what grounds the departure of Jews is forbidden in the USSR. It is clear to us that trees which have grown on Soviet soil belong to the Soviet State. But we are not gifts of nature to Russia. We were born of, and reared by, our Jewish parents, and not by the Russian soil. We know of no legislative act by which the Jews, residing on the territory of the USSR, have been made the possession of any persons or organizations. We have the right to be the masters of our own fate and we have not ceded this right to anyone.

The forcible detention of Jews cannot enhance the history of any country, and certainly not that of the Soviet Union, which has proclaimed the highest ideals of mankind.

I hope that you, as the Head of the Government of the USSR, a person responsible for the prestige of the government and of the

State governed by you, will undertake the necessary measures regarding the granting of exit permits for Israel to us.

(signed) David Drabkin
September 28, 1969

To: The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR,
A. N. Kosygin
From: David Drabkin
Residing in Moscow, 6 Fadeyev St., Apt. 32

OPEN LETTER

I am forced to apply to you in an open letter, because the letters I send you by mail do not reach you.

My case is as follows:

My wife and I have repeatedly applied to the Soviet authorities with the request that we be permitted to emigrate to Israel, to our relatives, from whom we were separated as a result of the war.

The exit permit was refused us. Things being what they are, the reasons for the refusal as well as the identity of the persons who forbid emigration to Israel are kept secret, and so there is no practical possibility to ask for a revision of the decision of the authorities. All the letters sent by me to the leaders of the Soviet Government are sent to the OVIR of the Ministry of Interior, which informs the petitioner orally, by phone, of the refusal to grant the exit permit.

After my wife and I applied for permission to emigrate to Israel, repressive measures were taken against us. I was dismissed from my job, and now my wife is being fired. We worked as scientific workers. This field of activity has now been closed to us. The directors of the institutions where we worked told us repeatedly that we, as persons wishing to go to a capitalist state, cannot be entrusted with work of a research nature. Therefore, the education and experience gained by us have, in effect, become valueless, and we have become unnecessary people in the USSR.

My wife and I, after completing our education, worked for over twenty years, and we consider that by our work we have repaid the expenses of our education.

Our desire to go to the Jewish State stems from our national convictions and our desire to unite with our relatives in Israel, and not from any hostility to the USSR.

I hope you will bear in mind that the forcible restraint of Jews wishing to go to their relatives in Israel cannot embellish the record

of any country, including the USSR, which has proclaimed the lofty ideals of mankind.

I ask you, as Head of the Government of the USSR, as the person responsible for the prestige of the Soviet Union, as the one who has the necessary authority, to issue the required instructions to grant exit permits to me, my wife and our child.

Respectfully yours,

(signed) David Drabkin
October 1969

8. Letter from Dora Zak — April 24, 1969.

April 24, 1969

TO: General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU,
L. I. Brezhnev
Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
Podgorny

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Kosygin
I hereby request you to give instructions to the appropriate organs not to impede my emigration and that of my son, Boris, from the Soviet Union to the State of Israel.

I am firmly convinced that only in Israel will we be able to feel that we are full and equal members of society.

In this connection, I hereby announce our rejection of Soviet citizenship. For nearly twenty years, I have been subjected to incessant moral and material deprivations, the only reason for which being the fact that I am a Jewess. For the same reason, all my complaints and subsequent investigations have not resulted in the elimination of the injustices. The authorities, to whom I have repeatedly appealed, have not even taken into consideration the fact that a woman with two children, including a son born in 1950, was being subjected to anti-Semitic persecution.

I, therefore, have all the grounds to consider that I have brought up my son without any help from the Soviet Union.

From 1963 on, I repeatedly applied to you with the request to let me and my son go to Israel, but in answer to all my letters I would be called to the OVIR of the Latvian SSR and told that my request might be granted if I presented a document confirming that the State of Israel was prepared to accept me.

However, when I presented a letter from the Israel Embassy in Moscow, dated 13/9/65, stating that as soon as I got a passport for

abroad I would be given an entry visa for Israel, I was jeered at in the OVIR and told to present an affidavit from relatives or, at least, acquaintances.

In January 1969, my son and I applied once more for permission to go to Israel. I had attached the necessary documents in our application to the OVIR, including an affidavit from a cousin living in Israel. In March 1969, I was again refused permission to emigrate to Israel.

My cup of sorrow has overflowed. Nineteen years without work in my profession, nineteen years without an assured piece of bread, nineteen years of jeering and insults and the joyless childhood of my children.

Don't prevent me from departing the borders of the Soviet Union, and don't drive me to madness by another refusal.

(signed) Zak, Dora Isaakovna

My address is:

Riga 39, Unias Street 17, Apt. 1, Latvian SSR

- 9. Letter from Mendel Gordin — June 1, 1969.
- 10. Letter from Mendel Gordin — February 1970.
- 11. Letter from Mendel Gordin — February 1970.
- 12. Letter from Mendel Gordin — February 1970.

To the most Respected Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR:

In accordance with the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, part I, article 5, paragraph 1, ratified by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on January 22, 1969, in Moscow, every citizen has the right to leave any country.

On February 5, 1969, I applied to the OVIR in Riga for a permit to leave for Israel. This application was rejected on March 28, 1969.

I most decisively state that I wish to live only in my Fatherland and that I consider Israel as such.

In connection with the above, I renounce my Soviet citizenship.

I hereby attach passport series ZZ — U Yu No. 642423.

June 1, 1969

(signed) Mendel Gordin

Riga, 12-17 Skolas,

OPEN LETTER

To the Secretary General of the UN, U Thant:

My life, the life of a religious person in the Soviet Union, is attended with considerable difficulties: dismissal from my job, the threat of criminal proceedings against me for "parasitism," etc. All my attempts to receive a permit to emigrate to Israel have been total failures.

The great prestige that you enjoy in the USSR permits me to hope that your opinion on this question will be attentively heard out by the Soviet Government.

I attach herewith a copy of the protocol of a trade-union meeting discussing my dismissal from work in connection with my refusal to work on the day of the religious fast, Yom Kippur.

USSR, Riga, Skolas St. 12 apt. 17

Gordin, Mendel Genakhovich

OPEN LETTER

To the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Great Britain, John Gollan:

I, Gordin, Mendel Genakhovich, was born in Latvia in 1937. In February 1969, I submitted to the OVIR of the city of Riga a petition for emigration to Israel, and this application was denied in March.

On June 1, 1969, I renounced my Soviet citizenship, stating that I wished to live in my Homeland, Israel. On October 31 the director of the OVIR of the Latvian SSR, Comrade Kaya, told me that in order to be deprived of Soviet citizenship it is necessary to be a criminal.

In principle, the question of the emigration abroad of those wishing to do so, is solved by Soviet legislation with the utmost democracy. Why are the Jews an exception?

"No, Gentlemen Zionists, it is not a question of anyone forbidding or impeding anyone's emigration to Israel" — writes the newspaper *Izvestia* of 14/12/69. I applied with petitions to go to Israel, to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Comrade Podgorny — on June 1; to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Comrade Kosygin — on August 12; to the Secretary General of the CPSU, Comrade Brezhnev — on December 18. All my applications were refused. Why is a Jew an exception?

Over twenty years ago the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, thus taking its first step in the cause of the international defense of the rights of man. As a religious man, I refused to work on the day of the religious fast — Yom Kippur, and as a consequence I was dismissed from my job. Why is a Jew an exception?

Grigori Plotkin, G. Tsypin and S. Diment are absolutely right when they say, "I don't know what has remained in me that is Jewish, perhaps only the nationality paragraph in the passport," as they consider that they have no other Homeland except the USSR. But as I do know what is Jewish in me, I prefer to live in the Holy Land and not in an alien land. As a religious person, I am not looking for any easy ruble and I therefore agree to change my lot for that of the unhappy Tskavzaradze, the Gertsman couple and others.

USSR, Riga, 12 Skolas St. apt. 17. Gordin, M. G.

OPEN LETTER

To the Secretary General of the World Health Organization,
Marcolino Candau:

In February 1969, I submitted to the OVIR of the town of Riga an application for emigration to Israel and it was refused in March. On May 23, the administration of the Republican Anti-Tuberculosis Dispensary, in accordance with the instructions of the director of the Personnel Section of the Ministry of Health of the Latvian SSR, Comrade Girgenson, suggested to me that I should resign from my job, because she considered my continued tenure in charge of the laboratory as undesirable.

On September 19, I asked the administration for permission to be released from work on the day of the religious fast, Yom Kippur. I received a categorical refusal and on September 23 I was dismissed from work.

On October 31, the Deputy Director of the Passport Section of the Latvian SSR, Comrade Kaya, announced to me that court proceedings will be opened against me in connection with parasitism, if I do not find a job in the nearest future.

When I decided to apply for employment to the Central Committee of the Comparty of the Latvian SSR, the instructor of the Central Committee of the Latvian CP on questions of health, Comrade Valkov, refused to accept me, urging me to go to a "region where there is a possibility of working in my profession and to engage in scientific activity."

On December 24 I sent a telegram to Comrade Kosygin:
"Honored Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR!
From 1966 on, I have been working in Riga as the person in charge of a laboratory, possessing a science degree of Candidate of Medical

Sciences in Bio-Chemistry. Since September 23, 1969, I have no work. I applied for employment to the Municipal Health Department of Riga — on October 23; to the personnel section of the Ministry of Health of the Latvian SSR — on November 11 and December 24; to the Minister of the Latvian SSR — on November 5, to which I received an answer only on December 19; to the Ministry of Health of the USSR — on November 12 and December 7; to the Chairman of the Soviet of Ministers of the Latvian SSR — on December 9; to the Committee of People's Control of the Latvian SSR — on December 9; to the Republican Soviet of Trade Unions of the Latvian SSR — on December 9; to the editorial offices of the papers, *Sovetskaya Latvia*, *Tsinya*, *Pravda*, *Izvestia* — on December 9; to the Chairman of the Commission for Health of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR — on December 18; to the Committee of People's Control of the USSR — on December 18; to the Central Committee of Trade Unions of the USSR — on December 21; to the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR — on December 21. In spite of this, the Ministry of Health of the Latvian SSR refuses, for the fourth month, to give me employment in my profession in Riga. On December 24, the director of personnel of the Ministry of Health of Latvian SSR, Comrade Girgenson, stated that I have no profession in general and that I cannot claim the post of a physician-laboratory worker. As my financial means are very limited, I ask you, as soon as possible, to help me in finding employment. With great respect,
Gordin."

On January 9, 1970, I applied to the physician-in-chief of the X Polyclinic, Comrade Kireeva, with a request to employ me as a probationer-therapist. After a talk, during which Comrade Kireeva was interested in the details of my religious views: how often I go to the synagogue, which of my acquaintances is religious, whether I engage in religious agitation in the synagogue, etc. — employment was refused me.

January 16, 1970, a representative of the Ministry of Health of the Latvian SSR told me that a necessary condition for providing me with employment is obligatory work on all religious holidays.

On January 29, 1970, the director of the Municipal Health Department of Riga offered me employment as a laboratory physician, warning me that I would be immediately dismissed from work in case of my refusal to work on any religious holiday.

Thus, I live under constant fear of being dismissed from my job. Taking into consideration all the above, I ask you to help me to go to Israel.

Gordin, Mendel Genakhovich

USSR, Riga, Skolas 12 apt. 17

13. Letter from a Moscow Family — Udia Klaizmer, Benedikt Borukhovich, Boris Shlein — June 25, 1969.
 14. Letter from a Moscow Family — February 14, 1970.

To: The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R.,
 A. N. Kosygin
 From: Citizens U. I. Klaizmer, B. I. Borukhovich and B. L. Shein,
 Moscow Zh. 457, Pervaya Novokuzminskaya 6, Apt. 72

OPEN LETTER

In view of the fact that our many letters, statements and appeals to you personally, as well as to other highly placed Soviet statesmen, have met with no response, we have decided to turn with this letter to those press organs that will understand the tragedy of our situation and will agree to publish this letter.

We consider the fact that our request was under consideration ality. On December 30, 1968, basing ourselves upon the formal affidavit of invitation (—vizov, required by Soviet regulations — Translator.) from our sisters, we applied for exit permits to the State of Israel in order to be reunited with close relatives from whom we were separated as a result of the War and whom we have not seen for thirty years.

On June 16, 1969, our application was denied, our natural human urge to live with our closest relatives, with our people and in the land of our people, was rejected.

We consider the fact that our request was under consideration for nearly six months only to be rejected, as an appalling act of mocking humiliation and anti-Semitism.

Our family was educated in the tradition of Jewish culture but in the present conditions of Soviet reality our children are denied the possibility of learning their own language, as well as the great cultural heritage and all the spiritual values of our people, because unlike other peoples living in the U.S.S.R. the Jewish people is subjected to cruel discrimination. There exist in the U.S.S.R. neither Jewish schools nor any other Jewish institutions of learning nor theatres, since the bloody repressions of 1948-1953; there exist no periodical Jewish publications except one lone magazine.

Absolutely everything connected with the achievement of the Jewish people's philosophers and men of culture, science and art, everything connected with the heroism of the Jewish people and the sufferings it experienced — everything Jewish, in short, is silenced.

Books by a writer like Kichko, informed with a consistent and open anti-Semitic spirit on the level of the propaganda of the Tsarist Black Hundreds, are published and popularized. All this profoundly insults our national feelings and our human dignity, and to remain in such an atmosphere of anti-Semitic propaganda and discrimination is unbearable to us.

We feel ourselves to be Jews emotionally and spiritually, bound up with our Jewish State of Israel. As free men who have committed no crimes, in full consonance with the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. as well as with the basic principles of the Convention on the Liquidation of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and in accordance with the statement you made at a press conference in Paris in November (actually December — Translator) 1966, we have the full right of emigrating to Israel.

We would like to hope that you will reveal understanding and that our request will be complied with.

(signed)

Klaizmer
 Borukhovich
 Shlein

June 25, 1969

To: The President of the State of Israel, Mr. Zalman Shazar
 To: The Prime Minister, Mrs. Golda Meir
 From citizens: Udia Klaizmer, Benedikt Borukhovich and
 Boris Shlein, residing at:
 USSR, Moscow
 Zh. 457, Novokuzminskaya St. 6
 Apt. 72

We, the undersigned, compose one family, Jews by nationality.

It is already the third year, since December 1968, that we have been trying to obtain the permission of the Soviet authorities to emigrate to the State of Israel, where our relatives have been living for many years.

Our application requesting emigration to Israel, submitted on December 30, 1968, was examined for almost half a year and, on June 16, 1969, we received a post card asking us to ring telephone number 297-94-65, for Inspector Arkhipova, who answered that we have been refused permission to emigrate and that the OVIR (the Department of Visas and Registrations), where we sent our application, has given no reasons for the refusal.

Since then, we have written eighty-eight letters, addressed to various high-ranking figures in the Soviet Union, including:

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
N. V. Podgorny
Prime Minister, A. N. Kosygin
Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the CPSU,
L. I. Brezhnev
Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities, Y. I. Paletskis
Member of the Central Committee of the CPSU, M. A. Suslov
Minister of Foreign Affairs, A. A. Gromyko
Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, B. N. Ponomarev
Head of the Administrative Department of the CC CPSU,
N. I. Savinkin
Secretary of the CC CPSU, K. F. Katushev
Secretary of the CC CPSU, A. P. Kirilenko
Minister of Internal Affairs, N. A. Shchelokov
Head of the Department of Internal Affairs, A. P. Kozlov
Chairman of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies,
V. F. Promyslov
Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Red Cross of the USSR,
Prof. Miterev
and so on. . . .

However, to all our letters, complaints and statements we have been receiving the same verbal answer: refusal — and that's all!

Having lost all hope of obtaining a favorable solution of our problem, we apply directly to you, to the Jewish people in Israel and throughout the world, and we apply to the United Nations Organization. Help us to go to Israel, to our ancient and new Homeland, help us to reunite with our people on its land, the promised land!

Help us to re-unite with our close relatives, whom we have not seen for almost 30 years, who have survived all the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps and are now living happily in Israel.

With hope,
(signed) Klaizmer, Shlein, Borukhovich

February 14, 1970

15. Letter from Wolf Gordin — July 22, 1969.

July 22, 1969

TO THE WORLD PUBLIC!

For many years, I have been applying to the proper organs of the Soviet Union with requests to permit me and my family, numbering four persons, to go to the State of Israel in order to reunite with

members of my family — my old mother and other members of the family. Each time my request was declined without any valid reason. Evidently, my chief desire — to live with one's relatives — is forbidden. Although, for a number of years, Soviet leaders stated that if any one wanted to go to join his family, he was welcome to it. This is not so in fact, however! And I am an example of this! I am an example of how one thing is said and another thing is done. Where, then, is the truth? And so I'm writing so that people should know that Jews are not let out of the USSR even to join their mothers.

What is the matter? What is it that irritates the USSR? That I'm going, or, rather, that I want to go to Israel? But they themselves had voted for it in 1948. I won't even mention the fact that in the USSR the Jews do not have the same rights as other nations. My children cannot go to a Jewish school, learn Hebrew, and celebrate our holidays. We cannot be Jews in the USSR, and we are denied the possibility of leaving. Ours, after all, is the simple human request and the natural desire to reunite with our family.

(signed) Gordin

16. Letter from Eighteen Georgian Jewish Families — August 6, 1969.

17. Letter from Eighteen Georgian Jewish Families — February 1970.

The Jews of Georgia represent a unique community within Soviet Jewry. Jews have been living in Georgia since at least as long ago as the early centuries of the Christian Era. Their religious lore traces their ancestry to the Ten Lost Tribes of the Biblical Kingdom of Israel, destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.; and they have clung with passionate fervor to their religio-national bonds with the ancient Holy Land.

They have always been a close-knit community, centering on the family and the clan. It is through these institutions, to which they remain intensely loyal, that they have transmitted their traditional heritage from one generation to the next, in reverence and dignity.

Georgian Jewry numbers around 120,000 out of a total population of 4,660,000 in Soviet Georgia. The eighteen Jewish families who wrote these appeals live in four main centers of the community — Tbilisi (40,000 Jews out of a total population of 861,000), Kutaisi (20,000 out of 160,000), Kulashi (9,000 in a town mainly inhabited by Jews), Poti (3,000 out of 46,000).

These letters were first made public by Prime Minister Golda Meir and the Government of Israel, who felt duty-bound to accede to the ardent requests contained in them.

These deeply affecting letters bespeak the abiding faith and piety, the profound historical attachment to the Jewish people, the Messianic exaltation with their ancient homeland, for which the Jews of Georgia have traditionally been noted.

To: The Prime Minister of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir:
We request you to give instructions that the enclosed letter be forwarded to the U.N. Human Rights Commission and to Yosef Tekoah, the representative of Israel at the United Nations.

We also request that the letter be published in the press and broadcast in the Russian language over the Voice of Israel. We will listen to broadcasts on the 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd of Elul, and on the first of Tishre (the first day of Rosh HaShanah).

May God help us in the common struggle!

Shalom! On behalf of 18 Jewish families
[signed] Shabata Elashvili
Bension Yakobishvili

August 6, 1969
22nd day of Av

Dear Yosef Tekoah
Representative of Israel in the United Nations
New York, USA

Enclosed please find a copy of a letter addressed to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. We request you to take immediate steps to obtain in the shortest possible time permission for us to leave for Israel.

We also request you to take steps to distribute the enclosed letter to the Members of the United Nations and also to have it published in the Press with the complete list of signers — names and surnames, and, if necessary, addresses.

For the time of fear has passed — the hour for action has come.

For if I am not for myself, then who will be for me?

And if not now, then — when?

To the Commission on Human Rights
United Nations
New York, USA

We eighteen religious Jewish families of Georgia, request you to help us leave for Israel. Each one of us, upon receiving an invitation from a relative in Israel, obtained the necessary questionnaires from the authorized USSR agencies, and filled them out. Each was assured orally that no obstacles would be put in the way of his departure. Expecting to receive permission any day, each sold his property and gave up his job. But long months have gone by — years, for many — and permission for departure has not yet been given. We have sent hundreds of letters and telegrams; they have vanished like tears in the sand of the desert. All we hear are one-syllable oral refusals. We see no written replies. No one explains anything. No one cares about our fate.

But we are waiting, for we believe in God.

We eighteen religious Jewish families of Georgia consider it necessary to explain why we want to go to Israel.

Everybody knows how justly national policy, the theoretical principles of which were formulated long ago by the founder of the State, V.I. Lenin, is in fact being carried out in the USSR. There have not been pogroms, pales or quotas in the country for a long, long time. Jews can walk the streets without fear for their lives; they can live where they wish, hold any position, even as high as the post of minister, as is evident from the example of V. Dymshits, Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. There is even a Jewish deputy in the Supreme Soviet — A. Chakovsky, Editor-in-Chief of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

Therefore, it is not racial discrimination that compels us to leave the country. Then perhaps it is religious discrimination? But synagogues are permitted in the country, and we are not prohibited from praying at home. However, our prayers are with Israel, for it is written: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning." For we religious Jews feel that there is no Jew without faith, just as there is no faith without traditions. What, then, is our faith and what are our traditions?

For a long time the Roman legions besieged Jerusalem. But despite the well-known horrors of the siege — hunger, lack of water, disease, and much more — the Jews did not renounce their faith and did not surrender. However, man's strength has its limits, too, and in the end barbarians broke into the Holy City. Thus, a thousand years ago, the Holy Temple was destroyed, and with it — the Jewish State. The nation, however, remained. Although the Jews who could bear arms

did not surrender to the enemy and killed one another, there remained the old people, women and children.

And whoever could not get away was killed on the spot.

But whoever could, went away into the desert; and whoever survived, reached other countries, to believe, and pray and wait.

Henceforth they had to find a way to live in alien lands among people who hated them. Showered with insults, covered with the mud of slander, despised and persecuted, they earned their daily bread with blood and sweat, and reared their children.

Their hands were calloused, their souls were drenched in blood. But the important thing is that the nation was not destroyed — and what a nation.

The Jews gave the world religion and revolutionaries, philosophers and scholars, wealthy men and wise men, geniuses with the hearts of children, and children with the eyes of old people. There is no field of knowledge, no branch of literature and art, to which Jews have not contributed their share. There is no country which gave Jews shelter which has not been repaid by their labor. And what did the Jews get in return?

When life was bearable for all, the Jews waited fearfully for other times. And when life became bad for all, the Jews knew that their last hour had come, and then they hid or ran away from the country.

And whoever got away, began from the beginning again.

And whoever could not run away, was destroyed.

And whoever hid well, waited until other times came.

Who didn't persecute the Jews! Everybody joined in baiting them.

When untalented generals lost a war, those to blame for the defeat were found at once — Jews. When a political adventurer did not keep the mountain of promises he had given, a reason was found at once — the Jews. Jews died in the torture chambers of the Inquisition in Spain, and in fascist concentration camps in Germany. Anti-Semites raised a scare — in enlightened France it was the Dreyfus case; in illiterate Russia, the Beilis case.

And the Jews had to endure everything.

But there was a way that they could have lived tranquilly, like other peoples; all they had to do was convert to another faith. Some did this — there are cowards everywhere. But millions preferred a life of suffering and often death to apostasy.

And even if they did wander the earth without shelter — God found a place for all.

And even if their ashes are scattered through the world, the memory of them is alive.

Their blood is in our veins, and our tears are their tears.

The prophecy has come true: Israel has risen from the ashes; we

have not forgotten Jerusalem, and it needs our hands.

There are eighteen of us who signed this letter. But he errs who thinks there are only eighteen of us. There could have been many more signatures.

They say there is a total of twelve million Jews in the world. But he errs who believes there is a total of twelve million of us. For with those who pray for Israel are hundreds of millions who did not live to this day, who were tortured to death, who are no longer here. They march shoulder to shoulder with us, unconquered and immortal, those who handed down to us the traditions of struggle and faith.

That is why we want to go to Israel.

History has entrusted the United Nations with a great mission — to think about people and help them. Therefore, we demand that the United Nations Human Rights Commission do everything it can to obtain from the Soviet Government in the shortest possible time permission for us to leave. It is incomprehensible that in the twentieth century people can be prohibited from living where they wish to live. It is strange that it is possible to forget the widely publicized appeals about the right of nations to self-determination — and, of course, the right of the people who comprise the nation.

We will wait months and years, we will wait all our lives, if necessary, but we will not renounce our faith or our hopes.

We believe: our prayers have reached God.

We know: our appeals will reach people.

For we are asking — let us go to the land of our forefathers.

Signtaures:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Elashvili, Shabata Mikhailovich | Kutaisi, 53 Dzhapardize St. |
| 2. Elashvili, Mikahail Shabatovich | Kutaisi, 33 Dzhapardize St. |
| 3. Elashvili, Izrail Mikhailovich | Kutaisi, 31 Kirov St. |
| 4. Eluashvili, Yakov Aronovich | Kutaisi, 5 Mayakovsky St. |
| 5. Khikhashvili, Mordekh Isakovich | Kutaisi, 19 Makharadze St. |
| 6. Chikvashvili, Mikhail Samuilovich | Kutaisi, 38 Khakhashvili St. |
| 7. Chikvashvili, Moshe Samuilovich | Kutaisi, 32 Tsereteli St. |
| 8. Beberashvili, Mikhail Rubenovich | Kutaisi, 9 Klara-Tsetkin St. |
| 9. Elashvili, Yakov Izrailovich | Kutaisi, 54 Tsereteli St. |
| 10. Mikhelashvili, Khaim Aronovich | Poti, 57 Tskhakaya St. |
| 11. Mikhailashvili, Albert Khaimovich | Poti, 57 Tskhakaya St. |
| 12. Mikhelashvili, Aron Khaimovich | Poti, 18 Dzhapardize St. |
| 13. Tetrushvili, Khaim Davidovich | Kutaisi, 5 Shaumyan 1st Lane |
| 14. Tsitsuashvili, Isro Zakharovich | Kutaisi, 5 Shaumyan 1st Lane |
| 15. Tsitsuashvili, Yefrem Isrovich | Kutaisi, 6 Shaumyan 1st Lane |
| 16. Yakobishvili, Bension Shalomovich | Tbilisi, 4 General Delivery
(formerly lived at 91 Barnov St.) |
| 17. Batoniashvili, Mikhail Rafaelovich | Kutaisi, 53 Dzhapardize St. |
| 18. Tetrushvili, Mikhail Shalomovich | Kulashi, 114 Stalin St. |

August 6, 1969

Honored Mrs. Golda Meir:

We beg you to transmit the attached letters to the representative of Israel in the UNO, Mr. Yosef Tekoa and to the Secretary General of the UNO.

Our prayers are with you, Mrs. Meir.
We live because we believe. Shalom!

Mr. Yosef Tekoah:

As you will see from the attached copy of the letter addressed to the Secretary General of the UN, our situation has not changed in the 100 days that have passed.

We ask you to help the Secretary General to fulfill his duty.

We give you the right to publish the text of the present letter, giving the full list of the signatories — with their names, family names and addresses.

We assure you that in our longing to return to Israel is the meaning of our existence and that there is no life for us without it. . . .

Mr. Secretary-General of the UN:

We, the eighteen religious Jewish families of Georgia, wish to remind you that we are alive and pray for our return to Israel.

A hundred days ago we applied to the UN with the request that we be helped to emigrate. We wrote that each of us, after being sent for by a relative in Israel, received the necessary questionnaires and oral promises not to impede his departure, from the USSR organs that are empowered to do so. Each of us, awaiting departure from day to day, had sold his property, including his house, and resigned from his job. We filled the questionnaires and remembered the promises. A year has passed (for many of us more than one) and nothing has changed.

As before, our bread is bitter, our tears are salty and the conditions in which we live are difficult. Here is an example: one of the families is huddled together in one room — small children, their parents and old people; at night there are rats.

We understand: our sad faces may dampen somewhat the holiday mood of the Soviet people who are preparing to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of V. I. Lenin, who laid the foundations of

the nationality policy of the USSR. But we have no way out: we applied a long time ago and the choice has been made — we wait, because we believe.

Who will help us?

The history of the Jews is the road of sufferings, on which each step is marked with blood. The Jews did not abandon their Fatherland of their own free will — they were expelled.

We are the descendants of those exiles.

It is doubtful whether there can be found another nation that had to defend so long and so stubbornly, with tears and blood, the right before the entire world to its own State. This tragedy began before our era; in 1948 the curtain started to come down on it, when the UN confirmed the right of the Jews to re-establish their national State on the land of their ancestors. But Israel is still calling on its sons and daughters to come.

As long as the curtain has not yet come down, it is possible to see millions of corpses on the stage, and we want you to know what it means to be a Jew: six million Jews were killed in the last World War — this means that each of us has been six million times shot, hanged, asphyxiated in gas chambers; and before this our children were murdered, taken by their feet and their heads crushed against the walls of houses; our mothers, wives and daughters were raped before our eyes.

We want you to know what it means to be a Jew: our hearts are cemeteries, where a few are buried individually, those that we know, such as Anne Frank and Hannah Senesh, and the other graves are fraternal graves. . . .

Who then will help us?

We have still not received the permit to emigrate; one might think that our case is the first one of its kind and that the competent organs are deliberating how they should act in this very case. However, there are known precedents.

There is much in common between the fate of the Armenians and the Jews: both nations had for centuries been the victims of oppression. Both had been scattered all over the earth; in both cases the majority of the nation for many generations lived outside the boundaries of their historical Fatherland. The USSR has done everything to realize the centuries-old dreams of the Armenians; today hundreds of thousands of them have been repatriated to Armenia.

They can say: the Armenians left the capitalist hell into the country of victorious socialism, and that no comparison can be made here. Let it be so. But then, let us remember something else: the Spaniards who emigrated to the USSR at the end of the Thirties returned at the

end of the Fifties, together with grown-up children who were born in the USSR, to their Fatherland — to Franco Spain; at that time the Spanish Republicans were not called betrayers and traitors by anyone.

Why is it that what has been permitted to the Armenians and the Spaniards is forbidden to the Jews?

We know that the famous internationalist and Leninist, W. Gomułka, has widely opened the gates for all the Jews who desire to go out of Poland; in this he is fulfilling his duty as a communist.

And so, there are precedents. What, then, is the matter?

In our first letter we wrote that it is not racial discrimination in the USSR that makes us want to return to Israel, but religious reasons, the desire to reunify the families that have been torn apart by the war. We are not coming out in the name of ALL the Jews of the USSR, we are not demanding the return to Israel of ALL the Jews of the USSR.

We apply only in the name of those 18 whose signatures were under the first letter and are under the present letter. We speak in the name of those who WISH to go. After all, everyone makes a choice for himself and only our God is one for all. Therefore, whoever wants to, should return, and whoever does not want to — let him go his own way.

In the 100 days that have passed none of us and none of the members of our families has changed his mind, we all want to return to Israel, and there is no power that can stop us.

We believe that we shall return. We are convinced of this on the basis of the Leninist doctrine on the right of nations to self-determination, which lies at the foundation of the national policy of the USSR, and on the statements of official persons, in particular of A. N. Kosygin (Paris, December 3, 1966).

There are also other documents, well known to you: "THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN" and the "INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION," signed by the USSR as well; in these international agreements is confirmed the right of everyone "to leave any country, including his own," and this is precisely what we ask. Since the UN Human Rights Commission, to which we first wrote, was unable to help us, we turn to you with the same request.

We state once again that we shall never give up our right to live on the land of Israel, because we are an integral part of the Jewish people, which has kept its faith and traditions.

May our prayers penetrate your mind and your conscience, Mr. Secretary General. We are expecting help from you, because time is short.

We are not afraid of anything, because, dead or alive — we are children of Israel.

Who will help us?

Signatures:

Elashvili, Shabata Mikhailovich, Kutaisi, Dzhaparidze 53
Elashvili, Mikhail Shabatovich, Kutaisi, Dzhaparidze 33
Elashvili, Izrail Mikhailovich, Kutaisi, Kirova 31
Eluashvili, Yakov Aronovich, Kutaisi, Mayakovskoyo 5
Khikhashvili, Mordekh Isakovich, Kutaisi, Makharadze 19
Chikvashvili, Mikhail Samuilovich, Kutaisi, Khakhanashvili 38
Chikvashvili, Moshe Samuilovich, Kutaisi, Tsereteli 82
Beberashvili, Mikhail Rubenovich, Kutaisi, Klara-Tsetkin 9
Elashvili, Yakov Izrailovich, Kutaisi, Tsereteli 54
Mikhelashvili, Khaim Aronovich, Poti, Tskhakaya 57
Mikhelashvili, Albert Khaimovich, Poti, Tskhakaya 57
Mikhelashvili, Aron Khaimovich, Poti, Dzhaparidze 18
Tetruashvili, Khaim Davidovich, Kutaisi, Dzhaparidze 42
Tsitsushvili, Isro Zakharovich, Kutaisi, Shaumyan, 1st. per., 5
Tsitsushvili, Yefrem Isrovich, Kutaisi, Shaumyan, 1st. Per. 6
Yakobishvili, Bension Shalomovich, Tbilisi, 4, General Delivery
(formerly lived at 91 Barnova)
Batoniashvili, Mikhail Rafaelovich, Kutaisi, Dzhaparidze 53
Tetruashvili, Mikhail Shalomovich, Kulashi, Stalin 114

18. Letter from Lassalle S. Kaminsky — September 1969.

This letter is followed by a List, compiled by Kaminsky himself, of the record of applications, statements, complaints, appeals and letters to various institutions and organizations — all dealing with the request of the Kaminsky family to obtain exit permits for family reunification in Israel.

To: The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
Com. Podgorny, N. Y.
Dear Nikolai Viktorovich:

I hereby apply to you with the request to permit my family to emigrate for permanent residence to Israel, where our relatives reside.

For over two years, in accordance with the established order, we have been requesting the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR to give us such a permit, but each time we receive an unexplained refusal. And this, in spite of the fact that there exists an order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR concerning the ratification of the International Convention on the Liquidation of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, which confirms the rights of every person to leave any country, including his own. And this also, in spite of a number of other documents that confirm this right and that have been signed by the Soviet Government.

All my numerous complaints to the above-mentioned organs about the illegal, negative decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in connection with my family, do not, as a rule, go further than the reception rooms or the offices of these establishments and — evidently, out of a desire to avoid giving an answer to an unpleasant question — are transmitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR even when the matter in question has nothing to do with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. You can see this from the attached list of our applications to various administrative organs.

My family consists of four persons: my wife and I are forty years old, our daughters are sixteen years old and ten years old. I am an engineer-metallurgist, my wife is a philologist. We have never been engaged in any confidential work.

Kaminsky, L. S.
Leningrad, D-25
6 Vosstania St., apt. 4

Con-secutive No.	To whom the statement has been sent	Date Sent.	Brief contents of Statement	Form and contents of reply.	Date of Reply
1.	Oral statement to director of the "Gipro-saitekhprom" Institute (L.S.Kaminsky's place of employment.)	2 April 1967	Request to give a "character description" for handing in documents to the Leningrad OVIR.	Character-description received after several "educational" talks with the management and the Secretary of the Institute of Party Organisation.	20 April 1967
2, 3	To the Director of the Department of Interior Affairs, Leningrad District Executive Committee through the OVIR, two separate statements from the husband and wife.	10 May 1967	Request to permit emigration from the USSR to relatives in Israel.	By phone. In connection with the 'Six-Day War'. Documents are temporarily not examined.	1 July 1967
4	Verbal Statement to the Director of the "Giprosamtekhprom" Institute.	December 1968	Request to give character description for emigration to Israel.	Character description received.	December 1968
5, 6	To the Director of the Department of Interior Affairs, the Leningrad District Executive Committee, through the OVIR, two separate statements from husband and wife.	20 December 1968	Second request to permit emigration to Israel to relatives, with a new affidavit attached.	Orally in the OVIR — refused. Reason: remoteness of kin. (My wife has an uncle and aunt and there are no other relatives in the USSR).	20 February 1969
7	Minister of Interior of the USSR, Com. Shchelokov.	20 March 1969	Complaint against the Department of Interior of Leningrad, with reference to Com.Kosygin's statement on 3.12.66.	By telephone from OVIR. Refused, without explaining reasons.	15 April 1969

8	To the Chairman of Council of Ministers of USSR, Com. Kosygin, A.N.	7 May 1969	Complaint against the decision of the Ministry of Interior of the USSR.	By phone from OVIR. Refusal without motivation.	15 May 1969.
9	To the Director of OVIR of the Leningrad District Executive Committee, Com. Bokov, V.P. (handed in personally during a reception by Com. Bokov.)	7 May 1969	Request to re-examine the negative decision in connection with the ratification by the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, on January 22, 1969 of the Convention about the liquidation of all forms of racial discrimination.	By phone from OVIR. Refusal without motivation.	15 May 1969
10	To the Chairman of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Com. Podgorny, N.V.	19 May 1969	Request to re-examine the negative decision of the Ministry of Interior of the USSR.	Found out by chance after phoning up the OVIR that the statement is in the OVIR in Leningrad. The old decisions remain in force — that is, refusal.	25 August 1969
11	Prosecutor General of the USSR, Com. Rudenko.	19 May 1969	Request to protest the unlawful decision of the Ministry of Interior, USSR.	" "	25 August 1969
12	To the Deputy of the Dzerzhinsky Region Soviet of Leningrad, Com. Dementyev, V.	3 June 1969	Request for assistance in realisation of the right to emigrate from the USSR.	Orally from Com. Dementyev. The Regional Soviet does not deal with these questions.	11 June 1969
13	To the manager of the group of letters of the Prosecution Office of the USSR.	2 July 1969	Complaint against the acts of the prosecutor of group of letters, who sent the first letter of 19.5. to the Ministry of Interior of USSR for examination.	By phone from OVIR. The previous decision (refusal) remains in force. (The letter was again sent to the Ministry of Interior.	25 August 1969

14	Deputy Director of the Department of Interior of the Leningrad District Executive Committee, Com. Vostriakov, A.M. — a written question at an evening meeting with the workers of Leningrad.	25 June 1969	Why is emigration forbidden in spite of the ratification of the Convention on Liquidation of Racial Discrimination?	After a brief description of the question to the audience, Com. Vostriakov answered that he must study the matter and that the answer will be received in the OVIR in 3 days.	25 June 1969
15	To the Director of the Leningrad OVIR Com. Bokov, V.P. (oral question at a reception).	2 July 1969	Request for an answer in accordance with the preceding answer made by Com. Vostriakov.	Answer received on the spot: Departmental instructions.	27 July 1969
16	To the Deputy Director of the Department of Interior of Leningrad, Com. Vostriakov (oral question at a reception).	14 July 1969	Repetition of the oral question asked on 25.6. in connection with the unsatisfactory answer on the part of the director of the OVIR.	Instruction given to Director of OVIR to make a personal report to Com. Vostriakov concerning the case of the Kaminsky family. Answer to be found out at OVIR.	14 July 1969
17	The Chairman of the Council of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Com. Palestkis, Yu.I.	11 July 1969	Request to examine the statement on emigration at the opening session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.	Reply not received.	
18	To the Chairman of the Commission of Legal Provisions of the Council of Nationalities, Com. R. Nishanov.	11 July 1969	Complaint about the fact that all our statements are directed to the Ministry of Interior. Request for help to leave the USSR.	Statement sent to the Ministry of Interior, from there to the Leningrad OVIR. Refusal by phone.	25 August 1969
19	To the Deputy Director of the Leningrad OVIR, Com. Ivanov, P.S. (oral question at a reception).	7 August 1969	Why is our family not allowed to leave? Why others are allowed to do so?	Answer: Instruction from the Ministry of Interior of the USSR. Other documents unknown to me.	27 August 1969

20	To the Director of the Legal Dept. of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR	25 August 1969	To whom can one complain about the negative decision of the Ministry of Interior that is contrary to par.1.	Reply not received.	
21	To the Chairman of the Legal Commission attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR.	26 August 1969	" "	Statement sent to the Ministry of Interior because the Commission is not empowered to decide such matters. (Letter from manager of the Secretariat).	5 Sept. 1969
22	To the Director of the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Com. Chkhikvadze.	27 August 1969	How can our family make a concrete use of the right to leave the USSR?	Reply not received.	
23	The Editor in Chief of the magazine 'Soviet Jurisprudence', Com. Treshchetenkov	28 August 1969	To what court should one apply in connection with the unlawful decision of the Ministry of Interior refusing permission to leave the USSR	Questions have not been put concretely, therefore the Editorial Board cannot answer them. (Letter from the Editorial Board).	3 Sept. 1969
24	To the Editorial of 'Pravda'.	28 August 1969	To help find out: on the basis of what laws can one leave the USSR.	Reply not received.	
25	To the First Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Com. Tolstikov. V.S.	29 August 1969	Request to note the negative decision of the Ministry of Interior, contrary to Law.	Summoned by post-card for a talk in the Region Committee of Communist Party of the Soviet Union (see No.30)	11 Sept 1969
26	To the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Com. Gromyko, A.A.	2 Sept 1969	Request for help in making use of the right to leave the USSR.	Letter from the director of reception of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR to the effect that the letter has been sent to the Ministry of Interior as the subject is not dealt with by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	12 Sept 1969

27	To the Editor in Chief of 'Literaturnaya Gazeta', Com. Chakovskiy, A.B.	4 June 1969	Request help in making use of the right to leave the USSR.	Answer in a letter from Editorial Board stating that they won't deal with this matter as it does not enter into a matter that Editorial Board is empowered to deal with.	12 Sept 1969
28	To the Editorial Board of 'Izvestia'.	10 Sept 1969	To help find out on the basis of what laws can one leave the USSR.	Reply not received.	
29	To the legal commission attached to the Council of Ministers of the USSR. (repeated)	11 Sept 1969	To whom can one complain against the actions of the Ministry of Interior of the USSR.	Reply not received	
30	To the Deputy Director of the Section of the Administrative organs of the Central Executive Committee of the Com.Party of the S.U., Com.Slitenko, L.A. (oral statement addressed to Com. Tolstikov).	12 Sept 1969	Complaint against the actions of the Dept. of Interior of Leningrad and request to help emigrating from the USSR to Israel.	Answer by phone. Main reason for refusal - subject to army service. According to the instruction of the Ministry of Interior of the USSR, persons subject to army service are not allowed to go to Israel.	16 Sept 1969
31	To the Director of the Section of Administrative organs of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Com. Savinkin.	20 Sept 1969	Complaint against the actions of Ministry of Interior and request to help to emigrate to Israel.		
32	To the Chairman of the Supreme Court of the USSR, Com. Gorky.	23 Sept 1969	Claim against the Ministry of Interior of the USSR for unlawful decision refusing departure for Israel.		

19. Letter from Elizaveta Kapshitzer — September 24, 1969.

Mrs. Kapshitzer's moving letter requires a few words of factual clarification.

Vitold Kapshitzer's plight is manifestly connected with the tragic fate of his father. It is known that he was arrested in 1938 and disappeared forever. In her letter, Mrs. Kapshitzer has several references to him. She describes him as "a person whose entire life had been devoted to Russia." She mentions that her son received "a true internationalist" — i.e., Communist — education, for which the father would surely have had a major responsibility. She notes that she lost her husband in the Soviet Union and describes this as a "terrible and senseless sacrifice" — expressing the devout prayer that her son not become a new "victim." She recalls her son's expulsion from school because he would not admit that his father was "an enemy of the people."

From all this it is evident that the father must have been a loyal, idealistic old Communist done to death in Stalin's Great Purge of 1936-40, like millions of other innocents. There was a time, for about a dozen years after Stalin's death and especially during the period of de-Stalinization from 1956-64, when many of his victims were rehabilitated and no trouble was made for their families. But in the increasingly repressive atmosphere of the post-Khrushchev regime, which is being accompanied by partial re-Stalinization, that kind of family connection is no boon.

Vitold Kapshitzer is triply suspect today: He is the son of one of Stalin's victims. He was born a Jew. He defends the honor of the Jewish people.

A word is in order about the harsh economic fate imposed upon the Kapshitzers.

To earn a livelihood as a writer in the USSR, one must belong to one or another literary organization authorized by the regime. Otherwise one can not hope to publish or obtain royalties. Not every writer, however, is a member of the Soviet Writers Union, which is the prestigious establishment group. There is also a lower, though not less official, category of trade union for workers in the literary crafts. It is this to which Vitold Kapshitzer belonged; in addition, he was a member of the Writers' Committee of the Literary Fund. This latter is a kind of welfare, or social security, fund which receives a certain proportion of everything that any writer earns from published pieces or books, or from stage, television or radio.

Expulsion from these bodies has made it legally impossible for Kapshitzer to work as a writer. In the absence of any other means of

livelihood, he has been reduced to sharing his aged, sick mother's miserable pension of forty-nine rubles monthly, which is worth not more than about forty dollars. Humiliation and degradation are here joined to deliberate impoverishment.

The "anti-Communist Manifesto" which he is accused of writing is undoubtedly his statement repudiating his Soviet citizenship, a "crime" which he has been pressured to recant. Kapshitzer's path is typical for a growing number of his generation. He received no Jewish education. He was reared as a good Communist. But bitter awareness of discrimination, debasement and obloquy directed at Jews awakened in him a sense of his Jewish identity, a desire to learn and write about Jewish history, ultimately a full devotion to the Jewish people. Without intending any harm to the USSR, Kapshitzer's awakening led him to identify his Jewish pride with Israel.

To: The 24th General Assembly of the United Nations Organization
From: Elizaveta Isaakovna Kapshitzer
USSR, Moscow 6-96
2nd Filovska St., No. 7/19, impus 3, apt. 27
Tel.: 144-49-04

Statement on the Violation of the Rights of Man

Dear Sirs:

A year has already passed since I applied to the U. N. Commission on Human Rights through the Director of the Moscow U. N. Information Center, Mr. Chechetkin, but I have not yet received any reply. I can only conclude that Mr. Chechetkin did not transmit my complaint.

This forces me to apply to you with a new letter. Please excuse me if I repeat in some parts of my complaint what I wrote in 1968. But I have no assurance that you received it. It is only because of very difficult circumstances that I feel obliged to turn to you again.

It is already two years since my son, Vitold Kapshitzer — a writer — has been expelled from his society and deprived of all means of earning a livelihood. My son and I are forced to exist on my pension, which is 49 rubles. In this letter, I shall try to explain for what sins we have been punished so severely.

My son had never been particularly nationalistic. On the contrary, he had received a true internationalist education. But he found it impossible to overlook the insulting attitude toward his people. He could not ignore the injustices and cruelties, and could not reconcile himself to the degradation of man. He always considered national enmity as the greatest of ills.

In 1966, my son decided to write a book dealing with the history of the Jewish people, so as to attain mutual understanding between peoples and nations. He was, however, denied the possibility of carrying out this work. Still, my son could not reconcile himself to a situation where one nation is exalted in every way and all its actions are proclaimed to be holy, while another, a small people, is debased in every way.

Therefore, in 1967, he applied to the Government of Israel with a request that he be admitted as a repatriate. In answer to this request, he received an invitation to come to Israel. The Soviet authorities agreed to consider my son's application for an exit permit only on condition that he give up his Soviet citizenship. He was thus forced to apply to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, stating that he was giving up his Soviet citizenship. He sent this statement on May 31, 1967, but until this day he has received no official written reply — although he has been told orally that his request to give up Soviet citizenship has been denied. At the same time, because he made this statement, he was expelled from the Writers' Committee of the Literary Fund of the USSR and from his trade union — which has deprived him of the possibility of working and of earning a living.

In answer to his request for employment, the demand was put to him to "repent." But what should he repent of? Is devotion to one's own people a crime? Are feelings of human and national dignity forbidden feelings? Has a man no right to defend himself and his people from insults? My son has drunk to the full his cup of suffering and degradation. Around him for many years there existed an atmosphere of anti-Semitism, as a result of which his family disintegrated. Even in his early youth he was expelled from school because he refused to consider his father "an enemy of the people." Later, he was prosecuted by the organs of State Security, was prevented from working, and it was demanded of him that he should "frankly confess" that he had allegedly written an "anti-Communist Manifesto."

I am a mother. You, sirs, know what this means. You will readily understand how much suffering it causes me to see my son ejected from life, existing on the pitiful crumbs that I can only with difficulty provide for him, and, at the same time, to wait each day and each night for violence to be done to him. And, still, I can't tell him: "Go and confess, betray your people and yourself!"

I appealed to the Soviet authorities. I told them: "Your society, your country, has denied my son; then give him the right of free departure, give him the possibility of beginning his life anew."

In April 1969, my son again received from the Israel Foreign Ministry an invitation for permanent residence. The Soviet authorities, however, on various pretexts, refuse to let him go. I can not under-

stand why they need him. For two years already, he has been shunted aside from participating in the life of society; he knows no state secrets, he has no intention and no possibility of harming the Soviet State in any way. Can the reason really be just cruelty in principle? And we had always believed in the highly humane principles of Soviet society.

Dear Sirs: I am an old woman and for over ten years I have been bed-ridden with a serious illness. I have no possibility of following my son. But I appeal to you with the most insistent request a mother can make: Help my son to leave this country! I know that it is only the Soviet Government that has the power to solve this question. But there is such a thing as conscience in this world and someone must sense our pain! We have given this country everything we had. I lost my husband here, the father of my children, a person whose entire life had been devoted to Russia. Is this sacrifice not enough? Must my son become a new victim, just as terribly and senselessly? Who needs this?

I can not and do not want to believe that the Soviet Government needs this. But my voice and my appeals do not reach the Soviet Government. I, therefore, appeal to the Soviet Government through your great international organization.

Dear Sirs! I want to believe that you will add your authoritative voice to the voice of a mother.

Please let me know the results of my appeal.

Yours respectfully,
(signed) E. Kapshitzer

September 24, 1969

20. Letter from Ionas Damba — September 30, 1969.

To: The International Red Cross Committee

From: Damba, Ionas Isherio, born in 1929, a Jew, non-party, residing in the Lithuanian SSR, Vilnius, Shviture St. No. 14, apt. 43

On May 22, 1969, I submitted my documents to the OVIR of the town of Vilnius, Lithuanian SSR, with the request to be allowed to go with my family (my wife and our five-year-old son) to the State of Israel for permanent residence; to join my brother, Damba, Avrom Isherio, born in 1931, residing in Tel Aviv, 10 Miron St., from whom I was parted because of the Second World War. Over four months later, that is on 25/9/69, I was called to the OVIR and told that I was refused permission to emigrate because I am a citizen of the Soviet Union and am materially secure.

This, in spite of the fact that I am already 40 years old and I haven't even an apartment of my own, and never had one. I am a sub-tenant and live with my family in a small room, 11 sq. meters in size.

In 1941, in the villages of Girulyay and Weshevenay of the Telyashaysky region, our parents were shot. My little brother and I found ourselves in the Shauli ghetto, where we suffered for a year and a half. I was torn away from him and taken to work at the sugar plant, Povencahy, while he — some time later — was taken to Germany, and from there, after the war, he got to Israel.

I still remember his eyes and his screams when we children were parted. I thought that he was dead. I, myself, twice faced shooting and was saved by a miracle. But can this be described in mere words? We have never seen each other again.

For over fourth months I was sitting on my valise with the hope that we may see each other. How many sleepless nights did I pass; how much joy and how many dreams and hopes did I have! I had been absolutely certain that they would let me go. I counted on the justice, the humanism and the understanding of common, rank-and-file people. After all, I understand nothing of politics, I am not a criminal, I owe nothing to anyone. I am a rank-and-file person and no matter where I live I shall never be in the way of anyone.

The only thing I want is that there should be peace on earth, because I, perhaps more than anyone else, tasted the grief of the last war.

The past, the horror of the war, the difficult post-war years of struggling for a living by an orphaned adolescent boy, tired and morally crippled, all this has had an effect on my later life. I have not achieved anything definite in life. Before the war I finished four grades of elementary school and, after the war, I studied for two years. I have no profession. And my forty years have passed joylessly.

The last few years I had been living with the hope that maybe I shall be able to see my brother before I die, but even this hope has crashed about me. Evidently, this is the last blow in my life. Only a person who has gone through sorrow himself can understand me. After all, my brother and I went through all the horrors of war, we repeatedly faced death; hungry, dirty and weeping, we were torn apart, for a long time. Can it be that after so many years of separation we have no right to the happiness of living together?

Sometimes I get very sad. After all, step by step with me, there goes through life my sick wife who really shares my sorrows and who has the same dream, or rather, who shares my dream. In reality, however, this is not a dream — it is the aim of my life — this desire and this daily waiting for a reunion. Sometimes I want to scream! Will no one

understand me, will no one come toward me? After all, there are some kind people in the world. I want to live with my only brother; is it possible that I can be judged guilty because of this? After all, we have no one else in the world.

I am writing these lines and I'm weeping like a child and I am not ashamed. I am not ashamed because I am asking for very little, and I have the right to ask this.

Permit me to live together with my only brother after a cruel and unforgettable separation, after so many years!

I ask for intervention on my behalf so that my documents will be re-examined and the solution to my problem be approached with humanism, with thoughtfulness and with understanding for our position. I ask that my cherished wish be fulfilled and that it be possible for us to live together.

I thank in advance all those people who will help me and I hope that with the help of people who really understand me I shall succeed in living together with my only brother.

Thank you for your help.
(signed) I. Damba

30/9/69

21. Letter from Tina Brodetskaya — October 1969.

To: The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, A. N. Kosygin

From: Tina Brodetskaya, Moscow G-285, 1 Mosfilmovskiy Pereulok 5, Corpus 14, Apt. 193

OPEN LETTER

I apply to you in an open letter because, to my repeated applications to the Soviet authorities with the request to permit me to emigrate to my relatives in Israel, I have been receiving refusals, which, in accordance with the accepted order, are given orally, by telephone, without any stated reasons for the refusal nor any indication of the identity of the persons who made these decisions.

My desire to go to Israel is the result of national feelings alone, and not of hostility toward the Soviet Union

During the Second World War, my father, who had volunteered for the front, was killed. Many of my close relatives were also killed. In my early childhood, together with my mother—an army physician—I followed the Soviet troops from the Ukraine to Berlin. I saw German concentration camps, embalmed heads of Jewish commissars, and

crates with soap inscribed — “From Jewish Fat.” I had to realize why such things happened precisely to the Jews. Later I understood that the defenselessness of the Jews was caused by the absence of a Jewish State, and that the fate of the Jews really mattered only to the Jewish State.

I decided that there was only one road for me — to live for my people. In my student years, I strove to awaken national feelings in Jews. In 1957, I was sentenced to prison for Zionism. My stay in prison did not change my convictions. I still consider Israel as my national Homeland.

I consider that under conditions that make it impossible to express one’s national essence and to educate the growing generation in a national spirit, the Jewish people in the USSR is totally doomed to forcible assimilation. I do not want to assimilate. My desire to live in Israel is unshakeable. I, therefore, insistently demand the satisfaction of my natural right to decide my fate for myself and to be allowed to go to Israel.

I have already applied by letters to the leaders of the Soviet Government, but in answer I would receive a postcard with the request to telephone. My telephone calls were answered by unknown persons saying that the right of departure has been refused to me. I am forced to apply to you, Aleksei Nikolayevich, in an open letter, as there is no other way out for me.

October 1969 (signed) Respectfully yours,
Tina Brodetskaya

22. Letter from Joseph Kerler to Nehama Lifshitz—November 18, 1969.

Joseph Borisovich Kerler is a well known and talented Soviet Jewish poet whose work, in the original Yiddish as well as in Russian translation, has appeared in the USSR, Poland and the United States.

Kerler was born in the Ukraine in 1918. His wife, Anna (Anyá), was born in 1924; and their son Boris (Bere’le) was born in 1958. Their address is: Prospekt Vernadskovo 22, kv 78, Moscow.

During World War II and the Nazi occupation of the USSR’s western reaches, the Kerlers’ experience was typical for Soviet Jews: The Nazis slaughtered their families; eleven members of Mrs. Kerler’s family alone perished this way, and only one sister (now Mrs. Elka Kedari of Kfar Saba, Israel) somehow managed to escape and made her way to Palestine. Mr. Kerler was a front-line soldier and was wounded several times; Mrs. Kerler was a front-line nurse throughout the war.

Kerler began to publish in 1944, but his career was shattered in 1950, at the height of Stalin’s anti-Semitic terror, when he was denounced and arrested, and sent to slave labor in the Vorkuta coal mines. After six years of this harrowing existence, his health seriously impaired, he was released. He was able to resume his publication in 1957.

In 1965 the Kerlers applied formally for the right to emigrate to Israel to be reunited with their sole surviving relative, Mrs. Kerler’s sister. In December 1965, they were granted an exit permit. Suddenly, a month later and with no explanations, Kerler was informed that the permit had been cancelled. By then, the Kerlers had made all their arrangements for departure, including the sale of their furniture and household goods.

Kerler appealed this arbitrary decision, but his appeal was rejected in June 1966. Since then, he has regularly resubmitted his application for an exit permit and has invariably been rebuffed.

They are in desperate straits economically (Kerler has not published a line in four years)—physically (their health has badly deteriorated in this period) — and psychologically (in his most recent letter, Kerler speaks of their being “on the verge of destruction,” with “no other way out”).

The letter was sent to his good friend, Nehama Lifshitz, the famous Soviet Jewish singer who was permitted to leave for Israel in March 1969. Since her own arrival in Israel, Miss Lifshitz has made strenuous efforts to enlist support for the Kerler family. She has released this moving personal letter in the hope that its publication might at long last touch the Soviet Government sufficiently to relent and allow the Kerlers to go.

Moscow, November 18, 1969

Dearest Nehame’le,

As you see, four years have gone by since the authorities granted us an exit permit to join our family in Israel. Unfortunately, however, when all was ready for our departure, the permit was suddenly, and without explanation, annulled. You know very well how these developments have affected our situation and our health. Especially my Anya’s health. In the past few years she has twice been hospitalized with dangerous infections and serious heart attacks. Small wonder: It was she whose father, mother, brothers and sisters (eleven souls, all told!) were slaughtered by the Fascist beasts. It was she, the lone survivor, who over the many years searched and ultimately found her only remaining relatives in Israel. It was she, a heroic,

dedicated nurse, who served on all fronts of the battle against the Fascist invader — from Kharkov to Bucharest to Belgrade. And so of course it was she who was hardest hit by the vicious injustice perpetrated against us.

You ask, dear Nehama, what medicines to send for Anya. For Anya, as for all of us, there is one and only cure — to be reunited with our family in Israel!

Yes, for all of us, this is the right medicine, more indispensable to us than bread, than air.

Dear Nehama'le! I am the last person here who wrote Jewish poems for you, and you were the last to sing my songs. Who could grasp my situation as well as you?

I am a Jewish poet and as such I am utterly superfluous in the Soviet Union. Surely no one can any longer deny that, because of certain historical developments, there is absolutely no future for Jewish culture here. Without Jewish educational and cultural institutions, without a press, a theatre and, above all, without a mass Jewish readership — what is there for a Jewish writer to do here? It is only natural that a Jewish poet should want to live where his people, his culture, his language are firmly established. Where he can be certain that his child will grow up not as a person of ambiguous nationality, but rather as a free, proud, progressive Jew.

Our passionate yearning to go to Israel is natural, lawful, just and very human!

Does this mean that we are disloyal to the Soviet Union? Absolutely not! Like my wife, I fought actively in the Great Fatherland War, and was wounded several times in battle against the German fascists. This earth, soaked in blood and sweat, is dear to me, is my own. The great culture of Russia is dear to me, is my own. I was reared in its revolutionary, freedom-loving spirit. I love Russian poetry, and the Russian landscape. We will never forget the extraordinary sacrifices by which the Soviet people saved humanity in general and the Jewish people in particular from the Brown Plague and extermination!

And yet — we must leave Russia. Better to remain friends from afar. My most ardent desire is to be able to say with a clear heart and free mind:

Dear land where I was cradled, farewell!
I leave you now,
Not like a beaten dog
Who, at a whistle or a pat,
Is pathetically ready to bound back
And wag his tail . . .

I go with heavy heart,
With leaden steps.
With each step
I tear away
Pieces of earth
Soaked with my blood.
I wrench my eye away
I wrench my heart away
And wish you: Let all be well with you!

After our 1965 permit was revoked, we appealed to the highest authorities but apparently our plea didn't reach that high. . . . This year we applied twice for an exit permit but after seven months of "considering," we were twice denied. And once again — without explanations. It goes without saying that we will persevere in our stubborn struggle for our lawful rights. And we feel sure that the Soviet authorities, basing themselves on the highest principles of justice and humanity, will in the end renew our permit.

The question is only — how long will it drag on? The years fly swiftly by and our health is deteriorating. I have not published a single line in four years. You know how hard and bitter it is for us. But we are not asking for pity. All we ask, dearest Nehama, is that you help us knock on all the doors. Perhaps through you our pain, our cry of woe, will reach the highest Soviet authorities.

Remember — we are on the verge of destruction. Yes, destruction — for we have no other way out if the great injustice done our family is not redressed, if our right to emigrate to Israel is not soon restored.

Keep well, Nehama'le, our solace and our great hope! I wish you success in all your singing and in all your undertakings.

Anya, Bere'le and I embrace you, hug you and kiss you with all our heart.

Moscow
Your
Joseph Kerler

23. Letter from Aaron Bogdanovsky — December 31, 1969.

To the Prime Minister of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir
From: Bogdanovsky, Aaron Solomonovich
Kharkov 3, Per. Kravtsova 9, apt. 7, USSR

I am a Jew; I am thirty-four years old; in the USSR I have no close relations (my parents have died recently). In Israel lives my uncle (Mr. Nathan Gjourarie, Asaf St. 23, Ramat Gan, Israel), who has invited me to him for permanent residence.

In accordance with Soviet regulations, on 12/9/69 I received a permit for my departure to Israel for permanent residence, confirmed by documents. But when I ruined myself completely on instructions from the passport authorities (rented out my apartment, lost my job, gave in all the documents, sold for a trifle almost all my belongings, including all my winter clothing, etc., and spent money on travels and so on), I was refused an exit visa.

I was told only that there is some sort of a letter against me from a representative of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR, Dyankonova, O. A. It seems that she had not liked the TONE in which I spoke and the names of the books that I asked to be permitted to take out of the USSR. I did not know that it is a "crime" to ask for a permit to take out books. I had never in any way violated Soviet laws or regulations. Possibly, it seemed to someone that 1,700 books for one departing Jew — is too much. If this is so, then I am ready to give up not only all my library, which had been collected by my father, but also ALL my property, except one suit, of EVERYTHING I own, in order to go to Israel.

I applied to the Chairman of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR, to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, to the International and the Soviet Red Cross, and have repeatedly been received at the Ministry of the Internal Affairs of the USSR, and in the Ministry of Culture of the USSR, and have been in the office of the newspaper, *Izvestia*, after the publication of the article of Berenshtein. However, I have not received an answer from anyone, and only the OVIR (the department of visas and registrations) answers NO. I don't know any more to whom to apply in order to obtain the use of my constitutional right to defense.

My situation at present is terrible: I have no money, no place, no possibility for existence. Even if I would be restored to my place of work, and get back my apartment, I have lost almost everything. Having been always certain of the triumph of socialist justice, I could never have imagined that a thing like this could happen.

I apply to you with the request to undertake measures to help me, so that I might be able to go to Israel, to my uncle. It is possible that only through you will this request reach Kosygin and Podgorny, because my letters to them are immediately sent to the OVIR.

December 31, 1969

(signed) A. Bogdanovsky

24. Letter from Rozalia Plotkina — December 31, 1969.

To: The Prime Minister of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir
From: Dr. Plotkina, R. R., residing in the USSR, Moscow,
Balashikha 8, Yuzhny pr. 3, apt. 5

Much Honored Mrs. Meir,

I appeal to you to help me with all possible means to go to Israel, to my relatives, because my life in the USSR has become unbearable for me.

On March 24, 1969, I applied to the Soviet authorities with the request to permit me to go to Israel. This was refused to me. Simultaneously with my application for a permit to go to Israel, I began to be subjected to systematic persecution at my place of work (I am a physician). I cannot enumerate all the various humiliations to which the Party and the Trade Union organizations gleefully subjected me. At present, (December 1969) the matter has reached the stage where a collective trial against me was organized at my place of work, after an attempt to take from me by force, at my place of work, correspondence with my relatives in Israel. At this "comradely trial," a resolution was adopted noting the necessity to dismiss me from work in accordance with Statute 47-G of the Employment Code of the USSR, and indicating the impossibility of employing me in the capacity of a physician. This means that it is impossible for me to work in the USSR as a physician. I have no other profession.

I ask you to take into consideration the fact that the only way out of my situation is my departure for my Homeland, in Israel, and to help me.

Sincerely yours,

December 31, 1969
Moscow

(signed) Rozalia Plotkina

25. Letter of the Moscow Twenty-five — 1969.

OPEN LETTER

To: The Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization,
U Thant

To: The President of the XXIV Session of the General Assembly,
Miss Angie Brooks

We are forced to apply to you and to your august Organization, because in our country we see no more ways for a satisfactory solution of a question that concerns us deeply — namely, the question of FREE departure from the USSR.

We, the signatories to the present appeal, are persons of various ages, occupations, education and tastes and are not connected with one another in anything except the wish to leave the USSR for Israel, in order to reunite there, in our own land, with our relatives.

In Article 13/2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — it is stated:

“EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LEAVE ANY COUNTRY, INCLUDING HIS OWN, AND TO RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY.”

The same idea is expressed in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on January 22, 1969.

Moved by this elementary right of EVERY PERSON, we, desiring to live in the State of Israel, have appealed innumerable times to all possible organs of authority in our country — from the Ministry of Internal Affairs up to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

All of us have been refused.

We consider it necessary to explain that in the USSR there is no categorical ban on departure, but the organs that deal with this question know very well that a negligible percentage of Jews out of those applying for an exit permit succeeds in obtaining this permit. Ultimately, the great majority of us receive refusals; we are being kept forcibly. WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GO.

Such treatment is an act of lawlessness, it is an open violation of the rights of man.

We consider that to hold us forcibly is against the elementary concepts of humanity and morality.

We Demand Free Exit From The USSR!

We turn to you, believing that you will be able to see to it that those humane principles which guide your august Organization will also apply to every Jew residing in the USSR, who wishes to go to Israel.

(signed)

Drabkin — Moscow, Fadeyeva St. 6, apt. 32

Elbaum, Mark — Moscow, Trekhpudny Per. 11/13, apt. 85

Svechinsky, Vitali — Moscow, Flotskaya 13, corp. 2, apt. 338

Brodetskaya, Tina — Moscow, 1 Mosfilmovskiy 5, corp. 14, apt. 193

Freidin, Lev — Moscow, Novo-Ostapovskaya 12a, apt. 35

Bershanskaya, Lubov — Podolsk, Moscow Region, Kooperativni Proezd 3/23

Roitburd, Nikolai — Podolsk, Kooperativni Proezd 3/23

Dora Kolyaditskaya — Moscow, Mikhailovskaya 17, apt. 38

Syrkin, Norman — Moscow, Staroye Shosse 13, apt. 62

Muchnik, Lutsia — Moscow, Kastanaevskaya 43 — II-30

Muchnik, Abram — (same address)

Diskina, Bliuma — Moscow, Volgogradsky Pr. 10, apt. 56

Trakhtman, Ernst — Moscow i-282, Shirokaya st. 1 cor. 3, apt. 175

Plotkina, Rozalia — Moscow, Balashikha I Karla Marksa 16, apt. 38

V. Borschchevsky — Moscow — Zh-44, 3rd Krutitski Per. 15, apt. 20

Landman, Moisei — P. Malakhovka, Moscow Region, I Malakhovsky Proezd 2

Landman, Gittia — (same address)

Dorfman, Mikhail Davidovich — Malakhovka, Nekrasova 7

Klaizmer, Udia — Moscow Zh-457, I Novokuzminskaya 6.72

Borukhovich, Benedikt — (same address)

Shlein, Boris — (same address)

Fridliand, Ilya — Moscow Zh. 462 Yunykh Lenintsev St. 44, apt. 59

Tverskaya, Sara — Moscow, 18, 12 Proezd Maryina Roshcha 21, apt. 6

Kogan, Gisia — Moscow V-415, Udaltsova St. 4.213

Khait, Isaak — Moscow, Leninsky Pr. 27, apt. 602

26. Letter of the Riga Twenty-two — 1969.

OPEN LETTER

To: The Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization,
U Thant

To: The President of the XXIV Session of the General Assembly,
Miss Angie Brooks

We are forced to apply to you and to your august Organization, because in our country we see no more ways for a satisfactory solution of a question that concerns us deeply — namely, the question of FREE departure from the USSR.

We, the signatories to the present appeal, are persons of various ages, occupations, education and tastes and are not connected with one another in anything except the wish to leave the USSR for Israel, in order to reunite there, in our own land, with our relatives.

In Article 13/2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — it is stated:

“EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LEAVE ANY COUNTRY, INCLUDING HIS OWN, AND TO RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY.”

The same idea is expressed in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on January 22, 1969.

Moved by this elementary right of EVERY PERSON, we, desiring to live in the State of Israel, have appealed innumerable times to all

possible organs of authority in our country — from the Ministry of Internal Affairs up to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

All of us have been refused.

We consider it necessary to explain that in the USSR there is no categorical ban on departure, but the organs that deal with this question know very well that a negligible percentage of Jews out of those applying for an exit permit succeeds in obtaining this permit. Ultimately, the great majority of us receive refusals; we are being kept forcibly. **WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GO.**

Such treatment is an act of lawlessness, it is an open violation of the rights of man.

We consider that to hold us forcibly is against the most elementary concepts of humanity and morality.

We Demand Free Exit From The USSR!

We turn to you, believing that you will be able to see to it that those humane principles which guide your august Organization will also apply to every Jew residing in the USSR, who wishes to go to Israel.

(signed)

Khnokh, Leiba, Riga, Malienas St. 2, apt. 1
Khnokh, Pinkhus, Latv. SSR, Daugavpils, Wirshu 48-100
Knokh, Dina, Latv. SSR, Daugavpils, Wirshu 48-100
Yofet, Khana, Latv. SSR, Riga, Fr. Engels St. 28, apt. 68
Yakobson, Daniel, Riga, Latv. SSR, Krasnoarmeyskaya 6/6
A. Rozin, Riga, Skolas 38, apt. 20
David Zand, Riga, Sarkanarmias 12, apt. 46
Gamza, Itskhok-Aizik, Riga, Apes St. 10, apt. 2
Roitman, Iosif, Riga, Stures 5, apt. 20
Zalmanson, Silva, Riga, Veidenbaum St. 16, apt. 22
Aleksandrovich, Ruta, Riga, Suvorov St. 16, apt. 120
Gurvich, S. R., Riga, Lenin St. 96, apt. 12
Feigin, G. I., Riga, Latchplesha St. 48/50, apt. 15
Lendinbaum, B. N., Riga, Maskavas St. 268/2, apt. 43
Mendelson, M. A., Riga, Leon Paegle St. 13, apt. 2
Bodnaya, M. A., Riga, Skolas St. 7, apt. 2
Feitelson, Volf, Riga, Birznyeka-Upisha 27, apt. 3
Mints, Lev, Riga, Latchplesha 52/54, apt. 33
Sobolev, A. A., Riga, Mayakovsky Blvd. 9/71
Sholom Goldshmit, Riga, Revolutsias 27/8
Glazer, Mozus, Riga, Suvorov St. 49/38
Miller, Rakhmiel, Riga, Latchpleshas 112/7

27. Letter of Four Jews in Georgia — 1969.

OPEN LETTER

To: The Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization,
U Thant

To: The President of the XXIV Session of the General Assembly,
Miss Angie Brooks

We are forced to apply to you and to your august Organization, because in our country we see no more ways for a satisfactory solution of a question that concerns us deeply — namely, the question of FREE departure from the USSR.

We, the signatories to the present appeal, are persons of various ages, occupations, education and tastes and are not connected with one another in anything except the wish to leave the USSR for Israel, in order to reunite there, in our own land, with our relatives.

In Article 13/2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — it is stated:

“EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LEAVE ANY COUNTRY, INCLUDING HIS OWN, AND TO RETURN TO HIS COUNTRY.”

The same idea is expressed in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on January 22, 1969.

Moved by this elementary right of EVERY PERSON, we, desiring to live in the State of Israel, have appealed innumerable times to all possible organs of authority in our country — from the Ministry of Internal Affairs up to the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

All of us have been refused.

We consider it necessary to explain that in the USSR there is no categorical ban on departure, but the organs that deal with this question know very well that a negligible percentage of Jews out of those applying for an exit permit succeeds in obtaining this permit. Ultimately, the great majority of us receive refusals; we are being kept forcibly. **WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO GO.**

Such treatment is an act of lawlessness, it is an open violation of the rights of man.

We consider that to hold us forcibly is against the most elementary concepts of humanity and morality.

WE DEMAND FREE EXIT FROM THE USSR!

We turn to you, believing that you will be able to see to it that

those humane principles which guide your august Organization will also apply to every Jew residing in the USSR who wishes to go to Israel.

M. M. Manasherov, Georgian SSR, Surami. Internatsionalnaya St. 177
Tsitsuishvili, M. A., Georgian SSR, Zestafoni, Karl Marx St. 8, apt. 21
Sefyashvili, M. R., Georgian SSR, Kutaisi, Pervyi Pereulok Shaumyana 10
Khikhashvili, M. I., Georgian SSR, Zestafoni, Ninoshvili St. 45

28. Letter of the Riga Twenty-seven — 1969.

OPEN LETTER

To: The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR,
A. N. Kosygin

Copies to:

- 1) UPI Agency
- 2) UN Human Rights Commission

Honored Aleksei Nikolayevich:

On December 3, 1966, in Paris, at a press conference at the Association of the French Diplomatic Press, R. Eli Matiss (UPI Agency—USA) asked you:

"Catastrophes of war have separated many Jewish families; some of the members of these families are at present in the USSR and some of them are abroad. Can you give these families any hope for their reunification, as has been done for many Greek and Armenian families?"

You answered:

"Individual persons raise this question from time to time. Some even say that there is anti-Semitism in the USSR. There is nothing like that in our country and there cannot be. As regards the reunification of families, if certain families want to meet or to leave the Soviet Union, the door is open to them and there is no problem about it at all."

But you, at that time, obviously did not know that there is such a problem, that it does exist. We, the undersigned, are among those who wish to go to Israel. Many of us have relatives there, some of us haven't any, but all of us consider Israel as our spiritual Fatherland, as our national home. We have always been, and we continue to be, loyal to the USSR. Many of us, who have relatives in Israel, have repeatedly applied to the proper Soviet authorities with requests to permit us to emigrate to the State of Israel for permanent residence, but we always got negative answers. Others are deprived

of the possibility of applying to go to Israel because, under existing regulations, it is necessary to have an affidavit from relatives, and they have no relatives there.

We appeal to you, honored Aleksei Nikolayevich, with the request to grant us the possibility of going to Israel and of living in our ancient Homeland. Fearing that our letter may not reach you, we are applying to the UPI Agency, to the UN Human Rights Commission, and to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with the request to transmit this letter to you.

(signed)

Aleksandrovich, Ruta Isakovna, Riga, Suvorov 16-120
Khnokh, Pinkhus Girshevich, Daugovpils, Virshu 48-100
Yofet, Khana Ziskovna, Riga, Fr. Engels St. 28-8
Khnokh, Dina Davidovna, Daugovpils, Virshu 48-100
Margulis, Martin Germanovich, Maskavas St. 268-1, apt. 43
Zalmanson, Silva Yosifovna, Riga, Veidenbaum St. 45/22
Rozin, Aizik Meerovich, family of 2, Riga, Solas 38-20.
Gordin, Volf Abovich, family of 5, Riga, Blauman 27, apt. 13
Veinreikh, Tema Rafailovna, family of 4, Riga, Skolas 7-79
Kuznetsov, Eduard Samuilovich, Riga, Veidenbaum St. 45/22
Lendenbaum, Bela Nikolayevna, Riga, Moskavas 268/2, apt. 43
Vilder, Aleksandr Abishevich, Riga, Skolas 38-5. Family of 6, applying for emigration since 1964
Braude, David Maksovich, Riga, P. Stuchka 13, apt. 14.
Mendelson, Mishel Aronovich, Riga, L. Paegle 13, apt. 2
Gasul, Simon Zalmanovich, Riga, P. Stuchka 13, apt. 4
Khait, David, Riga, Lenin 397, apt. 42 (with family)
Levi, Ruben, Riga, Merkel 9, apt. 5 (with family)
Ferber, Benyamin Manevich, Riga, Latchpresha 23-6
Yanilshtein, R. E., Riga, Talivalzha 17/1
Khnokh, Leiba Girshevich, Riga, Malienas 2, apt. 1
Yakobson, Daniel Norbertovich, Krasnoarmeyskaya 6, apt. 6, family of 4
Yakobson, Khava Yakovlevna, Krasnoarmeyska 6, apt. 6
Goldman, David Semenovich, P. Stuchkas 97, apt. 27
Shomer, Ruben, with family, Yurmala, Kuldigas 19-37.
Berkovich, Karmela, Yurmala, Skolas St. 57a-11.
Kogan, Yuri Borisovich, Riga, Ya. Kupala 10-7
Bodnia, Mendel Abramovich, Riga, Skolas 7-2 (with family)

29. Letter of Eleven Women — 1969.

To you, Women!

We, the signatories to this appeal, strive to go to Israel, to the land of our forefathers, where we are awaited by our near and dear ones — our husbands and brothers, our parents and children, from whom we have been torn asunder.

But according to some law — more barbaric and amoral than lawful — we are not allowed to leave the USSR. We are not allowed to go, against our will. We are kept forcibly, by the law of the stronger.

And nothing helps us in our degrading appeals to indifferent officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs — neither our petitions, nor the many months of waiting, nor tears, nor demands.

As there is no formal ban on leaving the USSR, we get our refusals always orally (as if they felt that they are doing something that is vile and unlawful) and in a manner of irritation. They refuse us behind closed doors, being afraid of publicity, and, at the same time, at the other end of the world, from high international tribunes they proclaim loudly that in the USSR there allegedly ARE NO persons desirous of going to Israel.

And what about us? And about THOUSANDS like us? We, who only live with the hope of going to Israel?

And this dream of ours did not come suddenly; it emanates naturally from the 2,000-year-old history of the dispersion of our people. This desire for national reunification on the land of Israel is the inevitable end to the many centuries of the wanderings of the Jews. This is our right, just as it is the right of the Armenians to live in Armenia, of the Poles in Poland . . . And it must be understood rightly.

We are sincerely thankful to the peoples of the Soviet Union, who have for centuries given shelter to our much-suffering people. But today, in the second half of the 20th century, we have our own JEWISH state. Whether it is good or bad, it is OUR OWN country.

And we appeal to the Soviet Government: "Let us go in peace! Don't keep us by force!"

And we appeal to you, Women, no matter who you are — a student or a Minister, a salesgirl or a cinema star, a housewife or a Queen, we ask you, Women: Help us, won't you, too, appeal to the Soviet Government with the words:

"Let them go in peace! Don't keep them by force!"

(signed)

Tina Brodetskaya — Moscow, I Mosfilmovskiy Per. 5, Cor. 14, apt.

Muchnik, Lutsia — Moscow, Kastanaevskaya 43, cor. 2, apt. 30

Plotkina, Rozalia — Moscow, Balashikha, I Karla Marksa 16, apt.

Diskina, Bliuma — Moscow, Volgogradsky Pr. 10, apt. 56

Freidina, Rina — Moscow, Zatonnaya 14, apt. 8

Klaizmer, Udia — Moscow Zh 457, 1st Novokuzminskaya 6, apt. 72

Zbarskaya, Sara — Moscow B — 330 Universitatskiy pr. 1, 23, C. 3

Fridliand, Zhenia — Moscow Zh, 462 Yunykh Lenintsev 44, cor. 1

Koliaditskaya, Dora — Moscow A — 239, Mikhailovskaya 17/38

Bershadskaya, Luba — Podolsk, Moscow region, Kooperativnyy Proc.

Aleksandrovich, Ruta — Riga, Suvorov 16-120.

30. Letter from Grigory Vertlib — 1969.

To: The Ministry of Internal Affairs,
The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the
Soviet Union,
The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
The Prosecutor General of the USSR,
The newspapers: *Pravda*, *Izvestia*

I hereby apply to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR — the organ that is supposed to examine my complaint.

I also apply to Soviet Party, State, and Public organizations: it is within your power to restore justice in relation to me and my family — please do so!

I hereby lodge a complaint against the Leningrad Section for Visas and Registration of Foreigners, which has denied my family the right to emigrate to Israel, in accordance with the affidavit received by them.

I am asking again — give me and my family the possibility of emigration to Israel for permanent residence.

Why have I decided to leave the USSR, and to emigrate to Israel with my family? There can be only one answer to this: we want to remain Jews!

The long-suffering Jewish people has lived through much sorrow, but there had never been anything more horrible than the times when fascism was on the rampage. Jews were killed just because they were Jews — and blood flowed in a stream. Six million people were killed — among them there had perhaps been new prophets, Maccabees, Halevys, Maimonideses, Spinozas, Einsteins, Mendelsohns, Heines, Herzls, Bialiks, Marxes, and Sverdlovs. . . .

It is hard for me to read about the deaths of women and about children who were thrown out of windows. It is hard for me to think about this all the time, to think about my 83-year-old grandmother, who was killed by the fascists and about many others of my relatives, who were tortured to death. . . .

I want to kneel to their memory and perhaps to pray for them, I want to see the museum in Jerusalem that is devoted to the memory of the victims of Nazism, and where the sacred memory of the victims is honored.

I also feel bitter when I think about the death of millions of other people — the Nazis killed also non-Jews. I feel sorrow for their deaths.

But I cannot understand why now — after so much suffering — I cannot think about my own Jewish people, why I cannot study my own Jewish language, and cannot know my own Jewish history.

In the Soviet Union, neither I nor my family can do this. There are no schools here where it is possible to study the Jewish language, the history of the Jewish people, and the fundamental art and national-historical heritage of our people (in particular, the Bible, which is a masterly religious art and historical monument).

I am 37 years old, my wife is 31 years old, our son is 3 years old. Neither my wife nor I have ever been engaged in any confidential work. I am a lawyer by profession, my wife is a mathematician. We ask for one thing only — to be given the possibility of going to Israel, and to live there together with our relative, who has sent us the affidavit, and who is ready to render us assistance in educating our son.

All this is denied to my family. Thus, I want to give my son a Jewish education — but the Leningrad authorities deny us this. *There is only one conclusion: In relation to my family it has been decided to carry through a policy of forced assimilation.*

This is clearly contrary to the Constitution of the USSR. V. I. Lenin used to come out against forced assimilation (he did not oppose the emigration from the USSR of those people who did not want to remain there). A very short time ago, on January 22, 1969, the Soviet Union ratified the International Convention to ban of all forms of racial discrimination, where it is plainly stated (page 5) that the Government undertakes the obligation to give its citizens the right of freely leaving the country.

Man reacts in various ways to the misfortune that befall his people. Some wish to withdraw from this people, others wish to help it attain a bright future. I belong to the second category. I again ask for one thing only; give me and my family the possibility to go to Israel, so as to live and work there.

Vertlib, Grigory Solomonovich
Leningrad, W-67, 9 Briuzovskaya St.
Apt. 5

31. Letter from Six Moscow Jews—December 1969.

OPEN LETTER

To L. Berenshtein and M. Fridel—authors of the article, “To Whose Tune Do The Zionists Dance” (*Izvestia*—No. 292, December 14, 1969).

Lately, in the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia* there have appeared articles devoted to the attitude of Jews living in the USSR toward the State of Israel. The authors of these articles—G. Plotkin, L. Berenshtein and M. Fridel—are Jews, and they have evidently taken upon themselves the mission of speaking in the name of the entire Jewish population of the USSR.

As we, the signatories to this letter, are also Jews living in the USSR, the questions mentioned in the articles directly concern each of us—and this is why we consider it necessary to answer the authors of the article, “To Whose Tune Do The Zionists Dance.”

And so you, L. Berenshtein and M. Fridel, write that the Parliament of Israel has adopted a resolution in which it demands “respect” for the indubitable right of every Jew to live on the soil of his historical motherland—that is to say, Israel.

It is here to the point to ask: do you know of any other historical motherland of the Jews that is not “so-called”? Perhaps you wish to say that the Jews—unlike other peoples—have no historical motherland, or, at least, should not have one? Or, as you are trying to convince the reader, that the Jewish national question can be solved only in the field of class struggle? What it comes to is that it is not historical continuity, not the ancestral spiritual heritage, not the history of the country and its people, that shape the soul of a person, but the class struggle and only the class struggle. Moreover, you consider that the Jewish problem can be only political, social and even religious, but by no means national (in the sense of their own statehood).

But how much more human, after your awkward lines, appear to us other words about the Fatherland, patriotism and internationalism, expressed by I. Vuzylev and A. Kraminov in this same *Izvestia* (December 15, 1969), in the article, “Love And A Ring”: “. . . We feel ourselves citizens and workers of the huge, proudly expansive, global territory that is called the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. And we feel that it is our Fatherland . . . This is a personal attitude as well. And it is precisely this that, sooner or later, had to impel us and did impel us to visit that corner of the earth, small in comparison with the vast areas of the country, that is situated to the north of Moscow and

is called 'Rus,' around which Russian statehood was constructed, around which the Russian people confirmed itself and felt itself to be one. All of us are children of our parents. Our existence, everything that we are, we owe to them first and foremost. And this gratitude toward an endless number of generations surely makes up part of the lofty concept of patriotism. And another part of it is the consciousness of the fact that each of us is a link in this chain of generations and bears full responsibility toward those that follow us. After all, it is doubtful whether true internationalism is within the reach of a person who lacks the feeling of national dignity. Because how can the soul and the beauty of another nation be understood by one who is capable of scorning his own spiritual heritage?"

Do you hear, L. Berenshtein and M. Fridel? What can you say to this? What source nourishes your feelings of national dignity? To what endless row of generations are you grateful? You who come out in the name of the "Jewish population of our country," will you be able to read P. Markish, S. Halkin, L. Kvitko, I. Fefer and Bergelson in your own, Jewish, language? Do you know even one Jewish letter? Are you proud of the spiritual heritage of your people—even of the Bible, if only in its literary and historical aspect? Do you, your children and your grandchildren know about the heroic national uprisings of the Maccabees and of Bar Kochba against foreign rulers? What do such names as Yehuda Halevi, Maimonides, Moses Mendelsohn, Ch. N. Bialik and S. Frug say to you? Or is all this not your history, not your spiritual heritage? If so, then what is yours? And where is it? Is it only the "field" . . . the bare field of class struggle? And on the basis of what national spiritual heritage do you dress up as internationalists?

On April 1, 1964, in the newspaper *Izvestia* it was written: "The constant striving for unity, for life on the land of the ancestors has preserved the Armenian nation." Then why don't you see that it is precisely these forces—the striving for unity and for life on the land of the ancestors—which have preserved the Jewish nation as well through centuries of even greater trials? By what right do you—the pathetic product of assimilation!—come out in the name of the "Jewish population"? And don't try to convince the readers that the decision of the Israel Knesset demanding respect for "the indubitable right of each Jew to live on the soil of his historical motherland," is an anti-Soviet campaign. Don't follow the path of blackmail, don't hark back to those times when violation of laws was a habitual matter. And don't hasten to stick the label of "traitors" and "betrayers of the Homeland" on the Soviet Jews who have so far only expressed their desire to unite with their kin on the land of Israel.

Neither the French, nor the English, nor the Russian peoples had to prove to the entire world their right to a national existence. The history of the Jews was different. The Jewish people had to prove this right. And it was proved in 1947. And the world recognized this right. And the Soviet Union was one of the first to recognize the State of Israel. Doesn't this mean that from now on every Jew HAS THE RIGHT to take part in the building of HIS STATE and in the formation of a JEWISH national culture on the land of HIS ancestors? And you, the so-called "representatives of the Jewish nationality," are not ashamed to make police threats and describe this right and the open expression of the will of the people to return to the land of its ancestors as "treachery" and "betrayal"!

As for the class struggle, it is successfully carried out by the Communist Party of Israel (even two of them!), which is, incidentally, the only legal Communist Party in the entire Near East, the representatives of which even sit in the same Knesset whose resolution inspired you with the idea for your article.

It is clear that your aim is to prove to the reader both in the Soviet Union and abroad that the idea of settling in the "land of the ancestors" in Israel is alien to the Jews of the Soviet Union. You should take a look into the Visas and Registration Section attached to the Ministry of Interior of the USSR and ask, how many tens of thousands of Jews come there in the vain hope of getting a permit to leave the USSR and to reunite with their relatives in Israel? Although the lawfulness of their strivings is not refuted, these people are nevertheless deprived of the possibility of achieving their lawful aim. This open violation of human rights becomes more and more obvious and acquires greater and greater publicity before public opinion.

And this is in spite of the fact that, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, "all of whose provisions"—according to *Izvestia* no. 289—"have long since become a habitual norm of life," states, in article 13: "Every person has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

Try to understand, L. Berenshtein and M. Fridel, that the right to leave any country is the lawful right of every person and is nowhere in the world regarded as "treachery" and "betrayal of the Fatherland."

Therefore the recent appeal to the UN on the part of the eighteen Jewish families from Georgia, complaining against the Soviet organs that arbitrarily impede their departure, is also fully understandable. It was precisely this appeal that was the basis for the resolution of the Israel Parliament, something that you have preferred not to mention in your article.

Persons who desire to go to Israel do exist. There are thousands and thousands of them. This is not "a fabrication on the part of bourgeois slanderers." These people exist and openly protest against the infringement of their human rights.

And we add our voices to this protest.

As for you, L. Berenshtein and M. Fridel, like every one "who knows the laws of social development," you must be aware that the wheels of history can not only not be turned back, they cannot be stopped either. And today, when the Jewish State has been revived and has existed for twenty-two years, "the striving for unity, for life in the land of the ancestors," is natural and incontestable.

Therefore all the Soviet Jews who wish to reunite with their people in the land of Israel would certainly welcome respect for their indubitable right "to live in the land of their historical motherland."

And to the great Power which gave shelter to many generations of Jews, we repeat the words of our distant ancestors who demanded the right of Exodus from Egypt: "LET MY PEOPLE GO!"

Vitaly Svechinsky, Flotskaya 13 c.2 apt. 338
Dora Kolyaditskaya, Mikhalkovskaya 17, apt. 38
Mark Elbaum, Trekhprudny 11/13 apt. 85
Tina Brodetskaya
Lev Freidin
Bliuma Diskina

Moscow, December 1969

32. Letter from V. Polsky — January 14, 1970.

33. Letter from Chaim Rabinovich — January 30, 1970.

These two letters have several significant things in common. Both address themselves to a specific issue of Pravda — that of January 13, 1970. As Polsky and Rabinovich indicate, on that day the daily organ of the Soviet Communist Party rounded up Jews from various parts of the country and published their letters condemning Israel and fulsomely asserting their eternal devotion and undying loyalty to the USSR. In effect, these Jews were coerced into turning their backs on their Jewish origins, kinship and identity. This was a very early stage of a massive, nationwide propaganda campaign which the Soviet authorities expanded into one of the most virulent anti-Semitic campaigns in Soviet history.

These two letters are unique, moreover, in linking their denunciation of Pravda's publication with their own demand for the right to leave in order to emigrate to Israel. This is daring of a rare order.

Rabinovich, in particular, makes the point that the date of the Pravda article, January 13, 1970, is tragically reminiscent of another January 13 publication in that newspaper — in 1953. On that day, Pravda unveiled the notorious "Doctors' Plot," according to which a group of Jewish doctors, at the behest of an "international Zionist conspiracy," murdered some Soviet leaders and were plotting to murder others. He might also have noted an even more remarkable coincidence of dates in the tragic calendar of Soviet Jewry: January 13, 1948, five years before the Doctors' Plot, was the day that Stalin's secret police murdered Shloime Mikhoels, the director and star of the Moscow Jewish State Theatre, an illustrious personality who was also the leading Jewish figure in the USSR. His murder inaugurated what Soviet Jews called the "Black Years," 1948-53, the last five years of Stalin's life, when the last remaining Jewish cultural institutions were liquidated and the Jewish intelligentsia destroyed.

OPEN LETTER

To: The Editorial Office of the newspaper *Pravda*

In *Pravda* of 13/1/70 were published letters to the editorial office under the general heading "Exposure of the Provocateurs."

All the letters are founded on your paper's assertion, which does not correspond with fact, that the appeal of the Government of Israel had been directed to all the Jews of the USSR. In fact the call for emigration was addressed only to those Jews who wish to emigrate to Israel within the framework of family reunification or for other reasons.

I do not doubt for a minute the genuineness of the published letters and the sincerity of their authors. But, with some variations in the answers published (from coarse, foul insults to the Government of Israel in the letters of persons that do not contain the authors' social position, to the restrained expression in the letters of the more intellectual economists and the librarian), all these letters have one thing in common: they are written by citizens of Jewish origin, who do not wish to regard themselves as Jews.

This idea is expressed in all the letters, but it is particularly frankly stated in the letter of G. Tsypin. This, so to say Jew, writes: "I don't

know what has remained in me of Jewishness, perhaps only the nationality paragraph in my passport, but as long as I am considered (!) a Jew. . ."

Here it is, the fruit of assimilation, when a man lacks national pride and national dignity, he turns into a person without kin and without a tribe.

As long as the writer does not consider himself a Jew, the question arises whether he and others like him have the right to appear publicly in the name of the Jews on a matter that concerns Jews exclusively (Jews not only by origin) and no one else.

The editorial office of *Pravda* has made an obvious miscalculation in publishing letters like the one quoted, because it follows from them that there is no national life for Jews in the USSR. Not a single one of the authors mentions (and they have no grounds for it) any national, cultural or spiritual life of the Jews in the USSR, a life without which the normal existence of any nation is unthinkable.

Can you find among the Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Georgians, Armenians and other peoples of the USSR any persons asserting that all that has remained in them of their nationality is but a paragraph in the passport? Such a statement on the part of the Jews testifies to the pitiful situation of their national culture and their national life! There are no Jewish schools, newspapers, magazines, theatres or textbooks for learning the Jewish language!

A policy that is directed toward assimilation does bear some fruit, but as a whole it is doomed to failure. Nobody has yet succeeded in assimilating the Jews throughout the 2,000 years of their homeless history, when there was no Jewish State. This will still less succeed now, when the Jewish State exists and is a center of attraction for all Jews who have kept their national pride and dignity.

V. Polsky
Moscow E-24, Krasnokazarmennaya 23,
apt. 62

14.1.70

To: The Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir!
Honored Golda Meir!

I am forced to appeal to you with a request for help:

I have twice petitioned the Soviet authorities for permission to go to Israel with my family, to my relatives. This was denied to me.

At present, because of my insistent intention to go to Israel, I am being dismissed from my job. I am 55 years old, my wife is an invalid and I have two minor children. I don't know what my family will live on.

I beg you to undertake all the measures in your power to help me and my family in getting a permit to go to our relatives in Israel.
(signed) Ch. Rabinovich

30.1.70

Moscow E-77
Izmailovskiy Blvd. no. 66, apt. 41
Rabinovich, Chaim

To: The Editorial Office of the newspaper *Pravda*

January 13. . . . This date should be well-known to the editor's office of *Pravda*. It was precisely on January 13, 1953 that *Pravda* published an announcement from the Procurator's Office of the USSR and there began the campaign that acquired the sorry appellation of the "Doctors' Plot." From January 13 on, every day there were published feuilletons and articles in which Jewish family names were "exposed." At that time the talent of O. Chechetkina became fully "revealed" in her article "Murderers in White Coats." And at the end of March, Zhukov wrote in *Pravda*: "This evil should be extirpated with red-hot irons." At that time there were also published statements of many persons of culture, science, and prominent workers of Jewish nationality, condemning the physicians who "sold themselves to the Zionists" and to the "Joint" (about Prof. Vovsi) and so on and so on.

Everyone knows the end of this scheme. The agents of Beria and Abakumov were exposed in time and the provocateurs got what they deserved.

And now it is again January 13, not 1953 but 1970, a jubilee year.

We open the newspaper *Pravda* and we read: "Exposure of Provocateurs."

And again letters: from people, Jews of various professions, condemning Israel and Zionism. The authors of these letters do not want even to hear about Israel, about going to live there. Who are they, these "Jews"? Citizen Tsypin from Kharkov expressed very well his attitude towards the nation of Einstein and of Veksler: "I am a Jew only by passport. What is there Jewish in me?" I am sorry for him, for Citizen Tsypin from Kharkov. It is not these Jews that Golda Meir

is worried about. These people are united by hatred toward the Jewish State, for the establishment of which we are indebted to the firm policy of the Soviet Union and of its representative at the UNO, Comrade Gromyko. After the terrible tragedy that befell our Jewish people, as a result of which one-third of the Jewish nation was massacred by the fascists, the Jewish State was established. It is precisely the blood of these victims, their heroic fight and their martyr-death that to a great degree assisted in the establishment of the State of Israel. And it was established not just anywhere, but where it had existed long before the establishment of other states, where our ancestors, the Jews, had lived and fought.

Of course, we, the Soviet people — both Jews and non-Jews — would like that there should be a socialist system there, that there should be peace between the Jews and the Arabs, between all the States of that region. But in the Soviet Union, in Russia, not everything was done all at once. Should one write so sharply (even if one is a non-Jew) about a country without knowing the life, the way of life and the tradition of a people that lives there, in Israel? Personally, I sympathize with the people which is fighting there for its existence. After all, it is not a secret that the Arab slogan calling for the annihilation of the State of Israel and pushing the Jews into the sea has not yet been taken off the agenda. Can I, a Jew, not be concerned for my people? I am proud that I belong to such a nation, which is fighting for its independence surrounded by so many enemies. Does this mean that I am a nationalist? No, not at all. I was born in the Soviet Union, I grew up and studied in a Soviet school, a Workers' Faculty and an Institute, I lived all these years having contacts with the Russians and nobody could ever accuse me of nationalism. But at that time, at the front, in the war against the fascists, my two brothers were killed; in the occupied territory, in the Ukraine, my relatives were killed only because they were Jews. And when, at last, the remainder of the Jews after the war gathered in their own State and want to live as they like, they are again threatened with extermination. Can I, a Jew, remain on the side? In the 20 years of its existence, Jews from all countries rushed there to build their State. From the Arab countries alone 400,000 Jews emigrated. From the USSR too there had been a partial emigration to Israel.

Comrade A. N. Kosygin stated in Paris, in 1966, that the Government of the USSR does not impede the reunification of families. However, I have several times submitted documents and received a refusal.

Why do I want to go to Israel with my family?

1) I was born into a religious Jewish family and I cannot observe here all the traditions and the holidays of my people.

2) I have two daughters. They are growing up and they do not know the history of their people and have no possibility of studying the Jewish language (there are no schools, no newspapers, no theatre.)

I cannot refuse my gravely ill wife her last wish — to live among her relatives and to die there.

I have been working at an electrical plant from 1933 (with a break of seven years for study)! While working in the collective I have never seen any national differences between the Jews and the Russians. On the contrary, I remember how, in 1935, a Jewish theatre choir came to the electric plant and how enthusiastically it was received. Alas, there is no such choir and theatre now. But had there been, it would not have been received as before. This is not to a small degree due to such Jews as sent their letters to *Pravda*. As for the discussion in the Knesset concerning Soviet Jews who wish to go to Israel, I do not consider it either a provocation against the USSR or a subversion. After all, when after the war the Armenians desired to return to Armenia, no one called this either subversion or provocation. I am fifty-five years old. I am an engineer. After I submitted a statement concerning my desire to go to Israel I was transferred to an inferior position, not in my profession and now, upon submission of my second application to go to Israel, my dismissal from the plant has been decreed, and a family of four persons will live on the pension received by my wife (invalid — 2nd grade) to the sum of thirty-nine rubles. However, no matter how difficult things may be, I shall not give up my desire to live with my people.

Moscow — E-77. Izmailovsky Blvd. 66, apt. 41

Rabinovich, Ch. Sh.

26.1.70

34. Letter from the Leningrad Nine — February 1, 1970.

This group includes an outstanding personality from an earlier era of Soviet Jewish heroism. Indeed, Gedalia Pechersky was a lonely hero. Born in 1901, he worked for many years as a medical technician and dentist. From 1953-56, he was chairman of the religious congregation in the Great Synagogue in Leningrad. In 1956, he was demoted to vice-chairman of the congregation as a penalty for his determined and energetic activities on behalf of Jewish religious rights.

Among these activities were his systematic efforts to obtain permission for kosher meat slaughter, for baking of matzot for Passover, for preservation of the Jewish cemetery in Leningrad, and a host of other such matters. His most abrasive activity, from the point of view of the authorities, was his unceasing attempt to gain permission to establish classes for the study of Hebrew in the synagogue; he even went so far as to submit a memorandum on the subject to the Ministry of Religious Cults in Moscow.

His persistence and his audacity finally led the authorities to lose their patience with him. In the summer of 1961 he was arrested; he was tried in October on the charge of maintaining close relations with members of the Israel Embassy, and was sentenced to twelve years in prison. Serious intercessions were made on his behalf, including one by the late Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. He was released from prison in August 1968. In May 1969, he submitted the first of several requests for exit permits for himself and his family to leave for Israel.

At a time when others were silent from fear, Pechersky spoke up, loud and clear, and paid the price for his courage.

Another of this group, Natan Tsirulnikov, spent one year in prison on the charge that he had received Hebrew textbooks from abroad. At his trial, he did not deny his intense desire to teach his children the Hebrew language, but insisted that he saw no crime in this. He was released from prison on April 17, 1969, and has since made several requests for exit permits for Israel.

TO: THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

We, the undersigned, citizens of the USSR, residing in Leningrad and Jews by nationality, request the Commission on Human Rights to help us and our families (9 families, 24 persons) to obtain from the Government of the USSR a permit to emigrate to Israel in order to reunite with our relatives there.

All of us, at various times, after submitting the necessary documents, had applied to the proper organs for permits to emigrate to Israel, but all our requests have been rejected.

We have repeatedly sent complaints against these decisions to the highest Soviet State organs. However, we have never received any answers to our complaints from those high-ranking persons to whom they had been addressed. Our complaints were transmitted for decision to the very same administrative organs against whose actions we were complaining. And the decisions concerning the refusals remained in force.

We wish to explain the reasons for our decision to emigrate to Israel for permanent residence.

- 1) We want to live in Israel, together with our relatives from whom we have become separated as a result of the tragic historical fate of the Jewish people and other circumstances. We grieve deeply over the death of many of our relatives massacred by the Nazis, and we want to live together with our surviving relatives and dear ones, who live in Israel.
- 2) For us, the unassimilated and the refusing-to-assimilate Jews, the satisfaction of our cultural-national needs in the Soviet Union is practically impossible due to the absence of proper national-cultural institutions, Jewish schools, etc.

This factor is of even greater importance for those of us who have children. We, the parents, consider it our duty to ensure that our children obtain national education in their own Jewish language.

We possess national consciousness, and we have need for the satisfaction of our national and cultural requirements, just like all the other peoples of the world. This makes us desire to emigrate to Israel, where we and our children will speak the Jewish language, read Jewish papers, go to Jewish theatres, mark Jewish national holidays, and live the life of the Jewish people.

We were born Jews, and we continue to be Jews, and this is why we want to unite with the Jewish people in Israel.

- 3) Some of us are religious. The observing of religious rites (keeping the Sabbath, observing traditional Jewish holidays, etc.) will, of course, be much easier for us in Israel than in the USSR.

Among us are persons of various ages and professions. All of us, during our entire lives, have been loyal citizens of the Soviet Union. We are, therefore, convinced that there are no objective reasons for forbidding us to go to Israel, especially as we possess no information that can be considered state secrets.

The granting to us of a permit to go to Israel is not contrary to the laws of the Soviet Union. Emigration to Israel means only that we wish to be together with the Jewish people, and to live a national life with all its particularities, just like any other people.

We ask you to approach directly the Government of the USSR in accordance with the procedures of implementing the Declaration of the Rights of Man, proclaimed by the UN and its member, the USSR, and also in accordance with the International Convention on the Liquidation of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by the USSR on January 22, 1969. Paragraph II, statute 5 of said Convention, ensures the right of the citizen of any country, and, therefore, also of the

USSR, regardless of his national and racial affiliation, to leave any country, including his own.

Certain of the great international prestige of the United Nations Organization, we hope that an appeal by the Commission on Human Rights to the Government of the USSR will ensure that we and our families obtain the permits to go to Israel.

(signed)

Vertlib, Grigory, 38 years old, jurist, Bryusovskaya St. no. 9, apt. 5
Kaminsky, Lassal, 40 years old, engineer, Vosstania St. no. 6, apt. 4
Lieberman, Lazar, 68 years old, pensioner, Tallin St. no. 6-a, apt. 30
Makhlis, Gennady, 30 years old, engineer, Ordinarnaya St. no. 20, apt. 22
Mogilever, Vladimir, 30 years old, engineer, Telman St. 36, corpus 1, apt. 209
Pechersky, Gedalia, 69 years old, Rz'yezhaya St. no. 9, apt. 8. Physician.
Fridman, Vladimir, 31 years old, engineer. Pobeda St. no. 7, apt. 190
Tsirulnikov, Natan, 59 years old, engineer, Telman St. no. 50, apt. 71
Chernoglaz, David, 30 years old, agronomist, Malkina Prsp. no. 26, apt. 25
February 1, 1970
Leningrad, USSR

35. Letter from Albert Mikhaelashvili — February 20, 1970.

Moscow, February 20, 1970

I would like to open this letter with the best wishes to you throughout your life.

I am very grateful for everything you have been doing for us, and that our aim has become yours. I'd like to inform you in detail of events here.

Nothing has changed in our lives except that they are getting worse from day to day. All the eighteen families including mine are in a critical condition. I am referring to thirty-two children and 104 adults. If I were the only one in distress, I wouldn't have cried for help. I am truly and honestly crying for help for many others who are suffering with me. I have not been working for over a year. I have sold all my belongings and ever since have been living in a cellar with nine other members of the family. Rats run about in this humid and terrible cellar, making our lives unbearable. To hell with my own life! But what about the children's lives? The tears have dried on our faces. The children are in great agony and they don't understand why they are being punished so!

My daughter Rita has suffered jaundice and my other daughter Vitalie was nearly killed from boiling water. My baby son Robert has drunk kerosene but was saved from disaster. All these accidents are

not results of neglect on our part but results of the inhuman conditions we are living in. However, Daniel, all our suffering is both physical and emotional. We have to suffer because we love our homeland and our forefathers who made it our land.

I know you've wanted to speak to us on the phone; so have we, but it was impossible to get in touch with Tel-Aviv-Jaffa line. I've tried to ring you up from Kutaisi, Tibilisi, and come to Moscow to try again but — in vain — I cannot get in touch by phone. Daniel, we are in no need of money, all we want to do is to come to Israel. Grown-ups and children alike. My father is sick but all he thinks of is Israel. Nothing but death will ever stop me fighting for my right to reach my homeland.

I have been sending so many letters to Israel but have not received any answers.

Best regards to all my relatives from all of us here.

We wish to come to Israel. Israel is the homeland of the Jews and we must live in Israel.

Daniel, I am writing you all this so that you'll know that I'm not the only one living in such conditions; if it were only me I wouldn't have written to you.

And thus, I end my letter.

Albert

P.S. Please forgive me for having made mistakes in my letter. I have been writing and waiting near the telephone with the hope of getting in contact with you. I see there's no hope now. Perhaps I'll do better in Kutaisi. I'll try to ring you up again from there.

Albert Mikhaelashvili

36. Letter from Yosif Khikhashvili — February 1970.

From: Khikhashvili, Yosif, 21 Ordzhonikidze St., Ordzhonikidze, Georgian SSR, USSR

To: USA, Washington, Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant

Copy to: Prime Minister of the State of Israel, Golda Meir

STATEMENT

From: Citizen Khikhashvili, Yosif, Binyaminavich, 50 years old, residing in Ordzhonikidze, Georgian SSR.

A year ago I received a formal document of invitation to go with my family to the State of Israel for permanent residence. This invitation

was sent to me by my niece, Mikhaelishvili, Sara Mikhailovna, who lives in Israel, in Kfar Habad. This document was then submitted by me to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian SSR, in Tbilisi, where it, with all the other necessary documents, remains. In August 1969, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Georgian SSR informed me that my departure for Israel had been postponed.

I then appealed to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Comrade Kosygin, to help me to go to Israel. Then, as a consequence of my request, I was unexpectedly informed by the head of the regional militia that the exit permit has been totally refused me. I therefore appeal to you and ask you to help me gain permission to go, with my family, to my homeland, the State of Israel, and to my relatives.

Y. Khikhinashvili

37. Letter from L. Muchnik—February 1970.

To the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR,
Comrade N. V. Podgorny
Copy to the Secretary General of the UN, U Thant
From citizeness MUCHNIK, L. S., residing in Moscow, Kastanyevskaya
St., no. 43, corp. 2, apt. 30

STATEMENT

For a number of years my husband, Abram Yakovlevich Muchnik, and I, his wife, Lyutsia Samuilovna, had repeatedly applied to you personally and to various Soviet organs for permission to go with my family to Israel—in order to reunite with our close relatives. We invariably met with an indifferent and even heartless attitude toward our petition and with unmotivated refusals.

On the night of January 4-5 of this year, my husband passed away from a grave illness. There is no doubt that no small role in his premature death was played by the aggravations and unpleasantnesses connected with our running around to various instances, and by the stubborn unwillingness of the organs concerned to understand the motives that induced us to ask to go to Israel. The persons near us saw what a grave effect on his health was played by all the degrading procedures that he had to go through, in the hope that in the end

justice would triumph and it would become possible for him to spend the rest of his life in the country that he considered his spiritual father and, where his only surviving sister lives. In these years many Jewish families have gone to Israel, after receiving the OVIR's permission. What, then, were the reasons for refusing an exit permit to us? What loss could there be from this to the Soviet State?

The memory of my late husband is sacred to me, and therefore his death-bed injunction is also sacred to me:

TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTAIN THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS CHERISHED DREAM, TO CONTINUE HIS JUST STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO REUNITE WITH OUR RELATIVES IN ISRAEL, FOR THE RIGHT TO EDUCATE OUR SON IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR NATIONAL TRADITIONS AND GIVE HIM THE POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF OUR ANCIENT AND NOW FULLY REVIVED LANGUAGE—HEBREW, TO HAVE AN ALL-AROUND KNOWLEDGE OF THE HISTORY, LITERATURE AND CULTURE OF HIS PEOPLE.

In addition, my husband bade me *bury the urn with his ashes in Jerusalem*. Perhaps this wish will seem to some people naive and sentimental and some sort of a tribute to prejudices and superstition, but it testifies to his unquenchable feeling, to the passion and force of his love for the land of our ancestors—and therefore it is sacred to me, and at present the only purpose of my life is to strive to carry out to the full wishes of the deceased.

I want to believe that my voice will finally be heard by you. However, taking into consideration the sad experience of the past and the failure of all our efforts, which took a great toll of the health of both my late husband and myself, I consider it my duty to appeal, simultaneously with my petition to you, to international organizations (Human Rights Commission, the UN, etc.). However, I am not losing hope that you, Comrade Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, will say your *decisive word*, and that the Soviet organs, dealing with these matters, will finally put an end to my sufferings and will permit me and my son to go to Israel, where many relatives of mine and of my husband live.

L. Muchnik

Moscow
February 1970

38. Letter from Twenty-five Georgian Jews—February 1970.

To the President of the UN General Assembly
From families residing in the Georgian SSR

February 1970

From the high tribunal of the UN we state:

Today, when we have our own national homeland, we live with the sole thought of being with our people, in order to live and work for the good of the world. Our families were brought up in the strict traditions of the Jewish religion. What our ancestors believed, we believe too, and we want to study our language, our history and literature.

We, the undersigned, long ago submitted our documents for emigration to Israel, but all of us have received verbal refusals. All our appeals to higher authorities have remained without results. When we apply to the competent organs, we find silence, or else our answer is that we are threatened and chased out.

We are forced to appeal to you to do all that is necessary to assist the free departure of Jews from the USSR to Israel. According to the International Convention on the Liquidation of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (part 1, article 5), everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own.

We are not connected with one another in any way—except by the desire for a free and most speedy departure to our historical homeland!

Buzukashvili, Abram Israelovich	Tbilisi, Serebriana 28	persons	5
Mikhelashvili, Abram Moshiakhovich	" Leselidze 43	"	5
Sefiashvili, Simon Filkhazovich	" Lermonton 24b	"	1
Elishakov, Shalva Gabrielovich	" Avleva 38	"	4
Mrikheli, Elko Yakovlevich	" Baratashvili 7	"	8
Dzhindzhikhashvili, Rafael Abramovich	" Iper. Engels 3	"	5
Davarashville, Gershon Danielovich	" Krugovaya Per. 4	"	5
Dzhanashvili, Veniamin Isakovich	" Fizkulturnaya 26	"	6
Dzhanashvili, Peres Filkhazovich	" Kuptinsky Per. 9	"	3
Mikhelashvili, Israel Semionovich	" Krashny Partis. 38/40	"	6
Babalashvili, Rakhmin Benyaminovich	" Tabidze 20	"	4
Panisedova, Shushana Moiseyevna	" Zhelyabova 17	"	3
Vashkovkar, Naum Yuzefovich	" Lenskaya 28	"	4
Gazenlishvili, Elkazar Meirovich	" Azizbekova 11	"	1
Moshiashvili, Elko Davidovich	" Per. Akhundova 7	"	1
Binoyev, Binyamin Meirovich	" Tumanyanatupik 4	"	6
Mikhelashvili, Abram Menashevich	Kulashi, Stalina 2	"	18
Khundivashvili, Tamara Abramovna	" Vaszh Pshavela 46	"	10

Moskashvili, Nina Abramovna	Tbilisi, Tiomni Tupik 5	persons	1
Aizorm, Abovich Megrelishvili	Zestafoni, Ninoshvili 22	"	6
Rafiel Besarionovich Tsitsuashvili	" Ninoshvili 45	"	5
Tsitsuashvili, Iosef Besarionovich	" Marx 8	"	8
Elikishvili, Abram Yakovlevich	" Shromskaya 5	"	8
Khikhinashvili, Mikhail Yakovlevich	" Ninoshvili 45	"	5
Manasherov, Mikhail Moshiakhovich	Surami, Internatsionalnaya 177	"	5

39. Letter from Fourteen Moscow Jews — February 1970.

To the Secretary General of the UN, U Thant:

We, Jews living in Soviet Russia, appeal to you with a petition to help us go to Israel for permanent residence. Our wish to go to Israel is based solely on the desire to live among our own people, together with our relatives and kin. Our entire experience of life amidst an alien people shows that no other culture and no other national life can replace for us our own Jewish culture and our natural, national Jewish life, and that there is no alien land that we can call our own. Our Fatherland is not the land where we happened to be born, our Fatherland is the land on which our people was born, it is the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the land from which the Jewish people sprang, and it is only this land, the bearer of Jewish history and Jewish culture, that we can call our own. There are therefore no grounds for a forcible retention of us, Jews who desire to return to our Fatherland.

Our many years of experience in submitting petitions for departure to Israel show a complete lack of understanding for our national longings on the part of the organs that are responsible for the issuance of permits to emigrate.

All the Jews who have signed this letter have submitted petitions for emigration in accordance with the regulations established by the OVIR of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; many of us have applied several times.

However, all the petitions for emigration ended the same way, a refusal by word of mouth, without any explanations.

The high principles, recognized by the Soviet leadership, stated in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and also contained in individual statements of Soviet leaders, give us grounds to hope that there exist no obstacles of principle against our repatriation.

We hope that the high principles and the prestige of the UN will allow the solution of the problem of our repatriation to Israel.

Lipkovsky, Leonid, 1926 — Moscow, Uralskaya St. 6, apt. 87, corpus 3
Gurevich, Eduard, 1937 — Moscow, Sumskaya St. 6, C. 4-a, apt. 32
Gurevich, Sara, 1948 — Moscow, Sumskaya St. 6, C. 4-a, apt. 32
Rabinovich, Chaim, 1916 — Moscow, Izmailovsky Blvd. 66, apt. 41
Rabinovich, Tatyana — Moscow, Izmailovsky Blvd. 66, apt. 41
Brodetskaya, Gita — Moscow, Izmailovsky Blvd. 66, apt. 41
Ropskaya, Ida — Moscow, Luzhnitsky Proezd 13, apt. 1-a
Tovbis, Aleksandr — Moscow, Luzhnitsky Proezd 13, apt. 1-a
Tovbis, Maria — Moscow, Luzhnitsky Proezd 13, apt. 1-a
Fridlyand, Evgenia — Moscow, Yunykh Lenintsev St. 44, c. 1 apt. 59
Fridlyand, Margarita — Moscow, Yunykh Lenintsev St. 44, c. 1 apt. 59
Kazakov, Yosef, 1922 — Moscow, 3rd Institutskaya 6 apt. 42
Kazakova, Sofia, 1922 — Moscow, 3rd Institutskaya 6, apt. 42
Kazakova, Sofia, 1900 — Moscow, 3rd Institutskaya 6, apt. 42

40. Open Letter of Vilna Jews — February 1, 1970.

OPEN LETTER

To the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization, U Thant
To the Chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights
To the Prime Minister of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meir.

We are writing you this letter from the capital of the Lithuanian SSR, the town of Vilnius. We are writing it after long deliberations and after numerous and fruitless appeals to our authorities.

We have no claims against anyone. Our sole desire is to leave the USSR and to return to the land of our ancestors, to the Jewish State of Israel. The reason for this is as follows:

The Jewish people — the only people in the world which for hundreds and hundreds of years, divided and scattered among various peoples, had participated and is participating in the general historical development of these countries, but which has nevertheless not fused with those peoples, has not disappeared as many other peoples as old as it, but has remained a sharply defined and separate national group.

The explanation for this phenomenon in the history of mankind does not have to be looked for in the heavens, in mystical occurrences or in any special "chosenness" of our people. It is necessary only to follow the tragic fate of the Jews who had lost the most important thing for the life of a nation — their territory, their statehood.

Terrible is the fate of a person without a homeland, tragic are the ways of a people expelled from the land of its ancestors. The two-thousand-year-old orphanhood of our people is an unquestionable example of this. For twenty centuries could be heard our plea for shelter, but there is no country in Europe that, while giving a roof over the head of the "eternal Jew", has not tainted its own history with innocent Jewish blood. Perhaps it is the subconscious awareness of this terrible guilt that is the source of the hatred toward us.

Few of us now remain in Lithuania, in this beautiful, green country on the shores of the Baltic. All of it has turned into a mute grave, where over 300,000 of our brothers and sisters were massacred — that is 87% of the Jewish community of Lithuania on the eve of the Second World War. And nobody except us remembers them today. Even the inscriptions in the Jewish language on the places of mass executions have been effaced. There are no monuments, no "Kaddish", no "Yizkor". It is not permissible to gather at the Ninth Fort to commemorate the victims of mass executions. And for almost five centuries there glowed here the life of a part of our people, whose sons with gratitude called the capital of this country "Yerushalaim de Lita" ("Jerusalem of Lithuania"). In Lithuania, particularly in Vilnius, was created our distinctive culture; it was precisely here that there were schools in Hebrew and in Yiddish, the network of elementary and higher education, there was the world-renowned Strashun Library, the Jewish Scientific Institute, many books, newspapers and magazines published in Hebrew and Yiddish, there were Jewish theatres and clubs. This had been, it is no longer and will be no more.

After the catastrophe that befell the Jewry of Lithuania in the years of the fascist occupation, the surviving Jews believed that the day had come when this "eternal" question would be solved and there would be once and for all an end to anti-Semitism and that we, the Jews, had at last acquired true defenders of human rights.

However, all the time that has passed has shown how deeply mistaken we were. There is no country, except Israel, that can solve our question. The events in the USSR in 1948-1953, when terrible accusations were aired over the radio and in the mass press, testify to this. If the Hitlerite fascists accused every Jew — whether it was an old, bearded rabbi or the embryo of a Jewish child — of communism, then we have suddenly all become cosmopolites and spies, murderers in white coats, currency dealers, etc. Our culture was immediately beheaded — they killed our singers and poets, our writers and artists and scientists with world-famous names. And only because they were Jews.

Where is there the guarantee that the tragedy of Mikhoels and Feffer, Bergelson and Zuskin, Markish and Kvitko will not repeat itself! And what about the pogrom in the small Lithuanian town of Plunge in the sixties! And how little there lacked for a pogrom to be launched in Vilnius when the charge was made against us of ritual murder before Passover. Thank God, it transpired that the murderer was a Lithuanian, Petrila, who had strangled a little girl. But what would have happened had this been a mentally ill Jew? Who would have defended us from the enraged crowd? After the exposure of the guilty person, not one of the leaders, not a single newspaper, came out with the exposure of the vile slanders against the Jews. And all this was after the unprecedented sufferings of our people, when, in the eyes of the entire world, they burned our mothers, children, fathers and grandfathers, and when in the whole world there was not a single hand stretched out to save the Jews from the ovens of Auschwitz and Treblinka, from Babi Yar, Ponar and the Ninth Fort!!

Our people has placed on the altar of its national liberation six million martyrs. Against the fascist beasts the Jews fought bravely in all the armies of the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition.

With their own blood, their own struggle, with the support of all the progressive forces of the world, the best sons of our people have revived their ancient Homeland, have created the State of Israel — the sacred Fatherland of all Jews, the hope of our much-suffering people.

Today we, citizens of the USSR, pray for only one thing — we want to live in our own land. Let us go!! Let us go home! We hear the voices of the ancient prophets, we are called by the Messiah of freedom, we are called by our Homeland!

We no longer want to be called guests, we don't want to be hostages or lightning rods in the game of the black passions of the world gone mad.

We, the undersigned, have repeatedly applied to the Soviet authorities with the request to allow us to emigrate for permanent residence to the State of Israel. All our requests were refused, without explanations, without motivation. All this has driven us to appeal to you, to the world public — help us, heed our plea, use your prestige so that we should be allowed to go to Israel.

Gorelik, Valeriy Yosifovich — Vilnius, Olandu 3 apt. 1. I want to go to my aunt, Rinek, Olga Abramovna, resident of Israel, Givatayim, Hamaavak 31.

Khayatovsky, Khanan Benyaminovich — Vilnius, Gorky 26—11. I want to go to my uncle Abramson, Shraga, residing in Jerusalem.

Vaintraub, Itamar Aronovich — Vilnius, Zhirmunu 98, apt. 61. I want to go to my aunt Romanov, Luba Khaimovna, Israel, T.A. Gordon 82.

Brudnaya, Tamara Yakovlevna — Vilnius, Tverechyaus 10 apt. 55. I want to go together with my son, Brudny, I. M., to my uncle Brudny, residing in Israel, Tel Aviv, Weizmann St.

Katsene, Basia Ruvinovna — Vilnius, Tverechyaus 3-14. I want to go to my three sisters: Sh. Likht — Kibbutz Dalia; I. Klisar, Bnai Brak, Moshlever 16; and B. Krelker, Hadar Yosef, Kiryat Varsha 1.

Itzikson, Lubov Abramovna. I want to go together with my sick old father, my husband and my daughter to my sister and three aunts. My address: Lit.SSR, Vilnius, Putny St. 3 apt. 45. My sister's address: Israel, Givatayim, Mishmar HaYarden St. 2-6, Sternberg. My aunt's address: Israel, Holon, Hoifain 38, Chana Perel.

Beilinson, Liya Samuilovna. I want to go with my sick old mother, husband and daughter to my father, residing in Israel, in Tel Aviv, Brener 20a, Tkach, Samuil Markovich. My address is: Lit.SSR, Vilnius, Zhemaites St. 9 apt. 56.

41. Letter from a Woman in Moscow — February 19, 1970.

To: Chairman A. N. Kosygin.

Dear Aleksei Nikolayevich:

I have written you over twenty letters, but, judging from the answers, I understand that you have not read them; they have not been transmitted to you!

I have been twice refused permission to go to Israel. No reasons are given, and there are no reasons for the refusal. I am already an elderly person, I am not working, I have buried all my relatives — life is very, very hard for me.

I entreat you, please allow me to go to Israel. Nobody needs me here, my departure will be entirely unnoticeable.

Be kind and humane to me, I beg you. Please don't refuse my request.

After all, I started petitioning for emigration precisely after your statement, after you had said that there would be no impediments to emigration.

I believe in your words and I believe in your kind heart and I wait with impatience.

Bershadszkaya, Lubov Leontyevna
Podolsk, Moscow District
Kooperativny Proezd 3 apt. 23
Telephone 3-47-55

19.II.70

42. Letter from a Ukrainian Jewish Family — February 18, 1970.

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

My family and I appeal to you with a fervent plea for help. You are our last hope!

I am Liberman, Shmaya Abram Elyovich, 55 years old, residing in Ivano-Frankovsk, Ukrainian SSR, a poultry slaughterer. My wife — Liberman, Kentsia Fashkovna, 56 years old, a housewife. Our daughters — Nesia, 22 years old, a clerk; and Fania, 18 years old, a student.

We, like millions of our fellow Jews, suffered a great deal during the Second World War. The greater part of our family was killed and the rest were dispersed throughout the world. My brother, Zvi, found himself in Israel. My sister, Paulina, in Rumania. For us it was a great joy to find out that our brother was alive. When our eldest

sister, Tsilia, and her family emigrated to Israel to our brother, they began calling me to them, in order at last to reunite our much suffering family.

For many years I have been trying to obtain permission to go to Israel in order, after so many years of sorrow and suffering, to finish my life amidst people who are near and dear to me and from whom I have been separated for so long.

On May 23, 1967 my petition, as well as the request of my relatives abroad, was granted and I was officially informed that I have been given permission to go to the State of Israel for permanent residence. Unfortunately, in connection with the well-known events, I did not have time to make use of this permit. There began a lengthy and painful waiting for this question to be solved some way; after all, the basic thing — the permit — had been granted to me. My family and I hoped that the time will come when this permit would be renewed.

In December 1968 I renewed my petition, submitting a new affidavit and other necessary documents. After repeated inquiries on my part, I was informed on July 29, 1969 that, contrary to the previous decision, my petition had been refused, without any explanations. After this I applied both by letter and personally with pleas to the higher local organs, as well as to the supreme authorities of the Soviet Union, and received an encouraging answer from the representative of the local authority. However, on February 3, 1970, I was again informed that my request has been denied, again without any reasons being given.

The strength and health of my family have been totally undermined. I am ill with bronchial asthma, cholecystitis and a number of other illnesses. I and my younger daughter, who is also suffering from bronchial asthma, need a dry and warm climate. My wife has undergone a serious operation on the gall-bladder and suffers from an illness of the heart and the arteries, and cannot even always move alone because of trophetic ulcers on her feet. My eldest daughter has undergone a number of grave illnesses (purulent meningitis, capillary toxicosis), her nervous system is ruined and she is now forced to leave her work. It is only our hope to embrace our near ones that is supporting us. Do not let this hope become extinguished.

From May 1967 onward, we have been living on valises. Our insistent desire to go to Israel, which has lasted for many years, brings forth a negative attitude toward our daughters in the environment in which they study and work.

For me — a deeply religious person — Israel is my spiritual fatherland. To give up the hope of reuniting with our relatives would mean

for us to give up everything in our life and to continue living under such conditions is above our strength.

Help!

With great respect and hope,

Liberman, Sh. A-E.

My address:

Ivano-Frankovsk, Ukr. SSR
Galitskaya St. 43, apt. 30
18.2.1970

43. Letter from a Moscow Jew — March, 1970.

To the Chairman of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR,
Comrade Kosygin, A. N.

From citizen Fridland, Ilya Moiseevich, resident in Moscow —
Zh. 462, Yunnykh Lenintsev St. 44, apt. 59

STATEMENT

Since December 1966, my family and I, consisting of my wife, Fridland, Khenia Illivna and my daughter Margarita, 19 years old, have been applying for emigration to Israel, to rejoin our mother and brother, but we get constant refusals without any explanation.

After submitting documents for emigration in February 1968, I was expelled from membership in the CPSU and thrown out of my job. Since then I can find no work in my profession, as an engineer. I have been working and studying since I was 13, and in all this time I never left work, even of my own will, but was transferred from place to place, going wherever I was directed. And merely because I expressed my wish to go to Israel to my mother and brother, I have been deprived of confidence, without which life here is impossible.

If in 1966, when I first submitted documents for emigration, my sole motive had been to unite with my mother and brother, at present this question is more serious and more profound, particularly after the June war of 1967. Anti-Semitism has reached the limit and it is felt not only by the grown-ups, but even by the children. For instance, my nine-year-old son cannot go alone into the yard, because he is constantly being called a Jew and they try to beat him up. And I, as a communist (even though an expelled one) and as a human being, am afraid of what will happen further to our children.

I am forty-two years old and my wife is forty, and, after all these events, we demand that we should be allowed to go to our Jewish country, where the children will be able to have their own language, their own culture, and where they will be able to be proud of their nationality, equally with all peoples who live in their own countries. In spite of all the deprivations and humiliations that my family and I have gone through and are going through at present, we are firmly convinced that justice will triumph and no obstacles can stop us; on the contrary, they will only make stronger our desire to unite with our relatives. A country that liberated the Jews from fascist annihilation, a country that was the first to recognize the Jewish State, cannot refuse the Jews the right of going to their own country and of reuniting with their relatives.

I am certain that this question will be examined with all seriousness and will be solved favorably.

Fridland

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