

San Francisco
JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

Serving San Francisco, Marin County and the Peninsula

BENEFICIARY AGENCY OF THE JEWISH WELFARE FEDERATION

40 FIRST STREET, THIRD FLOOR (Zone 5)

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ON CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Most Americans support the concept of cultural exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union as a means to improve international understanding and the cause of world peace. In addition, the major national Jewish organizations, through the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, support a program of cultural exchange between the two countries because they believe that such a program is in the best interest of the beleaguered Jews of the Soviet Union. The Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, Marin and Peninsula concurs in that judgement.

During the Stalinist period in Russia, substantial numbers of Jews were jailed, murdered or simply disappeared because of their Jewish identification -- and all vestiges of Jewish activity were wiped out. The American Jewish community made numerous protests during those years - but the Iron Curtain was so impenetrable that this protest had no effect at all.

Today, the Soviet Union is somewhat sensitive to the expression of world opinion. In response to that opinion, there has been a measure of emigration permitted, and there have been some checks on oppression, such the commutation of death sentences after the Leningrad trial.

The hope is to hold and increase the pressure of world opinion on the Soviet Union. Another Iron Curtain would close off that possibility. Cultural exchange can help to keep that Iron Curtain from closing again, and help keep hope alive for hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews.

Professor Mikhail Zand, one of the heroes of the Soviet Jewish protest, has, in addition, pointed out that one of the new circumstances on the Soviet Union which kept alive some hope for the future, was the sympathy of many Soviet intellectuals and artists for the disadvantaged condition of Jews in their country. Dr. Zand, along with other Soviet Jewish leaders, feels that protest activities should be intensified throughout the world, but not the kind that would needlessly alienate this important center of support for Soviet Jews. Specifically, any interference with cultural exchange would be counter-productive for Soviet Jews on that score.

For these reasons, the JCRC supports the cultural exchange program, and would consequently oppose any efforts to impede it.