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Doublespeak and Anti-semitism

In a recent issue of Izvestia, one of the major Soviet newspapers, there is a bitter complaint about President Reagan's meeting with Avital Shcharansky, the wife of the imprisoned Soviet Jew. Yu. Kornilov, a correspondent for TASS, wrote:

"It is not the first time that certain circles in the USA have been trying to rescue their paid agent Shcharansky... Zionist circles have also been actively using Mme. Shcharansky for exaggerating absurd anti-Soviet rumors...All these actions can hardly be considered anything else but an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of the USSR."

Izvestia will be further dismayed to hear that the American Congress is about to "interfere in the internal affairs of the USSR." There is a Lehman/Fisher resolution in the House of Representatives which strongly protests the recent sentencing of Viktor Brailovsky to 5 years in exile.

Brailovsky is a key refusenik leader who has been engaged in Jewish cultural activities. He was sentenced to 5 years for "defaming the Soviet State." He was specifically charged with defaming the Soviet State by declaring that there was discrimination against Soviet Jews!

Presumably that is one of those "absurd anti-Soviet rumors" to which Y. Kornilov referred. If anti-semitism is against the law in the Soviet Union, then anyone who says that Jews are treated badly in that country must be guilty of "defaming" the state--and obviously has to be sent into exile. The key to this simple riddle can be found in a remark that Secretary-General Brezhnev made a couple of months ago to

July 20, 1981--page 2

the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

"The national sensibilities and national dignity of every person are respected in our country," Brezhnev said solemnly. "The Communist Party has fought and will always take a determined stand against any attitudes alien to the nature of socialism such as chauvinism or nationalism; against any nationalist aberration, whether it is, say, anti-semitism or Zionism."

Now, there's a prime piece of Doublespeak. Anti-semitism is bad and so is Zionism--but since all Jews who insist on being Jews are to be ~~counted~~ counted as Zionists, then in practice, anti-semitism is socially acceptable and even recommended. That's not a new twist. Lenin outlawed anti-semitism--but at the same time outlawed the Jewish Bund, a socialist group which was explicitly non-Zionist, but wanted to maintain Jewish identity. In other words, the only good Jew is one who has become a non-Jew; and the anti-semitism which is outlawed is anti-semitism against such non-Jews.

So the production of anti-semitic books flourishes in the Soviet Union; in recent years between two and four dozen such books have been published annually by the official Soviet press. And, so, Soviet Jews, not being fools, want to leave, which compounds their crime. And this is a period when the Soviet Union is cracking down on such Jews.

At least 5 Soviet Jews are now awaiting trial. Most of them, such as Vladimir Tsukerman and Osip Lokshin of Vishinev face imprisonment simply for having engaged in peaceful protest about emigration policies.

July 20, 1981--page 3

Tsukerman and Lokshin participated in a May 30 march, and were arrested for "group actions which violate public order."

Sometimes, the local Soviet authorities become more imaginative. Stanislav Zubko of Kiev applied to emigrate 2 years ago, and has been subject to KGB harassment ever since. In May, police came to Zubko's house while he was away, and took its only occupant, his mother, to the police station for a couple of hours. The next day, they went back to the house and immediately "found" a brown substance which they said was a "drug", and a gun under the refrigerator. He is now charged with those two offenses.

But everyone knows what the arrest is really about, and the KGB wants them to know. These arrests and imprisonments are warnings to all Jews who don't know their place, and who spread "absurd rumors" that all is not well with Soviet Jews.

The Brailovsky imprisonment is such a warning--and that is why it is important to let the Soviet Union know that they're not fooling us, and that we are concerned about what is happening. That is the significance of the Lehman/Fisher resolution in the House of Representatives, and you might want to urge your Congressman to support it.