

SOVIET JEWS AND EVANGELICALS

The sexiest subject in America, since the presidential campaign, has undoubtedly been the evangelicals. This is partly because so many people have confused the Moral Majority, a right-wing political group, with the 30 million evangelicals in this country.

Most of those evangelicals disagree with most of the broad political positions of the Moral Majority. Indeed, the Moral Majority proved itself rather ineffective politically with the evangelicals, as evidenced by the fact that a smaller percentage of evangelical Protestants than of non-evangelical Protestants voted for the Moral Majority's presidential choice.

A group of evangelicals in Northern California has approached the JCRC for discussions about evangelical-Jewish relationships, which had been clouded by the image of the Moral Majority. And in Illinois, the second national conference of Evangelical Christians and Jews will take place on December 9, under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee, and the leading evangelical journal, *Christianity Today*. The subject will be pluralism.

Meanwhile, the evangelical Christians and the Jews in the Soviet Union have clearly discovered one thing in common: persecution by the Soviet regime. So far this year, 45 evangelical Baptists have been arrested because of their religion. Many others languish in Soviet prisons. One clergyman founded The Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers in the USSR -- and was sentenced to 5 years in a labor camp plus 5 years of exile.

All this is going on as a kind of mocking background to the Madrid conference of those who signed the Helsinki pledges on human rights and other matters.

To show their contempt for the pledge which they had solemnly signed, the Soviet Union took the occasion of the Madrid conference to arrest Victor Brailovsky, prominent Jewish activist. He had called a press conference to announce the hunger strike of 140 Soviet Jewish refuseniks. His wife reported that a KGB man told him, as he went off to the Butyrki prison in Moscow: "You won't survive a year in our prison camps, but a 3-year sentence will finish you off for sure."

The worst thing that can happen to an imprisoned person in the Soviet Union is to be forgotten. That is why many of us should develop the habit of taking fifteen minutes each week to write a letter to Soviet authorities about *some one*, with a copy to our Congressman. If you don't find a suitable name in the weekly Bulletin, call the JCRC or the Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry.

This week, you might write a few words about Brailovsky. All you have to say is that you hope that he will be released and allowed to leave, as a gesture of justice and humanity, and politely ask for a reply. Then, they will know they are being watched -- and the Congressman will know more about the state of affairs. One might as well write such letters to Consul General Alexander Chikvaidze, Soviet Consulate, 2790 Green Street, San Francisco 94123; your letter will be forwarded.

Next week, you may want to drop a few lines about Vladimir Voinovich, the novelist. Voinovich was expelled from the Writers Union 7 years ago. This past spring, he was given assurances that he could leave the Soviet Union. But, in a cat-and-mouse game, the authorities have continued to postpone the visa. He has been threatened, and he has suffered a severe heart attack. Voinovich recently wrote a letter to Soviet authorities, which was smuggled out of the Soviet Union, and should be required reading for all tyrants:

Earl Raab

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"Shameless bullies ... For quite some time your perfidy, your cruelty and your lack of principles has ceased to shock me. But I must admit that I never cease to be amazed by not only your lack of statesmanship, but by your lack of ordinary common sense. Sated with your own power, you do not want to recognize that your punitive measures towards an independent writer are not only limited, they are close to zero ... It is long past time for you to understand, if only from our country's history, that the more you torment a writer, the longer his books shall live and outlive not only himself, but his persecutors as well."

(Syndicated by the San Francisco Jewish Bulletin)