

## A Refusenik Odyssey<sup>1</sup>

After signing our wills in Steve Saft's<sup>2</sup> office, we proceeded to Kennedy airport to catch Swissair. Arriving In Zurich, we found a day room where we could take a nap. We arrived in Moscow at a quarter to four in the afternoon. The border guard in his little booth looked at me very carefully. After much looking at me and the photograph, he asked me to take my hat off, checked me, double checked me (I twirled my mustache to indicate that I was the same person as in the picture), and then allowed me through. We had some trouble getting luggage carts. Ingrid and I decided to go through customs individually with separate bags to maximize the chance of everything being O.K. and minimize their perception of the amount of stuff we were bringing in. In going through customs, I noted who was doing the inspecting, and chose the inspector, who due to his sparse hair seemed to be the oldest and who was indeed in charge. I got on the end of his line hoping he would want to finish with me quickly to go for "tea" break. He checked my small green carry-on bag, which had in it more camera supplies than one can imagine. It contained Dick Rush's<sup>3</sup> two cameras with extra zoom lenses, a Polaroid camera, my own camera and another extra zoom and a walkman. It was jam-packed. He double x-rayed it, but never asked me to open it. He did ask me to open one suitcase, took out a number of the children's books by Isaac Bashevis Singer that the Conference<sup>4</sup> had asked me to take, picked up Chaim Potok's book *"Wanderings - A History of the Jews"* and said to me, pointing to the cover, *"This is the wall of Christ"?! I pleaded total non-understanding of what he was saying. He finally put the books back after some further inspection, and did *not* mark the back of our visa with anything that had to be taken out of the country. Luckily, he did not come upon the oranges from Israel that I had stashed in another suitcase. Ingrid had already passed through without any problem and without having any bag opened at all, although I wasn't sure of that. I had a fantasy of her being interrogated by the KGB,<sup>5</sup> all the contents of her suitcases strewn on the floor, explaining who Sean Bloom in Dublin<sup>6</sup> was and why he was*

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<sup>1</sup> Written with the gracious assistance of my wife Ingrid, upon our return from the USSR in 1988  
It obviously could not be published at the time. It is presented here as it was written then.

<sup>2</sup> Our lawyer for this purpose.

<sup>3</sup> The Reverend Richard Rush, a Protestant minister and beloved personal friend, and friend of our people,  
Who contributed many items for us to take into the Soviet Union. He appears in this book in another  
Context in Ch.10.

<sup>4</sup> The "Conference on Soviet Jewry", under whose auspices and direction we were going.

<sup>5</sup> The Soviet secret police.

<sup>6</sup> "Sean" was Ingrid's creation, and had he existed, he would have had one swell Bar Mitzvah.

getting twenty-five Superdance USA T-shirts, lipsticks, jeans and eye shadow for his Bar Mitzvah.

**INGRID:** Since I acted totally incompetent in not knowing what I was doing they might have let me through without too many problems.

**JHB:** I changed some money at the bank as per instructions, \$100.00 and got the almost ludicrous sum of sixty Rubles for it. At the black market rate, which we did not trade at all, we would have gotten three to four hundred Rubles.

We then proceeded to the Intourist desk and they whisked us quickly in a rather old, black Volga sedan right in to Moscow to the Intourist Hotel. We went in along very, very wide roads, the car just cruising along. We only realized later that the pedestrians had all been put underground. They were in underpasses. Our car seemed to just move along with virtually no red lights until we arrived at the hotel. Ingrid, on the way in, made the first use of our cigarette lighters. We had picked up a couple of packs of disposable cigarette lighters in our last couple of days in the States that cost \$2.99 for five. They had a two-dollar rebate on them so each one ended up costing twenty cents. I suppose we chose giving lighters instead of cigarettes as tips to put the burden of guilt on the person lighting up. To watch the car driver's face light up when he was given this "souvenir" of America was an incredible experience that was repeated each time we dispensed a lighter. Lipstick, eye shadow and pantyhose served the same purpose for the women. At the Intourist, we were assigned to room 1830 which luckily turned out to have a tired, old Toshiba air conditioner. 1830 was a two-room suite, one front room and one room for the bedroom since we had deluxe accommodations by Russian standards; there was a little refrigerator in the suite. We discovered just now lucky we were to have the Toshiba when we learned from sweltering tourists that most of the rooms in the hotel were not air-conditioned and we were in the middle of a heat wave with temperatures in the nineties. It also served as a noise cover for us when we inadvertently blurted out something that we should not have said. Throughout the entire stay in Moscow and Leningrad, the temperature varied in the 90 to the 100-degree range. There was a day or two in Leningrad that was over 100 degrees.

After settling in a bit I went out of the hotel to make my first call as instructed. Of course in looking for a phone booth, I turned right and had to walk about three blocks. A left turn, (no doubt appropriate in the USSR) would have revealed a booth 30 yards away. I thought a one Kopec piece, given to me by Steve and Marilyn

Kushner<sup>7</sup> at our stateside briefing, would do the job. Sometimes it did. Sometimes not. Only later did I realize that it took two Kopecs at least to do the job and the fact that one sometimes worked was a comment on the vagaries of the telephone system. Valery Engel, the Historian was to be my first contact. I did know his number 281-1772 by heart...(secret agent 0018). I had with me a credit card sized, secret coded computer address list which broke down completely a couple of days later. I was reduced to using Ingrid's tiny white address book in which we had coded the phone numbers. I called and a woman answered who did not speak English very well, and said that Valery would be back at 9p.m. I then tried to reach Yuri Sokol and some others but got no answer. To pass the time and do our tourist thing, we walked into Red Square, viewed the Kremlin, saw those onion churches-St. Basil's, all of which were just across the street. It turns out that Lenin's tomb and the Kremlin were closed because of the 19th party congress. We have no recollection of eating supper that day or for that matter, other days as well. Bringing foodstuff into Russia was very, very useful. We laughed when we packed peanut butter, Triscuits, granola bars, dried fruit, etc., yet those items turned out to be invaluable. It's very hard to find places to eat in this large metropolis. I went back to call Engel again, did reach him and he said that he could see me Sunday night at 9 o'clock. I got a bit nervous because, though it was only two days later, it seemed an eon away. I decided to call someone else and tried Chelenov,<sup>8</sup> - no answer - tried Gutman, - no answer and then tried Sergey Vainshtein. I reached Sergey, but he was leaving for Leningrad the next day for vacation. It seemed everyone, even Refuseniks were on vacation. In some desperation, I asked him if there was someone he would suggest that I might contact. He then suggested that I call Lev Gorodetsky.<sup>9</sup> I called and his wife answered. She arranged for us to meet at metro station "Aeroport" the next morning at 9:30 a.m. in the center of the platform. I asked how we would recognize him? She assured me that he would recognize us. At 9:30a.m. the next morning we went to the center of that specific platform, when a man in a rather beaten up shirt and old Levi corduroy pants approached with a big button on his chest that said "כֹּשֶׁר"<sup>10</sup>. He introduced himself and we proceeded to walk with him to his apartment. On the way Lev told us that his father had not agreed to his leaving for Israel so he was not technically a 'Refusenik', but he was hopeful that his father would eventually do that and he could then apply to leave. He told us that he was the president of the *Igud Hamorim*, a group of fifty Hebrew teachers in the Soviet Union, who had organized themselves to improve the teaching of Hebrew and history, and fight Neshirah (going to America

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<sup>7</sup> My colleague, Rabbi Steven Kushner and his wife Marilyn, had briefed us extensively on what we needed And how to behave while inside the USSR. Their advice was extremely competent and useful.

<sup>8</sup> Chelenov, Gutman Vainstein were all active in the refusenik movement, and were on my list to contact.

<sup>9</sup> Lev though not on my list was a truly lucky find. We have remained friends to this day.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew for kosher.

instead of Israel). I thought that although he was not on my list, he was a lucky find, what with my own background in Jewish education and being Chairman of the Bureau of Jewish Education in Bridgeport. When we entered his rather modest apartment, we met his wife Katya, also a Hebrew teacher, who was nine plus months pregnant. We talked about Hebrew teaching, their hope for legalization, their teaching needs, the fact that Eugene Voronov had been given a license as a Hebrew teacher but that it was then withdrawn illegally. Lev is 41 and this is his second marriage. Katya has two children, a four year old with Lev and a ten year old from a previous marriage. The hope is that this new baby will be a boy. (A boy Ariel was born on July 5, 1988 .) They served us something that looked like orange drink. We started to distribute Dick Rush's Pentax camera, one of the Superdance USA T-shirts, one of Irwin Peck's<sup>11</sup> gold necklaces, some cosmetics, some pantyhose, and a tape player, though it became quite clear that the tape player was the least useful of things because what they needed were tape recorders, (more about that later...) a couple of tapes, a blouse, magic markers, etc., etc., Lev asked the camera's worth so that he could know how much it would bring to forward the work. Lev's single minded thrust was to forward the work of the *Igud Hamorim*. He was concerned that The National Conference start to deal with the Igud Hamorim in a coherent way to get supplies, lectures and equipment to them. Lev had been a computer engineer before he got into Hebrew teaching a number of years back. The copy of Byte magazine that was originally for someone else was given to him and he was thrilled. Lev was also thrilled when I gave him a picture of my daughter Rachel and myself in front of an armored personnel carrier.<sup>12</sup> He said he wanted the picture to reassure parents about their kids being in the army in Israel. He found it very important and inspiring that Rachel had such a wonderful experience in the Israel Defense Forces. He was also especially pleased, that as it worked out, the copy of the Jerusalem Post I gave him had a long article about Natan Sharansky, who had been a personal friend of Lev years earlier. As far as my lecturing and teaching were concerned, it turned out that the clandestine Hebrew schools, like the Refuseniks who went to their "dachas", also broke for the summer so teaching was not possible.

Ingrid had indicated some interest in an artist that Pat O'Reagan from her school knew. Lev called and we were on our way to an artist's studio to see some magnificent work. One print Lev actually ended up buying as a gift for us by paying what turned out to be the awesome sum of 75 rubles. We found that these Refuseniks and activists were very, very generous. The artist inscribed his work for us. It was an

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<sup>11</sup> Irwin owned a Jewelry store and was most generous in providing Chais and Mogen Dovid jewelry.

<sup>12</sup> Rachel went to Israel to escape the divorce her mother and I were going through. She joined the army and had a distinguished career being chosen "Outstanding Recruit" and later, Outstanding Soldier. She was given a prime assignment teaching young men to drive and handle armored personnel carriers.

interesting studio in that there was some wonderful primitive work that the artist refused to sell and some work that was a gross satire on Stalin, which we thought was dangerous but they did not. He put in our package a picture of one of the satires of Stalin and Lev wanted that picture for himself. It had, as matter of fact, been printed in "Der Spiegel," a German magazine. Lev asked us to meet again at 4:00p.m. at a different subway station, Mayakovskaya, and said he would take us to something special.

We returned to our hotel after noon and ate at the buffet. Ingrid then inquired at the desk as to the location of the nearest Marriage Palace. The information clerk was stunned that any foreign tourist would be interested in that, but did locate where the nearest Marriage Palace was and told us how to get there by metro.

**INGRID:** About The Marriage Palace. A wedding takes place in a designated area every ten or fifteen minutes. We had a bit of difficulty finding the Marriage Palace at first, but we just followed brides and that's how we got there. They had several rooms that had nice upholstered furniture and somebody would stand there and ask for the couple's vows and they would get their official stamp and a short lecture. We asked a young couple if they wanted us to take their Polaroid picture. They were really rather frightened and didn't want to do it until Jack took a picture of me and handed it to me rather ostentatiously. They then said OK and we took Polaroid pictures of one of the couples. They were absolutely excited to get them, gathering around the developing picture and chatting rapidly about it. It may have been the most exciting thing that had happened to them on that day besides getting married. We also gave the bride lipstick and the groom a lighter. Their faces lit up and they felt that they were really great presents. In return, the bride's family gave me a rose, which I am seen with in the picture that Jack took in front of the Marriage Palace.

**JHB:** We met Lev at four o'clock that afternoon in the center of Mayakovskaya metro station. The metro is an absolutely fantastic underground achievement. Ingrid noted that it does have the feeling of the old movie, Metropolis. Moving hordes of blank faced workers to and fro. It is filled with polished marble statuary and runs very efficiently. We met Lev there and went to what was going to be a demonstration at Pushkin Square. I asked Lev how he knew there was going to be a demonstration. "*Word of mouth*" was his reply. As it was described by some of our new friends, Pushkin Square is now Moscow's Hyde Park. There were people there with banners asking for new political parties to be formed and hordes and hordes of police controlling the crowds in a more benign way than ever before. The police showed no weapons of any kind, but they did sometimes carry people away into vans and moved them with some force. There were a lot of loudspeakers interrupting the orators

drowning them out saying that, "*You have to clear out...time has elapsed*". These demonstrations would not have been possible a year or two ago. It was in Pushkin Square that we met Victor, who was an important part of our experience in Russia. He is a stocky, heavy bearded, Georgian fellow who looked like he could have ridden out of the Cuban hills with Castro. He wore a blue hat imprinted with "*Sun Country*" on it. He had studied English for only two months. He was sometimes hard to understand. He sometimes had to search for words, but he was going to speak English no matter what. He made himself remarkably well understood.

**INGRID:** As a foreign language teacher I learned something very important. Victor said that he has no passive knowledge of English, he uses everything, every word and that I think is a wonderful statement.

**JHB:** We did not know just how important Victor would be to us. He was apparently Lev's protégé. He indicated to us that although he was from Tbilisi in Georgia, he was going to Leningrad where his wife, whom he had married a short time ago, lived. Victor is 28 and his wife Elena, whom we met later, is 21. Now, you would not want to meet Victor in a dark alley. He is very husky, very strong and is afraid of no one. Like Nachman of Bratslav, he says, - "*It is crucial to not be afraid*".

At Pushkin Square, we had our first contact with "Pamyat" (Memory) which is an anti-Semitic Russian group devoted to purging Russia of the Jews, claiming that all that is bad in Russia has happened because of the Jews. Glasnost has given them free speech as well. We watched Victor and a young man from Baku, who had already received permission to leave, get into discussions with these people. Some had small tape recorders to tape the ongoing argument. The demonstration overall was really very impressive. The Jews at Pushkin Square with us, some of them identified by the Mogen Dovid's around their necks, were all astonished at how much arguing and discussing was going on.

**INGRID:** Unfortunately, I found the need to go to a bathroom at that point and it was almost impossible to find such luxury. Lev took me through I don't know how many streets to find a public bathroom that was closed for the day or week...who knows. We then continued quite a distance to come to a hotel. Natives of Russia are not allowed to go into these hotels. We had a confrontation there so that I could go in and use the facilities. Life is very difficult in Russia.

**JHB:** After being with Victor and this other young man from Baku for some time, we became concerned that Lev and Ingrid had been blocked off by the police and

could not get back to us. The police would systematically block off a part of the crowd, letting people out, but not back in at a specific point. They finally did return from their jaunt through the city of Moscow in search of sanitary facilities

**INGRID:** Lev pretended that he was my Intourist guide, and I screamed that my husband was in there and we were able then, to return.

**JHB:** you can imagine an Intourist guide with a big button on his chest saying Kosher in Hebrew letters!

We then went to a park to relax a bit. We had one of the endless, endless, endless glasses of apple juice that we had in Moscow. Lev treated us to that apple juice followed by some ice cream. We sat in the park observing busloads of blue shirted police. Lev said that he would make contact with Ilana Marmostein,<sup>13</sup> whom I had called the night before unsuccessfully, and that Victor would take us to Ilana's house since Lev couldn't be away from his nine plus months pregnant wife very often. We started off on a 50-minute trip to Ilana's. First by metro, then by tram, and then walking. Ilana's apartment, actually her mother's, was in the poorest condition of any that we saw. Her own apartment she said was across town, but she lived with her mother who had not given her permission to emigrate. Her mother had only retired this last month and was now considering giving the precious OK. We met Ilana, a chubby, vivacious 32-year-old woman who works as an editor. Her life and love is Hebrew and teaching it. She learned Hebrew from a teacher who already emigrated. She is, from what we could see, a consummate Hebrew teacher. She showed us, over tea and a table full of cheese and cookies and such which hardly anybody touched, some of her work; poems in Hebrew and translations into English, songs she had written and photos of Purimspiels<sup>14</sup> in her apartment. She sang us a little song about teaching an in-utero child to be quiet in this difficult land.

**INGRID:** She was also saying that her salary as an editor was very minimal, and as a Hebrew teacher she said that you don't get the same fees that other teachers get for tutoring. It is more like an almost voluntary position for voluntary payment.

**JHB:** It was Ilana who made what seemed to be a totally absurd request, which was to get a machine for dubbing tapes at the Beriozka, the hard currency store. I was getting increasingly concerned that the kind of stuff we had brought in for Hebrew teaching was not as useful as it might have been. The same way that I had dubbed my

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<sup>13</sup> A devoted early childhood Hebrew teacher.

<sup>14</sup> Light plays and farces presented for the holiday of Purim.

tapes at home, they could have dubbed their tapes. If we had brought in a small tape recorder, a little larger than a walkman, a pair of them, one for Ingrid, one for me, with headphones and some patch cords, and an A C converter/transformer, we would have had a useable tape-dubbing unit with no problem.

**INGRID:** She also wanted an invitation to Israel sent to her official address.

**JHB:** We then returned with Victor to our hotel. It was a long trip on the bus on this late summer night in Moscow. Victor said as we rode the bus that "he was not very "Shabbat" and I wondered what it meant to him to be "Shabbat". We later discovered the depth of his commitment. He talked about his library in Leningrad and how they lent Haggadahs for Passover and hoped that they would be returned. I told him that I had brought a Haggadah along to add to his storehouse. We talked about Tbilisi Jewish Life, his affection for Lev, his thoughts about Jewish Life In Russia and were soon back at the Intourist, having passed Pushkin Square, where the demonstration begun seven hours earlier was still under way. We had a Pepsi with him and he was off to Leningrad. He gave us his number which we could reach when we arrived there. We asked him to contact Mikhail Blank<sup>15</sup> so that they could set up some teaching sessions which was, after all, what I had come for. We shook hands, hugged each other - Shalom -till Wednesday. Ingrid and I trudged upstairs to the 10th floor tearoom to get a bite to eat. We had had no supper. So ended one of the longest and fullest days I can imagine.

Sunday morning we started out to walk past the Kremlin and down to where the Intourist desk had showed us the synagogue was. It was even starred on their map, a six-pointed star no less. We started out the wrong way and ended up walking past the Kremlin and along the Moscow River, which looked polluted. It was hot and dusty. We came to the synagogue, went inside where we were met by a little old man. We had been told that any donations to the synagogue were pointless since they "*go directly to Gorbachev.*" We saw a man who was fairly young and vigorous apparently the chief Rabbi of Moscow, but he too is a KGB<sup>16</sup> informant. We went into the main synagogue, tried to take a couple pictures of the inside, when a young man by the name of Roman Barulin came over to us wearing, of all things, a Eugene O'Neill Theater Center (located in Connecticut) T-shirt. He started to tell us about his own status. He was beginning to learn some Torah. His father did not live with his mother, and refused to give him permission to emigrate, but that he was still trying to get out. He also wanted a letter of invitation. He was a short, rather

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<sup>15</sup> A Refusenik who was on my Leningrad list.

<sup>16</sup> The notorious Secret Police of the USSR.

charming young man making his way in English. I wondered about the presence of informers and such in the synagogue, but it turned out that Roman knew Lev, and Lev did indeed vouch for him the next time we saw him. We pulled out of our bag of supplies another Superdance USA T-shirt. It is useful to understand that the T-shirts apparently go for between 50 and 60 Rubles there, so it's quite a significant gift. We also gave him one of the little silver Mogen Davids that Irwln Peck had given us. His face absolutely lit up. We took pictures with him and he gave us a big hug and kiss at the end of our visit.

**INGRID:** He also told us about anti-Semitism in Moscow; that the Jewish cemetery had been vandalized and that very few policemen came to do anything about it. In fact, they suspect that the police may have been helping in the matter. We heard a lot about anti-Semitism.

**JHB:** He also mentioned that people had come to throw stones at the synagogue and that they had to organize an informal patrol there.

We spent the rest of the time Sunday afternoon walking around, looking at the Bolshoi theater, going under underpasses, up from underpasses, down into underpasses, walking around the Kremlin and that kind of thing. Much of anything of interest was blocked off because of the 19th party congress.

Then came one of the fun experiences in our Russian odyssey, the kind of experience couples tell each other in the presence of the grandchildren. Ingrid had found the Operetta theatre which was a significant "turn on" for her. We were looking at the billboard of the Operetta Theatre trying to figure out what was playing. A woman with a minimal knowledge of English said she could not translate the whole thing, but the last word was mouse. Ingrid convincingly said, "*I don't know any operetta that has the word mouse in it*".

**INGRID:** Later on I went back to the Intourist office at the hotel and had them translate to me what was playing. I found out that it was *Die Fledermaus*. That is my favorite operetta of all and I got very excited about the whole thing. They had first given me a different date for the *Schoen Egalite* which played that night and I went to that too. I love opera and operetta.

**JHB:** But she's *never* heard of any operetta with the word mouse in it!

**INGRID:** Plus, the Intourist office does not push this because usually tourists are not interested in it. Theater is very cheap there and if you go by yourself to the theater

you can manage to get tickets in all kinds of different ways. Intourist would rather sell you the Bolshoi Theater where you can see an opera for forty or fifty bucks. Actually, the best tickets are somewhere around three or four Rubles apiece if you go there personally, if you can get the tickets. We figured out that there are little pavilions where you can buy theater tickets. They actually post them on the window. They hang them facing outside so you can see what kind of tickets are available. I did get tickets to the Schoen Egalite that night. Of course I also tried hard to find tickets to Die Fledermaus. We went from ticket booth to ticket booth and all they had were some for 70 Kopecs each which would have put us in the peanut gallery, right under the roof. We bought two of the 70 Kopec tickets and continued to search. They were sold out on Sunday for Monday night's performance.

**JHB:** Sunday night I went to meet Valery Engel, as per my first phone call. (I had also tried the first night to reach Sokol, but had been hung up on a couple of times. Apparently he is a very difficult man according to the others. Though to this moment, I'm not sure if it was he who yelled at me. His books were given to Lev for transmission to him.) Someone had given me incorrect instructions on the metro and I was half an hour late. It turns out that I was also half an hour late at the wrong stop. I phoned Engel. He asked where I was and said I was at the wrong stop, but he would come to meet me. I imagined that the head of the Jewish History seminar, who conducted learned historical seminars every week in Moscow, was a man in his forties or fifties. I was stunned to see a twenty-seven year old young man walking up to me. He took me to the apartment of his wife whom he had recently married. The apartment was up to date, clean, pleasant, though the public entrance ("if it belongs to everyone, it belongs to no one") was on its way to decrepitude. Engel is trying to incorporate Jewish studies legally into the system. He needs historical periodicals, books, etc. To my surprise, he showed me that sometimes materials, even books, could come through the mails. He showed me a book which I had at the last minute left home, for fear that I would look like a bookmobile going through customs. We speculated that perhaps they'd let it through because it didn't say anything Jewish on the cover. He also had a letter from Jonathan Sarna of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. I never did meet his wife who apparently is quite shy. According to what Lev told me later on, she is not an activist. Engel avoided army service, which would have given him "access" to secrets and would have prevented him from leaving the country later on, by faking a depression, being admitted to a psychiatric hospital, and given anti-depressants which did indeed depress him. He said that since he has come out of the hospital, he is much less fearful of what will happen to him. He even thinks that he can get a sponsor for his work at the University. For his dissertation he wants to work on the Jewish Factor in Russian Foreign Relations, immigration and the like. He is a rather stiff pedantic type, with whom one has to

work very hard to get a laugh. I could imagine him as a stern professorial type in his forties. He runs the history seminars every Thursday night although now, of course, it was "on break" so nothing could be done as far as my teaching. I gave him the encyclopedia in Russian and some of the tapes that I had. I also carefully placed one Jaffa orange on his desk. He smiled! He also indicated that a tape-dubbing machine would be very, very useful and wanted an English/Cyrillic typewriter. I returned to the hotel close to one a.m., a metro veteran by now, trudging through underground passes, and arriving at the Intourist in a pouring, heat relieving rain. On Monday we went to the GUM department store.

**INGRID:** I don't know why I get to contribute when it comes to shopping, but it is a huge place, very impressive. It's like a mall and every hallway is a different color. It's glassed to the sky with ironwork in different colors in different hallways and fountains at intersections. There were hundreds of shops. There were people standing in lines. In fact, people were standing in line wherever you went. You ended up standing in line wherever there was a line because you were wondering whether something could be had. Finding anything worth having was lucky. We had learned that in our constant "hot" pursuit of mineral water or anything to drink or eat. The GUM Department Store was very interesting, but you would never want to buy anything there.

**JHB:** On Monday evening I was supposed to have an appointment at 6 p.m. with Lev to transfer a letter from the *Igud Hamorlm* to The National Conference on Soviet Jewry. Lev had told me about wanting to do that, but wanted to consult with his associates first. Someone had said that there was a good French meal at the International Hotel. We were looking for a meal, would do anything for a meal, but we ended up at the wrong metro stop and walked to the wrong hotel, *The Ukraine*, a Stalinist behemoth with spires reaching to the sky. We went in, sat down in the dining room, and promptly got thrown out. Outside again, with one of our take along meals, bread and cheese from breakfast, we found a pineapple drink stand and ate a 3 o'clock lunch. Then came one of the lucky events for the activists and not so lucky for my pocketbook. We were walking across the street toward the metro when we saw a window display. It was a Beriozka, a hard currency store. We walked in to look around and to perhaps get a fur hat for Ingrid or something and there they were - tape-dubbing machines! I was ready to buy one at that point, but they would not take a credit card for the Sharp, which was small enough to put in my green bag. There was a Sanyo, which was bigger. Actually it was a large "ghetto blaster". I was nervous about schlepping it into and out of the Intourist Hotel past the inspector at the door, so I decided to wait and talk to Lev about it. I met him at six in front of the Intourist, and walked with him around the corner to a park bench. He showed up with

an immense, empty rather moth-eaten leather carrying bag. He handed me the letter, wrapped in a Russian newspaper. Lev indicated to me that the letter should really be destroyed before I left the Soviet Union since, if it was discovered at the border, it could get him and his co-signers into significant difficulty. I exchanged things with him for his wife Katya, including the lovely house robe from Joan Rosenbaum<sup>17</sup>, dungarees for Lev's child, some T-shirts, a whole bunch of stuff that would be useful to sell and many books. We didn't know which books to leave for Leningrad. We also gave him a package for Ilana of Hebrew teaching texts, magic markers, pantyhose and gave both Lev and Ilana a Jaffa orange. First Lev turned it down, but when I told him where it was from, his face lit up. We were sure that Ilana, in passionate love with anything Israeli, would be ecstatic over a Jaffa orange. They turned out to be really significant gifts. I told Lev that the Beriozka had a dubbing machine and he suggested that we meet once more the next day at a metro stop and go to the Beriozka.

That night it was time for Die Fledermaus. All we had were those 70 Kopec tickets which might have been nowhere, but then Ingrid moved into action.

**INGRID:** I again went to the box office checking for better tickets. This was about fifteen minutes before the start of the show. The box office lady said, "*nyet*," no way, there were absolutely no tickets available. I pulled out a pair of pantyhose and pushed the 70 Kopec tickets over to her with the pantyhose and all of a sudden, the best tickets in the house appeared, which we happily took and the lady happily took the pantyhose. We were sitting in third row orchestra. It seems that a whole bunch of tickets were kept there just in case somebody from the Congress might be stopping by to see an operetta. Die Fledermaus was of course great fun since we know it very well, but they added a lot of talking and took out two of the most important songs. I can't really tell why, but one of them was Prince Orlofsky, the Russian Count's song where he says that he loves to invite guests and he likes to drink and he likes to throw glasses around and he'll throw the guests out in case they are not having a good time. I wonder if taking out the song has something to do with their alcohol problem. They should not be drinking all the time. Maybe it had to do with the line "*Chacun a son gout*" (each to his own taste) - not appropriate in the workers paradise.

Gorbachev seems to have done something about the alcohol situation in Russia. Apparently there has been a lot of alcohol abuse. As Victor pointed out, there were a lot of alcoholics and children of alcoholics who didn't seem to fare well. There were a large number of birth defects as a result of the alcohol problems in the country.

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<sup>17</sup> Another contributor to my smuggling cache.



We then decided that since we were on the kind of mission we were on, we should visit Gorky Park, scene of the novel. It turned out to be a rather grungy amusement park, not very well taken care of. We went there, took a boat back to Red Square, met some East Germans from Dresden, Ingrid's birthplace, and went back for what we had hoped would be a delightful meal at the hotel. We had no civilized meal since we arrived except for the buffet at the Intourist. Monday night, we made arrangements that meant our going in to eat at 7 p.m. on Tuesday to a restaurant in our hotel that accepted Rubles for payment. We were absolutely sure that we would be finished by 10 o'clock when we had to leave the hotel to go to the railroad station. We were seated promptly at a table with an American Pakistani businessman and two Russian prostitutes. We were told by another single tourist that the particular prostitutes, who congregated around the Moscow Intourist and the Hotel Leningrad as well, were not considered to be on a low level in terms of Russian society, and that most of them were KGB agents anyway. At our table the American Pakistani and the two young prostitutes were sitting eating caviar and sturgeon and indeed seemed to be enjoying themselves despite their not knowing English and him not knowing Russian. This was followed by other entertainment, but no meal. Our meal was served at about two minutes of ten as we were leaving. We walked out in a huff and had to pay about 30 Rubles (\$50.) for that non-meal. We were feeling hungry and furious about being ripped off. At 10 p.m., the transfer to the Leningrad station was prompt. While waiting to get on the train,- whom should we meet, but our next door neighbors from Fairfield. The porter who had moved our bags was to get 30 or 60 Kopecks, but the lighter I gave him was so exciting that he did not bother about his fee.

**INGRID:** As usual Jack was hungry and was searching around for something to eat and was tired of granola bars. He went into the station to find something to drink and came out with a whole big cake that he bought and we had for breakfast the next morning on the train. He saw a line, got on it and what should there be at the beginning of it but a cake!

**JHB:** It is interesting to note that we were in what is referred to in Russian as "Soft Class", the Russian version of First Class (it reflects the class struggle.) Soft Class was an overnight sleeper, a train from the thirties or forties, with a stewardess who served tea twice.

We arrived in Leningrad Wednesday morning. Again, Intourist was efficient. They took our stuff and moved us quickly, although Ingrid almost got lost talking to a couple of Germans. We arrived at the Hotel Leningrad at 7:30 a.m. Another lighter

went to the driver who smiled profusely. We were shown our room at the Leningrad, which was sumptuous. A large living room with a bedroom attached, a view of the river with the destroyer *Aurora*, a hero of the Revolution, and a view of all of 18th and 19th Century Leningrad. As soon as we got in, we had breakfast and then went to find a telephone. As usual, we took a right turn instead of a left where there was a phone about 20 yards away. We ended up walking across a bridge into another part of Leningrad to make the first contact. Victor had promised to call Blank ahead of time to organize a teaching session. I had been unable to organize any groups in Moscow to teach anything because all of the underground schools were on vacation as well as the regular schools. I called Blank, but got no answer, called Victor and did get an answer. He said that he had been trying to call Blank, without any luck, but he would meet us. We arranged to meet at a metro station around 2 o'clock. We spent the morning walking around a bit, lost and feeling irritable in the oppressive heat. We went back to the hotel, got a map of Leningrad, walked to the closest metro, the Lenin Square Station, which is also the Finland station of Revolution fame. We went a couple of stops and met Victor again, easily identifiable by his "Sun Country" cap. He took us to his home at the far end of the Metro line. The apartment was quite clean although the public areas had that low income housing look. The apartment itself had a double door. One door opened out and the inside door, upholstered, opened in. This was Elena's parents' apartment where Victor has been living with his wife Leah (Elena Dynina) without really having permission to live in Leningrad. As soon as Victor got into the apartment, he put on his own Kipah (skull cap.) It had been hard to tell from his behavior the previous Shabbat, when he rode with us, how observant he really was. He had said then that it did not feel like Shabbat and his sun country hat was, at best, ambiguous, perhaps only protection against the relentless sun and not there to honor the living God of Israel.

Leah had started to learn Hebrew at sixteen and now her Hebrew being reasonably accomplished, is one of the leading Hebrew teachers in Leningrad. Leah is also a graduate of a Culinary Institute in Leningrad. She is planning to open a cooperative where Jewish dishes will be served. We were told that Leah's parents objected to her leaving. Leah described her father as a very simple workingman. It was not clear what her mother did, but she too objected to Leah's applying to leave. The walls of their apartment were decorated with posters of Israel, anything that could be gotten in; art posters, tourist posters, maps, a potpourri of books, parts of book sets, orthodox prayer books, conservative Haggadahs, a potpourri library. Anything that anyone had brought in. We gave them the large Mezuzah we had brought, tapes, and the ever-present Superdance T-shirt, (one of the twenty-five we distributed). Leah opened a cabinet to put the cassettes away and revealed a mass of Jewish material.

We gave Victor, Carole Rubln's<sup>18</sup> "We Are One" Am Echad pin. Victor was absolutely thrilled and put it on immediately. Lev's protégé now had his own button.

Victor's story is rather interesting. He is being groomed by Lev to be sent to Tbilisi in Georgia to organize Jewish life. He sees himself as a "Jewish Life Organizer". He is not a Refusenik and has not applied as yet, although he seems strongly Zionist, and will only support those who are strongly Zionist. He organizes sending things to different parts of the Soviet Union. Lev is his mentor whom he respects immensely. He put on the button as a kind of homage to Lev whom we never saw without his Kosher button. To the best of my knowledge and understanding, Victor has only one Jewish parent, but he identifies so clearly that it is awesome. He is astonishingly knowledgeable in a wide variety of fields. A most unintellectual looking guy, he is clearly very, very bright. He and Leah had been married about a year. They talk from time to time about having to be in different places for a while to do their work. Victor earns some money by doing some very simple construction work, which the government cannot trace. His father from Tbilisi, who is apparently well to do, assists in supporting him. Victor's description of Tbilisi is of a very different kind of place than Moscow or Leningrad. He, of course, doesn't consider himself a Russian. None of the Jews do, but he even more so, being a Georgian. He describes Tbilisi as a place with 7000 Jews having three synagogues that are full, a community with *mikvehs*,<sup>19</sup> *shochets*,<sup>20</sup> kosher meat supply and a generally active Jewish Life.

We were not Victor's only visitors. While he was taking us around, his wife was meeting some people from Los Angeles. Even our next-door neighbors from Fairfield had indicated that a number of the people in their group had broken off from the tour to visit some Refuseniks, visits that mean an immense amount.

**INGRID:** Victor apparently came from a very interesting, very cultured family because his grandmother's uncle was a famous artist whose pictures hang in the Louvre of all places. I think his grandmother played the piano, which was very unusual for Tbilisi and that area of the world.

If there is anything that I remember best about Russia, it's probably spending half of the time in Russia on the subway, changing trains one way or another in a drafty, but not too hot environment while on top it was really very hot and dusty.

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<sup>18</sup> Another contributor to the cache.

<sup>19</sup> Ritual baths.

<sup>20</sup> Slaughterers whose specialty is kosher slaughtering.

**JHB:** As we were sitting there drinking tea, which helped quench our persistent Leningrad thirst, Victor and Leah said that they would try to organize a meeting for the next night so that I could do some teaching. I gave them some of the names I had on my list. They indicated that one had left for Israel. Some others were out of town, but they would do their best to put together a meeting. We then made arrangements for Thursday for Victor to take us to the Hermitage.

On Thursday morning we visited the Leningrad Choral Synagogue. The little lady, who spoke little English and to whom Ingrid gave some cosmetics and pantyhose, was most appreciative. We also saw a morning service going on at about lunchtime in the little Synagogue in the back of the main Synagogue.

We went to the Hermitage and saw a line seemingly a mile long. A lighter, a lipstick and word that we were foreigners, got us in immediately, no waiting, nor did any one on the line object. The Russians are used to more privileged folk getting preferential treatment. Inside we visited Ingrid's beloved Impressionists, were awed by the endless galleries, noting how poorly the paintings were kept. Yet this was truly one of the world's great museums. It was at the Hermitage that I was again struck by Victor's level of observance. We had become quite used to taking bread and cheese from breakfast and making sandwiches so that there would be something we could have at lunch. We offered him a cheese sandwich. He indicated that he could not eat it because he would have to say a blessing over it, which required the washing of hands. Nonetheless, he did enjoy the granola bar that we had and the dried California fruit we had been told to bring.

**INGRID:** The Hermitage must be one of the largest museums in the world. It was certainly very impressive. The rooms are gorgeous, but I was struck by how little care has been taken of some of the paintings. I have great affection for Impressionism and they do have some lovely Impressionist paintings, however, they are placed so that you can barely see them. Some have glass in front of them and the reflection ruins the viewing. Because of the heat they keep the windows open for ventilation, but the humidity is very bad for the paintings. Some of the oils seemed to be cracking and not in very good shape.

**JHB:** Upon returning from the Hermitage, Victor waited outside our hotel and I filled two large shopping bags he had with books. We were waiting for a taxi outside the hotel and I said something to Victor in Hebrew where someone behind us said, in Hebrew, "*Oh, you speak Hebrew.*" He turned out to be a Palestinian Arab, one of a group of six. They proceeded to hassle Victor about his *Am Echad* button, about his desire to go to Israel, about where he belonged and where they belonged. Victor, who

gives no "quarter" in any fight, started to get involved with them and I started to get concerned that they could easily see the titles of the books in the shopping bags and what might happen if this went too far. Victor wisely decided to withdraw from the confrontation. He came over to me and said, "I think that we have to go to a different taxi stand." I was relieved as we walked past the front of the hotel, hoping we would not be followed, not by the KGB this time, but by the Palestinians. Victor proceeded to the taxi. I was to come to his apartment two hours later in order to meet the group that he and Leah had assembled.

On Thursday night Ingrid went to the Kirov opera to see "The Betrothal in the Monastery" by Pushkin, with music by Prokofiev. I went to the meeting that Victor and Leah had set up at 7 p.m. for a large group. On the way there with a satchel full enough to give anyone a double hernia, we passed some police cars that had pulled up outside Victor's apartment block. I had another fantasy of the KGB in the apartment, being interrogated, asked what the T-shirts, lenses and cameras were for when Victor Interrupted my dark fantasy telling me that the cops were there probably because some guy, with too much vodka in him, had hit his wife - so we trudged on. I schlepped the suitcase out there vowing that I would bring it back empty.

Victor and Leah were quite apologetic that people were late. But gradually a group assembled. I started by meeting Alexander Blinov, who has been in refusal since 1979 and I thought was the longest Refusenik I was to meet, which turned out not to be so. Blinov, who has sparkling eyes, was there when I came. He used to be an engineer, who is now working as a foreman in a laundry boiler room, along with former criminals, drug addicts and the like. His wife, daughter and mother-in-law have emigrated to Israel. He was living alone with his cat "Chatul"<sup>21</sup>. In order for his wife and daughter to get out of the country, they had to go through a divorce. So Blinov is formally divorced from his wife who now has another name. His wife and daughter are now in Israel, his wife living in Halfa, and the daughter In Jerusalem attending the preparatory program of the Hebrew University. Blinov is a charming, delightful man just waiting to leave. I promised to call his wife In Israel and to do anything possible to assist him in leaving. He wonders what he's doing in Russia. He's hoping that by the time the next human rights delegation comes, that perhaps he'll be released at that point. He wonders, the way the other Refuseniks do, what possible use can he possibly be in Russia and why would they want to keep him anyway.

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<sup>21</sup> A rather generic name since Chatul in Hebrew means cat.

Victor and Leah had invited a rather mixed assortment of guests, one of whom called himself Jim Weiss. His father, a leading architectural designer in Leningrad, had had a stroke. He didn't say what his mother did, but he spoke to me in broken English, indicating that anything that I could do to help him get out of the country by himself, so that he could then help his parents get out, would be appreciated. He wasn't clear as to where he wanted to go, to the United States or to Israel. Victor drew sharp distinctions between people who wanted to go to Israel and people who wanted to go to the States. A young man, Vladmir, wanted to go to New York and was adamant about it. He wanted a letter of invitation, but Victor would not even allow me to take his name. A young guy who came with his wife and daughter is, rather unbelievably, a vegetarian in Russia. What he eats in the land of no vegetables is beyond me, yet he must be doing something right. His iron grip almost broke my hand. He was the most controversial of all the assemblage, recommending resettlement for the Arabs, fulminating against Gorbachev, Russia, etc. Victor loved him very much. He took the small Mezuzah I gave him with much appreciation. You would not call him orthodox in any shape, manner or form, yet he puts on t'fillin every day as a kind of demonstration of his own Jewishness in the Russian environment. A twenty-one year old young woman, Olga, a close friend of Leah's, had been in Leah's Hebrew class but missed class too often to learn any Hebrew. She is a very pretty young thing, who spoke only German. I could have used Ingrid's help talking with her. A young woman physician of twenty-five wanted to know what things were like in the United States for young women physicians of twenty-five.

A while later, Zachary Levin came in, a Refusenik from 1978 and an outstanding Hebrew teacher. He has a lot of his extended family, brothers sisters, etc. already in Israel. He reported that he was able to get some teaching materials more easily from Israel now than in the past. Glasnost is apparently making that easier.

We noticed during our trip that there were a number of different groups among the Russian Jews we met. Some were straight Refuseniks who have not been allowed to emigrate. Others were activists who had not applied for emigration and were interested in creating Jewish life in the Soviet Union. Still others wanted to emigrate anyplace outside of Russia not necessarily Israel or the United States.

The group was then organized to listen to a talk. It was hard to know what to tell them. My mandate from the National Conference was to push Zionism. A rather difficult one, since I am settled in Fairfield, Connecticut. I decided to tell the story of my own Jewish life In America and then to answer any questions. Speaking in Hebrew, translated by Zachary Levin and Leah Into Russian, I told them how my father had left Romania in 1914 with the border guard saying, *"that's one less*

*Goddamned Jew In Romania*". I told of my father's ambivalence about having chosen to go to America when his best friend went to Palestine. I told of my father's encouraging my brother Sol's going to Palestine in 1947, and my own history as a Zionist. I spoke of my day school education, having learned Hebrew at Camp Massad, six months in Israel in 1953-54 as a Hebrew teaching student, becoming a Rabbi as a result of those six months, a year in Jerusalem in 1969-70, doing a clinical psychology internship at Hadassah, regular visits thereafter, my daughter Rachel's spending her two years in Tzahal, resulting in her becoming Chayelet Mitztayenet (outstanding soldier), my daughter Rebecca's time in high school in Israel and her pre-army training, up to today. They asked me, "What was the most important thing about living in Israel?" I offered that it was the feeling of being at home, of having Purim and Passover in the streets and in the schools. I told them about our non-Jewish American friend, back in 1970, complaining about how left out she felt at Passover time and that our response was that that's how left out we feel at Christmas time. I offered that those over the years who settled in Israel did not do so because there was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, rather, because they wished to help the Jewish people live and survive creatively. There were different questions at the end of the short talk. Many about what should be done about the Arabs. Serge was adamant and demanded transfer. I noted how easy it was for the oppressed to become the oppressors. I stayed, guzzling tea and cookies until 11:30p.m. not realizing that these were the white nights of Leningrad, so it was like afternoon out. Indeed the night before, Ingrid and I awoke at 2:30 a.m, and saw something that we had only heard about. Looking out over the Neva River and seeing the midnight sun sitting there in the sky in the middle of the night. By 11:30p.m., I had totally emptied my satchel of everything that I had brought. Leah handled it all very well; putting everything in another room and having people go in and pick out what they wanted. I took the Carole Rubin Jewish jewelry and distributed it among the people in the room. Leah fell in love with a blue sparkling spangled blouse that had been Ingrid's and was now hers. A pair of jeans went that night though I know not to whom. I had brought some sugar substitute for Boguslavsky, but he had apparently left for Israel. So, Victor took some for his own father. I had also brought my last seven Jaffa oranges, which after numerous oohs and aahs were appreciatively and quickly devoured. So back I went to the hotel with a mercifully empty suitcase. I had kept my vow.

**JHB:** On Friday we went to see The Green Belt of Glory, which is a huge cemetery outside of Leningrad that dates from the siege of Leningrad. There are 500,000 people buried in these mass communal graves. Victor told us that in the Leningrad defending army there were many Jews, since Leningrad had a large Jewish population, but there is no mention of Jews specifically in either of the small

museums there. In Vilna, according to Victor, the regimental orders were given in Yiddish and of the ten or so Medal of Honor winners, six were Jews. That too, is not mentioned anyplace. The only way one can check that is, if you go to the museum in Vilna, you can see the actual copies of regimental orders in Yiddish. Victor noted that there is a systematic attempt to wipe out anything that is noted as Jewish in the Soviet Union.

Both Misha and Victor on separate occasions noted that Stalin truly hated Leningrad and wanted to have it destroyed, which is why he did not simply surrender it to the Germans. He preferred that the people be exterminated. Walking back from the great statue of Mother Russia, which dominates The Green Belt of Glory, we noticed a number of couples making a pilgrimage there immediately following their wedding ceremony, apparently a result of the Russian peoples' desire not to forget what happened.

We then returned to the center of Leningrad and Victor took us around Nevsky Prospekt, Leningrad's large, grand Boulevard. Leningrad had an additional problem for us, in that we could not touch the water. Gross warnings from the State Department that Montezuma's revenge would look like nothing compared to what would happen if we drank Leningrad's water. We were sufficiently frightened so that all that we would drink was bottled. Of course during the heat, our hotel ran out of mineral water, so all that was left was a sickly sweet soda pop, unless we used dollars at the hard currency bar, in which case we could get sickly sweet Coke or Sprite.

**INGRID:** The other half of our trip, we spent tracking down mineral water. It was a real "yucky" kind of water. We went all over town, once about 40 minutes out of our way to try to find some mineral water and ended up in a fine hotel, the Hotel Europeskya, and sat somewhere in a corner and found some mineral water on the second floor. You were just thirsty all the time and not a drop to drink.

**JHB:** It was on Friday that we ventured into the Europeskya in pursuit of that warm mineral water and managed to get Victor into a hotel he was not allowed to go into. During the day Victor was carrying around a magazine and he showed me a copy of an article written by the head of the Arab Communist Party in Israel, who is a member of the Knesset. The article was a negative one about Israel's arms sales to various countries in the world. Victor told me that he always read these articles "inside out", so that he would discover something about Israel by reading them from the opposite perspective as the author, since only negative articles were allowed to be printed in the Soviet Union about Israel. The arms sale article thus was read by Victor from the point of view of showing him how strong Israel is.

Victor had to go away Shabbat to visit with his in-laws at their Dacha. It is interesting to note that Shabbat begins at 1:00 a.m. on Saturday morning and ends at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. Victor suggested that I contact Misha Kazanevich, who is the longest (15 years) Refusenik in Leningrad and tied for the longest in Russia. Although already quite tired, I called Misha at 8 o'clock that night. I did the *"I'm a friend from America"* routine.<sup>22</sup> He responded, *"Oh Jack, Victor has told me all about you"*. He wanted to know if I could meet him at 9 o'clock, one metro stop short of Victor's place. Filling my green traveling bag again with T-shirts, tapes etc., and my zoom lens, which for some reason I had not taken to Victor's the night before, I set out. I was tired and saw an available cab after trudging to the Lenin Square station. The cab took me to the appointed Metro stop. It ended up costing five rubles, not marked on the meter. After waiting a few minutes I saw someone approach cautiously. We looked at each other and then looked away from each other. Then Misha approached and introduced himself. We started on the way to his apartment. He told me about his Refusenik status. Upon applying for emigration 15 years ago, he was thrown out of his job as an electronic engineer, became a porter, then a gatekeeper at a Pedagogical Institute. The boss of the Institute, a kindly man, said that he was too intelligent to be doing that kind of work. He took him inside to become a kind of night watchman/foreman. He told of employment papers being provided by friends to prevent his being arraigned on charges of parasitism. He told of destroying those papers immediately after using them so that those friends would not get into trouble. He told of his company's executives threatening him that because he was the first of their numerous Jewish workers who applied to leave. They would see to it that he would never get out. Until now, they have apparently succeeded. He told how he finally became a professional photographer, individually, without any government sanction, and having to give 71% of all his earnings to the state and was currently making about 150 rubles a month. He was being refused for secrecy and he said that the secrets for which he was being refused now appear in children's magazines. One of Misha's perplexities is, *"What do they want with me after 15 years of being a Refusenik? Are they keeping me for hostage?"* Upon repeated inquiry, he has received a number of letters back saying that his secret standing is still in effect. Maybe, he offered, the secret they are trying to hide is just how far behind the West they are. With a forlorn look on his face, he says, *"What do they want me for, of what use am I to them in this society?"* He received a letter from a Colorado congressman wishing him well and hoping that he would get out. Misha would appreciate more letters from congressmen

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<sup>22</sup> It was indeed a routine taught us by the Kushners on behalf of the National Conference.

from all over the United States. He thinks that it would be helpful. He also received an invitation to the 4th of July party at the American Embassy. They seem to be eager to help.

I had given away virtually all my camera equipment, except for my own camera and its zoom lens. I told him that I had a zoom with me and I hoped it would fit his camera. He asked what kind of camera I had and I said a Canon AE1. He indicated that he had a Canon body on which the zoom would fit perfectly. He was thrilled by the gift. We entered his apartment which was quite nice. It was an apartment that he had gotten with his wife and mother the year before he went into refusal. I met his 18-year-old daughter Janna who had lived since she was 3 years old in a state of refusal, a lovely young woman. The camera that he had, had been repaired numerous times. He said that he had taken over 400,000 pictures with it. He indicated that he would really appreciate it if a mechanical Canon camera could be gotten to him. Victor had told me that Misha produces books that the movement needs by taking photographs of the books and developing the negatives. He has his own dark room so has some control over what he can do. I told him of my problem with Lev's letter. He said he would take care of the letter and all the other written and printed material, all of the addresses, and letters of Invitation I had in my possession. He said that he would meet me the next morning and give it all back to me.

I was at his house for two hours and was quite tired, but was kept awake by a lot of tea. I met his daughter's boyfriend, a very tall, thin blonde young man, Alex, whose parents don't want him, as in so many cases, to consider emigrating for fear of never seeing him again. I wondered who Alex was. As they say he did not "look Jewish" but it was clear that Misha trusted him completely. As I was leaving I noticed on the wall of Misha's apartment a sticker that read Housatonic Community College, located in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I asked how he had received this. He then told me about Michael Stein, a photographer from Orange Connecticut, who had been to visit him. Misha then gave me the names of some people who had visited that I knew, Rabbi Alex Shapiro, and Rabbi Israel Dresner. I promised that I would send regards to all of them. At about midnight Misha escorted me out into Leningrad's White Night. He flagged down a passing car moonlighting as a cab, told him where I was going, and negotiated a price of 5 Rubles. The "cabby" had a Toyota sticker on his dash. We started talking about Toyotas. He joked that his Russian Zhigulli Fiat was his Toyota.

Misha met us the next day at the Lenin Square /Finland Station stop on the metro. He had with him the photographs of the important documents. Having photographed and developed them, he put them back in the canister, a bit of film hanging out, so it

looked like a new and unused Ektachrome film. He put back in its original box the American instructions and sealed the box so it looked like a new box of film. Having that film in my possession, enabled me later in the day, to burn Lev's letter, flush it down the toilet and do the whole spy trick. To be doubly sure, I had dictated the letter into the micro cassette which Ingrid brought home on her person from Russia. He was an invaluable help to **secret agent 0018**.

Misha then took us to where his daughter was selling tickets for a boat trip on the canals of Leningrad. Knowing the ticket seller, we went to the head of the line with no Russians objecting. I took some Polaroid pictures, which Russians were agape at and spent the entire day with Misha. The trip on the canals was exceptionally hot and steamy, with a high point when we passed the gate at which Misha had been a doorman. We walked along Nevsky Prospekt. Ingrid saw a lot of sidewalk painters and Misha kept telling me how important it was for Ingrid to see that as an artist. I used my newfound ability as a "Russian" to go into the Europeskya to get three bottles of warm mineral water and bring them out. I knew my sources. We sat outside in a little park and nibbled some more cheese sandwiches that we had brought from breakfast. Misha noted that we had passed, while viewing the sidewalk artists, a number of members of Pamyat - the anti-Semitic Russian Group- Memory, devoted to ridding the Soviet Union of Jews and Jewish influence. We then walked to the St. Isaac Cathedral, the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism, which was very plush inside. We found a menorah there which wasn't called a menorah. In terms of the entire exhibit, the space allocated for Judaism was miniscule. We went to another cathedral that was magnificent. A rainstorm struck while Misha and I went upstairs in the cathedral to view Leningrad from on high and Ingrid remained in the gardens outside. Towards evening we left Misha, agreeing to meet him the next morning with Victor. I told Misha that I had forgotten to take the pictures of Victor and Leah's wedding that I had traded for a picture of Rachel, Rebecca and me standing on The Mount of Olives with Jerusalem in the background, and a picture of Rachel in army uniform. Misha said he would tell Victor. Since he had been the photographer at the wedding, he had some pull.

We returned to the hotel, dressed quickly and took a cab to the Kirov Theater.

**INGRID:** I found at the Intourist office that they sold theater tickets to tourists. You never knew if you could get anything to ballets because they always told you that they were sold out for all kinds of groups way ahead of time. The only tickets that they might have would cost \$40 each for the Kirov. I found that when I was at the Kirov Theater, I got my tickets for a lipstick since the man was selling some tickets that he could not use. He didn't have any change for my Rubles so the lipstick did the

job. Just about the highest price was 3 Rubles and 50 Kopecs, about \$5.00. Those were the best seats in the house--from \$40 down to \$5.

**JHB:** We got tickets to the ballet, sat down inside in these lovely armchairs in the orchestra. Ingrid went through the program which seemed strangely, rather long and tried to decipher what was there. Swan Lake seemed to be there. Tchaikovsky's name appeared a suspiciously large number of times in Cyrillic letters, but we weren't quite sure. Finally the curtain went up and there we saw a picture of Lenin, a red star, a hammer and sickle and a whole presidium of people sitting on the stage. We wondered what was going on. It was the *graduation ceremony* of the Kirov Ballet School. After about an hour of ceremony and speeches and awarding diplomas, each of the graduate students came out and did their graduation ballet recital. That explained the multiple appearance of Tchaikovsky's name. We had excellent seats and it was an interesting though rather long experience. The cab we got back from the Kirov, a moonlighter, had an empty tank of gas. He stopped at a gas station which was closed. He then stopped a fuel truck. The two drivers, one empty of fuel, the other with a surfeit, yelled at each other a bit and our guy gave him a jerry can apparently agreeing to meet later and have some "people's" gasoline transferred to his private use. On the way back to the hotel we commented on what a nice city Leningrad was and he responded, *"yes, nice for you."* He asked if we would pay with a couple of dollars since he was collecting hard currency to buy a VCR.

On Sunday morning, Victor and Misha took us to visit an oddball artist living in a very sparse apartment/studio, by the name of Zev Chernoy. We were told that when we came to the courtyard we should not talk at all and certainly not English since he was afraid of being harassed. The apartment was furnished with several very rickety chairs, a bed that was made of wood with a thin mattress. Zev himself was an unusual looking person with long earlocks coming out from under his hat. He turned out to be a bicyclist who found our story of the 35-mile bike trip around the five boroughs of New York City awe-inspiring. He gave us a couple of his cards, one of which is going to be our New Year's Card. In addition to the Jewish work that he does, he also does work that concerns itself with the rights of other small obscure ethnic minorities, some groups having no more than fifteen people.

**INGRID:** What I remember about Zev is that he was in a very sparse apartment, though not terribly small for one person, considering Russia. Even his bed was hard. He had made all kinds of drawings that related to Israel in some way and they were all tacked up way out of eye level which I thought was sort of strange. He showed us samples of his work by showing us postcards that had been either drawn or

reproduced. He was also very interested in archeology and would like to have archeological books about Israel.

**JHB:** Later Sunday, Victor and Misha wanted to take us out to eat. On the way, as we were walking along looking for a place to eat, a man came up and asked Victor and Misha for a light. I noticed immediately that he, Victor, and Misha had gotten into a confrontation. This man had spotted them as Jews and started to make snide, anti-Semitic remarks. Victor positioned himself on one side of this man and Misha on the other. Later on, after the man left rather dejectedly, they spoke of other people whom they had had to "beat up" for such things. Victor is a person who will take nothing untoward from anybody. I asked Victor and Misha how this man knew that we were Jews. They offered that, "*The Russians can tell that without any problem at all.*" When we finally found a restaurant that was open, after a number were closed, the restaurant refused to serve us though it was totally empty. Victor and Misha said something to the person in charge and suddenly we were inside the restaurant. We asked if it was possible to get any watery Russian beer and were told "Nyet", that there was no possibility. Yet, shortly thereafter, the beer showed up. A can of pineapple juice was brought to the table, some smoked salmon, and some chicken salad. Victor, of course, washed before he ate and they then paid outlandish prices for having taken us out.

We walked on in the heat, finally arriving at the Leningrad Summer Garden, a park with endless statuary from Czarist times. Sitting there we emptied what remained in our bags, giving it all to Misha and Victor, including some of Irwin Peck's jewelry, and granola bars which Victor rapidly devoured. I don't remember if it was Victor or Misha who said how uncomfortable they were receiving Tz'dakah. I noted that what we were giving them was not in any shape, manner or form, Tz'dakah. They were on the front lines, bringing Jewish life up from out of the concrete of Russia, nourishing it, strengthening it, doing everything they could to have it grow. We were not in the front line, but were providing the supplies to enable that to happen and in no way should they think of it as Tz'dakah.

We headed back to the hotel. Victor and Misha waited outside the hotel while we went in. We packed everything else that we had into a suitcase. We went down to the hard currency bar, picked up a can of Coke and a can of Sprite and went out to give them what we had which was virtually everything in the room including my camera covering and my flash since Misha could use that. Misha, who had insisted on giving us something, had given us a small Russian box. Misha asked me if we had a slide machine which we do, but never use, and gave us slides of portraits from the Hermitage. They drank the Coke, the first one that they ever had. They said that they

would be back at 9:00 P.M. with the pictures of Victor's wedding and that they would call into the hotel. I didn't want them to take that risk, so I was sitting outside the hotel around 9 wondering whether I would indeed get the picture, when I saw two figures trudging along. One with the distinctive blue "*Sun Country*" hat and a shorter figure with him. They were coming with a bunch of flowers for Ingrid. I went in to call her down. We stopped again at the hard currency bar and picked up another Coke and a bottle, apparently from Finland, that said Jaffa Aurinchko on it. Victor and Misha gave Ingrid the flowers. Victor gave me a Georgian hat.

The next morning, bright and early, Intourist had our regular black Volga sedan take us to the airport. Unfortunately, they pulled their first boo-boo that day by taking us to the domestic airport instead of the international one. It is hard to believe how dilapidated the domestic Leningrad airport is, but a lipstick and an eye shadow later, we were at the International airport in line with a group of tourists. Our bags, containing all that illicit material were passed through without inspection. The Aeroflot plane was much like everything else in Russia, rather down in the mouth. As we touched down in Ireland, we had a special feeling of being free again and having everything that we had, ourselves especially, being safe and sound.