

Soviet Jewry - 1979

A dramatic increase in the number of Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union, the unprecedented pardon of five long-term Soviet Jewish Prisoners of Conscience and the release of two others in a prisoner exchange have made 1979 a most unusual year in the almost two-decade history of the Soviet Jewry movement. Whether these events are part of a shift in Soviet policy, or isolated instances brought about by internal and external political considerations, is not clear at this time.

There must be no diminution of efforts by Jews in Israel and the rest of the free world to assist our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union in their struggle to preserve the continuity of Jewish life for this third largest Jewish community in the world.

Therefore, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods resolves that:

1. We call on Sisterhood members to continue to work for:
 1. the emigration of Soviet Jews who wish to leave and for opportunities for Jewish cultural and religious life within the Soviet Union for those who remain;
 2. the release of the Prisoners of Conscience, serving extended prison terms for seeking permission to emigrate, still held in Soviet labor camps under extreme conditions;
 3. permission to emigrate for the almost 3,000 refuseniks who have been waiting in an outcast status as long as seven or eight years for exit visas.
2. Sisterhoods should vigorously participate, whether by themselves or in cooperation with their congregations or other Sisterhoods, and where appropriate with other Jewish communal agencies, in programs of resettlement and integration of Soviet immigrants within their local Jewish communities.

Further, every effort should be made to welcome Soviet Jews into congregations and activities.

3. Because the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow represent a unique opportunity to acquaint athletic teams, news media and tourists with the circumstances of Soviet Jewry, Sisterhoods are urged to take every occasion to request those participating and observing to insist that the Olympic spirit of fair play should prevail throughout the games, emphasizing especially unhampered participation of all teams, including the Israeli teams, and that there be no harassment of Soviet Jews by house arrest or detention before, during and after the Games.