

Adjournment Debate

While I want to condemn the Soviet authorities for their treatment of individuals such as the Stonovs, there are hundreds of Refusniks like them.

It is time that the Soviet Union totally lived up to its human rights obligations. How can it possibly be planning to host an international conference on human rights next year, 1991, in Moscow when these cruel abuses continue?

There is an urgent need to deal humanely and compassionately with these long-term Refusniks. On the other hand, I compliment Mr. Gorbachev for his introduction of *glasnost* which means more openness and *perestroika* which means restructuring.

From a human rights standpoint, and to be fair, the record must show that an incredible number of Jews have received exit visas in recent years.

Let the record show that in 1986, when I was elected chairman of the Canadian Parliamentary Group for Soviet Jewry, only 914 Jews obtained exit visas.

I led a small all-party delegation to the U.S.S.R. in 1987. We met with more than 150 Refusniks and with several Soviet officials. There were some positive signals but the climate was rigid and uncompromising. *Glasnost* had been announced and Mr. Gorbachev was obviously insisting that changes must be made. In 1987, more than 8,000 Jews received exit visas. In 1988, the number climbed to more than 18,000, and last year, 1989, more than 70,000 Jews obtained their exit visas.

While *glasnost* has brought some progress on human rights, it has also revealed a dark side. With more openness in letters to the editors in newspapers, on TV and in books, many people are fanning the flames of anti-Semitic behaviour. This is a most regrettable and despicable development. Because of the vile nature of these anti-Semitic fanatics, many thousands more Jews now want to leave the U.S.S.R. Jews have become the scapegoats of *perestroika*.

However, increasingly the way to the Jewish state is blocked. After 23 years of a diplomatic stalemate, no direct flights between Israel and the Soviet Union exist. The only way for Soviet Jews to reach Israel is to disembark at some airport in Europe and then arrange a direct flight to Tel Aviv. Hungarian Airlines recently cancelled its Moscow-Budapest-Tel Aviv flights due to threats from Arab terrorists.

Last week, over 200 members of the U.S. Congress signed a letter to His Excellency Yuriy Dubinin, ambassador of the Soviet Union in Washington. In the letter, they said that they were appalled and dismayed to learn that the Government of the Soviet Union had rejected an appeal from President George Bush and Secretary Baker to permit direct flights for Soviet Jews from Moscow to Israel.

I call upon the Canadian government to work with other democratic governments in the east and the west to help arrange for direct flights from the U.S.S.R. to Israel. The backlog of Soviet Jews with exit visas waiting to leave the U.S.S.R. is in the tens of thousands. This is a human rights time bomb.

In summary, there are three issues that we as Canadian parliamentarians must solve. We cannot solve these issues ourselves. We need the support of other democratic countries.

First, we must continue to pressure the Soviet authorities to deal quickly and compassionately with individual Refusnik cases such as the Stonovs. Let us not have the large volume of Jews receiving their exit visas overshadow the cruel plight of individual Refusniks such as the Stonovs.

Secondly, a way must be found to arrange for direct flights from the U.S.S.R. to Israel.

Third, leaders of the western world must speak up about the ugly consequences of unbridled anti-Semitism.

These are awesome challenges, but this should not deter men and women of good faith to tackle these challenges with all their energy and resources.

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this chance to respond to the hon. member for Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville. Since he and I both were elected here in 1984 I have heard him rise in the House of Commons on countless occasions to speak on behalf of individuals who are in the Soviet Union seeking refuge and freedom in the west and this afternoon it is just one more of those cases. In responding to him, I will very briefly make some general observations and address the specific case he has raised.

The broad context, of course, is that the condition of Soviet Jews has been improving considerably recently with greater opportunities for cultural and religious expression within the U.S.S.R. As well, there are relaxed restrictions on emigration. To that, we should also make note of the fact that a new Soviet draft law on emigration