

# Hunger strike will protest Soviet injustices

By Maxine Kopel

Beginning today, several York students will take to the halls of Central Square in a hunger strike and camp-in.

They are protesting Soviet transgressions against the 1975 Helsinki agreement and supporting prisoner-of-conscience Anatoly Sharansky.

According to Rebecca Rotenberg, an assistant co-ordinator of the vigil and a member of the Freedom for Soviet Jewry organization, the objective is to "bring Sharansky's plight to the attention of the public, fellow York students, people across the country and to the government. We can't believe Canada, a co-signer at Helsinki, is letting another co-signer go so blatantly against the agreement."

A representative delegation, possibly including Sharansky's cousins, was scheduled to travel to Ottawa on Monday, November 28. According to Rotenberg, the goal of the Ottawa jaunt is to approach all the MP's in Ottawa. "Canada has not taken a stand on Russia's obvious aggressions on the Helsinki

agreement. We want our government to take a stand. It must abide by human rights," she said.

"We want to know from every MP if he is willing to take a stand on misuse of human rights. We will publicize the answers.

"At the same time, we York students are signifying our support for all whose human rights are transgressed."

The group, which currently numbers 10, will partake of bread and water only until, says Rotenberg, "we feel our government has satisfied the stand we've taken."

A doctor has been consulted and will periodically check on the students.

Each day during the strike, a table will be present in Central Square, offering fact sheets with details of the Sharansky plight, the Helsinki agreement, and Soviet anti-Semitism. Also available will be printed postcards to be sent to Brezhnev and the Soviet ambassador. Movies and slide shows depicting Soviet Jewry are on the agenda as well.

Members of the Sharansky family have given their full support and will

sit with the protesters during their strike.

The Soviet Union co-signed the Helsinki agreement in 1975, granting human rights to all constituents in the signing countries. However, like Sharansky, many potential emigrants have been refused exit visas and jailed.

The 29 year-old computer scientist applied for an exit visa five years ago, but was denied permission to leave and was subsequently fired from his job and jailed.

His fiancée Avital was granted a visa with instruction to either leave on the designated departing date, or give up all rights to emigrate.

Sharansky was released from jail the day of his wedding to Avital. The next day he vanished from sight and she left Russia.

It has been 3 years since the couple has been together.

Sharansky was arrested again and has been in jail for eight months. He has neither been heard from nor formally charged. The Russian government claims it can hold him nine months before pressing charges.

The Russian newspapers claim he is a CIA member. President Carter has denied that Sharansky has ever been associated with the CIA.

According to Rotenberg, the hunger-strikers will attend important classes and exams.

"We all feel bogged down with work but feel it is important so we are risking the school year to this cause. Our marks may go but we hope our teachers will understand.

Every student will try to get his work done.

"We are not asking for sympathy but for the York community to turn to its government," she said.

"Sharansky lost his job and was jailed just for applying for a visa. All we're doing is missing a few meals. We're doing nothing."

Rotenberg summed up her views, "We want to see justice done. Russia is becoming more like Nazi Germany."

## Rights in USSR stifled say York's Soviet students

By Maxine Kopel

"In Russia, the Russians don't know what's happening. They only know what's happening from the papers and they are government controlled. We know more about Russia here than in Russia."

These are the words of two recent Russian emigrants on their homeland.

Isabella Kravez, a 21 year-old York student who, along with her family, re-established life in Canada 3 years ago, complains of discrimination and an abundance of unwritten laws.

"People are scared to talk and get involved. If you do, the government will tell you to shut up or you'll never get out.

"They don't want people to leave. If life is so good, why leave?"

Kravez, a psychology and language major maintains it is difficult to obtain a visa, and in some instances one may never secure a visa at all. One variable is employment.

A character resumé from an employer or school is a prerequisite for a visa and proves to be a deterrent in some cases. No employer or school wants the government to think his workers or students are dissatisfied and long to leave. Therefore, laments Kravez, they will frequently release a bad resumé. Kravez received such a resumé from her school. "My teacher couldn't say anything. She was staying in Russia."

Ostracism plagues the potential emigrant's woes as well, says Kravez. "Once you apply to leave, they will make such an atmosphere that you have to leave. You have a black mark because you want to leave the country."

In addition, the employer "can always find some complaints to fire his workers. People are afraid of this."

Once a Russian is granted a visa and travels to a country with no diplomatic relations with Russia, such as Israel, he must forfeit his Russian citizenship and pay the government 800 rubles to do so.

According to one York student who emigrated to Russia two and one-half years ago and wishes to remain anonymous, his parents and he procured their visa on their second application.

"My mother, a history teacher, was fired from her job when she applied. The second time she went and said we had no money, nothing. They said we could leave without my brother."

"They needed some reason to refuse him, so they said it was because he just finished the army," claims the student, who plans to visit friends in Russia next year and fears publicity will prevent him from acquiring a visa. His brother, a musician, finally was allowed to join his family after a year and a half and five applications.

The student says that Bob Kaplan, federal Minister of Health and Welfare, helped unite the family.

The Russian government firmly upholds its trademark as an anti-Semitic country, claim both students.

"The Jews," said Kravez, "always stand out."

Although the education is free, it is hard for Jews to get a higher education. "It's not written, but it is explained as 'why should we give an education to them, and then they go to Israel?'"

Except for those in the main cities, synagogues are closed. According to Kravez, the KGB controls the Moscow synagogue, and the rabbi only does what is allowed by the KGB.

All children are brought up Communist, maintains Kravez. "Religion is kept inside. Families keep it secret. Nobody hears and nobody knows."

"The government teaches you that any religion in general is old fashioned. You are taught that there should be no religion. They are trying to make you modern."

Both students echo the same grievance. "Everyone reminds you that you are Jewish. They try to do everything not to please you."

## Yeomice



by AC

## Forest supporters organize

By Laura Brown

Social Science lecturer Jeffrey Forest is still suspended from the university as *Excalibur* goes to press. He has been at the University Tavern Restaurant on Keele Street most weekdays in an attempt to keep in touch.

Forest is associated with the York Student Movement (YSM), which is the York student branch of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

During the past week YSM has been active in expressing its demands for the reinstatement of Forest to the university.

An organizational meeting was held last Wednesday, November 23 in Curtis Lecture Hall J by what was advertised as "the Ad Hoc Committee to Oppose Political Persecution."

Dr. Marsha Forest later told *Excalibur* that this meeting was an "organizing meeting, not an information meeting."

Admittance to the meeting depended on each individual signing a petition which said they fully supported the following:

- "The rights of students to disseminate Marxist-Leninist and all revolutionary literature.
- "The immediate lifting of the ban against Forest and his immediate reinstatement with all rights and privileges."

James Nugent, one of the men who was arrested with Forest, spoke to the crowd of approximately 50 people.

Nugent discussed what the "Zionist holligans" did and he stressed that the YSM would not be pushed off campus by them. He added that they would use violence if they had to.

Nugent also said that support for the YSM demands was growing on campus.

The crowd was told by Nugent that there is a "Zionist-state-police-administration alliance" against them.

A petition has also been circulated to the York community expressing the YSM demands.

According to Marsha Forest, there are over 200 signatures on the petition. She added there is a positive response from both faculty and students.

Forest said, "Many faculty are outraged by the actions of the administration concerning the banning and suspension of Jeffrey Forest."

A demonstration yesterday afternoon by the Ad Hoc Committee protested Forest's suspension.

They also plan to hold "an open and public investigation into causes of the violence on the campus."

Marsha Forest told *Excalibur* that at the demonstration there would be "many people coming forward who have been harassed by the administration for their political views."

She stressed the fact that the committee wants the investigation to be open and public and that the students should know exactly what is going on.

Assistant vice president in the York administration, John Becker, was asked by *Excalibur* what conclusions have been drawn by the administration about the incidents of the past week.

Becker said that there is nothing that can be said at this time. However, at press time he was planning a fact-finding meeting.

The meeting will investigate the incident at Bethune College November 4, when a York student was forcibly evicted from an anti-racism meeting organized by the CPC (ML).

The November 17 and 18 occurrences in Central Square are also on the agenda.

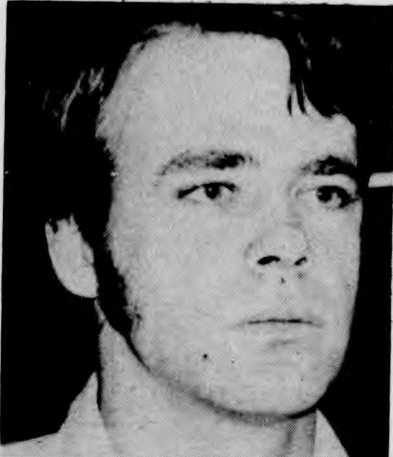
According to Becker, a general investigation has not been extended. He said, "It is not an open meeting, per se, but there is nothing secret about it."

Becker will chair the meeting and students who have factual information will be present. He asked that the names of the people are not publicized at this time.

Director of security, George Dunn, will be present at the meeting

because of his knowledge of the November 4, 17 and 18 incidents.

Becker said that Jeffrey Forest will hopefully be at the meeting. Forest has been told that he can bring a representative from his union.



YSM supporter James Nugent

## "Mortgage yourself" - Parrott

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But Harry Parrott, Minister of Colleges and Universities, maintained that candidates for professional schools have other advantages.

"After you've proven yourself you are in a pretty saleable position to acquire your own collateral. If you are smart enough and tough enough and with-it enough you will have made enough contacts who will help you. You can then mortgage yourself."

Asked how poorer students can make contacts and take loans, Parrott replied, "I can't be all things to all people. Student aid is not designed to get everyone through no matter what."

"We think it's important for student to get aid early in their career, when they are less in a position to get other funding."

Chris Alnutt, Ontario Federation of Students researcher, said as many as 7000 students would have been

cut off loans and grants this year if the proposal had already been in effect.

"A BA is no longer a key to a job or to a higher income level," said Murray Miskin, an executive member of the Osgoode Legal and Literary Society. "The new regulations cut off support at the point where students can make their education more practical by either going to a professional school or specializing in a graduate faculty."

According to Carol Beckman, president of the society, the new proposals undermine any attempts the professionals schools make at being more equitable. Osgoode Hall has recently put in place special admission procedures for native peoples and students from lower socio-economic levels to enter law school.

"This will be all for nothing of the government takes away the financial support such students will need," she said.

Instead of considering a student "independent" after three years in the work force, the government should keep the current criteria, the student brief proposes. There should be interest-free loans for the duration of a student's programme, it says.

The level of family income level above which parents are required to contribute should permit more than an "adequate standard of living" for the family. Above that level the contribution required of parents should be scaled to income, states the brief.

After a student's eligibility period expires, he may be able to get interest-bearing loans from the government, hinted Parrott, although no details, if any, have yet been worked out. But students have countered that this still would not help needy students, as these loans are "interest bearing" after issue. "Students cannot start repaying loans, or interest on loans while still going to school," John Rowan said.