

No. 016

January 27, 1989.

JOE CLARK'S COMMENTS ON SOVIET DECISION  
ON RABINOVICH CASE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today made the following comments on the Soviet decision regarding Mr. Alexander Rabinovich and his family:

"It is with great disappointment that I learned today of the decision of the Soviet authorities to maintain their refusal to allow Alexander and Lilia Rabinovich to emigrate from the Soviet Union to be reunited with their family in Canada. I have instructed my officials to pursue a reversal of this negative decision using every available channel. This decision, in my view, contradicts commitments undertaken by the Soviets in the Concluding Document of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Vienna."

- 30 -

Secretary of State  
for  
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État  
aux  
Affaires extérieures

- The Rabinovich family of the Soviet Union (Lilia, Alexander and 2 children plus Alexander's parents) applied to immigrate to Canada in 1987 sponsored by Lilia's sister and brother-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Wolfson of Toronto. Lilia's and Mrs. Wolfson's parents the Okun family also live in Toronto.
- The Rabinovich family was refused exit permission to Canada in December 1987 for security reasons based on Alexander's past employment to 1979 at the All Union Scientific Institute of Radio Engineers (VENIRA). The family appealed the refusal to the Supreme Soviet and was informed there was no possibility of reconsideration until 1992.
- In April 1988, the Director General of the USSR and Eastern Europe Bureau, External Affairs, headed a consular delegation to Moscow. A family reunification list of 21 families was presented by him to the head of the Soviet delegation. The Rabinovich family was on that list.
- The Wolfson family moved to Manitoba in the summer of 1988 and contacted the office of Premier Filmon for assistance. He has now "adopted" the Rabinovich family.
- On December 1, the Canadian Ambassador discussed the unresolved family reunification cases with the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This discussion was followed up by a further case by case review on December 9 by the Canadian Consul.
- On December 27, the Canadian Ambassador presented a new family reunification list including the 4 unresolved cases from the previous list of which the Rabinovich family was one. The Ambassador asked for a review of the Rabinovich case because the Soviet explanation of security difficulties was not satisfactory to him.
- On January 10, 1989 the Soviet A/Head of the Humanitarian and Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Canadian Ambassador that the problem was still security. The Ambassador again asked for a review.
- On January 11, Mr. Rabinovich informed the Canadian Consul that the security objection had been maintained by the Director of VENIRA and that his hunger strike would start on January 14.
- On January 11, The Canadian Ambassador to the follow-up meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe being held in Vienna made a specific representation on the Rabinovich case to the Soviet

delegation.

- On January 13, Ambassador Bauer in Vienna spoke to a member of Soviet delegation again about case.
- On January 16, Canadian Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow phoned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about case. He was told that there would be a reconsideration of decision by the Expert Group on Security but no guarantees were given about the eventual result.
- On January 17, the Canadian Chargé d'Affaires spoke to Division of Humanitarian and Human Rights in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was promised the case would be reviewed and an answer provided in the next few weeks.
- On January 17, the SSEA telephoned the Wolfson family in Winnipeg.
- On January 19, SSEA passed a personal note to Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze requesting a review of the case.
- On January 23, McLaine, Director General of USSR and Eastern Europe Bureau met with hunger striker, Alla Wolfson and supporting groups in Ottawa.
- On January 23, Director General McLaine met with Minister-Counsellor Makarov of Soviet Embassy to press for a review of the case.
- On January 25, Charles Mayer, Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds) raised the case during a visit to Leningrad.
- On January 27, a negative decision was received by the Canadian Consul from the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs.