Rally backing Soviet Jews draws several MIT students

Reporter's Notebook

By Andrew M. Greene

Over a dozen MIT students joined an estimated 250,000 people at "Freedom Sunday," a march and rally for Soviet Jews in Washington, D.C. on Sunday. Rabbi Daniel Shevitz said that 163 students were unable to get tickets to the rally. "Million and others may have gone independently. The march started at 11 a.m. at the Ellipse and proceeded to the Mall where the rally began at 2 p.m.

Participants were addressed by Jewish, Catholic and Protestant leaders. A black member of the House of Representatives said that, as tens of thousands of Jews joined the Civil Rights marches of the 1960s, so too it was "proper and fitting" that he join in this rally. "As long as one Jew is kept against his will in the Soviet Union, we are all Soviet Jews," he said.

The demonstration was peaceful, with only one arrest for disorderly conduct. A parallel demonstration in Moscow involving Jews, Armenians and Russian Orthodox was, broken up by the police there.

Many of the speakers at the rally called for "linkage" between aid to the Soviets and human rights.

One change from May's annual Solidarity Sunday rally in New York City was the call for more rights for the Jews who would rather remain in the Soviet Union. In past rallies, the focus has traditionally been on the Refuseniks who want to leave the Soviet Union.

Despite the chilly weather and wind, most people stayed for over two hours at the Mall. As Senator, refusenik Anatol Shcharansky put it, "We were told that America's numbers don't count, that America's numbers don't count, that America's numbers don't count."

The leaders of the rally urged President Reagan to press the human rights issue with General Secretary Gorbachev in the summit this week. Leaders of government, including Vice President George Bush, House speaker Jim Wright (D-TX), and Senate majority leader Bob Dole (R-KS), were all received well by the audience.

For us. But you came, and winter retreated."

The most striking aspect of the rally was the wide variety of participants. Young and old, Jews and non-Jews, whites, blacks and others were all marching together for a common goal. Parents brought their babies, and scrollers seemed more common in this march than the floats in the Macy's parade on Thanksgiving.

There was a definite feeling of unity and of community. As small groups broke out in song before the march, many people were humming live familiar melodies being sung by people who live over 3,000 miles away. "I'm feeling at home, instead of in a crowd of strangers," said Advisor Yervenik "Bill".

People were packed between the buildings of the Smithsonian. The Capitol stood behind the U.S. Capitol, and the Washington Monument at the rear of the crowd made a visual exclamatory point. "How lucky we are," said one person, "to live in a country where we have the Constitutionally guaranteed rights to free speech and free assembly. Someday, soon, we hope our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union will be able to say the same thing, and to join us in the West if they want to." And the crowd chanted: "Mr. Gorbachev, let our people go!"

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