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THE LONG ORDEAL IS OVER -- FREE AT LAST

THE ROAD TO FREEDOM
By David Kantor

BONN, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Anatoly Shcharansky stepped into the world of freedom Tuesday. The 38-year-old Soviet Jewish dissident and aliya activist who became a symbol of the worldwide struggle for human rights during his eight-year ordeal in Soviet prisons and forced labor camps, arrived in Israel Tuesday night to a hero's welcome. (Arrival story, P. 4.)

Shcharansky was released by the Soviets Tuesday morning as part of an East-West spy swap and was flown immediately from West Berlin to Frankfurt. There he was re-united with his wife Avital, who flew from Israel to meet him. It was in Frankfurt, too, that he received his Israeli passport, presented to him personally by Israel's Ambassador to West Germany, Yitzhak Ben Ari. Anatoly had first applied for an emigration visa in 1974.

(In Israel, President Chaim Herzog and Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir issued special statements welcoming Shcharansky. See P. 3 for texts of their statements.)

The prisoner exchange took place at the middle of the Glienicke Bridge which connects West Berlin with Potsdam in East Germany. Shcharansky was one of nine persons involved. Five were suspected or convicted Eastern bloc agents imprisoned in the U.S. or West Germany. Three were Western agents imprisoned for espionage in Communist bloc countries.

Shcharansky was arrested in 1978 allegedly for spying for the U.S. But the charges against him were regarded as patently false in the West. The 13-year sentence imposed, of which he served eight years, was seen as punishment for his activism on behalf of Jewish and other dissidents and his indefatigable struggle for the right of himself and other Russian Jews to emigrate.

Separated From Other Exchanged Prisoners

At the insistence of the U.S., Shcharansky was driven across the bridge alone, to underline the fact that he was not a spy. The other exchanged prisoners followed in a minibus.

A German government official confirmed this. Shcharansky, he said, was not a spy but a human rights activist. It was the Soviets who insisted that he could be given his freedom only within the framework of a spy exchange. West German sources denied categorically that the Soviets received any payment for releasing Shcharansky.

A line of parked buses blocked the view of what was happening at the eastern end of the bridge. The exchange ceremonies in the center were brief. Shcharansky, slight of build, wearing a grey coat and a brown "chapka," the traditional Russian fur cap, smiled and waved at the small crowd of reporters and spectators waiting at the western side. He was only glimpsed by them.

He was surrounded by dozens of officials, greeted personally by U.S. Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt,and whisked away to Tempelhof Airport in the back seat of a grey Mercedes limousine flying the Stars and Stripes on its fenders.

Reporters and onlookers said Shcharansky seemed to be in good health and visibly enjoying his new freedom. He walked swiftly and confidently to the waiting limousine, barely glancing at the battery of TV cameras aimed at him from behind police barricades.

At Frankfurt Airport he was allowed a half hour of privacy with Avital in the VIP lounge before the couple was surrounded by officials and jubilant well-wishers. They had not seen each other for 12 years, during which Avital campaigned tirelessly and unremittingly all over the world, but especially in the U.S., for release of her husband.

Shcharansky's spirit was never broken during his harsh ordeal in the Soviet Gulag. But for long periods it appeared he would not survive. He reportedly developed a heart condition. When Avital flew to Frankfurt from Israel she was accompanied by a cardiologist.

No Medical Problems Found

But the doctor who examined Shcharansky at Frankfurt Airport said he found no medical problems and pronounced him fit to fly to Israel without delay. Shcharansky thanked his American, German and Israeli hosts before boarding the plane. He told well-wishers that he had been given good food during the final weeks of his incarceration and apparently regained most of the weight he had lost.

A PROFILE OF COURAGE
By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- The release Tuesday of Soviet Jewish Prisoner of Conscience Anatoly Shcharansky as part of an East-West exchange of prisoners brings to a close one of the most celebrated human rights cases which drew international attention and the concern of numerous government leaders and politicians.

Nearly nine years after he was bundled into a car by Soviet secret police agents on Gorky Street in Moscow to later be tried on charges of treason, in a move by Soviet authorities with few precedents since the days of Stalin, Shcharansky's name became synonymous with Soviet human rights violations and the harsh realities of life for Jews in the Soviet Union.

Now, with his release, he will once again be reunited with his wife Avital, who emigrated from the Soviet Union in July, 1974, just one day after they were married by a rabbi in Moscow, a marriage Soviet officials later declared invalid. Although she had not seen her husband since that time, Avital's tireless efforts on his behalf are credited with keeping Shcharansky's name in the forefront of international public opinion.

Born in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk on January 20, 1948, the son of a journalist and Communist Party member, Shcharansky graduated from the Moscow Institute's Physics Department of Computers and Applied Mathematics in June 1972. An expert in computer technology and cybernetics, he began work for a research institute connected with the oil and gas industry.

Shcharansky's application to emigrate was denied in 1974 on the grounds that "it is against state interests." He soon became the subject of continuous harassment, surveillance and interrogation as he joined the growing ranks of Soviet Jewish refuseniks. At times, as many as eight KGB agents trailed him to monitor his activities.

In early 1975, he was fired from his job at the Moscow Research Institute. In March 1975, after a series of arrests, he was reportedly informed by the KGB: "Your destiny is in our hands ... No one in the West is interested in you and what you are doing here and nobody will say a word in the entire world if there is one more Prisoner of Conscience in the Soviet Union."

Shcharansky became active in the Helsinki Watch groups formed to monitor Soviet compliance with the Helsinki rights accords. More important, he served as a key link between Jews seeking to emigrate and Russians and others wanting to stay and liberalize the society.

David Shipler, The New York Times correspondent in Moscow when Shcharansky was arrested, wrote in 1977 that "he was a consummate public relations man, fluent in English and scrupulously accurate with his facts, who acted as a spokesman to the Western press on behalf of Jewish activists.

"As such, he was part of a chain that Soviet authorities ... found threatening, a chain of communications that runs from the dissidents through Western correspondents to worldwide publications and back into the Soviet Union again via foreign radio stations such as BBC and the Voice of America."

Suit Claims Defamation Of Soviet Jews

In 1977, Shcharansky filed suit along with fellow activist Vladimir Slepak -- whose emigration visa has still not been approved -- and claimed that Soviet Jews were defamed as a result of the broadcasts of a blatantly anti-Semitic television documentary, "Buyers of Souls," which was apparently aimed at the Soviet masses.

Shcharansky soon found himself the subject of a vicious attack in an article written by Dr. Sanya Lipavsky, a former roommate, and published in the Soviet newspaper Izvestia. Lipavsky accused the Soviet activist of working for the Central Intelligence Agency, a charge vehemently denied by Shcharansky, and also by then-President Jimmy Carter.

Ten days after the Izvestia article, Shcharansky was arrested and detained in Moscow's Lefortovo Prison until his trial in July, 1978. He was convicted on charges of "treason" and "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and sentenced to 13 years in prison and labor camps. He began his term at Chistopol Prison, 500 miles east of Moscow.

Throughout his 18-month detention, while awaiting trial, Shcharansky was held incommunicado, unable to see or speak to anyone except the Soviet secret police. He was also not permitted legal counsel, despite relentless efforts by his family to secure an attorney for him.

A Passionate Defense

But Shcharansky defended himself, despite being convinced that his was "a hopeless case from the very beginning -- all the more so since I was declared guilty by Izvestia a full year-and-a-half before my trial took place and even before the case was opened and the investigation began.

"My people," Shcharansky continued, "have been oppressed all over the world for 2,000 years. Yet, in every place in which they found themselves, they said again and again, 'Next year in Jerusalem.' Now, when I am further than ever from my people and my Avital, when I face long hard years of imprisonment, I turn to my people and my Avital and say: 'Next year in Jerusalem. Next year in Jerusalem'." Shcharansky's plight drew international attention and soon became an issue continually placed on the U.S.-Soviet agenda. Carter spoke out on his behalf, as did numerous Congressmen and lay and religious leaders. As the Kremlin clamped down on Jewish emigration, Shcharansky's picture soon adorned placards carried by demonstrators urging his freedom and an easing of the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union.

In March, 1980, Shcharansky was transferred from Chistopol to the Perm Labor Camp in the Urals. In April, his mother, Ida Milgrom, and brother, Leonid, were permitted to visit him for 24 hours -- the first time since his initial imprisonment in 1978 that he was allowed visitors. The following September, they were again granted a visitation permit for a brief period, under heavy guard.

But Shcharansky's health began to deteriorate. He wrote a letter complaining of severe stomach and back pains. In early 1981, he was placed in solitary confinement which, in addition to poor food rations, led to a further deterioration in his health. All of his scheduled meetings in 1981 with family members were abruptly cancelled, and his letter-writing allotment was reduced.

In November of 1981, a surprise transfer once again brought Shcharansky back to Chistopol Prison. It was here, in September, 1982, on the eve of Yom Kippur, that Shcharansky began a hunger strike that would last 109 days.

The strike was to protest prison officials' confiscation of his mail and the refusal to allow him to receive visits from his family, despite such allowances under the Soviet penal system. At the same time, international support for Shcharansky's release began to gain momentum.

Many Appeals Issued

An appeal, one of the many, was addressed to French President Francois Mitterrand by exiled Soviet physicist Andrei Sakharov, urging the French leader to intervene on Shcharansky's behalf. There were also efforts to negotiate an exchange of Major Aleksei Koslov, a KGB spy held captive in South Africa, for the release of Shcharansky. That effort was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, President Reagan also urged his freedom.

Shcharansky's hunger strike, however, led to an unusual move by then-Soviet leader Yuri Andropov. He sent a letter, dated January 18, 1983, in which he stated that Shcharansky "had contact with his mother and ceased his hunger strike" in Chistopol and that "there is no threat to his life." The letter was in response to an inquiry from French Communist Party leader Georges Marchais.

The hunger strike left Shcharansky in critical condition, and during a visit by his mother and brother to Chistopol, he complained of being unable to sleep because of chest pains. In January, 1984, he again went on a hunger strike, though only for two days, to protest the blocking of mail sent to his wife, Avital.

In October, 1984, word was received that Shcharansky had been sent once again to the Perm Labor Camp where he was immediately hospitalized in a "pre-heart attack" condition. He was given medical treatment. Milgrom spent two days with her son there on January 14 and 15, 1985. In January, 1986, Avital said her husband had been sentenced to a new six-month term in a labor camp for going on still another hunger strike, again protesting restricted mail privileges. And then it happened -- word was out last week that Shcharansky would be released and allowed to go to Israel.

THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER CHAI

WEST BERLIN, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- The Glienicke Bridge, across which Anatoly Shcharansky walked to freedom Tuesday morning, spans a river as frozen as the East-West relations that left Germany, and Berlin itself, sundered in two after the end of the Second World War.

Only military vehicles of the former allies are allowed to use the iron-girdered bridge with its green metal spans, to and from the westernmost point of the West Berlin district of Zehlendorf to Potsdam, once almost a Berlin suburb and now part of East Germany.

The Havel River across which the Glienicke stretches was iced over in today's sub-zero weather, with swans and ducks struggling to survive on the frozen surface. Under the bridge, the ice had been broken yesterday by an East German icebreaker to allow passage of patrol boats and barges.

The bridge was damaged in World War II and rebuilt. The Soviet authorities, shortly after the division of Germany into zones of allied occupation, named its half of the Glienicke the "Bridge of Unity." The title, however, was dropped after the Berlin wall was erected in 1961.

Some time later, a plaque was placed at the entrance to the Western side of the bridge. It read, "Those who gave the bridge the name 'Bridge of Unity' built the wall, put up barbed wire ... and thus prevent freedom."

Tuesday's spy swap caps a history of such exchanges at the bridge, going back to the first major such deal in 1962. In that year, American pilot Francis Gary Powers, whose spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union and who was tried and imprisoned there, was exchanged for Soviet agent Rudolf Abel.

The windswept Glienicke Bridge, floodlit at night, subsequently served as the locale of various and sundry cloak-and-dagger derring-do in spy novels and films. None, perhaps, match the sheer-life drama of Tuesday's events, when one of the most celebrated Soviet dissidents crossed the white line at the center of the Glienicke Bridge to a new life.

It was a freezing cold day, but the sun shone in all its winter brilliance.

STATEMENT BY HERZOG
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog issued a special statement Tuesday welcoming the release of Anatoly Shcharansky and greeting him with the traditional Hebrew blessing: "Blessed be He who frees the prisoners."

The English text read over Israel Radio by Herzog said:

"Anatoly Shcharansky, a Prisoner of Zion, has become an example and a symbol. His struggle and his bravery gave courage to our brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union and inspired them in their struggle for their natural rights, both human and national, to study their traditions, their culture and the Hebrew language, and above all, to join their brothers and sisters in their homeland in the State of Israel.

"Anatoly Shcharansky has become a symbol for all freedom and human rights fighters throughout the world. His struggle has been a source of national identification for the Jewish people, and yet another example of the resilience of the Jewish spirit.

"Many of his fellows in the battle for human rights are still in the Soviet Union. He will not forget them, nor will we weaken in our resolve to continue in our efforts for their freedom.

"Anatoly Shcharansky did not sin, nor did he violate any law. He is a free man who fought a stubborn fight to maintain his Jewish identity and to live as a proud Jew, to live amongst his people in his homeland.

"On his arrival home, with the realization of his long-hoped for dream, he will be received with open arms and deep affection. I trust that our natural tendency to smother him with affection and good will will not hinder him from joining his wife, Avital, in making their joint dream of years come true, and in permitting him to build a happy home amongst us in peace and harmony.

"Our admiration and respect go out to Avital, who fought untiringly for Anatoly and the remaining Prisoners of Zion. Welcome home, Anatoly. May many others follow you."

In his Hebrew statement, Herzog paid tribute and expressed Israel's thanks to President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz for their endeavors to effect Shcharansky's release.

STATEMENT BY SHAMIR

JERUSALEM, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, in his speech at the World Conference of Friendship Leagues, said:

"Anatoly Shcharansky has become a symbol of the struggle of hundreds and thousands for freedom from Soviet oppression and for repatriation to Israel. Like many Soviet Jews, he came to realize that his future as an active, self-respecting member of the Jewish people lies only in Israel.

"He fought for his rights as a human being and as a Jew. He paid a heavy price, in imprisonment, suffering, torture, both mental and physical, and separation from his wife and family. Together with Avital Shcharansky, we rejoice in his newly-acquired freedom and his coming home to the land of his forefathers.

"But we must not for a moment forget that our struggle is for the many hundreds of thousands who remain behind, who are suffering and who are longing for freedom and deliverance, who rely first and foremost on us, on the Jewish State of Israel and you here in this conference and on all the friends of freedom all over the world to secure their salvation and their repatriation.

"We cannot fail them."

RELIEF AND REGRETS IN WASHINGTON
By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- The release of Soviet Prisoner of Conscience Anatoly Shcharansky was greeted here Tuesday with welcome relief, tempered by regrets that it had to come about as part of an exchange of spies and by concern for the fate of the many thousands of refuseniks as well as imprisoned Jewish activists who remain behind.

President Reagan was scheduled to hold a news conference Tuesday evening in which he was expected to comment himself on Shcharansky's release. In the meantime, the Administration indicated that Shcharansky's release was the result of "close cooperation over an extended period of time" with the West German government.

The Reagan Administration had special praise for West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl whose government, according to statements from the White House and State Department, had made a "substantial contribution" to the prisoner exchange.

Administration officials declined to elaborate privately on what role the West German government had played or on any other specifics about the exchange arrangements, saying that a similar policy has been maintained in previous prisoner exchanges with the Sov-

iets. Some of the spies released to the Soviet Union Tuesday had been in West German prisons. The State Department stressed that the inclusion of the celebrated Jewish human rights activist in an exchange of spies was in no way a retreat from the Administration's categorical rejection of the espionage charge for which Shcharansky had been sentenced to serve 13 years in prison and labor camps.

"We do not consider this to be a spy case," State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said Tuesday. "There have been in the past releases of human rights activists; they have in fact taken place."

"As a matter of fact, we consider Shcharansky's release to be an additional and separate benefit to a package arrangement which otherwise deals with intelligence matters on both sides," the spokesman added. He said that the Administration "would have preferred that the Soviets simply release Shcharansky" but that Moscow had long refused to do that.

Leaders of Jewish organizations hailed the release of Shcharansky but also stressed that the fight on behalf of Soviet Jewry is not over yet and that thousands of Jews are still waiting in the USSR to receive permission to emigrate. (Full story in Thursday's Bulletin.)

SHCHARANSKY COMES HOME

By David Landau

TEL AVIV, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Anatoly Shcharansky, happily reunited with his wife Avital after 12 years of separation while he was in Soviet prisons and labor camps, stepped on Israel soil at Ben Gurion Airport Tuesday evening to a jubilant and joyfully tearful welcome.

Premier Shimon Peres, who warmly embraced the Soviet Jewish dissident and aliya activist on his repatriation to Israel, his chosen homeland, declared: "It is a moving moment for the whole of the Jewish people, may I say for everybody in the world who loves freedom and who hopes that freedom will prevail."

Shcharansky flew to Israel from Frankfurt, West Germany in the same private executive jet that took his wife to Frankfurt earlier Tuesday for their reunion. He was freed Tuesday morning in West Berlin as part of an East-West prisoner exchange.

The throngs that came to greet him, many in chartered buses from all parts of Israel, remained behind barriers during the official ceremonies. Shcharansky was embraced by Peres, by Foreign Minister and Deputy Premier Yitzhak Shamir, Absorption Minister Yaacov Tsur, other dignitaries and rabbis who had helped and befriended Avital Shcharansky in her long struggle to gain her husband's freedom.

'A Very Unique Moment'

Peres gave his welcoming speech, first in Hebrew, then in English in the airport's VIP lounge. "It is a very unique moment in the experiences and feelings of our people," he said.

"I do believe that the hearts of all Jewish people beat today as though it were the very same heart. Anatoly Shcharansky, who has already adopted the Hebrew name, Nathan, has fought heroically alone, under tremendous pressure, against so many difficult odds as a proud Jew, as a freedom-loving person, as a man with a mission, as a devoted Zionist, and taught that you can arrest a body, you cannot imprison a spirit. Faith prevails even against the strongest of governments, and against the most difficult circumstances." The Premier also praised Avital who, he said, "fought like a lioness" for her husband's freedom.

Greetings were also extended by Shamir. Shcharansky responded in fluent but hesitant Hebrew, a language he had taught himself. He spoke briefly of his difficult years in prison, buoyed by the hope that one day he would reach Israel. The 38-year-old dissident arrived and remained bare-headed throughout the proceedings. His wife's head was covered by a scarf which is traditional among Orthodox Jewish women.

The couple was driven from the airport directly to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. From there they were taken to the home provided for them by the Immigration Ministry.

Irwin Cotler, the Canadian lawyer and law professor at McGill University who defended Shcharansky at his trial, arrived in Israel Tuesday to join the welcoming party for the freed activist. He told reporters that the timing of Shcharansky's release seemed significant. He said the Jewish dissident had become a burden to the Soviets and they were looking for a "fig leaf" to cover their embarrassment.

REAGAN TO SHCHARANSKY: 'MAZEL TOV'

TEL AVIV, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- President Reagan spoke to Anatoly Shcharansky and his wife, Avital, by telephone at Ben Gurion Airport Tuesday evening. Premier Shimon Peres put through the call to the White House to thank the President for his help in gaining freedom for the Soviet Jewish Prisoner of Conscience.

"Mazel tov," Reagan said when Peres handed the phone to Shcharansky, who then passed it on to his wife to receive the President's good wishes. Both gave their thanks. Peres said he also planned to thank Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany for his part in Tuesday's prisoner exchange that brought Shcharansky his freedom.

SHCHARANSKY'S FAMILY ECSTATIC

PARIS, Feb. 11 (JTA) -- Anatoly Shcharansky's family in Moscow was described as "ecstatic" by French Radio reports. His mother, Ida Milgrom, is said to have broken into tears of happiness as she heard reports that her son had crossed the bridge to freedom. His brother Leonid said, "This will give all of us new hope."

The radio quoted Leonid as saying that now that his brother had left, he and his mother will also apply for exit visas. Leonid, an engineer and one year older than Anatoly, said, "We did not apply for exit visas before because we did not want to risk leaving Anatoly here alone. Now, all is changed and we hope to leave also."

* * *

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Ruth Popkin, president of Hadassah, announced Tuesday that the organization will be providing immediate medical attention for Anatoly Shcharansky, who arrived in Israel today. Shcharansky will be receiving a complete check-up and medical care by a team from the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center headed by Dr. Mervyn Gotsman, head of the department of cardiology, who is also the personal physician of former Prime Minister Menacham Begin.