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October 13, 1969

Mr. Isadore M. Cohen
465 Park Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Cohen:

I am writing to you concerning a most unusual, little understood, and highly underappreciated group - the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry.

As one who has been associated with them directly from the very beginning, and especially recently in my capacity as Chairman of the New York Conference on Soviet Jewry, I have had occasion to judge the quality and extent of their contribution.

They are the only full, exclusive group of young people devoted to the cause of Soviet Jewry. They are involved in every single public project of importance that the Jewish community undertakes for this cause. Their value to all work for Russian Jews is inestimable. Without their participation and leadership, very little of what the community does could succeed.

Furthermore, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry has had a marvelous effect on the young people they attract. It is no secret that so very much of the best of our youth is being drained away from the Jewish community for radical and other non-Jewish (and sometimes anti-Jewish) causes. Somehow, we have failed to provide a healthy, Jewish outlet for the idealistic zeal of our youth, at the very time that youth throughout the country - and world - is gripped by a fervor for action and new ideals.

The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, however, has stepped into the breach and is answering this need in a splendid fashion. It was a remarkable and heart-warming sight when,

on October 2nd (at the Simchat Torah Celebration for Soviet Jewry), some 2,000 young people, the greatest number of whom were brought down by or belonged to the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, sang and danced and listened and protested for 3-5 hours while drenched by uninterrupted rain, coming down in buckets. Surely such devotion and enthusiasm deserves recognition by the adult community.

But despite such heroic contributions, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry lives in abject poverty. True, the students all give of themselves voluntarily -- to all hours of the morning. But there is need for salaries -- for a secretary and for an unusually devoted young man who has sacrificed career, family, and convenience to work for this cause -- and for rent, which comes to \$1,000 per month.

I therefore respectfully and urgently implore you to extend your assistance to SSSJ at your very earliest convenience. I have attempted, with only moderate success, to obtain help for them in the past, but these sources are no longer available to me. I understand that you had once expressed an interest in helping Soviet Jewry. This is an unusual opportunity to do that -- and at the same time achieve something constructive for American Jewish youth.

Sincerely yours,

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

NL/eg

cc: Yaakov Bernbaum