

SPEECH BY MAYOR JOHN V. LINDSAY -- SOVIET JEWRY PROTEST

U.N. PLAZA --- October 2, 1969

Rabbi Lamm, Mr. Riseman, Senator Goldin, Theodore Bikel,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Tonight should be a time of celebration -- for the Jewish community of New York, and of the world. Yet we meet tonight in sorrow -- and we meet in anger, too.

Tonight we should be gathering to mark our rejoicing over the Laws of God, enriched by the work of man. Yet we gather here to speak out -- to speak against a continuing, unjustifiable, insidious desecration of one of the supreme laws of the spirit-- the right to worship our God by the dictates of our conscience.

Tonight, even as we meet, thousands of Jews will gather in the streets of Moscow -- to worship, to sing, to express their own sense of joy. We gather in freedom - they do not. For the Soviet Union has made clear that it does not intend to permit its Jewish community to nurture its traditions and to survive. And thus these brave men and women celebrate their faith at great risk. We are here tonight to let them know that we stand with them in the streets of Moscow -- and we stand with them in their struggle to remain free in spirit.

We know the burden they bear. Their cultural heritage is threatened by official sanction and hidden intimidation -- they are effectively forbidden to develop schools, federations, journals, the whole range of tools for the preservation of a rich cultural heritage -- a heritage which lives and thrives today in every part of this city and this country. We know, too, that by heavy-handed persecution of Jewish writers and thinkers, the Soviet State has raised an unmistakable warning - a warning which says that to remain a free Jew in Russia is to put your career and your freedom in jeopardy.

The courage of the Soviet Union's Jewish community, in the face of this threat of cultural genocide, is inspiring. They have raised their voices in protest; they have publicly asked for their rights; and tonight, in celebration of the Law of God and man, they will in effect be saying "no" to the threat of state-sanctioned suppression.

We stand with them, Jew and Gentile alike. Because the fight for the free human spirit is the fight of every free man-- and in that sense, all of the barriers of race and creed and culture fall -- we stand together as men who recognize the freedom of others no less than our own.

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In that sense, then, we are all brothers of the Soviet Jews.

And in that sense, we say to the Soviet Union - if you cannot let our brothers live in freedom, then let our brothers go.

If you cannot grant them the right to worship God by their own lights, then let our brothers go.

If you cannot permit them to raise their children by the faith of their fathers, then let our brothers go.

If you cannot let them think, speak, pray and live as free men, then let our brothers go.

Let them go to Israel, where a free Jewish homeland awaits them. Let them go to Israel, where they can live and walk among their fellows, finding there what you would deny them. And let them come, too, if they wish to America -- and to this city -- where they will find the kind of freedom you cannot grant.

But do not trap them, half free and half slave, doomed to watch as a 5000 year old tradition is snuffed out by suppression -- let our brothers go.

Tonight -- according to Jewish tradition - the fates of all men that have been charted on Yom Kippur are entered into the docket of God's tribunal. We do not know what fate awaits the Jewish community. But we do know that as much as we can, we will speak and work -- on our own, through our government, through the United Nations - so that for thousands of Jews within the Soviet State, the fate for them and their children will be found -- this year -- in Jerusalem --and in freedom. The Laws of God -- and the rights of man -- demand no less. May this gift of freedom be their fate.

Thank you.