



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer's Briefing Materials **Boris and Natalya Katz Interview, 02/15/2009**

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Miller Center Documents¹

- Boris and Natalya Katz Fact Sheet.
- Soviet Dissidents Timeline.

Secondary Source Materials

- Boris Katz bio, www.wikipedia.com.
- Adam Clymer, *Edward Kennedy: A Biography* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999) pp. 212-215, 270-275, 389-394, 556-557.
- Murray Seeger, "Kennedy Bid to Aid Jews Held Failure," *Los Angeles Times*, 04/26/1974.
- Robert Kaiser, "Kennedy, KGB Agent Meet Jewish Activists in Moscow," *The Washington Post*, 04/26/1974.
- Lino Tontodonato, "Katz Family Reunion after 3 Years," *The Harvard Crimson*, 12/01/1978.
- "Katz Family in Vienna after Leaving USSR," *The Washington Post*, 11/30/1978.
- "Ailing Soviet Baby Arrives in Boston," *The Washington Post*, 12/01/1978.
- "Who We Are," Action for Post-Soviet Jewry, www.actionpsj.org.
- Jenna Russell, "Legions He Aided Now Praise Kennedy," *The Boston Globe*, 05/23/2008.
- Robert Israel, "Wooing Jewish Votes: U.S. Senate Campaign Enters Home Stretch," *Jewish Advocate*, 11/10/1994.

Oral History Interviews

- Larry Horowitz interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 04/17/2008.
- Jeff Blattner interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 03/30/2007.

¹ These are original documents created by Miller Center researchers for the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project. Please acknowledge credit for any use of these materials.

- Nancy Soderberg interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 10/09/2008.
- Trina Vargo interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 11/07/2008.
- Carey Parker interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 10/20/2008.

BORIS AND NATALIA KATZ FACT SHEET

Prepared by Rob Martin

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/12/2009

Overview highlights:

- **1970s:** Boris and Natalia Katz work as computer programmers at the Soviet Institute for Experimental Meteorology.
- **1975:** Boris Katz's mother, Khaika, and two brothers, are allowed to leave the USSR and emigrate to Cambridge, MA.
- **1977:** the Katz's learn their new-born daughter Jessica suffers from a serious digestive ailment; Khaika Katz enlists the help of a Boston-based non-profit activist group, the Action for Soviet Jewry, who put Boris Katz in touch with Dr. Feinbloom of Harvard Medical School, who diagnoses Jessica's ailment over the phone. When the Katz's are denied permission to leave the USSR to seek medical treatment for Jessica in the West, special baby formula is smuggled into the USSR by American tourists to keep Jessica alive. The Katz's visa application is denied because their computer programming skills are deemed state secrets.
- **1978:** EMK visits the USSR in September and presents a list of Soviet Jewish families he is requesting be allowed to leave the USSR. The list includes the Katz's, who are now expecting their second child. Brezhnev tells EMK he will positively reconsider the visa applications for 18 families, including the Katz's. EMK tells Katz the good news while meeting in Lerner's apartment. The USSR approves their visa application in October, but the Katz's do not leave until after they deliver their second child. They arrive in the U.S. in November.
- **Post-1978:** Boris and Natalia Katz settle in the Boston area; Boris Katz begins working as a computer scientist at the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and head the lab's InfoLab Group.
- **1984:** EMK's new media advisor, Michael Kaye, launches a series of campaign ads featuring longtime friends of EMK talking about how the Senator has dealt with tragedy in his life. The campaign ads include a videotaped testimonial from Boris Katz crediting EMK with saving his daughter's life.
- **1994:** Boris Katz speaks at a campaign rally for EMK during the 1994 reelection campaign against Romney.

SOVIET DISSIDENTS TIMELINE

Prepared by Rob Martin

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/12/2009

1973 The Soviet Union reportedly allows a record 35,000 Jews to leave the USSR. Many other visa applications are rejected, including that of the internationally-known Soviet cyberneticist Alexander Lerner. (*Los Angeles Times*, 04/26/1974)

Teddy Kennedy Jr. is diagnosed with cancer in his leg. He begins cancer treatment in early 1974.

1974

April EMK travels with Joan Kennedy, Teddy, Jr., Bob Hunter and Jim King to the USSR, Yugoslavia, Rumania and West Germany. On the 19th, EMK raises the issue of Jewish emigration with Soviet officials in Moscow at a luncheon at U.S. Ambassador Walter Stoessel's residence, the Spaso House. EMK stresses that it is an emotional issue for a country of immigrants. On the 22nd, EMK meets with Brezhnev and discusses an exit visa for the Soviet cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, whom Joan has taken a personal interest in. Rostropovich's name had been included on the list of Jewish dissident emigration requests that EMK had presented to the Soviets in advance. EMK suggests that a "magnanimous gesture" on the part of the Soviets towards Jewish dissidents could help defeat a Henry Jackson amendment which would bar economic concessions to the Soviets until it liberalizes its emigration policies. EMK also meets with a group of nine leading Soviet dissidents in Alexander Lerner's apartment. A KGB agent also attends the meeting. Clymer writes that some of the dissidents are quietly granted exit visas as a result of EMK's efforts. At the end of the trip, Brezhnev sends word that he would grant the visa for Rostropovich. (Adam Clymer, *Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999, pp. 211-215; *Los Angeles Times*, 04/26/1974)

August Nixon resigns from office; Ford is sworn in as the 38th president.

1976 Jimmy Carter is elected president.

1977 President Jimmy Carter sends Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Moscow to present an ambitious SALT II arms reduction proposal but is strongly rejected.

Soviet computer programmers Boris and Natalia **Katz** request permission to emigrate to the U.S. after learning that their infant daughter Jessica suffers from a rare digestive ailment requiring treatment in the West. Boris Katz's mother, Khaika, who lives in Cambridge with her other two sons, seeks help from Action for Soviet Jewry, a U.S.-based political activist group. Khaika **Katz** had been granted permission to leave the USSR in 1975. They enlist the help of Dr. Richard

Feinbloom, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, who diagnoses Jessica over the phone as suffering from malabsorption syndrome and prescribes a special baby formula, Pregestimil, which is directly absorbed by the body, but is not available in the USSR. The **Katz**'s visa request is denied because they have allegedly learned state computer programming secrets at the Soviet Institute for Experimental Meteorology. For the next year Jessica is kept alive through the smuggling of Pregestimil into the Soviet Union by American tourists. (*The Harvard Crimson*, 12/01/1978)

1978

Summer Chinese émigré Johnny Foo arrives in the U.S. and meets his parents for the first time in 20 years. EMK had pushed for Foo's release during his December, 1977 trip to China and attends the reunion. Without public announcement, others on EMK's list are later allowed to leave. (Clymer, p. 270)

August Kalicki privately negotiates the terms of EMK's proposed second visit to the Soviet Union with Andrei Pavlov of the Soviet Union's State Committee on Science and Technology. While the Soviets reportedly are interested in discussing arms control, EMK pushes to also include Soviet dissidents on the agenda, including better treatment for Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Shcharansky. Kalicki travels to the USSR to help complete the negotiations. (Clymer, p. 271)

September EMK travels with Horowitz, Kalicki and photographer Ken Regan to Moscow. EMK and Brezhnev meet for nearly two hours and discuss arms control, human rights, and the status of refuseniks. EMK states no arms control agreement will get through the Senate unless the USSR shows greater sensitivity on human rights. Brezhnev agrees to reconsider the cases of 18 families attempting to emigrate. The next morning EMK goes to Alexander Lerner's apartment to meet with dissidents, including Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner, and with Anatoli Shcharansky's mother and brother. EMK privately tells two of the dissidents, Lev David Roitburg and Boris **Katz**, that they would receive permission to leave the country. On condition of their release, EMK had agreed to keep the visas secret until he had left Moscow. Most surprisingly, the USSR also grants an exit visa to physicist Benjamin G. Levich. He is the first member of the Academy of Sciences allowed to emigrate. (Clymer, pp. 271-275; Burton Hersh, *The Shadow President: Ted Kennedy in Opposition*, South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 1997, p. 78; *Time*, 09/25/1978; Clymer interview with Pavlov 11/24/1997, pp. 14, 21-22)

On the 11th, EMK holds a press conference in Washington, D.C., in which he lists the names of refuseniks allowed to emigrate. *The Washington Post* says this shows EMK's private diplomacy to have been more effective than Carter's public interventions on behalf of dissidents. Years later Pavlov recalls that the Soviets only allowed Levich to emigrate because of EMK's efforts. (Clymer, p. 274)

October Soviet entertainers Olga Serova and her husband Yevgeny Kozhevnikov are told that restrictions barring their departure from the USSR have been lifted. They were one of the 18 families Brezhnev had promised EMK that would be released. Their 1976 emigration request had been denied because Serova's father works for the Kremlin and could have passed on state secrets to the couple. Another family on the EMK list, Galena Nizhnikova and her husband Eduard, are still awaiting the final, formal clearance to leave. (*The Washington Post*, 10/13/1978)

November Boris and Natalia **Katz** leave the Soviet Union with their daughter Jessica and nine-day-old child Gabrielle. Their departure had been formally cleared by the USSR in October, but was delayed until after Gabrielle's birth. The family is met by Kalicki in Zurich, who travels with them back to Boston, where the family settles. The **Katz** family is met at Logan Airport by Boris' mother, two brothers, EMK, and a large crowd of people who have followed the international news coverage of Jessica **Katz**. (Clymer, p. 275; *The Boston Globe*, 05/23/2008; *The Washington Post*, 11/30/1978)

1979

June Carter and Brezhnev sign the SALT II arms control agreement.

Summer EMK declines to join the advisory board of the "International Sakharov Hearings," a series of tribunals conceived to give Soviet dissidents living in the West the opportunity to testify to Western intellectuals about the oppressiveness of the Soviet regime. The tribunals are held between 1975 and 1983 and are named in honor of leading Soviet dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov. It was thought that the addition of EMK's name and political stature to the advisory board would pressure the Soviets to stop harassing Sakharov. In explaining the Senator's decision, Horowitz notes that EMK had recently traveled to the Soviet Union, where he had pressed Brezhnev on the case of eighteen Jews. He identifies EMK's strategy for dealing with the problem of dissidents as one of "quiet diplomacy." In a subsequent letter to a member of the Sakharov committee, EMK cites his busy legislative schedule as a reason for not joining. (*The New York Times*, 05/28/1981; <http://hoorferl.stanford.edu/rlexhibit/timeline.php>)

November EMK announces he will challenge Carter for the presidential nomination. He withdraws his bid at the Democratic National Convention the next summer.

1980 Reagan is elected president; the Democrats lose the Senate.

1982 EMK and Senator Mark Hatfield begin calling for a nuclear freeze.

Late 1982- Early 1985

EMK starts dispatching Horowitz on trips to the Soviet Union to discuss arms control matters and the release of dissidents. Acting as EMK's personal envoy, Horowitz also tries to arrange a meeting between EMK and Brezhnev's

successors, Andropov and, then, Chernenko. Horowitz works with several Reagan officials, including Poindexter and Matlock, to keep the administration informed of his communications with the Soviets. (Clymer, p. 332)

1983 EMK becomes a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Reagan announces his SDI/Star Wars proposal.

1984 EMK's new media advisor, Michael Kaye, launches a series of campaign ads featuring longtime friends of EMK talking about how the Senator has dealt with tragedy in his life. The campaign ads include a videotaped testimonial from Boris **Katz** crediting EMK with saving his daughter's life. (*The New York Times*, 09/26/1982)

1985

March Mikhail Gorbachev becomes the new leader of the U.S.S.R.

EMK travels to Geneva with the Senate Arms Control Observers Group for the Geneva arms control talks with the Soviets. Max Kampelman heads the U.S. negotiating team.

October Horowitz meets with Pavlov in Finland, where the two make preparations for EMK's upcoming Soviet trip. EMK is to meet with the new Soviet leader, Gorbachev, and discuss arms control and Soviet dissidents. (Clymer, pp. 389-390)

November Reagan and Gorbachev hold their first summit meeting in Geneva.

December EMK announces in a televised statement that he will not run for president in 1988. He acknowledges the following day at a news conference that his decision may mean that he will never again run for president.

1986

January Horowitz travels to Moscow to complete negotiations for EMK's Soviet trip. Pavlov updates him on the Soviets' response to EMK's the three conditions: 1) a meeting with dissidents, 2) the release of either Shcharansky or Sakharov, and c) an appearance on television. He informs Horowitz that Shcharansky will be released soon, along with nine other families, and that EMK can take public credit for securing Shcharansky's release; Horowitz responds that EMK is not interested in doing so. He also suggests Gorbachev will de-link INF disarmament in Europe from SDI. Horowitz meets with Vadim Zagladin, deputy chief of the Soviet Union's Central Committee International Department. Zagladin requests that Horowitz inform the Reagan Administration that the two powers might consider a treaty to ban chemical weapons as a means of reopening talks. (John F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended*, New York: Random

House, 2004, p. 93; Clymer, pp. 390-391; Clymer interview with Horowitz, 05/29/1992, pp. 12-15)

Upon his return to the U.S., Horowitz brings Avital Shcharansky, the dissident's wife, to EMK's Senate office. There, she takes a phone call from EMK, who informs her of her husband's imminent release. Horowitz had typically met with her following his trips to the Soviet Union in order to give her an update on her husband's situation. (Clymer, p. 391; Clymer interview with Horowitz, 06/23/1995, p. 14)

February

On the 4th, EMK, Horowitz, and EMK arms control advisor Thomas Longstreth arrive in Moscow. EMK had delayed his trip a few days in light of the Challenger space shuttle disaster. (Clymer, p. 391; *The New York Times*, 02/01/1986)

On the 5th, EMK meets with the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Arthur Hartman, who questions Gorbachev's perception as a new kind of Soviet leader, as well as his commitment to "de-linking" SDI and INF. EMK and Horowitz then meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who indicates that EMK will receive good news from Gorbachev on both emigration and arms control. Later on the 5th, EMK speaks at the Academy of Sciences, where he extols the dissident Sakharov. (Clymer, p. 392; Hersh, p. 79; *The Washington Post*, 02/12/1986; Clymer interview with Horowitz, 05/29/1992, p. 14)

On the 6th, EMK and Horowitz meet with Gorbachev, who confirms the de-linkage of INF from SDI. In their general discussion of human rights, Gorbachev lectures EMK on the presence of "human rights" in the Soviet Union (e.g. the right to food, the right to safety at night) and of the absence of such rights in the U.S. When EMK starts to grow angry, Gorbachev quickly moves on to discuss the specific human rights cases of concern to the Senator. He confirms that Shcharansky and twenty-five other Jews will be released. Gorbachev concludes the meeting by reminiscing about JFK. (Clymer, p. 393; Clymer interview with Horowitz, 05/29/1992, p. 15)

Before leaving Moscow, EMK meets with a group of dissidents. (Clymer, p. 393)

Upon their return to the U.S., EMK and Horowitz brief Poindexter at the White House. Poindexter had instructed them not to brief the State Department, but rather to come directly to him. Secretary of State George Schultz learns of Gorbachev's statement to EMK concerning arms control in the course of reading the newspaper. Soon thereafter, EMK and Horowitz start working more closely with the State Department. (Clymer interview with Horowitz, 05/29/1992, p. 17)

On the 11th, the Soviet Union releases Scharansky as promised; he is allowed to walk from East Berlin to West Berlin as part of a prisoner exchange between East and West Germany. (*The Washington Post*, 02/12/1986)

October Reagan and Gorbachev hold their second summit meeting in Reykjavik.

Late Horowitz meets with the long-time Soviet Ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Dobrynin, in Moscow, who proposes the two countries create an informal group to break an impasse on arms control. However, the proposal fails when the two countries are unable to agree on the group's participants. (Clymer interview with Horowitz, 05/29/1992, p. 13; Clymer interview with Horowitz, 01/07/1999, p. 1)

1987

December Gorbachev and Reagan hold a summit meeting in Washington, D.C., where the two leaders sign an INF Treaty to eliminate their intermediate- and short-range missiles. Horowitz later says that, along with EMK, he and his wife are invited to all the dinners during Gorbachev's visit. (Clymer interview with Horowitz, 05/29/1992, p. 13)

1988 George H.W. Bush is elected president.

1990

March EMK travels with Horowitz, Bill Lynn, Nancy Soderberg and Tom Oliphant to the Soviet Union. During his fourth trip to the Soviet Union, EMK discusses the current political crisis in Lithuania with Gorbachev. EMK urges Gorbachev not to resort to the use of force in order to prevent Lithuania from declaring its political independence from the Soviet Union. In so doing, the press speculates, EMK demonstrated to Gorbachev that there is absolute solidarity between the EMK "back channel" and the official view of the U.S. government. (*The Boston Globe*, 03/28/1990)

1994

October Supporting EMK's reelection campaign against Romney, the Jewish community throws EMK a thank you rally at Brandeis University. A number of Soviet refuseniks are in attendance, including Shcharansky, as well as Boris **Katz**, who recalls, "sixteen years ago I was in Moscow. It was a desperate time. Senator Kennedy intervened on our behalf. He helped get our freedom." (Clymer, p. 557; *The Jewish Advocate*, 11/10/1994)