

U.S. Senator 'receptive' to plea to help Minsk Jews

Jerusalem Post Reporter

TEL AVIV. — Indiana Senator Vance Hartke was reported yesterday to be "very receptive" to a plea that he intervene on behalf of a large number of Minsk Jews expected to figure soon in a Soviet show trial.

Senator Hartke's adviser, **Leon Charney**, now visiting Israel, had been asked by the Public Council for Soviet Jewry to inform the Senator of the plight of the Minsk Jews, who are being constantly and cruelly interrogated by the KGB because of their desire to emigrate to Israel. Yesterday Mr. Charney told *The Post* he had spoken with Senator Hartke over the phone and had good reason to believe the Senator would do his utmost for the group.

Among the Minsk Jews it is Col. Efim Davidovich whose case is causing the greatest concern, and Mr. Charney plans to stress it when he meets the Senator next Tuesday. Col. Davidovich is a Soviet war hero who has suffered three major heart attacks and is in such frail condition that he cannot be held in detention. Despite this he is being summoned daily by the K.G.B. for incessant and vigorous interrogation, from which he emerges in an even worse state of health. Mr. Charney says something may have to be done about his case even before the scheduled visit in Washington of Soviet Communist Party chief Leonid Brezhnev at the end of June, since it would be much more difficult to free anyone after a show trial begins.

WASHINGTON SUMMIT

Mr. Charney also told *The Post* he has knowledge that President Nixon intends to take up the problem at his Washington summit with Brezhnev and is expected to try to move Mr. Brezhnev to concessions on the issue.

The Public Council for Soviet Jewry chose to appeal to Senator Hartke because he is a ranking member of the powerful Senate Commerce Committee, whose role in granting the U.S.S.R. most-favoured-nation status in trade relations with U.S. is crucial. Senator Hartke is also co-sponsor of the Jackson Amendment, which seeks to deny such status to the U.S.S.R. as long as it denies its citizens the right to emigrate freely.

He led the recent delegation of seven Senators to the U.S.S.R. and held long talks with Mr. Brezhnev.

The Council is particularly worried about the state of the Jews in the Soviet heartland — the Republics of Russia, Belorussia and the Ukraine — where the authorities are making emigration especially difficult. In Minsk, the Belorussian capital, a number of families who had already

received permission to leave for Israel have had their visas delayed, while investigations continue — probably to pressure them into testifying that there is an "underground Zionist organization" in the town. A number of prominent Minsk Jews have had their homes searched by the K.G.B. and their Yiddish and Hebrew books confiscated.

An appeal which reached Moscow yesterday from Jews in Minsk accuses the Soviet security police of using "blackmail, threats and intimidation" to prepare a criminal case against seven retired Jewish officers in the city.

The appeal said the police had questioned dozens of Jews in Minsk and other Soviet cities with a view to prosecuting the officers for encouraging emigration to Israel and other acts.

The appeal's 98 signatories called on world figures in Israel, the U.S. and other Western countries to use their influence to aid Soviet Jews.