

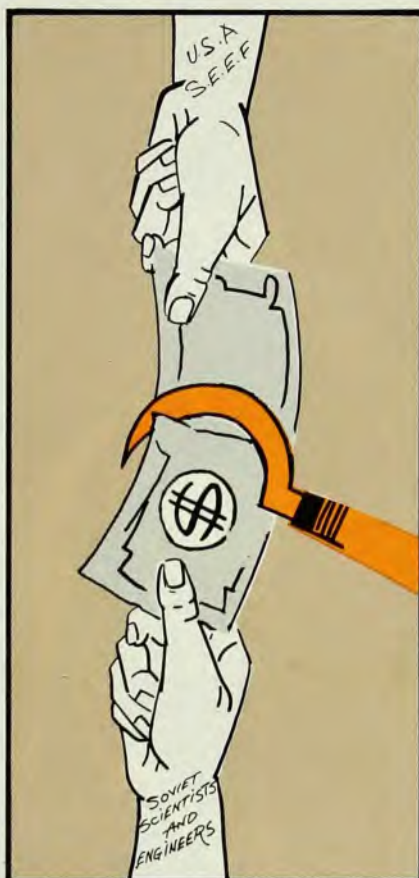
Soviet emigrant fund imperiled

We are taking this opportunity to report on the activities of the Scientists and Engineers Emigrant Fund (SEEF). In 1973 a group of physicists began sending small sums of money by regular bank draft to a few colleagues in the Soviet Union who had lost their jobs and were in need, as a result of applying for exit visas. As time passed, and more information arrived here about the "refuseniks," we added engineers, chemists, and mathematicians to the list of those being helped.

In 1974 SEEF was organized, chartered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a charitable trust. In our role as Trustees, we the undersigned, have received (tax-exempt) contributions from over 1000 members of the US scientific and engineering community, solicited primarily from the Fellows of The American Physical Society and from the Members of the American Mathematical Society. These funds have made it possible to send gifts averaging \$50 a month to some 30 different individuals—usually heads of families—for a total of about \$20 000. (Contributions can be sent to Scientists and Engineers Emigrant Fund, c/o David H. Frisch, Room 24-036, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139). Communications from recipients still in the USSR, and from those who have managed to emigrate, have told of the importance of this financial and moral help, not least as an indication of support by the international scientific community.

Recently the Soviet Government announced two rulings that will seriously hinder our efforts and those of others: 1) a new 30% tax in addition to the approximately 35% now deducted will be imposed on all foreign-currency gifts, starting 1 January 1976; 2) even more important, there will be a drastic reduction in the effective exchange rate applied to such gifts. The combination of these two makes an almost confiscatory effective exchange rate. This will cripple our efforts, and also those of many individuals, especially emigrés who try to support their families in the USSR with periodic remittances.

Given the very small magnitude of the sums involved in gifts compared with that of the Soviet economy, we conclude that the purpose of these new regulations is to discourage emigration



further by imposing even more difficult sanctions on those individuals who claim this basic right.

As the Trustees of SEEF, we are concerned by this new turn of events that is so contrary to the announced spirit, if not the letter, of the Helsinki agreement and we call it to the attention of our colleagues, especially those who deal directly with the Soviet Union.

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Sunday in Moscow

Every Sunday at noon some thirty Soviet scientists gather in the tiny Mos-

cow apartment of Mark Azbel for a weekly seminar, which represents their only remaining opportunity to practice the science to which they have devoted their professional lives. Azbel is an internationally known theoretical physicist, formerly a member of the prestigious Landau Institute near Moscow. Two and a half years ago he applied to emigrate to Israel and was immediately dismissed from the Institute. For him and the others in the Seminar there has been no further opportunity to participate in Soviet scientific life. They are shunned by practically all of their former colleagues. Access to libraries and laboratories is forbidden; telephone service is cut and all mail is intercepted, including subscriptions to Western scientific journals. Although these scientists live in a constant state of personal fear and deprivation, they make a determined effort to remain intellectually alive through the Sunday Seminar and the occasional participation of visiting scientists.

Recently, the undersigned participated in a Soviet-American physics symposium in Moscow sponsored by the Academies of Sciences of the US and USSR and the National Science Foundation of the US. On the Sunday preceding the opening of the symposium, six members of the American group attended the Sunday Seminar. Azbel invited us to speak to the group, postponing that day's scheduled lecture by one of the regular participants in order to listen to discussions of current research. So we took turns standing at a worn-out blackboard in the small crowded apartment lecturing about optical properties of crystals, with Azbel interrupting periodically to summarize sections of the lecture in Russian and to translate questions. The audience was enthusiastic and the Seminar continued for four hours.

On Monday 26 May, the official symposium began—a five-day marathon of lecture sessions and laboratory visits. During the symposium we met many distinguished Soviet scientists and visited several impressive research laboratories. We found the opportunity for first-hand interaction highly rewarding and stimulating, particularly with those scientists who have not been allowed to travel abroad and whom we have previously known only through their pub-