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Washington march is birth of activism for some Dade Jews

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Miami News Reporter

WASHINGTON — "It's amazing," said Miami lawyer Sam Dubbin while taking a curbside lunch break during the Washington march on behalf of Soviet Jewry. "Where have you ever seen so many Jews in one place before?"

Nowhere.

Until yesterday, no one had ever seen 200,000 American Jews gathered in one place to advance a common cause.

A half hour after Dubbin sat down with his wife and their 5-year-old son and his mother, the other marchers — 20 to 30 abreast — continued to file by.

More than a thousand Miamians like the Dubbins flew to the capital for the occasion and flew back last night.

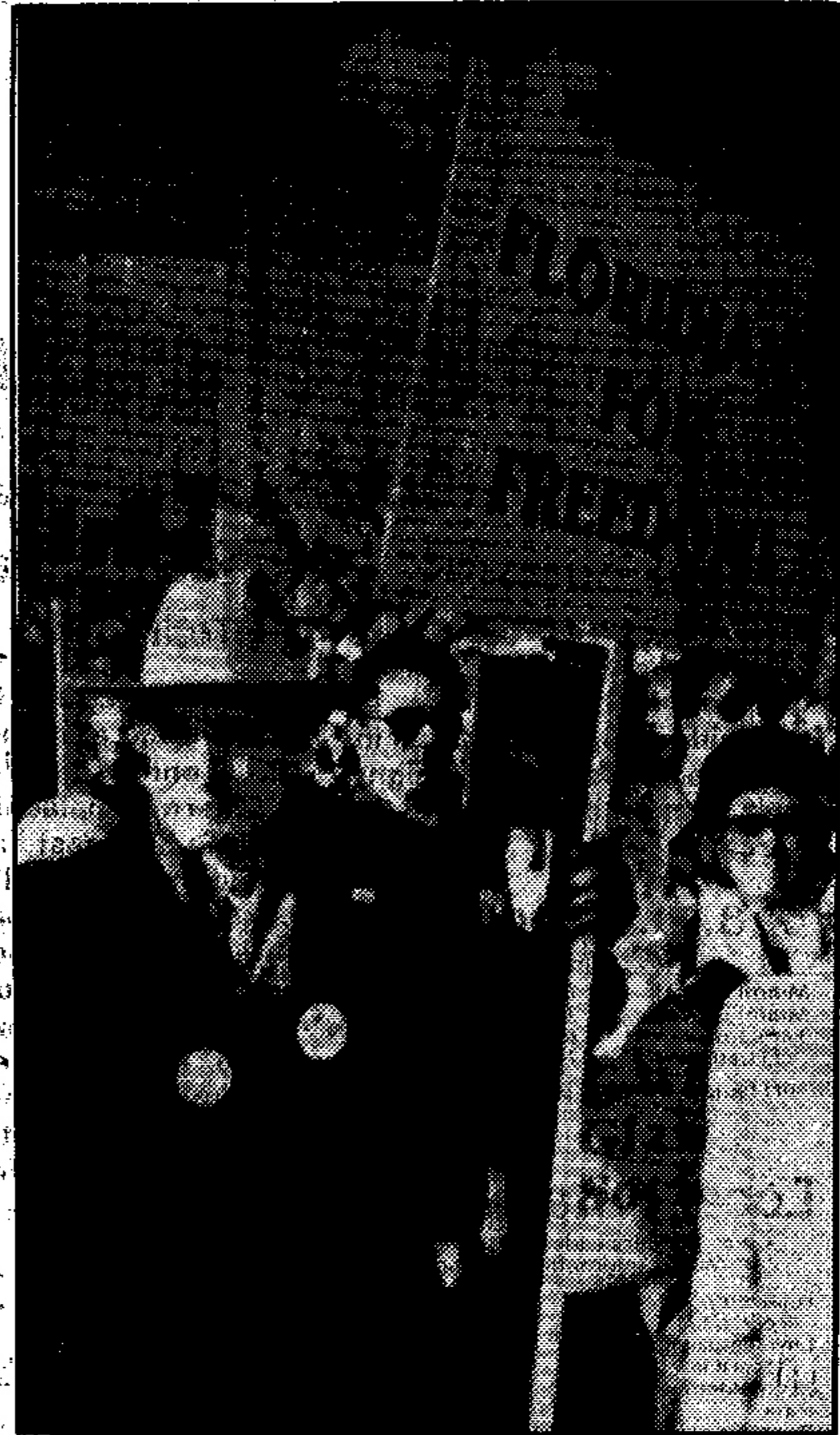
Thousands of other American Jews had traveled even further, from places like Anchorage, Honolulu and San Francisco, just to join the crowd at The Mall in front of the Capitol on the eve of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev's summit meeting with President Reagan.

The demonstration, organized by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, sought to focus world attention on the plight of an estimated 380,000 Soviet Jews who have been unable to win government permission to emigrate.

Many of the demonstrators were descendents of Jews who fled persecution in Russia more than three generations ago.

Some, like Miami Beach Commissioner Abe Resnick, came to the West more recently. "I defected from the Soviet Red Army in 1947," he recalled. "If I hadn't succeeded, I'd be marching over there and you would be the people who would be trying to free me."

The American Jewish community had long tended to be painfully discreet in its attempts to influence public policy. There was always the fear that any big, highly visible expression of political power would



Miami News/Cox News Service — LANNIS WATERS

Sen. Lawton Chiles joins in D.C. march

confirm the paranoid stereotypes of anti-Semites and provoke a backlash.

But that fear of backlash was barely discernible

Please see MARCH, 10A

yesterday. If it hadn't evaporated, it had been pushed aside by the overwhelming conviction among those who marched that American Jews have an obligation to fight the persecution of less fortunate Jews abroad.

Writer Elie Wiesel, who survived the Holocaust and went on to win a Nobel prize for chronicling it, told the crowd he sees great hope in the change.

"Had there been such a demonstration for Jewish and human solidarity . . . in 1942 and 1943 and 1944," Wiesel said, "millions would have been saved."

"But too many of us were silent then. We are not silent today."

And American Jews yesterday found they were far from alone in their concern. They were joined by many marchers of other religions and colors; by official representatives of the National Council of Churches and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, by scores of senators and congressmen, by majority and minority leaders of the Senate and House, and by Vice President George Bush and four other presidential candidates.

President Reagan declared his solidarity with the cause in a letter read at the rally. He promised to use the summit to press "for the release of all refuseniks, for full freedom of emigration, and for complete freedom of religion and cultural expression. We shall not be satisfied with less."

Politicians who couldn't address the crowd seemed eager to work their way through it.

Sen. Lawton Chiles, D-Fla., was waiting to greet the Floridians who arrived on buses from their three chartered passenger jets. So were Rep. Connie Mack, R-Cape Coral, an announced challenger to Chiles; Sen. Albert Gore Jr., D-Tenn., a presidential candidate who campaigned in Florida just last week.

U.S. Reps. Dante Fascell, D-Miami; Larry Smith, D-Hollywood; Bill Nelson, D-Melbourne, and Kenneth "Buddy" MacKay, D-Ocala, all worked the crowd. Fascell and Smith provided doughnuts and hot coffee in the elegant House Ways and Means Committee hearing room.

Miami Mayor Xavier Suarez arrived on a commercial flight. However, several politicians on the charter flight, including Mayors Alex Daoud of Miami Beach and Raul Martinez of Hialeah, were guests of lawyer-developer Jeffrey Berkowitz, the

Greater Miami Jewish Federation board member who chaired the Miami committee for the demonstration.

Miamians traveling with Berkowitz had a long, difficult day: a 7 a.m. check-in at the Miami airport, an airline Kosher breakfast with tepid coffee, four hours of exposure to a piercingly chilly wind on the Washington mall, a 2½-hour delay at Dulles Airport for the return flight, and an airline Kosher dinner served shortly before midnight.

Although many of the Miami participants were longtime activists in a variety of Jewish philanthropies and causes, some, like Suzanne Horowitz, were completely new to any sort of activism.

"I felt I hadn't done anything and maybe this was the time," said Horowitz, a North Miami Beach receptionist who is the daughter of a Russian Jewish immigrant.

Her trip was paid for by her husband, an accountant who "stayed home watching football," she said. "He'll meet me at the airport in Miami and he'll ask where I was all day, but I think he's very proud that I did this."

Another first-time activist who said she was "awed" by the experience was Jenifer Richard, 16, of Coconut Grove. She traveled with a sister and three cousins as guests of her aunt, Miami advertising executive Elaine Silverstein.

"On Yom Kippur, I was at Congregation Beth David with my grandfather when the rabbi announced that Ida Nudel (a longtime Soviet dissident) had just been released," Richard recalled. "My grandfather told me how he had met her in the Soviet Union and how he had written letters to her."

The young woman said her grandfather's example convinced her that she, too, could help. "I'd never realized that one person, by doing something, could make that much of a difference," she said.

"This wasn't the most relaxing way to spend a Sunday, but it was fun," said David Smith, 24, a mortgage banker from Coconut Grove. "And I'd never been part of anything this major before — only little protests here and there in college for things that involved only the campus."

Smith said he was excited at "meeting people from all over the country who felt, like I did, that they had no choice but to be in Washington. I was really proud to be Jewish and American — but mainly to be Jewish."

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Jewish groups to protest Rally to precede Gorbachev visit

By LISA GIBBS
And CARLOS HARRISON
Herald Staff Writers

An international gathering of Jewish leaders in Miami Beach this week will focus attention on mustering forces for a massive Washington demonstration demanding the release of Jews wishing to leave the Soviet Union. "This is a crucial time," said Linda Kantor, co-chairman of the South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry. "We have a historical opportunity to do something for Soviet Jewry."

The rally, expected to be the largest Jewish protest ever in the capital, is set for Dec. 6, one day before the arrival of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev for the U.S.-Soviet summit. Organizers say the rally on Washington's Mall will far surpass the 12,000 protesters who gathered during the June 1978 visit of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

Preparing for the rally and a national march has become a key issue of the 56th General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, which runs Wednesday through Sunday at the Fontainebleau Hilton hotel.

Organizers of the Miami gathering, which is expected to attract more than 3,500 delegates from Jewish organizations around the world, hastily arranged a special session on the march for Wednesday night.

"Mobilization is an immediate, high-priority issue" of the conference, said Aaron Podhurst, president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. He said about 1,000 Jews from Florida are expected to go to Washington for the rally.

Speakers at the conference include Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeanne Kirkpatrick and former Soviet "refuseniks" Ida Nudel and Yali Edelshtem.

"It is the refuseniks' position that, unless pressed, the situation for Soviet Jews will become worse than it was before," Podhurst said.

Some delegates to the conference are to run a five-kilometer

Please turn to PROTEST / 14A

Protest set by Jewish organizations

PROTEST / from 1A

course along the beach early Friday in a gesture of support for Soviet Jewry.

"We need to get everybody hyped up on how important it is that hundreds of thousands of people go to Washington," said Judy Gilbert, who organized the run.

The Reagan administration has said it will press the question of the Jewish refuseniks — Soviet citizens repeatedly denied requests to emigrate — and other human rights issues when meeting with Soviet negotiators next month.

Jewish activists hope the summit will be a turning point in the struggle for the rights of Soviet Jews. They see signs of hope in Gorbachev's reformist policies, the Reagan administration's commitment to human rights in the Soviet Union and the general atmosphere of Soviet-U.S. cooperation on arms control, trade and other issues.

"It could be one of the turning points, not only in Jewish rights but in normalization of relations," said Morris Abram, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

David Harris, Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee, said Jewish leaders want to be "supportive" of Reagan so that the president can mention the rally to Gorbachev and say, "Look at this event and you'll see the concern for this issue."

Jewish groups say the statistics on Jewish emigration give them hope.

The number of emigrants has

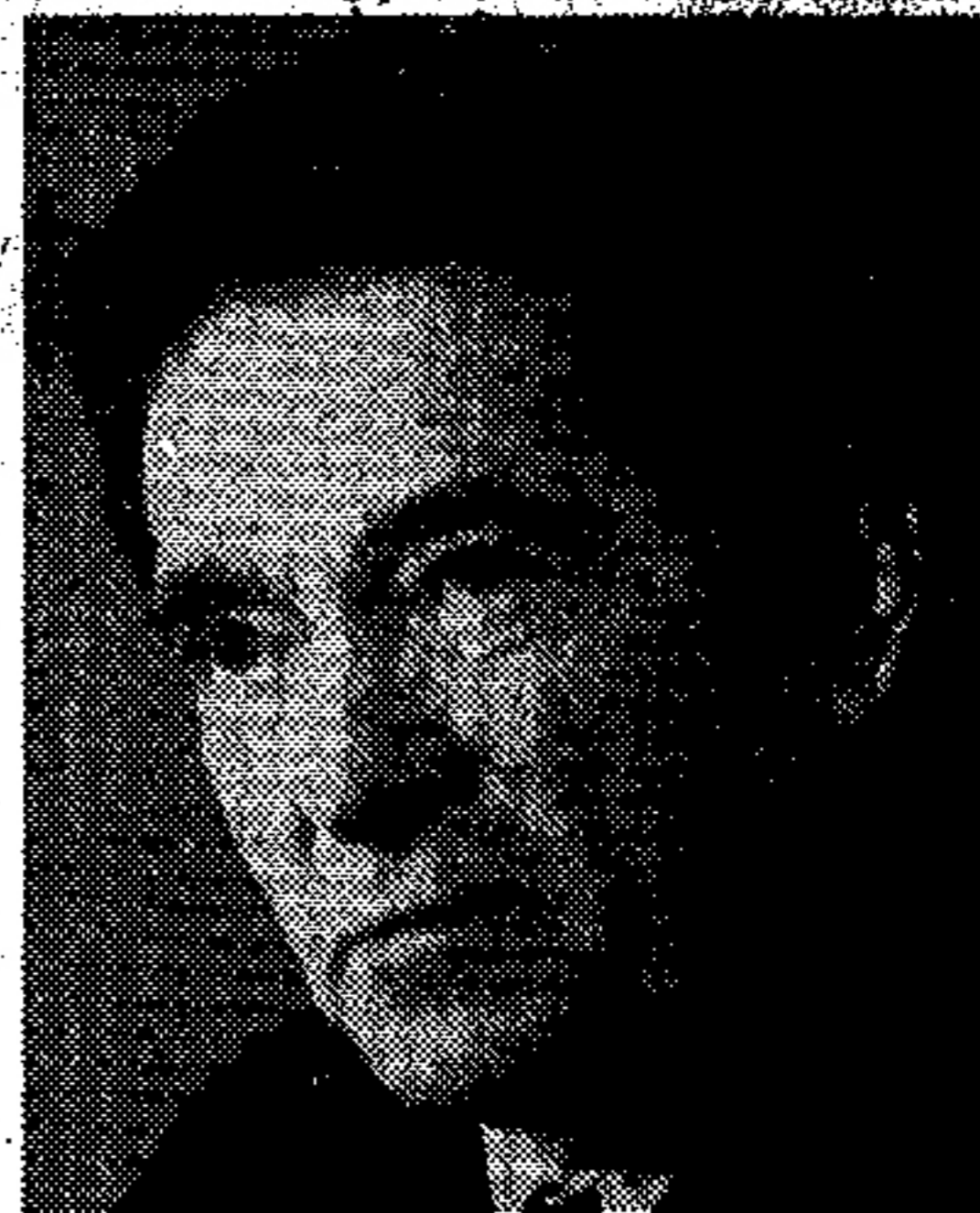


Aaron Podhurst: Rally is 'high-priority issue.'

risen and fallen according to the state of U.S.-Soviet relations. It rose as relations improved in the 1970s to a high in 1979, when an average of 4,200 Jews were leaving each month. But relations soured after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that year, and deteriorated during Reagan's first years in office. The average last year was 76 per month. Recently, the numbers have risen to about 800 a month. Experts said that this might reflect an effort to win public-relations points during pre-summit maneuvering.

The U.S. government has identified about 12,000 refuseniks waiting for release. Jewish groups believe that about 20,000 more have been refused emigration requests among about two million Soviet Jews.

Jewish groups are asking for a streamlined emigration process and a range of other reforms to stop what they consider to be the Soviets' forced assimilation of the Jews. Jewish leaders here believe that the fate of Soviet Jewish culture — the heritage of many American Jews — is at stake.



Morris Abram: 'Could be one of the turning points.'

The Miami Beach conference will not devote all its attention to the Washington rally. Delegates also will vote on resolutions addressing the validity of conversions to Judaism; assistance to Ethiopian Jews in Israel and those still in Ethiopia; and support for substance abusers and AIDS victims.

Smaller workshops will address Catholic-Jewish relations, partnerships between Israel and North American Jewish groups and issues facing Jewish women. There will be special sessions for college students.

The theme of the five-day conference is "Dor L'Dor: From Generation to Generation — Building Community and Continuity through People." Shoshana Cardin, president of the Council of Jewish Federations, will open the conference with a speech on that topic Wednesday night.

The Greater Miami Jewish Federation is host of the general assembly, which was last held in Miami Beach 12 years ago. Events are not open to the public.

This report was supplemented with Herald wire services.