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Protests, hope usher in summit

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200,000 rally in D.C. for Soviet Jews

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WASHINGTON — There were 200,000 in all, nearly 1,000 from South Florida, often locked arm in arm, soul to soul. They united in Washington on Sunday to send a message about Soviet Jews to Mikhail Gorbachev. No one is free until we all are free. Let my people go.

They were grandmothers and grandbabies in strollers, romantics and refugees. Many were onetime college stu-

dents, then children of the 1960s, now in their 40s. They stood in the open air before the U.S. Capitol and spoke as one.

They wanted the message to hang in that same cold Washington air, to be there when Gorbachev arrives in Washington today for his summit with President Reagan.

"As long as Russian Jews need allies, we shall be allies. We shall come here again and again as long as they need us to come here," said Elie Wiesel, Nobel peace prize winner.

It was called Summit Sunday, a chance to make the point that 380,000 Soviet Jews are prevented from leaving the Soviet Union and persecuted for asking.

The date was chosen as a media appetizer for the summit, when the world's eye turns to Washington, and to permit as many Americans to participate as possible.

They did, by bus and plane, by Reebok

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and wheelchair. They marched a mile, from the Ellipse near the Washington Monument to the Capitol in biting-cold, sunny weather.

"Beyond expectations, awesome," said Jeffrey Berkowitz, co-chairman of the South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry.

All can 'empathize'

But it was more than a one-denominational rally. Charlie Garriss carried a banner that read: "Christ the King Catholic Church Supports Soviet Jews." A government employee from Silver Spring, Md., he spent most of the rally having his hand shaken, being thanked.

"Everybody can empathize with freedom," he said.

Miami Mayor Xavier Suarez, holding up the right end of a banner from the Cuban Hebrew Congregation of Miami Beach, said he came to march because "the right to emigrate is the single issue we all agree on the most."

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., whose district includes the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary recently under siege by Cuban prisoners, spoke to the huge crowd, three blocks wide, two blocks deep. "As long as one Jew is not allowed to emigrate, as long as one Jew is not allowed to practice his religion, we are all Jews in the Soviet Union," Lewis said.

There also were frequent reminders that on the same day that 200,000 Americans, from Portland to Perrine, gathered freely in their nation's capital, a similar gathering of Soviet Jews in Moscow was broken up by state police and an American reporter was arrested there.

"The bully boys of Gorbachev" is what New York Mayor Edward Koch called the Soviet police. "That's not glasnost. That's Joe Stalin," he said.

Refuseniks' message

The stars of the day were Russian refuseniks who fought, suffered in the system and eventually won their freedom. Most reminded the comfortably middle-class crowd that there were sisters and brothers left behind the Iron Gate of the Soviet Union.

Yosef Mendlevich warned them not to be fooled by Gorbachev's televisionese, his openness, his glasnost. He urged Reagan to refuse to trade, to refuse to aid until emigration of at least 60,000 Soviet Jews takes place.

"Linkage, linkage, linkage. Link trade with human rights. There is no peace without freedom," the veteran of 11 years of Soviet prison said.

Others, like Natan Sharansky, warned that Gorbachev offers a false peace, similar to the false peace of 1939, the year World War II began.

Fewer than 1,000 of the 380,000 Soviet Jews requesting permission to leave the Soviet Union were allowed to last year. This year, that figure has risen to 7,000.

It remains to be seen how firmly Reagan will stick to his commitment to human rights and the Soviet Jews during his meeting this week with the Soviet leader. Star Wars may be a more marketable chip than human rights.

Will Gorbachev listen to 200,000 protesters? "He's got to hear it," said Mary Silver of Miami Beach.