

"CALL TO CONSCIENCE" VIGIL
Remarks by Congressman Les AuCoin
on behalf of Solomon Alber
October 1, 1981

Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to participate again this year in the "Call to Conscience", the Congressional Vigil for Soviet Jewry, calling attention to the plight of Solomon Alber. I commend Congressman Barnes for organizing this important demonstration of Congressional concern for the victims of Soviet oppression.

Since the last time I addressed this Chamber about Solomon Alber and his courageous family, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States have taken a turn for the worse. Tensions are strained over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Our hopes for productive arms limitation talks are dim. Soviet emigration has dropped radically over last year.

But in spite of this dismal picture, I continue to hope that human rights will prevail and that next year I can report on Solomon Alber's deliverance from the Soviet Union. It is not an idle hope; it is one that I want my colleagues to share.

Solomon Alber's story is at the same time his own personal story and yet very much like the story of every other Soviet Jew who is refused permission to emigrate in blatant disregard for the Helsinki Accords.

Mr. Alber, a mathematician and physicist, was director of a computer research laboratory when he applied for emigration visas for himself and his family -- his wife, Evangelina, and his sons, Mark and Ilya. He was refused in 1975 and, as a consequence of the application, was demoted. Evangelina, a physician, lost her job as a pathologist as well.

News about the family's application refusal spread quickly in their small scientific community outside Moscow.

The New York Times reported in June, 1976 that Mark, then 15 years old, had become the target of an officially inspired campaign of threats and violence. First, his fellow students began the "silent treatment," refusing to speak to him. Then, as the shunning wore off, they taunted him, calling him "Jew, Jew, Jew" in derisive tones. Later, Mark was twice beaten, once into unconsciousness. Nevertheless, the police took no action, even though they apparently knew the identity of the assailants.

Shortly after this, a metal ball was shot through the third floor bedroom window of the Alber home. Fortunately, neither Mark nor Ilya were in the room at the time. Still, the police dismissed the incident as a prank.

But the most important part of of Solomon Alber's story is that he himself is not without hope and that he continues to work for his

freedom. At last report, he is active in the refusenik organization, working at sacrifice to promote his dream and that of others. Unfortunately, his wife has contracted a lymphatic infection and has been forbidden to work by the authorities at the Central Medical Institute. Her condition is serious, but not critical. His son Mark passed the mathematics exam to enter the University of Moscow but was denied admission, and is now attending an institute for Railway Engineering, one of the few to which Jews are admitted.

As you see, Mr. Speaker, life for the Alber family continues, just as they continue to hope that one day they will be allowed to emigrate. I am pledged to see that the Albers do not hope in vain. I call upon my colleagues to join me in this effort by expressing their concern directly to the President, to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and Soviet Premier Brezhnev, demanding that the Albers and their fellow Jews be allowed to leave. With this kind of support, the Albers can continue to hope, and perhaps next year I can say to you the Albers are free.