

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Soviet Jewry Movement

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As record numbers of Soviet Jews continue to pour into Israel, Jews in particular have reason to join in the celebrations of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. For it should be recalled that Dr. King, the supreme voice of the civil-rights movement in the United States, was also an early and influential supporter of the Soviet Jewry movement, the effort to achieve human rights, including the right of emigration, for the more than two million Jews living in the USSR.

We are confident that the climactic successes of this movement--the move to Israel of 200,000 Soviet Jews in 1990 and the even greater number anticipated in 1991--would have brought considerable gratification to Dr. King. So too would the fact that for the first time in three generations, Jews in the Soviet Union are being allowed to teach Hebrew to their children, create their own art forms, develop their own culture and establish Jewish communal bodies.

From virtually the very beginning of the movement to free Soviet Jews in the 1960's, Martin Luther King, Jr. was a major advocate on their behalf. Twenty-five years ago this month, he publicly sought support for the reestablishment of the "religious and cultural freedom" of the Soviet Jewish community. He went on to "urge that the Soviet government end all the discriminatory measures against the Jewish community."

The next year Dr. King addressed by telephone hook-up dozens of Soviet Jewry Human Rights Rallies across the United States.

In his compelling remarks he indicated that the Soviet government de-

prived Jewish communal life of elementary needs required to sustain even a modest existence. He admonished his fellow Americans not to "sit complacently by the wayside" while their Jewish brothers and sisters in the Soviet Union faced the possible dissolution of their spiritual and cultural life.

By remarks such as these, Dr. King helped play a significant role in legitimating the effort to alleviate the plight of Soviet Jews--in moving it from the fringes of our society's concerns to the center. He thus made it acceptable for many people with diverse backgrounds to support this movement at a time when general endorsement by American society was either lacking or uncertain.

In retrospect, Dr. King's adoption of the cause of Soviet Jewry is not surprising, given his belief that the freedom of Blacks was inextricably tied to the universal right of all groups to be free from discrimination and oppression. This belief, exemplified by Dr. King's extraordinary leadership, was instrumental in the shaping of the close relationship between blacks and Jews that developed during the King years, a closeness that included cooperation in campaigns to end discrimination in employment and housing and to improve educational opportunities.

In fact, Dr. King was the embodiment of this cooperation. Ten years before his 1968 death, he enunciated the basis of the natural relationship between the Black and Jewish communities. Blacks and Jews, he said, shared an "indefeasible and important destiny to complete a process of democratization... which is our most powerful weapon for world emulation."

Surely, as we ponder the message of Martin Luther King's life and work, we must come to realize that it is again time for both groups to return to the effort.

Jefferson Students Honor Martin Luther King, Jr.



Sharon Mitchell, anchorwoman of Channel 8

A tribute to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. took place Monday, January 21, 1991 at the Jefferson High School Performing Arts Center.

Entitled "Keep Living the Dream: A Tribute to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." This tribute was welcomed by the community as a sincere effort to heighten awareness of Dr. King and the national holiday established in this honor.

The program provided an

opportunity for students of Portland Public Schools and the community to participate in a significant cultural enrichment community activity. Its objective is to foster greater understanding of cultural diversity through music, performing arts, dramatic and speech presentation.

Program content included Portland area students and a number of prominent local and state citizens all reflecting on the importance of living the dream.

Civil Rights Journal

by Benjamin Chavis, Jr.

The Truth Of Martin Luther King, Jr.

There is no better way for the people of the world community to remember and to pay tribute to the living legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., than listening again to the truth of Dr. King's expressed opposition to U.S. war-making policies. Today, as thousands of armed forces are caught in a geo-political conflict of the Persian Gulf crisis, the words of Dr. King still ring loud and clear.

While we have already gone on record in expressing our opposition to war in the Persian Gulf, it is important that we continue to speak out against any attempt to justify war for the sake of the control of oil.

As Dr. King expressed his opposition to the Vietnam War, we must be just as vigilant to express our opposition to the Persian Gulf War. It was on April 4, 1967, one year to the day before his tragic assassination, when Dr. King delivered his famous sermon at Riverside Church in New York City.

For Dr. King, this was the time to "break the silence."

We believe it is important for you to hear these particular words of Dr. King once again. Dr. King emphasized, "There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others have been waging in America...It seems as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor--both black and white--through the poverty program. Then came the buildup in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything as a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and attack it as such."

Dr. King continued, "Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than de-

tating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and die in extraordinary high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee the liberties of Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and east Harlem."

Dr. King further said, "We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world. If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight...The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise we must choose in this crucial moment of human history." Of course, Dr. King made the choice to demand peace and justice.

Now a quarter of a century later, the people of the United States are called again to make a choice between war and peace, between injustice and justice, and between immorality and morality. Today, there is a real connection between the U.S. military buildup in the Persian Gulf and the deteriorating social and economic circumstances of the nation's poor and oppressed. Disproportionately African Americans are once again on the front lines of an immoral war situation.

We are grateful that there appears to be a growing "peace and justice" movement evolving across the nation. Yet timing is critical. We need more voices and we need more persons of good will to choose peace and not war. As Dr. King challenged President Johnson and all of those who were in the choir singing war anthems, we need to challenge President Bush and all of those in the Congress and other places who are singing the same war songs.

"Bring the troops home now!" "No blood for oil!" "Peace and justice in the Middle East!" These should be our chants today. Dr. King's truth "crushed to the earth, shall rise again."

"Non-violence is the answer to crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence."

"Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

NORTHWEST NATURAL GAS



Birthday presence.

What would you give Martin on his birthday?
Can you separate the man from his ideas?
How do you gift wrap a dream? Can you put Peace in a box?
Maybe you could send him a world of people who are glad that he lived, who are trying to live the lessons of compassion of courage of a right and wrong where truth does not discriminate, but can be found in the soul.
A world of people trying simply to do what is right.
Those lessons, that he left us.

Happy Birthday, Dr. King

NORTHWEST
Making the most of your time.

