

Tell Soviets of Wide Support For Open Exit, Mandel Urges

NEW YORK, July 1—Maryland Gov. Marvin Mandel said today that the U.S. government has a responsibility to "disabuse" Soviet leadership of the notion that free emigration of Russian Jews is a narrow issue supported only by small, localized Zionist pressure groups in this country.

Reporting his impressions of a 12-day State Department-sponsored trip to the Soviet Union in May, Mandel said Russian leaders "have got to be told that this is a problem of concern at all levels of our society and government and that it is not narrowly supported."

Mandel visited the Soviet Union with seven other U.S. governors from May 17 to 29 and discussed his findings today at a press conference sponsored by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Mandel implicitly endorsed a statement, issued by the conference chairman, charging President Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger with "placing the issue of freedom of Soviet Jews on the back burner" and making the problem "last year's business."

Although his own comments did not appear designed to engage the Ford administration in an open quarrel over the Jewish emigration question, Mandel's remarks were noticeably more pointed than those he made upon his return from a similar Soviet visit three years ago.

"They (the Soviets) have to be impressed that no one is trying to run their govern-

ment for them, but that they do want to work this out," Mandel said. "The problem of human beings here. These are people, and they feel they want to immigrate, they should be allowed to do so," Mandel said.

He described a meeting had with the wife and two children of Edward Goren, a Soviet Jew who defected from the country and who subsequently became a first violinist in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. The wife and children have been denied exit visas, which Mandel characterized as "cruel and inhuman punishment."

"They (the Soviet officials) keep saying this is an internal problem, that it is none of our affair . . . but it is a human problem for us all," Mandel said.

He said he interviewed Alexander Lerner, a leading Moscow activist in the cause of Soviet Jewry, and was told that an estimated 15 per cent of the Jews—or 500,000 citizens—would leave immediately if there was an open-emigration program.

Lerner, Mandel said, has been denied the opportunity to work for three years.

Mandel said another Soviet Jew he interviewed, a professor of Chinese psychology, had been denied an exit visa on the grounds that he possessed state secrets. The professor, Mandel said, had been offered a teaching position in New York City.

"They want to leave in the worst way, but they just cannot . . . This is an area where (U.S.) officials can sit

and try to work this thing out," Mandel said. Asked how he interpreted the Soviet officials' rationale against the emigration policy, Mandel said:

"No. 1, there is no rationale because they tell you there is no problem. They tell you that what you read in the newspapers is created by troublemakers' and that they have no problem.

"They say that by their own constitution, anti-Semitism is prohibited, so they can't have a problem," the governor added.

Stanley Lowell, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said at the press conference that before the Soviet Union abrogated the 1972 trade agreement with the U.S., the fate of the 3-million Soviet Jews was a high national priority.

Since then, Lowell charged, Mr. Ford and Kissinger have failed to speak out on the issue.

"Our government's silence has been interpreted by the leaders of the U.S.S.R. as a signal to intensify the repression of Soviet Jewry. We urge the President that he reiterate this nation's commitment to human rights with respect to the Jewish community in the Soviet Union," Lowell declared.