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**Title: The experience of the Leningrad-Manchester in the resolution of current issues in international relations in the 1970s.**

Опыт сотрудничества между Ленинградом и Манчестером в разрешении актуальных вопросов (проблем) международных отношений в 1970-е гг.

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**Abstract:** An examination of how in the 1970s, the city twinning (partnership) between Manchester and Leningrad was used as a vehicle to raise issues about the treatment of soviet Jewry. The 1962 Twinning Agreement committed Manchester and Leningrad to the development of friendship and understanding. Until the 1970s this municipal diplomacy or internationalism was conducted through the exchange of civic and cultural delegations and was largely uncontentious. In the 1970s the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry*, the Manchester 35-s, staged various attention grabbing stunts including protests at performances by the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra and the Kirov Ballet. They also used the twinning relationship to arrange meetings with visiting Leningrad officials and asked Manchester councillor when in Leningrad to raise their concerns.

**Key words:** City Partnership, Town Twinning, Friendship Agreement, Manchester, Leningrad, 35 Group, Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry, Kirov Ballet, Leningrad Philharmonic.

**Introduction:**

After World War II town twinning, friendship agreements or city partnerships represented a growing area of sub-national cooperation. Governments on both sides of the 'Iron Curtain' sanctioned and encouraged such agreements with former enemies and allies old and new. In 1944, the twinning of the British city of Coventry with the soviet city of Stalingrad, marked the first such relationship between Great Britain and the USSR. As Anglo-Soviet relations deteriorated and the war-time alliance gave way to the cold war, it was not until 1962 that the second such agreement was signed, this time between Manchester and Leningrad. The agreement committed Manchester and Leningrad to exchange information about developments within their cities and to promote contacts between schools and colleges, observatories, and libraries. A very general but nonetheless vital goal was to develop mutual knowledge, understanding and friendship and these remain the basic aims of the twinning arrangement to this day [14].

Until the 1970s the Manchester-Leningrad twinning relationship was largely non-controversial, the exchange of delegations, school visits and cultural events went ahead without raising much concern. In 1956, Alderman J. E. Pheasey had opposed the visit of Manchester's first civic delegation to Leningrad and the hosting of a return Leningrad delegation in Manchester, largely on financial grounds. Ald. Pheasey was out of step with his own party and ultimately resigned from both the Conservative Party and the Council [34]. In 1962, the Liberal Party called for a reduction in the size of Manchester's civic delegation to Leningrad again on cost grounds, the call was defeated in the Council. The visit went ahead as planned and Manchester's lord mayor signed the Friendship Agreement with Leningrad

[43]. Also in 1962, concerns were raised that a planned school exchange would expose Manchester school children to political indoctrination, as while Leningrad school children were to stay in private homes in Manchester, the Manchester school children were to stay in a Pioneer camp. The fears were dismissed by Alderman Richard Harper, who had been closely involved in planning the exchange and was the leader of the Conservative Party group on Manchester City Council [50]. It was not until the 1970s that the Manchester-Leningrad twinning became the focus of a sustained campaign, but rather than seeking to end the link, the aim of to use the link as a channel to raise concerns about the treatment of soviet Jewry.

### **Literature review and overview.**

Studies of town twinning relations have tended to focus on the promotion of friendship and social interactions. According to the geographer Wilbur Zelinsky, "The choice of country and specific community within it is not a random process; historical connections, shared economic, cultural, recreational, and ideological concerns, similar or identical place names, and, to a certain extent, the friction of distance, all play meaningful roles." [51. C. 1]. For Manchester and Leningrad the relationship grew out of the Anglo-Soviet war-time alliance and a desire to avoid future conflicts. Manchester also had a well-organised Communist Party and there was a strong pro-Soviet sentiment within the Labour Party and an active branch of the *British Soviet Friendship Society*. Within Manchester support for twinning with Leningrad went across the political spectrum and the first civic delegation to Leningrad in 1956 included councillors from the Conservative, Liberal and Labour parties [7]. Soviet-era accounts of town twinning typically focus on its role in developing international friendship and specifically on twinning as part of the USSR's peace strategy [24, 25, 26]. For example, in 1960, N. Smirnov the chair of Leningrad City Soviet *Ispolkom*, declared that, "Leningrad – the cradle of Great October – pays attention and love to the millions of people of the earth." [49. C. 108]. He stressed that, differences in social and governmental structures and ideology were no barrier to the development of friendly relations with capitalist countries [49. C. 109]. Similar sentiments were expressed in accounts of Leningrad's twinning relations by Golobovich [18], Egorieva [11] and Lebedinskaya [30].

In the 1980s western studies of town twinning by writers such as Kincaid [27] and Kirby [28] and more recently by Ewen and Hebbert [13] depicted it as a form of municipal diplomacy or municipal internationalism. An example of this phenomenon was Leningrad's support in 1990 for Manchester's, ultimately unsuccessful, bid to host the Olympic Games. The late 1980s and 1990s were a time of monumental change within the USSR and then Russia. These changes presented town twinning links with new challenges but also opened up new opportunities to support, exchange experience and ideas, and to learn from one another. This experience has been analysed in the work of Emelianova [12] and Patiaka [46]. Manchester and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) shared the challenges of urban and economic modernisation and restructuring in the face of the decline of traditional industries. For example, in the 1990s town twinning provided a channel through which Manchester and St. Petersburg shared their experience of the development of the new creative industries [44].

Contemporary studies of town twinning have started to examine how civil society organisations are now using town twinning links as a vehicle to raise subjects as diverse as environmental concerns, human rights, humanitarian issues and the treatment of diaspora

communities [19. C. 159]. This approach rather than seeing town twinning as solely an elite defined and directed process, instead investigates how it is perceived and used at the grass roots level. Terms now sometimes used are citizen or peoples' diplomacy. Cities and towns by their very nature include diverse communities with a range of opinions, priorities and concerns. As town twinning is about the promotion of friendship and understanding, this raises a crucial question, whose version or versions of a city's history or current concerns should inform or impact upon its twinning links? Town twinning should be understood as both municipal diplomacy or internationalism, but it is also part of a city and country's political and policy process or processes.

### **The focus and methodology of this study.**

This study examines how Manchester's twinning with Leningrad was drawn into an international campaign in support of soviet Jewry in the 1970s. In 2016, Mark Hurst [22] published the first monograph about the activities of British civil society organisations: *Keston College*, the *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry*, the *Working Group on the Internment of Dissenters in Mental Hospitals*, the *Campaign against Psychiatric Abuse*, and *Amnesty International*, in support of soviet dissidents between 1965-85. Hurst provides accounts of these NGOs' structures, internal decision-making processes, individual actors, financial constraints and advocacy strategies. The focus of this article is not on the soviet dissident movement and soviet Jewry, nor is it concerned with the internal processes and structures of the *Manchester Campaign for Soviet Jewry* and the Manchester branch of the *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry* known as the *Manchester-35s*, headed by Mrs Sylvia Sheff. Rather it examines how the *Manchester Campaign for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s* sought to use the Manchester-Leningrad twinning relationship as a channel through which to promote their concerns. Crucial to this study is the *Manchester-35s'* archive, which is now held by *Manchester Archives and Local Studies* at *Manchester Central Library*. The *Manchester-35s'* archive boxes contain posters, fliers, letters, briefing documents, reports and newspaper clippings. Manchester in 1970s had a well-established and organised Jewish community that was active in civic affairs. There were Jewish councillors and aldermen, that is members of the Town Council, and also lord mayors during the 1970s. *Manchester Archives and Local Studies* also holds the personal archive of Alderman Bernard Langton, who was a long-serving member of Manchester City Council and also a prominent member of Manchester's Jewish community. An examination of this archival material has made it possible to identify the range of both public and also the behind the scenes ways in which the *Manchester Campaign for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s* identified and targeted the Manchester-Leningrad twinning link to raise their agenda. This study specifically examines how Manchester's Leningrad Square, and the visit of Leningrad civic and cultural delegations in 1971, 1973 and 1977 were used to raise the cause of Soviet Jewry.

### **The 1970s: détente, tensions and the development of protest.**

While the 1970s was a period of détente, of improving East-West relations, marked by arms agreements, increasing trade and in 1975 by the Helsinki Final Act, it was nonetheless also marked by tensions. In September 1971, Anglo-Soviet relations were brought to a new low when Britain expelled 105 Soviet diplomats and trade officials on the grounds of espionage. Earlier that year when asked by the Labour MP Dick Crawshaw if the Prime Minister intended to raise the issue of the treatment of Jews in the USSR and the, "repressive

measures taken which are abhorrent to all British people?" The Conservative Prime Minister Ted Heath said, "We have done this on many occasions, and the last occasion I did it personally was when Mr. Gromyko paid a visit to London." [21]. During a visit to London in October 1970, the Soviet Foreign Minister had been repeatedly heckled by demonstrators protesting against the treatment of Jews in the USSR.

The national *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry (35s)* was founded in 1971. The catalyst for the organisation was the refusal of an exit visa for Israel and the arrest of Raiza Palatnik a 35-year old librarian from Odessa, and her conviction for slandering the Soviet Union. In the 1970s and into the 1980s the national *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry* under their leader Mrs Doreen Gainsford adopted a variety of tactics designed to attract publicity and the raise awareness of their cause. On May Day 1971, a group of 35s dressed in black chained themselves to the railings and went on hunger strike outside the Soviet embassy in London in protest at the treatment of Raiza Palatnik. The 35s organised demonstrations and disrupted cultural events such as a performance by the *Georgian State Dance Company* at the Coliseum Theatre in London in June 1973. They also lobbied government officials and politicians, conducted letter writing campaigns, adopted *refuseniks* (those who had been refused an exit visa) and provided them with material and moral support.

The Manchester branch of the *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry* (the *Manchester-35s*) was part of a co-ordinated network of 35s groups in Great Britain. The *Manchester-35s* was founded in 1971 and chaired by Mrs Sylvia Sheff, it participated in the 35s' national campaigns and organised actions in Manchester. The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* was also set up in 1971 under the auspices of the *Manchester Jewish Communal Council* to co-ordinate activities on behalf of soviet Jewry in Manchester. The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* was chaired by Mrs Kathryn Berman, Mr Aubrey Erstling served as the vice-president. The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* worked closely with the *Manchester-35s* to raise awareness amongst the general public and promote backing for their campaign in support of soviet Jewry. Within Manchester the city's twinning link with Leningrad presented a focus and a channel for their campaign. The public side was the demonstrations, enactments, dressing up in prison costumes, leafleting and attention grabbing stunts. There was also the more behind the scenes use of the twinning link to ask Manchester councillors to raise the issue with Leningrad civic delegations in Manchester and when visiting Leningrad to raise the issue with their hosts. Manchester councillors also organised private meetings in Manchester between the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and *Manchester-35s*, and visitors from Leningrad.

### **The symbolism of Leningrad: framing the protest.**

As a token of friendship the city of Leningrad named a new road Manchester Street and Manchester reciprocated by naming a new square in the Wythenshawe district, Leningrad Square. The Leningrad name provided a useful hook for a joint *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry – Manchester-35s* protest that used the symbolism of the name of Leningrad to draw attention to their campaign. The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry – Manchester-35s* organised letter writing campaigns in support of *refuseniks* and also letters to officials both in Great Britain and the USSR. The aim was to raise the case of individual or groups of *refuseniks* and also to publicise and promote their campaign in general. On 6<sup>th</sup> February 1973, the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and *Manchester-35s* held a demonstration in Leningrad Square in Wythenshawe and then proceeded to the local Post Office to send a

hundred letters to Mr Bokov, the head of OVIR (visa office) in Leningrad appealing on behalf of Mr Boris Rubinstein, a Leningrad *refusenik*. The letter writing itself also served to raise awareness of their campaign and drew in people from both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Amongst those who had written letters to Mr. Bobkov, were Tom Normanton a Conservative MP and also the Bishop of Salford and the Bishop of Middleton.

Another joint *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry - Manchester-35s* action drew on the symbolism of Manchester's crown courts [17]. On 10<sup>th</sup> July 1978 they organised a day-long protest against the Moscow trials of Anatoly Scharansky and Alexander Ginzburg; Maria and Vladimir Slepak. A handful of protestors demonstrated outside the courts with placards reading, "SAVE SOVIET JEWRY" and "MANCHESTER 35 GROUP". Mrs Sheff, handed a letter to nine of the crown court judges urging them "to show that judges in a free world do not believe the Soviet Union is meting out justice." [40]. They called on people to support, "these human rights activists" by sending protest letters to Nikolai Lunkov the soviet Ambassador in London; Yuri Andropov the KGB Chairman and President Leonid Brezhnev and the Procurator General Roman Rudenko [40]. However, while the organisers were delighted with the number of young people who joined the protest, overall they were disappointed that only a handful of people attended the day-long protest [45]. Mr Erstling hoped that the coverage on television and radio would make up for the lack of people attending the demonstrations. Mrs Sheff complained about the lack of support and said that the, "Manchester community had a lot to learn and a long way to go in its efforts for Soviet Jewry . . ." [17].

### **The Leningrad hijackers.**

In 1971 the fate of the Leningrad highjackers, quickly became a mobilising cause for the international campaign in support of soviet Jewry. In June 1970 Jewish *refuseniks* planned to hijack a plane in Leningrad to leave the USSR, they were informed upon and arrested. Following a trial held in Leningrad in December 1970, the death sentence was imposed on the ringleaders Edouard Kuznetsov and Mark Dymshitz, although these penalties were later commuted to 15 years' imprisonment. They had been charged under Article 64-A of the Russian Federation Criminal Code or its Ukrainian and Latvian equivalents. Article 64-A dealt with treason and included "flight abroad" as treason. Punishment allowed under this article ranged from 10 years' imprisonment to death

The Leningrad connection again gave the hijackers' fate an added focus in Manchester. Manchester and Leningrad took it in turns to host civic and cultural delegations from their twin city and in 1971 it was Manchester's turn to be host. A high point of the 1971 visit was a performance by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester's main concert venue. The performance provided the protestors with a high profile target that would ensure national and international coverage. The jewellery designer, Andrew Grima had already designed a Star of David-shaped medallion for the *Women's Campaign for Soviet Jewry*, the medallions had a name on one side and "USSR Jewish Prisoner of Conscience" on the other. For their protest the *Manchester-35s* dressed in black and wore medallions, bearing the name Sylva Zalmanson, the wife of Edouard Kuznetsov who was also imprisoned. Their action was carefully planned and was designed to attract as much attention as possible, twelve members of the *Manchester-35s* positioned themselves in two rows of six in the centre of the Free Trade Hall's auditorium. During the Soviet national anthem they stood up and unfurled their banners, which stated, "Leningrad,

stop playing - with Jewish lives". After the concert the Lord Mayor hosted a reception at the Town Hall on Albert Square for the guests from Leningrad, these included the orchestra, the civic delegation as well as Mr Andrei Parastaev, the Soviet Embassy's first secretary. In all 130 demonstrators from the *Manchester-35s* and the *Bnei Akiva* Zionist youth movement, demonstrated outside the Town Hall, handing out leaflets and chanting "Scharansky". It took twenty minutes for the Leningrad visitors to enter the Town Hall. Mrs. Sheff reported that Manchester City Council leader Mr Norman Morris had rejected the *Manchester-35s* request to meet the orchestra. The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s* did have supporters within Manchester City Council. For example, Frederick Balcombe JP a Labour Councillor (1958-1982) and a campaigner for the rights of soviet Jewry, boycotted the 1971 Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra concert. However, Frederick Balcombe was also flexible and as lord mayor in 1974 led a civic delegation to Leningrad and used it as an opportunity to raise the issue of soviet Jewry with his hosts.

### **The Manchester Festival and the Kirov, 1973.**

Cultural events such as the 1973 Manchester Festival were designed to show Manchester as an international cultural centre and to encourage visitors to come to the city. The Manchester Festival Committee and Manchester City Council invited a Leningrad civic and cultural delegation, including the Kirov Ballet, to come to Manchester for the festival. The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s* quickly mobilised to use the invitation, the Kirov Ballet performance and the presence of senior Leningrad politicians in Manchester to raise the issue of soviet Jewry. The protests focused on the fate of the Leningrad hijackers and Valery and Galina Panov, who in 1972 had been sacked by the Kirov after applying to immigrate to Israel. Once again the twinning link and the symbolism of the Leningrad connection of the hijackers and the Panovs were used. The London-based *Committee for the Release of Valery and Galina Panov* wrote a series of letters to the Labour Party councillor Alderman Bernard Langton, protesting against the invitation of Evgeny Gogolev, first deputy chairman of Leningrad City Soviet and the Kirov ballet company to perform in Manchester. In their letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1973 the *Committee for the Release of Valery and Galina Panov*, wrote that their members, "are concerned about the plight of the Panovs and about receiving a man responsible for the persecution of any minority whatever its race or religion." [31]. Alderman Bernard Langton had been a member of Manchester's first civic delegation in 1956. He was a strong supporter of the Manchester-Leningrad twinning, as Lord Mayor in August 1965 he had hosted Mr Vasili Isaev the chair of the Leningrad City Soviet *Ispolkom* and in April 1966 had led a Manchester civic delegation to Leningrad [29]. After the festival Bernard Langton asked Mrs Berman of the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* to send him a list of the Leningraders, including the hijackers, about whom they were most concerned. The Manchester Lord Mayor 1972-73 was a Labour Party councillor Edward (Ted) Grant, who had led the Manchester civic delegation to Leningrad in 1972; he was also very active in the Manchester branch of the *British Soviet Friendship Society*. Ted Grant rejected the suggestion that the visit should be cancelled in response to the treatment of the Panovs.

The *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s* had another direct route to Manchester City Council through Councillor Mr Leslie Donn, who had been key figure in the establishment of the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry*. Mr Donn wrote a letter to

each of his fellow Manchester City Council members, entitled: "Visit of the Kirov Ballet to Festival '73". He wrote,

"As you are no doubt aware, there has been considerable international publicity given to the visit of the Kirov Ballet to Manchester.

Whilst we welcome cultural; exchanges of this nature. The visit is marred by the absence of two former leading members of the Company, namely, Galina and Valery Panov and whose sad plight is described in the enclosed articles.

We are deeply concerned about the resentment that is, in the circumstance, being caused by the visit to Manchester of the Kirov Ballet. We are sure you will agree that our City must not be shown as being insensitive to the plight of the Panovs.

We ask you to take up the cause of the Panovs and, through the Corporation [City Council], to plead with the Russian Authorities for their right to emigrate. In doing so you will be supporting basic human right and freedom in keeping with the great traditions of our City.' [9].

Mrs Sheff made similar points in a letter to Alderman Langton on behalf of the *Manchester-35 Group* and noted with regret that Ted Grant had not withdrawn the invitation to the Kirov. There was even a move by Tom Normanton, the Conservative MP for the neighbouring town of Cheadle, who was an active supporter of the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s*, to have the Kirov's entry permits withdrawn "in view of the threat to public law and order posed by their presence in Manchester" [20]. In an article in *The Times*, Bernard Levin, a leading British journalist, author and broadcaster accused Yevgeny Gogolev as having played a leading part in a wave of anti-Semitic persecution in the Leningrad. He accused Ted Grant of refusing to convey to, "the Mayor of Leningrad the strength of feeling among the British theatrical community at the persecution of their fellow artists"; further that Ted Grant had also refused to contact Madame Furtseva, the Soviet Minister of culture, with an appeal on behalf of the Panovs [32]. On 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1973 away from the public glare, Ted Grant did however host a meeting in his office of Leningrad deputy Mayor Yevgeny Gogolev with representatives of the local Jewish community; unsurprisingly they did not find any common ground [31]. It is indicative however, of how the town twinning provided a means for Manchester activists to meet a leading Leningrad politician and to put their case. Yevgeny Gogolev also gave a press conference at which he reiterated a point he had made at his meeting with the activists, namely that, "Valery and Galina Panov are in their present situation because of their bad behaviour and their attempt to change their nationality." He also spoke about the Jewish contribution to the development of Leningrad and that he numbered Jews among his "best friends" [31 & 42].

The Leningrad visit was marked by frequent confrontations between the Leningrad visitors and the Jewish and non-Jewish protestors [31]. The Kirov performance went ahead on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1973 at the Opera House only to be disrupted by the protestors' catcalls. About seventy members of the *Manchester-35s* in the balcony unfurled a banner condemning the treatment of Leningrad hijackers and the Panovs. The police hustled some demonstrators out of the hall but others remained and continued to interrupt the visiting artists with shouted demands for justice for Soviet Jews. No arrests were made [31]. There were also demonstrations outside the Opera House and in Albert Square outside the Town Hall. The demonstrators gave out leaflets explaining their actions, stating that, "**An Apology** to



tonights audience. It is regretted that **Valery and Galina Panov** the leading dancers of the **Kirov Ballet**, Are unable to appear. They are languishing in their Leningrad apartment, dismissed from their positions because they applied for visas to emigrate - **Their Legal Right**. It is hoped that this does not mar your enjoyment unduly." [37]. In a review of the concert in *The Guardian* newspaper Marete Bates [1] noted the amount of "London-centric" criticism that the Lord Mayor had received for inviting the Kirov. She complained that, "The demonstrators not only wanted to send the Kirov home and castrate all contact but showed themselves only too capable of persecution too: picking on individual artists with yells. Toots and showers of pamphlets. Which the artists withstood without flinch or murmur. Moreover they returned such a strong impression of restraint, austerity, and modesty that the audience stood by them, clapping down the interruptions. And the show went on." [1].

At a civic dinner in honour of the visiting Leningrad delegation Ted Grant condemned the demonstrators and said Manchester, "spurns and abhors the mindless attitude of those who wish our city to be backward and negative" [16]. He also argued that, "Once the invitation was sent it could not be lightly withdrawn. That would have damaged the relationship between Manchester and Leningrad – built up slowly and sometimes painfully over the years – without doing anything for the Panovs" [16]. He also told the civic dinner that, "the great majority of Manchester people would never succumb to the pressure and threats that had been made" and quoted Pericles: "We throw our city open to all, and never by the expulsion of strangers exclude anyone from either learning or observing things." For his part Yevgeny Gogolev, said he hoped that the visit of the Leningrad delegation, with performances by the Leningrad singers and dancers, and a "Leningrad Day" in Manchester would strengthen the relationship between the twin cities of Manchester and Leningrad [42]. Both Ted Grant and Yevgeny Gogolev, stressed the importance of friendship and communication and there does not seem to be any indication that the protests had any impact on their opinions and actions.

#### **Promoting mutual understanding: against the use of cultural visits for political purposes.**

The 1962 Friendship Agreement committed Manchester and Leningrad to develop friendship and understanding. The *Manchester-35s* and the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* framed their activities as fulfilling this role, but they had a different or at least a differently nuanced understanding of Manchester and also of the purpose of the twinning link than for example Ted Grant's understanding of it. In response to the planned visit of a delegation from Leningrad in 1978 the *Manchester-35s* declared that, "We have the right, as every group in the country has, of public demonstrations and Soviet groups are well aware of it. It has always been our policy to support civic, cultural and educational links with other countries, to mutual understanding between people." [2]. The *Manchester-35s* presented their own actions as being against cultural visits being used for political purposes, but were clearly using the twinning relationship to raise their own political agenda. In October 1978 the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s* also lobbied the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool near Manchester to promote their campaign to have the 1980 Olympics removed from Moscow; they saw the Moscow Olympics was an example of the USSR using a sporting event for political purposes.

For the protestors the 1978 Leningrad civic delegation visit to Manchester and the planned Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra performance on 8<sup>th</sup> October was another example of the USSR using a cultural event for political purposes. An article in the Manchester-based

newspaper the *Jewish Gazette* stated that, “The Leningrad orchestra and those attending its concerts at Free Trade Hall and civic reception at Town Hall on Sunday will be reminded that arts and politics are not separated in the view of the Soviet Union. Demonstrations and representations to orchestra members will be made by the *Manchester 35 Group* and *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry*.” [2]. The plan was for a joint demonstration outside the concert at the Free Trade Hall concert venue and outside the civic reception at the Town Hall. A *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* protest leaflet produced for the concert was decorated with prison bars in the place of musical bars. Outside the concert in front of a banner proclaiming, “LENINGRAD VISITORS NOT WELCOME TILL USSR STOPS VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS”, the protestors wore stripped prison-style uniforms and tabards saying “Soviet Prisoner of Conscience” [2].

### **Friendship and freedom.**

*Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* leaflets handed out during the visits of Leningrad delegations during the 1970s bore the legend, “Friendship cannot flourish without freedom”, so linking the fate of twinning with the treatment of soviet Jewry. Their 1975 leaflet stated, “Visitors from LENINGRAD are guests of the CITY OF MANCHESTER during the period 27<sup>th</sup> May – 1<sup>st</sup> June, for the purpose of strengthening the twinning arrangements between the two cities.” And that, “We do welcome the exchange of athletic, cultural and educational interests but we are deeply concerned for all those tens of thousands of Jews in the U.S.S.R. who have applied for permission to emigrate to Israel and in consequence are subject to harassment and imprisonment.” The leaflet then listed 19 Leningrad *refusenik* families [38]. Their leaflet for the 1977 Leningrad delegation visit, is headed with MANCHESTER WELCOMES LENINGRAD (in Russian), and states that, “While the City of Manchester is extending hospitality to visitors from the City of Leningrad for the purpose of strengthening friendship between the ‘twinning’ cities . . . . . let it be realised that scores of Leningrad Jewish families are being detained against their free will (and therefore in absolute violation to the terms of the Helsinki Agreement), from leaving the U.S.S.R [39].

### **Finding a route to the Town Hall: Leningrad visit to Manchester 1977.**

Manchester hosted a delegation headed by Ivan Nosikov, Deputy Chair of Leningrad City Soviet, 13-18 May 1977. The files of the *Manchester-35s* held in *Manchester Archives and Local Studies*, includes a copy of the delegation’s programme detailing where they would be and who they were meeting throughout their stay. There is no information in the file about how the *Manchester-35s* obtained the programme, what it did mean is that they were able to target their activities. For the *Manchester-35s* and the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* gaining direct access to members of the Leningrad delegation was a major coup. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1977, Mrs Berman gained access to a reception at Manchester Town Hall for the civic dignitaries and athletes from Leningrad [41]. Mrs Berman attended the reception as the guest of Dr Michael Taylor a labour party councillor of Russian-Jewish heritage. Mrs Berman approached Mr. Novikov said she had visited Leningrad and had met with many Jewish families who were, “experiencing difficulties in emigrating.” In Mrs Berman’s report, Mr Novikov replied that, “people could emigrate and that many wanted to return to the USSR”, asked why they wanted to leave in the first place he answered, “maybe relatives” asked why, “a family who wanted to join their relatives in Israel, but couldn’t, had no work and no money.” He answered “maybe secrets” and indicated she should speak to Councillor

Taylor, who had raised the case of a Leningrad woman with Mr Novikov. At the reception the Lord Mayor Kenneth Franklin and Mr Nosikov both gave speeches stressing the cities' cultural exchanges and the broadening of contacts. Mrs Berman's report on the reception noted that, "I really felt that the 35,000 Jews of Manchester had been let down, not to mention the Jewish *refusenik* families in Leningrad. After all, they are only pawns in a big game of chess, and what do we matter anyway. That we had been denied to meet the delegation was a mere nothing, Councillor Taylor and I felt the evening was most useful, and that our point had been made clearly, inside and outside the Town Hall." [41].

### **Raising the issues – beyond the headlines**

Beyond the headline grabbing protests and direct action, the town twinning also provided other opportunities for the *Manchester-35s* and the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* to promote their cause. One aspect of the twinning relationship was the exchange of school groups and information about education in the two cities. A 1974 visit by Leningrad Educationalists provided another opportunity for the *Manchester-35s* to meet with Leningraders. Manchester City Council's Education Committee, which invited the educationalists also arranged for members of the *Manchester-35s* to meet the Leningraders. The latter did not want to engage in lengthy discussions but did accept a letter from the *Manchester-35s*. The *Manchester-35s* also contacted members of Manchester City Council and asked them to raise their concerns with their opposite numbers in Leningrad. For example, in reply to Mrs Berman's letters raising her concerns about the Leningrad *refusenik* Yoseph Blich, the Lord Mayor Kenneth Franklin, replied that, "I well appreciate your concern." [15]. He noted that he had already written to the Chair of the Leningrad City Soviet Mr. Zaikov on several occasions in recent months and that, "He is well aware of my views and I feel certain that through constant dialogue we will receive further co-operation from the Soviet authorities, so that there will be an increase in visas granted. Please be assured that I will do all that is possible to help." [15]. In a similar vein in 1978 the Lord Mayor councillor Trevor Thomas met with members of the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry*, *Manchester-35-s* and Mrs Sonia Levine, who was in Britain during *Soviet Jewry Solidarity Week*. Following a "very sympathetic" half-hour interview the Lord Mayor promised to raise the case of Mrs Levine's *refusenik parents* Professor and Mrs. Alexander Lerner and their son Vladimir. The party later symbolically lit a 11-foot *Menorah* marking its candle-light vigil for Soviet Jewry in Albert Square outside the Town Hall [33].

### **Final comments**

In the 1970s British cities such as Liverpool and Plymouth actively considered ending their friendship links with Odessa and Novorossiysk in protest over the USSR's human rights record [47, 11]. In July 1978 the Manchester Conservatives raised the issue of a protest to Leningrad, but the Labour group felt that it was better to keep the link. Within the archives of the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s*, there was never any suggestion that the link should be ended, rather they wanted to add a more critical dimension to the relationship that had previously been largely absent. The relationship stressed friendship and understanding, for the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester-35s*, friendship and understanding did not preclude and indeed they argued had to include raising contentious issues. They used the symbolism of Leningrad Square, the

presence of Leningrad civic and cultural delegations in Manchester, and performances by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra and the Kirov ballet as targets to publicise their demands through direct action including demonstrations, chanting and leafleting. They also visited and wrote supportive letters to *refuseniks* in Leningrad, and raised their cases with Leningrad delegations in Manchester. Manchester City Council included councillors who were sympathetic to the *Manchester Council for Soviet Jewry* and *Manchester-35s'* demands, the councillors raised the issue of soviet Jewry in meetings and letters to their Leningrad counterparts. These activities were part of a larger national and international campaign on behalf of Soviet Jewry. The next step in this study is to explore the soviet-era archives in Russia in order to identify what impact, if any, the *Manchester Campaign for Soviet Jewry* and the *Manchester Manchester-35s* had on decision makers in the USSR.

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