P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

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KUDIRKA'S MOTHER

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow recently issued an American passport to the 67-year old widowed mother of Simas Kudirka -- that Lithuanian sailor who leaped from a Soviet fishing vessel off Massachusetts in 1970 onto a U.S. Coast Guard ship. Kudirka's dramatic request for asylum was callously rejected. Russian thugs were permitted to come on board the American ship and drag him back to Russia. He is now serving a ten-year prison sentence in a slave labor camp in the Ural Mountains.

Kudirka's mother was born in Brooklyn and is, therefore, an American citizen. She would like to return to the United States. Since she began trying to make contact with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in order to secure her American passport, she has been harassed and followed by the Soviet police. On April 28, she was stopped by five members of the Soviet secret police when she tried to board a train for Moscow from Lithuania.

Her case has been championed by a courageous Soviet biologist named Sergei Kovalov. He called a press conference in Moscow and revealed how the U.S. Embassy is constantly guarded by the Soviet secret police who, when it suits them, prevent even American citizens from entering.

It came as a shock to many people to discover that the U.S. Embassy in Moscow is, in effect, in a state of seige, and that even

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American citizens may enter only with the permission and under the surveillance of the Soviet secret police. This is in violation of the Consular Treaty which supposedly guarantees free access to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

Will the Soviet Government permit this woman to leave, now that she has an American passport? The Soviets have said only that she will be put on the "hardship" list. Other cases on the "hardship" list have been known to wait as long as 30 years. At her age, a 30-year wait would be too long.

The case of Simas Kudirka's mother should be a good conversation piece for Congressmen to bring up when they are visited by the Russian trade delegation, now here from Moscow to lobby on Capitol Hill for Soviet trade benefits. When they ask for U.S. credits to finance Soviet purchases, our Congressmen should ask when the Soviets will permit American citizens to leave Russia.

If the Soviets refuse to respect the right of a U.S. citizen to leave the Soviet Union, then we are only deceiving ourselves ourselves if we imagine that they will make meaningful concessions in other areas, such as weapons and space.

The disgraceful treatment which Simas Kudirka received from the U.S. officers who turned him back to the Soviet Union makes it our moral obligation to help his mother now. Secretary of State Kissinger's frequent intimate conversations with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin present a splendid opportunity for Kissinger to request that Kudirka's mother be permitted to return to America.

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