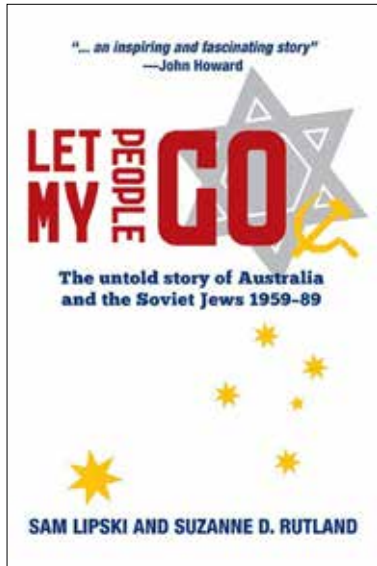


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Let My People Go: The Untold Story of the Australia and the Soviet Jews 1959–89

By Sam Lipski and Suzanne D. Rutland

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Let My People Go: The Untold Story of the Australia and the Soviet Jews 1959–89 details the 30-year-long Australian campaign to bring Soviet Jews to Australia. Co-authored by former *Australian Jewish News* editor, Sam Lipski, and historian Professor Suzanne D. Rutland, the book combines Lipski's first-hand accounts from Australia and the Soviet Union with Rutland's extensive research in the Jerusalem archives of former Australian Jewish community leader Isi Leibler. The book is expertly written and meticulously researched, with Lipski and Rutland providing the ideal pair to create this complex and untold story.

It is highly commendable that the Australian Jewish community, partially made up of post-World War II migrants whose own horrific experiences informed them of the serious plight facing Soviet Jews, presented a convincing case to successive governments to speak up. Australia became a key player in a broader international effort to bring pressure on Moscow regarding its treatment of Soviet Jews.

Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke played a key role in releasing Soviet Jews from the USSR to Israel and Australia. This book details insights into both Hawke's passionate efforts and the issues he caused with the campaign after 'the refuseniks' had returned. First as a trade union leader and later as Prime Minister, Hawke was dedicated and passionate in negotiating exit visas for 'refuseniks'. Lipski rightly describes Hawke as 'the great champion of the Soviet Jewry.'

Most interestingly, Lipski's style of investigative journalism covers the

controversy triggered by Hawke's speech at a Melbourne rally on 17 May 1988, when 3000 people came to the Concert Hall at Melbourne's Arts Centre to celebrate and welcome fifteen Soviet Jews. He publicly expressed his views on the Israel–Palestine conflict, drawing parallels between the Soviet Jews' struggle and that of the Palestinians. Hawke said that the 'tragic events in the West Bank and Gaza have further convinced me that the democratic, humanist principles on which Israel was built do not sit easily with the role of master of occupied territories and subject peoples.' He took the audience by surprise when he said: 'The Palestinian in the occupied territories, as the Jew in the Soviet Union... has his aspirations to be truly free.' In saying this, he greatly offended Leibler, his wife Naomi and the refuseniks. As Lipski said, it 'has shaken and offended his listeners.'

The book details the events from 1959 that created a chain reaction culminating in that night in May 1988. Not only is this fascinating story real, it also reads like a John Le Carré spy novel during the hostile environment of the Cold War. Australia was the first country in the world to raise the issue of the Soviet Jews' plight at the United Nations, five days after the Cuban Missile Crisis, a very tense time in the Cold War. It is an epic moment in Australian history and well worth reading.

This text would be relevant for Unit 2, AOS 1 on the Cold War, as well as any Year 10 subject on the Holocaust. I highly recommend it for every school and History teacher.