



# **It Seems I Am a Jew: A Samizdat Essay on Soviet Mathematics (Science and International Affairs)**

*Grigori Freiman*

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## It Seems I Am a Jew: A Samizdat Essay on Soviet Mathematics (Science and International Affairs)

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In this essay smuggled out of Russia a renowned Soviet mathematician speaks out against the policies of the Steklov Institute in Moscow, which controls much of mathematical life in the Soviet Union. They control VAK, the certification commission that has the final say in approving doctoral dissertations, and as Dr. Freiman documents, seem to be pursuing a policy that will make all of Russian higher mathematics *Judenfrei*.

“The numbers  $m$  and  $n$  have the same prime factors. The numbers  $m-1$  and  $n-1$  possess the same property. Are the multiples of this pair of numbers  $m$  and  $n$  finite or infinite? Explain.” This was the special question asked Sasha Navodvorsky during his oral entrance examination for the Mathematical and Mechanical School at Moscow University. He, who had received a perfect score on his written examinations, did so poorly on his oral exam that he was denied entrance. (His brother had recently left for Israel.)

Freiman’s essay against the corruption of the minds and souls of men was prompted by his own student (identified only as B. in the essay) falling victim to this depraved system. Kafkaesque and Orwellian, the selection process Freiman describes is made possible by a blend of pathological anti-Semitism on the part of key individuals in the Institute and the unique Soviet system of rewards and punishments. The insidious process has proven effective to a remarkable degree. The Soviet Academy of Sciences contains only a single Jewish mathematician and the Steklovka is now *Judenfrei*.

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