

Blockades on Exodus

By Robert E. Segal

Coming now to the Passover season and deeply dismayed by the Soviet reversal on a well-publicized pledge to allow more Jews to leave the USSR in return for much more profitable trade with the United States, the meaning of Exodus for 3600 years is more precious to Jews than ever.

Among Greeks, the word, Exodus, means "the road out." It would cheer the hearts of all of us were the masters of the Soviet Union now to permit that "road out," that "Exodus" be paved with viable terms. We Americans would give the Russians the chance to find happiness with smooth and very favorable trade contracts with the U.S. as projected back in 1972; and the Russians would get their judges, jailers, and high priests of discrimination off the backs of Jews desiring to depart and let them make their exodus unharassed, untaxed, unimpeded.

Indeed, if it could be smoothly arranged by Henry Kissinger, Leonid I. Brezhnev and other architects of detente, some Russian Jews who long for the right to exit might be willing to join in exodus overnight, with unleavened bread or no bread at all, so great would be the prospect of emerging into freedom. If Bibles could be made available to those qualifying for hasty departure, they might dip into that section of the holy writings wherein an ancient movement from another land of intense nationalism is described thus:

"And a mixed multitude went up with them, and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals."

But there is no "thrusting out" of Russian Jews now. Instead, there is reneging on the widely-trumpeted trade agreement so grandly hitched to the expediting of emigres. And while the world waits for that snarl to be unknotted, if such is possible, we ask Passover prayers and Russian mercy and legal justice for more

NORMAN COUSINS INTERVIEWS ARAFAT

NEW YORK (WUP) -- Norman Cousins, senior editor of the Saturday Review, recently visited several Arab states and Israel on what he termed "a one-man's quest for an understanding of the possibilities for peace in the Middle East."

The noted 'Jewish' editor reported his findings in the March

22 issue of the Review. While in Beirut he was escorted to Yasir Arafat's hidden headquarters and given a private interview by the PLO chief.

Editor Cousins notes that Arafat had "described Sadat as a misguided moderate who is making the serious mistake of putting himself in the hands of Henry

Russian Jewish heroes lately in the news.

There is, for example, Mikhail Leviev, 56, who had been manager of a large government store in Moscow, then resigned and applied for permission to emigrate to Israel with his wife. Egress rights were granted; then the blow fell. Mikhail Leviev was held prisoner nine months without trial (an eerie application of the spirit of documents guaranteeing human rights). Non-Jewish persons, indicted with him as alleged co-conspirators, were sentenced to five, eight and nine years in prison. Tried for fraud, bribery, and embezzlement of government property, Mr. Leviev was sentenced to death. At this writing, his appeal is before the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union. Far from being "thrust out" to freedom, he has been thrust into grim uncertainty, into a bottomless denial of due process, and into an eternity of waiting.

Again, there is the case of Dr. Veniamin Levich, who, with his family, had been promised exit rights. A turn of the dials of Soviet bureaucracy; and Dr. Levich, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, learns that his sons will be allowed to leave only if the elder Levich pledges never again to apply for emigration.

Such examples of discrimination and miscarriage of justice come out of Russia all too frequently now. Taking note of them, one understands more clearly why Moscow urges its propagandists, with access to the free American press, to preach to Americans a hands-off policy with regard to Russian internal affairs. When the Kremlin's hunger for more trade with America is pitted against Washington's desire to bring the Russians to live up to sacred pledges regarding human rights, the outcome is predetermined by those who hold their nationals as hostages of detente and international bargaining.

Hence, this Passover brings to our tables a grim reminder of the old plagues the early Hebrew were spared in Egypt, and the new plagues saddled upon modern Jews who yearn for reunion with their kinsmen, for renewal with their ancient traditions.

Kissinger. He predicted that Sadat would discover that Kissinger could not deliver and would soon find that Israel will not respond to moderation. The Israeli Government, he said, is not strong enough politically to make the kind of peace with Egypt that Kissinger would like Israel to make."

Cousins went on to recount in his lengthy article -- entitled "Last Chance for Peace in the Middle East?" that "Arafat doubted that the Israelis would give up any territory unless forced to do so. Their

strategy is to sit tight and give up nothing."

While in Beirut, Mr. Cousins also met with Dr. Charles Malik, a former Foreign Minister of Lebanon and a one-time President of the UN General Assembly. "The main essential for peace is the need for the Arab world to accept Israel's existence," he reported Malik as having stated. "Unless and until the Arab peoples have a genuine change of heart on this question, the Middle East will be vibrated from one crisis to the next."

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