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Passover 1983

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

On Monday evening, March 28, the Jewish people throughout the world begin the observance of Passover, the oldest and undoubtedly the most influential of Jewish festivals. Known in Jewish tradition as Zman Cherutenu, the Season of our Freedom, Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. The term Exodus conventionally is understood to stress the physical aspect of liberation, but the Exodus from Egypt was simultaneously an event of spiritual liberation that decisively transformed the religious orientation of mankind.

To the ancient Israelites, spiritual liberation was more than a religious piety or liturgical exercise. It involved a monumental struggle in actual daily life against the spiritual values of Egyptian civilization. Egyptian life was characterized by cruel human slavery; idolatrous submission to a Pharaoh king who believed he was a god, the source of all law but never the servant of law, and the debilitating paganisms of animal worship. The rejection of Egypt by Moses and the Israelites was thus a life-shaking victory in the struggle of spiritual and human independence of life - denying values.

But Passover celebrates not only the redemption as a past event -- it is celebrated as much through the colorful Jewish ceremonies of the Seder family service as a present-day experience, a search for its continuing meaning in our present individual and communal lives. That is why the spiritual and physical plight of Jews in the Soviet Union and in Arab countries such as Syria and Iraq will be uppermost in the minds and hearts of Jewish families everywhere as they seek to confront modern Pharaohs with the compelling moral claim, "Let my people go."

When the fourth Matzo of hope is uncovered at the Seder table, and when the millennial hallowed words "Next Year in Jerusalem" are recited, these will be not simply reminiscences of the ancient Exodus, but occasions of fervent recommitment to the struggle for liberation and justice, until the Exodus of Soviet Jews and the Great Exodus of all people who seek freedom and human rights are realized everywhere.

Behind The Scenes

At The United Nations

By David Horowitz

A World-Union Press Feature

"Israel is There to Stay" Troyanovsky

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- "Israel is a fact of life, Israel is there to stay."

These words came from none other than the Soviet Ambassador to the UN, Oleg A. Troyan-

ovsky, at a luncheon hosted here last week by the UN Correspondents Association.

The Russian's comment relative to Israel took many reporters by surprise since it came as a reply to an Arab reporter who sought his reaction to the current situation in the Middle East in the aftermath of the Lebanese crisis which witnessed the loss of Soviet influence in the region resulting from Israel's capture of massive Russian weapons and the destruction of their missiles in Syrian-held areas.

The reporter wanted to know where the USSR stood today and what its role was in the region in its policy vis-a-vis Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other states in the Mideast. Of course, the inquisitive correspondent was not ignorant of the fact that the Russians are installing new missiles in Syria and even manning them.

Aware of what was really implied in the question, Troyanovsky replied at the very outset that the Soviet stand and policy on the Middle East remains unchanged, he made it plain that the Kremlin's interest in the area is vital since it is contiguous to the Soviet domain. Recognizing that his country's relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and others have been strained for a long time, he made an offer. "We are ready," he said, "to enter into a dialogue with all the states in the region." It was at this juncture that he declared with emphasis that "Israel is there to stay!"

This writer decided to follow up on the Soviet Ambassador's offer to have a dialogue with the states in the area. "There are some elements in Israel," your correspondent asked, "who would like to see the reestablishment of relations with the Soviet Union. During the historic days prior to and after the Partition vote in 1947, the USSR joined hands with the U.S. in support of the creation of a Jewish State (It was a rare moment in UN annals. Mr. Gromyko at the time not only spoke out strongly for a Jewish State. He also publicly condemned Arab aggression, as was witnessed by this writer at the time). You spoke of a dialogue. Do you at this time see an opening door for the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel or at least entering into some dialogue towards those ends? The United States maintains relations with both the Arabs and the Israelis. On the other hand, your country is tied to the Arab world alone. There must be a balance."

There was a brief pause. It appeared that he had some difficulty in finding an answer. He had already said that "Israel is there to stay," a statement which he knew was like thrusting a dagger into the PLO body - whole. But now, on the question of the resumption of diplomatic relations with Jerusalem, to speak about that he knew might get him into trouble with his bosses in Moscow. That is something that only the Kremlin could decide upon. Thus he responded by noting that "Israeli aggression" must first come to an end.

Among the many other questions asked was one about the reduction in the emigration of Soviet Jews in recent years. He replied that he was not aware of a shift in USSR policy that might restrict emigration. He pointed out that "some 300,000 to 400,000 Jews had

(Continued on page 12)

King of One Liners



HENNY YOUNGMAN
...Man of Many Talents.

A WOMAN CALLED UP THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND SAID, "I HAVE A SEX MANIAC IN MY APARTMENT. PICK HIM UP IN THE MORNING."

TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth
Constitutes A Majority"

(Continued from page 1)

his brothers. Joe, with his Jewish "kup" interpreted a dream of the king Pharaoh which saved Egypt from starvation. All Joe did was store up grain during the years of plenty for food during the years of starvation.

Generations later, another Pharaoh, panicked by interpretation of a nightmare, ordered all Jewish male babies cast into the Nile. That's when Moses was set adrift in a waterproof basket and was rescued by the Pharaoh's

daughter, to grow up in the palace.

Moses, who never forgot he was a Jew, belted an anti-Semite and had to go into hiding. He married the daughter of a Priest and became a sheep grazer.

One day near Mt. Sinai; a voice from a burning bush commanded Moses to set the children of Israel free. Moses tried to reason with Pharaoh but it was no use. Strong measures were needed. A plague brought death to every first-born Egyptian. Pharaoh was glad then to get rid of the Hebrews, who took off in a hurry. Three days later, Pharaoh changed his mind and set out after the Jews with the Egyptian army. The Israelites practically had to eat on the march and as for prepared food didn't have time to let the dough rise, so the short-baked bread came out unleavened - now known as matzoths.

Then came the incident at the Red Sea where the waters parted to let the Hebrews across, only to come together again to drown the Egyptians. After 40 years of wandering, the Israelites settled in Canaan, the Promised Land beyond the Jordan River. But Moses never got there.

It was God's will that Moses should get a look at the Promised Land from Mt. Pisgah before he died of old age. Exactly when Moses received the Ten Commandments from God is not clearly identified. Our belief is that Moses was in constant touch with God and all liturgical law was promulgated through him. From the Ten Commandments came all accepted criminal codes and mandates of human ethics practiced in civilized countries.

Leo Tolstoi, the Russian novelist and philosopher who died in 1910, came up with several answers to the question: "What is a Jew?" Some of his responses are appropriately significant to the story of Passover.

He wrote: "Let us see what kind of peculiar creature the Jew is, which all the rulers and all nations have together and separately abused and molested, oppressed and persecuted, trampled and butchered, burned and hanged - and in spite of all this he is yet alive.

"The Jew is the religious source, spring and fountain out of which all the rest of the peoples have drawn their beliefs and their religions.

"The Jew is the pioneer of liberty. The Jew is the pioneer of civilization. Ignorance was condemned in olden Palestine more even than it is today in civilized Europe.

"The Jew is an emblem of civil and religious toleration," wrote Tolstoi, who went on to quote Moses in remote and savage times when the principal ambition of the nations consisted of crushing and enslaving one another: "Love the stranger, Moses commands, "Because you have been stranger in the land of Egypt."

"The Jew is the emblem of eternity," wrote Tolstoi, who continued, "He whom neither fire nor sword nor inquisition was able to wipe off from the face of the earth, he who was the first to produce the oracles of God, he who has been for long the guardian of prophesy, and who transmitted it to the rest of the world - such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is everlasting as is eternity itself."

After reading the writings of Tolstoi, who authored "War and Peace," "Anna Karenina," and other monumental works, you kind of get the unequivocal, indisputable feeling that the Jewish religion is here to stay. Let's keep it that way no matter how you celebrate Passover. Incidentally, Tolstoi was not Jewish.