

Board Game Depicts Real-Life Escape Route From USSR To Israel



THE GAME IS REAL -- Shoshana Ramm now lives in Israel, but it took her and her family three arduous years before they were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. During the period of waiting, Shoshana, then 14 years old, created the game 'Route To Freedom' which depicts their frustrating struggle to reach Israel. The game -- smuggled out of Russia -- is available at the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York.

It took three arduous years before Soviet authorities allowed Shoshana Ramm and her family to leave for Israel. During that period of waiting and hoping, Shoshana, then 14 years old, created a board game depicting her frustrating struggle. "Route To Freedom -- A Game of Escape From The Soviet Union" was smuggled out of the Soviet Union just before the Ramm family finally reached the shores of Israel, in 1976.

Ten years later, the game, produced and available nationally by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, is as relevant as

ever, says Frada Harel, director of Sales and Customer Service at BJE. "Unfortunately, nothing has changed," Mrs. Harel said. "The route from Moscow to Israel is still tortuous and filled with traps and harassment. The game is real and continues to be one of BJE's more popular items."

The game, published in cooperation with the Coalition to Free Soviet Jews, formerly the New York Conference for Soviet Jewry, provides a graphic lesson in the struggle for freedom. Players meet constant barriers as they circle the game board, becoming highly frustrated in their attempt to reach their final goal. "Route To Freedom" players may be fired from their job because they requested a visa, or sentenced to prison for publicly expressing their wish to leave.

Just when the player thinks he's ahead, this may happen to him: "The situation has changed and your visa is no longer valid. This sometimes happens after you've surrendered your home and spent your life's savings on the visa. Return to red refusal circle and skip your next turn." Shoshana adds this chilling note: "In real life, nobody knows what to do next."

The game is a real reflection of the Ramm's struggle to emigrate. In 1974, Shoshana, her 12-year-old brother Aryeh and their mother, Bella, were placed under house arrest. Their father, Demetrios, a mathematics scientist, was thrown in prison because, along with another scientist,

he sought to hold an international conference of scientists, a dangerous activity according to Soviet authorities. Her mother, also a mathematician, had been fired from her job when she was suspected of passing a copy of Leon Uris's book, "Exodus" to a friend.

It was while the family was under house arrest that Shoshana, in an effort to pass the time and entertain her brother, created the game. She managed to smuggle the game out with an American tourist. As Shoshana writes in her introduction to the game, "We've played this game for real over and over again, so while you play, remember us."

"Route To Freedom" includes a four-color game route, markers, dice, instructions, and background information on the Ramm family and their struggle. Cost is \$4.50. To order, call or write the Board of Jewish Education, Department of Sales and Customer Services, 462 W. 58th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10019, (212) 245-8200, ext. 330.

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