

Soviet Jews Turn To Humor

NEW YORK — Soviet Jews have turned to humor to deflate the extraordinary tensions in their daily lives.

So says David A. Harris, Deputy Director of the International Relations Department of the American Jewish Committee, who, together with Israel Rabinovich, Professor of Russian Language at the Monterey Institute of Foreign Languages, has just published *On a Lighter Note? Soviet Jewish Humor*.

Some samples from the 10-page compilation:

Question: Why are there no Jewish cosmonauts?

Answer: The Soviet authorities are afraid they would never return.

"Kaim, what would you do if the borders were opened tomorrow?"

"I'd jump into the nearest tree."

"But why?"

"So as not to be run over by the stampede."

Question: Do you know Khaim, the fellow who lives across from the prison?

Answer: Yes, but now he lives across from his house.

"My Kaim is such an anecdote teller," boasted Sarah. "A few years ago, he was sentenced to three years for just one anecdote. And last night he told an anecdote that was worth at least eight years!"

Question: What is the longest street in Odessa?

Answer: Bebelya.

Question: Why?

Answer: Because Abramovich went down it five years ago to KGB headquarters but still hasn't returned.

Question: What's the definition of a Soviet string quartet?

Answer: A Soviet symphony orchestra that has just returned from a tour of the West.

Abram telephoned the KGB.

"Hello. Is that the KGB there? I wonder if by any chance a parrot has come to your office?"

"No."

"If he should come, I just want to let you know in advance that I don't share his political views."

Shortly after Abram left Kiev for a business trip to Eastern Europe, his friend back home received

a telegram from Poland: Greetings from free Warsaw, Abram. A few days later a second telegram, this one from Czechoslovakia, arrived: Greetings from free Prague, Abram. Several days passed before a third telegram from Hungary came: Greetings from Free Budapest, Abram. Then followed a long period of silence before the friend in Kiev received a telegram from Israel: Greetings from Jerusalem, free Abram.

And so on.

Adds Mr. Harris: "Few Americans realize how vital a role political humor plays as a commentary on society, and an emotional outlet for people behind the Iron Curtain. Deprived of opportunities for self-expression through the ballot box, the press, assembly or cultural forms, political humor becomes a treasured, if private means of conveying anger, frustration or criticism in an often hostile environment."

AJC Concerned About Nation's Poverty Level

NEW YORK, N.Y. — The following statement was issued by Theodore Ellenoff, President of the American Jewish Committee:

"In response to the U.S. Census Bureau's recently published data on poverty, the American Jewish Committee expresses deep concern that the nation's poverty level measured 14% in 1985. AJC states that, while it welcomes the improvement in the economy reflected in the slight drop in poverty, nevertheless the poverty level persists at an unacceptably high level. Stating that a decline to 1981 poverty levels "should be no cause for comfort," AJC points out that prior to 1981, fifteen years had passed since the poverty level had equaled or exceeded 14 percent.

"Moreover, the most recent Census Bureau data continue to reflect disturbing trends in the pattern of poverty. A disproportionate number of the poor continue to be minorities or to live in female-headed households. Although the poverty level for Blacks declined slightly in 1985, it registered an alarming 31.3 percent; and poverty among Hispanic Americans rose slightly to 29 percent. Perhaps most troubling is that nearly a quarter of the nation's children under six continue to live in poverty.

"To alleviate poverty in America, AJC advocates a wide array of social policy approaches that stress individual, communal and governmental responsibility.

"In the critical and ongoing national social

The Indian-Israelite Connection

By Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

The Sioux Indian, Little Sun Bordeau, who celebrated his bar mitzvah in Israel recently, was a 24-hour news sensation. But the alleged ties between the American Indians and the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel remains an enduring legend in American history.

One of the first accounts of American fascination with this legend centers around the person of Quaker William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania. In 1681, Penn visited the Quaker colony in New Jersey and described the local Indians as "closely resembling Jews." Penn's report that Indians were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel became the basis years later for a book on this subject by Elias Budinot, a Revolutionary patriot who served as President of the Continental Congress.

In Alabama, in the 1750s, Abraham Mordecai, who spend much of his life as a trader among the Creek and Chickasaw Indians, was convinced that Indians were descendants of Israelite tribes. He heard Indians chanting, "Yavohoya, Yavohoya," during their green corn dances, and he was sure they were thanking Jehovah, the Great Spirit for their abundant harvest.

But perhaps the most serious treatment of the Indian-Israelite connection was presented by the noted scholar Dr. Cyrus Gordon of Brandeis University. In his stimulating book, *Before Columbus*, he argues persuasively that there were contacts between ancient Israel and the New World as long ago as the Roman period, pointing to Hebrew inscriptions on stones in Bat Creek Indian mounds in eastern Tennessee.

policy debate, AJC will continue to press for: 1) increased welfare benefits at levels closer to the poverty line; 2) creation of training and employment programs, with adequate support services such as child care, that would move income assistance recipients out of poverty; 3) policies and programs that reinforce and strengthen the family, such as the pending Family and Medical Leave Act of 1986."

The American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. Founded in 1906, it combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people everywhere.

High Holiday List Available

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A new list of selected names of both refuseniks and Prisoners of Conscience to whom to mail High Holiday greetings -- called "Send a Shalom" -- is now available from the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. For a free copy, contact the SSSJ at 210 West 91st Street, New York, N.Y. 10024, tel. (212) 799-8900.

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