

IVAN THE SOMEWHAT TERRIBLE

It will soon be the 400th anniversary of the death of Ivan the Terrible.

The Soviet Union might take the occasion to announce that it was fulfilling one of that Czar's objectives. Ivan the Terrible was the first Czar to proclaim that Jews should be kept out of Russia.

"It is not convenient," he said in 1550, "to allow Jews to come to Russia, since many evils result from them. For they import poisonous herbs into the realm and lead Russians astray."

At the moment, the Soviet leaders seem to be in substantial agreement. Fifty to sixty thousand Jews will be allowed to leave this year. Who will be left to grow poisonous herbs and lead the Russians astray?

Well, it's all not over yet. There is a new category of Soviet Jewry. There have always been "Refuseniks," Jews who have applied for visas, but who have not been allowed to leave. Now there are "Waitniks," Jews who want visas but have not yet been able to apply for them.

If, in a given Soviet city, there is one visa desk open four hours a day, then perhaps 2000 visa applications can be processed in a year. If, at the beginning of the year, there were 4000 Jews who wanted to apply for visas, then we have left 2000 Waitniks who have been trying for a year to apply without success.

The fact is that there are about 200 thousand Soviet Jews who have indicated that they want to leave; and who have received letters of invitation from relatives in Israel, the first step needed for visa application. They will all not be leaving so fast, unless the Soviet slowdown is abandoned. It is the *ratio* of those wanting out, to those getting out, which must be the test.

In addition to tens of thousands of Waitniks, there are still a couple of thousand Refuseniks who have not been allowed emigration. Three of them have just been given stiff prison sentences under questionable circumstances.

Aleksandr Milner, Arkady Feldman and Yankel Groberman are Moldavian Jewish Refuseniks who on January 5 were celebrating the fact that Feldman had finally received his visa. They were in a café when seven young men began to taunt them with such niceties as "How long must we put up with you lousy Yids?" A fight developed between the seven youths and the three Jews, joined by an incensed Russian customer.

Well, there are hoodlums in any country. But, in this case, the seven youths were never arrested; the three Jews and the Russian who helped them were arrested and convicted. Milner was just sentenced to 6 years in prison, Feldman and Groberman were each sentenced to 4 years in prison. Their Russian supporter drew an unannounced sentence, reportedly a long one.

In addition to such episodes, the two year conviction of Boris Kalendarov, a Refusenik since 1973, raises to sixteen the number of Jewish Prisoners of Conscience.

Of course, we can be accused of being greedy and ungrateful. A record number of Jews are getting out and we are complaining about the slow-down. Some Prisoners of Conscience and Refuseniks are getting out, and we are complaining about the others.

Earl Raab
"Ivan the Somewhat Terrible"
page 3

One could be accused of being greedy if, having two pieces of candy, he cried for four. But people are not candy. And it would be proper to be "greedy" about the release of one Waitnik or Refusenik or Prisoner of Conscience, even if all others had been let go.

However, by the same token, we *are* grateful for the release of any Soviet Jew, and that much more grateful for the release of sixty thousand. There are ways of showing our gratitude, as a practical political necessity, of making certain gestures, without giving up the whole ball game. It isn't over yet by a long shot.

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