

NAME OF THE GAME

Being an official "labor leader" in the Soviet Union is something like being the chairman of a human rights commission in Uganda. However, it is not the business of the Jewish community, as such, to criticize the labor set-up in the Soviet Union -- and it does not engage in such criticism.

Thus, when a group of Soviet "labor leaders" came to the United States recently, the Jewish community took them at face value. As labor leaders, they would be interested in the plight of their constituents. Attempts were made to present them with the cases of Soviet Jewish workers -- electricians, radio technicians, carpenters -- who had been denied visas, and many of whom were without work for that reason.

The point is that the Jewish community did not want to attack the Soviet system. That is the business of the AFL-CIO, which is concerned about the absence of a free labor movement in the Soviet Union. Most U.S. labor leaders refused to meet with the Soviet visitors, and dignify their status. However, the Jewish community agenda was simply to try to get help for those Soviet Jewish workers.

This is the same limited theme that the Jewish community follows with respect to trade with the Soviet Union. The Jewish community is not interested in using trade to punish the Soviet Union, to attack the Soviet system, or to bring back the Cold War. The Jewish community, as such, is only interested in trade as it applies to the violation of rights ifor Soviet Jews.

Earl Raab

"Name of the Game"

page 2

We are now in the middle of two pertinent developments: a rising emigration rate from the Soviet Union; and a concerted drive to remove the Jackson-Vanik law. You will remember that the Jackson-Vanik provision permits the President to restrict trade with the Soviet Union, to the extent that the Soviet Union restricts emigration.

As the *New York Times* reported this week: "The largest group of American business representatives ever assembled in Moscow ended a week of discussions with United States and Soviet officials here, and both sides seem to have convinced each other that they really want to increase trade, not to use it as a weapon."

Then the *New York Times* ran an editorial, presumably for the purpose of spanking "Jewish organizations" for "crying olf" about Jessica Kats. Jessica is the baby, less than a year old, of Boris and Natalya Kats, who had been denied a visa. The baby became seriously ill, unable to take nourishment.

There was a campaign to allow the Kats family to emigrate and Jessica's condition was featured. When the Kats family was finally allowed to emigrate, they arrived with Jessica in a stabilized condition, apparently on the way to recovery. But there is no evidence that the Jewish agencies exaggerated Jessica's condition.

In early spring, Jessica was in critical condition. That was reported. Jessica began to improve in April, when a special pre-digested formula was brought to her by some American visitors. That was reported. There were two relapses in May and June; then there was stabilization. All these turns were reported by the American Jewish community, and by the groups that were especially involved in her case, such as the Bay Area Council on Soviet Jewry.

But, even at the end, there was some special concern for Jessica, given her history. And the fact is that the campaign for the Kats family had begun *before* Jessica

Earl Raab

"Name of the Game"

page 3

became ill. Senator Edward Kennedy, who had made a special appeal for eighteen families, including the Kats family, said that he had been acting "on behalf of the family, not because of Jessica's condition."

Then why did the *Times* go out of its way, with some inaccuracy, to single out this case? The telltale line in its editorial is this: "Soviet emigration" bars do not "justify every form of counter-attack, from misleading propaganda to trade restrictions."

So, the real issue is the campaign to erase the Jackson-Vanik measure and to discredit those who oppose that erasure. It is true that the emigration rate is rising in certain selected areas (about 25 thousand this year, and, at current rate, more next year). But it is rising because the Soviet Union wants something. The point is this: under Jackson-Vanik, the President has the power to tighten or ease trade restrictions, according to emigration patterns. If Jackson-Vanik is erased, he does not have that power. We can "play" with the Soviet Union only if we don't give away all our chips. We trust our Congressmen understand that much about the simple art of Poker.

(Syndicated by San Francisco Jewish Bulletin)