

RUSSIAN JEWS ENVY ISRAELI ARABS

An 'Intelligent' Proposal

By
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It is natural that we, the Jews of Eretz Israel, are envied by the Russian Jews. After all, even the Jews who were raised on a Communist diet (which so big-heartedly advocates living in national geographic boundaries such as the Ukraine, Georgia, Turkestan and so on) want a land of their own but - for some reason - their Jewish blood is not stirred by the thought of Birobidjan.

The Soviet Government is now wringing patriotism from the lips of its Jews - in a land full of Georgians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians, *someone* has got to be Soviet - so why not the landless Jew?

No, there is no doubt that Soviet Jewry envies us, despite our accursed capitalistic regime. But we are not the only ones they envy.

THE SOVIET JEW WOULD GLADLY CHANGE PLACES WITH THE "OPPRESSED" ARAB WHO LIVES UNDER ISRAELI RULE.

For one thing, Israeli Arabs have a great many people worrying about them. There are the Russians - 250 million of them, all motivated by pure concern for the poor "oppressed" Arabs in Israel. Then there are the 100 million brother Arabs, 800 million Chinese, the entire "progressive" world, and many Israeli Jews - including men of letters and entire political parties.

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT RUSSIAN JEWS ENVY THE ARABS OPPRESSED IN ISRAEL?

More than that, the "oppressed" Arab students can study in any Arab university - in Beirut, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus - and they are provided with special transportation by the Israeli authorities and safe conduct both ways; this year alone, 1,200 high school graduates from the Gaza Strip left to continue their studies in Cairo. The "oppressive" Israeli regime does not even ask for an assurance that these students restrict their academic efforts to philosophy and theology and refrain from studying sabotage. The Israeli regime does not ask these students to give up

their option to return to the Gaza Strip or Hebron or Nablus in order to put their newly gained knowledge to use.

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT JEWISH STUDENTS IN RUSSIA ENVY THESE PRIVILEGES OF THE OPPRESSED.

In this oppressive Jewish Land, the Communist Party - which identifies with the terrorists and especially with the Moscow line - has seats in the Knesset, propaganda meetings and its own publications. The "oppressed" Arabs can denounce Israel in Israel - in prose and poetry, they can openly announce their plans to take over the country and throw the Jews into the sea; and they can shout in public "Long Live Nasser" and "Death to Dayan."

IS IT ANY WONDER THE JEWS IN RUSSIA ENVY THIS OPPRESSED FREEDOM?

The Arabs who claim to like the Israeli administration and wish to remain under our "oppressive" rule can do so and live well. But those who insist on a national government of their own have their pick of fourteen countries - kingdoms, republics, dictatorships, socialist havens, Moslem, secular or Christian and all of them Arab.

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT RUSSIAN JEWS ENVY THE ARABS OF ISRAEL THIS BASIC HUMAN PREROGATIVE OF LIVING WHERE THEY CHOOSE?

You Russians claim we oppress the Arabs. We, in turn, weep about your treatment of our brothers in Russia. But there is a solution to this tug-of-war - simple intelligent, gentle, an INTELLIGENT solution.

No, I am not going to suggest an exchange. The deal would not be quite fair because you have three million Jews and we have only one-and-a-quarter million Arabs - though we could probably provide another million, and, besides, your deal with Poland was not all that fair

either: after World War II you shifted two-and-a-half million Poles from your territories to Poland and in exchange took in only about one-and-a-half million Ukrainians and Byelorussians. Population transfers are something you know quite a lot about and we have a great deal to learn from you. But suggesting an exchange would not be realistic. You do love the Arabs and admire their many talents, but not enough for that.

What we do suggest is that Russian Jews be vouchsafed precisely the same conditions in the USSR that the Arabs are enjoying in Israel.

And I do not mean only the Arabs who were living in the State of Israel before the Six-Day War, who were full citizens with equal rights, but Arabs living in the new territories which you claim have been occupied.

IT WOULD BE ONLY FAIR IF THE JEWS OF RUSSIA ENJOYED THE SAME CONDITIONS WE OFFER TO OUR OPPRESSED ARABS. NO MORE, AND NO LESS.

It would be fine and proper if Russian Jews enjoyed the same suppression of freedom of speech we practice with our oppressed Arabs; if they were allowed to set their own Yiddish or Hebrew schools, just as the Arabs of Israel to have their own schools, if Jewish University students were allowed to travel from Moscow and Odessa to Jerusalem.

It would be helpful if Russian Jews could establish a Zionist party in the USSR - not, heaven forbid, to support enemies of the regime, but only to express their love for Israel.

It would be no more than ethical if the Jews pining in Russian prisons were given the same privileges that Israel offers to Arab criminals - such as legal counsel appointed for their defence, and visits from the Red Cross and their families.

And it would be only human to accord the Russian Jews a fundamental human right - THE RIGHT TO LEAVE.

THE SILENT MILLIONS

A History of the Jews in the Soviet Union - By Joel Cang Rapp & Whiting, London (246 pages)

The silent millions of Soviet Jews, speak eloquently through Joel Cang's book, which should find a place on the shelf of anyone concerned with the history of the captives of Modern Babylon. The book is both good reading and a valuable source of information.

There is no present without a past and no portrait is complete without a background. Cang pans widely across Jewish sufferings during the hundreds of years of Romanovs' despotic reign in Russia, and then proceeds to paint the portrait of the contemporary Jewish tragedy in the red concentration-state.

Here the background is more than a background. It is also a comparison between the "honest" on-the-level anti-semitism of the Tsars, and the subtle strangulation into anonymity by the Stalins, Kruscchevs and Kosygin. Murdered and whipped by the Cossacks, the Jews could cry for mercy or revenge. Here they are silent.

Joel Cang, a British journalist, spent some years in Poland and the USSR as Warsaw correspondent of the GUARDIAN: During the 'thirties and again after the war, he wrote for the TIMES. He did extensive research on the Jews of Russia, and was able to watch at close-quarters the Soviet version of Hitlerism. The book also includes a 102-item Selected Bibliography, fifteen pages of notes, and an extensive index.

Cang decided to write this book standing on the very rim of Babii Yar, the ravine on the outskirts of Kiev, where in the autumn of 1941, the Germans carried out the biggest single massacre of the Jews, "where no monuments were erected," as Yevgeni Yevtushenko wrote in his famous poem "Babii Yar."

But whereas Yevtushenko sees the absence of monuments at Babii Yar's ravine as a sad poetic image, Joel Cang reaches the real meaning of the neglect; the Soviets' panic lest not only those alive, but even the dead break the silence.

Emmanuel Pratt