Jewish underground songs from Soviet Russia

SILENT NO MORE

based on tapes smuggled out by "ben tsion"

THEODORE BIKEL

STAR RECORD CO.

IN COOPERATION WITH THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS
FREEDOM SONGS OF SOVIET JEWS

The most common misunderstanding in the West is to view the Jewish plight in Soviet lands solely in terms of religious persecution. While that is assuredly one of the aspects, what is under attack here far more than religious practice and is totally inexcusable by the theory of basic Communist oppression of all religion. It is the notion of Jewish peoplehood—not synonymous with nationalism—a notion quite acceptable to the Soviet government in other instances, as for example Armenian peoplehood embracing Armenians both within and without the Soviet borders. What is under attack is the basic need to be with one's own, to speak one's own language and dialect, to read the newspaper, to tell the tales, sing the songs and dance the dances. It is this instinct which will not be thwarted and whose voices will not be stifled.

These are truly underground songs. They are composed in backrooms, transmitted by word of mouth, sung in basements and cellars. While for us in the West it may be mystifying to look at the contents of these songs and, failing to find any conspiratorial, revolutionary, or counter-revolutionary connotation, wonder why they should have to be written and sung in such clandestine fashion, we must bear in mind that here is a regime which has indicted Jews for no other reason than the possession of a Hebrew grammar or a Yiddish story-book. When any letter or piece of literature bearing the word Jew, Judaism or Israel is subject to confiscation and the possessor liable to prosecution, such songs as these are indeed conceived in peril, sung in peril and, in this case, brought out of the Soviet Union at some risk.

The material from which this record was programmed was brought to me by a scientist whom we call "Ben Tsion." He had spent some time in the Soviet Union on a study mission in his field. After his arrival there he became so impressed by the cultural predicament of Soviet Jewry that he began to seek out Jews, to spend time with them, and talk to them. He endeavored in particular, to listen to some of their songs, knowing that songs and poems are the most eloquent and persuasive expression of a people's anguish. He began to go about with a small tape machine, recording conversations and songs whenever Jews came together. A regular observer of the Soviet scene may judge him to have been either very foolish or very brave. Perhaps he was both.

The songs on this album are in three languages: Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish. Occasionally the lyrics jump from one language to the other; so do the conversations in the streets with Soviet Jews. The songs as Issachar Miron and I have adapted and recorded them are based closely on the references—taped brought out from Russia by "Ben Tsion."

The documentary parts, marked on the label as "voices of Soviet Jews," actually are portions of the smuggled tapes.

Musically these underground songs have drawn on many sources and influences. They are, of course, original songs but reminiscent of Hebrew tunes as heard secretly over the shortwave radio, of Yiddish tunes, Chassidic melodies and even straight Russian or Soviet-type airs. Nor are they somber, maudlin or depressing as some might assume. On the contrary, they are fiery, heroic and often full of humor. Look for example at the lyrics of "Tolko Tri Chasa" (Three Hours' Flight) and "Tel-Avivskaya Toytva" (Tel-Aviv Auntie) and you will see at once what I mean. These are songs of flesh and blood just as the people who created them are real and multi-dimensional.

It is our hope that you will listen to this record closely, read the lyrics, sing the songs. We who are free to raise our voice as Jews have an obligation to do so lest we shame our brothers who cannot.

**[Note: In these documentary portions the right stereo channel contains the original and the left a translation commentary in English. You may listen to one or the other by tuning to either channel only; or to both simultaneously by playing full stereo. The musical portions being in full stereo naturally have no commentary but full translations and translations are included in the enclosed booklet.]**

THEODORE BIKEI

A GEM OF A COLLECTOR'S ITEM FOR FREEDOM LOVING HUMAN BEINGS

Whenever folk music is discussed, the name of Theodore Bikel comes to the fore and global in an adjective applied to his diverse artistry. His international repertoire covers a wider range in both expression and technique than that of any other living folk singer.

Working on this record with Theo was to me, and to a group of leading American instrumentalists, a fascinating professional experience. Among the folk singers he constitutes a top league by himself. His understanding, depth and friendship were the mortar which joined all the complex ingredients of SILENT NO MORE into one entity. He molded the recording into a bold yet peaceful manifesto of civil rights for every suffering minority.

The unique blend of the multifaceted talents of Bikel the folk singer and guitarist; Bikel the actor—on stage, in motion pictures and in television; Bikel the author, lecturer, raconteur; and Bikel the dedicated man with strong convictions and the courage to voice them, merged magically in SILENT NO MORE, creating a rare gem of a collector's album for every freedom-loving human being.

ISSACHAR MIRON

*Issachar Miron, arranger and conductor of SILENT NO MORE, has made a name for himself as a composer, educator and writer. As a composer he won one of Israel's coveted awards, The Engel Prize for Music. As a leading music expert he was Deputy Director of Music of Israel's Ministry of Education and Culture, Director-in-Chief of Art and Music of the Israeli Defense Army and Music Faculty Chairman of the Jewish Teachers' Seminar and Herzliah Hebrew Teachers' Institute in New York City. As a writer he holds ASCAP's Decem Tayar Award for creative writing. Mr. Miron has written, among others, bar- oratorios, symphonic and choral music, but is perhaps best known for his popular songs, including the International hit "Tzema, Tzema." Leading experts say of his skillful and brilliant orchestrations that it "seems to constitute an invention of its own," and that "be employs each instrument both in accompanying and solo functions on virtuoso levels, contrasting powerful rhythmical themes, and building up enormous climaxes."
SILENT NO MORE

THEODORE BIKEL

Arranged and Conducted by Issachar Miron

33 1/3 Side 1

A Great Star
LP Stereo Recording

1 and 2 Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 1:10
3 ----- Zol Shoyn Kumen * (Let Redemption Come) - 1:30
4 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 1:40
5 ----- Tol’ko Tri Chassa * (Three Hours’ Flight) - 3:00
6 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 3:15
7 ----- Sinai * (Sinai at Dawn) - 2:05
8 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 3:30
9 ----- Yerushalayim * (Jerusalem the Beautiful) - 3:45
10 ----- Tel-Avivskaya Tyotya * (Tel-Aviv Auntie) - 2:30
11 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 1:13
12 ----- Otpusti Narod Moy * (Pharaoh, Let My People Go) - 2:30

*Adapted from the original Zionist underground tapes from The USSR with new music and lyrics by THEODORE BIKEL (BMI) and ISSACHAR MIRON (ASCAP).

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Produced by Thelma Moore

ST-119-18A

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS
SILENT NO MORE
THEODORE BIKEL
Arranged and Conducted by Issachar Miron

33 1/3 Side 2
A Great Star LP Stereo Recording

1 ----- Nye Bayussya * (Fear No One) - 1:40
2 and 3 Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 2:45
4 ----- Yeshcho Raz * (One More Time) - 4:10
5 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 3:30
6 ----- Leshana Habaa’ (Next Year in Jerusalem) - 1:55
7 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 2:10
8 ----- Akh Ty Serdste * (Oh My Clumsy Heart) - 3:05
9 ----- Voices of Soviet Jews (Original Recording) - 4:40
10 ----- Am Yisroel Chai * (Our People Lives!) - 2:45

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ST-119-18B

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS