

THE LAST EXODUS. By *Leonard Schroeter*. New York: Universe Books, 1974. 432 pp. \$10.95.

Gradually, yet forcefully, the subject of free exit of Jews from the Soviet Union has become in the last few years an important subject on the agenda of Western public opinion. Free emigration from the USSR became a major issue in the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union to improve their trade relations and a stumbling block on the road to *détente*. The "Jews of silence" are leaving by the thousands in spite of many obstacles the Soviet Union places on their way to Israel. Leonard Schroeter's book is an attempt to trace the roots, the emergence, and the development of what might rightfully be called the Jewish movement in a country where any dissident group has very little chance to survive, let alone achieve its goals.

Schroeter's book in many respects is a pioneering work. Although the dissident movement, and particularly some of its outstanding figures, have known wide public attention, scholarly and systematic research on the subject is lacking, partly because of the inadequacy of sources. *The Last Exodus* is an excellent example of how this problem could be solved. Schroeter has used an impressive collection of Soviet underground *samizdat* publications, personal interviews, official and semiofficial Soviet and Western publications, and Western news media, as well as his direct contacts with many of the people in the Jewish movement. The result is a book that for the first time provides an extensive account of the awakening and the activities of the Jewish national movement in the Soviet Union. In a sense *The Last Exodus* is a collection of case studies of persons and small groups who triggered a mass movement. One can clearly see how the holocaust, official and grassroots anti-Semitism, and the denial of national right and pride in achievements of the newborn independent Jewish state converged in different places and inspired people with different backgrounds to create a national movement. The author is at his best when he describes the creation of the small groups of Jewish activists and their ingenious methods of organization, self-education, personal courage, and self-sacrifice. He provides illuminating examples of the transition from assimilation to the defining of national self-affirmation that many Soviet Jews have gone through in the last few years. As the author himself admits, the book is not just an account of a freedom movement; his purpose was also to gain support for that movement in the West. The book's major shortcomings are the result of the author's close involvement with his subject matter. The analytical parts dealing with the interconnection between the development of the Jewish movement and the changes that took place in the post-Stalinist regime, in the international relations of the Soviet Union and the relation between outside pressure and internal developments, deserve more attention than the author has given them. Even so, the book is an impressive and successful attempt to describe and analyze the development of the Jewish national movement in the Soviet Union and is the best yet to appear in print.

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