

RUSSIA (Continued)

Yet one fact remained uncontested. According to Soviet representatives, the Russian Red Cross and Kozmin relatives, the parents were well and working, he as an aviation mechanic and she as a custom seamstress. They had kept in contact with their children; they had another son; and they wanted their family together.

DID I, the father of seven, have the right to keep any family apart?

In my mind, I could hear discussions I had had with my brother, a U. S. Congressman, about what our country is and what has made it a beacon of salvation to so many peoples. We had agreed that the basis is in certain "unalienable rights" which no man, no matter what powers the people give him, can abridge.

Certainly, one of these rights is that of parents to rear their children. If the parents are fit, it is a law of God and nature that a family be together.

"A law of God"—what would that have meant to the Soviets! What respect had they ever shown for the family? What "unalienable rights" had they ever bowed to? These thoughts, too, inevitably came to mind.

But during the hearings, I would glance from the attorneys to the boys sitting nearby. Paul, who seldom saw Richard and George, would always sit between them so he could touch and feel them again. The four, always quiet and well-behaved, would group together for a precious moment of love no foster home could provide.

Their simple actions were more powerful than any laws or abstract ideas. This was a family and, under the circumstances, could no longer be kept apart. It made no difference what Russia would have done. There was only one decision to make, and it had been made long ago. An ideology like Communism may challenge it, but the unity of the family will survive as it has survived other challenges.

The Kozmins are together again and, I hope, in lasting happiness. I understand when the boys landed in Moscow, officials snatched away their baseball gloves and hats before photographers took their pictures.

But I think the Kozmin boys brought something more important and indestructible to Russia. They brought the idea that Americans have the courage to live up to their beliefs in the rights of individuals and families—rights which, if respected everywhere, would never have led the Kozmins into tragedy in the first place.



Unhappy here, the Kozmins returned to Russia to continue custody fight now won.



Released from Chicago mental hospital, the Kozmins had Peter, began fight to get back their other sons.

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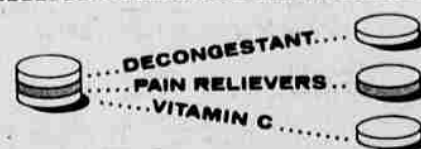
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