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Friday, June 21st - Moscow: There was a delay of 10 hours until we reached Moscow. As soon as we stepped off the plane we were met by Rabbi Shlifer. He was very glad to see us, as he was frightened by a report that an American plane had crashed, and so he was relieved. We were immediately taken into cars and went to the National Hotel. We were surprised that no one checked our baggage - there was no customs at all. At our first conference with Shlifer we were shocked that as we entered the room and sat down one old Jew, without having been asked or invited, walked in, sat down, and listened "for a good reason". We were never told his name and he seemed to be there for a purpose. He always stuck around and we saw him time and time again. At this preliminary conference we touched on basic questions such as the Sidur. He showed us dummy copies of scattered pages. We also spoke about the Yeshiva. We said we had seen and heard reports that there was a Sidur and that a Yeshiva was to be open. The world is looking for tangible evidence we said. Is it a fact? The Yeshiva, he said, is a definite reality. Everything is all set up and it is just a matter of technicalities. We asked about a luach and he said it is in the same category as the Sidur. The question of Agunot was raised and he said that if the women are in Israel and the men in Russia the men can come from Israel to Moscow and everything can be settled. The meeting lasted about 2 hours.

We returned to the synagogue and were told that we would have our meals there with Rabbi Shlifer. However, we insisted we would not take more than one meal from him a day. Rabbi Adleman led the services and the people were wild with enthusiasm. Attendance was quite good as there were about 500 people there Friday night and about 1,000 for Shabat. We tried to talk to the people and there and then we became aware of the great effort made by Shlifer and those accompanying him to prevent us from talking to them. He said we have to eat, make Kiddush, etc., so we finally went in. At the table there were several people present who were not members of the Rabbimut - persons not of Shlifer's family. One man in particular was obviously a stooge. There was a minyan present. The meal was well prepared and we sang Zmiras, Ani Ma'amin, etc., which made Shlifer's face wet with tears. He had no knowledge that Ani Ma'amin came out of the camps. We returned to the hotel after the meal and someone always insisted on accompanying us. We deliberately did not talk of our mission because we were aware of the presence of these people. The major subject of our discussion was very personal and informal. We spoke about people we knew in common, described American Jewish life, religious Jewish life, and spoke generally. The meal left an indelible impression on us. There was an atmosphere of exceeding warmth. We had the feeling that a lot of people were present at every meal for a reason and we felt that Shlifer was protecting himself as well so that he could never be charged of a private conversation with us. Many people invited to be present were not government people.

Shabat morning we came to the synagogue and there was a great attendance. Before services we discussed the problem of delivering sermons and Shlifer told us to stay away from certain subjects. We gave him a Talis as a gift and mentalack for the synagogue. The gifts were accepted without a word - sort of under the table - with absolutely no recognition of taking the gift. He asked us to stay away from: 1) reference to Israel and 2) specific discussion about religious education for young children. We could however, talk about culture, faith, world peace and against war. By the way, we made the request to address the congregation, to which he agreed. We asked if more than one of us could speak to which Shlifer answered that he would not accept this suggestion because if more than one person speaks the whole session will take on the character of a meeting rather than a religious service. First Shlifer spoke (there is usually a microphone in the synagogue but Shlifer was afraid to use it in our presence - the amplifiers were still up.). The substance of what Shlifer said was interesting as he said nothing. He can talk 1/2 hour and say nothing, but once in a while puts in something pointed. He spoke about Bilam, etc. When he finished, he forgot Hollender's name which we whispered to him, and the mention of which was the only introduction given, without referring to who Rabbi Hollender is, what he is doing here, etc., as if it were perfectly normal for him to speak at Shabat services in Moscow. Rabbi Hollender spoke and the Jews hung on to every word and they cried. He spoke about Joseph and his brothers; we want you to know that American Jews have not forgotten you; we wanted to come to you all this time but there were certain obstacles in our

path..now it seems they have been removed and so we are here. There was a hubub after he finished..however deathly silence as Hollender spoke. In general the synagogue was very noisy, with no attempt by the Rabbi to stop it. Our impression was that the reason for it was because the synagogue is the only place where the people can speak freely - they can't generally so they talk during the service. In drosha, Rabbi Hollender mentioned, one of the commentators says that Bilam was told you will not succeed because some one preceeded you so one comments on the comparison that Avraham Avinu did not succeed in the Akeda because had he succeeded the Jewish people would come to an end. The people should feel they are secure. Before the drosha the Sefer Torah is carried through the synagogue. The Rabbi did not ask us to join him so we just got up and walked behind him. As we walked through the crowd everyone pushed to grab our hands and in the course of the procession words were whispered into our ears - "dont believe - it's all lies - it's a mask". We asked one what he meant and he said "it is not like this". They slipped us pieces of paper. (At this point Rabbi Shachter presented a note he received which he read.) In most cases they gave us old envelopes with addresses of relatives. Another reaction we found was that after the service was over the crowd surged forward to say "Good Shabas", to shake our hands, to touch us, and this was when we tried to snatch conversations.

We used code names for everyone. We gave Yisrael Noach a salami and he was so thankful but so afraid. He said we should give it to him so that no one should see. He was petrified. Rabbi Hollender gave it to him in front of the synagogue and he said "you should not have given it to me here". They were afraid to be photographed with us.

At the service Rabbi Shlifer offered a prayer for the Government of the USSR and described the government as being the protector of peace in the entire world. Not only did he write the prayer but also the music. The Chazan and choir cost the congregation 150,000 Rubles a year. There are three men in the choir.

At Sabath lunch Rabbi Shlifer's son-in-law was present. He was a learned Jew and never wanted to give his family name. We went home and Rabbi Nachum insisted on walking us back home. He is an old man with a bad leg and uses a cane but he insisted. As we walked home, Rabbi Adleman and Hollender were ahead and Shachter was left behind talking with him. Rabbi Nachum is telling how wonderful the USSR is, how everyone gets pensions, how everything is fine, etc., when a man brushed by and said "It's a lie - ask him where our Rabbis are - he's a traitor - a squealer - a liar!" and then he vanished. No doubt Rabbi Nachum heard but he said nothing. When asked who the man was he answered he must be some meshuganar.

Before services started, we sat in the yard and spoke to Rabbi Shlifer alone. We discussed nothing of particular interest - America, the cities we might see in Russia, etc. At the synagogue we sang traditional melodies and again, without introduction nodded to us and Rabbi Shachter spoke. Our names were never mentioned and the talk lasted for about 15 minutes. An interesting comment is that Rabbi Shlifer made absolutely no comment on what we said, how we said it, etc. Afterall, we're considered good preachers and Shlifer happens to be a poor one, but he said nothing. It wasn't until later on that he said he was grateful and could have kissed us. Also, it was only in Leningrad and Moscow that he limited us to one drosha. In Rostov all four of us spoke and he had no objection to it being political.

He was with us day and night and travelled with us wherever we went. He always emphasized to the ticket man that he gets a special rate (government rate) that shows that his trip was with the knowledge of the government. Once we asked for a ticket for him and were told that he could get it through the church. In every city he visited the local ministers of cults.

There were three Israelis on the pulpit. There was a barrier between these three and the rest of the Jews. They wear bar-mitzvah talisim - they do very little praying - they were absolutely bored and looked it - they are on display and the people feel it. There can be no rapor established when these people do not have any warmth. We were told in (Roumania or Sachumy) that the ambassador, if he comes, drives to smel, doesn't wear a hat, etc. While we were there they made no appearance at all. The Israel service men should be aware of the fact that they are Jews as well as politicians.

On Sunday we spoke to Rabbi Shlifer about the fact that we heard there are other synagogues in Moscow which we would like to visit - Malina Miavoshna - the Rabbi of which we had met at the airport and who had invited us to come. We were told the Rabbi was away at present and that it would not be proper for us to visit his synagogue in his absence. Again on Monday we told him our time is limited and we want to see the Bet Olom and Jewish life in this community. Monday was also stalled. We discussed the question of itinerary, and discussed

the question of certain cities which it seems we couldn't visit because they had no tourist facilities. One was Kutaisi but he was anxious that we go there and the next day we met Kutaisi was on the list. We do not know why some cities were forbidden but they were. We applied to the following which we did not receive: Berdechev, Minsk, Vilna, Rega, Kovna, Chitovya, Meybosh, Uman, Tarnapol, Livuv, and Kishinev. We all felt that on every point we raised about the inadequacy of facilities for Jewish life (i.e. Karchov) the answer was always that the Jews are to be blamed. They don't want it and they cannot unite and come to the Ministry of Cults with a united apshina. This was his line. If Jews are arrested it is for smuggling, black market, etc., - not because they are Jews or Zionists. The Jews of Odessa complained about the synagogue and he said to them "It's your fault". We met Moshe Brodizan who was just released from prison and we asked him about the imprisonment of Jews. He said he had met Jews whose only crime was to build a mikvah or the like, for which one man was sentenced for 25 years, and that many Jews there were imprisoned for religious reasons. He said many Rabbis were killed in jail. We asked to go to Karchov and Rabbi Shlifer said there is no need as there is no synagogue there.

Following are some answers we received to some of our questions:

Tephellin - He said, "I wish we had enough hands and heads to wear the tephellin we have." We saw many Jews at services and there was no one there without tephellin. We asked if it is examined periodically and he said of course.

Mezzuzot - "Certainly there are mezzuzot". At a private minyan we visited there was no mezzuzah on the door. When we asked why, we were told Mezzuzot were very expensive and ran as high as 50 Rubles. We went back to the car with David Fingel and asked what about mezzuzot and he said you can get them for 4 or 5 Rubles. Everyone has them.

Talisim - "You can buy them here - they're not expensive" We saw no evidence of talisim. Those we saw were made out of burlap sacks. When we told Shlifer of the expensive mezzuzot he said anyone could get them for practically nothing. Then he said, even if it does cost 50 Rubles is that a reason why a private minyan cannot acquire a mezzuzah. Private minyanim were created to make money, sell matzot, etc. His attitude was that everything Jews did was for business. He said many Jews could be Rabbis but did not want to accept the responsibility. They did not want to suffer for being Rabbis and were afraid to take the chance. One minyan we saw consisted entirely of rabbis (men over 50) who would not assume the responsibility of rabonim. These are people who came previously from Poland. We saw Jewish cemeteries and Jewish funerals. If someone wants to be buried as a Jew they have all the facilities. Cemeteries are nationalized and there are burials on Shabat. Why - because the government and not Jews are in charge. There were incidents where facilities were available but people did not take advantage of it. This is true, as we saw tombstones inscribed in Russian with pictures and without a single Hebrew word, although there were some stones entirely in Hebrew. Perhaps we overestimated the piety of Russian Jews.

Matzot - In Moscow and Leningrad the government set aside on bakery under the supervision of the Rabbi and matzot are sold in government stores at moderate prices. There are many Jews who have their own private matzo bakeries. We asked how matzot can be baked privately if the machinery is government owned, to which he answered that the government knows about it but doesn't stop it. In some places the synagogue has a bakery and each family brings its own flour and the matzo is baked in the synagogue. This is the arrangement in Rostov. We were told that 2 kilos of matzo were received from Israel but as a result of pressure were sent back with a letter in Russian thanking them for it but stating that they don't need it. We remember that before we left for Russia we wrote Rabbi Shlifer asking if we could bring anything and he replied that he didn't need anything. We asked if Hebrew is taught at the University and Shlifer said he didn't know. However, Hebrew is taught in Leningrad. We spoke to two young people, one Jew and one not, studying Hebrew at the University. They spoke haltingly but understood what we said. We asked if Shlifer could provide us with a list of all the official practicing Rabbis in the Soviet Union. As to the number of practicing Rabbis he said there were 150, which we are convinced is an exaggeration. P.S., we never got the list. We asked is there any official relation between the congregation to one another or to the government. Answer - To one another there is no relationship - to the Government there is the Ministry of Cults. How do Jewish clergymen receive their salaries? From the congregation. Each congregation pays the salary of its rabbi. In relation to other workers of similar training and skill do rabbis receive more or less, to which he answered more. Shlifer himself gets 50,000 Rubles a year - or about 5,000 a month. Do clergymen pay taxes? Yes.

More or less than people in a similar income bracket? "Definitely more because they are non-productive." How does a congregation maintain itself? What is its budget? The Choral Synagogue in Moscow has an annual income of 1/2 million Rubles a year which comes in without too much effort. There is no pressure applied for people to give money - it is entirely voluntary. Every aliyah carries with it a contribution. There is no membership (registration) in the congregation. If Jews want to found a new synagogue how do they do it? "If 20 Jews can organize a shchina and they apply to the Ministry of Cults and they find a place, they will be recognized as a synagogue." They do not pay taxes on the building but must adhere to all building codes.

We saw a schitah for the first time on Monday. Many women came in. The knife was kosher but it was not a chalaf - it was a straight razor. However, everything was done according to order.

We again asked about visiting various synagogues and again Shliffer said we could not visit in the absence of the presiding Rabbi. This was the first real clash we had with him. He said we didn't trust him, didn't believe him, etc. After that everything was all right. A program was planned and we visited a synagogue in the Tzechisev area. About 100 people were there and we were told more would soon come as they were coming from a Brith. At services, we were called upon to say a few words at our insistence. Afterward there was a Chasidic rikud. It is interesting to note that the Rabbi of that synagogue had resigned (as far as we know). His name is Shmuel Abe Lerner. He stood outside and refused to enter. Shliffer saw us with him, came out, and argued with the Rabbi, but he still refused to come in. Shliffer then pulled us inside. When we left the synagogue the people were very warm. We tried speaking to them and tried to find out how things really were. We either received no answer or the usual expected answers. They were more concerned with what is happening in Israel than what's doing in America.

The following morning we went to Rabbi Alievsky's synagogue and there were about 30 people there. It was the Fast day of the 17th day of Tamuz and we visited two private minyanim which we insisted on visiting. To get to one we walked through a lot of alleys until we got to an old shack which looked as if it would collapse at the slightest breeze. There were three rooms in the shack - one of which was the synagogue. We visited the private minyan only after tremendous pressure on our part. Shliffer wanted to make sure he gave us only the best possible demonstrations.

Tuesday night the rest of our delegation arrived. We set up appointments with Ambassador Bohlen and the Ministry of Cults for Wednesday. Bohlen was very cooperative.

Before we arrived in Moscow we stopped in Vilna and were told there are about 10,000 Jews there and that it is said they will soon build a Beit Midrash. A man who served us lunch we found out to be Jewish although he did not reveal himself. He asked if we wanted bread, to which we asked what it contained. He said "Don't worry - there's no chazer in it." By using this word we knew.

June 27th-11 am. We met with Bohlen and Davis (2nd Secretary). Bohlen said Stalin was anti-semitic; the Bolsheviks were anti-semitic. It was never racial as was Nazism but was motivated by the objection of allegiance to anything outside of the USSR. He said Khaganovitz was still in great power and a member of the Presidium. There is no anti-semitism against Jews who have renounced their Judaism. He felt Stalin strived to rid himself of early Jewish communist leaders. There is no discrimination against Jews other than the discrimination that there is against all other religions. There was tremendous fear last December when Khrushchev made a strong speech against Israel. He said Jews will always occupy positions in ratio to their population. Stalin used anti-semitism against Trotsky, and when Stalin died the Jews feared there would be pogroms. He also said "This is a period of relative relaxation and every Jew waits in watchful hope." The Communist Party, they give and take, and there is no sense of permanent security and anything could change. Russia had helped many Jews escape from the Ukraine. Bohlen told us however not to say this because there were many incidents when Russians turned Jews over to the Nazis. (Z.A. denied that Jews as Jews were turned over to the Gestapo, but only because they were communists and not because they were Jews.) The Jews in Georgia told us that Soviet Russia offered them help.

We then met with the Ministry of Cults. We did not meet Polansky, the chairman, but met with Prychodko, a member of the council. The meeting lasted for about two hours. Also present was an advisor on Jewish subjects. We couldn't get his name. Whenever he spoke to Prychodko he threw in a few Jewish words. We asked what the purpose of the Ministry of Cults is? It was defined as an organization to guarantee the right of citizens to be for or against

religion. The Constitution of Soviet Russia provides the right to propagandize against religion, not for it, i.e. education. Again we asked about the formation of a synagogue. "He said it can be organized through proper application." However no formal schools are permitted. He said Yeshivot (and he used the plural) are soon to be organized. He knew we were orthodox and told us esrogim were being cleared for import and sidurim were to be printed. He said when a synagogue is recognized by the Council, the Council will help facilitate matters for the synagogue, such as getting paper for the prayer books, etc. If it is officially recognized as a synagogue - they can ask for help - otherwise not. An organization of Jews, unless it has a religious stamp becomes a mass meeting. The Council doesn't make the budget for the synagogue. Shliffer says his own synagogue receives 500,000 rubles in gifts. Would the Council object to Shliffer visiting the US and he said no. Prychodko then asked us what the World Jewish Congress was. We spoke of it as being an organization concerned with the rights of Jews all over the world in religious and political matters but mostly political to guarantee their rights as individuals. We asked how many Jews there were in Moscow and he had no information at all.

We went to Friday night services at Milano Varoshi synagogue. The Jews there cried like babies when we spoke of seeing each other again and reuniting our people. Don't forget that only those on pensions - those who don't work - attend services, so that attendance is quite good. They all bemoaned the lack of religious education and spoke of the difficulties of circumcision as they might be penalized for it. They lined the streets to see us and touch us, and whispered to us when they could, "Get us out of here!" "Salvation to the Jewish people". One asked if we came here for anything special? We answered we came to see you. "Oh, I thought you came to deliver us". Despair lies heavily on them. The synagogue was in an alley surrounded by houses and is in place of a building which was taken from them. The synagogue has an income of 80,000 rubles per year. There are spies and squealers in the group and some blame Shliffer and fear of being sent to Siberia as the reason for not being aggressive enough and demanding license for Jewish education. Shliffer said that a store for the sale of kosher meat would soon be opened. Meanwhile Jews are without education, etc., but the Jews we spoke to were learned. The Jews slipped us notes full of hopes for immigration. The service lasted from 8:30 to 11:30. We asked the Ministry of Cults about the Yiddish paper and the Yiddish theater. He answered that the theater was not attended and closed because of deficit. He said the paper probably closed for the same reason.

We saw Hellmann (Ambassador of the Polish government in Russia) who spoke about the freedom of the 40-50,000 Jews in Poland. 30% of the writers and 40% of the artists in Poland are Jews. He said there is an annual remembrance of the Warsaw uprising and people should come to see how much freedom there is for Jews in Poland. He spoke as well about freedom of religious instruction and about McCarthyism in America as a symbol of fascism. He spoke about the relation of Israel and Poland and said it was sympathetic but made no further comment. He did mention that after the war they let every Jew who so desired leave, but eventually had to stabilize the population.

We visited the Lenin State Library in Moscow which has about 200,000 rare books and 19 million volumes altogether. Among the rare volumes are Ramban-1477, Rashba-1480, Ibn Ezra translated by Rambam, Avraham Ibn Ezra-1488, Bachaya-1492, Tur-1472, and Kalonymoss-1489. We spoke to a Mrs. Kalchina about the possibility of exchanging microfilms, of if we could send films if they didn't wish to exchange them. She was very helpful and told us to contact directly the International Exchange Service. That night we left for Leningrad. The two of our delegation who had not been in Moscow wanted to stay but Shliffer cried that we had to go with him. He was afraid to leave us or for us to leave him. So we left for Leningrad.

Shliffer told us there are not enough Rabbis to take care of the needs of the Jews. There are 100,000 Jews and four synagogues in Tashkent, of which one is new. The request would be granted to form new synagogues if there were Rabbis to go with the congregation. Shliffer said there is no need for fear among Jews but admitted there were informers. We discussed the Stalin era with him. He handed us three copies of the Zargust in 1952 and had the book opened to the place where he had delivered his speech. The question of germ warfare was there and that the Soviet Union was the first country in the world for 1800 years to have granted Jews complete civil and political and religious freedom. There could be several interpretations as to why he showed us the book: 1) he wanted to show complete equality of all religious groups and 2) he was perhaps trying to say that although it is here I do not believe it myself. In his book he mentioned Stalin as the savior of the Jewish people.

We asked whether he was aware in 1952 of what he is aware of in 1956. He said then the times were different. He told of matzo bakers in his congregation and that he is hoping to have official kosher wine.

In Leningrad we were met by a delegation of the community headed by Perchersky, who is a dentist and president of the Jewish community in Leningrad. They were surprised that we didn't have beards and that we had "smiche" from the gedolim, as well as the fact that American rabbis were unshaven. The Leningrad synagogue is magnificent. The Beit Midrash has a ladies gallery. At one time there were many different minyanim going on at the same time and the Beit Midrash was the orthodox minyan. There was a large mikvah, succah, etc. There is a struggle for power and leadership in the Leningrad congregation. One Jew related to Shliffer is Perchersky's antagonist. Perchersky requested us not to talk to him in Shliffer's presence as "you will endanger our lives". Shliffer spoke disparagingly of Perchersky on many occasions. This is an illustration of what happens in a community when a layman and not a Rabbi is president. The rabbi of that congregation Lubanov was in jail for several years and now has returned to Leningrad. Rabbi Moseson replaced him and is now retained, as Rabbi Lubanov's position is indefinite. The people said all they need is Talisim and Sidurim. We saw a mosque being repaired publicly. There are about 50,000 Moslems there and they have a magnificent building. Why don't Jews have such improvements publicly undertaken? In America young people come to the Rabbi for recommendations about university, etc., but here the rabbi is detrimental.

We visited the Library. Harkavy's catalogue is there. We asked about the Firkervitz and Zimberg collections. There is a fine general Hebrew and Yiddish collection at the library. A Jew is on the staff. They have a chumush from the year 1010 and have a 9th century Torah. There is a separate reading room for Hebrew and Yiddish volumes. About ten readers come in per day. There are about 30, -40,000 books in Hebrew and Yiddish. The last Yiddish paper we saw was the Freiheit of February 1956. The only Israeli paper was Kol Ha'am. The Birobidjan Shtern was there too. The Hebrew section of books in Moscow is part of the general reading room while here it is separate. Zimburg's collection is almost all in Moscow.

Friday night services were at 10:15. We had a skimpy meal but you could see that it was the best they could do for us. They did everything they could. There is a great fear of being seen with strangers. "Asur l'daber - al t'amin" one man told us.

On Saturday, June 30th, there were two services - one at 6 and one at 8. There were 500 people present. The shul seats 3,000. Shliffer delivered the sermon and broke down and said something about education. He exhorted the congregation to teach their children. "This is a free land a man can think as he likes. There was darkness but now there is light. Let us not fear to teach our children." This he told the people. By the way, this was his third trip to Leningrad in 30 years. Again he delivered a prayer for the government but there was no response from the people. Hollender spoke after Shliffer and touched their hearts and ours. The theme was the reunion of Joseph and his brothers. We never touched on Israel, civil rights, etc. The crowd surrounded us and we cried like babies. If anything else has been successful this re-establishment of ties and the feeling of being reunited has given them new courage, and we hope not falsely. Rabbi Schahter spoke and said we have come to say Shalom to our brothers. We saw so many broken Jews, but they are still full of Torah. They told us "We have so much joy now we hope it won't hurt us". Lubanov's son-in-law, an opera singer, was there and told us his wife pleaded with him not to come to the synagogue but he said he had to. One Jew told us "You violated the Sabbath by kindling a fire in our hearts." Perchersky is ready to give over his position to a responsible person. Shliffer wants Lubanov. We thought that that's why Shliffer came with us - for this reason. Two young men saw us with Yarmulkes and walked by quietly and said "Gut Nacht". We asked them to sit down but they said they could not and ran away.

We cabled Vorishilov for a meeting but did not get an answer. Shliffer knew about the cable but it was not acknowledged because they did not know whether "we" were the delegation or whether they should wait for the W.J.C. We saw one child of 7 in the synagogue - the first child we saw. Someone told us "That under the Czar they killed us with hate and now with kindness." Whenever we spoke to the people we always said "Leshana ha'ba" to which they always replied "B'Yerushalayim". To this they said, "You don't need it - we do". Many asked why don't more American Jews go to Israel. "They have the opportunity but don't go".

We were in Peterkoff and spoke with little boys on the street. We asked if they knew any Jews, etc. We didn't detect any signs of hatred. We saw the Jewish cemetery and noticed one or two crosses. There was much intermarriage.

One man, about 40, asked in Hebrew if there was any way that he could help the State of Israel. Could he send money? The present Jewish community is a devoted one. We met the son of the former chief Rabbi of Moscow, Medalia in Leningrad, who was released that week after 5 years of prison. The son was convinced that his father is still alive and Shliffer was convinced that he was not alive because during these past months thousands of people have been released from prison and if he were still alive he would have been released with the rest. We met a Lubovitz Jew, Avfaham Abah, who refused all kinds of outside work not to violate the Shabbat, and consequently he lives in poverty, but with sanctity. To anything we said he would reply, "God will help." He broke down and told us his own daughter was married to a goy. They feel they are prisoners in a huge jail. In Leningrad on a week day 200 Jews attended services. In Moscow 300 attended services - only pension people attending. One Jew told us a person should take one of the Jewish concepts and should sacrifice in order to observe it. There are 14 Greek orthodox churches, 1 catholic church, 1 baptist church, 1 mosque and 1 synagogue in Leningrad. There is a minimum of 25 minyanim. In the Museum there is a picture of the destruction of the Temple with the inscription below: "This came as a result of a peasant uprising". The Jews there are a great, heroic people, for only the great could have survived physically and remained true spiritually. There is no organizational structure of rabbis or of congregations. Children are prohibited from attending Jewish classes. Inter-marriage is great so that many children are the result of mixed marriages or there are those who are afraid to express connection with the Jewish religion. One man told us, "I have wonderful Jewish children but they cannot pray - they know nothing." There is no climate for Jewish life and even cemeteries are nationalized. Jews have no control over their administration. Gentiles married to Jews are identified with the Jewish religion and are buried in Jewish cemeteries. News of our trip appeared in no paper. In Kiev we were told that Kol Yisrael was heard but the Yiddish section of the broadcast was jammed. The Hebrew was not. The program should be done in Ashkenazit as they don't understand Sephardit. They listen to Kol Yisrael in secret under closed blinds and dark rooms. Besides Birobidjan there is no Jewish paper and that has no Jewish content. We conferred with Shliffer and Lubanov about farewell talks, which upset them.

Rabbi Kroll asked if we could teach Ein Yaakov at the Sunday evening service. Of course we said yes, and he announced the fact that tomorrow night Rabbi Shachter will teach Ein Yaakov. However, during the course of the afternoon Shliffer asked would I mind if I would not teach Ein Yaakov. He said it was too much already. The Jews in Leningrad are too excited. We shouldn't over do it. I agreed. At dinner that evening one of the men came and whispered to Shliffer that there was a tremendous crowd of people outside and should they open the main synagogue. Shliffer said no. Shachter went to him and said he would not say anything out of line - it will not be an address, and since so many are here, why should you oppress them any more than they are already oppressed. I will stick to the text. He finally said all right, "but please remember, no farewells, no emotion, only the text." We went to the Beit Midrash which was jammed with 300 people and I spoke about education. They were afraid of farewell talks. We had a combination Tishabaav and Yom Kipur. All our meals were prepared by a woman named Luba, a member of the Communist Party, who had done great things for the Jews. We asked to meet this woman. Monday night, for the farewell she came in to serve the meal. She was happy and yet at the same time worried. She spoke very well and gripped our hands and said it was the happiest day of her life. We had the impression that here was a person of great importance in Leningrad. That she had done a great deal and that her coming to the synagogue to serve the meal was a great sacrifice. She was afraid to go out after she finished. After the meal we were besieged by mobs in the streets, sobbing, screaming, clinging to the cars, and they followed us to the station. We heard whispers of "Please come back". We all broke down and cried as the train left.

July 4th we met with Polansky, Prochodko and an expert on Jewish affairs. We asked for permission to send a printing machine of Hebrew type. When we had discussed this with Shliffer he was all excited about it. When we raised the question his answer was that if necessary, "We will produce such a machine ourselves". We asked for permission to send copies of books until facilities for printing are developed. Polansky said he would check with customs and let us know. We made the point about a luach - that it could not be photographed - to which he answered that a luach is being prepared. Could we send them until such time, to which he said he had no objection but would want to discuss this with the Jewish Community. He doesn't know how customs will treat such a



shipment. If it is permissible to teach children why shouldn't there be a notice at the synagogue that whoever wants to teach his child to read Sidur can. Polansky said religious teaching is the private affair of parents and the Ministry has no interest in private affairs of parents. We asked then, could you say that you permit it? He said that to post a notice is an internal affair of the synagogue and he has no interest. It was not prohibited to hire a private teacher in a family. Could 10 families hire one teacher and he said permission is not required to teach a language, but not religion. What objection is there to the Hebrew language? Why not permit the organization of classes for the teaching of Hebrew? They began to soften. But at this point, the expert jumped up and said "But this is a cheder." After that no amount of argument could convince them that it was possible to study Hebrew divorcing it from prayer and religion. Is it permissible to teach religion when there are children in the congregation. Yes. If that's all right, why cannot the Rabbi teach religion to children. No answer! While speaking about the Sidur they showed us the Koran which they had just published (offset) in Arabic. We told them we would be asked about the condition of Jews in Russia and this would be of great interest to the Jews of the world and it would be a far greater report if we could bring a copy of the Sidur. They looked at each other and smiled. "It is impossible - it will take several months."

At the July 4th reception we spoke to Bulganin and Khrushchev, who did not seem very impressed with us. Hollender spoke to B & K expressing gratitude for the opportunity to visit Jews in the Soviet Union and hoped the same opportunity would be open for others to come. He also emphasized that a religious citizen is also a patriotic citizen to the country where he lives and it is to the advantage of the country to encourage religion. As religious leaders we would like to see more synagogues, to which B. answered, "It's up to the Jews." We said we would like to see better facilities for education of youth, etc. They shrugged and left. (Wilson alleged they turned their backs rudely on us and walked away. This is not true.) Jan Pearce was being congratulated and Shachter told him to tell the people that he dovened in the Moscow synagogue Saturday, where there were over 2,000 people. Pearce did so.

We noticed Shliffer placed himself at the door where B & K would be sure to see him as they left. As they passed him K. led and walked stiffly by Shliffer. B. passed, turned and bowed to Shliffer.

We had a farewell dinner at Shliffers house with Rabbis Sandler, Katz and Rakovitz present. If you will remember we were told that if the Jews want it, they could form a synagogue. We were told that a group of Jews who had worshipped in a basement synagogue, rabbi of which was Sandler, had their building taken away from them. They asked Shliffer to see that a new congregation should be established. We were told that Shliffer blocked the way. Shliffer, when we asked him about it, said it was not true, and that he is not the one to sanction or object, and that if the Jews want a synagogue, they know how to get it.

We then left Moscow.

A Supplement on the Visit to Moscow:-

Flight from Vilna to Moscow. Met by Schlieffer and five other religious functionaries. We were taken to a small room at the airport where we exchanged greetings and regards. All were very warm and cordial. We were deeply impressed by their warmth. Our lunch was brought to us. There was no check whatsoever; no one asked for our passports, no customs inspection, no baggage examination. Two large limousines were waiting for us and we were driven to the Hotel National where each of us had a lovely private room. There was a short sight-seeing tour through the city and we then met the Rabbi at 5 o'clock in his study. He has an imposing, traditional Rabbinic appearance, a scholar, keen, sharp.

We spoke of the Yeshiva and his answer was, "There is no doubt that the Yeshiva will be established. It is impossible otherwise. The Yeshiva must be established." Our impression is that it is still very much up in the air. He showed us the pages of the new Sidur "which will appear within a few weeks." It is a fully traditional Sidur in every sense. The only addition is a prayer for the Soviet government.

Rabbi Schlieffer invited us to be his guests for the Sabbath and all other meals. We arranged the agenda. All through our conversation in his study one of the synagogue elders was present.

The synagogue was fairly crowded. Many rose as we entered. We were seated on the bima next to the Rabbi. Rabbi Edelman officiated at the evening service, which was exceedingly well received. The reaction of the people to the service and to our presence generally was most heartwarming. They surged forward en masse to shake our hands and we were greatly impressed by their searching eyes and yearning faces which spoke more significantly than any words. The Rabbis and the elders were anxious to have dinner and we had to cut short our snatched conversations. The Rabbi spends Shabat in a room in the synagogue because he lives too far away. We sang hymns after prayers and the meal.

Shabat in the morning there was a very large crowd in the synagogue. It was the usual traditional service which was chanted by the Cantor and a choir. At one point in the service, Schlieffer chanted a special prayer for the USSR and for world peace, which he himself had composed. We walked through the synagogue behind the procession of the Torah and snatched further bits of conversation. Rabbi Schlieffer preached and spoke of Bilom as partially blind and as symbolic of those in the world today who see only half truths; he quoted the Yiddish: "Barks like Bilom." ..Those who speak as a prophet in the name of God and simultaneously spread conflict (warmongers). Then he said that there is need for havlagah, for patience, never to become so angry that reconciliation will be impossible. It is only with patience that the worst enemies can become reconciled. Rabbi Hollander spoke, conveyed regards from Rabbinical Council of America and all American Jewry, exhorted them to pursue their religion, etc.

The congregation filled the synagogue to capacity. The people were visibly moved, many to tears. Immediately after musaf, we were rushed into Rabbi Schlieffer's room to dinner. His son-in-law was present, a young man in his middle 40s who impressed us as being a scholarly Jew. Before minchah we talked to Rabbi Schlieffer in the yard of the synagogue for over an hour.

Sunday afternoon we were with Rabbi Schlieffer from 5 until 11 at night, with brief breaks for minchah and mirev. Discussed the following:-

1. We asked that he arrange with the Ministry of Cults for an appointment for us. He said yes.

2. We gave him the list of the cities in Russia which we desired to visit. His reaction was doubtful.

3. The Yeshiva. He said "It will and must be." We proposed (a) that boys of 18 with no background whatever be encouraged to study for the Rabbinate - because he told us that he envisaged that the students in this seminary will all be people in their late 30s and 40s. Was doubtful about a man who was past 50, and (b) we proposed that efforts be made to import teachers and Rabbis for a limited time. His reaction was doubtful. (c) We proposed to create a central headquarters and organization of all Russian Rabbis and synagogues. His reaction was favorable but (1) he said there never was such a central organization in Russian history (even prior to the revolution) and (2) he became exceedingly bitter over the fact that what ordained Rabbis there were in Russia refused to serve as Rabbis in an official capacity. We asked him for a list of all official Rabbis and religious communities. He said that such a list might be available but our impression was that he was not too keen. (We never did get such a list. We questioned him again at the very end of the trip and he said that he would try to forward such a list to us.)

4. We discussed at length the problem of religious education for children. He gave us the usual line that the government forbids formal education for youngsters under 18 except where a parent instructs his own child. When we asked about the possibility of arranging for individual private tutors for individual children, his answer was, "The parents are not interested." We proposed (a) that we would send from America a series of recordings of lessons in Bible and other religious subjects; that we would send a linotype machine; a curriculum for young people above the age of 18 and general religious literature for adults, in Russian. He indicated a strong desire to receive various Torah journals from America. We then spoke of the need for contacts on a regular basis with world Jewry. His reaction was favorable.

We spoke of the possibility for arranging pilgrimages to Israel as a religious duty. His reaction was favorable. However, he made it clear that such efforts must be made on a strictly private basis without any organizations.

It is interesting to note we met in the synagogue in Moscow two boys about 19 or 20 years old. They are honor students and really pious. One of them is Rabbi Schlieffer's grandson, the son of his daughter and the other is a young man who is a nephew of Rabbi Ephraim Epstein of Chicago and also a grand-nephew of the late Rabbi Moshe Mordecai Epstein of the Hevron Yeshiva. Incidentally, these boys were not in the synagogue on Shabat; one we met there Shabat evening and one on Sunday morning. Also interesting - in the big synagogue there were many minyonim dahvening mincheh, one after the other. Sunday while we were sitting in the little yard of the synagogue with Schlieffer, we were interrupted five or six times to recite kidushah with the minyonim whose voices we heard clearly in the yard. Rabbi Hollander gave a tallis to a Jew who said to him, "When I will die, I want to be wrapped in your tallis."

At the Sunday morning service we attended, which was one of many, there were about 60 people present, all in tallis and tfilim, most of them bearded. After services, we visited a slaughter house. We observed a young shochet, in the 30s. He used for the knife a straight razor but we checked it and found it completely kosher. He asked us to send him chalofim and in every city they asked us for chalofim.

We discussed with Rabbi and Mrs. Schlieffer (especially Mrs. Schlieffer) problems of American democracy, principally McCarthyism and the negro problem. They discussed with us at length the reaction of the Jews to the death of Stalin. They pointed out the horrible anomaly that on the one hand Jews rejoiced at the announcement of his death for which they heaved a sigh of relief, and simultaneously they were stricken with fear lest his death bring any upheaval in the routine of the government, and the Jews would be the first victims of any such change in government

policies. For with it all, they felt that Stalin's strong arm restrained potential violent anti-semitism.

We saw in the Jewish cemetery in Moscow the monuments of Rabbi Abraham Abba, son-in-law of the Rogotchover and of Rabbi Zeldin and Rabbi Zeitchik.

Conference with Prichotkov: We questioned him on population figures for Jews in Moscow. "Don't know." We asked why so few synagogues? He answered, "Because they don't ask for more. If they want it they can have it." We questioned him about our itinerary. He answered "Up to Intourist." Regarding religious education he said it was forbidden. He mentioned the concessions to the religious Jewish community, the imminent establishment of the yeshivot, the facilities for matzoh, the import of etrogim and the publication of the sidur. We asked about a central national religious organization. He answered that there never was such a thing in Russian history even prior to the revolution. We asked whether it would be permissible for Soviet Rabbis to travel outside the USSR for religious conferences. He answered, O.K. Re publications: we discussed the possibility of issuing a variety of religious publications in Russian, Yiddish and Hebrew. His answer was, "By all means." It was a very pleasant conference which confirmed all our previous notions.

We were interviewed by a correspondent from the Polish-Yiddish newspaper "Folkshtime."

On the train to Leningrad we had a very long conversation again with Rabbi Schleiffer. We asked insistently if all is permissible for Jews, why the crippling fear. His answer was that there is no reason for the fear. If certain Jews are afraid, let them recite "Shma."

In Leningrad we met Meir Zislin, about 30 years old, a student in the Oriental Language Institute in Leningrad, who is working on Hebrew manuscripts and arranging catalogues of such rare volumes which are in abundance at this Institute. He is originally from Riga. Another fascinating person that we met together with Zislin, is the only other graduate, whose name is Starkava Klovnia, a non-Jewish Russian girl who wrote a doctorate thesis on Yehuda Halevi and who speaks Hebrew very haltingly but understood it perfectly.

#### ROSTOV

The pilot seemed to fly by eye and ear only. They don't fly at night because they don't have many instruments. They have two-motor planes, old Dakotas, primarily DC3 type, and Ilyshins. They fly very low but make good landings and take-offs. We arrived in Rostov on time. About 800,000 live here of whom 20,000 are Jews. 22,000 more Jews were killed during the Hitler occupation. Five elders met us at the airport. One told us we were like angels to him and he crys for joy. The synagogue is a beautiful building which had been possessed by Germans and Russians as a factory. Later it was returned to the congregation who had it redone beautifully. There is a Beit Hashritah. The shochet serves also as Rabbi, a bearded Jew. People are not quite as sophisticated as those of the larger towns.

The secretary of the kehila told us that the income of the synagogue was 60,000 rubles annually, all voluntarily contributed. There is no membership - everything is voluntary. The government, through the local representative of the Ministry of Cults, (whom Rabbi Schleiffer made sure to visit) knows of all the budgetary activity of the congregation. The shochet, Rabbi Isaiah Aranovitch, also acts as the official Rabbi and we observed his slaughtering activity.

In the synagogue we saw the small bakery where individual families bring flour and matzos are baked. They charge 5 rubles per kilo. They indicated that from the proceeds of matzo baking they cover a good part of their annual budget.

They have an old sick scribe, who fixes tfilim and mezuzos but there is a critical shortage in kosher parchment. He asked us a religious question - whether it is permissible to use the margin of the Sefer Torah parchment for the writing of mezuzos. Tallisim are impossible to obtain. They are desperately short in sidurim. There is no such thing as Bar Mitzvah. The shochet is also a mohel but in addition to many other reasons the fact that he is a weak old man makes many Jews reluctant to circumcise their children. There is, however, no restriction from the government.

We visited the cemetery where we paused at the grave of Rabbi Sholom Ber Schneirson of Lubovitch who died in 1920, was buried in the old cemetery and in 1938 his remains were removed from the old cemetery to the new one. The government needed the grounds of the old cemetery for other purposes. The Rabbi's grave is surrounded by a strong wall covering an area of approximately 10 x 20 feet. The only other grave there is that of Shmuel Gurarich.

(Our guide in Rostov listens to the Voice of America and criticizes the government very openly.)

We were told that in 1950 the cantor was accused by the government of Zionism because of too much emphasis on the prayers that deal with the return to Zion. His entire situation was very clouded because some Jews claimed that he was arrested by the government for another reason. During the German occupation he was among the collaborators who identified Jews for the Nazis and persecuted them. From the moment of our arrival a Jew in the synagogue in Rostov was pointed out to us as a squealer and this man had formerly been the cantor of the congregation and had acted as a witness against the current cantor.

We visited a small town near Rostov called Novocherkask, which is known as the Cossak city. There are about 30 Jews there among 100,000 population. We found a pharmacist who was a Jew who claimed to be very happy under the present situation, but nevertheless would not yield his Jewish identity. He is head chemist with about 50 people working under him; is completely far from Judaism although he was a yeshivah student and quoted some Talmud. He told us he never steps into a synagogue but on Yom Kippur and yarzeit he recites kaddish in his own home. He pointed out that only in the USSR could a Jew be a chemist and an instructor at a local college, and this justifies his present happy situation. He hated Germans, saw them destroy Jews and he therefore considers Russia a great country because they fought the Germans. He was born in Minsk.

After we visited Novocherkask, Schlieffer said that in the days of the Czar no Jew could safely walk the streets of this city and now under this regime Jews have equal rights with others.

Hundreds of people were present on Friday night and Saturday morning and Saturday night in the Rostov synagogue. There is no president in the Rostov community but the secretary is Moshe Stolber, about 65, whose only son was killed in the war.

Notes: 13,000 kilos of flour were baked for matzos last year. There is no shofar; had no giddim with which to stitch parchment. If Sefer Torah tears at the stitchings it remains unstitched. They weave tzitzes here which are also woven in Tiflis and Kutaisi. We were told that there are many converts to Judaism in Rostov with their own synagogue, but we never could find it.

This congregation is different from the others we saw in that the leaders of the congregation exercised little restraint in keeping the people from us as was done in Moscow and Leningrad. This may be due to the fact that they have no strong leadership to exercise such restraint.

There were a lot of women and children in Rostov, about 18 boys between the ages of six and eight who sat at our feet on the bima. They played with my watch. Unfortunately, the children don't speak or understand Yiddish and neither do many of their parents. There are a few interesting Jews to mention - one, Mordecai Lifshitz who himself moved the remains of the Lubovitcher Rabbi into the new cemetery. Also Yosel Kovneh, a scholar, very sharp and caustic, close to 60 years of age and seemed to be acquainted with all the great Rabbis in America. His great tragedy was that he knew them all and could have been as great as they but he remained in Russia. He sells cigarettes from a stand. They told us there were only five sidurim in the shul and slightly more bibles. Some people said that they are not religious but they realize that the synagogue is now the last institution that can unite the Jews and they came to the synagogue for that reason. The American Jews must be the ones to supply them with their religious needs (they said). We emphasized very strongly the need for religious education for children. We saw there a young man from Tornapol who spoke Hebrew and complained that he was lost here (Russia). The Jews of Rostov all cry that they are in one great prison and constantly repeat "Leshana Habaa ---". We used this as a password. We would say "Leshana Habaa" and they would answer "Yerushalayim."

In Rostov at least 2,000 people came to Shalosh Seudot. Never in the history of Rostov did so many people come to synagogue. Schlieffer was visibly moved, never having seen so many people congregated in the synagogue. He cried like a baby. We couldn't figure out if he was genuine or putting on an act. They spoke about Israel in Rostov to the extent that they all asked what is doing in "our State." Wherever we went, they asked about "our State."

On the plane to Kutaisi we met four Georgian Jews, three men and one woman, who were deeply religious, spoke no Yiddish or Hebrew, but told us they were all kosher. When they saw Rabbi Hollander reading a Yiddish paper, one of the men went to the rear of the plane to get his hat. They joined us in saying "Baruch Hashem" when we got off the plane.

KUTAISI, Sunday, July 5th.

Several thousand men, women and children awaited us in the Kutaisi airport. Some waited over six hours for us. The reception was overwhelming, such as we have not yet experienced. The airport - we were crushed. They carried our things. A long caravan of cars honking through town brought us to the hotel. Three Rabbis (chachamim) and three shochatim met us. They told us that they had instructed their people not to be at the airport otherwise all of Kutaisi would have been there. They venerated us; kissed our hands. One man was assigned to take care of each of us. We were brought to a private home, just recently completed which belongs to the president of the Jewish community of Kutaisi - vast and of beautiful proportions, wonderful table, food. The owner works in a leather business - how he made his money, we learned that this we don't talk about. It was a most imposing home, from what we saw the most imposing in the city. When we hesitated in drinking the milk we were told that the milk was not gentile milk... A series of toasts followed each other. We were told that the house was to be dedicated at that time. Two young girls, about 20, toasted us in English, beginning with "dear comrades." The language of the Jews there is Georgian. They speak no Russian, Hebrew or Yiddish. The Chacham speaks Hebrew and he translated all our remarks into Georgian and their remarks into Hebrew and he spoke a beautiful Hebrew.

The Chacham is a most impressive personality. Chacham Haim, the elder one, studied in Palestine and is a regal looking man with a long white beard. He speaks French. There is also another Chacham whose name is Yaacov, who is a much younger man and whom we also loved - he is second in command. There are three synagogues, Chacham Haim in one, Chacham Yaacov in the other and Chacham Yaacov has a brother who is in the third. There is one shochet named Zalman Kagaotchiver, who is there for 48 years and another shochet is Eliamu Haim, a local boy whose brother is the president of the community.

There are about 20,000 Jews among a population of 100,000. We were visited by the Rabbi and a delegation from Kulashi who invited us to visit their city too. It was very hot and we were told that "Abraham also had very hot weather when the angels came.." Hundreds of people waited in the streets for us. We had to go out on the balcony to wave to them. Here we saw children and teenagers. There were riots outside as people tried to go into the house where we were. After lunch we hiked over dirt and muddy roads to the Jewish section to the three synagogues. These are beautifully kept buildings, well decorated and neat. It was interesting to note that in the front of these synagogues there was a double Arc, the whole width of the shul. Two synagogues are in one courtyard. Then we went up the street and across to the third synagogue which is the largest. Each synagogue was packed so that it was impossible to enter or leave. Special men were assigned to open up a path for us. They claim that these Jews are here since the First Temple. Very simple people, most devoted, kissed our hands on the way in and out. Mikveh is well kept. They assured us that 98% of the women attend the mikveh regularly. There is also a chafifah room and a turkish bath. Despite the time they are here, since the First Temple, their passport reads "Jew" not "Georgian."

They claim there is little intermarriage - perhaps one out of a thousand. There are three mohalim in town. No children are uncircumcised. Until Passover there were four shochatim but one died and now three remain. There are two kosher meat stores which sell only kosher meat at government prices. They had 10 etrogim for Succoth but could use a thousand. They have Bar Mitzvah services for children on week-days at which time they bring gifts and have a big party just like a wedding. They prepare straps for tfillim and parchment and giddim to send to Moscow. One of the shochatim gave Rabbi Schachter a pair of such tfillim straps to bring as a gift to Rabbi Samuel Levitin of Lubovitch. Some people say there are not enough sidurim; others say there are not too many but enough.

The synagogue is supported by income from aliyot. The budget for the three synagogues is 250,000 rubles. They claim their relationship with the goyim is good, perhaps because of antiquity of Jewish settlement there. The Jews claim that the Georgians have Jewish blood in them and vice versa. There were no pogroms there, even under the Czar. Stalin's only exception in his anti-semitic actions seems to have been in Georgia.

A delegation from Kulashi and Vanyi came to invite us to visit their towns. They brought with them tallisim and sidurim in order to spend the night.

There are 450 doctors in Kutaisi, 150 of which are Jews, many of whom came to see us. In 1950, the shochet, Zalman, was sent to jail for eight months accused of being a Zionist. Rabbi Kuptchan who succeeded Rabbi Samuel Levitin was sent away in 1937 together with the Chacham Michael, and never heard of since. The crime - Trotskyism.

A toast was made by the son of the Rabbi who was sent away as a Trotskyite. He rose and said with tears in his eyes that as a result of our coming he will become a penitent. Another man rose and spoke for young people who have been re-inspired to Jewish life. They recite the "Shma Yisroel" out loud so that Jews in America and all over the world should hear - and this means that they need help.

There is very strict religious supervision in the community. They will not circumcise a son born of a hugna. Both Chachamim consulted with us and asked us to consult with world Rabbinic leaders on the problem of whether to circumcise a child who was born of a mother whose first husband was declared as missing. They asked us to see that if a yeshiva is established in Russia, a branch should be in Kutaisi. We were told that both Chachamim have sat (been jailed) for saying the "Leshana Habaa."

On Monday, July 9th, there was a brith in the synagogue - most unhygienic. Chacham Yaacov was the mohel. The child was wrapped in clean rags. The shul was packed with hundreds of people who chanted with the service. These were young people who would normally be working - and hundreds of them. No sidurim in the synagogue, people just repeat by rote. Perhaps this is why they have system of joining in chant in order to learn the prayer by heart.

Personalities in Kutaisi. In 1920 the Lubovitcher Rabbi sent to Kutaisi Rabbi Samuel Levitin. Under the communist regime Rabbi Samuel established a yeshiva where approximately 500 students studied a full curriculum until 1928. Several outstanding students were sent by Reb Samuel to other Lubovitcher yeshivot. To this day a number of Chachamim speak a fluent Yiddish. The impact which Rabbi Shmuel made on all the communities throughout Georgia is incredible. He was compelled to leave at the end of 1928 but to this day his name is remembered with great reverence and his religious inspiration has motivated many of the religious leaders in Georgia. They all asked to be remembered to him.

The oldest Chacham is Haim. He studied in Jerusalem and was a class-mate of Rabbi Isaac Nissim, under Rabbi Uziel. This Rabbi Haim is a very devoted and inspiring religious leader who is deeply revered by all. His associate is Chacham Yaacov Dabar Shvili, who is a younger and more vigorous man who is also exceedingly pious and dedicated to God and to the service of his people. The oldest shochet is Reb Zalman Altschuler (Rogotchover) who has served as a shochet in Kutaisi for over 40 years, and was sent there by the Lubovitcher Rabbi. He has trained many younger shochatim. Reb Zalman suffered greatly because of his open identity as a hassid. He lost five children during the war. He still is a shochet and has a great positive influence on the native Jews.

The local shochatim include Eliahu Haim and Shabatai. The brother of Eliahu Haim is the president of the community. My impression of Eliahu Haim is that he is regarded as an apologist for the government. Another fine shochet is Shabatai, also a student of Lubovitch. The brother of Chacham Yaacov is Moshe Hakatan, who studied under Chefetz Haim, and another brother Gabriel, is a shochet in Surami. A third brother is in Israel.

From Kutaisi we drove in a large procession of automobiles to Kulashi. Literally the whole town came out to see us. All work was stopped. The assistant mayor of the town is a Jew, and either ordered or permitted all the Jews to jam the synagogues and the streets to welcome us. Here too we were given a reception in a private home and addressed a vast throng which jammed the synagogues. Dignitaries met us en route in cars covered with greens and flowers. The streets were packed with people who presented us with bouquets. All spoke about hope for peace. One of the officials of the city of Kutaisi, a non-Jew, came to Kulashi to be with us on this occasion.

After lunch we went to synagogue. This city, Rabbi Schlieffer said, outside of the fact that it lacks the holiness of the land of Israel, is just like Israel in every aspect.

The local Chacham has been out of jail for only five months. The acting Chacham of Kulashi was a communist and is now repentant but is still looked upon with suspicion by the other Jews.



Most of the men are off from work today in order to meet us. About 2,000 Jewish families in Kulashi out of 30,000 population. Shabat is strictly observed in this town. An indication of the religious fervor here is the fact that these 2,000 families built no less than 1200 succot for that festival.

When we questioned Chacham Yaacov as to why he heaps so much praise and adoration on Rabbi Schlieffer and whether he really considers Rabbi Schlieffer as the Chief Rabbi of all Russia, he answered that he does not trust Rabbi Schlieffer. He wants Rabbi Schlieffer to convey to the authorities in Moscow that the Jewish communities of Georgia are very loyal and patriotic. He looks upon Rabbi Schlieffer as the representative of the government. He insisted to us that if and when a yeshiva is established in Moscow, a branch must be opened in Georgia because he is afraid to trust Rabbi Schlieffer and the government in Moscow with the pious young men whom he could persuade to enter such a yeshiva. He said that there could be several hundred candidates for such a yeshiva in Georgia alone.

Interesting to note that noone here sends regards to America, probably because families were so comfortable that they never left. They express a desire to go to Israel only in a religious sense. They were not touched by either world war - no invasions here.

We went to Vanyi - 210 Jewish families; a synagogue built in 1911.

I sense fear here among Polish and western Jews of whom there are very few. They feel they are not part of the community. They are afraid, talk about getting out and the few non-native Jews who attempted to convey regards to relatives in America were swiftly hushed up by the local Jews. But there is still fear because when they lined up to say "Shalom", they emphasized that we should not say anything to hurt them. In the mad rush of official receptions and mass demonstrations, we really had no opportunity to talk privately and intimately to any individuals, with the exception of the Chachamim, who broke down and cried.

Chacham Yaacov told us that in the black year of 1953, all the synagogues in Kutaisi were closed - an unprecedented event in the entire history of Georgia. In Kulashi, however, the Jews literally guarded the entrance to the synagogue with their bodies against the Russian police who came to close the synagogue and therefore the synagogues in Kulashi remained open, whereas in Kutaisi the synagogues were closed. Yaacov was arrested. He too is under the influence of Lubovitch through Reb Shmuel. He had in his possession a number of hassidic volumes which he buried in his backyard when he heard rumors that he was to be arrested. About an hour after his arrest and his denial that he knew of such volumes, they were shown to him by the police. Obviously someone had informed. He suffered greatly because of his being influenced by Lubovitch.

Both Chachamim of Kutaisi spoke very frankly and openly, complaining bitterly of the hopelessness of their plight and emphatically said that the only future for all their people is that they be taken en masse to Israel.

The demonstration of hundreds of Jews who came to see us off at the airport was getting out of control and so we were told that the plane is six hours late and we were whisked back to town and then to a train for Tiflis. The final farewells at the railroad terminal were fantastic, especially the boys of 15, 16 and 17 who came on the train and kissed us passionately. The adults swarmed up to cry and kiss us. In Leningrad our farewell was European, but this was Oriental. They bought our tickets to Tiflis and when we protested, they said that when Joseph was sold by his brothers they may have taken money, but when they met him again and searched for him for years, there was no question of money. They sent along a man on the train to accompany us, to make the beds for us and to take care of all our needs and sent us huge bundles laden with food.

Tuesday morning, July 10th, we arrived in Tiflis. Thousands were waiting at the airport, but since our schedule had changed, noone was at the railroad. We went to the synagogue where about 2,000 people were inside. The synagogue in Tiflis is most magnificent. We were almost crushed by the people. There are two Rabbis here, Immanuel and Yisroel. Both acted as interpreters and they improved on what we said. Immanuel is completely sincere and genuine and Yisroel is suspect. (Yaacov told us that Chacham Yisroel, the younger Chacham, informed on the older Immanuel who was incarcerated). There are about one million people in Tiflisi, of which 5,000 are Russian Jews and 20,000 Georgian Jews. One large structure is used by two congregations and there is also one synagogue for the Ashkenazi Jews. The Ashkenazi synagogue is very poor in comparison with the Sephardic synagogues.

In the Georgian shul, in the morning there are about 150 worshippers in the large synagogue and about 80 or 85 attend services. About 1,000 seats in the large synagogue and on Saturday both synagogues are packed to capacity and there are no seats. This congregation has 250,000 rubles surplus and they contributed 10,000 rubles to Schlieffer's yeshiva. They surged at us "like the Jews in Buchenwald when freed."

The president of the community in Tiflis is Ephraim in whose home we had brunch. The Ashkenazic president brought Rabbi Kuptchan to see us in this home. Alas, Rabbi Kuptchan did not see us for he is blind as a result of his years of incarceration. Kuptchan is the only Rabbi - in our sense of the word - in all of Georgia. He is now about 80 years old. Rabbi Kuptchan is recognized as a great scholar, but he is a beaten and infirm old man.

We were taken on a tour of the city - Holy Mountain, funicular, ice cream parlor, shoe shines. We sat with three men who were Georgian Jews from Gori. They treated us to ice cream and showered us with affection, fell all over us. They had seen us in the synagogue. They told us their homes were kosher. To our surprise the roughest looking one bent under the table and picked up a soiled handbag and opened it. Inside were a pair of trousers, some food, and the tfillim bag. He kissed it reverently and said he never leaves his house without it. We were then encouraged to ask about tzitzis and one pulled out his tzitzis.

At every station we were loaded down with food - cake, fruit, all for the journey. Leaving Tiflisi we had two big hat boxes full.

Wednesday, July 11th, we arrived in Suchumi which is on the Black Sea almost opposite Istanbul. In 1953 the Georgian synagogues were closed for three months as a result of the "doctors plot." The Jews were terrified of Stalin. One of the alleged reasons why the synagogues in Georgia were closed was because it was claimed that a large amount of gold was found in the Arc of the synagogue in Tiflisi. Consequently, since the possession of gold was a violation of the law and because gold might be used for something counter-revolutionary, the synagogues were closed. All this was denied by the Rabbis.

We were met at the train as usual by a large percentage of the 200 Jewish families living in Suchumi. Here they had no butter or milk because not from Jewish-owned farms. The Chacham in Suchumi is Shlomo, also a disciple of Lubovitch who speaks Yiddish fluently. In addition to the Chacham, who is a wonderful, dedicated leader, we met several Lubovitcher hassidim with whom we talked at length. They are Reb Dovid Hakoton (Pabroiznitzer) and Reb Shmuel Vesinkovitzer. We also met Reb Leizer Nanes, an ardent Lubovitcher who was just released after 20 years in prison, a sick, broken man who pleaded for some means of emigration.

In Tiflisi we were told that the Jewish Historical Museum was under repair and unavailable for visits. We have been told and suspect that it was closed permanently.

We left Suchumi by plane. Odessa - 162 years old. There is a seminary here for Russian Orthodox Church students from 18 years up. We were told that there are seven such seminaries in Russia and two higher academies in Moscow and Leningrad. Here are two very fine large buildings on what appears to be a very large street. There are 120 students in this school. The Professor of Old Testament History, with whom we met, told us that registration has increased in the last years. He pointed out that one famous member of their Church is Dr. Filatov, a very well-known ophthalmologist, who is also very religious. Some younger students in groups up to five, are being educated by priests in some of the churches. They have their own printing press in Moscow to print books and church materials. They have no trouble with the government and print as much as they want through their patriarchate. The nuns in the monasteries make religious vestments for the priests.

The Rabbi here is named Dimont. We met Jews at the sanatoria in Odessa. Some are uncommunicative, some are afraid. Our guide's mother is Jewish, her father is Russian. Her identity card marks her as Russian. Many of her friends and relatives are Jews. She says most young people are irreligious.

The synagogue is at the end of town near the freight yards. At one corner of the street is an open-air cinema with blaring noises. On the other corner is heard the whistling of freight engines. This disturbs the services.

The Germans occupied Odessa for about three years and slaughtered thousands of Jews, 20 or 30 thousand at one time. The Jews that are here now were not here during the occupation. They came from other areas. It is interesting to note that we were told that the local gentiles helped massacre the Jews, while at the same time the government provided trains, buses, cars to take the Jews away to Central Asia. They were not only passively sympathetic, but gave the Jewish refugees food and money. When the trains came further east, the non-Jews met the refugees and fed them. The mass graves of the thousands of martyrs have been dug up and lost. Nowhere in Russia were there any markers or monuments or any form of memorial to the Jews who had been massacred by the Germans. The one exception was in the city of Rostov where, in the synagogue, a memorial sign had been put up.

The Odessa synagogue was taken over by the government and was used as a factory and in 1950 it was returned to the community. During the time that this synagogue was used as a factory, the Jews worshipped in a synagogue on Pushkin Street. Apparently it was too fine a location and it was taken away and the Jews were forced to come to this synagogue, which is decrepit and in a very bad neighborhood.

There are about 180,000 to 200,000 Jews in Odessa today. Before the revolution there were 66 synagogues for 300,000 Jews. Now there is one synagogue for the 180,000 Jews. During the occupation 100,000 Jews were evacuated. Of the other 200,000, less than 5 percent remained. Those that are here now are the evacuees and those gathered from different areas.

In the 1940s, several synagogues were turned over to churches. The present synagogue seats 500 men and about 500 women. No sidurim - machzorim are not even available. There are six official shochatim, of whom three are mohalim. The shul is so far from the center of town that it requires driving. There are some people who will not drive and consequently they cannot use the synagogue. There are about five to ten private minyonim. There seems to be criticism of the Rabbi as not being aggressive or devoted enough. (The Pushkin Street synagogue became a sports club.)

At this very time there is a representative of the Odessa community in Moscow to plead for the assignment of a better, more centrally located site for a new synagogue. The Rabbi, unfortunately, is not strong enough to make any requests, let alone demands, from the government. His name is Rabbi Diamant (Dimont), is about 75 years old and a rather complacent little fellow. In a discussion about the need for more adequate supplies of kosher meat, he contended that the Jews would not be interested any way, especially if the cost were slightly higher. We were generally unfavorably impressed with him.

This was the only city (Odessa) in our entire tour of all Eastern Europe where we did not speak publicly.

We were told that the cemetery has been desecrated and monuments overthrown. Fresh graves are dug in advance in preparation for the dead.



After only 24 hours in Odessa, we left on Friday afternoon, July 13th, for Kiev. We arrived there two hours later and with Shabat beginning rather late, we had enough time to look around town during the afternoon. We were met at the airport by Rabbi Panitz (84 years old) and the president, who made a very poor impression from the very start. We were informed immediately that the synagogue was a great distance from the hotel and that we would not, therefore, be able to attend the synagogue for the Sabbath eve service. We were rather disappointed by the cool reception and by the lack of really adequate arrangements for food and other requirements. We almost regretted having come to Kiev at all.

Immediately before Shabat some food was sent to our hotel room and we had our Sabbath eve meal together in Rabbi Schlieffer's room. We then went for a long walk. We made a point of speaking Yiddish audibly among ourselves and the figure of Rabbi Schlieffer flanked by us strolling through the streets, attracted much attention. As we noticed people who stopped and who were visibly Jewish, we greeted them with "Gut Shabess." Several immediately dropped the cigarettes from their hands and responded warmly to our greetings.

After a short while, we stopped in front of our hotel and began to engage individual Jews in conversation. Rabbi Schachter spoke to one Jew at length who readily complained that he was personally a victim of what he considered flagrant anti-semitism. He is a bookkeeper in a large factory and he insisted that were he not a Jew he would be occupying a much higher position. Rabbi Schachter asked this man to repeat his story in the presence of Rabbi Schlieffer. The latter queried the man as to his academic training and tried desperately to impress Rabbi Schachter with the fact that the lowly position of this particular man was due not to anti-semitism, but to his own inadequate training. This could be true, but we hardly believed it.

Rabbi Schlieffer then went into the hotel and all of us remained on the sidewalk for about three hours until almost 2 a.m. Individual groups gathered around each of us and many of these people who stopped to talk with us were not Jews. The Jews in the groups acted as our interpreters. This sidewalk session was most illuminating for it afforded us a real opportunity for talking intimately with Mr. Average Citizen in the city. Their interest in us was very keen and we were sharply impressed with their knowledge of the shadows of American life. They seemed to be exceedingly well-informed and were sharply critical of the United States. The propaganda which they are fed certainly strikes deep roots and molds their thinking most effectively. A few questions that were hurled at us: "Is it possible for you to assemble as freely and talk with foreigners on the streets of New York as we can here?" "Are there still demonstrations of unemployed on Union Square?" "What about the bread lines?" "What about the high cost of living which makes it impossible for an average unskilled laborer or farmer to meet the basic needs of life?" ... And, of course, the usual questions about McCarthyism, the millionaires' control of the press and the government:- "Is it not a fact that the law firm headed by Dulles represented the Nazi government in the United States before the war?" "What about re-arming the Wehrmacht and building up West Germany?"... And more about McCarthyism and the embarrassing problem of fingerprinting. Each of us tried, with a modest measure of success, to set them right.

When we questioned them in return about the freedom of the press and whether it is possible for Pravda to write an editorial criticising the government or any of its policies, they stoutly maintained that such criticism is unnecessary for once government policy is debated and determined in the highest echelons of the party and the government, it is perfect and leaves no room for criticism. When we asked about the perfection of Stalin and his policies, they dismissed that with a shrug that he made mistakes. We asked a number of young students who insisted that Stalin had made great contributions to Russia in spite of his mistakes,

whether they had ever heard of Leon Trotsky. "He was an enemy of our people." "Did he too not make contributions to the Russian revolution and why should he be considered more of an enemy than Stalin?" Evasion. This whole session was certainly most illuminating to us.

In the morning we set out accompanied by an elderly shochet for a two-hour walk to the synagogue. As we walked through the streets, many Jews recognized us as they were hurrying to work. We greeted them all with "Gut Shabess" and those who paused for a quick word told us how happy they were that we had come and in each case we expressed to them the hope that they may soon be able to observe Shabat properly. Without exception this hope was reverently and hopefully acknowledged. When we finally arrived at the synagogue in a most dilapidated part of the lower areas of the city, the street and the yard around the synagogue were filled to capacity with Jews awaiting our arrival. The synagogue itself was jammed. A fine cantor chanted the service and both Rabbis Schlieffer and Hollander preached to the congregation. This was Shabat Chazon and both Rabbis evoked tears and audible sobs. Kiev had suffered horribly during the war and we of course emphasized that world Jewry never became reconciled to the fact that the remnants of our people were to be cut off from us. Rabbi Hollander spoke of Jacob who was informed that his Joseph was devoured by a wild beast but that Jacob refused to be consoled for one does not accept consolation for the alleged loss of a loved one who is still alive. So too, did we never consider Russian Jewry lost in spite of the wild beast of Nazism which massacred our people.

After the service the people were visibly deeply moved and they reacted in their usual silent but obviously sincere gratitude. Again, the tragic lack of prayer books, sidurim and tallisim was very marked. From the synagogue we went to the Rabbi's home for dinner and this was a typical old-fashioned Russian home. The building was probably 100 years old with no sanitary facilities; only an outhouse in the yard. The dinner table was surrounded by a number of very interesting Jews, including the brother-in-law of Rabbi Zevin (a scholar and a maskil, over 80), a younger brother of Rabbi Panitz, who himself was a non-practicing Rabbi, hinted to us that the president was definitely an informer. Rabbi Zevin's brother-in-law also told us very clearly when we walked with him later that this president had informed on him saying that he listened to Kol Israel and as a result he was incarcerated for several months. Rabbi Zevin's brother-in-law also told us that his children had begged him not to come to the synagogue that day and not to talk with us. However, the joy of seeing us was so great that he could not withstand the temptation. With typical frustration, the Rabbi's brother told us how deeply he regrets having passed up an opportunity to come to the United States years ago. Several Rabbis related such deep regrets at having passed up opportunities to come to America.

The luncheon chatter was insignificant except for a few Divrai Torah by Rabbi Schlieffer and the host Rabbi, in which we all joined. After dinner we walked back to the shul for minchah and then a long uphill climb which lasted almost three hours back to the hotel. En route we again were stopped by several people with whom we chatted rather freely. One of the men with whom we talked as we climbed up a steep hill, told us that he was an ardent Zionist and that the only news about Israel which he gets is via the Rumanian Yiddish broadcasts which are filled with communist propaganda but which are obviously not jammed by the Soviet government. In each such broadcast several times a week, the Rumanian radio includes news from Israel. He also tries to catch the Kol Israel but the Yiddish language broadcasts from Israel are jammed. The Hebrew is not. (It is our urgent recommendation that Hebrew broadcasts from Israel be sent out in a slow Ashkenazic pronunciation.)

We rested that evening and in the morning drove through town where we saw the once famous Brodsky synagogue, which is now a puppet theatre. Another beautiful structure which was the synagogue of the Karaim, is now empty and closed.

We then drove out to Babiyar, probably the most gruesome spot in all of Russia. There is a huge two-mile ditch about five miles from the city line, where the Nazis slaughtered and buried approximately 160,000 Jews. The round-up and slaughter began on Yom Kippur of 1942. We drove over the street where the Jews were hurded together, told to bring and leave all their valuables and then march to the execution spot. There they were stripped, machine-gunned, and many were buried alive. There is absolutely no marker, sign or monument to indicate the sanctity of this hallowed ground where so many of our people were martyred. When we asked Rabbi Schlieffer why this should be so, he heaved a heavy sigh and said that he was working to correct this situation but that thus far the official response was that not only Jews were victims of the Nazis and that therefore no exclusively Jewish monuments should be erected. Our abhorrence for the vicious Nazi murderers was greatly increased and we could not help but wonder how our own American government could maintain any friendly contact with these murderers. We recited several prayers. Rabbi Schlieffer interpreted the prayer "Father of mercy avenge the blood of thine innocent servants. It is merciful to avenge the murder of the innocent and cruel to be merciful to the killers." Rabbi Schlieffer could not contain his tears and wept openly as we prayed at this site.

That afternoon we had a long conference again with Rabbi Schlieffer which was actually our last formal session with him. In this conference we covered again all the points that we had discussed at the outset. We asked him to give us a statement expressing his own personal views on the future of Judaism in Russia. We made it clear that we do not wish to misquote or misinterpret his views. He thought for a while and said that he does not have enough time to prepare such a statement. (We had the feeling that what he really meant was that he did not have enough time to clear such a statement with the authorities.) We covered the following points:-

1. The fact does remain that after our extensive tour we are convinced of the crying need for all types of religious articles. This situation must be remedied immediately. We repeated our offer to help and he repeated his conviction that the government will improve the situation.
2. We emphasized the obvious need for a central organization of all Rabbis, synagogues and communities. The lack of such organization is responsible for the fact that what little supplies there are locally available cannot be circulated; e.g., in Georgia there is parchment and ritzuot without a sofer. In other cities, there are sofrim but no parchment.
3. We repeated our request for a list of all recognized congregations and Rabbis. He promised to send us such a list and in passing mentioned several:- In Sverdlovsk, Rabbi Opperstein; in Zitomir, Rabbi Alpern; in Vilna, Rabbi Rabinowitz; in Kovna, Rabbi Workuld (?); and in Riga, Rabbi Masliansky.
4. The need for improving the relationship between the community and the Ministry of Cults in (a) more plentiful availability of kosher meat; (b) matzos; (c) etrogim; and (d) most important - the immediate publication of the sidur.
5. The need for continued and expanding contacts with world Jewry, to which he heartily agreed and promised to push.

We then discussed with him very frankly our dilemma as to what we should publish on our return. We felt that perhaps we should remain completely silent and issue only an innocuous statement. This position he strongly and emphatically vetoed. Silence would be tantamount to a condemnation which the government might "take out" on Russian Jews. He insisted that we should report what we saw "Kala kemo shehi," - use discretion, but report the situation honestly as you saw it, without too much editorial subjective interpretation.

That evening we returned to the synagogue and again it was jammed. Rabbi Hollander spoke and then we were shown the small slaughter house for fowl, an improved and modernized mikvah and we were told about the prospect of two kosher meat shops. We were also told that the congregation was offered a lot upon which to build a new synagogue but because they feel that in the present climate there is a good chance of getting back a former synagogue structure, they did not accept this offer. We were also told that they estimate that there are close to 100 private minyonim in Kiev. (We are inclined to doubt the figure.)

On Monday we bid our farewells. We were accompanied to the plane by Rabbi Schlieffer, Rabbi Panitz and the suspected president. The final farewells were pitiful. Rabbi Schlieffer again cried as he said his last goodbye to us. The eyes and the handclasps spoke volumes. The last words as we left Russia were "Do not forget us."

We left Kiev Monday morning, July 16th, stopped for a while at the Odessa airport and arrived in Bucharest that afternoon (erev Tisha Be'av). At the airport we were met by a very impressive crowd of about 100 leading Jews and government officials. Outstanding among them, of course, was the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Mozes Rosen. After the first greetings we were driven in huge limousines to a beautiful villa, the equivalent of the American Blair House, which was to be our official residence during our stay in Rumania. At the outset we want to emphasize that it is literally impossible to overstate the unusual VIP treatment and every conceivable luxury that was given us. The villa was staffed by seven people; the kitchen was completely kosherized and a special mashgiach (Joseph Appel from Arad). We sat down to a luxurious table laden with fine food and immediately plunged into conversations with the Chief Rabbi and with Mr. Bacal, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities, who is one of the most outstanding and articulate communist leaders in Rumania. The latter lost no time in telling us of the wonderful situation of Judaism in Rumania and of the abundance of religious supplies and facilities. We immediately asked, "Is this not contradictory to the whole communist philosophy of atheism and anti-religion? Surely the country from which we just came does not have this policy."

He answered that Rumanian communism has learned much from the mistakes of Soviet communism. Their policy is not to attempt to violently uproot religion. As long as there are people who seek religious expression, it is the duty of the government to provide every facility for the fulfillment of such expression. However, it is the communist conviction that ultimately the naturalistic philosophy of Marxism and Leninism will conquer the hearts and minds of the people. In the free and open competition of ideas, communism will triumph. -- We were immediately informed that there are Talmud Torahs in every community, a yeshiva in Arad and that every congregation and all Rabbis and every aspect of Jewish religious life is affiliated with and controlled by the efficient Federation of Jewish Communities, presided over by Bacal and staffed by trusted communists. In all of Rumania there are 30 Rabbis, including three non-orthodox.

There is now a need for at least another 30 Rabbis. There are 86 large kehilot and about 50 smaller ones. There are 31 members of the Board of Directors of this Federation who are appointed with the avowed approval of the government. When we pointedly asked Rabbi Rosen how one can be an official Rabbi and cooperate with a regime that is clearly atheistic, he replied that as long as the government permits him religious freedom and does not compel him in any way to act against his conscience, he sees no conflict. We were also assured that the government is vigorously opposed to any intimation of anti-semitism. Our attention was strongly drawn to the comparison with pre-communist Rumania when Jews were constantly exposed to terrible persecution and discrimination.



At this first dinner session Rabbi Rosen asked us to attend the Kinos service that evening at the temple, where there is an organ and a mixed choir. Rabbi Rosen told us that when Rabbi Efrati of Jerusalem was recently in Bucharest, he preached in the temple on Friday night, but that on that particular evening the organ and choir were not used. Rabbi Hollander led in expressing our determination not to worship in this temple, to which all of us agreed, - after some discussion among us. When the problem of the Friday evening service came up, Rabbi Hollander suggested that we call Rabbi Solavachik in Boston to ask his opinion as to whether it is permitted for us to speak in the temple on Friday night. Rabbi Rosen emphasized that this is very important since the temple has the largest seating capacity and many thousands of Jews want to hear and see us. We reached Rabbi Solavachik and he definitely said that not only is it permitted for us to speak in the temple, but that we should do so to bring the message to the people.

With all this, we, as a group, felt that it would be a great Kidush Hashem if we did not go to the temple but to hold the big service in the Malbin synagogue, which is a strictly traditional synagogue and also has a large seating capacity, though not as large as the temple. Rabbi Rosen finally, though reluctantly, agreed. (This decision on our part, plus the fact that we arrived in Bucharest with a nine-day growth on our cheeks, plus the little beards on our chins, won the confidence of all the truly pious Jews.)

That Monday evening we attended the Malbin shul for Kinos. The synagogue was packed but very few women and no young people present. That evening we walked with Rabbi Rosen and had a long talk with him as we strolled through the streets. He told us that he would not trust himself to talk with us in any room and that we should not talk among ourselves in our villa or even in the cars which were placed at our disposal, for they are surely wired. He impressed upon us the vital importance of our visit and related to us for the first time the frightful impression which the statement released by the other group in New York made in his government circles. He urged us to disassociate ourselves from the other group when we met with government officials. He told us all about the visit of Rabbi Wilhelm and admitted to us that Rabbi Wilhelm went overboard in his praise of the Rumanian government. While he expects us to acknowledge positively whatever good features we find in Rumanian Jewish life, we should be more reserved and point out the failings as well. From the outset we somehow felt that Rabbi Rosen was much more objective and open-hearted with us than was Rabbi Schlieffer.

In the morning we again attended the service at the Malbin shul where only about 40 or 50 old people were present. We then had a very pleasant session with Mr. Robert Thayer, the American Minister in Bucharest who affirmed the fact that his opinion is that all religious groups are treated alike and that the government is profiting from the mistakes of the Soviet's attitude toward religion.

After a visit to the cemetery we returned to the office of the Federation where we conferred with Bacal and the other Federation leaders. In spite of the fact that we were fasting, we felt no ill effects and conducted all these conferences with alertness. After Bacal outlined the structure of the Federation and the whole Jewish community, which we described briefly above, he told us that this Federation supplanted the previous one headed by one Filderman, a wealthy Jew who cooperated with anti-semitic regimes. In the old regime, nothing was done on a government level to help religious life. Now there were 6 functioning Talmud Torahs in Bucharest, with approximately 200 children in attendance. The small number of children is due to their own parent's apathy because in Transylvania, in communities with 2,000 people, there are as many children in Talmud Torahs as there are in Bucharest with 100,000 Jews. Rosen reported that as a result of Wilhelm's visit, 15,000 sidurim are being imported. Though the government was willing to provide facilities for publishing such sidurim in Rumania, they felt that it would be more efficient to import them from abroad.

Bacal and Rabbi Rosen complained that religious functionaries had left the country and their escape reflected on their loyalty to Judaism having left the people without adequate religious leadership. While in the Federation headquarters, we were shown samples of locally produced tallisim, Passover wine and matzos, luchot, etc. We were deeply impressed by what seemed to us to be a real concern on the part of the government and its appointed Federation to meet the religious needs of Jews by providing all the above, plus butcher shops, the excellent state of repair of synagogues, mikvaot, etc.

After having services and supper, Rabbis Hollander and Schachter spent a long session with Rabbi Portugal, the Skulaner Rebbe, who is a real tzadik and most highly revered by all elements of Rumanian Jewry. He was delighted to see us and complained bitterly of what he considered actually rishut on the part of the government. While he spoke highly of Rabbi Rosen's efforts on behalf of Jews, he carefully and cautiously indicated that the hope for Jewish survival under the present regime is indeed bleak. Much of the conference was devoted to his plea that we seek ways and means to intervene with the government on behalf of some 50 Jews, including one prominent Rabbi (Alpern), who are incarcerated for over two years because of admitted smuggling operations. Some time ago the government declared an amnesty under which three non-Jews who were in this group were released. The Jews, however, were taken out of that category of crime which was subject to the amnesty and placed under an entirely different category of political espionage, with which they certainly had nothing to do, and were thus not subject to the amnesty. This case agitates most Rumanian Jews and we promised to do what we could.

Wednesday morning, July 17th, we met with Constantinescu-Iasi, the Minister of Cults, who, incidentally, spent time in the same concentration camp with Roseh during the war. He is a very cultured gentleman, a former university Professor of History and an expert on America. After an exchange of warm amenities, we plunged into our discussion:-

1. Exchange of cultural and religious materials... With pleasure. He assured us that the respect of the Rumanian Constitution for all religious faith is basic and not a mere superficial formality, quoting Article No. 84 in their Constitution.

2. On the question of Hebrew language in publications and schools... No objection except that Yiddish is better known among the masses. (He himself understands Yiddish quite well, having been raised in the city of Yassi among Jews.) He parenthetically complained to us that the United States refused to grant him a visa some time ago when he wanted to visit our country.

3. We spoke at length about the need for making the observance of the Sabbath possible for religious Jews. He explained that the whole economy of the country is based on a six-day work week but that there are and could be cooperatives where Jews could arrange their own work day and week.

We spent almost three hours with him and came away with a pleasant impression of him. We were told by Rosen and Bacal, who were present at this conference, that he has a record of genuine concern for Jewish rights.

We then left on the private plane that was placed at our disposal by the Federation, and we flew to the town of Turgomuresh, in the Transylvanian region, which, before the first World War, belonged to Hungary and still retains a measure of Hungarian cultural autonomy. In Turgomuresh we visited a large synagogue and saw an impressive monument in the synagogue recording the fact that 5,943 Jews from this town were slaughtered in Auschwitz. There are about 1,000 Jews there in a total population of 100,000. 120 children in the Talmud Torah with 3 teachers.

We then drove in cars through the next town of Sas-regin where there are 100 (Jewish) families and Toplitsa where there are 50 families. In each community there is a synagogue, a Talmud Torah, a mikvah. We finally arrived at our first destination, the town of Borsek, which is a country resort nestled in the Carpathian mountains famous for its mineral waters. The Federation has established a special summer home for Rabbis and shochatim and their families where they spend summer vacations at a very nominal cost - actually as guests of the Federation. We were very joyously greeted by the Rabbis and their families and we were immediately impressed by the sight of real "Williamsburg" Hungarian Rabbis with long beards and peyot and especially by their children, little boys with long peyot. A fine banquet meal was served to all of us. We each spoke and then began a session of nigunim and rikudim which was most inspiring and ecstatic. After a few hours sleep we left Borsek with a warm feeling and drove for almost 10 hours through the most gorgeous natural scenery we had ever seen. The huge canyons through the Carpathian mountain ranges simply defy description.

We finally arrived in the city of Yassi at about 7 p.m. The mass of Jews that met us and crowded the streets around our hotel reminded us of Georgia in Russia. We chatted a while with the local Chief Rabbi, Israel Gutman. In addition to Rabbi Gutman, there are two other Rabbis, twelve shochatim, one mohel, a kosher butcher shop, sixty smaller chapels, two large synagogues, two Talmud Torahs, twenty Hebrew teachers, many of whom give private lessons to children who do not attend the two Talmud Torahs where there are 100 children enrolled. There is one Yiddish school and in many state schools Yiddish is taught as a language. Of a pre-war Jewish population in Yassi of over 50,000, the Rabbi told us that there are today approximately 7,000.

We immediately went to the cemetery where we saw mass graves of Jews murdered by the Nazis, a very impressive large monument to their memory, and the graves of famous Rabbis and tzadikim. From there we went to the City Hall where we were officially received by the municipal authorities and then to the old synagogue (600 years old), a very quaint and beautiful structure fraught with historic memories. The crowd was so vast that it was impossible for us to get into the synagogue. We were almost carried above the heads of the people and finally came to our places inside. After maariv and an introductory address by Rabbi Gutman, Rabbi Hollander and Schachter spoke. The reaction was electric. These are very emotional hearty Jews who had suffered much and for whom we represented a new ray of hope. This was the closest thing to Kutaisi. It is interesting to note that none of the foreign diplomats in Rumania have been permitted to visit this city. We are thus the first foreigners whom they have ever seen - certainly since the war.

From the synagogue we stopped for a brief visit to the Yiddish theatre, which is historically the first Yiddish theatre in the world, founded by Abraham Goldfaden, of whom a beautiful sculptured bust is displayed at the entrance to the theatre. Rabbi Schachter reacted to the director of the theatre over the fact that the first name of Goldfaden was written with the communist Yiddish spelling rather than the Hebrew traditional spelling. He merely replied that this phonetic spelling was easier to read.

We went back to the hotel where a huge banquet awaited us. Over 200 people were present, including many non-Jews, all professional, educational and religious leaders of the community. The restaurant in this hotel had been closed for two days, the kitchen kashered and a real old-fashioned Rumanian kosher meal was served to all on brand new utensils and dishes. We spoke very briefly and then entered into private discussions with the local Yiddishist communist leaders, in which we tried to convince them of the futility of building Jewish identity and survival on the tenuous basis of the Yiddish language alone.

After a very few hours sleep, we again took off on the private plane that waited for us at the airport, for the city of Arad. There we were met by the leaders of the community, including Rabbi Shimon Miller, a disciple

of Satmar, with the typical outer appearance of the Neolog Rabbi, Dr. Shlomo Schonfeld. We were immediately taken to the Yeshiva - the pride and glory of Rumanian Jewry. The yeshiva is housed in a recently acquired fine structure. We were informed surreptitiously that this building had been made available only a few days prior to our visit. It was completely remodeled and furnished only to impress us. The sights that met our eyes warmed our hearts. Here at last was a real East European yeshiva with young men pouring over the Talmud and the Bible. There are a total of 37 students in the yeshiva with several more to be admitted next term. The teachers, interestingly enough, are young and clean-shaven, while many of the students wear long peyot and the older boys sprout beards. We spoke to the students and then at an elaborate luncheon in the large beautiful dining hall where we again addressed a gathering, sang, and danced together. We also visited the huge main synagogue, the Neolog synagogue, the very large Talmud Torah, mikvah, etc.

We had to rush back to the plane and back to Bucharest for Shabat. Before Shabat we visited the home of the American Minister, Thayer, where an appointment had been set up previously for us to meet Margolit of the Israeli Embassy. Mr. Thayer was exceedingly understanding and cooperative. To avoid any suspicion, he invited not only Margolit and his wife, but also the Ministers of Britain, Belgium, Finland and France. After brief amenities, Rabbi Schachter had a long and significant conversation privately with Margolit.

Then to the Malbim Shul. This was our major public appearance. The synagogue again was bursting with people, approximately 2,000 jammed the synagogue and the courtyards. Rabbi Edelman chanted the service and the rest of us preached to the congregation. In addition, both Rabbi Rosen and Mr. Bacal (in Rumanian) spoke. It is interesting to note that after clearance with Rabbi Rosen, Rabbi Schachter delivered the opening part of his address in Hebrew. The reaction to all our addresses was most gratifying. Many came forward and told Rabbi Schachter in a fluent Hebrew and with tears in their eyes that this was the first time in 15 years that Hebrew was spoken publicly. Rabbi Hollander, also, after clearance with Rosen, told the congregation that we bring greetings not only from American Jewry but from Israeli Jewry as well. Rabbi Schachter formally presented a tallis to Rabbi Rosen and a Torah cover to Mr. Bacal.

After the service, dinner at Rabbi Rosen's home, then to hotel. Shabat morning we prayed in a small synagogue. During the service Rabbi Hollander spoke and Rabbi Schachter had the large Kiddush following. In the afternoon we all visited the Skulaner Rebbe and he again pleaded with us to take up the fate of those imprisoned. After minchah, Shalosh Seudot and maariv in the little synagogue founded by Rabbi Rosen's father, we went to the Federation headquarters where a large Melave Malka was arranged in our honor. This was perhaps the outstanding event in our whole trip. About 300 leading Jews from all parts of Rumania, several Rabbis wearing shtreimlich, filled this large hall to capacity around bedecked tables. We came at about 11 p.m. and did not leave until 6 a.m. The spirit, the warmth, the ecstasy of the gathering was exhilarating. The local Rabbis and all of us spoke. The Skulaner Rebbe was present and spoke. We sang and danced all through the night - a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Sunday we visited several additional institutions in Bucharest and Monday morning we again took off in the plane for quick visits to Oradea (Gros Verdein) and Satumare. We flew back to Bucharest where a press conference awaited us. We had insisted that the questions that the press would ask us be given to us in advance. This was promised to us, but actually we were handed the list of questions at the very last moment when all the representatives of the Rumanian press and radio were already assembled and waiting for us. We approached this press conference with the feeling that this is the "pay-off" - that we were now to pay for all the courtesies and luxuries lavished upon us. The ghost of Rabbi Wilhelm haunted us. However, God was good to us and we believe that we handled the press as well as could be expected. The following are the questions put to us and our answers:-

PRESS CONFERENCE IN BUCHAREST

1. What institutions of the Jewish faith did you visit and what can you inform us regarding these institutions?

ANSWER: We visited many communities in Rumania and observed the synagogues, the Talmud Torahs, yeshiva in Arad, mikvaot, the headquarters of the Federation - and we were delighted to find that all of these institutions which are basic to Jewish religious life, are adequate for the needs of the Jewish communities and are in a good state of repair.

2. What impressed you most during your visit to our country?

ANSWER: We were most impressed generally by the unwavering faith of our people despite the terrible blows of Hitler and the fascist governments of Rumania. Our people have obviously retained their loyalty to God and their kinship with Jews the world over. Specifically, we were most impressed with the yeshiva in Arad which we feel is the strongest guarantee for Jewish religious survival in Rumania.

3. In your contact with the servants of the Jewish faith and with the believers of our country what problems arise which preoccupies them most?

ANSWER: Jews share the same common problems which face all the citizens of Rumania. They share with their fellow citizens a deep sense of loyalty and gratitude to the present regime for the opportunities given them to observe their faith. There are, however, certain aspects of the Jewish religion and of the Jewish people which are unique, different, from other faiths and therefore Jews do face certain unique problems which agitate them perhaps more than others: (a) The extreme urgency for facilities to observe the traditional Jewish Sabbath. (b) The need for more and better facilities for elementary Jewish education. We were happy to find what we found, but the physical facilities and the number of facilities, we feel, are inadequate. The yeshiva in Arad, with which we were most pleased, should be enlarged and expanded. Perhaps another such school should be established in another part of this country. (c) Jews feel very strongly a sense of affinity and kinship with their co-religionists in different parts of the world. They yearn for the opportunity to freely communicate with their people everywhere and to exchange religious and cultural materials for the enhancement of their own religious lives. (d) One of the most serious problems which agitate the hearts and minds of Rumanian Jews is the fact that many are cut off from the immediate members of their own families who have recently emigrated to Israel. The reunification of these families is of paramount concern to local Jewry.

4. Did you have the possibility to convince yourself of the manner in which the Jewish population of our country lives, from the religious, cultural and economic point of view?

ANSWER: At the outset we wish to eliminate the economic aspect of this question. We are no experts in economics and did not come to study economic problems. We feel, however, that by and large, Jews do enjoy the same economic opportunities as do others. Religiously - we have found freedom of religion. We were impressed with the number and condition of the synagogues, the manufacture of tallisim, matzos, wine, the availability of kosher food, the prominence of memorials to Jewish martyrs and many other institutions and facilities which indicate the freedom and opportunity for religious observances. Culturally - we were impressed with the Yiddish theatres in Yassi and Bucharest and with the fine library of Hebrew and Yiddish volumes in Bucharest. However, in view of these liberal policies towards Jewish religious and cultural institutions, we were surprised to find that there is no Hebrew or Yiddish press; that there are no Hebrew books in any of the state public libraries; and that, as we noted above, there are no facilities for the observance of the Sabbath, and the inadequate facilities for an elementary religious education.

5. Do you have any knowledge of certain declarations made to the United Press Agency by the delegation of American Rabbis who visited the Soviet Union and what is your opinion regarding the view of these rabbis with regard to the situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union and the countries of popular democracies.

ANSWER: We are unaware of any declarations made by other American Rabbinic groups and in any event, we certainly bear no responsibility for anything said by any other American rabbis. We represent the Rabbinical Council of America and are the spokesmen for the rabbis and congregations affiliated with our national organization. We completely disassociate ourselves from whatever statements made by any other individuals or groups.

6. Do the Jews of the United States know of the sufferings of the Jews in our country during the legionnaire regime and of the crimes committed by the representatives of that regime against the Jews?

ANSWER: We are aware of the sufferings which our people endured in this country under prior regimes and we are happy to note the vast change in that any expressions of anti-semitism are outlawed by the present government.

7. What attitude did the Jews of the USA take regarding the fact that some of the principal authors of these crimes are sheltered in some states of the Occident and the United States?

ANSWER: American Jews together with liberals in America of all faiths have protested vigorously against offering asylum in our country, or in any country, to nazis and fascists who have perpetrated so many vicious crimes against innocent people.

8. Do you know the case of the legionnaire Viorel Trifa, who unleashed the massacres in January 1941, when 120 Jews were killed and who is now Bishop of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the USA, under the name of Valarian?

ANSWER: We do not personally know this man but surely we look with contempt upon any person and surely upon any clergyman who will hide his horrible crimes behind the sanctity of the church. In any event, this man surely does not play any significant role in America and is completely unknown.

9. Do you know the manner in which the clergy and the Jewish population of our country participates in the fight for peace and against the rearming of the Wehrmacht?

ANSWER: We are impressed with the sincerity of the earnest desire for peace. We hope and pray that you are engaged in the struggle for peace with the same earnest determination that characterizes the struggle for peace of the American government and people. Surely the Jewish people the world over are most deeply concerned with the urgent necessity for world peace.

10. If the Jewish clergy and the Jews of the USA regard with the same anxiety the problem of the rearming of the Wehrmacht and the manner in which they contribute to the safeguarding of peace in the world.

ANSWER: The problem of rearmament of Germany is beyond the area of our competence to discuss. We are religious leaders and not international statesmen. This is a problem that is being studied on the highest echelons of international diplomacy and one upon which we cannot competently comment. We do want to make it clear that we, of course, as Jews and as humanitarians, view with utmost abhorrence the horrible atrocities of the German people.

11. Did you know the life of the Jews of our country before August 23rd, 1944, and in what manner it differs from the life of the Jews of our country in comparison to the past.

ANSWER: We are aware of the changes in the life of Jews and all citizens since the establishment of the current regime and we are particularly happy to note that the official policy of this government is opposed to any prejudicial acts against Jews. At this point, we also wish to express our gratification over the fact that all Rumanian Jews who had been imprisoned for their loyalty to Zion, have been released.

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The following is the official government press release which was issued after our conference:-

Press Conference with the Members of the Delegation  
of the USA Council of Rabbis

ROMINIA LIBERA, July 28, 1956

On Monday afternoon a press conference with the members of the delegation of the USA Council of Rabbis who visited our country took place in the Capital.

The press conference was opened by I. Bacalu, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities (Mozaic) in the RPR.

Before replying to the questions put by the representatives of the press, David B. Hollander, President of the Council of Rabbis, leader of the delegation, made a short statement giving thanks for the special hospitality enjoyed by the delegation in our country on the part of the government, of the Federation of Jewish Communities and of the Chief Rabbi of the Mozaic religion, Dr. Mozes Rozen.

"Our delegation," Chief Rabbi Hollander said, "represents the Council of Rabbis in America, an organization which includes about 700 Rabbis of the Orthodox communities in the USA and Canada."

"Both the government and the Federation of Jewish Communities gave us opportunities of visiting several Jewish institutions in Rumania, namely, synagogues, religious schools for children, ritual baths, institutions where various religious objects are manufactured, the library of the Federation of Jewish Communities, and the Jewish State theatres in Bucharest and Iasi."

"It has given us pleasure to see the children who attend the schools of the Mozaic religion. The synagogues are attended by the faithful and are well cared for. The delegation was particularly impressed by its visit to the Jewish theological school at Arad."

In connection with the living conditions and the rights enjoyed in the RPR by the Jewish minority, Rabbi Hershel Schachter of the Moshulu Jewish Centre of Bronx, said among other things, "I have noticed that the Jewish population in Rumania is naturally faced with the same problem as the other citizens who live in this country. The Jewish population is just as loyal, grateful and devoted to the government for the possibility of attending religious services. Nevertheless there are some specific aspects of the Mozaic religion and of the Jews. They are different from other religious creeds or from other groups of men, and therefore the Jews have here, as in the other countries of the world, some problems specific to them." Mr. Hershel Schachter said that, in his opinion, these specific problems included the establishment of a working programme giving the faithful the possibility of keeping Saturday as a holiday.

(cont.)

(Press Conference Release cont.)

On the problem of cultural and religious exchanges, Rabbi Schachter said, "In this respect I wish to show that it is in the interest of world peace and of universal culture that the Jewish population like all the other peoples should maintain close religious and cultural relations."

"I think it is our duty to inform you that among the problems we discussed with the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Al. Birladeanu, we mentioned this problem of the religious and cultural relations between the Jews in various countries, and that he explained that the government had no objection at all against the exchange of religious and cultural ideas, and of publications."

In conclusion the speaker said, "We know and are deeply impressed by the stress laid on the importance and necessity of peace. We hope and pray that the wish for peace - the sincere wish of your people - may stand at the side of the wish for peace of our people in the United States."

The following question was put to the members of the delegation: What is the attitude of the Jews in the USA towards the fact that some of the chief authors of the crimes committed against the Jews under the Iron Guard regime have found shelter in some Western states and in the USA?

In his reply, Rabbi Schachter said that such men, if there were any in the United States, had no influence at all, in his opinion over the life of the country.

The American Rabbis were asked if they were aware of the case of the Iron Guard Viorel Trifa who unleashed in 1941 massacres where 120 Jews were killed and who is a Bishop of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the USA, bearing the name of Valerian.

Rabbi Adelman said that he did not know this name, but on principle he condemned such situations.

Referring to the fight for peace carried on by the Jewish clergy and faithful in the USA, Rabbi Schachter said, "We consider that the revival of the Wehrmacht has serious international repercussions. We wish to emphasize, however, that we are religious leaders and not international politicians."

Rabbi Gilbert Klaperman of the Beth Sholom congregation in Lawrence, Long Island, said among other things, "I am happy to be able to say, in my own name and in that of my colleagues, that everywhere in Rumania we found great religious liberty. We saw many synagogues of which there are enough to serve the respective communities. I have found that these synagogues are in good condition, and moreover that there is freedom as regards ritual slaughter. We have found that the cemeteries and monuments erected in memory of the Jewish martyrs are maintained in good condition. We have also found that facilities are provided for ensuring the conditions necessary for the religious education of Jewish youth. The schools are served by very well qualified educational personnel."

Rabbi Samuel Adelman of the Adath Ieshurun congregation of Newport, Virginia, said that he knew the lives led by the Rumanian Jews prior to 23rd August 1944, the persecutions and the inhuman regime imposed by the Fascist reactionary governments. "The short but intense study I was able to make in your country," Rabbi Samuel Adelman said among other things, "allows us to know that today the present regime condemns racialism and anti-Semitism, which moreover are punished by the present laws of your country."

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We had to interrupt the press conference to keep the appointment that was made for us with the Vice President of the Council of Ministers, Alexander Birladeanu. This conference, held at the Federal Government Headquarters in the office of the Vice President, was most impressive and significant. In addition to the Vice President and the four of us, there were present Rabbi Rosen, who acted as our interpreter, Mr. Bacal, and the Minister of Cults. The substance of our conference, which lasted three hours, is as follows:-

The Vice President assured us that he and his government are delighted with our visit. He **knows** that we learned a lot and he hopes that our visit will now become productive of better relations between the United States and Rumania and between the Jewish communities all over the world. All he wants is that we speak the truth as we found it; those who accompanied us did not cover up or disguise any aspect of Rumanian Jewish life and he hopes that we will convey our impressions precisely and fully. If we stand by what we said while in this country, he considers our visit a huge success. He maintained that there was no need for him to go into the details of Jewish life in Rumania prior to the communist regime. Suffice it to say that there is a vast difference in the civil status and the physical security of Jews as a result of the triumph of the working class. He emphasized that there are rigid government penalties for any expressions of anti-semitism. Several aspects of the problems which we raised, he felt involved broad international problems which could not be fully covered at that session. The following are the Vice-President's statements on each of the points which we raised:

1. Exra. We are proud that we created the possibility for every Rumanian citizen to earn his livelihood. We recognized the fact that Jews suffered more than others in the course of the last war, that there is a higher proportion of widows and orphans among Jews. Therefore, the government and the Jewish Federation make additional grants to such war victims. Outside aid would be welcome except that it must be done on an individual basis. Any individual private person may send financial aid to any individual in Rumania, only through the official state bank and such aid will be turned over to the recipient. In so far as organized community aid on the part of world Jewry to Rumanian Jewry - he feels that this is a very difficult problem which he will however take up with the authorities.
2. Shabat. Tell us how we can do it - how is it done in the USA? I don't see any reason why an individual Jew cannot arrange to observe Shabat on his own with the local town or factory authorities. However, since we raise this question, he will study it and discuss it further. He emphasized that there is certainly no legal deterrent to the observance of Shabat. He spoke at length of the fact that religious freedom in Rumania does not mean that the government does not hinder religion, but that it is committed to help religious life.
3. Religious and cultural exchange. We certainly have no objection at all. Jewish community in Rumania is well organized in the Federation. Any exchange of religious and cultural materials must therefore be done through the channels of Federation. The only condition would be that none of this material contained any anti-government propaganda. There is certainly no objection on the part of the government to correspondence of Rumanian citizens with families and others abroad. Old contacts that were lost can be renewed through the offices of the Rabbinate and the Federation.
4. Physical facilities for elementary religious education. We admit that they are inadequate. Our country has a general acute shortage of buildings. We are short of space for state schools and we need new structures.
5. Ichud Mishpachot. He emphasized the fact that there was a time when Jews were permitted to emigrate freely from Rumania to Israel, indicating that their number from 1949 to 1952 approached 150,000. He maintained that Jews are permitted to go to Israel on the basis of close family ties and if they are helpless here and could prove that they would be better off there.

(He was clearly weak on this point.) He promised that he will take the matter up further. We emphasized in this connection that we are exceedingly grateful for the release of all Zionist prisoners.

6. Contact with world Jewry. No objection provided such contact is purely religious and cultural and not political.

7. On the subject of the Jews who are incarcerated because of their infraction of the law, he told us that he is not aware of the details but will study the matter and inform us of the government decision. He made clear the fact that this problem will be carefully studied by the government and given every consideration, not because they fear any accusation of anti-semitism, but purely on a humanitarian basis.

In conclusion he expressed the desire to speak to us as man to man as citizens of Rumania to citizens of the USA. He emphasized repeatedly "We have no enmity or any ill feeling against any country in the world and surely not against the USA. Please convey our earnest and genuine wish for peace to all the people of the USA."

After partaking of the lavish delicacies served us, we left to return to the press conference in our villa. Parenthetically, we would like to mention that we interrupted the conference at one point and explained that we must take time out for minchah. The Vice President very reverently ushered us into a private room where we recited our prayers and then returned to the conference. We concluded the press conference and then went to a farewell dinner at the home of Rabbi Rosen where again a number of leaders from various walks of life were present. The dinner lasted until one a.m. Rabbi Rosen returned with us to our villa where we conferred until six a.m. and then packed and got ready to leave. Mr. Thayer called for us in his private car and insisted on having the honor of driving us to the airport. At the airport a large number of Jews were present including all the local Rabbis. The plane was delayed and while we were chatting with the local Jews, they pointed out to us four young men who were mingling among the crowds around us who were government spies. We finally boarded the plane, leaving Rumania with a remarkably up-lifted spirit on the one hand, and yet still bewildered by the enigmatic personalities of Rosen and Bacal and the impossible and yet real situation<sup>78P</sup> a communist government weaving tallisim, packing matzos and building mikvaot.

#### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

We left Tuesday morning, July 24th, stopped for a while at the Budapest airport but could not get into the city and then flew on to Prague where we arrived that afternoon. We were met at the airport by Dr. Iltis, the head of the Jewish Community and Rabbi Emil Davidovitch, one of the junior Rabbis, and several other people. We were driven directly to the "Jewish City Hall," the famous old headquarters of the Jewish community. There we were served lunch in a private room. There is a kosher restaurant in that building where some 40 people eat every day. This restaurant, incidentally, is completely subsidized by the government which pays the salary of the cook and the mashgiach.

At lunch we were joined by Chief Rabbi Gustav Sicher, a very fine distinguished and wise gentleman, with a pleasant sense of humor. He is a man in his 70s who, while not a traditional Rav and hence does not pasken shailos nor arrange gittin, is yet personally a very observant Jew. He studied in several seminaries and interestingly enough, spent the war years in Israel and came back to Prague because he felt a genuine need to minister to the remnants of his people.

After lunch we checked into Hotel Esplanade, then a short sight-seeing tour through the city which is most picturesque and then to the famed Alt-neue Shul, which is situated adjacent to the kehila house. The exterior of this famed synagogue is not very impressive but as we entered through the heavy portals, we felt that we plunged back 500 years of history. The interior of the synagogue is of typical church-like architecture and has

many interesting features. We were told that during the war this synagogue was surrounded with dynamite by the Germans who had determined to blow it up, but goyim removed the dynamite before it exploded because of a legend among them that the city of Prague will stand as long as this synagogue will stand.

In the morning - services, breakfast in the kehila house, and then a tour, the old cemetery where we saw the grave and monument of the famed Maharal and many other old historic graves. The oldest monument we saw was dated 1439. We then went to the museum maintained by the government and housed in three former synagogue buildings and the former Chevra Kadisha building. Every type of synagogue object is displayed very beautifully. We also visited the Jerusalem Synagogue which has only a small minyon on Shabat in the chapel and where only on the High Holidays do they use the main synagogue. After lunch, we drove to the infamous Terezienstat, which was used as a concentration camp during the war and saw the four huge ovens of the crematoria, urns with human ashes and all the other torture instruments. Part of the place was used as the ghetto and one area was set aside as the death camp. In all 160,000 Jews passed through here; 36,000 died here; 90,000 were sent to Auschwitz, 30,000 were alive at the time of liberation. On the way back we stopped at another cemetery where we saw the grave of Rabbi Eziakiel Landau and other famous luminaries.

We then had a conference with Rabbi Sicher at his home. In all of Prague where there are approximately 5,000 Jews today, only 40 children obtain any Jewish education and that only one hour a week, following the pattern of the "release time" program. In former years, Rabbi Sicher told us, the Chief Rabbi served only in an advisory capacity. Now he is the major factor in the life of the Jewish community and the sole authority in all ritual matters. Nothing can be done without the consent of the Chief Rabbi. The government pays the salaries of all Rabbis, teachers, shochatim, mashgiachim, and there is an adequate supply of kashras, matzos and mikvaot. There never was any prohibition against shritch but for a few weeks in 1953 at the time of the Slansky trials, there was no kosher meat. As a matter of fact, since the Slansky affair, Jews are not too prominent in the government. He told us that while Slansky was certainly far from positive Jewish life, he was yet a decent person and helped the state of Israel materially. His motive probably was not only humanitarian but the conviction that Israel would become a communist state.

There are four Rabbis in Prague; in addition to Sicher and Davidovitch, Farkash and Feder. There are two other Rabbis, Katz in Bratislava and Steiger in Slovakia. The Chief Rabbi receives 2,000 kronen monthly (a chauffeur earns 1,300). The official rate of exchange is 7.10 per dollar. On the black market, it is 20.25 per dollar. All cemeteries belong to the state but Sicher insisted that the law specifically excludes Jewish cemeteries for fear that they will ultimately be destroyed. The state therefore gives some support to the maintenance of the historic cemeteries but not enough. He is terribly worried about the future of these important historic sites. On the question of Ezra, Sicher told us that in September, 1955, Dr. Hyman of Secouras was here but the Jewish community was told not to expect any aid. They probably will not permit it even now since it is an insult to the government to receive outside aid and furthermore because JDA, Secouras and Zionism are all espionage.

Very few were recently permitted to reunite with their families in Israel: parents to children more than vice versa. From 1948 to 1951, 30,000 Jews emigrated from Czechoslovakia to Israel.

In all Prague there are two or three Jewish weddings a year, even less in the provinces. Marriages must first be held civilly and only then after the civil ceremony can a couple voluntarily have a religious ceremony. But Czech Jews generally are not so religious. Hitler made them a little more aware of their religious identity.

It is interesting that an attractive and informative annual yearbook or almanac is published together with a religious luach each year.

Rabbi Sicher's contacts with the local Israeli officials are surprisingly open. We spoke on the telephone from Sicher's home to the local Israeli Legation. However, the government attitude towards Israel is quite rigid. The problem of Shabat is very difficult. It is interesting that even goyim find it difficult because Sunday is not an official day of rest. Yomim Moraim can be observed by exchanging them for other work days. Generally, we have the impression that there is hardly any "mesirat nefesh" on the part of the local Jews. Sicher is a wise and courageous leader but our humble opinion is that he does not seem to push for more effective Jewish life, especially in the field of education, which is here not outlawed.

From Sicher's home, back to the synagogue, dinner, hotel. Early the following morning, Thursday, July 26th, we left by plane from Prague to Bratislava. There we were met by Rabbi Shlomo Katz, a young, vigorous, traditional Rabbi, and several local leaders. We drove to Rabbi Katz' home, chatted with him for a while. He is a real lamdan and a capable person. There are in Bratislava about 2,000 Jews, but everything looks hopeless and forlorn. He is waging a courageous battle for survival. In Bratislava we visited a kosher moshav zekainim maintained by the government. We were told that there are several more in the country. Also visited the synagogue and the cemetery. The old historic cemetery is completely destroyed. Some of the remains were reburied in another cemetery. A little section of the cemetery where the Chatam Sofer and his family and disciples are buried, was left but a road was built over it and a heavy steel door was placed in a little green triangle in the middle of the road. The heavy door was opened for us. We descended a few steps and there are the remains of these sacred graves. There is nothing left of any of the famous institutions that flourished in the once glorious Jewish community of Pressbourg.

We then hired two cars to take us to the Czech-Austrian border on our way to Vienna, having telephoned ahead to the Israel Consulate in Vienna which sent a car to bring us from the border into the city of Vienna. We arrived in Vienna Thursday afternoon, July 26th and remained there until Monday afternoon, July 30th.

We then flew to Warsaw, arriving there that Monday early evening, July 30th. We were met at the airport by several Jews, leaders of the religious Vaad Hakilot and of the Communist Central Committee. We were driven to the kehila building (Twarda, 6), prayed maariv in the only remaining synagogue in all of Warsaw, the Nozhik Shul, in the same court of the kehila building; had dinner in the kehila building restaurant with Rabbi Dov Perzovitz, an old, tired little man, the only Rabbi in Warsaw; Rabbi Zeev Moreinu, who is a young vigorous brilliant Rabbi of Lodz; Mr. Isaac Frankel, the head of the Lodz kehila and Dr. Alexander Libo, the president of the Vaad Hakilot, plus several others.

We spent the rest of the evening there and were immediately impressed with the fact that there seemed to be absolutely no restraint on the part of these Polish Jews to speak freely about their devotion to Israel. The following morning, July 31, we drove from Warsaw through several small towns to Lublin and the death camp of Maideneck, where hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered. In the city of Lublin there are about 200 Jewish souls, never a minyon except on High Holy Days. We paused in front of the magnificent structure of Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin, built by Rabbi Meir Shapiro, which is now a catholic university. We visited the old cemetery in Lublin where we saw the monument of the famed Chozeh of Lublin and others.

We drove back to Warsaw and then off to Lodz where about 50 Jews waited for us in the local kehila building and restaurant. We spent the afternoon there and then to the Grand Hotel.

Early next morning, Wednesday, August 1st, after prayer in the only remaining synagogue in Lodz, we visited the kosher butcher shop and the mikvah and the famous Lodz cemetery. There are approximately 8 to 10 thousand Jews in Lodz of a pre-war population of 350,000. Only 40 children in the Talmud Torah.

We then drove from Lodz to Auschwitz. We stopped en route in the town of Radomsk and stopped at the cemetery there. We arrived at Auschwitz early afternoon and spent three hours going through the smaller horror camp of Birkenau and the adjacent Auschwitz, which have been preserved as museums with many graphic displays of all the misery and tragedy, with many impressive monuments in tribute to the millions of martyrs who perished here. From Auschwitz we then drove to Krakow. Here we visited first the old cemetery where we saw the grave of the Remo and many other immortals. We then visited the synagogue of the Remo which is reputed to be 415 years old. In Krakow we also visited the Temple (Dr. Joshua Thom was its famous Rabbi). It is now a bare structure but still used as a synagogue.

We spent the rest of the night at a reception with a number of local Jewish leaders and then retired to the hotel for three hours' sleep. (In Krakow there are about 3,000 Jews and to our knowledge the only city in Poland where there is a daily morning minyon.)

We returned early the following morning to Warsaw where we spent some time sight-seeing. We saw the famous monument at the site of the Warsaw Ghetto. The ghetto has been cleared of most of its rubble and much of the old ghetto area has been rebuilt. We visited the Jewish Historical Institute and conferred with Professor Berl Mark. This institute is housed in the former synagogue house of the famous Tlomacker Synagogue. It contains great literary treasures, thousands of manuscripts, historic archives and very vivid displays of the destruction of Polish Jewry.

From there we drove to the American Legation where we met with, among others, the Israel representative. Then to a formal reception given in our honor by the Central Culture Communist (communist Jews). There we were greeted by Hersh Smoliar, the chairman of this organization. Here we met the famous Yiddish poet, Moshe Broderson, and his wife, who had been imprisoned in the Soviet Union for 5½ years. We had a very interesting talk with him.

We then rushed to the airport and left at 4:30 p.m., leaving behind the veil of tears which is Poland today, and winged our way above the Iron Curtain to the freedom of the Western world, landing in Amsterdam at 8 o'clock. At the airport we had a chat with Rabbi Aaron Schuster of Amsterdam. Left there at 11 p.m. and back to the blessed shores of the USA.

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# JEWISH OBSERVER

## *Newsletter*

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A Periodical Survey of Events Affecting Jews in the Soviet Bloc

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### INTRODUCTION

IT is conservatively estimated that a third of the world Jewish population resides in the Soviet Union and in the Communist countries of East Europe.

This "Newsletter" is designed periodically to provide reliable information on the situation of Jews living in the Soviet orbit.

The "Newsletter" is not intended as an instrument of anti-Soviet or anti-Communist propaganda. Such a policy would serve neither the interests of the Jews in the Communist countries nor the cause of friendly international relations.

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## RUMANIA

The most notable development since our last Newsletter appeared in November, 1958, has been the rapidly increasing flow of immigrants into Israel from Rumania since the Rumanian Government, in August-September, 1958, began to allow Jews to leave for Israel in the framework of a liberally interpreted scheme for the reunion of families.

Official Israeli sources seem reluctant to disclose the exact size of the emigration from Rumania, but according to a spokesman of the Jewish Agency early in February, 1959, a total of 125,000 Jewish adults have already registered in Rumania for emigration to Israel. The spokesman disclosed further that "the average age of the adult immigrant will be under 40" and that "these newcomers will arrive in Israel without personal property."

According to *Le Monde*, in November, 1958 alone the Rumanian Government granted more than 3,000 exit permits to Jews, and there are many indications that the ratio of emigration has since risen steeply. The Israeli press reported at the end of January that in order to speed up the migration, government authorities in Bucharest started to issue "family passports" instead of individual ones and were doing everything to expedite the arrangements for transit visas (through Hungary, Austria and Italy).

An interesting account of the Rumanian immigration was published on January 13, 1959, in the London *Jewish Chronicle* by its Haifa correspondent :

"Once a Rumanian Jew decides to emigrate to Israel, a middle-aged immigrant told me, he has to have infinite patience and resolution to pursue his decision, as he is likely to meet difficulties and sudden reversals of fortune. . . . When filing an application for emigration a payment of 100 lei per person is made (this is nearly a quarter of the wages of an unqualified worker). No payment is made for children. When approval comes, an additional payment of 1,000 lei per person is required. At this juncture the emigrants sign a statement renouncing their Rumanian citizenship. This implies an automatic loss of the right to return. . . . Emigrants are left with little or no money even after they have sold their houses, furniture, and other valuables, thanks to the various taxes which are collected before the exit permits are issued, as well as the payment of fares. Money would be of no use to them in Rumania, anyway, as officially they are not permitted to take any currency, gold, or jewellery out of the country. The amount of luggage is strictly limited. Each individual is allowed

to take out with him nothing but personal belongings, and the amount of these is limited according to his economic and political status. If a man or woman is a registered member of the "working class," that is, if he has been recognised by the authorities as one who has fulfilled the ideological and professional requirements for employment in industry, agriculture, or the administration, he is allowed to take out with him personal effects amounting to 70 kilos (about 32 lbs.). If, on the other hand, he has in the past been working independently or in private business (rare cases) and has not been accepted as a registered member of the "working class" he is entitled to only 40 kilos of luggage (about 18 lbs.). . . . The prospective emigrant is not anxious to spread the news of his departure. The main reason for this is connected with his job. Once a Jew in a responsible position is marked as a prospective emigrant he is given work of lesser importance and remuneration or discharged altogether. The authorities explain this attitude by saying that they are interested in filling the prospective emigrant's position at once, so that the functioning of the institution or factory should not suffer. The emigrant, however, being always afraid that some hitch may prevent his departure, is interested in keeping his job to the last moment."

About the motives of the Rumanian Government's reversal of policy on emigration, a *Reuter's* correspondent wrote from Budapest:

"The reason behind the Rumanian authorities' surprise decision to lift the six-year ban on Jewish emigration remains obscure, but there appear to be two main factors.

1. There is reported to be widespread anti-Semitism in Rumania, where the majority of Jews have not been assimilated in the Communist system.
2. Perhaps more important the Communist authorities are believed to be anxious to replace Jews in skilled and responsible positions by the rising generation of Rumanians who support Communism.

"This theory is supported by the fact that the emigrants are drawn from every walk of life and include doctors, lawyers, scientists, artists and skilled workers—whose departure would normally be considered a serious loss to society—as well as old people and children. . . ."

This view is generally endorsed by informed quarters in Western countries. In the meantime, it was reported in Paris (*Unser Wort*, February 9, 1959) that George Kennan, the former American Ambassador in Moscow, stated that he did not believe the Rumanian Govern-



ment had asked permission of Moscow regarding its present Jewish policy. Nor did he believe that the Soviet Union would now seek to try to solve the Jewish problem by mass-deportation to Birobidzhan. It was not impossible, he thought, that the Soviet Union, if it felt the existence of the Jewish question, would as a natural alternative also give the Jews the chance to emigrate.

### SOVIET UNION

Few recent developments relating to Soviet Jewry have caused more concern and bewilderment than the reported intention to revive Birobidzhan on the borders of Manchuria as a centre of Jewish settlement. It will be recalled that Birobidzhan cropped up in curious terms only last summer in an interview with Mr. Khrushchev, published in *Le Figaro*, in which the Soviet leader analysed the reasons for the failure of Jewish settlement in the area, which he ascribed to certain individualistic, intellectual characteristics of the Jews themselves. This interview was repudiated by Moscow, and shortly afterwards a widespread, apparently systematic, campaign was opened to persuade foreign and domestic public opinion that Birobidzhan was a prosperous, attractive region with contented Jewish inhabitants who enjoyed good Yiddish cultural facilities. There have been at least eight broadcasts on this theme to North America and other Western countries, as well as newspaper articles in the Soviet Union, in Poland and in the Communist press of non-Soviet bloc countries.

This was followed by persistent and widespread rumours that Mr. Khrushchev was prepared to raise the matter at the 21st Party Congress of the Soviet Communist party, which took place in Moscow last month. There was much talk of a plan to reopen Birobidzhan as a place of settlement for Jews in the Soviet Union, and particularly to direct young Jews to the region on the grounds that this could be their contribution to the general problem of Siberian development.

The rumours were of the "substantial" variety. They cropped up in the Soviet Union, in the several countries of the Soviet bloc, and in the Communist parties of the West where, with many members already very disturbed over the injustices experienced by Jews in the U.S.S.R., they created fresh alarm and misgivings. Reports were received that the Soviet authorities had hinted to a number of Jews that a plan to direct them to Birobidzhan existed. Certain specific cases were reported where Polish Jews, applying for repatriation to Poland, were told by Soviet officials: "Sorry, we need you to go to Birobidzhan and reclaim the wilderness." This comment,

whether ironic or serious, was passed on to relatives in Poland and was taken as a confirmation of the rumours.

Information, which we cannot confirm, was given to Jewish organisations that letters sent by certain Soviet Jews to relatives abroad announced suddenly and without explanation that the senders were leaving to settle in Birobidzhan. According to a despatch from Paris published in the London *Jewish Chronicle* on January 16, 1959, the matter was discussed by Mr. Hersh Smoliar, editor of the Polish-Jewish Communist paper, *Folkshtimme*, and French communist leaders. Jewish branches of the French communist party, the *Jewish Chronicle* said, were planning concerted action to dissuade the Soviet rulers from proceeding with any plan to revive Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan.

The serious press in Western countries, among them the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times* in the United States, the *Observer* in Britain and many newspapers in France, Canada, South Africa, etc., carried reports from correspondents commenting on the matter with some concern.

In the meantime, a unique first-hand account of life in Birobidzhan was published in the Jewish press of America by a Polish-Jewish poet, Israel Emiott, who went there in 1944, on behalf of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow, after having lived for several years in Kazakhstan in company with thousands of other Polish-Jews who had fled to Russia to escape the Nazis. He describes how, at the end of the war, thousands of Jews came to Birobidzhan from other Soviet regions, particularly the Ukraine where there had been a revival of anti-Semitism. At the time the population of Birobidzhan was about 110,000, composed of Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Koreans and other Far Eastern nationalities. The Jewish population at its peak was about 35 per cent of the total, but had considerably diminished. The chairman of the Region's Executive Committee was a Ukrainian Jew, Michael Zilberstein, who was responsible for extensive regional developments, particularly in the capital, Birobidzhan, which, Emiott declares, is now one of the most beautiful towns in the Soviet Far East. At the time, Jews were predominant in the administration of the region.

The new settlers were each loaned 300 roubles as travelling expenses and 10,000 roubles to establish themselves in farming. But the pattern of the 1936-1937 purges was repeated in 1948, during Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign, and Emiott was among many others arrested for "Jewish nationalism" and deported to a Siberian labour

camp, in his own case with a ten years' sentence. These events, and the destruction of Jewish culture, began the mass retreat from Birobidzhan by Jews who had abandoned any hope that they would ever be permitted to build an autonomous national life there.

Emiott was released after Stalin's death. He returned to Birobidzhan and was saddened to see how completely Jewish cultural life had been wiped out there. The Jewish library, named after Sholem Aleichem, which had contained some 30,000 volumes in Yiddish and Hebrew, some of them rare and ancient, was now almost entirely a Russian institution with only a few hundred Yiddish books. The rest had been removed to a cellar where they had rotted away. All the Jewish schools had been closed down, and nothing was left but a small thrice-weekly Jewish paper, "mostly a translation of the local Russian paper although there are a number of gifted Jewish writers in the region who could have made the newspaper an original and interesting one."

An equally interesting report on the region was published in the Polish weekly *Swiat* on December 7, 1958, by a Polish Catholic writer, Dominik Horodynski. He was not unimpressed by Birobidzhan as a general place of settlement but firmly rejected the idea that it was in any way a Soviet "Israel." When he asked the mayor of the capital how the Jewishness of the region manifested itself, he was told that there was a Yiddish newspaper, Jews reached managerial positions and official notices were published in two languages. There were no Jewish schools because "parents preferred to send their children to Russian schools." About half the 40,000 population of the capital were Jews. He visited the *Pravda Kholkhoz* whose chairman was a Jew and was told that the collective had 167 families. Only six of these were Jewish but, the chairman said, in the neighbouring Kholkhoz there were more Jews.

When Dominik Horodynski visited the small synagogue he found that it did not possess a rabbi and that services were conducted by an elderly *Chazan*, the religious functionary who leads a congregation in the chanting of prayers. The congregation numbered only 24 but "more than 50" came to the High Festivals. None of them were young.

#### **Mikoyan's Assurances**

During his recent visit to the United States, Mr. Anastas Mikoyan, the first-Deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, lunched with four prominent American Jewish leaders and strongly denied reports that the Soviet Union was planning a mass migration

of Jews to Birobidzhan. Since responsible opinion has never been inclined to think that there was any present danger of a *mass* transfer of population to Birobidzhan, but rather of a campaign of "persuasion" upon individuals and groups, particularly the young, to make them agree "voluntarily" to settle in the region, Mikoyan's denial of mass migration plans is virtually valueless. At the same meeting, Mikoyan insisted that there was no discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union and that the charges that they were denied facilities for expressing themselves in their own language, or prevented from having their own newspapers, schools and communal organisations, were slanderous statements spread by enemies of the Soviet Union.

On another occasion during his U.S. visit, Mikoyan told U.N. correspondents that there was no Jewish problem in the Soviet Union, and if no Jewish cultural facilities existed it was the fault of the Jews themselves. "In my country," he said, "all peoples enjoy full freedom of cultural activity. Jews are among these people. However, the Jewish population has merged with the Russians and we do not interfere with them. Jewish writers consider themselves Russian and write in Russian. There is no Jewish problem in the Soviet Union, and it is created only by those who wish to create difficulties and impede good relations. I have friends who are Jews and many of our leading people have married Jewish girls. They live very happily and have excellent relations."

#### **The destruction of Jewish culture—Some significant statistics**

In connection with Mikoyan's dogmatic assertions that Soviet Jews enjoy full freedom of cultural activity on a level with other nationalities, it is interesting to examine some of the figures available of Jewish cultural activities in the Soviet Union prior to the destruction of Jewish culture in 1948 and the complete embargo upon it that exists to this day.

At the peak period of the 1930's, when Jewish creative activity was given the same encouragement as that of other nationalities, there were some 1,400 Yiddish schools with almost 150,000 pupils; about 20 theatres and theatrical groups; nearly 20 daily, weekly and monthly journals in Yiddish; Yiddish publishing houses with an annual output of about 2,000,000 books and pamphlets; important organisations of Jewish writers and intellectuals. In certain areas with large concentrations of Jews Yiddish was an official language used in the courts and at meetings of local Soviets and official bodies. All this has disappeared.

Though this is the most startling aspect of the discrimination practised against Jews, statistics relating to other spheres of Soviet life **are not less revealing**, and one must remember that figures from Soviet sources that could shed light on the situation are not readily available. But the process of eliminating Jews from leading positions is graphically illustrated by studying the proportion of members of various nationalities in the Supreme Soviet. In December, 1937, Jews constituted 4.1 per cent of the membership of the Supreme Soviet. By 1946 their representation had been reduced to 0.8 per cent. By March, 1950, they were less than 0.4 per cent and by 1958 0.25 per cent, or three representatives out of a total of 1,336. As Jews at present constitute 1.5 per cent of the total Soviet population, their representation in the Supreme constitutional body of the U.S.S.R. is only one-sixth of their proportion of the population.

How do Jews fare in religious facilities compared to other religious groups in the Soviet Union? Here, again, the available statistics are illuminating. Of the four major religious denominations in the U.S.S.R.—Russian Orthodox, Moslem, Baptist and Judaism—Judaism is the only one denied a national, centrally directed organisation. In marked distinction, for example, to the Russian Orthodox Church, there is no systematic contact between the scattered Jewish congregations. Jews have some 60 rabbis, many of them not properly trained or ordained, which amounts to one for every 50,000 Jews. The Russian Orthodox Church has 35,000 priests, or one for every 4,000 people. The Russian Orthodox Church has 22,000 churches. The precise number of Jewish synagogues is not known, but many large Jewish localities have no synagogue at all (for example, Kharkov whose Jewish population is 70,000) and others are compelled to use small rented rooms as synagogues. Construction of churches still goes on, mosques have been freed from confiscation and are again being used for worship, but not one synagogue has been returned and, in the whole of the U.S.S.R., not a single new one is being built. And whereas the Russian Orthodox Church is permitted to have ten seminaries with about 1,000 students, the only Jewish seminary was opened in 1957 in Moscow and is restricted to a student membership of 20.

The systematic policy of concealing the participation of Jews in national life has been constantly noted. Random examples have been the reduction of references to Jews in the Soviet Encyclopaedia from some 160 columns in the 1932 edition to four columns in the 1952 edition, as well as the removal of the biographies of many pro-

minent Jews and the careful avoidance in the biography of Karl Marx of mentioning that he was a Jew. Another outstanding example will be found in *The National Traditions of the Peoples of the Soviet Union*, by M. Morozov (Moscow State Publishing House for Political Literature, April, 1957) which gives precise statistics of those in the Soviet armed forces who were decorated as "Heroes of the Soviet Union" for valour in the last war. The Jews are not listed. There were 7,627 Russians, 1,928 Ukrainians, 244 Belorussians, 157 Tartars, etc., down to eight Letts, eight Lithuanians, six Karelians "as well as combatants of other peoples," whose fractional denominations, it is implied, are too insignificant to justify listing. This might confirm a routine anti-Semite in his conviction that Jews are cowardly shirkers of military service: a more reasonable person might suspect that the number of Jews decorated for valour in the U.S.S.R. is concealed somewhere among those that have not been listed. In fact, it is possible to determine how many Jews are roughly involved quite easily. At a conference of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in April, 1944, it was officially disclosed that of a total of 3,517 armed forces personnel awarded the decoration of Hero of the Soviet Union at that time more than a hundred were Jews, *who thus proportionately occupied third place among Soviet nationalities*. It is reasonable to assume that this proportion remained fairly constant and that of the 11,000 Soviet citizens who had received the decoration by the end of the war, there were some 300 Jews, or more than the 244 Belorussians who occupy third place in the published statistics.

#### **Communists criticise Mikoyan**

There were, of course, many people in America who firmly reminded the Soviet leader that his assurances on the Jewish situation in the Soviet Union were in contradiction to the facts. But perhaps the most telling rebuttal came from the New York Yiddish Communist daily, *Morgen Freiheit*, which on January 18, 1959, sharply contested Mikoyan's reassurances in the following terms:

"That does not mean that the question of Jewish culture is already quite settled. To the right to construct a culture must be added the State's help to enable such an upbuilding to take place. That has still to be achieved. It is to be hoped that on returning home Mr. Mikoyan will report that among Jews in America—and surely also among Jews in other countries—there is a strong sentiment that Jewish culture in the Soviet Union has to be given the opportunity which existed in former years, to be constructed."

**How did the meeting come about?**

The proceedings leading up to the meeting with the Jewish leaders throws some light on the significance of Mikoyan's statement. The circumstances, according to reliable sources, were as follows. Senator Humphrey approached Mikoyan with a memorandum on Birobidzhan prepared by three Western non-Zionist Jewish bodies (The American Jewish Committee, the Anglo-Jewish Association, and the French Alliance Israélite Universelle). His first reaction was that "there is a misunderstanding. I will explain what it is all about." The impression created by this was that Mikoyan was aware that Birobidzhan would be discussed at the Party Congress, and that he was at this stage merely concerned to correct any mistaken conclusions that had been drawn from this fact. He was, generally speaking, inclined to react with irritation whenever the Jewish question was raised and seemed to have no freedom of manoeuvre on the matter as compared with other questions he discussed in the U.S. In fact, he was compelled to fall back on mere official formulae, regardless of the known evidence.

It was some days later that he reluctantly consented to meet the Jewish leaders and issued his denials, but the Jewish leaders had to exercise persistence before he finally agreed to permit them to publish a brief statement embodying his Birobidzhan denial. At the same time, he vehemently refused to declare publicly that the idea of promoting Jewish settlement in Birobidzhan would not occur to his government sometime in the future, or to permit the publication of a promise that the Soviet Jews would be enabled to enjoy those cultural facilities given to the other nationalities in the U.S.S.R.

**The Census**

Experts are expecting that the national census conducted in the Soviet Union from January 15 to 23 will produce some surprising figures. The published regulations relating to the census (in *The All-Union Census of Population*, published in Moscow by the State Publishing House of Political Literature, 1958, and broadcast to the Soviet public during the course of the registrations) contain clauses which will separate the individual's nationality and mother tongue, which "may not be identical to the nationality of the applicant." The applicant will cite what he considers to be his own mother-tongue or, if he finds difficulty in defining it, the tongue with which he is most familiar, or which is in general use in his family. The clause relating to nationality states that this is cited by the applicant himself without

documentary proof. Children's nationality is decided by the parents. In families where the parents are of different nationality and where there is difficulty in defining the child's nationality, the nationality of the mother is given preference.

It is thought that some Jews with non-Jewish names may choose to declare their nationality as Russian, Ukrainian, White Russian, etc. This may affect the official statistics of Jews in the Soviet Union but cannot affect their status as Jews in everyday life, as the Jewish registration will remain on their personal documents regardless of how they declare themselves in the national census.

#### **Anti-Jewish Broadcasts**

Anti-Jewish innuendoes have been creeping with increasing frequency into Soviet "anti-Zionist" propaganda, and striking examples of this practice are shown in some recent Soviet broadcasts. Two of these, on November 5 and 6, were Moscow broadcasts in Arabic by the political commentator, Leonidov. But more disturbing by implication was an internal Ukrainian broadcast from Kirovograd.

The Leonidov broadcasts were concerned to explain the background of the present tension in the Middle East and related it to the machinations of a powerful Jewish cabal in New York and Britain, a distinct echo of the notorious "Elders of Zion" legend. After blaming Israel for the "greatest responsibility" in creating Middle East tension, Leonidov goes on as follows: "The Israeli Government is run by Mapai, which is headed by Ben-Gurion. But it is no secret that Ben-Gurion's policy is determined by an organisation whose head is outside Israel, which is called the Jewish Agency . . . Some of its members, as well as its head, live permanently in the U.S.A. Therefore it is New York that dictates and decides what Israel should do. This has been the case since 1929. . . . This organisation took charge of the supreme command of all Jewish nationalist bourgeois groups the world over." (He goes on to list the names of big Jewish bankers, oil magnates and store millionaires in New York and London). "Since then the World Zionist Organisation has become, in essence, a political organisation belonging to the association of these businessmen. These businessmen see Zionism, before anything else, as an advantageous imperialist transaction. . . . The establishment of the State of Israel did not reduce the responsibility of the World Zionist Organisation to the financiers, already mentioned, in New York and London. . . . It is not the new immigrants, who arrive in Israel wholesale, who dictate Zionist policy, but the owners of the big banks and Stock Exchanges



of New York and London (who) do not in fact care about the fate of the new Jewish immigrants, whom they send to the Middle East as cheap manpower and gun-fodder."

The second Leonidov broadcast was mainly a repetition or elaboration of this thesis, linking Israeli "aggressive" policy with the intrigues of a powerful clique of rich Anglo-American Jews.

The Ukrainian language transmission was delivered on December 17, 1958, and came from the station in Kirovograd which disseminates material over the air for editorial guidance to the Soviet-Ukrainian press. The general framework of the broadcast was, again, an attack on Zionism. But it charged that "leaders of bourgeois Jewish nationalists adopted an inimical attitude towards the Soviet régime." Despite the pogroms committed by White Russian forces in the early days of the Revolution, these Jewish bourgeois nationalists concluded agreements with Denikin, the White Russian General, and Petlyura, the Ukrainian Nationalist leader. Nor is this hostility towards the U.S.S.R. a thing of the past. "Throughout the Soviet régime Jewish bourgeois nationalists have conducted inimical activities against the U.S.S.R. Jewish bourgeois nationalists enjoy great support from the American imperialists, for instance, from Rockefeller, who recently gave them several million roubles . . . The Zionists are also indoctrinating individual Jews with a nationalist spirit, trying to enlist them in anti-Soviet activities and forcing them to become traitors to their fatherland. . . . These forces disseminate the racist theory of hatred of people and the superiority of one people over another."

#### **Synagogues Desecrated**

Perhaps such wild propaganda helps to explain the anti-Semitic hooliganism, news of which occasionally filters through to the West. It has now been learned, for example, that several weeks ago a large number of headstones in the Jewish cemetery of Kiev were desecrated and hooligans broke into a synagogue and stole some religious objects. The mayor of Kiev visited the cemetery and promised that the graves would be repaired at public expense. He ascribed the incident to the effects of Nazi propaganda on the local population during the war. Similar acts of desecration occurred in Vinitzia, near Kiev, and in the town of Kremenchug, where young thugs broke into a synagogue during prayers, ripped up prayer books and assaulted elderly Jews in the synagogue courtyard.

In Kharkov, where there is no synagogue, groups of Jewish worshippers on the High Holydays were dispersed by police. One

policeman told Jews: "You eat Russian bread, but you pray for Israel."

### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Czechoslovak authorities have opposed an effort to bring an appeal against the sentences imposed on 26 Zionist leaders, including three women, who are at present serving long terms of imprisonment after secret trials held in 1952, and again between 1953 and 1954. Most of the prisoners are middle-aged to elderly and are serving sentences ranging from seven years to 23 years, but nine of them are serving terms of imprisonment of from two to five-and-a-half years.

Not all the identities of these prisoners have been disclosed, but most of them are known. Their names and sentences are listed below: Joseph Buchler, aged 46, 23 years imprisonment; Mikulas Stern, aged 59, 22 years; Ferdinand Heilinger, aged 60, 22 years; Armin Goodman, aged 58, 18 years; Erwin Steiner, aged 54, 10 years; Erwin Vrana, aged 38, 10 years; Adolf Reich, aged 58, 13 years; Alexander Goldstein, aged 58, eight years; Miss Elzbeta Breznitzova, seven years; Professor Lazr Beck, aged 59, 14 years; Jakub Grun, aged 57, 15 years; Samuel Vesely, aged 47, 12 years; Ferdinand Kolina, aged 42, 12 years; Adolf Herzog, aged 59, 12 years; Julian Schorban, aged 48, 12 years; Polak, aged 55, nine years. Of the remaining nine, two are women and one, Rabbi Dr. Bernat Farkas, has been released as a result of intervention on his behalf with the Czech Government. Rabbi Dr. Farkas recently celebrated his 25th anniversary as communal Rabbi of the town of Decin, but, tragically, there was only one survivor of the original community. All the rest were killed by the Nazis.

The imprisoned Zionists were accused of various offences including that of conducting Zionist activities, maintaining contact with the Israeli Legation in Prague, carrying on "illegal" activities connected with exchange regulations and maintaining contact with people abroad.

In the meantime the arrest of Jews on charges of Zionism still continues and the intractability of the Czech authorities is further demonstrated by the rejection of an appeal from Mordechai Oren, the Israeli left-wing Socialist, to the Czech High Court, for a revision of his trial in 1952 when he was one of the accused in the Slansky case and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. Oren was subsequently released and returned to Israel, but despite the rehabilitation of many similarly accused persons in Communist countries, his name

has never been cleared. The President of the Czech Supreme Court who rejected his appeal is Urvalek, the man who acted as official prosecutor in the Slansky trial.

#### **Communal Developments**

At a meeting of the representatives of the association of Jewish communities in Bohemia and Slovakia with the Czech Assistant-Minister of Education and Culture, it was decided that in a Bratislavan secondary school a Jewish religious circle of ten to fifteen boys would be formed. Teachers would be appointed by the Jewish authorities and would work under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The pupils would live in a special dormitory and receive two-hours religious tuition daily.

In what appears to be an attempt to slow down the assimilation of Jewish youth, the religious committee of the Jewish communities in Czechoslovakia has proposed that a club for young Jews be opened and permission be obtained to organise a children's choir attached to the Prague Synagogue.

In Brezica, in Southern Bohemia, the local municipality has decided to renovate buildings in the Jewish ghetto and convert them into a Jewish museum.

#### **POLAND**

In view of the fact that, in some ways, the situation of Polish Jewry has been a fluid one, undergoing a number of important changes during the last year, it is worth taking a fresh look at the community as it is at the beginning of 1959.

Although 3,767 Jews emigrated from Poland to Israel during 1958, and some 800 to other countries, the total Jewish population remains about the same, roughly 40,000. This is due to the fact that roughly the same number of Jews were repatriated to Poland from the Soviet Union during the year. In fact, of the total Polish-Jewish population of 40,000 it is estimated that some 13,000 have been repatriated from the Soviet Union and 27,000 have been living in Poland since 1946. Almost all the repatriates are anxious to go to Israel.

In round figures, the distribution of the Jewish population is as follows: 10,000 in Warsaw; 5,000 in Wroclaw (formerly Breslau); 4,000 in Lodz; 3,000 in Stettin; 3,000 in Liegnitz; 3,000 in Walbrzyck; 2,000 in Cracow; and 10,000 are scattered in groups throughout Silesia and the rest of Poland. In spite of the large Jewish population in Warsaw there is little Jewish life in the capital as the Jews there,

many of them in Government service and the Party, seem to be making a determined effort to assimilate.

In general, the opportunities for assimilation have never been so favourable in Poland and it can be assumed that half the existing Jewish population have no intention of leaving the country (although this does not apply to those who have come from the Soviet Union under the Repatriation Agreement). This affects the influence and activities of the official, Communist-government, Jewish organisation, the *Kultur-Gesellschaftlicher Farband*, which is largely disregarded by the Jews who wish to assimilate. The audiences who attend Yiddish-language lectures, or visit the Yiddish theatre, or the "K.G.F." club, are almost entirely Soviet repatriates who have a great longing for Jewish cultural and social activities of which they were starved in the Soviet Union.

Among the 27,000 or so local Jewish residents in Poland there are about 40 per cent of mixed marriages and a high percentage of elderly people who would find it difficult to uproot themselves. They also, of course, include dedicated members of the Communist Party who are against leaving Poland on ideological grounds.

In the meantime, the official Polish attitude to Jews was expressed at a meeting held at the beginning of last December in Wroclaw. This meeting, reported in the Polish-Communist Yiddish newspaper, *Fokshtimme*, on December 4, was held to discuss the problems of minority nationalities living in Lower Silesia, which has Jews, Ukrainians, Macedonian-Greeks, etc., among its general population. The main address was given by Skrzypczak, Chairman of the Committee for Nationalities which is attached to the Polish Communist Central Committee.

He said that although minority nationalities represented only about two per cent of the total Polish population much damage had been done by underestimating the problem created. The Polish Communist Party was strongly opposed to any attempt at the compulsory assimilation of minorities, but it was also opposed to attempts to create narrow national and cultural separatism. It had been noted, chairman Skrzypczak said, regarding Polish Jewry, that despite the extensive cultural activities of the Polish-Jewish "K.G.F." a large proportion of Polish Jews left the country during 1956-7 "due to increased anti-Semitism which had resulted from the strengthened activities of reactionaries in Poland." But he emphasised that "this departure was also encouraged by the propaganda of various hostile elements in the Jewish population itself." He urged that Polish nationalism and

chauvinism must be combatted, as the main enemy, but also that nationalism, separatism and other damaging manifestations among the minorities must also be fought and "socialist education" be carried out to strengthen their ties with national Poland.

He gave no indication that the Polish Government's policy of permitting Jews to emigrate to Israel would be changed, and there is every reason to believe that it will continue until all the Jews who wish to do so have left. With this hope in mind, the Jewish repatriates from the Soviet Union tend to "live out of their suitcases," ready for instant departure, and they become embittered when they read anti-Israel propaganda in the Communist-Yiddish newspaper, *Folkshtimme*, and are addressed with anti-Zionist lectures by the "K.G.F." authorities who are anxious to discourage the Jewish exodus to Israel.

Although there are still many former Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (approximate estimates put the figure at 12,000), it is unclear whether all who wish to be repatriated will succeed in doing so. The final date of the Polish repatriation under the Russian-Polish agreement is April, 1959, and the deadline for registration was January 1, 1959, but despite the considerable number of applicants waiting to leave, the average monthly number of Jewish repatriates is still around 300 and unless the period of departure is extended most of those still in the Soviet Union will have to remain.

#### **Polish Yiddish State Theatre**

It has been reported that Soviet authorities rejected an application from the Warsaw Yiddish State Theatre to perform in the U.S.S.R. The grounds on which the application was rejected have not been made public. In place of the Soviet tour, the Warsaw Yiddish Theatre is planning to visit America.

### HUNGARY

Some 60,000 of the 70,000 Jews now living in Hungary dwell in the capital, Budapest. Representatives of the Hungarian Jewish communities claim that the total number of Jews in Hungary is about 100,000, but according to all available information this claim is exaggerated.

At the end of last year there were rumours that the Hungarian Government would permit Jews to emigrate freely to Israel, but to date these rumours have proved unfounded and emigration from Hungary remains numerically negligible.

Most of the Jewish religious functionaries left the country during the 1956 uprising and very few orthodox rabbis are left. The Chief Rabbi of the orthodox community has also left Hungary. Hungarian law recognises religious freedom. According to the Central Committee of Hungarian Jews, there are 17 large synagogues in Budapest and many small ones, and 85 synagogues in the provincial towns. But Jewish religious life in Hungary is in decline, and is found mainly among the older generation. There is a Rabbinical seminary in Budapest attended by 10-15 pupils. Various Jewish communities maintain Talmudei Torah, at which Jewish children are given religious instruction for two hours weekly. Several months ago a Talmud Torah with a dormitory for 12 students was opened in Budapest. This institute is supported by the Jewish "Claims Conference," whose headquarters are in New York, out of Restitution funds obtained from West Germany.

The decline of the religious life of the Jews can be judged by the fact that the character of Jewish activities have become increasingly cultural i.e. lectures, concerts and dramatic performances which frequently have no special Jewish characterisation, except that the actors are Jewish.

The Committee of the Communities runs a museum, an old age home, an orphanage and a hospital. It publishes a fortnightly newspaper, *Uj Elet* (partially subsidised by the World Jewish Congress). Israel is rarely mentioned in this newspaper. One of these infrequent occasions was in an issue of August 15, 1958, when they published an interview with a Dr. Singer who emigrated in 1956 and returned to Hungary after failing to adjust to Israel. Dr. Singer described life in Israel in very gloomy terms. We have been informed that he has since been appointed regional rabbi for several provincial communities.

Two books adversely describing Israel were published recently. One, "Europe which has disappeared," was written by Nemes Laszlo, who returned to Hungary from Palestine in 1945. The other, "Six months in Israel," was written by Istvan Vari who left Hungary in 1956 and returned there from Israel after a few months.

Ten years have passed since an agreement was concluded between the Jewish community and the Hungarian Government which decided on the size of the government subsidy to the community. According to this agreement this support would decrease by 25 per cent every five years. The agreement was recently renewed and the government agreed to a request by the community not to decrease the subsidy in

1959 and 1960. Despite this the financial position of the community is precarious. At a meeting held in February, 1959 to mark the anniversary of the agreement, Dr. Binyamin Schwartz, Chief Rabbi of Hungarian Jewry, spoke of the need to stabilise the economic position of religious Jewry in Hungary and suggested that the only way to do this was by selling the immovable property of all the communities in Hungary. Dr. Schwartz said that the communities' Central Committee would sell such property after consulting with the individual community owning it. In cases where the sale of a synagogue building was involved the advice of the Chief Rabbinate should be sought. This was accepted.

The Budapest community has published "Tevya the Milkman," the well-known play by Sholem Aleichem, in Hungarian, and a documentary book on the Nazi occupation period. The librarian of the Rabbinical Seminary Library has edited a bibliography on the Nazi period, publication of which was announced in *Uj Elet*. Immediately the book appeared on bookstalls all copies were confiscated by the authorities without explanation.

The Central Board of Hungarian Jews has issued a pocket calendar in Hungarian and Hebrew for the current year giving detailed instruction in a Hungarian appendix as to the appropriate prayers to be recited on various Jewish Holydays. There has also been an announcement by the Hungarian Ministry for Religious affairs, in *Uj Elet*, that Jewish workers, in accordance with existing custom, may request three days' leave on appropriate Jewish Holydays to be deducted from their annual leave.

#### BULGARIA

It has been reported that in the second half of 1958 a series of arrests occurred amongst Jews on charges of maintaining ties with the Israeli Legation. Some of those arrested have been sentenced to long periods of imprisonment and thus has spread alarm among Bulgarian Jews.

The authorities have begun to refuse applications for permission to emigrate to Israel or visit that country on the grounds that they did not intend to "strengthen the imperialistic powers in the Near East."

#### BOOKS AND WRITERS

Soviet views on Israel are well-known, having been frequently and abusively expressed in the Soviet press and radio, but recently the first authorised book exclusively devoted to Israel was published

in Moscow by the "State Publishing House for Literature." Entitled "The State of Israel: Its Position and Policy," by K. Ivanov and Z. Sheinis, it was produced in the relatively large edition (for a specialist Middle Eastern book) of 100,000.

Purporting to be a serious piece of political writing, it falls far short of the professional standards customary in the West. As random examples the following show the strictly propagandist technique used by the authors. They reproduce as facts, and without attribution, much of the highly-coloured anti-Israel propaganda put out by Cairo Radio. They include, also without attribution, a complete chapter from a book by an Israeli Communist, Moshe Sneh. They quote seriously an Indian newspaper, *Blitz*, which published details of a "secret Israeli plan" to establish a Jewish empire from the Nile to the Euphrates.

The anti-Israel complexion of the work, is of course, in line with Soviet policy, and would not, therefore, merit special consideration here if it were not that the book reflects acutely a current Soviet dilemma, namely how to be anti-Israel and anti-Zionist without, at the same time, becoming anti-Jewish. If the authors are aware of the dilemma, they did not face it. The anti-Jewish undertones are clamorous enough in certain passages to obscure the basic theme of the book, Israel, entirely.

For example, they denounce as "mediaeval mysticism" the theory of "bourgeois Zionist nationalism" that "all human beings who belong to the Jewish religion are members of a Jewish nation, wherever they live." They charge that Zionists collaborated with the Gestapo; that Jewish survivors of the concentration camps were forced by the Zionists to go to Israel. The entire millenium-long history and tradition of the Jewish people is ignored and the idea that the Jews are an historical nation is treated as an invention of the Zionists, one that has resulted in the creation of an unscrupulous state which serves colonialists and imperialists and is obsessed by only one world problem, "the ingathering of Jews from the Diaspora."

All this having been said, it must be assumed that serious Soviet students of Middle Eastern affairs may well compare this new book with another Russian political study, "The Palestine Problem," by I. A. Genin, which was published in 1948. Such students could not fail to notice that the ten years that have elapsed between the publication of the two books has brought about a complete reversal not only of policy, but also of facts. In 1958 the Soviet authorities assert the precise



opposite of what they claimed as true in 1948. Here are some characteristic examples :

1948—in Genin's book (page 9) : "The question of settling in Palestine a part of the Jewish population of Western Europe, the so-called displaced persons, who lost their property and shelter and were deprived of means for existence as a result of Fascist brutality, is an acute one," and again (page 14) : "There is one more important matter which cannot be ignored in the solution of the Palestine problem : it is the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish displaced persons in Western Europe."

1958—In the Ivanov-Sheinis book (page 120) : "Shocking are the facts about the mockery of Jewish displaced persons in Western Europe, whom the Zionists forced after the end of World War II to go to Israel."

1948—Of the Israel-Arab war, Genin writes (page 20) : "Seven armed Arab countries united by the Arab League, attacked the State of Israel," and (page 227) : "In spite of superior technical equipment and in spite of the presence of British officers in the Arab Armies, the attempt of the Arab countries to annihilate the Jewish State ended in failure."

1958—In the Ivanov-Sheinis book (page 22) : "The military failure of the courageously embattled Arabs were the result of transitory historical circumstance and the absence, among the Arabs, of unity of aim and action."

1948—In Genin's book (page 14) recalling Gromyko's famous declaration to the U.N. : "The fact that not one West-European country was in a position to guarantee the defence of elementary rights of the Jewish people explains the aspirations of Jews to create their own state. Therefore, it would be unjust, taking into consideration the sufferings endured by the Jewish people during the war, to disclaim that right."

1958—The Ivanov-Sheinis book (page 147) : ". . . The ruling circles of Israel even nowadays have proved themselves unable to understand that the Jewish question cannot be solved by isolating Jewish people from other nations."

If, as is probable, the publication is not only directed at general public opinion but is also intended to discourage Soviet-Jewish interest in Israel, the effect is likely to surprise the authorities. For Soviet Jews, experienced like most Soviet citizens at reading between the lines, will discover from the book that Zionists consider themselves the "defenders" of liberty for the oppressed Jewish nation (page 30);

that Israel is open to all Jews who need or wish to go there (page 54); that the basic aim of "Zionism" is the creation of a state with a population of 3-4 million during the life-time of one generation (page 45); that the State of Israel is not at all as isolated from other countries as Soviet propagandists often assert, and that it obtains support not only from America and England but also from Canada, France, Belgium, and others (page 56). The fact that Israel received arms from various countries, including aeroplanes, tanks, submarines, artillery, etc (pages 55, 57) may not depress Soviet Jews. Nor are they likely to be upset over the fact that Israel produces more electrical equipment and precision instruments than textiles and shoes (page 95).

The book received considerable attention in the Soviet press and radio. It was the subject of a talk on Moscow Radio's Home Service on December 12, 1958. The talk, beamed to Soviet Asia, was given by George Verbitsky, who linked it with charges that Israel had "become the forward post of imperialism in the Near East and a battle line of expiring imperialism." The broadcaster cited the *London Times* as his authority and claimed that Britain and the United States, "according to foreign press reports," were supplying vast quantities of arms and other military equipment to Israel.

In the December, 1958 issues of the Soviet publication "Contemporary East" and "International Affairs" the Ivanov-Sheinis book was extensively reviewed, the reviewers in the journals adding additional "facts" which the book had omitted. M. Zenovitch in "Contemporary East" attacks the "hypothesis" of a world Jewish people and charges "Israeli extremists" with plans to create a Zionist state "from the Euphrates to the Nile." P. Milov, writing in "International Affairs" enlarges in what has become a standard method of Soviet propagandists on the role of European and American bankers (Rothschild, Rockefeller, Dewey, Guggenheim, Morgenthau, etc.) in the creation of Zionism and claims that "the group of extreme bourgeois Zionists who today rule Israel have ties of long standing with the leading monopolies in the United States, France and Britain, the inspirers of the colonialist policy in the Middle East." Milov, however, is apparently alone in criticising the inaccuracies in the book and the fact that it "makes no references to sources and literature even when these sources are cited."

In the meantime, we learn that visitors to the Soviet Union who have sought to buy the book have encountered great difficulty in doing so. It has sold quickly and is in great demand among Soviet Jews.

**"The Priests of Jehovah"**

An example of frank anti-Jewish propaganda, verging on direct old-style Ukrainian anti-Semitism, came to hand last month in a Ukrainian local newspaper *Prikarpatska Pravda*, of September 24, 1958, published in the city of Stanislav, Ukraine. This newspaper only recently came to notice because it is not normally obtainable outside its area of circulation. It is the prototype of scores of similar newspapers with a limited local readership and may, therefore, not be a solitary example of this sort of literature.

The article, feuilleton style, is by Pana Efremenko and is called "The Priests of the God Jehovah." It is concerned with a "loathsome, bloodsucking tick," a Jew married to a Ukrainian working woman of Stanislav who deserts her and his two children after leaving a note that he has fallen in love with another woman, "my sister by blood, also a Jewess, which cannot be said of you." Five years later, the same man, calling himself Semen Mikolaievich Khomiak, turns up with forged documents which represent him as having been badly wounded in defence of the motherland, and requests permission to register a group of worshippers "of the God Jehovah" and open a synagogue. He produced a list of sponsors, which also turns out to be forged. It transpires that Khomiak's true name is Yudah Lipovich Goldsheit, that he had dodged military service, defrauded the state of 54,000 roubles with falsified documents and had roamed about the streets of Stanislav drunk, extorting money and signatures supporting the opening of a synagogue from simple souls. He had two shady partners, the article says, one Shaya Elevich Liberman, occupied the profitable post of director of a poultry slaughter-house, another Moshe Israelovich Tartakovsky, was of no definite occupation. "Liberman, according to Talmud instructions, persuaded the gullible fathers from among the Jewish population to permit the prescribed rite of circumcision of young males, savagely performing this cruel ritual with his own hand in insanitary conditions."

No summary of this extraordinary piece of journalism can convey the nastiness with which it is written, but its worst feature is that it takes this particular case-history—whether true or false—and makes it representative of Jews, Judaism, Israel and Zionism, as though these were synonymous with cunning and dishonest practices. "What," the author demands, "is the meaning of the Jewish religion, in favour of which the 'candidate for rabbi,' Yudah Lipovich Goldsheit-Khomiak, makes so much fanatical propaganda in Stanislav?" And he goes on to elaborate an answer in which it appears that Goldsheit-

Khomiak's personal characteristics are those of Judaism in general. "The Jewish religion teaches Jews who live among other nations never to wish them peace and happiness." By innuendo, it is also suggested that all religious Jews in the Soviet Union are enemies of the people. "Rabbis, tsadiks and their like across the borders even now try in every way to send special agents for anti-Soviet activities into our country; in letters and in radio broadcasts they direct the clericals who are living in the Soviet Union to sabotage against the Communist system and the Soviet regime; they oppose the Communist system of education of children."

This is not an isolated instance of a form of propaganda which spreads alarm and despondency among Soviet Jews, particularly in such areas as the Ukraine where anti-Semitism is a traditional disease. Another example was the Ukrainian broadcast from Kirovograd on December 17, 1958 (see page 12). Less blatant than "The Priests of Jehovah," it makes the same charges in substance. "Success in national policy are the result of the great struggle of the Communist Party against bourgeois nationalists of all kinds, including Jewish nationalists, Zionists and Bundists . . . After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, leaders of Jewish bourgeois nationalists adopted an inimical attitude to the Soviet regime. They concluded agreements with Denikin, a White Russian general, and with Petlyura, Chairman of the Directorate of the Ukrainian National Government, despite the horrible Jewish pogroms committed by their gangs in the Ukraine and Belorussia . . . Jewish bourgeois nationalists support aggressive Zionist plans and openly take sides with the imperialist states . . . These forces disseminate the racist theory of hatred of people and the superiority of one people over another."

The broadcast cites two letters from allegedly dissatisfied Soviet Jews who have settled in Israel to support the charges against Judaism and Zionism. It is significant that in one instance the vocabulary used is identical with that in the article, "the Priests of Jehovah." Referring to the experiences of Dvoretz, one of the disappointed immigrants, the broadcast declares: "Dvoretz states that, according to Judaic law in Israel, he is compelled to place his four-year-old son, born in the U.S.S.R., into the jurisdiction of fanatical rabbis, who intend to perform *the savage rite of circumcision* and intoxicate him with religion."

The coincidence of this kind of propaganda and the similar terms in which it is conducted would seem to indicate a systematic, centrally-directed, campaign against a vulnerable national minority. Experience

elsewhere in the world has shown that it is easier to initiate such propaganda than to control its effects.

#### More Feuilletons

A rough calculation of the *feuilletons* pillorying anti-social individuals that have been appearing with some regularity in the Soviet press during the past year reveals that at least 50 per cent deal with malefactors who have Jewish sounding names. A curious example of this literary form appeared last October in the Moscow *Literaturnaia Gazeta*. It was called "The Descendants of Ostap Bender," by M. Lanskoï. Ostap Bender was a satirical portrait of a scheming swindler created during the N.E.P. period by the well-known Soviet satirists, Ilf and Petrov, and the character has become an archetype in Soviet literature. In this instance, the "descendant of Bender" is a man named Flaksman, with a long criminal history, who is trying to raise money from gullible scholars to finance the preparation of an "Anthology of Jewish Poetry in the Middle Ages," and is unmasked when he visits the Leningrad branch of the Writers' Union.

The circumstances of this case are unusual. The actual existence of someone named Flaksman is verifiable. In May, 1958, he wrote to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem through his secretary, N. Fainitsky, requesting certain books for the preparation of such an anthology. The anthology was actually announced for publication by the Soviet State Publishing House, and in November, 1958 it was mentioned in an article by the editor of the Communist-Yiddish paper in Paris, *Naïe Presse*. The article recounted a conversation earlier in the year with the adviser on Jewish affairs for the Soviet State Publishing House, Moshe Bielinky, who spoke of a plan to produce in Russian translation a comprehensive collection of Jewish classical writings, including the works of Ibn Gabirol, Moshe Ben Ezra, Emanuel the Roman and Yehuda Halevy, i.e. the same anthology Flaksman sought to finance. Now it seems that the project has been abandoned, and, as there is no way of confirming whether the description of Flaksman's character is justified (no indication is given as to whether or not Flaksman was arrested) the publication of this story in the influential *Literaturnaia Gazeta* may well discourage other scholars from embarking on similar Jewish literary projects.

The article contains a curiously ambiguous paragraph. "I glance . . . and see the name Flaksman, A. M. This was our first meeting but by a stroke of fate all his biography was known to me. All of it! I very much want to mention here other names under which he faced the courts—Palatner, Kvitko, Kharik . . ."

Now, these three names are those of actual Jewish writers. Lieb Kvitko, one of the best-known Yiddish literary figures in the Soviet Union, was executed on August 12, 1952. Izi Kharik, a poet from Minsk, was liquidated in the late thirties. Isaac Platner (or Palatner), also a poet from Minsk, was arrested during the purges of the thirties, sentenced to 25 years imprisonment as a spy sent from the United States, and rehabilitated after Stalin's death. Their inclusion in the context of an article about a Jewish literary swindler, without any explanation whatsoever, might suggest to the less sophisticated that all Jewish literary activity is somehow shady.

#### **Sholem Aleichem Centenary**

March, 1959 will mark the centenary of the Jewish author, Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Rabinowitz) whose birthplace in 1859 was Pereislav, in the Ukraine. Perhaps the most outstanding Yiddish writer of all time, Sholem Aleichem has been widely published in Russian translation in the Soviet Union, where he has been acclaimed by the literary authorities as the spokesman for the Jewish proletariat and its social protest. When the Yiddish school system was still permitted (it was finally liquidated in 1948) study of the works of Sholem Aleichem was a standard part of the curriculum. Clubs, institutions and streets have been named after him; he is a revered figure in the Soviet literary pantheon. But since 1948 not a single one of this distinguished writer's books have been published in the U.S.S.R. in Yiddish, the language in which he wrote.

In honour of his centenary, the Soviet "Peace Partisans Movement" have announced the publication of a new edition of his writings—in Russian translation. Several months ago a group of Jewish Communist and left-wing writers addressed a letter to the "Peace Partisans Movement" expressing gratitude at the plans to celebrate Sholem Aleichem's centenary. Their letter included the following: "One cannot regard the anniversary celebration as complete if, in the country in which he was born and lived and in which he wrote most of his works, an edition of Sholem Aleichem is not published in the language, his mother-tongue, in which his works were written, and which also remained the language of the Jewish communities living there—the Yiddish language."

If the Soviet authorities remain adamant in their refusal to publish Sholem Aleichem in Yiddish it will be the first occasion in the U.S.S.R. when an author's anniversary is honoured while, at the same time, the language in which he earned his distinction is boycotted.

In the meantime a 1959 calendar, issued by the Government Publishing House for Political Literature in Moscow, contains on one of its pages a short centenary article on Sholem Aleichem.

The Polish communist Yiddish paper, *Folkshtimme*, on February 3, 1959, reported that there will be articles commemorating the centenary in the Soviet press as well as radio and television broadcasts. A special Sholem Aleichem stamp will be issued on March 20 and among authors participating in the celebrations will be Ehrenburg, Fedin, Valentin, Katejow, Ivanov, Halkin and Lurie.

But there is a possibility that the pressure of public opinion in the West on this point may have been effective, judging from a report in the Israeli Communist newspaper *Kol Haam*. On February 15, the Israeli Arab Communist, Emil Habibi, cabled *Kol Haam* from Moscow that the Soviet Government publishing house was planning to publish selections from Sholem Aleichem in Yiddish during his centenary. The newspaper gave the titles of several short stories in this context.

#### Other Translations

The "Soviet Writer" recently published a selection of poems, in Russian translation, by David Hofstein, one of the Yiddish writers executed in the purge of Yiddish intellectuals in 1953. The book in an edition of 5,000 copies, is one of a series of books of murdered Yiddish writers now appearing, or planned to appear, in Russian translation. The fact of the execution of Hofstein and his colleagues has not yet been publicly acknowledged in the Soviet Union, but the prologue to the present book hints that the poet did not die a natural death. It also refers to his deviations, his "temporary retreat towards nationalism," but says that in the end he overcame his mistakes and became "an upright Soviet citizen and a Communist."

Another interesting Russian translation from Yiddish is a collection of stories on Birobidzhan by Moshe Goldstein. This book was first published in 1934, and again in 1941. It was also published by a Yiddish Communist journal, *Ikuf*, in America in 1944. There are a number of strange omissions in the new, Russian, edition. First, it is not mentioned that the book is a translation from the Yiddish, and the biography of the author, who was killed at the front in 1943, omits any reference to the fact that he was a Jew. Whereas the original Yiddish version referred to Jews who had come to Birobidzhan from the U.S.A. and Hamburg, Germany, these details are now altered to make it appear that they came from Berdichev. Where the word

"Jews" appears in the original it is generally translated as "people," except in the following sentence: "And have the Jews decided all of a sudden to go away from here?"

A similar process of editing is noticeable in a Russian translation of a Yiddish novel "The Steppes are Calling," by Neta Luria, which was written sometime between 1930 and 1935. In this instance, the fact that the book was translated from the Yiddish is acknowledged, but reference in the original to "Jews" and "Goy" are deleted altogether, or the term "Jews" is changed to "people." Luria, who was an important Yiddish writer, was imprisoned during the period when Jewish culture and intellectuals were being actively persecuted in the Soviet Union but was later rehabilitated, facts which are not stated.

#### **Minimising the Role of Jews**

The practice now so frequently encountered in the Soviet Union of minimising the role of Jews in events is seen in a strange light in the December, 1958 issue of the Soviet *International Affairs*. This contains a lengthy book review by S. Semyonov of a German book about the S.S.—Reimund Shnabel's "Rule Without Morals: Documents about the S.S."

Semyonov complains in this review that although "documents dealing with S.S. activities in Germany show that Hitler's reign of terror was chiefly directed against the Communists—official West German historians falsify facts to throw a veil over the heroic fight put up by the Communists against fascism." Although Semyonov does not go so far as to *falsify* facts, he succeeds in throwing a veil of his own over at least one important fact, namely that the Jews were the principal victims of the S.S. Indeed, in the recital of S.S. brutalities against people in the Occupied countries, Semyonov specifically refers to Jews only when quoting from S.S. documents. He refers to the mass-shootings and executions of "Soviet citizens" in gas-chambers, but omits to mention that these Soviet citizens were almost entirely Jewish men, women and children who, along with the rest of European Jewry, and European Gypsies, were the chief candidates for this method of extermination.

Semyonov also writes: "The document which deprived such prominent personalities as the writer Leonhard Frank, Anna Seghers, Willy Bredel, Gustav Regler and Erich Weinert, the artist John Hartfield, the producer Erwin Piscator and others of German citizenship reveals the barbaric treatment that German intellectuals suffered from the Hitler regime." But these writers and artist were Jews, not "Ger-



man intellectuals," and they were deprived of German citizenship precisely because they were Jews.

Another omission occurs in a review of the play "the Diary of Anne Frank" in the January number of the Soviet monthly, *Sovietskaia Zhenshchina*. The review is by I. Falkovits a Jewish scientist and Yiddish grammarian who was released from prison some years ago. His review fails to mention that Anne Frank and her family were Jews.

#### OTHER PUBLICATIONS

"EASTERN EUROPE," by Marvin L. Kalb; *Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy*; 332 pp.; \$4.50.

Marvin Kalb is a young American who joined the staff of the American Embassy in Moscow from Harvard's Russian Research Centre in January, 1956. He stayed for thirteen months, travelling round the country, speaking (in fluent Russian) to people in all walks of Soviet life, from students and taxi-drivers to Red Army officers and *stilyagi*. During his travels he visited synagogues in Bokhara and Tiflis, the Jewish ghetto, the *Podol* in Kiev, and spoke about Jewish problems in Tashkent. All these and hundreds of other experiences were vividly recorded in his diary which is now published. The book does not contain any surprises for those familiar with the situation of Jews in the U.S.S.R. It confirms the picture of a diverse, scattered and restless population, still remembering with bitterness the terror to which they were subjected during Stalin's reign, conscious of their own uncertain situation, many of them longing to leave the Soviet Union, others hoping that their conditions will improve. But Mr. Kalb is never didactic. He is content to report what he has seen and heard, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions.

"HOW A JEWISH COMMUNITY LIVES IN TADJIK," by Cedric Belfrage; *National Guardian*, New York, November 10, 1958.

Mr. Belfrage is rather more didactic, as one would expect from so energetic a left-wing journalist. Here he reports on a Jewish wedding he attended in Stalinobod, Tadjik, Soviet Asia. Mr. Belfrage's lively account of this wedding and his conversations with Jews he met in the city is intended to show that Jews do not feel discriminated against in the Soviet Union and, indeed, are free, equal and happy citizens of

the various republics. He does, however, explain that he hasn't been attempting any study of the Jewish situation, but has set down his encounters as isolated incidents "for what they may be worth." One imagines that he would not altogether deny the possibility that the Jews he met might have been hesitant about frankly confiding their feelings to a total stranger. But, for all that, much of the conversations he reports does not materially contradict the more critical version of the Jewish situation in the Soviet Union reported by his daughter, Sally, in her shrewd and entertaining book, "A Room in Moscow"—(See our Newsletter No. 3).

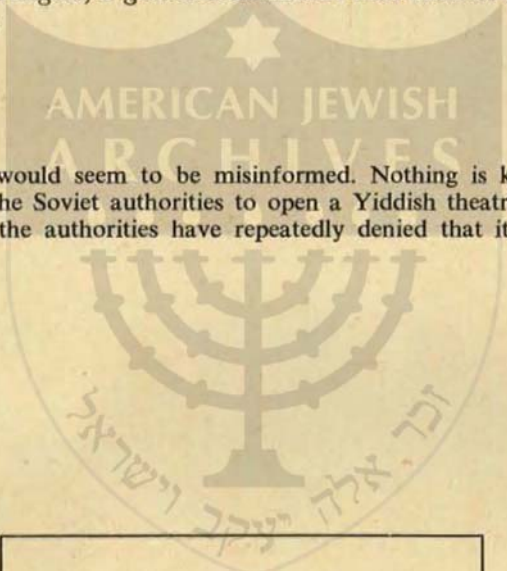
At the wedding, Mr. Belfrage's table neighbours "agreed that they had no interest in going to Israel, though they wanted to know if I had been there and what it was like." He gathered that "the younger grown-ups—the majority of these sitting around me—went to the synagogue either not all or only on the three great Jewish days . . . 'Religious' or not they were a community, and I learned later that some young folk who never went to the synagogue nevertheless expressed group loyalty by giving money to it." They were Bokharan Jews and explained that none of their community spoke Yiddish or Hebrew, except for a handful of elders. But no one seems to have explained to Mr. Belfrage that Bokharan Jews have never spoken Yiddish, which is a European-Jewish language. The synagogues of which there were two, one "small," one "medium size," bore no distinguishing marks. There was no rabbi, but a man of about 40, "the son and grandson of Rabbis in Russia, was acting for them as best he could." His name was Shapiro, clearly a Western Jew, who said that the Jews in Stalinabod did not feel discriminated against now, although, said Shapiro "I will not speak of the events up to a few years ago." He added. "It is true that old habits die hard, and sometimes we encounter individual words or acts of anti-Semitism." Some of them, Mr. Belfrage writes, get Yiddish papers from Birobidzhan (which can only mean that they receive them from other Jews privately, as the Birobidzhan Yiddish paper is not circulated to subscribers outside the area), but none of them wished to go to Birobidzhan. He was told that a few of them had gone to Israel, including the former Stalinabod rabbi, who sends parcels of special fruit from there and is apparently happy. "Shapiro knew no Jews personally who had gone to Israel and regretted it, but indicated awareness that there were some . . . 'Stalinabod's European Jews' do not complain of the lack of Jewish cultural expression hereabouts, since only their tiny minority would appreciate it if they had it. They are unhappy about

this lack in the European part of the U.S.S.R., but with evident satisfaction Shapiro said that he understood a Yiddish theatre would shortly be opened in Moscow.\* They would like to be able to get a Jewish paper from Moscow and think one ought to be published there to which Jews all over the U.S.S.R. would subscribe, but do not expect it here."

Altogether, it is not difficult from Mr. Belfrage's report to see that even in Tadjik, where the Jewish situation is much less acute than in parts of the European areas of the Soviet Union, there is a strong sense of solidarity among the Jews and a readiness to communicate, even to strangers, a guarded admission that matters are not what they should be.

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\* Mr. Shapiro would seem to be misinformed. Nothing is known of any intention by the Soviet authorities to open a Yiddish theatre in Moscow, and, in fact, the authorities have repeatedly denied that it is necessary.



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PRAYER HOURS IN SYNAGOGUES IN MOSCOW.

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|                  |       |               |
|------------------|-------|---------------|
| Kabaloth Sabbath | about | 19.00         |
| Shaharit Sabbath |       | 09.30 - 10.00 |
| Ending of prayer |       | 13.00         |

On holidays the Shaharit begins at 10.00 and the prayer ends at about 14.00

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAVELLERS TO

### THE SOVIET UNION

1. Any Jewish traveller to Russia, completely unofficially, and purely in his capacity as a tourist, is in the position to do two helpful things vis-a-vis the Jewish position in the Soviet Union. He can indicate that he is interested in the Jewish situation by asking questions of Russian officials -- and he can strengthen the morale of the Jewish population by visiting with them and telling them of Jewish life in America and Israel.
2. As a tourist, he will be guided by the Russian travel agency called Intourist. He will have an escort or an interpreter. He can ask that person any questions about Jewish life in the Soviet Union, particularly about the social, religious, cultural and communal life. He can ask about synagogues, schools, Yiddish books, Yiddish theater, Hebrew books, holidays, social welfare organizations, or community centers. He can ask why all other nationalities have their own languages and publications and the Jews do not. He can ask about Jewish students at universities. He can ask what opportunities Jews have to live a full and complete Jewish life, to educate their children as Jews, to observe the holidays, to have adult education courses, and to do all the things we in America consider it vital and important to perform in order to preserve Jewish identity and guarantee Jewish survival.
3. He can ask the Intourist guide if it is possible to meet any Russian officials, with whom he could discuss these matters -- for instance, anyone from the Ministry of Cults or Ministry of Nationalities or any professor of the university who is equipped to give answers.
4. He can ask to visit any places of historical Jewish interest in the past or the present -- museums, schools, yeshivas, theaters, cooperatives.
5. He should say that he wishes to attend services Friday at sundown (give addresses and hours). The synagogue is the only place he can meet Jews.

SUMMARY:

All of this will indicate to the Russians that Jews from abroad are concerned with the fate and condition of their fellow-Jews in Russia. By asking pointed questions, (such as The American Jewish Committee leaders did of Mr. Mikoyan when he was in New York in February 1959), the visitor will be letting the Russians know that there is dissatisfaction with the cultural discrimination under which the Jews suffer, quite uniquely from all other national minorities. If the Russians are constantly reminded, in a friendly non-aggressive manner, that Jews abroad are disturbed by the discrimination, there is a possibility that some connections may be made. It is known that the Russians are sensitive to outside public opinion on matters of this sort.

6. When the visitor attends synagogue on Friday evening, he can make his presence known. He will probably be recognized immediately as a foreigner, and people will speak to him. He should not engage in political discussions -- but speak only of Jewish topics. He should indicate clearly that Jews all over the world are thinking of Russian Jews, are concerned about them and interested in their welfare. He should tell them all about Jewish life in America, for they are hungry for information. He should tell them how the American Jewish community is organized -- welfare funds, UJA, synagogues, centers, hospitals, old age homes, parochial schools, Talmud Torahs, Sunday schools, Yeshiva university, Einstein medical school, Bfandais, Yiddish newspapers in New York. Hebrew taught in many high schools and colleges throughout the U.S., etc.

7. He should describe the attitude of American Jews toward Israel; the support given in financial terms through UJA, Bonds, Hadassah, Hebrew University, Weizmann Institute, Technion, Histadrut, private investment; the political assistance given by individual Jews who interpret Israel to their senators and congressmen; the tourism which prompts approximately 40,000 American Jews each year to visit Israel; the student exchanges, which bring approximately 1500 American Jewish young people to Israel to study each summer; the attentive audiences who turn out to hear talks by visiting dignitaries from Israel; etc., etc.

8. He should describe the feelings of American Jews for their fellow-Jews all over the world -- in Morocco, Rumania, Yemen, Poland, etc. -- and tell of the work of the American Joint Distribution Committee in helping Jews everywhere. (The word "Joint" will probably be well known, especially to the older people who will remember its work in Russia after World War I.)

9. He should not do any of this in a boastful or superior manner (there may be a resentment of the rich Americans who patronizingly condescend to help their poorer fellow-Jews), but rather he should try to give a picture of the American Jews as being dedicated to Jewish survival -- his own and that of all Jews everywhere.

10. He should take with him to Russia some taleisim, prayer books (in Hebrew only), yarmulkes, Jewish calendars (in Hebrew only), Bibles (in Hebrew only). And he should leave these articles in the synagogue -- either giving them to the rabbi, or to individuals, or simply leaving them in the pew. If he is asked at customs, upon entering Russia, why he is carrying these articles (and such a question is extremely unlikely), he should simply explain that it is normal Jewish custom to carry these religious articles whenever one travels to a foreign land and to leave them behind as gifts to the synagogue.

11. He should not ask any Jew if he can render any service (such as contacting relatives back in America), but if he is asked, he may agree to do so. Any Russian Jew who wishes to risk giving a name and address of a relative in America or Israel, and who wishes to have a message passed on or a letter carried out, has probably thought through the risk carefully and has made his own decision. The visitor should not initiate, but if requested, he may comply.

12. Upon return to the United States it would be helpful if the visitor were to give his impressions, relate any experiences he had, tell what he saw, whom he met, what answers he got to his questions, what reactions he felt the Russians or Russian Jews had toward him. All information is helpful in piecing together a fuller picture of the life of the Jews in Russia.

## CULTURAL QUESTIONS

1. The percentage of Jewish students in Soviet universities:

The percentage of Jewish students during the 1930's was somewhere between 7.5% - 10.0% (as opposed to some 5.0% during Tzarist days). This was certainly an improvement.

Now a most reliable source (just returned from the U.S.S.R.) informs that official statistics concerning 1955-56, which are not yet available outside the U.S.S.R., give the total percentage of Jewish students in all higher institutions of learning (including the less exalted technical and musical institutes where entry for Jews is still comparatively much easier than in the case of the highly competitive universities, and especially certain faculties like the medical or certain academies like the diplomatic and military where Jews are almost completely barred) as 4.1%. (This leaves no doubt that the percentage in the universities proper is even lower, and in any case the percentage has dropped still further during 1956 - 58, when the silent exclusion of Jews has been in full swing and when, in any case, competition for entry into the universities has sharpened still further). There is thus no doubt whatever that the present percentage is less than half of what it was during the 1930's, and even considerably less than the official discriminatory limit of Tzarist days!

2. The systematic exclusion of Jews from political life:

In December 1937, 32 of the 569 members of the Soviet of the Union (5.6%) were Jews and 15 of the 574 members of the Soviet of Nationalities (2.6%), an overall total percentage of 4.1%. In January of 1946 the rapporteur of the Soviet of Nationalities, Peter A. Shariya, revealed that Jews in that House had dropped from 11th to 26th place numerically (no absolute figures are available for this House, but Jews occupied at that time somewhere between 7th-11th place among Soviet nationalities, no absolute accuracy being possible because of the disastrous changes of the war-time period. By March of 1950, there were only 2 Jews left in the Soviet of the Union out of 678 members (of whom one is



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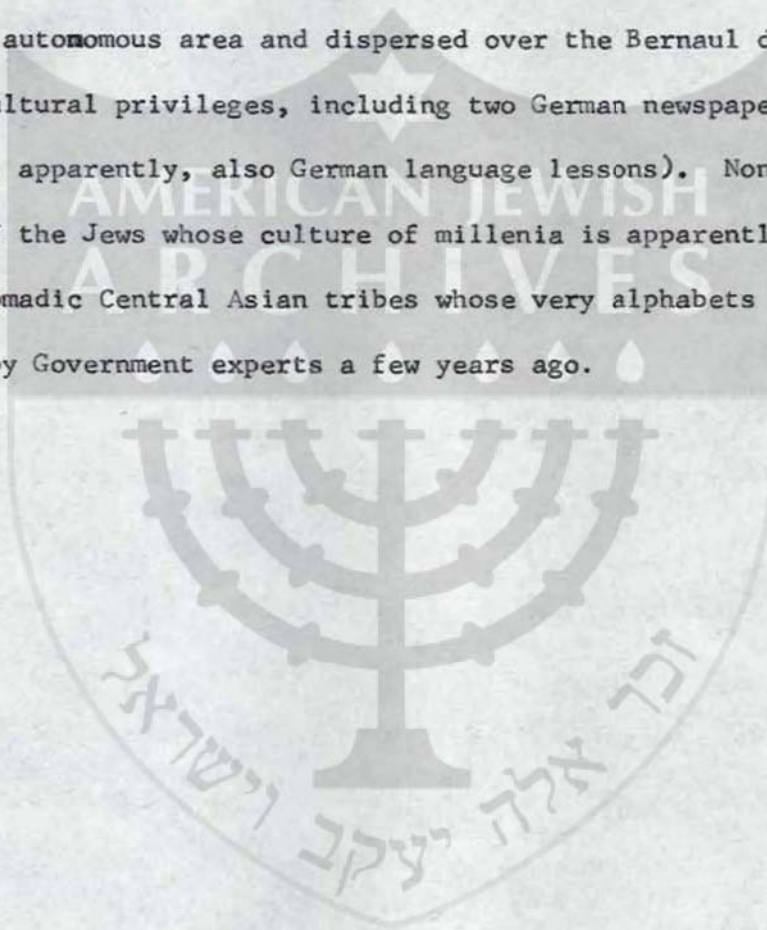
not even definitely a Jew). In the Soviet of Nationalities, there were only 3 Jewish representatives left (of whom one is also not definitely known to be Jewish) out of 638 members. The total for the whole Supreme Soviet is thus less than 0.4%, as compared with 4.1% in 1937. It would, however, appear that someone considered even this percentage to be excessive, since in the Supreme Soviet of Spring 1958 there were only 3 Jews left in both Houses (of whom one is not known definitely to be Jewish), i.e. a mere 0.25%. Yet the percentage of Jews in the Soviet Union is today about 1.4%.

3. Schools for minority nationalities:

There is no certainty today about the existence of any non-Russian schools in Moscow itself, although there were some rumours concerning a school (or at least additional language lessons) for Tatars; however it must be pointed out that approximately 500,000 Jews in the Soviet Capital (a number confirmed by Mr. Khrushchev himself) constitute approximately 10% of the population there, whereas no other non-Russian nationality in Moscow counts more than some few thousands, i.e. 1% or less. Thus if there existed any non-Russian schools there they should certainly be Jewish schools, since this happens to be the only minority in the Soviet capital which is numerically significant.

Whatever may be the position in Moscow, however, there is absolutely no doubt that through the Soviet Union as a whole the Jews are the only Soviet nationality so recognized in the relevant "nationality paragraph" of the internal passport which has no schools, or even additional language or history lessons of any sort, but whose children are forced to attend the schools of other peoples. (Yet in 1933, in Byelorussia alone, there were 339 Jewish schools with 36,501 pupils, while in 1931 there were 831 Jewish schools with 94,872 students in the Ukraine; outside these two republics - in the Crimea, in Birebijan, in the Western RSFSR, etc. - there would appear to have been at least some 20,000 pupils of Jewish Schools at various periods, a grand total of well over 150,000 pupils of Jewish schools - and today not a single one.

all  
As for other nationalities, not only do/the nationalities of the 15 Soviet Republics have schools of their own, not only do the peoples of the various Autonomic Republics have similar privileges, but the same privilege is also extended to various minority groups within the Republics and areas (not only Uzbeke and Russians have schools in Uzbekistan, but other Asian minorities there are given at least additional lessons in their own language; the Volga-Germans deported by Stalin as enemy aliens, deprived of their autonomous area and dispersed over the Bernaul district of Siberia, still have some cultural privileges, including two German newspapers, German radio transmissions and, apparently, also German language lessons). None of this is considered to be **the** right of the Jews whose culture of millenia is apparently considered inferior to that of semi-nomadic Central Asian tribes whose very alphabets had to be artificially created for them by Government experts a few years ago.



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CONDITION OF JEWS IN SOVIET UNION

BACKGROUND: The Soviet Union is constructed, unlike the U.S., not on the theory of the melting-pot, but rather on the principle of separate nationalities ('National in form -- Socialist in content', 'Soviet of Nationalities', national republics, Regions and Areas, separate schools -- or at least additional lessons -- in their own language and history for various ethnic units even when constituting dispersed minorities, artificial construction of alphabets and even whole vocabularies for backward tribes -- all this for reasons of economic and political expediency). Seen against this background, the treatment of more than three million Jews in the U.S.S.R. constitutes a glaring anomaly even within the Soviet rulers' own terms of reference. On the one hand, the Jews are recognized as a distinct nationality, like all others and irrespective of their places of residence, by one of the paragraphs of the Soviet identity cards which determines that the holder is a 'Jew (Yevrei), in as far as his nationality (nacionalnost) is concerned. On the other hand, this recognition works in the case of the Jews purely to their disadvantage, since questionnaires concerning application for work copy this paragraph of the identity card, and the applicant's Jewishness is a major obstacle to his being received into (or, for that matter, staying in) positions of national and security importance in the higher military, government or party ranks. Only three Jews remain among the several hundred members and candidates of the Communist Party's Central Committee: only three Jews are known for certain to be in the newly elected Supreme Soviet, although one or two persons of Jewish descent may be hiding behind Russian names; the diplomatic service is now almost completely 'Judenrein'; there is a distinct, if tacit, 'numerus clausus' (quota system used against Jews in universities in Czarist days) for the admission of Jewish students to certain schools and academies (such as in the diplomatic field), and even the most brilliant can get past this obstacle only by consenting to bribe the officials concerned. No less a personality than Mme. Katherina Furtzeva admitted the dismissal of Jews more than a year ago, in an interview with the pro-Soviet 'National Guardian'; she explained that this had occurred in positions where Jews constituted 'too high a proportion' of the staff. Mr. Khrushchev has explained that the increasing education of the

national cadres of the various Republics has made them desire to put their own people in place of the Jews.

As opposed to those drawbacks, the Jews do not enjoy any of the advantages accruing to other peoples as result of the official recognition of their national status. Their two national tongues -- Hebrew and Yiddish -- are prescribed, the teaching of their history and culture is taboo, there is today no Jewish newspaper (except a single, two-page translation of a Russian Far Eastern paper, appearing three times weekly in Birobidjan), no Jewish theater, no Yiddish books, or even a dictionary, have been printed since the ban imposed in 1948, no Jewish schools or even additional lessons in Jewish culture are permitted. Whereas small and dispersed minorities such as few thousand members of the Tadjik and other Asian minorities in the Republic of Uzbekistan, are considered worthy of schools in their own language and culture, or at least additional lessons in the subject, half-a-million Jews in Moscow (a number admitted recently by Khrushchev himself) are not deemed to have deserved that privilege.

One of the reasons given by Soviet leaders has been that it would 'cost too much money' to permit a dispersed minority like the Jews cultural development. This is a curious argument in view of the professed principles of the Soviet State, more curious in view of the treatment accorded to far less highly cultured Asian tribes only recently emerged from nomadism, who constitute no less of a dispersed minority, and most curious in view of the fact that in 1948, and other periods, the Soviet State confiscated numberless Jewish theaters, publishing houses, newspaper offices; schools and even synagogues, for purposes of its own and, of course, without compensation and that, in fact, it would be merely necessary to return its own property to the Jewish minority.

Another kind of Soviet excuse had claimed that 'Jewish culture is dead' and that the Jews themselves had 'lost interest' in their culture; it would seem that the Jews by some strange coincidence all 'lost interest' on that very same day in 1948, when Stalin by a sweeping administrative blow closed the Yiddish publishing houses, newspapers, schools

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and theaters, dissolved the 'Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee' and arrested the cream of Jewish writers, artists and thinkers (killing most of them by slave labor, slow torture and execution between 1948 and 1952, close on 450 outstanding Jewish intellectuals). It is, of course, known -- even from the Communist press outside the Soviet Union -- that after Stalin's death the former actors of the Yiddish Theater petitioned the authorities for the return of their requisitioned theater, but were met by a stone wall of bureaucratic red tape and delay and with final refusal. ~~Those~~ The remaining Jewish writers were promised an almanac of their works and of those who had died, but it never appeared. So much for the 'loss of interest' of the Jews themselves.

Nor has obvious discrimination against Jews been confined to the cultural field; as far as religion is concerned it is known that, whereas a number of Mosques have been returned to Moslem peoples in the Asian Republics, the requests of Jews for the return of sequestered synagogues have been turned down, even in one town where a large Jewish community was left with only one synagogue, as compared with 36 before the Soviet occupation. Moreover, the ban on Hebrew severely interferes with Jewish worship, since a child who has not learned Hebrew cannot understand the Jewish prayers or pronounce the various blessings required in worship. Unlike the Pravoslavic (Russian Orthodox) and Moslem communities, the Jews are not permitted any country-wide community and religious association or organization. There is no Chief Rabbi of Russian Jewry. Worshippers are pitifully short of religious articles such as prayer shawls. Needless to say, any association or contact with their Jewish co-religionists outside the Soviet Union is strictly taboo.

EFFECTS ON SOVIET JEWRY: The effect on Soviet Jews, especially of the younger age groups, of the period since 1948, has been the opposite of what might have been expected. During earlier years of Soviet rule, while there had been a fairly flourishing, officially permitted, Yiddish culture attracting the older generation, there had been far-reaching signs of assimilation and general loss of Jewishness among the younger generation, actively fostered by the Atheistic and 'internationalist' policy of the

government. For these young Jews, the government's sudden persecution of them and their people, with the clearly anti-semitic overtones accompanying the campaign, came as a traumatic shock. These were acts of the kind which, they had been told, a 'socialist society' had been created to abolish. The Soviet press attacked 'rootless Cosmopolitans without homeland or kin' and, in case anyone missed the point, the original Jewish names of these 'Cosmopolitans' were given (in brackets after their Russian pen-names). Then came the nightmare period of the Jewish "Doctors Plot"; the Soviet press published caricatures of hook-nosed Jewish physicians murdering their gentile patients; since the Middle Ages such caricatures had been seen only in Streicher's 'Der Stuermer'. It is now known that during those dreadful weeks, the ancient Czarist pogrom slogan of 'Beat the Jews and Save Holy Russia' appeared -- verbatim -- on the blackboards of schools and universities.

Jewish students feared to attend lessons, Jewish housewives preferred not to attend to their shopping, and whole Jewish families locked themselves in their houses, a phenomenon not witnessed since the Czarist pogroms. It was widely believed by Jews and non-Jews alike that Stalin had deportation trains assembled with the idea of dispersing the Jews across the Arctic wastes. One version never denied, claims that Stalin's last meeting with his associates was concerned with this question. Then came the dictator's death, almost miraculously rescuing the Jews from the fate threatening them. The "Doctors' Plot" was admitted to have been a fraud. A few survivors from the group of Jewish writers trickled back from the slave-labor camps.

All the acts against Jewish culture perpetrated during Stalin's last years were kept up unchanged; no revival was permitted. In as far as the works of the Jewish writers were mentioned again: it was always in Russian, never in the original Yiddish. When the State Publishing House issued a work on the 'National Tradition of the Peoples of the U. S. S. R.' giving a list of more than 10,000 awards for bravery in war time, it mentioned a group of some twenty nations which had shared the awards between them,

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ending up with "and others". Those "others", almost four hundred of them, were mostly Jews, as is known from lists published during the war. Had these Jews appeared in their correct place, they would have been third on the list of bravery, immediately after the Russians and Ukrainians, and in front of all the other Soviet peoples, many of whom happened to be numerically much stronger than the Jews. This fact was buried, however, among "and Others".

All these factors have caused an unprecedented revulsion among Jewish youth in Russia. From being completely indifferent to their own culture and people, they have turned into a group almost pathetically eager for any word concerning Jewishness, (difficult as such words are to find today in the Soviet Union) and concerning the most romantic event in modern Jewish history, the creation of the Jewish State of Israel. Their revulsion has caused them to idealize that same Jewishness concerning which they knew too little. They have come to the synagogue, although remaining uninterested in religion as such, to find out just what that Jewishness was of which they were being accused and for the sake of which they were suffering. When Mrs. Meyerson appeared in Moscow as Israel's first Ambassador, some tens of thousands of Jews welcomed her in the synagogue and demonstratively marched after her in the streets. An Israel youth delegation at last year's Moscow Youth Festival was met by similar demonstrations; the Soviet government resorted to almost every conceivable trick to prevent this, including the cancellation of appearances of the delegation at the last moment and transferences to remote and unsuitable places without prior notice. In spite of all this, young Soviet Jews, especially students, somehow managed to turn up in large numbers to demonstrate their fervent support for their kinsmen from the Zionist Youth Delegation while entirely ignoring a small Communist delegation which had also come from Israel.

There is no doubt today that the Soviet government's policy has entirely disaffected the Jewish minority and that the government itself is aware of this. Nothing else can

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explain the campaign of 'persuasion' throughout the Soviet press, especially professional and local papers, telling Jews how 'terrible' Israel is, how 'bad' the climate, the mosquitos, the housing and working conditions, how 'wrong' and Zionism is, etc., etc.

MOTIVATIONS OF SOVIET POLICY: Why then does Soviet policy continue along those lines? It would appear that it has created something of a vicious circle for itself from which it finds it hard to escape. Suspicion and discrimination has alienated the Jews, a factor which causes the Soviet rulers to act with further suspicion and discrimination, which in turn further alienated the Jews etc. The words and acts of the Soviet leaders leave no doubt that they realize that they have failed to solve this problem which sticks like a bone in their throats. It may well be that they would dearly like to rid themselves of this problem by letting the Jews go, but they feel that they cannot do so since this might cause difficulties with the Soviet Union's Arab Allies, fearing any augmentation of Israel's population, and might also cause troubles with other Soviet minorities which would like to cross the frontiers of the free world.



INTERVIEWS WITH RUSSIAN OFFICIALS ON JEWISH QUESTION.

The following are some quotations which illustrate quite clearly the general trends in as far as the treatment of Jews in the Soviet Union is concerned. The quotations are taken, without exception, from the statements of Soviet leaders to foreign visitors and delegations who enquire about the fate of Jews, or they are statements made by Communist and pro-Communist newspapers and personalities in various parts of the world on this subject:

The following statement was made by Mr. Khrushchev on Saturday the 12th May, 1956, to the visiting French Socialist delegate, headed by Messrs. Pierre Commin, Andre Philip etc.: the statement leaves no doubt about the fact that the Jew is considered by the Soviet leadership to be an alien in the Soviet Union and its various Republics; nor can there be any doubt concerning the under-tone which is to be clearly felt in the Soviet leader's statement. A verbatim report of the conversation was published in No.136 of "Realites" in Paris (May 1957) and its contents have never been in any way contested by any Soviet spokesman:

"KHRUSHCHEV: Anti-Semitic sentiments still exist here. They are remnants of a reactionary past. This is a complicated problem because of the position of the Jews and their relations with the other peoples. At the outset of the Revolution, we had many Jews in the leadership of the Party and of the State. They were more educated, may be more revolutionary than the average Russian. In due course, we have created new cadres...

"PERVOUKHIN: ...our own intelligentsia.

"KHRUSHCHEV: Should the Jews want to occupy the foremost positions in our Republics now, it would - naturally - be taken amiss by the indigeneous inhabitants. The latter would ill-receive these pretensions, especially as they do not consider themselves less intelligent nor less capable than the Jews. Or, for instance, when a

Jew in the Ukraine is appointed to an important post and he surrounds himself with Jewish collaborators, it is understandable that this should create jealousy and hostility towards the Jews."

What the implications are of this statement was illucidated still further by an interview given by another member of the Soviet Communist's Party Presidium, Mme Ekaterina Furtseva, to the Pro-Soviet New York periodic, the 'National Guardian' and printed there on the 25th of June, 1956, in reply to questions concerning the implications of Khrushchev's statement:

"According to the first 'National Guardian' story: "'She (Mme. Furtseva) said that some years back talk of anti-Semitism here was stirred as a result of misinterpretations of certain government actions. The government had found in some of its department a heavy concentration of Jewish people, upwards of 50% of the staff. Steps were taken to transfer them to other enterprises, giving them equally good positions and without jeopardizing their rights."'

Subsequently 'the Guardian' reported Mr. Ilyichev (the then Soviet Foreign Ministry Press Chief) had "'secured from Mme. Furtseva this explanation: In her interview she meant that 'if at some time there had taken place changes in office personnel, these changes were dictated by the economic needs of the country and under no circumstances were aimed at any discrimination of persons of any nationality. If a chief of an office or department found that in his office there existed over-saturation of a certain group of specialists, then proceeding from the economic needs of the country and with no reference to nationality, some of the specialists were given other posts in industry, agriculture and other branches. Never at any time during the Soviet power were there any quotas for Jews or persons of some other nationality, and there are not now."

"Ilyichev used the same occasion to set the 'National Guardian' straight on Khrushchev's views."

The original statement of the two Soviet leaders and no less the "rectifications" of Mr. Ilyichev leave little doubt as to the reality concerning the employment of Jews in certain sectors of public life in the Soviet Union. This is what Mr. Ilyichev had to tell 'the National Guardian' concerning Mr. Khrushchev's statement to the French Socialist delegation:

"What Khrushchev said, he (Ilyichev) explained, was that after the Revolution some of the USSR's national republics did not have their own national trained core of key people, that these cadres at the time were largely Russian. But now the Revolution was almost 40 years old, new national cadres had been created and the people of these Republics were demanding a place for them.

"It is quite understandable," Ilyichev said, "that any people should want to create their own cadres and prefer their leading ones to be of their own nationality. But this does not mean that able Jewish people are not and will not be promoted."

Here is the tiny, significant report of Mr. Y.B. Salzberg, former member of the Ontario Provincial Parliament of Canada, representing the 'Labour-Progressive' Party (Communist Party). Salzberg visited the Soviet Union in August 1956, with a delegation of the Canadian Communist Party, and went out of his way to investigate the conditions of Jews; this is his interview with Khrushchev as reported by Salzberg himself, in the Yiddish language, Communist Party Daily of New York 'the Morgen-Freiheit' (of the 30th October, 1956).

In reply to Salzberg's demands that the Jews of Russia should not be forcibly assimilated, but should be given cultural autonomy, Khrushchev said:

"Integration (assimilation) is historically speaking progressive..." he

added that he "does not agree to the thought of creating a Yiddish elementary schools and it would be much better for Jewish children to attend general schools".

When Salzberg stressed the question of Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, Khrushchev replied that he was not anti-Semitic, but

"After the liberation of Czernowitz the streets were dirty; when the Jews were asked why the streets were not being cleaned, they replied that the non-Jewish part of the population which used to do that work, had fled the city."

But "of thousands of Soviet tourists abroad, the three who did not return home were Jews."

But "wherever a Jew settles down, he quickly sets up a synagogue."

But that he had "agreed with Stalin, that the Crimean - which was then depopulated at the end of the War against Hitler - should not be set up as a centre for Jewish colonization, since, in case of war it would be turned into a war base against the Soviet Union."

Salzberg adds that "at the end, Khrushchev gave me the comradely advice not to let myself be incited by the bourgeoisie and by the Zionists.... I was left with a feeling of disquiet by those and other remarks of Khrushchev's, since they express antiquated prejudices against Jews in general, as a people, in sharp contradiction to the Marxist way of thought."

MOSCOW YESHIVA AND PRAYER BOOK - SHOWPIECES OF PROPAGANDA

From a very reliable and absolutely trustworthy source comes the following information:

Representatives of a certain Jewish community in the U.S.S.R. (whose name and locality cannot be disclosed for obvious reasons) approached the local authorities for Religious Affairs with a twofold request:

- (a) to be allowed to send an additional number of rabbinical students to the Yeshiva (Theological Seminary) in Moscow; and
- (b) to be allocated a greater number of Prayer Books ("Sidurim") urgently needed by the community at the religious services.

The representatives were told that their request could not be considered on the spot, but that they must make their application to the "Committee for Religious Cults" in Moscow. The advice was taken and an appropriate approach was made to the "Committee" in the capital. The reply to both requests was negative.

With regard to the first request, it was flatly refused as impossible. As for the Prayer Books, the representatives were told that they would have to wait "at least three years" before their request for additional "Sidurim" could be considered.

This case hardly requires much comment. It serves as a clear indication that the Soviet authorities have no intention whatsoever to heed to the real religious needs of the Jewish population. Both the opening of the Yeshiva in Moscow two years ago and the printing of the Prayer Book were a mere gesture designed for propaganda purposes only.