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The Soviet and the Jews, 1972.

The Soviet and the Jews
Daniel Jeremy Silver
October 29, 1972

In August of this year the Council of Ministers of the Supreme Soviet promulgated a new regulation which they numbered 572 and entitled "A Tariff For the Reimbursement of Education." The tariff set out various sums that would have to be repaid to the USSR by anyone with a college diploma or even a high school certification who wanted to renounce his Soviet citizenship and to emigrate. These sums would be in addition the present tariff of about a thousand dollars; five hundred rubles which each emigrant must pay in order to get an exit permit, 400 rubles which were required to renounce Soviet citizenship. It's difficult to save a thousand dollars in a Socialist state. The sums required by the new tariff are impossible. A person who has an ordinary baccalaureate, an AB degree, must pay 7,800 rubles, about \$9,500. If you are unlucky enough to have a PhD in the advanced sciences you must pay a sum equivalent to some twenty five thousand dollars. These sums are unattainable and this tariff is not an ordinary tax on emigrants, repayment of state financed education, but a form of economic blackmail designed to staunch the emigration of peoples, particularly of Jews, pre-eminently of Jews, only of Jews, from the Soviet Union. This blackmail was dressed up to seem understandable. The Soviet is concerned for what will be thought of her among many groups in the outside world; and it is true that unlike the United States where advanced education is a private enterprise function the Soviet State does pay all costs of one's advanced education. But if the Soviet tax truly developed out of a concern with repayment then years of service after one's degree would somehow enter the picture.

Surely a man who has done research or taught for forty years, has long since repaid his obligation. There would be a higher tariff for last year's graduate than for a man who has served a lifetime, but the tariff is the same for both.

The Soviets were concerned with limiting the increasing and the increasingly embarrassing emigration of Jews from Mother Russia. Until 1970 when for the first time the door had come a bit ajar only a handful of Jews had been able to leave the Soviet, these largely to be reunited with families which had been separated by the great movement of armies and population in Eastern Europe during the Second World War. In 1971, despite innumerable bureaucratic obstacles, a loud propaganda campaign against emigration and the loss of one's job or apartment, a thousand Jews a month found their way out of the Soviet Union and many more applied each month for emigration. The rate has increased to some two thousand Jews a month this year. We are told that there may be as many as a quarter of a million men, women and children, Jews, who have either made application or who would make application if they thought there was any chance of a permit being granted.

The Soviet has been embarrassed and surprised by all of this. It's a dogma of Soviet myth that life is better within Russia than anywhere else. Who would want to leave the workers' Paradise to be slave labor in a bourgeois capitalist state? And what Jews should want to leave the one major nation which has in its constitution a provision which outlaws any act of anti-semitism? Why should the Jews want to leave? Then, too, the Arab states particularly have objected to Jewish emigrations, this brain drain, obviously benefits the human resource which is the wealth of Israel. But I suspect what has surprised these

dialectic materialists the most, these economic theoreticians who believe that all problems are solved by economics, is the simple fact that the Jews of the Soviet Union have been well off by Soviet standards. If you want a measure of this you have simply to look at the instrument which they devised to staunch the emigration, an instrument which would be effective not against peasants or blue collar workers, but only against a group, a large percentage of whom are degreed and who obviously now occupy by virtue of these largely scientific and technical degrees places of importance within the professional, engineering and scientific hierarchies of the Soviet State. Why is it that a group of people who, by economic standards are well off, want to leave? Embarrassed Soviet reaction has been rather clumsy and heavy-handed. There have been the show trials in Leningrad of Jews who tried to commandeer a plane to fly them to Finland, and in Moscow young militant activist Jews who demonstrated in front of various foreign embassies in order to gain attention. The suppression of these activities, the harsh sentences given out at the show trials have embarrassed the Soviet Union among her progressive friends in the Free World. The Communist parties in Italy and in France have sent letters of condemnation to the Soviet State because of these actions. These acts of repression have created political distance between the Soviet State and radical groups who ought to be her natural allies. And now that the Soviet has had several years with inadequate crops and needs to talk about bi-lateral trade negotiations with the United States, hopefully on a most favored nation basis, and desires a period of cooling off in her cold war campaigns in order to digest her economic and political advances in the Middle East and in the Indian sub-continent, she suddenly finds that her actions vis a vis these Jews whom she doesn't quite understand, leading 76 Senators to put a "sense of the Senate" rider onto a trade bill

saying that no further trade relations or treaties ought to be signed between the United States and the Soviet Union until Soviet acts of repression towards Jews have been voided and emigration is again possible. The Soviets have had reason to be angered by this peculiar Jewish desire to leave and have been frustrated in knowing how to deal with it, so though the act was apparently promulgated in August, it was never officially announced and last week there were indications from Moscow that some families - some said 25, some said 40, we don't know the exact number - were being allowed to emigrate without payment of this tax. Apparently some of the activists who are now coming out were called Thursday of this week to the Interior Ministry where some senior Soviet officials said to them, "Tell the Jews of the world when you get out that anyone who wants to leave from the Soviet may leave. We will keep only those who have sensitive jobs," some seven per cent of those who have up till now made application. And there the matter stands and only time and the vagaries of international politics, the pressure from within the Soviet Union by those who want to leave and from without the Soviet Union who want to help them leave, will determine the size of the emigration and whether or not it will be permitted to continue at all.

Rather than to talk this morning about strategies, what I'd like to do is to talk about the reasons that Jews have wanted to leave the Soviet Union. It's important for Jews outside the Soviet Union to be clear on several points. The first is that Russia in 1972 is not Germany of the 1930's. The Jews are citizens of the Soviet Union. The Jews are not non-persons. There is no official racial bias. There is a great deal of unofficial, even semi-official, anti-Semitism. Russia has always been the center of a crude, rude anti-semitic spirit and many in government share this spirit. They're Russian, but anti-semitism is forbidden

by the Russian Constitution and, obviously, Jews would not have as many degrees as they do, have risen as high as they have in the various scientific and educational academies if there had been serious quotas or restrictions on their entrance into the universities. Much of the danger that hangs over the heads of the Soviet Jew is not so much what has happened till now, but what may happen from this moment on. And there are indications that the Soviet has reacted to the exodus not only by keeping Jews, now suspect, out of sensitive positions in the Foreign Ministry and the highest echelons of the military; but that they have been actively discriminating against young Jews who want to follow their fathers and their mothers into the technical schools and the universities. Perhaps the best way to provide background is to tell you about some of those who have left or are leaving and to do so as far as I can, in their own words, explaining what brought them to this point. Perhaps in this way we will understand this group of our fellow Jews, something about their world and I hope in the end something about our own.

By coincidence one of the men who is coming out this week is a young thirty-nine year old computer researcher by the name of Roman Rutman. He has been an activist. He has demonstrated in front of embassies. He has been sentenced to jail for fifteen days for demonstrations and for thirty days for sedition. He has been deprived of his apartment, but until he began these activities a few years ago he was a graduate engineer with a PhD. He had published widely in professional journals. He had a fine apartment. He had a car. He was established within the Soviet system. What leads Roman Rutman to emigrate?

About twelve months ago an American Jew met Rutman in Moscow and when he returned published an interview with him in the Village Voice. What led Rutman to want to leave was not 1967 and Israel's military success nor really any reawakening of traditional interest in the God of Israel; but, interestingly, Czechoslovakia and his growing awareness of the inability of the Russian State to fulfill the mythic promise that its propaganda had aroused in him and others like him who are first or second generation Communist trained young people. What happened to Rutman is not unlike what happened to many of our own sons and daughters who found not Czechoslovakia, but Viet Nam, to be a breaking point when the American myth became hypocritical. It began, Rutman said, with Czechoslovakia. At that time I began to protest with some other young Russians and realized very deeply two things: "I realize that we have been lying to ourselves about the future all along, that Russia would never have more freedom than she has now. Her tradition has always been one of absolute power to the State. Her people have no tradition of being independent. They have always let themselves be led by one tyrant or another. It is a need of theirs to have a strong government. We had thought there were a great horde of intellectuals who shared our disgust with the savagery in Czechoslovakia. But when it came time to protest all but seven or eight people fell back into silence. . . Around this time many of my friends began to be baptized. There was a neo-Christian movement afoot and I myself was on the brink of being baptized, but something held me back. . . I felt an irreparable separation - like the cold space that settles after two lovers have split apart. All my life I had loved my country and then hated her and then loved her and hated her again. Now I felt nothing for Russia. "

"This was a new and very real vacuum in my life. I began to ask myself some larger questions - perhaps you could call them religious questions. I began to think about a man's place in the universe in relation to the rest of mankind. . . . Where does a man belong? What should be the meaning of his life - more than political questions. . . . "Simply, the way I reasoned was: a country is a community of people living in the same area of space. In that sense I'm a Russian. And there are also communities in time, communities of traditions within history. And I realized that I really do not identify with Russian ancestors. I cannot honestly see myself as a figure in the stream of Russian history. I do not feel I belong to it. The Russian traditions are things I have been taught. They are not things I feel natural in myself. The great figures in Russian history are people I can admire, but not identify with. They were moved by things that do not move me. I have always been treated as someone apart, being a Jew. Even though I knew nothing of the Jewish religion until recently - and I am not a religious person in the conventional sense - and even though I have been as I told you successful, still I have always been regarded as a person of a lower order. I realized I have never been accepted as a Russian - I guess I always knew it, but tried to ignore it. But also I realized that I have never really been able to accept the culture of Russia as my own. "

"So I have been studying something of Jewish history. . . . From what I know I think I can identify myself much more naturally in Jewish traditions. Anyway, I wanted to be with people I feel are my own. I think the Jews are my people.

I know the Russians are not. I am no longer a participant in Russian society and I feel very good about that. It is like suddenly telling the truth after a long, long time of acquiescing to a lie. Perhaps I am all wrong. Perhaps in Israel I will feel the same alienation as I feel here. But I hope I will not. "

I suspect that Rutman's emotional hejira will be fully understood by many of our sons and daughters, though he is half a generation older than they. He's a man in his late thirties. To Russia the opportunity to feel, to react to freedom, came late. It began with Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Soviet about fifteen years ago when he buried Stalin's myth. This generation of which Rutman is a part was the first time to try to find the freedom which Khrushchev seemed to promise and they ran up against Czechoslovakia, against the tyranny that is traditionally Russian, and if they were Jews against the omnipresent anti-Semitism of Mother Russia. At some point in their history they began to look for another rootage. They think they will find it in the land of that other label that they bear on their passports, Hebrew, Jew. Will they? What will they find when they come among us? What will happen to Rutman when he leaves the Soviet? Will they find what our children have found?

Rutman is not completely typical of all who seek to leave. Last April I escorted some of the clergymen from Cleveland to Israel and we went down one night to Lydda. The airport was deserted, dark. No commercial planes were scheduled, only two charter flights from Vienna, bringing with them emigres from the Soviet Union. We were there somewhat early, maybe eleven o'clock, the flights weren't due till one. The airport was quiet and then about an hour later

a few good ladies from Ramat Gan bustled in and began to lay out cookies, tea, coffee and milk. A few officials came. Each of the refugees would be given the key to his own apartment, he'd sleep in his own quarters that night; a few coins so that they would be able to buy the immediate necessities; their cards of identification. All was handled with an amazing dispatch and we sat there and talked to the good women and to the bureaucracy of Israel and joked a bit about these people whose first sight on Israeli soil would be men with the turned back collar. Then the planes arrived and most of the people who descended from the planes looked much as we do. They were Jews of the West, of Russia; Polish Jews who had been pushed into Russia during the Hitler days, Jews of Lithuania, Jews whose body type and languages, Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, German, were familiar to us, with whom one or another of us could communicate. But there were a number of men and women, smaller in stature, weather beaten, silent, with whom none of us could communicate. They came from the far corners of Asia, from Tashkent and Vzbekstan, from places which we've heard of only if we've read Marco Polo. These Jews lived in a rural or village environment much as their fathers had lived for a hundred generations. Their language was a mixture of Arabic and Persian, the immemorial language of the steppes. There was absolutely no communication possible. Now why had these people come to Israel? They knew nothing of Moscow. They knew nothing of the show trials. They probably had heard of Israel only from their holy books. Why had they come, these medieval Jews? For medieval reasons:

In a little town called Magalan in Uzbekstan, a community of some eight thousand Jews, two days after Rosh Hashonah eleven years ago, someone brought

a charge of ritual murder against a Jewish family in the town; a two-year old Muslim girl was missing. The Jewish home was searched. It was claimed that her blood had been used during the Rosh Hashonah ritual. For seven days the police stood by and allowed the Jewish community to be looted and burned by the Muslim majority. This was galut, exile, the immemorial medieval experience of the Jew. A year later in Tashkent, one of the larger cities of this area, a place where there were fifty thousand Jews, a ruffian brought a charge of ritual murder against a seventy-year old Jewish storekeeper, a woman. Her house was ransacked and no one complained. She was thrown into jail simply on his charge. For a week the Jewish community of Tashkent was looted and burned and the Jew faced the immemorial hate and immemorial libels of galut. Nothing had changed. This was not technological Russia, Soviet Russia, this was the ancient hate, medieval Russia. To the Jew of Tashkent these were the birth pangs of the Messiah. They had come to Israel because they could no longer live in their homes and because a new age had been signaled.

That same night we met a woman very much like those I know here. She was about fifty, as vivacious and vigorous as anyone I've ever met. She'd been born in Vilna. She'd been living in Riga. She had been trained before the Second World War in a Hebrew High School. Her Hebrew was absolutely fluent. She was typical of another group who were coming to Israel, those who were swept into Russia in the 1940's, but who had been raised before that time in the intensely Jewish environment of Eastern Europe. She had met her husband when she was a partisan in Poland during the Second World War. He was an engineer. He was

not from as Jewish a home as she. They fell in love. He lost an arm at the shoulder in the fighting. After the war they found themselves in Latvia and settled in Riga. He became an engineer in a large company there. She became a correspondent for one of the local newspapers. They thought, well, the Nazis are behind us, we'll make a new life; but daily they were surrounded by evidence of anti-Semitic activity. She was eager to establish a Yiddish theatrical group in Riga. She would have been the king pin. She was a real balabusta who would make anything work, but she went to the authorities and Soviet authorities don't have the same love of balabustas as we do and they turned her down. Why do you want to bother with this kind of old-fashioned Yiddish activity? They faced one indignity after another and the crowning indignity was when their young daughter applied for the Bolshoi Ballet School and at her interview was told, "We can't take you, we have too many Jews already." At that point seven years before they had made application to emigrate. She had been thrown out of her job on the newspaper and had worked for the last five years as a charwoman in the local theater. Her daughter had worked as a secretary at whatever job she could get. Finally, after five years of being spat upon and pushed from here to there by anyone who discovered that they were traitors to the Soviet, the time to leave had finally come and she was three feet above ground. She was just so excited she couldn't stop talking. Her dreams had been fulfilled.

There's one other kind of Jew who's leaving the Soviet Union. I met Mikhail Zand for the first time at Brandeis University a few months ago. He's a leading orientalist, a man about my age. His father was a Polish Communist.

His father had moved the family to Russia in the early 1920's to be part of the great Soviet experience and they settled in the town of Kamenitz where he had been a bureaucrat in the Communist Part. Zand's father had been swept up and murdered in one of Stalin's purges. Mikhail Zand and his mother had to move here and there, branded as outcasts because the father had been declared a traitor to the State. They found their way to Moscow and found their way from Moscow back into the Urals during the Second World War where Mrs. Zand worked as a school teacher to the children of coal miners. Zand was called many names, "the son of a traitor, " "the son of a Jew. " The labels were spoken with equal venom. He learned to use his fists. He didn't know what a Jew was. His family couldn't provide any content to the term; but in the far reaches of the Urals he came across a Soviet encyclopedia and in that encyclopedia written way back in the days of Lenin, before the Stalin trials, there was an article about Yiddish and he read that article, indeed, he memorized it. The article included the Hebrew alphabet which he memorized. His life became one desperate search to find books in Yiddish and Hebrew. When he came out of the Soviet Union a year and a half ago Mikhail Zand spoke a perfect fluent Hebrew. He spoke a perfect fluent Yiddish. He had trained himself to be one of the leading orientalists in the world and he had devoted his learning to the Jewish communities of Uzbekstan and Tashkent because the Soviet was interested in these communities and because these studies would give him a chance to touch Jewish life. After 1967 when he had been pushed from here and there and denied certain appointments because of his background and because of his being Jewish he became one of the small group of demonstrators

in Moscow. He was sentenced to several periods in jail. The academic west took up the cudgels for Mikhail Zand. A number of universities made applications to the Soviet Council of Scientists to allow Zand to leave to receive honorary degrees at Oxford, at the Hebrew Union College and elsewhere. They couldn't bury the man. He couldn't simply disappear. So a year and a half ago he and his family were allowed to emigrate. Why have these people left the Soviet Union? Zand and Rutman were men who had made their way academically and professionally into a viable situation. They could survive and provide for their families, but something was missing. They were not at peace. There was that element of insecurity, racism, the recognition that the Jew is something, someone who is different and for many Jews 1967 was a turning point.

Let me read to you a paragraph written by another Jew, Ephraim Feinblum. Feinblum is today 38 years of age. He's an electrical engineer. He was one who had been able to take advantage of the Soviet system. For him until 1967 being Jewish was really little more than a label on his passport. "On the eve of the Six Day War Moscow opened its offensive propaganda against Israel. I was surprised by the internal contradictions and exaggerations of this propaganda. The authors seemed to be accusing me of being a Jew. So I began to be interested in Soviet Middle Eastern policy. When I felt that I knew a good deal about it, I went as a party member to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and requested this policy be explained to me. That was in 1969. "I was told that I complained too much and I ought to keep my mouth shut. " At first there were no consequences at my openly questioning talk, but after the press conference of

Jews in Moscow on March 4, 1970 I again wrote to the Central Committee expressing my thoughts about the Middle East in a twelve page letter and warning that this Moscow policy would encourage the development of anti-semitism throughout the Soviet Union which the Communist Party would be unable to control. This has already happened. I also stated that I could not understand why Russian armed forces were stationed in Egypt. As a result of this letter I was expelled from the Party and a meeting was summoned in the factory where I worked at which, in my absence, the workers were told that I was guilty of Zionist thoughts. " It's not a matter of religion or ideology. Feinblum remained a loyal member of the Communist Party until 1969. Rather it is the fact that when the Soviet threw itself heart and soul behind Egypt and the Arab cause in the 1960's it unleashed within the Soviet Union not only anti-Israel propaganda, but inevitably all the forces of anti-semitism. It was very easy to say, Israel is an outpost of the imperialist world. Israel is supported by a group of militant Zionists, imperialists, who are engaged in international conspiracy against the freedom loving peoples of the Arab world. But who are the members of this international conspiracy? Jews. And this includes Ephraim Feinblum, a Communist Party member in the Soviet Union, and every Jew in the Soviet Union suddenly awoke to the fact that he was looked upon not simply as comrade, but as comrade Jew, as a potential member of a conspiracy which the government had declared to be not only heretical, but treasonous. Nineteen sixty seven marks a turning point in the history of Soviet Jewry. Men like Ephraim Feinblum, third generation Communists, who happened to bear the title Jew on their passports suddenly feel themselves outcasts,

outside the pale, different than, and awaken to the fact that there is no security for them within their nation which supposedly has only an ideological test of one's loyalty to the State - does one accept Russian Communism or not?

In many ways, if we're honest, what's happened to the Soviet Jew parallels so much that's happening in our own country. How often I hear people say, "Look at all the economic advance that has been made by the minority groups. In the last decade the income of black families has risen twice as fast as the income of white families. What more do they want? Why aren't they satisfied? In America we've seen the black and the Indian and the Mexican American try to satisfy the other hunger which is within the human soul, the need to be one's self, to have dignity, to have a sense of the worth of one's own culture, to recognize that if racism is endemic in the society he must in defense create a counter society where he is seen just for himself. Racism in the Soviet Union is spelled anti-semitism, despite all the educational opportunity which the Jew obviously enjoyed over the last thirty years, forgetting the repression and what Stalin represents, despite all that the Jew has had he recognized deep within his soul that he's not accepted. He's needed something more, a sense of self-worth and the Russians have denied this to him by starving the content of his nationality. If they had sechel the Russian would have allowed the Yiddish theater to develop. If they had sechel they would have allowed the Yiddish Press to be something more than the quizzling press and Jewish literature. They'd have allowed the Yeshiva in Moscow to remain open. They'd have allowed worship to maintain itself in the various communities.

we give a Mikhail Zand a reflex of the intensity of his love of Jewish knowledge

The Jew would have found here his soul and he might have found that his soul can be satisfied within Soviet economics. But man doesn't live by bread alone. It's not by power always, nor by economic prosperity, but by the spirit that man prevails. And the Soviet, because of their inheritance of anti-semitism, their shortsightedness, had not allowed the Jewish soul its freedom and as a result even the third generation has a deep sense of being outside. Let a single event like '67 come along and suddenly you find these young people looking, seeking to escape, to find a place where they can breathe more easily.

There you have it. I doubt that the Soviet Union can purge itself of this kind of racism. It's been part of Russian life for centuries. I doubt that all Jews will be allowed to escape or even that all those who want to leave will be allowed to leave. Inevitably, some who remain will suffer because of the anger and the frustration of the Soviet at this exodus. Already there is evidence that though a few thousand have escaped many more young Jews are being denied admission to universities and placement in the advanced academies. Many are being pushed and shoved hither and yon where, perhaps, ten years ago they would not have been. The Soviet is a Russian bear and the Russian bear can be an angry, irritable animal. The problem is a difficult one. How to get the Jews out and to pressure for it and at the same time protect as best we can from the outside the survival of those who cannot or will not make application to leave. What's for it then? I suspect for us a recognition that those who are coming out are expecting far more of Israel and of American Jewry than perhaps we can provide them. Where will we give a Mikhail Zand a reflex of the intensity of his love of Jewish knowledge

and Jewry? Where will we give Roman Rutman the sense of freedom that the State represents, not only the narrow needs of a particular government, but the broader needs of all mankind? How will these men find their peace among us? We've already read of some of the difficulties of adjustment in Israel of these Russian immigrants. Up to this point the problems have been economic, a sophisticated highly trained people suddenly thrown into a society which is not as advanced as theirs. But, there's also a spiritual gap. I sometimes worry that Uriel de Costa may not rise again among us. Uriel de Costa was a Moranno, a third or fourth generation Moranno, who in Portugal somehow found a Bible, read it, believed it and sought freedom from Catholic Portugal in free Amsterdam where he applied to the Jewish community for re-admission into the fold. He was re-admitted and found that the congregation in Amsterdam was as closed minded and as unbiblical as those he had left behind in Portugal. He died a suicide, unable to find in the land of freedom the sense of freedom he sought. These people place an obligation upon us, not only to do what we can to free them physically, but to provide for them a community where their thirst for knowledge, justice and freedom can be slackened. Amen.

2. August, the Council of Ministers of the USSR presented
my case - Ref #572 - which requires the payment of a "Reimbursement
for Education" tax by anyone who wishes to receive his
 Soviet citizenship and passport. "Reimbursement for education"
is a euphemism for RANSOM - designed to make under
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VIOLENCE - ARBITRARYNESS



THE FIVE RICHES

"After my father's arrest, my mother heard that mothers too were going to be arrested and the children taken to special colonies set up for the children of enemies of the country. My mother was advised to get out of Moscow. She was then fully unemployed, having lost her teaching post in a Russian school as soon as my father was arrested. She left for a small town about 65 miles from Moscow while we, the children, remained in the Moscow apartment. I was ten, my sister five years old. At night, Jewish people brought food to us and once a week my mother 'passed the border' and visited us. She was then 28 but felt, she said, as if she'd already lived 200 years. Later our grandparents came from the Ukraine and took care of us."

When the Second World War began the Zand family were sent to the Urals and at first lived in a kolkhoz inhabited by Cossacks. Theirs was the first oriental language Mikhail encountered and this whetted his interest in orientalism. But the family was soon moved to the coal-mining region of Dombrovsk. / "The most important event of my childhood occurred there," ~~he said~~. "I came across a volume of the Soviet Encyclopaedia of the second edition. There were a few articles on Judaism and the Yiddish language as well as articles on the Hebrew alphabet. For me this was a fascinating discovery. I learned the Hebrew alphabet as if it was a great treasure. I knew a little Yiddish from home and with the Hebrew letters began to form complete words. After that I found a small book of Yiddish verse. I have forgotten the name of the author but the title of the book was 'Die Blonde Bestie' and concerned the Nazis. It was the first book I read in Yiddish and, although I did not understand everything, this first meeting with Yiddish literature was a moving experience. I was 14 years old. I learned that book by heart, from top to bottom, and still, after 30 years and everything I have experienced, I can recite every word of it from memory."

"My Jewish consciousness was awakened too. In the kolkhoz I found in a local Russian newspaper a short, laconic item about the destruction of Kamenitz Jews at the end of August, 1941. It was my birthplace and . . . I still felt I belonged to it and to its Jewish inhabitants. Besides, there were anti-semitic events in the coal-mining region where we were living: 'Those Yids have been escaping from everywhere and came here to suck our blood.' I heard similar talk in class. In the small town where we lived gangs of young Russian and Cossack boys got together to beat up Jews. I was also attacked and left unconscious in a small street. This anti-semitism also contributed to my Jewish awakening. I decided to fight back if ever I was attacked again, and I did so successfully."

"I began to earn my living as a porter in a wheat storage warehouse while trying with difficulty to continue my education and find books on Jewish subjects. By mere chance I found Dubnow's history

of the Jews on a neglected shelf of our small town's municipal library and so got acquainted with our history."

Before the end of the war, in 1944, the Zands returned to live in Moscow, having obtained permission to do so by concealing the fact that the father of the family had been arrested. Mikhail Zand, now 16, felt the murder of his father keenly and resented being forced to sing thanks to Stalin for giving him "a happy childhood". He was now a high school student and about to have his first personal encounter with the Soviet police. This arose because he was left alone while his mother went back to the Urals to bring the rest of the family to Moscow. A friend of his, three years older and a front-line soldier, came to stay with him. The other boy's father had also been arrested and killed. The friend stayed a short time in Mikhail's room, then disappeared taking all Mikhail's things. Apparently he was an army deserter. The police arrested Zand and accused him of harbouring the deserter. A Professor Lipanistika, his anti-semitic neighbour, took the opportunity to accuse him of robbing her and told the police that although the enemies of the people had been arrested their sons were following in their footsteps. For three days the police beat him incessantly and without mercy. They broke his teeth and brought him back home with his injuries.

"This was the drop that broke the jar and completed my Jewish consciousness," he commented. "The Soviet Union was undoubtedly not my country."

Rejected by the "Soviet Homeland"

As if to drive this lesson home, Mikhail Zand was rejected for service in the Red Army when he volunteered at the age of 17 on the grounds that his father had been an enemy of the nation. He said: "I think I cried. Everything looked alien to me and I felt that I did not belong. Retrospectively, I think that this was the event which inspired me with yearning to emigrate to Israel. Later, when I was struggling against the authorities for my exit visa, I reminded them that when everybody was fighting against the Nazis they refused to give me a chance to join in the battle and told me to go home. I said to them that is exactly what I want to do now. Let me go home. My home is Israel."

He became concerned about the assimilation of young Jews while still himself a pupil at high school and began discussing it with them, at first cautiously but with greater freedom as time went on. The response seems to have been negative. His friends did not readily identify themselves with the problem, but in the fact that they listened and even pressed him to talk about it he found encouragement. In the house of some relatives, Zand came across a Soviet edition of Sholem Aleichem's stories in Yiddish (presumably an early one as

my thoughts about the Middle East in a 12-page letter and warning it that this Moscow policy would encourage the development of anti-semitism throughout the Soviet Union which the Communist Party would be unable to control. This has already happened. I also stated that I could not understand why Russian armed forces were stationed in Egypt. As a result of this letter I was expelled from the Party and a meeting was summoned in the factory where I worked at which, in my absence, the workers were told that I was guilty of Zionist thoughts."

The Situation in Sverdlovsk

Boris Eidelman, a 41-year-old physician from Sverdlovsk, was closely associated with Valery Kukuy whose sentence to three years imprisonment in June, 1971, is regarded as a particularly gross case of an innocent man being victimised as a scapegoat. Eidelman is another of those Soviet Jews whose national feelings were aroused by Stalinist anti-semitism. "When the 'Doctors Plot' was announced in 1953 I felt, for the first time, that I was a Jew and that my blood could boil." Until then he was not particularly conscious of anti-semitism and "did not clearly understand that I was a Jew until 1948". Like so many Soviet citizens he and his family experienced unjust imprisonment. From Bendery, Moldavia, where he was born, the family was deported for 20 years to the north and his father was sent to a prison camp for five years. Boris, himself, was arrested in 1949 at the age of 18 on a trumped-up charge and spent six months in Kishinev prison without trial and was then sent to Tobolsk, in Siberia, where his family was living.

During the anti-semitic wave of the later Stalin period, Eidelman began to study the Jewish question. He got married according to Jewish law, which was becoming a rarity, and joined a small circle consisting of about eight to ten young Jewish students when he entered the Sverdlovsk Medical Institute in 1955. Israel, Birobidzhan, the Sinai campaign were discussed, some of the circle agreeing with Israeli policy others considering that Israel was a capitalist state. "One day I was summoned to the KGB and they suggested that the talks about Israel must stop otherwise they would consider I was agitating among young people in favour of emigration to Israel."

"Later, when I was working as a physician," Boris declared, "I was once called to a house where old people gathered to pray" (this was in Sverdlovsk, where up to 30,000 Jews live, and the last synagogue was closed in 1961). The experience seems to have moved him. He also recalled the visit, the first for two years, of a Jewish concert troupe to the city. "Mostly the old and the young went to the concert, and only few people of middle age. It was clear from the applause and welcome the artistes received that people had missed the Jewish

theatre, the Jewish tongue. Many went twice in order that the hall should be full and the tour financially profitable." Yet few Jews knew Yiddish and those who did were mainly from the Ukraine.

He reports an interesting range of attitudes among his extensive circle of acquaintances in the period of the Six Day War. In the course of the battles, they followed every broadcast and rejoiced in Israel's victories. But although the majority remained in sympathy with Israel after the war, there were disagreements in which some thought the occupied territories should be returned, and some said that although they would always be ready to go to Israel to fight in its defence they would not wish to live there.

"I think this can be explained by several reasons," Boris Eidelman, said. "My friends and acquaintances are physicians, teachers and engineers in good positions. They do not experience crude or acute anti-semitism, their families are all in Russia, and in the middle thirties it is difficult to go to an unknown place and begin building a new life. Also, in the depths of Russia assimilation is more effective than in the Ukraine, Moldavia or the Baltic countries."

He goes on to shed some light on the circumstances surrounding the murder of an entire Jewish family several years ago. (See *J.I.E.E.*, p. 196, Vol. IV, No. 7, November, 1971.) "At the time when a Jewish family was murdered in Sverdlovsk, a Russian friend and neighbour of mine was working in the regional C.I.D. From what he told me, it was apparent that the entire district militia was on the alert for days on end. My neighbour was constantly on duty. There was great alarm among the Jews. Anonymous letters were being thrown into their apartments, threatening them with similar violence unless they paid money. People were very depressed."

While working in a hospital, he was appointed to give a weekly or bi-weekly survey of information to the other physicians because of his known interest in politics. By the ingenious technique of basing his remarks on quotations from the Soviet press he was able, when the subject of Israel came up, to argue that Israel was not to blame for the war, and was therefore not an aggressor. It was possible to do this because although all Soviet newspapers and magazines dutifully follow the official line, they sometimes contradict one another in this or that detail, or cancelled out one "proof" by giving another stating the opposite. The reaction of his listeners varied from approval through indifference to resentment, but although the hospital's head physician mildly remonstrated with him there were no unpleasant consequences.

Tensions Over Preparing a Group Letter

In 1967, his mother and brother had succeeded in going to Israel and later sent him an affidavit to join them, but he decided at that

even though he submitted an application to leave the USSR. Presumably he means anti-semitism from his colleagues, because as a result of the application he was sacked from his post in the Nuclear Physics Institute of Moscow University where he had worked for seven years on the physical structure of metals. Until the family were successful in leaving the Soviet Union the breadwinner was his biologist wife, whose earnings he supplemented with private lessons in physics.

Although his interest in Israel had been a life-long one, Balabanov seriously considered emigration only after the Six Day War. Once he had applied, he pursued this ambition with tenacity. He wrote letters to the Ministry of the Interior, the heads of the OVIR and to President Podgorny. When elections were held for the Supreme Soviet he refused to vote on the grounds that he considered himself an Israeli citizen being detained in the Soviet Union against his will. The KGB arrested him one day when he was driving in Moscow with some friends in a private car. Their pretext was that he was with people suspected of theft. The police searched his home and confiscated an address book, the visiting cards of foreign journalists and copies of cables that he, Alexander, had sent to the Brussels Conference of world Jewish organisations in February, 1971. Within a month, however, he was allowed to leave with his family for Israel.

In contrast to Balabanov's youthful interest, Ephraim Feinblum, a 34-year-old electrical engineer who arrived in Israel with his wife and child about the same time, declared that until 1967 he had been entirely indifferent to Israel and Zionism. Soviet propaganda was responsible for the radical change that led him to settle in Israel. The Israeli press described Feinblum as a calm man with "a well-cared-for moustache", who spoke with thoughtful deliberation.

"On the eve of the Six Day War Moscow opened its offensive propaganda against Israel," he said. "I was surprised by the internal contradictions and exaggerations of this propaganda. The authors seemed to be accusing me of being a Jew. So I began to be interested in Soviet Middle Eastern policy. When I felt that I knew a good deal about it, I went as a Party member to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and requested that this policy be explained to me. This was in 1969. I also told the delegate of the Israel Rakakh (pro-Moscow Communist Party) in the Soviet Union that I was puzzled that in 1954 the Soviet press referred to Egypt as a fascist country and yet now that Egypt sheltered so many Nazi war criminals it had turned sharply in its favour. I also complained that the Russians were training Arab partisans who were fascists."

At first there were no consequences of this openly critical talk, but "after the press conference of Jews in Moscow on March 4, 1970" (which repeated Soviet propaganda accusing Israel of Nazi behaviour: — Editor, J.I.E.E.) "I again wrote to the Central Committee expressing

Years things were never the same again. the soul. Soviet Jews often gave the reacted with patient endurance. Quietly them were finding ways to study Hebrew, of developments in Israel, to learn about e. This was the era when Jews demon- by crowding out the occasional Yiddish available ticket when an Israeli team had a et Union, turning a recital by an Israeli y, and flocking in hundreds of thousands ional exhibitions held in the USSR. A was emerging. It is this we find in the t Jews who have arrived in Israel.

WHERE DOES A MAN BELONG?"

o have succeeded in leaving the USSR frankly. A painfully honest account of given in Moscow by a theoretical cyber- d in the New York "Village Voice" on g under the heading: "Russia: Emigrat- man belong?"", the article was based on erican Jew, Ross Gelbspan, and 36-year- atter's home in Moscow.

a wife and an eleven-year-old son, stated a, a scientist, with a car, two degrees, a ated control and published works to his might be asked "why I have decided to to leave Russia, for Russia is no longer assimilated and had "been educated in (for although we have had a revolution, l Christian ones)".

5, with the Daniel and Sinyavsky trial. e, was a very close friend and "the soul sisted of about 30 people who began to "There was a lot of hope in those days. ore freedom was possible in the Soviet niel protest proved the first link in the rest and trial in January, 1967 of Gins- a prominent in the Soviet protest move- e Paper" in the West on the subject of the great, great joy — all of us standing n sub-zero temperatures. . . . We still gs then."

ia. It was, said Rutman, more than a

shock for most of the protest group. "I myself realised very deeply two things. I realised that we had been lying to ourselves about the future all along, that Russia would never have more freedom than she has now. Her tradition has always been one of absolute power to the State. Her people have no tradition of being independent. They have always let themselves be led by one tyrant or another. It is a need of theirs to have a strong government." The second thing he now came to realise was that few were prepared to speak up. "We had thought there was a great horde of intellectuals who shared our disgust with the savagery in Czechoslovakia. But when it came time to protest all but seven or eight people fell back into silence. . . . Around this time, many of my friends began to be baptised. There was a neo-Christian movement afoot and I myself was on the brink of being baptised. But something held me back. . . . I felt an irra- parable separation — like the cold space that settles after two lovers split apart. All my life I had loved my country and then hated her, then loved her and then hated her again. Now I felt nothing for Russia."

~~Rutman's agonising reflections continued as follows:~~ "This was a new and very real vacuum in my life. I began to ask myself some larger questions — perhaps you could call them religious questions. I began to think about a man's place in the universe and in relation to the rest of mankind. . . . Where does a man belong and what should be the meaning of his life — more than political questions."

~~To recount all his thoughts would take too long, he said, but~~ "simply, the way I reasoned was: a country is a community of people living in the same area of space. In that sense I am a Russian. But there are also communities in time, communities of traditions within history. And I realised that I really do not identify with Russian ancestors. I cannot honestly see myself as a figure in the stream of Russian history. I do not feel I belong to it. The Russian traditions are things I have been taught. They are not things I feel natural in myself. The great figures in Russian history are people I can admire but not identify with. They were moved by things that do not move me. I have always been treated as someone apart, being a Jew. Even though I knew nothing of the Jewish religion until recently — and I am not a religious person in the conventional sense — and even though I have been as I told you successful, still I have always been regarded as a person of a lower order. I realised I have never been accepted as a Russian — I guess I always knew it but tried to ignore it. But also I realised that I have never really been able to accept the culture of Russia as my own."

"So I have been studying something of Jewish history," ~~Roman Rutman went on.~~ "From what I know, I think I can identify myself much more naturally in Jewish traditions. Anyway, I want to be with

people I feel are my own. I think the Jews are my people. I know the Russians are not. I am no longer a participant in Russian society and I feel very good about that. It is like suddenly telling the truth after a long, long time of acquiescing to a lie. Perhaps I am all wrong. Perhaps in Israel I will feel the same alienation as I feel here. But I hope I will not."

Roman Rutman's confession is an important one because his spiritual experience is valid for two generations of Soviet Jews who have grown up since the Revolution in conditions of total deprivation of Jewish culture, history and tradition. They have been a branch of the Jewish people "cut off" from the trunk, and eagerly assimilated everything that Russian traditional culture and its Soviet development has had to offer in search of a more viable identity. Far from being alone in his feeling that he had been occupying a false position, his attitude is shared by many Soviet Jewish intellectuals. Again and again, one hears of having been "treated as someone apart", of "being regarded as a person of a lower order", of never having been fully "accepted as a Russian". Consequently, the problem of "alienation", an integral part of diaspora Jewish existence, is intensified among Soviet Jews to a point where it often becomes intolerable.

MIKHAIL ZAND — THE CONFLICT BETWEEN JUDAISM AND COMMUNISM

The kind of Soviet Jew who has resisted both forcible and voluntary assimilation and built up an inner militancy as a response to its pressures is exemplified by Mikhail Zand, the Soviet orientalist and a prominent member of the Jewish national movement, who arrived in Israel with his family last summer. Dr. Zand's experiences led him to become a religious Jew. He told the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* (July 3, 1971): "The conflict between Judaism and communism started before I was born. My father, Itzhak Ben Avraham Zand, had been a faithful Communist in Poland and that 'dazzling light' blinded him. In the first years of the 1920s he escaped to Russia and the Russians sent him to do Party work in the town of Kamenitz Podolsk. There he met his future wife. She was the daughter of a highly orthodox Hasidic family who were shocked by this 'mismatch' but had to give their consent to the marriage. I was born to these parents in 1927 in a half-Communist, half-religious home.

"My father was arrested in 1937. We never saw him again. They murdered him. After a long time they summoned my mother to tell her that it had all been a mistake and he was rehabilitated. When my father was arrested I was a child of ten or eleven. A part of my father's archives — he had lectured on philosophy at Moscow University and at the special Communist university for African and