

Chapter Two •

A NATIONAL CULTURE REDUCED TO ASHES

There are only two Jewish communities in the world that are totally devoid of Jewish institutions save for the synagogue. One of them is in Iran, the other in the Soviet Union. All others, including those of the Peoples' Democracies in Eastern Europe, have some forms of social organizations of their own.

In Iran, in 1959, I asked the Rabbi of Teheran how it happened that the oldest Jewish community in the world, dating back to the ancient Persian empire, had not developed any of the various social institutions found even in the smallest and poorest communities in other parts of the world. His answer was that Persian Jews had had their own institutions, but centuries back—he did not recall how many—there had been a fanatic, tyrannical regime in Persia determined to convert the Jews to Islam and assimilate them into the local population. The ruler decreed the dissolution of all Jewish organizations, and the Jews “complied rather than die.” Succeeding generations neglected to revive the institutions, the synagogue taking over many of their functions. Then the rabbi added with a smile: “But you see, we have not been converted, and we have not been assimilated.”

In the Soviet Union I did not have to ask a rabbi. If I had, I am sure he would either have made no reply or said, “We have none because we need none and want none,” his sad, furtive glances belying his words. For the Soviet Union we have the exact date of the suppression, August 5, 1919, close to two years after the Bolsheviks took power, and soon after they felt secure in their rule. On that day the Soviet government issued a decree dissolving the Council of Jewish Communities and the individual communities as well, confiscating their bank balances

and turning over their properties to the government department dealing with Jewish matters. The announced reason for the decree was that the Jewish communities had become the center for secret enemies of the working class and of the achievements of the October Revolution, and that in their educational endeavors they were bringing up the new generation in an anti-Revolutionary spirit. Along with the communities were suppressed all the educational, social, and cultural institutions connected with them.

The ban was expanded to cover all independent, apolitical activities of a general Jewish nature: the Red Star of David, for example, which was the Jewish Red Cross, and Self-Defense Units (against possible pogroms by the Whites); also the *Habimah*, a theatrical group playing in Hebrew. This theatre had received moral support from the famous Russian author Maxim Gorki, and at one time also the encouragement of the Commissar for Culture, Lunacharsky. Now it was abolished with the excuse that Hebrew was an “anti-Revolutionary language.” Zionism was declared to be an abomination, and every Zionist an enemy of the Revolution.

The proscription of Zionism took the melodramatic form of the arrest, on fantastic charges, of seventy-five delegates to the still legal All-Russian Zionist convention. Allegedly, bombs were found at the Central Zionist office in Moscow; allegedly, documents seized connected the Zionists with the mortal enemy of the Soviet Union, the Entente; allegedly, the Zionists supplied emissaries between the counter-revolutionaries in Russia and the Interventionists in Britain. Zionists in other lands were also identified with the enemies of the Soviet Union: 80,000 Jewish legionnaires in Palestine, it was charged, stood ready, by agreement with Britain, to join the armies of the Intervention. Henry Morgenthau, Sr., was said to have visited Poland in 1919 as representative of the Zionists, to mobilize Polish Jewry for Poland's imperialists' march against the Soviet Union. American Zionists were accused of aiding Admiral Kolchak and his White Russian armies, and Britain was supposed to be using Zionist Jewry military in her campaigns against the Egyptian Nationalists and in her units at Arkhangelsk and Odessa.

All together, the accusations against the Zionists read like a leaf from the *Protocols of Zion*. What the Moscow Zionists could possibly want with bombs was, of course, beyond comprehension. They could not have been scheming to take over with those alleged few bombs. And the Russian Zionists would have had no dealings with the counter-revolutionary elements, inasmuch as these were the mass murderers of Jews wherever they temporarily usurped power—they were responsible for 1,520 pogroms in which 300,000 Jews were annihilated. The Jewish legionnaires, a force of volunteers organized after the Balfour Declaration to fight for Palestine, never numbered more than 5,000; at the time the Bolsheviks talked of 80,000 legionnaires in Palestine standing ready to fight against them, there were in all only some 60,000 Jews in Palestine, men, women, children. Henry Morgenthau, Sr., had never been a Zionist; in fact, he belonged to the anti-Zionists, and in 1919-20 was under attack in the Zionist press for favoring the Poles. American Zionists had no connection whatever with Admiral Kolchak or any other White Guard groups, whose rule was regarded as lethal to the Jews. And there had been no Jewish units in the British military in Odessa, Arkhangelsk, or anywhere outside the Near East, where the Jewish Brigade had a brief existence during the latter part of the First World War.

For all the absurdities of the charges, Zionism has remained the *bête noir* of the Soviet leaders to this day.

Having stripped Soviet Jewry of all its national vestment, the Bolsheviks turned upon its last heritage, the Jewish religion. Here, again, their concern was more with the national element, the Jewish way of life, than with the abstract articles of the faith. Theology was left to the routine atheist propaganda. They concentrated upon the rituals that had been the eternal pillars of Jewish national existence. First came a campaign against the observance of the Sabbath. All forms of social and economic pressure were used to prevail upon religious Jews to work on Saturdays. These were veiled in an appeal to patriotism. The hard-pressed Socialist fatherland terribly needed every possible hour of labor. A man abstaining from work on Saturdays was a slacker, a shirker, unpatriotic and inconsiderate of his fellow workers. Then came a legal act undermining the institution of

kosher food. Anybody who paid the stipulated tax and observed the sanitary regulations could set himself up as a ritual slaughterer to dispense kosher chickens and meat. The artful reason for this decree was to "break the monopoly of the religiously qualified slaughterer." But it was exactly this religious qualification that was the basis of the rite. If anybody whatsoever could set himself as a ritual slaughterer, then there was no reason for having a special person or special slaughtering. Administrative hindrances also often made it difficult for Jews to obtain matzohs for Passover. Observance of the Jewish holidays was subjected to the same pressure as keeping the Sabbath. There was always a rush job to be done just when a holiday came. Among the young Party members, there was propaganda against the practice of the rite of circumcision, which was stigmatized as savage, unhygienic, and contrary to medical opinion.

The design of the Bolsheviks was to obliterate the historic tradition and completely dissolve the old Jewish way of life. They did not succeed, but not because of any slackness of effort on their part. Soviet authorities are still wrestling with the old shadows of the past, still inveighing against the God of Abraham, still maligning the Zionists, still reprehending, menacing, and condemning any expression of national Jewish feeling. But they might as well attempt to stop the flow of their own Volga. They did succeed in suppressing all Jewish institutions, in silencing all voices of the Jewish spirit, but they could not stop the beating of the Jewish heart. Forty years after the dissolution of organized Jewish life, Soviet Jewish youths born after the death of Lenin and the expulsion of Trotsky, who know no more about the old ways of Jewish life than about the Czarist regime, overflow the streets about the synagogues on a high holiday, coming not to pray, which they cannot or would not do, but just to *protolkatsia sredi svoikh*—to press together among their own.

In all fairness, two observations must be made about this tragic chapter in the history of Russian Jewry. First, that the total destruction of the old was the reflection, in the Jewish sphere, of the general course of the October Revolution. As a close student of history, Lenin knew that many a revolution had failed because it did not cut deep enough, but concentrated on

the seat of power and left the social foundations intact. He was determined to burn the old regime to the ground and build anew. This made some sense in regard to the Russian society, however one regards the ethics of it. There was danger, in the persistence of the old social pattern, for the birth of the new. On the other hand, no matter how deep the change, the substance of the way of life remained as it had been. The peasant continued to be a peasant in his hut, in his village, tilling the soil, going to his church. Even the agricultural collective, the kolkhoz, was not foreign to the Russian scene, having had its historical prototype in the ancient village *mir*. But matters were quite different in the Jewish sphere.

The old Jewish social pattern was of no danger whatever to the October Revolution. On the contrary, the Jews could regard the Revolution only as a blessing, a promise. But here the totalitarian change meant the absolute uprooting of every phase of life, the destruction of the very basis and substance of existence. The inexorable application of the totalitarian transformation to the Jewish community was unwarranted, unjust, and cruel. Yet, given the complete ignorance and lack of understanding of things Jewish on the part of the Russian revolutionaries, and the narrow-mindedness, fanaticism, and complexes of the Jewish revolutionaries, the policy of blindly duplicating among the Jews the same tactic as among the non-Jews becomes understandable.

The second observation is that the Bolsheviks meant not only to destroy but also to build. They planned to erect a new Socialist Jewish way of life in place of the old traditional ways. They would create a Jewish proletarian culture in the Yiddish language. The Jewish Communists contended with the assimilationists of their day as well as with the nationalists. But they were not free agents. They were tools used for the wrecking. When they had put up the scaffolds for the construction, they were ditched.

For some twenty years, from 1919 to 1938, there were official bodies, state, civil, and even foreign relief agencies, to assist and guide the Socialist reconstruction of Russian Jewry. The Ministry of Nationalities, headed by Stalin from 1917 to 1923, had a Commissariat for Jewish Affairs; there were Jewish sections in

the Communist Party (the so-called *yeusektsia*); there was Komzet, a state agency, and Gezerd, a civil agency, both dealing with resettlement; and Agro-Joint (American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation), Ica (Jewish Colonization Association, with offices in Paris), and Ort (for vocational training). Primarily, the purpose of all of these was to aid in reconstruction of the Jewish economy, which had been shattered by the Revolution. Specifically, it was to turn the Jews into a people of peasants and workers. Inasmuch as Russia was still mostly an agricultural country—the First Five-Year Plan, launching the industrialization program, came only in 1928—and land was available, the major effort of these agencies was to settle Jews on land. But artels, co-operatives of artisans, were another feature of the reconstruction program, and the young generation was being taught trades in preparation for factory work. Along with the change in economic pursuits was to come a change in the cultural pattern. As Russian Jews joined the proletariat, their Jewish culture was bound to become proletarian.

Less than a year after the October Revolution, the Commissar of Jewish Affairs in Stalin's Ministry of Nationalities, S. Dimanstein, explained his function to local sections of his Commissariat as follows: "The economic changes taking place among us are causing many traders to lose their livelihoods. Many of them remain 'suspended in the air,' and as a result develop an anti-Soviet attitude. We must take cognizance of this situation. We must take steps that would make it possible for these people to become useful citizens and to serve our Soviet Socialist Republic. We have to organize Jewish communal farms and to create Jewish peasants. We must build Palestine in Moscow. It is our duty to uproot the bourgeois mentality of these people through a proletarian status."

What was to take the place of the bourgeois mentality? Dimanstein touched warily on the subject in an article in the Yiddish Communist paper *Emes* (Truth): "We are accepting the Communist program in its entirety. It is also our program. Being internationalists, we are not taking on any special national functions, but class functions, proletarian, only. But so long as we speak a different language, it is our duty to exert ourselves to have the masses know their own language and satisfy their im-

perative needs in that tongue. Hebrew is of no interest to us except to the extent that its heritage, which is needful for the masses, has passed into Yiddish. It may well be that in the near future the rich languages of the powerful nations will more and more force the Yiddish language out. We Communists will shed no tears over it, and will take no action to halt this eventuality."

A more comprehensive, and under the circumstances a more Jewish nationalist, statement was issued by a conference of representatives of Jewish sections of the Party (*yevsektzia*), which had the approval of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It ran as follows:

"We are setting ourselves the task not to 'preserve' the Jewish nation but to lift up the Jewish masses economically and culturally, to create a Jewish industrial working class, to create a Jewish peasantry, a Jewish proletarian intelligentsia, a culture proletarian in content and national in form—Jewish village councils, courts, schools of all kinds and degrees. For Communists, the emergence of a Jewish metal worker is just as much a historical event as the arising of a Jewish peasant. We shall serve the one as the other in his mother tongue; we shall draw the one as the other into the Soviet, cultural, and trade union upbuilding of their republics, irrespective of the nationality to which their future generations will belong. We shall fight the national nihilists, who, under the pretext of a probable future assimilation, refuse to carry out the Party's instructions to serve the Jewish masses in their own language. But with still greater energy we shall fight those who surrender to the ideology of national Bolshevism and who, instead of a Leninist analysis of the concrete environment and of the tendencies of its development, proclaim a slogan alien to Leninism, the slogan 'preserving the Jewish people,' thus strengthening the nationalistic aspirations among the Jews."

By their own guarded words, the Jewish Communists were engaged in a holding operation. Someday the Soviet Jews would be assimilated, and then their job would be done. For the present, they were to keep the Soviet Jews hale and hearty on proletarian Jewish fare. The Jewish Communists would have none of the talk of "preserving" the Jewish people inasmuch as they were to preside over the dissolution of the Jewish people, its

transmutation into a Jewish proletariat, which in turn would eventually flow into the international proletariat and disintegrate there. Meanwhile they, the Jewish Communists, were to provide for the Jewish proletariat a Socialist culture that was Jewish national "in form."

What was it like in practice?

Heyday of Proletarian Culture

Where a number of Jews were organized into an artel, they became a tiny unit of Jewish community. They continued to speak their own language and use their own tongue in the administration of their enterprise. If there were several artels in one neighborhood, they might have their own cultural center and their own school in their own language. They thus became a Jewish proletarian community. The Jewish collective farm was, in the absence of non-Jews in its immediate vicinity, a Jewish unit to a larger degree. If the Jewish artels in town were in close proximity to Jewish collectives, the Jews might form a majority of the local population. In that case, they might organize the local government in their own language; the local court might even conduct its proceedings in Yiddish. There you would have actually a small autonomous *Jewish region*. The Jewish proletariat thus presumed to live its own Jewish proletarian life. As in the case of the non-Jews, the Jewish intelligentsia (i.e., those who had been active in the Jewish cultural field or who knew enough Yiddish to engage in it now) was expected to provide "cultural service" to the Jewish proletariat. This meant the creation of a Yiddish proletarian educational system and Yiddish proletarian literature, press, theatre, music, research, adult education—in short, all the elements of a national culture, proletarian in substance.

Cultural service has always been regarded in the Soviet Union not as a luxury, or purely a spiritual adventure, but as a prop of the new social order and an effective aid in the advancement of production in the factory and on the farm. The cultural worker was expected to be as dedicated and productive in his endeavor as the manual worker was on his job. Both were functioning on the same assembly line of Socialist construction. This mechani-

cal view of culture may not have had the same validity for the Jewish writer or scholar as it did for the Jew in the Party apparatus. But he gladly accepted it, inasmuch as it opened new vistas for his creative talents and made him a very important member of society. There was a marked urgency in the new cultural activities in Yiddish, the zeal often reaching into unexpected places, like the Stalin Motor Works in Moscow, where the Jewish workers, who were certainly able to read Russian, had a "wall newspaper" (a sort of house-organ displayed on a bulletin board) in Yiddish.

The progress of the proletarian Jewish culture was startling. By 1930, when the Jewish sections of the Communist party were dissolved, there were 160 Jewish soviets in the Ukraine alone, ninety-four in agricultural settlements and sixty-six in town, and perhaps close to half as many again in other parts of the Soviet Union, all of them conducting their affairs in Yiddish. In 1924, the first Soviet Jewish court with all proceedings in Yiddish was established in the town of Berdichev, where the Jews constituted a majority of the 60,000 population. By 1930, there were forty-six Soviet Jewish courts in the Ukraine, ten in Byelorussia, and eleven in other parts of the Soviet Union. In that year, also, there were 1,208 Yiddish schools attended by 160,000 children. This was about one-half of all the Jewish children of elementary school age; the other half attended the non-Jewish schools. But this was close to three times the percentage of Jewish children receiving any kind of Jewish education, including Sunday school only, in the United States. There was also a considerable Yiddish press: three dailies, three others appearing thrice a week, eleven weeklies, eleven biweeklies and monthlies. About a dozen Yiddish theatres were functioning, including one for children, and there were a number of amateur groups in towns and collectives. There were three Yiddish research institutions associated with the Academies of Science of the three major Soviet republics, Russian, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian. The Kiev Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture had a hundred associates, researchers, assistants, and contributors, and a budget of 650,000 rubles supplied by the state of Ukraine. These institutes had special departments for the study of history, ethnography, social economy, education, literature, linguis-

tics, and bibliography, all related to Jews and in Yiddish, and each publishing its studies in Yiddish. Yiddish publishing houses were issuing not only works of fiction and non-fiction for adults, but also a considerable variety of textbooks and literature for children.

The dissolution of the Jewish sections (*yevseksia*) did not remove the Jewish Communists as satraps over the Jewish community. Thenceforth they functioned as individuals under the authority of the local Party Central Committee. Indeed, their hegemony continued to the bitter end, when some of them were executed for sins they had not committed, and the last vestiges of the Jewish proletarian culture were extinguished with them. The date of the dissolution of the *yevseksia* is noteworthy, for it marked a point of departure, however slight, in the Soviet tactic in regard to Jewish culture. Unnoticed at the time, the dissolution in 1930 was the first pull by an unseen restrictive hand, which was to be felt increasingly in the years to come. It was the beginning of the ambivalent attitude toward the Jews as a people, the right hand not always knowing what the left was doing, but the negative attitude, the hostile temper, was to prevail.

For some years the inner drive of the Jewish proletarian culture seemed to proceed unimpeded. The Jewish institutions were expanding, often on the initiative of the relevant local authorities. In 1931, the Byelorussian Ministry for Public Education called a conference of all Jewish cultural institutions in that republic to discuss common problems and co-ordinate their activities. In Minsk, capital of Byelorussia, in the same year an All-Soviet Congress of Yiddish Writers met to consider the status of Yiddish letters and to plan future efforts. In the Ukraine, in the same year, the Institute for Jewish Proletarian Culture held a conference to plan an expanded program of study of Socialist reconstruction of the Jewish masses. At Odessa, at about the same time, the Mendeli Museum (named for Mendeli Mokhor Seforim, "Grandfather of Yiddish Literature") undertook to collect all material relating to the economic and social changes in the Jewish community subsequent to the October Revolution. In 1932, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Crimea issued a decree making it obliga-

tory for all Jewish collectives in its territory to keep their books and to record their transactions in Yiddish. It would no longer accept the excuse that Yiddish lacked the necessary terminology, the decree explained, since a linguistic consultative body for that purpose had been established at the Collective Freidorf. In 1933, there were 35,373 children in the Yiddish schools of Byelorussia against 29,770 in 1930. In 1934, there were 224 Jewish soviets, representing some 300,000 Jews, which meant that 10 per cent of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union lived under some form of proletarian Yiddish autonomy.

Last but not least, one must take into consideration the nationalizing influence of the Birobidjan project. All through these years, the propaganda for the Jewish settlement of Birobidjan was at its height. It did not succeed in bringing a great number of Jews to the Jewish Autonomous Region, but it helped to keep alive in the Soviet Jew his sense of Jewish identity. At the same time that he was being told by Jewish Communists that Jews were not a nation, a people apart from the rest of the population, he repeatedly heard from no less a person than the President of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics that Jews were a people apart and should be a nation. President Kalinin was, in fact, urging them to strive toward that goal, and to be concerned about the continuity of their national culture.

In one of his statements on Birobidjan, Kalinin pointed up the dangers of assimilation, which he regarded as undesirable; he had a good word, however, for the contact with Jews abroad.

"I reckon that in ten years Birobidjan will be the most important, if not the only, custodian of the Jewish Socialist national culture. Moscow, for example, cannot preserve national qualities. It grinds down, if one may thus express himself, all nationalities into the large capital collective, as, for example, New York reduces a vast number of nationalities to one citizenship. What remains with the Jewish worker of his nationality after he has lived ten years in Moscow? Almost nothing. If he lives culturally, if he lives with proletarian interests, it is clear that the Jewish interests retire to tenth place. He has to forget them. The general proletarian interests are too great. Moscow lives an international life, and the national qualities are blotted out. When the Jewish youth comes from his small town to Moscow,

he comes with the good intention of preparing to aid his own poor small town. But in Moscow he forgets about it. . . . The same happens with the peasant boy coming to the big city. . . . The aid of the American Agro-Joint to Komzet is evidence of the attitude of some Jews abroad to the steps taken by the Soviet government in regard to the Jews. Because of these facts, certain elements of the Jewish bourgeoisie have outwardly a sympathy to our policies in regard to the Jews since the working Jewry have this sympathy. This is not speculation; nationalism reveals itself in different forms. This has to be distinguished and disclosed."

No doubt many Jews in the Soviet Union took President Kalinin's words seriously. He was their Jewish prophet as well as their Soviet Little Father. His pronouncements inspired in some of the Jewish intelligentsia a spirit of "going into the people," like the one that had moved the Russian liberal intelligentsia a generation before the Revolution. Others followed Kalinin into a sort of Soviet Zionism. They might not go to Birobidjan themselves, but they hoped that others would, and some day Birobidjan would emerge as an autonomous Soviet Jewish republic, making the Jews a nation like the other nations in the Soviet Union. If the term proletarian were taken to mean poor, puny, emaciated, one could have said that the proletarian Soviet Jewry was being reconstructed in the general image of pre-Revolutionary Russian Jewry, with Socialism taking the place of the Torah.

For Jewish culture, the 1930's did not end as brightly as they had begun. The cloud that was no bigger than a man's hand in 1930 had grown to menacing proportions by 1939. The invisible constrictive hand increasingly exerted itself. No change of policy was officially indicated, all went on as before, but the bureaucratic vise began closing ever tighter. Information about Jewish cultural institutions became hard to obtain. Some closed without prior notice or subsequent report. Those who were sensitive to political currents began to sniff the cooling of the air, but in the absence of a new Party decision, even they abided by the official line and ascribed the cooling to the inefficiency or personal resistance of minor officials, who were failing in their duty.

Time and again, Jewish Communists, charged with the implementation of the Jewish cultural reconstruction, cried out against unnamed, unknown elements that were undercutting their cultural activities.

In 1935, the Yiddish Communist paper *Emes* published an angry attack on the current agitation against the Yiddish schools. Some people were telling Jewish parents that sending children to Yiddish schools was tantamount to ruining them. The Yiddish school, they said, had no perspective, and upon graduation the Jewish children would have no place to turn. The article in *Emes* went to considerable length to refute these statements and to point to their incompatibility with a Socialist Soviet society. In 1936, an article in *Emes* took the Machine Tools Polytechnic of Odessa to task for having so many of its classes taught in Russian instead of Yiddish. Although all courses of the first year were being given in Yiddish, eight out of the eleven courses in the second year were in Russian, seven out of the ten courses in the third year were in Russian, and all courses in the fourth year were in Russian. *Emes* maintained that all courses should be given in Yiddish. In 1937, *Emes* singled out the Larindorfer Jewish Region for rebuke. What sort of Jewish region was it, *Emes* asked, when all its activities were conducted in Russian? In 1938, *Emes* exposed the director of a Yiddish school who was sending his own children to a Russian school, and complained that the Russian schools were taking away the best teachers from the Yiddish schools. In 1939, *Emes* reported with chagrin the closing of Yiddish schools in a number of small towns. In 1940, the same paper demanded an explanation as to why not one of the twenty-seven new Yiddish textbooks scheduled to appear before the opening of the schools was available?

Additional similar items could be cited for every year of that decade. All of these could not possibly have been indicative merely of a sudden indifference of the Jewish people in these respective places, particularly when the people were so concerned in other parts, or of obtuseness on the part of minor officials. There was an invisible, constrictive hand behind the scenes, cunning and powerful. For its own reason, it did not strike everywhere at once, or anywhere thoroughly. It func-

tioned haltingly, in desultory manner, picking a victim here and a victim there. Hence the strange phenomenon of suppression in one spot and expansion in another. The true intent and full weight of the constrictive hand, no longer so invisible, came to be felt during the purges of the 1930's. Many cultural institutions were closed during those dark years of terror upon the arrest of their directors or principal functionaries. But the institutions were soon reopened—with a different personnel. In the case of the Jewish institutions the purges were, comparatively, more extensive, and once closed, they were not reopened. Some Jewish units that were not subject to purge, like collective farms, were opened to non-Jews, thereby destroying their purely Jewish character. In some places, particularly Birobidjan, ardor for Yiddish culture was connected with Trotskyism. It was as though the purge was being used to hamstring and undercut the Jewish proletarian culture.

Under the circumstances, it was a marvel that so much of the Yiddish culture managed to survive. There were still 90,000 Jewish children receiving a Yiddish education in 1940; three daily newspapers, five literary journals, and ten Jewish theatres were still functioning, and 339 Yiddish books had been published just the year before. One curious Jewish cultural item of that year was the publication of fifty-three titles in the ancient Persian Jewish dialect of the Tajik Jews.

The subsequent story has been told in detail elsewhere in this book. Suffice it here to recall that between the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact in 1939 and the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, vast territories with many millions of people came under Soviet rule, the Baltic states, parts of Eastern Poland and of Rumania. Among these new Soviet subjects were about 2,000,000 Jews, who all these years had been living a full national religious and cultural life. Soviet policy in regard to the new territories was of a dual character. On the one hand, it was vindictive toward the former anti-Soviet elements and shipped off to labor camps all possible subversives; on the other, it endeavored to overcome the expected displeasure of the masses by introducing long-delayed agrarian reforms and fostering the indigenous culture. The same policy was applied in dealing with the Jews in these territories. Although the restrictive hand did

not relax its grip in the Soviet lands proper, Soviet authorities did encourage Jewish proletarian cultural activities in the newly acquired territories.

The ingress of 2,000,000 Jews used to a vigorous national life was bound to have a judaizing impact on the Soviet Jews. For full two decades they had been out of touch with fellow Jews outside the Soviet Union. Now they could meet any number of them, hear what their life had been like during these years, and also learn what was going on in the Jewish world at that very moment. Through this contact they almost rejoined world Jewry. The upsurge of Yiddish cultural activity in the new territories reflected itself among the Jews in the other parts. It was as though the Soviet Jews were warming themselves at the hearth of the newcomers.

After the Nazi attack, the Soviet leaders favored arousing the national spirit among their various peoples in order to mobilize it for the war effort. The proletarian Jewish culture took a national turn. Fighting the Nazi enemy, Soviet Jews, like Jews everywhere in the anti-Nazi coalition, were fighting not only the enemy of their country but also the deadly enemy of Jews the world over. The return to history was inevitable. Jewish Communists discovered kinship with the Maccabees and Rabbi Akiba, his title "rabbi" notwithstanding. And at last they again established contacts with Jews of the West. For a brief moment during the war contingency, the Wandering Jew reached home.

At the conclusion of the war the Jewish situation reverted to what it had been in the middle 1930's. Officially, there was no change in policy; presumably the cultural activities could continue undisturbed and at the same tempo. But invisibly the constrictive hand reasserted itself. The institutions that had been closed because of the war emergency were not reopened. The ambitious plans for cultural expansion somehow failed of realization. Although there was more leeway in the new territories, the trend there too was to reduce the Yiddish culture to the same status as in the rest of the Soviet Union. Once again there was the same strange phenomenon of suppression in one corner and expansion in another. The vitality of the remaining organs seemed to grow with the amputations. Jewish leaders kept planning wider cultural activities right up to the moment

when the agent of the Secret Police rapped on the door. Then came the catastrophe of 1948-53, related elsewhere in the book, when the invisible constrictive hand came out into the open as the official brutal iron fist, which destroyed all the Jewish cultural institutions, murdered the Yiddish writers and other intellectual leaders, and was about to smite the Jewish masses as well.

One could chart the garroting on a board. The corpus delicti was there for all to see. Yet Soviet spokesmen would have us believe that Jewish culture "died a natural death" in the Soviet Union.

In the Theoretical Labyrinth

How is one to understand this strange Soviet policy toward the Jewish people? What caused the sharp, fatal turns from an originally positive approach, to an ambivalent attitude, to a murderous brutality? Stalin's Jewish policy wavered between the Kalinin declaration of a sort of Soviet Zionism to the executions of the writers and those allegedly involved in the Doctors' Plot, in preparation for physical expulsion of all Jews. Stalin has been dead seven years now. Does Khrushchev's Jewish policy make more sense? Logically, Khrushchev's position is even more untenable. Stalin wanted to destroy the fact, but he did not deny it. Khrushchev denies the fact, and then proceeds to deal with it under the table.

Speaking privately, Soviet intellectuals admit that they have a Jewish "situation" or "phenomenon"—they would not vouchsafe to call it a problem. But they still go by the Book, by the word of Lenin—ten years earlier it would have been of Lenin and Stalin—according to which, supposedly, the Jews were not a nation and were due for assimilation; any trend in the opposite direction was to be regarded as reactionary. When you throw the fact at them that the Jews have not been assimilated and stand out today as distinct as ever, their answer is, "But they will be. Certain bourgeois manifestations take longer for the Socialist society to dissolve than others." When you press them to point out any tendencies in the direction of assimilation, they fall back on the Book. The matter is very

complicated, they say. Lenin struggled with it at the turn of the century, long before the Revolution. Just what the issue was then they do not know; some recall it was in connection with the Jewish Social Democrats (*Bund*).

Just what did Lenin say about the Jews as a nation?

Few of the Soviet Communists dealing with matters Jewish seem to have taken the trouble to read Lenin's remarks, sparse as they were, in their entirety. They cite merely the same stray phrases taken out of context, actually a vulgarization of Lenin's views, and assign to them an infallible orthodoxy no longer attributed indiscriminately, under Khrushchev's dictum, to Leninism generally.

Lenin was not dealing with the Jewish problem philosophically in a political vacuum. He dealt with it in connection with two basic practical problems he had before him: a single, centralized revolutionary body to bring down the Czarist regime, and a single authoritative regime which, after taking power, could transform the vast Russian empire into a Socialist state. He was looking for centripetal action to counteract the centrifugal forces which the Revolution would release. In this, he came into head-on collision with the Jewish Socialist movement known as the *Bund*.

Organized as a Social Democratic party, the *Bund* anticipated by a year Plekhanov's organization of the Russian Social Democratic party. Lenin was then only another young revolutionary, sent to Siberia for Socialist agitation. Six years later, when Lenin, as a junior leader of the Russian Social Democrats, presumed to lecture the *Bund* on Socialism, the leaders of the *Bund* were not too awe-stricken to argue the Marxian issue with him. The issue was Jewish nationalism. The *Bund* maintained that the Jews were one of the nations in Czarist Russia, with a language, culture, and national life of their own. As such, they should have their own revolutionary movement, in co-operation with similar parties of other nations, their own struggle for Socialism, and on liberation after the Revolution, the Jews should have their national autonomy where they could live in compact masses. To Lenin, for whom his own Social Democratic party was too wide a base from which to lead the Revolution, the existence of a parallel self-contained revolutionary move-

ment was a Marxian heresy and a dangerous splitting of the revolutionary proletariat. The *Bund's* call for national autonomy on the morning after the Revolution was to him stirring up a hornet's nest in a land with so many nations and nationalities. True, it was Lenin who had called Czarist Russia a prison of nations and promised the prisoners freedom. But he envisioned this freedom to result not in separate national, which meant bourgeois, states, but in a fraternal international union of the proletariats of the several nations. Nations, like the states, would wither away under Socialism.

"Marxism and nationalism are contradictory," said Lenin. "Although the Marxist understands that nationalism is inevitable in a Capitalist society, he cannot accept it as a permanent phenomenon, but only in so far as it plays a progressive role in the fight against feudalism. Marxism is against particularism and federalism. It is for centralization and internationalization. . . . Socialism aims at an international proletarian culture which would be the amalgamation of everything positive in the various national cultures."

The *Bundists* could well agree to this *optimum desideratum* of the Socialist ideal, merely insisting that they would dissolve their Jewish nation at the time Lenin dissolved his Russian nation. The only logical reply to this was that the Russians, being a nation already, could be left to the natural forces of Socialism to be eventually dissolved, but the Jews, not really being a nation, should not venture first to become one under Socialism. Lenin took pains to convince the *Bundists* that the Jews were not a nation. He quoted bourgeois authorities like Ernest Renan and Alfred Nacke, who was a Jew himself, and Marxian authorities like Karl Kautsky and Otto Bauer. Then he equated the efforts to maintain a Jewish nationality with reaction and damage to the interests of the proletariat.

"The Jews in the civilized world are not a nation," Lenin agreed with Kautsky and Bauer; "they have mostly been assimilated. . . . The idea of a Jewish nation contradicts the interests of the Jewish proletariat by creating in it a mood hostile to assimilation, a mood of the 'ghetto' . . . The Jewish question stands exactly so: assimilation or isolation? And the idea of Jewish 'nationality' carries a clear reactionary character not only

among its consistent partisans (the Zionists) but also among those who attempt to combine it with the ideas of Social Democracy (the *Bundists*). . . . The history of the cultural-national autonomy slogan shows that it was held by all Jewish bourgeois parties in Russia without exception. The *Bund* was dragged behind them without criticism." Lenin invoked even Jewish tradition for his argument. He wrote: ". . . Those who merge the international Marxist organizations with Russians, Letts, Ukrainians, etc., bringing with them their contribution for the creation of an international culture of the workers' movement, uphold, in spite of the *Bund's* separatism, the best Jewish tradition, fighting against 'national' culture."

These quotations, and similar ones, like "Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeois, the slogan of our adversaries," are often used by Soviet apologists as the ideological justification for this government's assimilationist policy. But Jewish assimilation did not mean to Lenin what it came to mean to his successors. He did not conceive it as the total obliteration of the Jewish nationality, but as the process of acculturation that is characteristic of the Jewish communities in the Western world. He was contending not against the existence of the Jewish people, but against the separatism of the *Bund*. He wanted the Jews of Russia—at the time of these arguments, 1903, 1913, there was still only Russia—to be "assimilated" like the Jews in France or the United States, not to cease to be Jews. He wrote: "All over Europe, the decay of the Middle Ages and the development of political freedom went hand in hand with the political emancipation of the Jews, with their moving from the Jewish language to the language of the people among whom they lived, and in general with their undoubted advancement toward assimilation within the surrounding population. Are we to go back to primitive theories and declare that it is Russia which will be the exception?" And, in 1913, he wrote: "What do these facts signify? They signify that against assimilation can cry out only the *petit-bourgeois* Jews who want to turn the wheel of history backward and compel it to go not from Russia and Galicia to Paris and New York, but the other way around."

Lenin's denial of Jewish nationhood implied opposition to

the separation of the Jews from the rest of the population, but not the extinction of the Jews as a people. In fact, in other passages, he clearly set the Jews beside the other nations in regard to national culture in his own sense, which is the proletarian national culture. He wrote: "In every contemporary nation . . . there are two nations. In every national culture there are two national cultures. There exists a Great Russian culture of the Purishkevich, Gutchkov, or Struve kind, but there also exists a Great-Russian culture which is characterized by such names as Chernishevski and Plekhanov [the former three are reactionaries and conservatives; the latter, two Socialist pioneers]. Exactly *two such* cultures exist in the Ukraine, in Germany, France, England, among Jews, etc."

Lenin did not object to the Jews having two national cultures. It was the concept of a single national culture that he abhorred. And he had the same abhorrence for the thought of a single national culture for his own Great Russian people. He wrote: "Let us take a concrete example. Is it possible for a Great Russian Marxist to take up the slogan of national Great Russian culture? No. Such a person would belong to the nationalists and not to the Marxists. Our cause consists in fighting against the prevailing Great Russian culture of the Black Hundred and the bourgeoisie, in the name of internationalism . . . not to preach or to allow the slogan of national culture."

Then Lenin applied the same approach to the Jews: "The same applies to the most oppressed and persecuted nation, the Jewish nation. Jewish national culture is the slogan of the rabbis and the bourgeois, the slogan of our adversaries. But there exist also other elements in the Jewish culture and in the whole history of the Jewish people. Out of ten and a half million Jews throughout the world more than half live in Galicia and Russia, in backward and half-savage countries which *forcibly* keep the Jews in a status of outcastes. The second half live in the civilized world, and there they are not segregated as a caste. There the eminent, universally progressive traits of Jewish culture—its internationalism and its heedfulness to the progressive movements of the epoch—have manifested themselves distinctly. The percentage of Jews in democratic and proletarian

movements is everywhere higher than the percentage of Jews in the population generally."

In the light of the last two quotations, Lenin's stand on the status of Jews in the Soviet Union begins, from the Socialist point of view, to make sense. He was not looking forward to the disappearance of the Jewish people, as his successors were. He granted the Jews had a progressive, proletarian culture, as well as a reactionary culture, like other nations in the Soviet Union and other parts of the world. And he saw positive values in the progressive Jewish culture not only for the Jews involved but also for the countries of their sojourn. Accordingly, there was no reason for denying the Soviet Jews a proletarian cultural life of their own, and the early cultural history of the Jews in the Soviet Union thus becomes intelligible. Inasmuch as the Soviet Jews had not segregated themselves but were participating in the Revolution and subsequently in the building of Socialism, and since the culture they were fostering in Yiddish was of a truly proletarian nature, the Jews were entitled to the same encouragement and assistance in developing their own cultural life as the other national groups were receiving, and they indeed received it for a number of years.

This might seem to contradict the absolute denial, in the polemics with the *Bund*, that Jews were a nation. But pure logical consistency never handicapped the Russian revolutionary leaders. Nikolai Berdayev, the Russian religious philosopher, said of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia that a major trait of its character was obsession with ideas, for which they were ready to give their lives, yet their concern with ideas was not how true they were but how effective they might be in bringing down the Czarist regime and the existing social order. The same people who were regarded as no nation at all in the ideological struggle with the *Bund* could be conceded to be a nation with two national cultures in another theoretical context.

Stalin followed Lenin in the theoretical denial that Jews were a nation. But as the Bolshevik specialist on the question of nations, he both elaborated this position and simplified it. (Stalin had been sent to Austria long before the Revolution to study the question of nationalities there, and he became Commissar of Nationalities after the Bolsheviks took power.) By

Stalin's definition, "a nation is an historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." And Stalin insisted that "only when all these characteristics are present do we have a nation," and that "it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be absent and the nation ceases to be a nation." The Jews, of course, did not meet these requirements.

"If there is anything common to them [the Jews] left," Stalin wrote, "it is their religion, their common origin, and certain relics of a national character . . . And it is only on this assumption that it is possible to speak of the Jews as a single nation at all." Moreover, Stalin said: "The Jewish nation is coming to an end, and hence there is nobody to demand national autonomy for. The Jews are being assimilated. This view of the fate of the Jews as a nation is not a new one. It was expressed by Marx as early as the forties in reference chiefly to the German Jews. It was repeated by Kautsky in 1903 in reference to the Russian Jews. It is now being repeated by Bauer in reference to the Austrian Jews . . ."

The practical end of Stalin's theoretical disquisition on Jewish nationhood is even more apparent than that of Lenin's remarks. The refrain after each conclusive statement was a bang at the *Bund's* call for Jewish autonomy. One paragraph concluded with: "The question of national autonomy for the Russian Jews consequently assumes a somewhat curious character: Autonomy is being proposed for a nation whose future is denied and whose existence has still to be proved." At the end of another paragraph was the remark: "There can be no question of territorial-political autonomy for the Jews since the Jews have no definite and integral territory." On another occasion Stalin found cultural-national autonomy unsuitable because "firstly, it is artificial and impracticable, for it proposes to draw into a single nation people whom the very march of events, real events, is disuniting and dispersing to every corner of the country. Secondly, it stimulates nationalism because it tends to the view which advocates the 'demarcation' of people according to national divisions, the 'organization' of nations, the 'preserva-

tion' and cultivation of 'national peculiarities'—a thing that is entirely incompatible with Social Democracy."

In the end Stalin poured out his last drop of venom against the *Bund*: "It is expected that the *Bund* will take another step forward and demand the right to observe all the ancient Hebrew holidays. And if, to the misfortune of the *Bund*, the Jewish workers have discarded religious prejudices and do not want to observe them, the *Bund*, with its agitation in favor of the 'right of the Sabbath' will remind them of the Sabbath; it will, so to speak, cultivate among them the 'Sabbath-like spirit' . . . Preservation of everything Jewish, conservation of all national peculiarities of the Jews, even those that are patently noxious to the proletariat, isolation of Jews from everything non-Jewish, even the establishment of special hospitals—that is the level to which the *Bund* has sunk."

Stalin's vehemence is understandable. The time was before the First World War. The Russian Revolution was still in the distant future, its character unforeseeable. The Bolsheviks were still a small group, largely doctrinaire. The *Bund* was a challenge in two respects: It had a mass movement in parts of Russia where the Bolsheviks had few followers. And ideologically, the *Bund* expanded the concept of democracy in Social Democracy even beyond the Menshevik confines, and this might imbue Socialists of other nations under the Czarist rule. After the October Revolution these considerations lost all meaning. The *Bund* was soon suppressed, along with other parties, Socialist or bourgeois. The national problem became a practical matter in the routine of Soviet administration. And, like Lenin, Stalin did not let the old national theories interfere with practical solutions of the problem of the Jewish people. It was under Stalin that much of the paraphernalia of a national Jewish existence as envisioned by the *Bund's* concept of autonomy came into being, like all-Jewish collective economic enterprises, local Jewish councils and courts, Yiddish schools, academies, and publishing houses, and finally a separate Jewish autonomous region. Nobody could have imposed all these on Stalin if he had chosen to stand by the literal application of his national theory. If his national theory did not prevent Stalin from allowing and helping the Jews to establish proletarian national cul-

tural institutions, it cannot be blamed for his final suppression of these institutions. Nothing has changed in the national status of the Jews through the years, certainly nothing to warrant such a radical change in policy toward them.

Ideologically, then, there is no ground for the current Soviet policy toward the Jews. Their national theory served Lenin and Stalin well in their struggle against a heresy that threatened the unity of their movement. Both readily discarded the theory when they found it incompatible with the actual situation. And at no time had the Lenin-Stalin national theory excluded the existence of the Jews as a people living in a dual culture as Jews live in the West. In fact, Lenin was looking forward to some such status as obtains "in Paris or New York."

The Basis of the Soviet Jewish Policy

If the Lenin-Stalin national theory does not explain the Soviet Jewish policy, what does?

We may come closer to the answer by turning from the Lenin-Stalin Marxian theories to Marxian dialectic. There is a certain Jewish "situation" in the Soviet Union. Its existence is undeniable, however one may regard it. The actions taken by the Soviet authorities in regard to this "situation" are likewise manifest, however one may interpret them. Now, what are the essential elements of the "situation" and the "actions"?

Basically, the Jewish "situation" consists of the following factors: (1.) The persistence of Jews as Jews. Soviet Jewry has not been dissolved within the general population so that the Jew is indistinguishable from the non-Jew. On the contrary, the Jew is as easily identifiable in the Soviet Union as in any other part of the world. (2.) The scattered existence of Soviet Jews all over the vast country. They are not concentrated in one continuous territory of their own, as is the case with all other nationalities in the land. Again, this is no different from what obtains in other parts of the world—except Israel, of course. (3.) The Soviet Jews' lack of a national cultural life. As reiterated above, they have no national press, theatre, published literature, schools, cultural centers, clubs, etc., in their own language. They are neither creatively active nor passively enjoying

their own secular culture, and because of the ban on religious education, they are also deprived of the cultural values in religious scholarship. This circumstance, as already indicated, differs from what prevails in other parts of the world, where Jews maintain a national culture, whether in Yiddish, Hebrew, or the language of their native land, generally in all three at once.

These elements of the Jewish "situation" are so patent that their existence is axiomatic. It is their consequence that is controversial. It is contended here that this is a problem. Soviet spokesmen deny this. Yet Soviet officials themselves admit, inadvertently perhaps, as in the statements of Khrushchev and Furtseva which we have quoted, that they have a Jewish "situation" which requires adjustment. For the nonexistent phenomenon which they are supposed to be, Soviet Jews are giving the Soviet leaders altogether too much trouble.

What have been the Soviet "actions"?

The martyred Solomon Mikhoels once told me a story apropos of certain people in the West who refuse to accept the realities in the East. It concerned his own little granddaughter, who hated being bathed. One evening, as the tub was being drawn for her, she stood by it whimpering, "No water is drawn and nobody will be given a bath." Formally, the Soviet authorities proceed on the make-believe that nothing has happened to Soviet Jewry since 1948—no plots, no arrests, no executions, no closing of cultural institutions. No mention of any of these tragic events has ever been made in public, not even when the occasion clearly called for it, as in a biographical introduction to the translation of a book by an executed Yiddish writer. According to such an introduction, nothing happened to the author; he just died. To inquiries from abroad—within the Soviet Union questions are still avoided—about the state of Jewish culture and life, the reply is that Jewish culture came to a natural end when Jewish communal life, outside the synagogue, faded away. But in practice, Soviet leaders are still battling with what they must regard as a potent Jewishness, making strenuous efforts to bring about the conditions they insist already exist.

The "actions" assume different forms at various levels of authority and forms of social organization, but they may be grouped around five major purposes. First, to estrange the Jew

from his own culture. This is reflected in the stubborn refusal to reopen any of the former cultural institutions, and in hammering away at the fiction that all Soviet Jews have already been assimilated. It sets a model for the individual Jew to conform to, and equates the striving for a national cultural life with separatism, regarded as antisocial and bourgeois. Second, to detach the individual Jew from the Jewish community, blot out his sense of solidarity, of belonging, with fellow Jews. This finds expression in frequent articles in the newspapers (to be discussed in detail shortly) which expose the evil doings of persons with unmistakable Jewish names. However innocently presented, these articles leave the individual Jew small pride and no social value in identifying himself with other Jews. He is better off on his own as just another Soviet citizen, minimizing, if he cannot disown, his Jewishness. Third, to sever all ties, physical and spiritual, between Soviet Jews and Jews in other lands, eradicating any sense of relationship. This is being undertaken by ideological articles purporting to prove scientifically and historically that the Jews of the world are not a single race or nation, and that the Jews in one part of the world have nothing in common with Jews in other parts of the world. It is reinforced by shutting off all communications between Soviet Jewry and Jewish communities elsewhere, and keeping out all news relating to Jews, except such as may have a negative value—that is, point up anti-Semitism in other lands or the hostile attitudes toward the Soviet Union of certain Jews abroad; in other words, leave Soviet Jews no pride in identifying themselves with Jews abroad and give them every reason for national disentanglement.

Fourth, to undercut the significance and achievement of the State of Israel, and equate Zionism with the imperialist enemy of the Soviet Union. This is being done by continuous vilification of Israel in articles in the press and in special publications, as well as over the radio, with never a word about the progress of the new state, so frequently commented upon with admiration in all but Arab countries, but pouncing on every item of news that may indicate local difficulties and exaggerating these, and by pure fabrication. It is expected that all of this will show the Soviet Jew he has no reason to take pride in the Jewish state

nor hope of living vicariously its national Jewish life. Fifth, to discredit the Jewish religion and hinder as much as possible its practice. In articles in the press and occasionally also by mock trials, the Jewish religion is stamped as a primitive, barbaric, antisocial superstition, its ceremonial a debauch and fraud. Although this may constitute a part of the general antireligious propaganda, it has special features not encountered in the campaign against the other religions. It concentrates not on theology but on the specifically national elements in the Jewish religion, as though to foreclose the synagogue-escape for the harried national Jewish sentiment.

What is the basic principle underlying all these actions?

At the time of the purges, the Soviet leaders devised the concept of *social prophylaxis*, which meant that the state had the right to take action not only against crimes committed but also against potential crimes. A potential criminal was to be treated as though he had already committed the crime. Some such psychological approach may account for the Soviet Jewish policy today—a sort of *national prophylaxis* that assumes the potential assimilation and dissolution of Soviet Jewry has already taken place and regards the Jewish national reality as a subversive element. The operation has been performed—all that is left to do is to clean up the operating table. The operation became necessary because the perseverance of the Jews as Jews developed into a problem (which was not supposed to happen under Socialism), and its solution is much more complicated in a collective, controlled society. The Stalinist habit of suppressing a problem rather than seeking its solution has, in this matter, been carried over into the Khrushchev era.

The presumption that there ought not to be a Jewish problem in the Soviet Union rests on three postulates. First, that the Jewish problem derives in part from economic sources. Because of historic factors, Jews concentrated in a limited number of callings, which are almost entirely urban, largely professional, and to a considerable degree concerned with the exchange of goods. This circumstance makes them conspicuous in the general population, the butt of competition, the object of envy. Under Socialism, it was believed, the historic factors would no longer prevail; the Jews would be assimilated in all the pursuits

of the general population and would achieve a balanced economy.

Second, the Jewish problem derives in part from a hostility toward Jews in large segments of the general population, which arose from various causes—ignorance, superstition, prejudice. These, originated in the long past, were being fostered by certain elements for their own ends. Under Socialism, it was taken for granted, there would be no such elements, and the traditional hostility would dissipate with the growth of enlightenment and absence of motivation.

Third, the conditions inherent in the first two postulates, operating in a society with social contradictions, make the Jew a convenient scapegoat for misrule and other ills of the system. It was believed that in a Socialist society, the conditions of the first two postulates would not exist, and there would be neither social contradictions nor a need for scapegoats.

What, then, was the Jewish situation in a Socialist society expected to be?

In the absence of differentiating and separating factors, the Jews might be assimilated into the general population and lose their national identity. Or they might choose to live their own national life in their own language and culture, the Socialist state giving them full freedom and opportunity to do so. In either case there would be no Jewish problem.

Obviously, neither of these possibilities came to pass for the Jews in the Soviet Union. Whether the Soviet leaders call their Jewish problem a "situation" or a "phenomenon," they cannot say that the Soviet Jews have lost their national identity or that they are enjoying a national cultural life. No amount of cold-war propaganda could create a semblance of a Jewish problem where none existed—say, in Albania or Red China.

It might be interesting to discover why neither of the two possible developments materialized for Jews under Socialism in the Soviet Union. One might well wonder if the reason was some fault in the Soviet brand of Socialism or some peculiarity in the Jewish people that is not susceptible to social change, however un-Marxian that would be. But this issue is not under consideration here. We are concerned not with the character of the Soviet state, but with the life of 3,000,000 Jews. The issue

here is whether a certain situation exists or does not exist, and if it does, what is being done about it? By now, we trust, the reader is convinced that the situation does exist. What, then, is being done about it?

Without retreating from their untenable position on assimilation and the Jewish problem, the Soviet authorities have proceeded on a modified form of the old pattern, an ounce of permission for the expression of national culture and a hundred-weight of suppression in the hope of actual assimilation. For instance, there is no agency, state or civilian, concerned with Yiddish books; no Yiddish publishing house, or Yiddish branch of a general publishing house; no association of Yiddish writers, nor a committee of such writers, to plan the publication of Yiddish books. But the Russian State Literary Publishers have lately issued three Yiddish classics. The beginning was made after an interval of ten years with a volume of stories by Sholom Aleichem, and about a year later, a collection of the works of Mendeli Mokhor Seforim and J. L. Peretz, all three of which have been mentioned previously. Late in 1960, announcement was made that a few works of deceased Soviet Yiddish writers were to appear in Yiddish. The first three were in editions of 30,000, an unusually large number for any but the Sholom Aleichem; prior to the suppression of Yiddish culture, such editions usually ran from 10,000 to 15,000. However, the editions were apparently meant more for the foreign market than for home consumption. Although these books are hard to obtain within the Soviet Union, one can find stacks of them in all Soviet bookshops abroad.

Similarly, there is no Jewish body or any agency concerned with Yiddish theatre. And there does not exist a single Yiddish theatre. But the Trade Union Culture Department, which fosters amateur theatrical groups among the other cultural activities of the workers, has organized, or permitted the organization of, three Yiddish amateur acting groups in Leningrad, Vilno, and Riga. Like other amateur groups, they give a few performances a year, primarily dramatizations of stories by Sholom Aleichem, whose work is politically safe.

There is no organization or committee interested in Jewish music, although many such groups had been in existence under

the Czarist regime. But the General Concert Bureau, which manages all musical performers and reciters, offers, as part of its international programs, concerts by artists who specialize in Jewish folk songs and recitations in Yiddish, again primarily from Sholom Aleichem. This exhausts the entire national cultural life of the Jews in the Soviet Union outside the synagogue. Unlike the case in other countries, there is no Jewish culture whatever in the language of the country, Russian. There was a considerable literature of Jewish content in that language under the Czarist regime.

These things are very little indeed, especially when compared to what there was before the Revolution or what Jewish communities of similar size have in other lands. Yet even this little came about only after years of tremendous pressure from outside the Soviet Union, after Soviet officials had been badgered both at home and abroad by foreigners, friend and foe. And against this slight, begrudged cultural outlet, there is the deadly constrictive hand choking off any other possible source of sustenance for the national spirit and sealing the narrowest crevice of escape from assimilation.

The renewed campaign against the Jewish religion, crude, ruthless, smothering (discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter), compared to which the attacks against the other religions are a polite atheistic discourse, makes no sense on religious grounds alone. The few poor old Jews one still finds in the empty, dilapidated synagogues cannot be of any consequence to Soviet society; they are beyond reach by such tactics, and are hardly worth the effort even if it were to succeed. Neither can it be said that there is a trend toward religion on the part of the Jewish youth sufficient to require counteraction. The campaign against the Jewish religion is comprehensible only as an effort to shut off an escape for the national spirit. This also explains why now, with the new turn of liberalism in the land, it has become much more difficult to obtain matzohs for Passover than even in the dark years of terror. The bland, tasteless matzoh has assumed subversive proportions in the eyes of the Soviet authorities.

The same motivation lies behind the relentless struggle against Zionism. There has not been a Zionist organization in

the Soviet Union in more than forty years. Those who dared to spread Zionist ideas underground in the years following the ban have long since paid with their lives in the wastes of Siberia. Almost two generations of Jews have come up who have never read a pro-Zionist article or heard a pro-Zionist word. Nevertheless, the Soviet authorities still fight Zionism as the devil incarnate. There is a ceaseless flow of diatribes against Zionism, whose adherents are called enemies of the Soviet Union, the cliché being "Jewish bourgeois nationalists, Zionists, and all enemies of the USSR."

The Soviet authorities insist that Soviet Jews have no interest in matters Jewish. In the report on his visit to Birobidjan in 1954, Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times* wrote that "never during the question periods, which uniformly occurred when this correspondent was escorted through schools, factories, or other institutions, were questions asked about Jews abroad, Israel, Zionism, or other matters of Jewish interest. Officials said this reflected a lack of interest on the part of Jews in such matters." Yet the war against Zionism continues increasingly to this day.

Why whip a dead horse?

Apparently, deep in their hearts, the Soviet authorities are not sure that the horse is dead. Zionism is the most active international Jewish spiritual force, the living idea of the common origin, culture, and destiny of the Jewish people. Branding it as an enemy of the Soviet Union and coupling it with "Jewish bourgeois nationalists," which might include most Jews in the Capitalist world, serves notice on the Soviet Jews to keep away from things Jewish abroad and not identify themselves in any way with those "enemies of the Soviet Union."

The same motive accounts for the anti-Israel propaganda within the Soviet Union. Israel is a small country indeed in the global scheme of Soviet foreign policy. Yet Israel is receiving much attention in the Soviet press and on the radio, more by far than many larger, older, and politically more consequential countries. Invariably, Israel is singled out for hostile comment and gross misrepresentation. One might understand such attention and such an attitude in Moscow broadcasts to the Arab world, world politics being what they are. But what sense can

there be in the Soviets' blasting away at Israel for their own people? Why should the Soviet people be so concerned with Israel? Or are the diatribes really intended for the ears of the Soviet Jews? Do the Soviet Jews have such a friendly feeling for Israel that a strong antidote is necessary to clear them of it? Besides, why take so much trouble about the attitude of the Soviet Jews toward Israel? They cannot possibly go there even if they want to.

This tactic becomes understandable, however, in the context of the larger aim of de-Judaizing the Soviet Jews. The rise of the new state in the ancient homeland struck a consonant chord in the hearts of all Jews, and its existence became a revitalizing force in world Jewry. Everywhere Jews began to take greater pride and feel more secure in their Jewishness because of Israel. That the Soviet Jews did not differ in this respect from the Jews in other lands was manifest in the huge, unprecedented demonstration they gave the first Israeli ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1948 and in their flocking together wherever an Israeli youth appeared at the time of the International Youth Festival in Moscow in 1956. The enthusiasm, the hearty approach, the sense of kinship, were all too apparent. It has therefore become necessary to detract from the achievements of the State of Israel and to defame its character, so that no Jew will have reason to take pride in it, much less to identify with it. The government of the Soviet Union may have proper diplomatic relations with Israel, but the Soviet Jews must have "no part nor inheritance with their brethren" in Israel. So, the people of the Soviet Union must be informed about how their leaders regard Israel, in order to detect who among the people about them stands up for that state.

What about the anti-Jewish pieces appearing from time to time in the Soviet press? They are not anti-Semitic in the sense that they do not reflect on the Jewish race or people. Occasionally, they make a point of dissociating themselves from anti-Semitism, which they condemn, stressing the Soviet fetish of friendship of nations. Actually, they merely expose social evils, citing concrete cases and naming names. But the names are strikingly Jewish, and all who are involved in the nefarious actions are Jews. And these pieces seem to be written with an

amount of sarcasm, rage, and vengeance out of proportion to the wrongs done. Often the reader feels that the administrator of the chastisement derives a sadistic pleasure from it.

The crimes involved are minor and common, abuses that have become part of the Soviet way of life. The stories follow a certain pattern: The Jewish person is smart, energetic, resourceful, but in an anti-social way. He is self-seeking, dishonest, out to get what does not belong to him. Often he occupies an executive position, and misuses his authority for his own ends. His accomplice, generally his assistant, also bears a recognizable Jewish name. A few items selected at random may illustrate the point.

An article in the *Red Star* (*Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20-12-'59) deals with a Lieutenant Colonel of the Medical Corps, Zinovi Borisovich Grinberg, and his assistant Zilberfarb. The article admits that Grinberg had done much for the polyclinic under his charge: "It should be said . . . that much had been done in the past years to improve the work of the clinic. New medical cabinets had been put into operation and were well equipped by the Collective. The polyclinic director was praised everywhere." But the praise went to Grinberg's head. "Forgetting the merits of the Collective, [he] came to believe in his own particular star and imagined that everything was now permissible for him." A carpet of "utmost quality" was sent down for the physiotherapy clinic. Grinberg took it home, substituting for it a cheap carpet of low quality which he bought with his own money. After a "group of lickspittles and toadies," who surrounded Grinberg, feted him with a "jubilee" in his honor, a magnificent affair, "flowers, passionate speeches, expensive gifts, Grinberg looked at everybody, his head in a whirl: 'I am loved, respected,' he congratulated himself. 'Look how much I have done. Yes, I can . . .'"

"Zinovi Borisovich's inexhaustible talents were, as from this day, displayed with ever greater brilliance. He introduced all sorts of reforms in the polyclinic, instituted new functions which he subsequently canceled, named people to staff positions (as for instance, N. Efimov) who did not work, but only received wages.

"And soon Zinovi Borisovich completely confounded public

property with his own. Having successfully carried out the carpet substitution, Grinberg now also took the carpet strip without any pangs of conscience. Furthermore, a soft sofa, two plush armchairs, two plywood night-tables, etc., were safely moved over to the director's flat . . . and the subordinates now deemed it possible to follow in their director's footsteps. Chairs were taken by one, a mattress by another, a wardrobe by a third, etc."

There is nothing startling here, nor anything specifically Jewish. What is worthy of consideration is that the bad people bear Jewish names and the good people bear Russian names; for instance, the ex-Party secretary who remonstrated with Grinberg for the substitution of the carpet was named P. Elokhin, and the nurse who finally exposed Grinberg to the Political Department was called Navozhina.

Another item reflects Soviet conditions in another sphere of life. It is called "Mother Sheindel's Stratagems," and appeared in *Dnestrovskaya Pravda* (27-9-'59). It could be the Sholom Aleichem story *Gymnasia* in reverse: Mother Sheindel had a daughter Ida, who received good marks all through the ten years of her elementary schooling, and a silver medal on graduation. Yet when she took the examination for admission to the Tiraspol Pedagogical Institute, she failed twice in mathematics.

"Mum . . . Mum, Mummy dear," stammered Idochka on coming home, "I f . . . f . . . failed."

"My darling, my dear daughter, my poor bird!" Mother Sheindel soothed her daughter, hugging her. "Do not cry, my darling. Everything will be settled. You know your mother. I know everything . . ."

"And Mother Sheindel really showed her 'capabilities,' but not in mathematics! No, by no means in mathematics, but in 'bribing.' As the old proverb goes—Grease one's palm and no doors are closed to you."

And this is how the bribe went. Mother Sheindel approached Sergei Ivanovich Miron, a teacher in the Pedagogical Institute.

"My dear Sergei Ivanovich, everything, everything depends on you. My daughter's fate is in your hands. . . ."

"I do not understand you, citizen. What do you want? Speak coherently."

"I am Ida Roitman's mother. You see, she—well, how should

I express myself? She failed her mathematics exam. But my daughter must study. Do you understand? I am a bold, determined woman."

"I do not understand you. What is it you wish?" asked Sergei Ivanovich.

Mother Sheindel continued: "I have already told you I am a bold, determined woman. Here, take an advance, three thousand rubles, clean money. And on my daughter's admission we will meet again. I will give you any sum you name. I do not throw words to the winds. Listen to me."

Sergei Ivanovich, of course, shoved the money back to her. "Take your money and go back where you came from." But Mother Sheindel was "no woman to leave a thing unended." She approached another teacher, Pisarenko, to whom she gave the money for Sergei Ivanovich. Pisarenko was as honest as Sergei Ivanovich, and turned the money over to the Peoples' Court, which sentenced Mother Sheindel to a year's imprisonment. The article posed the question: How could Idochka have won the silver medal?

Here, again, there is not a word to indicate that Mother Sheindel was Jewish. To a person unacquainted with the nomenclature of the Soviet Union, Mother Sheindel could be any Soviet citizen. But the Soviet reader needs no such identification. Just the name is enough; and the character needs no identification, either. It is the stereotype for people with Jewish names treated in such articles. If one is aware that bribing an official to get admitted to an institution of higher learning has recently become not an uncommon, or unknown, malpractice, the implication of Mother Sheindel's action is ominous. There is great popular resentment against this form of corruption, and Mother Sheindel is the woman who is trying hard to corrupt the admissions officials.

Another item deals partly with bribery but mostly with a legalistic tangle by which cunning subverted justice. Called "The Malakhovka Castle," it was published in the authoritative Moscow *Izvestia* (15-2-'59). It is about a man named David Abramovich Kurtsman. He and his wife have an apartment in Moscow and a summer place, a garret, in the suburb Malakhovka. Underneath the garret there is the dwelling of two old

women, Yekaterina Ilichina Galanina and Olga Ivanovna Samsonova, who occupy their place all year 'round. Kurtsman decided to turn his summer garret into a winter lodge, and introduced a heavy heating stove. The old ladies feared the ceiling would collapse under the heavy weight, and entreated their garret neighbor to forego the stove. Upon his refusal they gathered their belongings and put up temporarily with a neighbor. Then they appealed to the authorities, and the run-around began. The old women went to the chief of the Fire Brigade, Kukhumov.

"He listened, stamped his feet, clanged his copper helmet: 'Well, I will show him, the willful one.' And not only did he utter these words but he put them into writing in a document, in which it was stated that the stove put up by Kurtsman was not in accordance with the Fire Brigade safety regulations, and threatened a collapse.

"Comrade Kukhumov came . . . personally to punish the infringer, but here a miracle happened. It is uncertain whether the upper tenant winked meaningly to the official of the Malakhovka Fire Brigade or whether he stamped his feet at him. But a new paper appeared. It ascertained that comrade Kurtsman had a stove which had been standing for a long time."

The story repeated itself when the old ladies went to the director of the Regional Communal Economic Department, Samarin. Outraged, Samarin shouted, "How dared he? This is arbitrariness! The stove should be immediately pulled down," and he invalidated Kukhumov's second paper. But then again a miracle happened. "David Abramovich went to Samarin, spoke to him for two minutes, and received a document which also testified that there was a stove in the room, but said not a word about the arbitrariness of the owner, about the illegality of the existence of the brick structure in the summer garret."

The two old ladies went over the head of Samarin to Polyakov, chief of the Ukhtom Regional Communal Economic Department, who invalidated Samarin's document and "hurled thunder and lightning at Kurtsman," in which Samarin now joined. But still nothing was done about it.

" 'We can't do anything,' Comrade Polyakov said, gesticulat-

ing. 'We give orders to Kurtsman, he does not comply; we beg, he does not obey.'

" 'Use your authority.'

" 'With Kurtsman, you say? He will drag us from court to court.'

"Indeed, David Abramovich has great experience in jurisprudence. He knows the code of laws by heart."

Four times David Abramovich was called up for trial. Each time he obtained a postponement on some fake excuse. When he finally appeared, he challenged the jurisdiction of that court. The case was transferred to another court, which David Abramovich did not challenge, and this court ordered the stove removed immediately. But David Abramovich did not yield. "You will answer for this! We will complain." And he complained to the District Court.

The District Court upheld the two old women's claim, but found an error in the wording of the decision of the lower court. "It was not registered that the court, having satisfied Galanina and Samsonova's suit, had dismissed Kurtsman's counter-suit." The case had to go to the lower court all over again, and Kurtsman so intimidated the judge that the case was finally sent to Moscow. When the article appeared, the case was still pending and the two old ladies still being sheltered in a neighbor's kitchen.

Essentially, this article is an exposé of juridical bureaucracy, its functionaries being subject to bribery and intimidation, seeking to avoid assuming responsibility, and permitting themselves to be trapped in legal entanglements that pervert justice. Kukhumov, Samarin, Polyakov, and the others mentioned should bear part of the blame. But it was David Abramovich Kurtsman who brought about this travesty of the Soviet legal process. He did so through the familiar psychological pattern of persons with such names: i.e., smartness, superior knowledge, consuming perseverance, ruthlessness, and total disregard for his fellow men.

Two other social evils recently pointed up in the Soviet press also feature Jews as the major culprits. Both deal with foreign contacts.

One is concerned with gift packages from abroad. An article

ANTI-SEMITIC LEAFLET, WITH TRANSLATION

В О З В А Н И Е !

ДЕЛОЯ ЖИДОВ ИЗ ТОРГОВЛИ, КОТОРЫЕ НАНОСЯТ ВРЕД СОЦИАЛИСТИЧЕСКОМУ ДОБРУ И МАТЕРИАЛЬНЫМ БЛАГАМ НАРОДА, ПРЕЯТСТВУЯ ШИРОКОЙ ТОРГОВЛЕ ДЕРЖАВНЫМИ ТОВАРАМИ, НАНОСЯ КРУПНЫИ УЩЕРБ ГОСУДАРСТВУ И ТРУДОВОМУ НАРОДУ В СВОИХ НАБЛАТЕЛЬСКИХ ЦЕЛЯХ.
 Лопайте их, вынуждаяте им трудовые мучалы, наказывте нечестными делами. Учтите их, как надо жить тому, кого опасли от смерти предоставив свою землю, такой ненавистной нации, как они, а те в свою очередь обнаглел заняли ведущие места протаскивая по благу друг друга сделал своих же спасителей своими подчиненными, вдолбив в голову не искущенному русскому народу "РАВНОПРАВИЕ" ,чтопе могли они сделать немецкому народу, который собрал их всех выкинул из своих земли. А те буртли о жид сейчас так немецкий народ, как он живёт или польский, чешский,да там, где мало этой жудейско-црадательской нации, котораяиз-за золота ищет на всё.

Комитет -- д. С.Р.

APPEAL!

DOWN WITH THE JEWS FROM TRADE, WHO HARM THE SOCIALIST PROPERTY AND THE MATERIAL ADVANTAGES OF THE PEOPLE, HAMPERING THE EXTENSIVE TRADE OF COMMODITIES IN SHORT SUPPLY CAUSING GREAT DAMAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT AND THE WORKING PEOPLE IN THEIR LUCRATIVE AIMS.

Catch them, steam out the working callousness they acquired through dishonest deals. Teach them how should live one who was saved from death having put your own land at his disposal, such a hateful nation as they are, and who, in their turn, impudently secured the leading posts pulling each other through, drumming "EQUALITY" into the heads of the inexperienced Russian people, a thing they could not do to the German people which gathered them and expelled them from its soil. Otherwise it is doubtful whether the German people would live as it lives today, just like the Poles and the Czechs and there where there is little of this Judean-treacherous nation which for gold is ready for anything.

КОМИТЕТ В.Ж.С.Р.

Translator's Note.

The initials most probably stand for: BEI ZHIDOV SPASI ROSSIUTSENTRALNII KOMITET DLIA OSVOBOZH DENIA RUSSKOGO NARODA—Beat the Jews Save Russia—Central Committee for the Liberation of the Russian people.

entitled "Life on Foreign Charity" (*Sovietskaya Moldavia*, 15-4-'60) maintains that "the ideologists of Capitalism spare no efforts to present the Soviet people as miserable beggars, using all possible means to blacken the Soviet social system. Some of our individual citizens replenish the mill of hostile Capitalist propaganda by receiving, often begging, for assistance from their relatives or charitable institutions in the Capitalist countries." Actually, the article insists, "only those who do not like to work, who are used to living like parasites, who do not cherish the honor of the Soviet citizen, are in need of foreign donations."

What do the recipients do with the gifts? "The majority of the articles received are sold at inflated prices, the family thus making a fortune." This is not legally a crime, inasmuch as the recipient is only selling his personal gift, but the author of the article appeals "to the public tribunal," which is to say public opinion. He wants to stigmatize those who persist in receiving gifts from abroad. A number of names are mentioned in the article—some might be non-Jewish; those of the most conspicuous offenders are definitely Jewish. The sole example of a repentant, a transgressor who returned to the straight and narrow, is Roza Pinkhusovna Shnaider from the Lipkaini region. She had called for assistance from abroad, but "she has recently requested her relatives in Israel to stop sending her parcels, since she can very well live without them."

A more hostile article in an ugly mood is "Mrs. Mosberg Makes Business" (*Znamia Komunizma*, 15-4-'60), which deals with a social evil connected with foreign visitors in the Soviet Union. During the temporary thaw in the cold war many Russians took the talk of closer contact and friendship with other nations literally. They mingled freely with tourists, some even inviting tourists to their homes. During these contacts, comparisons between the daily life of East and West were inevitable. Worse yet, some of the youthful delinquents, derisively called in Russian "biznismen," and finaglers generally, began to approach tourists with all sorts of shady deals, ready to buy anything a tourist might have to sell, from an old pair of socks to American dollars, and offering to sell him anything from fur

pieces to icons. Possibly as a result of the easing of police control, the Soviet equivalent of our underworld began pouring over Red Square and other places frequented by tourists. Rather than go after the thieves, the article attacks the fence.

Margarita Grigorievna Mosberg is the secretary of her husband's law firm in Tel Aviv. She is a very aggressive, mean, and dishonest person. "Within the ten days of her sojourn in Odessa she visited many families, talked to scores of friends and strangers. The guest's speeches were so cynical and openly tactless that honest Soviet people had to air their rooms thoroughly after her visits. The pathetic meaning of all her orations came to one thing: 'Oh, how terrible it is here! How perfect in our country!'

"Hardly had Margarita Grigorievna stepped down from the ship's ladder than she directed herself as fast as her feet could carry her in search of what was dearest to her, platinumware. The Israeli tourist turned out to be a person of rare practicality. It was her deep conviction that only romanticists regard as valuable that which has no exchange value and cannot be put into circulation. Ridiculous to her are people who affirm in earnest: 'If you could only know how dear to us are Moscow's superb evenings!' To Margarita Grigorievna, the word *dear* sounds only with the tinkle of currency and stands parallel in meaning to 'How much does it cost? How much is it sold for? Can it be obtained cheap?'

"Where is platinum sold cheapest? This was the question which most worried Mrs. Mosberg. And the particular sharpness common to all businessmen prompted the course of her expeditions.

"Without delay, speculators appeared at the hotel's doorstep. One of the first to call on the foreign guest was a certain Morgenshtein. He assured her that he would try to do everything possible to obtain stolen platinum, and kept his word chivalrously. In the evening on one occasion, Morgenshtein took a taxi, drove up to the hotel, and with a sweeping gesture invited Mrs. Mosberg to follow him. We see them in the flat of Yuria Gurevich, a man with no definite occupation. Platinum rings are on the table. Morgenshtein weighs these himself on pharmaceutical scales: 29 grams, 30, 32.

"'Your price?'

"'Seventy rubles per gram.

"'This is robbery. Your friend told me you sold them for sixty.'

"'He will give them away for fifty. Strike a bargain!'

"And they struck, but so loudly that the economic police officials heard them."

Mrs. Mosberg turned out to be a cheat as well. "She wheedled thirty rubles out of Lora Sereshkina on the promise to send her a parcel from Israel. The benefactress was terribly disappointed that she could find no other people ready to loan their savings against parcels. She would have incurred no losses from this business. Parcels from Israel, as our people know, are readily dispatched by the Magen firm, which pursues far from exalted purposes."

The article ends on this note: "Oh, madam, madam! If you only knew how ridiculous and pitiful you look to the Soviet person, with your ragman's psychology. . . . We have left only a few remnants with whom you can find a common language, and tomorrow these will exist no more. . . . Your consciousness, stuffed with mercantile rubbish, is unable to grasp the thousandth portion of the great things we accomplish and achieve in building our happiness."

This continuous literary hounding would have been unpleasant for Jews even in a setting of racial harmony and good will. It has naturally been disconcerting in an atmosphere of considerable anti-Jewish prejudice and hostility. Anti-Semitic officials, and more particularly the riffraff, hooligan elements, could read into the flood of indirect abuse against individual Jews a license for arbitrary action against all Jews. The near-pogrom in Malakhovka is a case in point.

Malakhovka is a suburban community fifteen miles southeast of Moscow, with a population of about 30,000, about 10 per cent of them Jews. Early on Sunday morning, October 4, 1959, which happened to be the second day of the Jewish New Year, the local synagogue was set on fire. A neighbor discovered the arson, and called the fire department. While the firefighters were extinguishing the fire, the home of the caretaker of the Jewish cemetery was burned down to the ground, and his old

wife reportedly strangled and thrown into the flames. For two nights before and after the incident, typed anti-Semitic leaflets were plastered on the walls of Jewish homes. These were signed: Committee, Beat Jews and Save Russia. They contained such passages as: "Down with the Jews from trade, who harm the Socialist property and material advantages of the people, hampering extensive trade in commodities in short supply, causing great damage to the government and the working people in their lucrative aims . . . On our Russian soil the Judean race has risen so high as to name the Russian people 'fool' and '*Vanka*,' and we endure all this. But how long will it last? We saved them from the Germans, who were more intelligent toward this nation. . . . To speak frankly, the Bolsheviks have in vain hurried to equalize this nation . . . Our people is no longer the same. It has been contaminated by the Jews with bureaucracy, greed for profit, and unhospitableness . . ."

This incident did not represent government policy, of course. Neither was it an isolated incident. Rowdy acts against the Jewish communities were committed in various parts of the country. Similar anti-Semitic leaflets appeared also in Vinnitsa, Kharkov, Kiev. In the Moscow suburbs of Pushkino and Perlovka, hooligans smashed windows of Jewish homes and broke into and pillaged some. In another Moscow suburb, Kuntsevo, rowdies broke into a house where a minyan religious service was in progress and beat up some of the worshipers. A number of Jewish cemeteries were desecrated; in the one at Kiev, forty-eight tombstones were turned over, the vandals leaving behind the inscribed threat: "We are starting with the dead and will finish with the living." All these acts may be regarded as a reflection of the general rise of hooliganism, a social phenomenon admitted and decried in the press, a sad commentary on Soviet society forty-four years after the Revolution. Apparently the "engineers of the soul" (writers and other intellectuals) who had been called upon by Lenin to "reconstruct" the new Soviet man have not done as good a construction job as the engineers in other fields. But the anti-Jewish hooliganism has sinister implications, and questions may be raised as to the action, or inaction, of the Soviet authorities in this matter.

The article "The Malakhovka Castle" appeared in *Izvestia*

a little over half a year before the tragic incident there. One wonders how much influence the pillorying of Jewish persons as scoundrels and knaves in a prominent newspaper had on the hooligans in Malakhovka. In view of the obviously prevalent hostility to Jews in the lower levels of Soviet society, it is not unreasonable to ask if it was necessary to keep singling out Jewish names in articles exposing malfeasance and corruption. The strange inaction of the authorities in cases of anti-Jewish hooliganism is worse still. Instead of exposing these hooligan acts and meting out stern punishment as a deterrent to other rowdies, the authorities covered them up. Nothing more was heard about them, and the impression remains that the culprits went unapprehended or got off with light sentences. The anti-social elements assume that Jews are easy prey.

What have the Soviet authorities done about the near-pogrom in Malakhovka? Have they published the story in the press and made an example of the arsonists and murderers?

Although the arson and murder were committed on October 4, 1959, the Soviet public has still to hear of them. The outside world learned of the events through a story in the *New York Times*. On November 5, 1959, the Soviet embassy in Paris labeled this "a monstrous lie . . . spread to confuse public opinion." On December 6, 1959, General David Dragunski, himself a Jew and an honored guest at a French leftist Jewish conference, said at a press conference in Paris: "This is a lie, pure and simple. I have just come from Moscow. I have friends in Malakhovka. I can affirm that nothing of the sort happened either in Moscow or in Malakhovka, or anywhere in the Soviet Union. They who publish such calumnies have no other purpose but to prolong the cold war." This absolute denial by Soviet authorities was re-echoed in all the Communist and leftist publications, which now proceeded to turn the tables: If such an atrocious lie could be invented and reported as a fact in so many countries, then any unfavorable news about the Soviet Union should be suspect of being a fabrication.

On January 13, 1960, Voshchikov, a member of the Committee of Five, the highest authority on religious matters, appointed directly by the Council of Ministers, admitted that the "monstrous lie," the "lie, pure and simple," was the truth. The ad-

mission came in a special interview with an Italian journalist, Tullia Zevi, who accompanied an Italian delegation to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Voshchikov explained to Miss Zevi that there were persons with anti-Semitic feelings in the Soviet Union, just as there were anti-Protestant feelings in Italy and dislike of Italians in the United States. However, the Soviet authorities "do not encourage such feelings, and when they are too strongly manifested, the persons involved are prosecuted and punished according to the law for the protection of nationalities, which applies also to the Jewish nationality." As to Malakhovka, Mr. Voshchikov's version was that on October 4, 1959, "somebody set fire to the upper floor of the synagogue, and to the building near the cemetery where the dead bodies are washed. The guardian's wife was caught in the flames and died of suffocation while trying to escape. The entire damage was estimated at 200 rubles."

On his visit to the Soviet Union, in September, 1960, André Blumel, the French lawyer and Jewish leader, for years president of the French Zionists and a leader of the society for friendly relations between France and the Soviet Union, met with Ryasanov, the vice-chairman of the Committee on Religion at the Council of Ministers, and Zadarazhni, the head of the department for the Jewish religion; among other questions he asked about the incident in Malakhovka. He was told that the synagogue had been set on fire and the wife of the caretaker found dead; whether she had succumbed to the flames or had first been strangled could not be determined. The authorities investigated but "found nothing," and there the matter ended. This did not satisfy Blumel, and he asked the chairman of the Council of Advocates of Moscow, Samsonov, whom he had previously met in Paris, to check further on the Malakhovka case. Samsonov found one of the lawyers who had attended the trial of the Malakhovka culprits. Their defense had been conducted by a Jewish lawyer, Bakst. They were condemned to ten and twelve years' imprisonment. According to the reports of the Soviet lawyer, in passing sentence, the judge stressed the offense of spreading anti-Semitism, which was contrary to the basis of the Soviet system.

Thus, the disposition of the case was unknown to the authorities dealing with religion, even to the man supposed to supervise the Jewish religious activities. The Soviet public has not heard of the incident yet.

Tullia Zevi followed up the Malakhovka story on her own. Her investigation, based on "reliable unofficial sources," convinced her that the incident was much more serious than Mr. Voshchikov had indicated. The action could not have been carried out by an unorganized group, she insisted, for hundreds of typed anti-Semitic leaflets were plastered on Jewish homes overnight; also, she stated that evidence existed that the caretaker's wife did not suffocate from smoke but was strangled, and that the damage amounted to several thousand rubles. She maintained that the arrests of those responsible took place after a considerable delay, following the pressure of public opinion abroad. The latter seems to have some indirect corroboration from Mr. Voshchikov. Soviet justice is generally direct and swift, but here, according to him, "judicial investigation" was still proceeding three months after a plain crime in a small community.

What was the sense in denying the incident in the first place? And why such a belated, grudging admission, with an obvious attempt to minimize the crime? Why keep it from the Soviet public even after it had been officially admitted abroad? If such an incident happened anywhere in the United States, would any government—county, state or federal—make the least effort to conceal it? Would it not receive the widest publicity in the press and on radio and television, with full condemnation in editorials and by all organs of public opinion?

If the Soviet leaders are so exceptionally sensitive about such matters as to go out of their way to keep the news from public knowledge, why do they permit the breeding ground for such outbreaks to persist: the continuous flow of anti-Jewish articles in the press? One word passed down the line would put an end to it all. And they could do that without public knowledge or admission of a mistake.

The few articles cited here are not isolated examples from the Soviet press. Similar articles appear quite frequently. My sampling came from a single category, internal issues. Many more

articles appear dealing with special aspects of Jewish affairs—Zionism, Judaism, Israel. A conservative estimate of the total would be about six a month. Since most of these are concentrated in the press of a few localities, mostly in the territories newly acquired during the war, the Jews there feel them like an incessant barrage. What can the purpose of these pieces be?

I sought the answer in the Soviet Union. An American who had been stationed in Moscow for some years told me: "Take these articles as you would such stuff back home. If an American newspaper published them, would you not call it thinly veiled anti-Semitism? If something looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it is a duck."

A Russian intellectual could see no anti-Jewish intent in these articles. "They are not imaginary pieces," he said. "They are actual cases, with the real names given. Our press is fearlessly rigorous in exposing abuses. Would you have a Jewish criminal spared because of his being a Jew?"

A Soviet Jew was uncertain about the intent, but sure of the ill effect. "You have to bear in mind," he said, "that similar articles appear in greater number about people with pure Russian names. So you can't say that Jews are being singled out. The truth is that quite a few Jews also do get involved, or caught. Being the record keeper, or auditor, the Jew often has to take the rap for finagling with which he has had the least to do. He could not hold on to his job if he did not go along—and his cut is the thinnest. But when the thing blows up, he is left holding the bag. As far as the public record goes, it is he who is caught red-handed. So the papers have a right to use his name in the exposé. But let me tell you every Jew feels rotten about it. Do you know how he feels? As if everybody was pointing a finger at him."

Why should the Soviet Jew feel this way? What is so strange about there being Jewish sharpers, too? Are not Jews supposed to be like the other people?

My Soviet Jewish friend could not explain it. "You see," he said, "if Ivan Ivanovich is held up to scorn and contempt, Stepan Stepanovich is not affected. Both are regarded as individuals, each on his own merit. It is not a Russian who is caught finagling; it is Ivan Ivanovich. But when David Abramovich is

caught in the act, the court record, the newspaper article, says it is David Abramovich who was caught, and everybody knows it is a Jew who did the wrong. David Abramovich is that Jew, and you are another Jew. And you feel as though his malfeasance reflects on you. It makes no sense, but it's there."

It makes no sense, of course. But it has been that way a long time, and, strangely, it continues to be that way also under the Soviet Socialist system.

There is a talmudic saying that goes back more than 1,500 years, to the effect that all Jews are held responsible for one another. In this country, my own mother, on reading of a sensational crime in which a non-Jew was involved, would say, "Thank God, it's one of them." And when a Jew was the criminal, she would be as heartbroken as though he were a member of her own family. During the centuries Jews have lived in many lands "on approval." Psychologically, they are still on approval in the Soviet Union, as elsewhere. Such an attitude may be the historical defense mechanism of a people in Exile.

Perhaps here lies the real explanation for the frequency of the appearance of these articles. They are a barrage against that defense mechanism, an onslaught against the self-identification of the Soviet Jew with his own people. They are, in essence, a way of smoking the Jew out of his Jewishness, a drive to make him disconnect, disown, break all inner ties with his past and his people. He is to become just a Soviet citizen—indeed, the first Soviet citizen minus a national identity.

Chapter Three •

A RELIGION GASPING FOR BREATH

"... Even before this generation passes on, religion will be gone in our country. It is already on the way out. It needs only a little push to get it over the brink. And we are pushing . . ."