

has been as reluctant to assimilate the Jew as he has been to be assimilated. Before attempting to dissolve their Jewish communities, the Soviet authorities might do well to find out whether they have the effective solvent. They are driving their Jews toward assimilation. Are they sure their non-Jewish peoples are willing and able to assimilate them?

Chapter Four •

ONCE AGAIN "ECONOMICALLY PECULIAR"

Strange as it may seem, the Soviet leaders have not manifested a Marxian approach to their own Jewish problem. They are now first becoming aware of the economic factors involved, but are still reluctant to admit their existence publicly. The Jews, however, for all their religiosity, have always taken a realistic attitude toward their hard lot in Exile. Rather than lay the blame for their suffering on their Gentile neighbors, which would have been easy and more comforting to do, they assumed the reproach themselves. In the theologic age, it was, in the words of the prayer, "for our sins that we were exiled from our land and distanced from our soil"; their troubles in Exile were the chastisement of their Lord for their failing to return unto Him. In the modern economic age, Jews account for their Exile by the imperial wars of the ancient great powers in the Near East, and ascribe their troubles in their new homelands to the abnormal economic conditions into which they were forced by local political and social factors. The solution of the Jewish problem, whether through return to Jerusalem or liberation from oppression in his native land, is associated in the mind of the modern Jew with the reconstruction and normalization of the economic status of the Jews.

Normalization means balance, the aspiration being a balanced

national economy, with Jews engaged in agriculture, mining, and unskilled labor, as well as in trade, the professions, and cultural spheres. Russian Jews had been so sensitive to the imbalance of their economy, to their preponderance in trade, shop-keeping, and services, that they called the normalization of their economy "productivization," as though petty trade in a country without a distributing system was not productive. Long before the October Revolution, efforts were made to correct the economy of Russian Jewry by training Jewish youths in the mechanical trades. (The society devoted to this purpose, ORT, organized in 1880, survived the Revolution, was transferred abroad, and is now teaching trades to many youths of the new African countries as well as to Jewish youths in its trade schools in Western Europe and Israel.) The October Revolution eliminated the political and social factors that had created the anomalous situation of the Jewish economy. The issue was the transition to a "normal" and Socialist economy, which was at the time a necessarily painful process. Several forces combined to assist and guide this transition, the Soviet government, the Jewish sections—or elements—of the Communist party, and Jewish welfare agencies from abroad. Soviet Jews were to become a people of peasants and proletarians, coal diggers, unskilled laborers, factory workers, penetrating all fields of the new Socialist economy, like the rest of the Soviet population. With the emergence of Birobidjan as a future Jewish autonomous region, the prospect of a fully reconstructed and normalized Jewish economy was at hand. There, in an unsettled area, an entire national economy was to be founded and developed almost entirely by Soviet Jews.

There was some progress in the normalization of the Jewish economy during the first decade after the October Revolution, perhaps up to the middle 1930's. The greatest effort for the occupational change was made in agriculture. There was plenty of farming land, and it was being parceled out to landless peasants. It was a simple matter, therefore, to earmark certain sections for would-be Jewish peasants. It was assumed that only legal exclusion had kept the Russian Jews from the soil, and now that the restriction had been removed and opportunities offered, Jews would flock to the land. The original plan was ambitious: a round million Jewish farmers. That would be

one-third of the total Jewish population, but still less than one-half of the percentage of Russians. This figure was soon cut in half. The 1924 plan called for 100,000 families, or about half a million souls. A total of 670,000 acres in different localities was reserved for Jewish colonization. By 1938, only 158,000 acres had been taken up, and the total number of Jewish families on land was 26,500. This was a large increase over the 11,000 Jewish families which had engaged in farming under the Czars, but only about one-fourth of the hoped-for number. Still, it was the high tide for Jewish colonization in the Soviet Union. The percentage of Russian Jews in agriculture was 2.2 in 1913, 8.7 in 1934, 7.1 in 1939. (The comparative figures for the non-Jewish population in Russia were 82 in 1913, 66.7 in 1934, and 63 in 1939.)

Since 1939, the number of Jews in agriculture has undoubtedly declined. Many of the Jewish collective farms, or collective farms with a large Jewish majority, were, like the others about them, laid waste in the war. The collective farmers who were not called to the front were evacuated to the far north or east. At the conclusion of the war, there was no compelling reason for the returning Jewish farmers to go back to farming. Now there was plenty of work in the cities, as there had not been when they first turned agriculturists, and some of them preferred, after their sad experience during the war years, to be among Jews in the cities and towns rather than to live in close contact with non-Jews on the collective farm. Besides, even before the war, the general trend of migration from farm to city had also affected the Jewish agricultural areas. If the percentage of Jewish farmers declined from 8.7 to 7.1 during the normal years 1934-39, we may well expect a much bigger drop to have occurred during the period since 1939. The percentage now may be not much more than it was before the major effort was undertaken. So the dream of turning a considerable portion of Soviet Jewry into peasants has thus failed of realization.

The change in regard to physical work was not much different. In the early years after the Revolution, in reaction against the former Czarist restrictions and as an expression of solidarity with the ruling proletariat, many young Jews were eager to take industrial jobs, unskilled as well as skilled. Their ambition was

to become true proletarians, common laborers. But after a while, this trend began to taper off. The new tendency was toward administrative posts, white-collar jobs, teaching, and other professions, the fields of service and distribution (formerly trade). At one time this was rather encouraged by the Soviet rulers. With the Russian intelligentsia boycotting the new masters, the state needed the skill and experience of the Jews in these fields. Having expropriated and closed down private shops of all sorts, how was the Socialist state to organize its own distributive system: by putting peasant boys or factory workers in charge, or by employing the same personnel that had owned and operated the stores? Similar situations obtained in other fields. With a premium placed on managerial, operative, and supervisory qualifications, and special training schools for these occupations opened by the State, it was not surprising to find many Jewish youths attending these schools and distinguishing themselves in their specialties. In the end, instead of becoming normalized, Soviet Jewish economy found its imbalance only accentuated, the pursuits of Soviet Jewry under Socialism assuming a character not unlike those of the Jews in Capitalist countries.

There are no fully comparable figures for the trends of the Soviet Jewish economy, yet, such as they are, they give an indication of the direction of the changes. The 1897 census, which is generally used for comparison, listed 54 per cent of all employed Jews as in "trade and indefinite occupations"; another 10 per cent were employees and store salesmen, and about one-third engaged in "labor," one-half of these being independent artisans working at the bench along with their apprentices, the rest being apprentices and 4 per cent in "big industry." In 1926, the picture had changed considerably. Only 8.8 per cent were in trade (there were still tiny islets of private enterprise), and 11.8 per cent in big industry; 22.6 per cent were in artisan co-operatives, and a full quarter in the state apparatus and state enterprises commonly known as "employees." In 1939, the last year for which we have complete figures, some 4 per cent were self-employed, 16 per cent were in artisan co-operatives, and 71.2 per cent were listed as "workers and employees." How many workers and how many employees?

We get an inkling of the Jewish economy in 1939 when we consider Jewish occupations in order of the number of people in each: 125,000 bookkeepers and auditors, 60,000 middle-grade technicians, 31,000 medical assistants, 30,000 cultural workers (writers, journalists, librarians, cultural club directors), 25,000 engineers, 21,000 doctors, 17,000 artists and people otherwise concerned with art, 7,000 scientists, 1,000 agronomists, and 1,000 agro-technicians. Grouping together the related fields, we find that next to bookkeepers, the largest group is the technical intellectual field, 94,000; the medical service takes in 52,000, and 47,000 are in the purely cultural field. The Jews occupied the first place among all the nations in the Soviet Union in literacy, and although the percentage of Jewish children in the elementary schools corresponded to the number of Jews in the general population, the percentage of Jewish children in the high schools was three times the percentage of Jews in the general population, and in the colleges and universities, eight times.

It would be illuminating to have the corresponding figures for 1959. At this writing (early '61) such figures, if extant, have not been made available. The general observation of foreign visitors, as well as statements by Soviet dignitaries, indicates that the number of Jewish workers has been decreasing and of Jewish intelligentsia increasing during the last two decades. A few suggestive figures were brought back by André Blumel from a friendly visit to Moscow in September, 1960. As a lawyer, he was especially interested in the legal profession and inquired about participation of Jews in this field. He was told that in Leningrad and Kharkov about one-half of the lawyers were Jews; that out of the 1,190 lawyers in Moscow, 465 were Jews, and that of the eleven members of the Council of Lawyers in Moscow five were Jews. On the other hand, on visiting a factory in Moscow, he found only 107 of the 10,000 workers in the plant were Jews.

André Blumel's findings are in line with what other observers have reported and, indeed, what Soviet officials in candid moments have admitted themselves, as cited elsewhere in this book. The inescapable conclusion is that the dream of normalization in the sphere of labor has no more nearly been realized than in agriculture. The economic pursuits of Soviet Jewry are, as in

the Capitalist countries, concentrated in the urban, professional, technical, cultural, and administrative fields. On a second visit to the Soviet Union, in January, 1961, M. Blumel was told by Mme. Furtseva, Soviet Minister of Culture, that 10 per cent of the members of the Soviet Academy of Science and 34 per cent of the personnel in the Soviet film industry were Jews.

One may well ask: What difference does that make? Whatever the Jews do in the Soviet Union is useful to the country. All employment being by the State for the State, there can be no unnecessary or non-productive employment effort. All citizens being equal, what does it matter which do what? An individual's occupation is a matter of his own individual skill, talent, and inclination. Did not Khrushchev himself tell the National Press Club in New York in 1959: "The national problem does not exist with us; we don't ask anyone for his religion . . . we consider each person solely on his own merit"?

Theoretically, it is so. Theoretically, it is so also in the Capitalist countries that pride themselves on their freedom and equality of opportunity for all alike. But practice, in the Socialist East as in the Capitalist West, is different, except that in the West the resulting situation is more viable because of the prevailing individual freedom and free enterprise. A report to the American Jewish Committee by its executive vice-president, Dr. John Slawson, on October 28, 1960, stated that discriminatory hiring practices in American corporations have excluded numerous Jews from top executive positions. Jews constitute less than one-half of one per cent of the total executive personnel in leading American industrial companies, although they are 8 per cent of the college-trained population from which the managerial staffs are chosen. Discrimination is, of course, unjust, unfair, and un-American, but it exists. However, two mitigating circumstances are present here that cannot be found in the Soviet Union. In the United States Jews can fight back; they can publicly demand their equality of opportunity; they can expose the evil and exert pressure for its elimination. Here, too, Jews can organize their own corporations, even buy up the discriminating corporations, and have their own outlets for their executive talents and energy. In the Soviet Union this is impossible. There is no private enterprise affording an escape,

and there is no possibility of contending with the discriminatory authority, which is the state.

Soviet authorities deny the existence of any discrimination against Jews in their country. In fact, they take pride in being unique in this respect. They point to many Jews in high positions in their country and to the large number of students in the institutions of higher learning. There is nothing unique in this denial. At the time when discriminatory practices against Jews in certain academic institutions in the United States were at their highest, only one university head admitted that discrimination existed at his institution. All others denied the fact, and gave plausible reasons for the accidental fewness of Jewish students and professors, or for so many applications from Jewish students being rejected. Similarly, no American corporation will admit that it has any rule or policy excluding Jews. But denial of a fact does not eliminate it. What is the actual situation in regard to discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union?

There are on record the declarations of Lenin and Stalin condemning anti-Semitism. On record, also, are unequivocal denials by the present Soviet rulers of any manifestations of anti-Semitism in their land. But there is also a public statement by no less a person than Yekaterina Furtseva, the only woman member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which corroborates the persistent reports of discrimination against Jews. Mme. Furtseva called those reports "misinterpretation of certain government actions." And what were those actions? As quoted in the *National Guardian*, a New York leftist weekly, Mme. Furtseva described them as follows: "The government found in some departments a heavy concentration of Jewish people, upwards of 50 per cent of the staff. Steps were taken to transfer them to other enterprises, giving them equally good positions without jeopardizing their rights." It is very clear, then, that being Jewish is a matter of consideration in the selection of personnel; otherwise it would never occur to anyone to count noses and discover that in certain departments Jews constituted "over 50 per cent of the staff." It is equally clear that a saturation of Jews in one department is regarded as undesirable; otherwise the need to redistribute

them would never arise. And such action shows, of course, that in regard to employment the Jews are considered a separate entity not assimilated into the general population; they have to be "adjusted." However you sugar it with "equally good positions" and "without jeopardizing their rights," it does taste like drawing a distinction between Jew and non-Jew.

Mme. Furtseva's words naturally called forth critical comment in the foreign press, and Leonid Ilychev, press chief of the Soviet foreign office, hastened to "explain" the lady's remarks. His explanation, however, was not relevant to the original statement. Mr. Ilychev said: "In her interview she meant that if at some time there had taken place changes in office personnel, these changes were dictated by the economic needs of the country and under no circumstances were aimed at any discrimination of persons of any nationality. If a chief of an office or department found in his office there existed over-saturation of a certain group of specialists, then, proceeding from the economic needs of the country and with no reference to nationality, some of the specialists were given other posts in industry, agriculture, and other branches. Never at any time during the Soviet power have there been any quotas for Jews or persons of other nationalities, and there are not now." But the issue here is Mme. Furtseva's statement, and she spoke not of an over-saturation of specialists but of an over-saturation of Jews, the exact words being "a heavy concentration of Jewish people," and the lady even had a specific figure for the number of Jews, "upwards of 50 per cent of the staff." Mr. Ilychev might have denied the truth of Mme. Furtseva's statement, but he cannot expect us to believe that she meant what he said she meant. The discrepancy is all too obvious.

Mr. Ilychev might as well "explain" Khrushchev's statement, quoted earlier in this book, that "when a Jew in the Ukraine is appointed to an important post and he surrounds himself with Jewish collaborators, it is understandable that this should create jealousy and hostility towards Jews," by saying that what Khrushchev really meant was that there is no longer a Jewish people in the Ukraine, that all Jews have become assimilated into the general Ukrainian population, and that "the national

problem does not exist" in the Ukraine, where each person is considered "solely on his own merit."

The Soviet leaders believe there is no anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish intent in their adjustment policy. They insist that nobody is going to get hurt; everybody will have as good a job as he is fitted for. It is only a matter of balance. Have not the Jews themselves talked about balancing the economy of their people?

To be sure, in an expanding economy under the system of production for use that prevails in the Soviet Union, very few can be fatally hurt economically. There is always some work somewhere at a wage that will keep body and soul together. But is it fair to squeeze a person out of his top position, or deny a person a well-earned promotion, or tell a boy he cannot enter the field of his choice, merely because there are too many of his race or nationality there already? Should not a person be considered as an individual, "solely on his own merit," as Khrushchev said, rather than be taken as a member of a certain ethnic group and be treated as part of the group? Is this not a relapse into tribalism?

To what extent is the policy of proportionate adjustment, which in plain language is discrimination, put into practice?

No exact figures are available, but the basic facts are known. No one charges that today Jews are unceremoniously thrown out of big jobs just because they are Jews, as happened in the tragic years between 1948 and 1953. But it is no less true, and is privately admitted by Soviet officials, that where a high position is vacated by a Jew through death or retirement on pension, another Jew rarely is appointed to fill his place. Preference will be given to a member of the indigenous people—a Great Russian in the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic, a Ukrainian in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and so on in all the republics of the Soviet Union. By the same token, a Jew should have preference in Birobidjan, but that is the one place in the Soviet Union where there are no preferences, where they insist that no questions be asked about one's national origin in appointments to high positions. Besides, not more than 1.5 per cent of Soviet Jewry lives in Birobidjan. The basic fact is that the Jew born in any republic of the Soviet Union does not be-

long to the indigenous nationality of that republic, but is a member of a separate nationality, which gives him a sort of secondary status. Let me try to explain this strange situation.

The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, which covers the major part of the area and contains more than one-half of the population of the Soviet Union, consists of fourteen autonomous republics, six autonomous regions, and ten national regions. Each of these autonomous and national regions is centered around an indigenous people whose language and culture officially predominates. Each is regarded as the home of that people, although others may be living there too, and all must learn the Russian language. It is taken for granted that the intelligentsia of the indigenous people is to have first consideration in promotion and appointment to high office in its own autonomous region; otherwise many of these peoples, having been backward for centuries, would continue to be ruled by outsiders and never rise to a truly national life. Although the professors of a university in such an autonomous unit may still be Russian, Ukrainian, and Jewish, it is expected that their positions will be filled by natives as these rise in their academic qualifications. Thus, the chances for a Russian, Ukrainian, or Jew to get a professorship at the Bashkir University at Ufa are steadily decreasing as the Bashkirs themselves begin to qualify for academic posts. The Bashkirs may be said to have first status in the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, and all others to have second status. In all other republics, the Bashkir would have second status, inasmuch as the first status would belong to the indigenous people of each particular republic or region. There is, of course, a crossing of the lines to some degree. A specially qualified Bashkir might be teaching in the University of Moscow, for instance. But such cases would be only the exceptions that prove the rule.

Now, the Jew born in Ufa would not be a Bashkir, not even a Bashkir of the Jewish faith, but just a Jew. He would not enjoy the same status as the Bashkir in his own native republic. If there were no anti-Jewish prejudice there, he would have the same status as the Russian or any other non-Bashkir has. Likewise, the Jew born in Moscow is not a Great Russian, not even a Great Russian of the Jewish faith, but just a Jew. If

there were no anti-Jewish prejudice there, his status in the Great Russian republic would be like that of the Bashkir. And so in all the other republics. In other words, the Soviet Jew is nowhere indigenous and everywhere in second status. The tragic fact is that the Soviet Jew would settle for this second status if he were sure that it would completely eliminate anti-Jewish prejudice. He would not mind being treated like a Ukrainian in the Great Russian republic, even though, as a native of the Great Russian republic, he is entitled to the same treatment as the Great Russian.

Soviet leaders deny the existence of a Jewish situation, and point to the large number of Jews in high office, in top positions in academic institutions and economic enterprises. True, there still are quite a few Jews in positions close to the top; though no longer in top jobs. But those Jews belong mostly to the older age group; that is, they are holdovers from the pre-adjustment days, the era when actually no questions were asked about national origin in appointment to high office. The immediate assistants, the younger men who are to step into their shoes, are generally non-Jews. The same situation prevails in the academic field. There still are many Jewish professors, some of them most outstanding in their fields. But the number of Jewish students in the graduate faculties, whence the future professors are to come, has dropped sharply. Here the process of adjustment, to prevent saturation, has set in. Soviet authorities deny such a drop, as they deny any limitation on the admission of Jewish students into the universities and institutes. What are the facts?

In an interview with Mr. Harry Schwartz of the *New York Times*, which appeared in that paper on September 29, 1959, the Soviet Minister of Higher and Secondary Education, V. P. Yelutin, said that "there are no quotas limiting the admission of Jews to any educational institutions" and that there is no "discrimination against Jews in educational opportunity." In evidence he cited the fact that "Jews constitute 10 per cent of the students in Soviet institutions of higher education, although they are only 2 per cent of the Soviet population." Both figures are inaccurate, and the picture Mr. Yelutin attempted to draw is false.

Assuming that there are 3,000,000 Jews in the Soviet Union, the percentage of Jews in the general population would be only 1.5. As to the percentage of Jewish students, a letter by Dr. Solomon Schwartz to the *New York Times* of October 3, 1959, cited Soviet statistics for the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, which in 1956 had 60 per cent of all the university students in the Soviet Union, to the effect that Jews constituted less than 4 per cent of the student body, and the percentage was likely to be less rather than more in the other parts of the Soviet Union. But the 3,000,000 Jews are not distributed evenly all over the Soviet Union. They are concentrated in a limited number of localities with a comparatively small combined area. In that area the Jews are not 1.5 per cent nor 2 per cent, but 8, 10, and 12 per cent of the population. In Moscow, for example, Jews constitute 11 per cent of the population. If the Jewish students there are only 4 per cent of the student body, they are actually only a little more than one-third of what they should be according to their number in the general population.

One must also consider these figures in their historical perspective. Czarist Russia had an official discriminatory quota for the admission of Jewish students to institutions of higher education, which was denounced by world public opinion. That quota was 10 per cent for the "Pale," the part of Russia in which Jews were permitted to reside and were highly concentrated, 5 for Moscow and St. Petersburg (Leningrad), and 3 for the rest of the country. After the Czarist discriminations had been removed by the Revolution, the number of Jewish students kept rising, the figure for 1935 being 13 per cent. It must have continued to rise during the balance of the 1930's and especially after the war. With the number of students soaring in recent years everywhere, and particularly in the Soviet Union, it would have been strange indeed if Jews, with their traditional drive for learning, were to fall behind in this universal march toward higher education. In the United States the number of Jewish students has increased greatly in the last several years, and is now several times the average for the rest of the population. In the Soviet Union there has been a definite decrease. How is one to explain that?

The apparent decrease of Jewish students in the Soviet Union

has of late aroused considerable discussion. Some of it centered around the University of Minsk, Byelorussia, which had always had a large contingent of Jewish students. Without citing exact figures or authority, some have charged that whereas Jews at the university there used to number between 20 and 30 per cent, and in some departments as many as 40 per cent, there now are only 3 or 4 per cent. This was at once denied. Recently, some definite figures came to light. By checking the official reports of the graduates in two departments, history and chemistry, the national breakdown came as follows: history graduates (1958) Byelorussians 213, Russians 70, Ukrainians 40, Jews 7; chemistry graduates (same year)—Byelorussians 224, Russians 76, Ukrainians 41, Jews 7. The similarity in the numbers in the two faculties seems to indicate a set ratio, not to use the word quota, for the national groups. Jews, as we see, are just a bit over 3 per cent. A further statement in connection with that university appeared in the Communist *Morgen Freiheit* of New York on October 30, 1960, by three Jewish professors of the Minsk university, in the form of an open letter to the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The letter denied certain allegations about discrimination against Jews in the academic field made in an article by Joseph Novak in that publication on May 28, 1960. The item bearing directly on the issue of the admission of Jewish students strikingly exposes the contradiction in the Soviet position.

The three professors, Hirsh Starobinets, Hilel Lifshitz, and Leib Shnierson, write: "We have never interested ourselves in the number of Jewish students at our university; and we have never interested ourselves for the reason that from our point of view the question is meaningless. Why? Because in the Soviet Union there is no race discrimination, and if there are fewer Jewish students in one institution of higher learning and more in another, the explanation lies in the inclination and interests of the people involved, but not in the existence of a special selection or quota. Mr. Novak's article led us to do a little figuring. And what did it show? *Of the 3,000 students at our university, 96 are Jews.* The Byelorussian University of Minsk is the only one in our republic. It is natural therefore that the composition of the student body, which has been formed during

the last six years, should reflect the constituent nationalities of our republic. According to the census of January 15, 1959, there are 150,000 Jews in Byelorussia, or not quite 2 (1.9) per cent of the population. This means that these not quite 2 per cent of the population are represented at our university, the principal higher institution of learning in Byelorussia, with more than 3 (3.2) per cent of the students, which is almost twice as much as could be expected if admission was on the basis of the national components of the republic. In our country a person is judged not by the nationality to which he belongs but according to his talents and capabilities, to his contribution to the general cause. And when the question arises as to which of the applicants are to be admitted to the university, the committee on admissions does not pose the question, 'Are you a Jew?' as the author of the article states, but asks, 'How well did you do on the examinations?' Only this is the determining factor."

Now, if the examination is the only determining factor, how did it happen that the national composition of the student body came to reflect so closely the national composition of the republic? And why only during the last six years? What miracle during the past six years has given the ten-year school graduates intelligence in exactly the same degree as the proportion of the nationalities in the republic? The three professors also cite the percentage of Jewish professors at the university—out of 300 professors and instructors, 68 are Jews, 22 per cent. How could 3 per cent of the student body provide seven times that number of professors—particularly in a republic where the learning abilities of the young generation seem to be in exact ratio to the percentage of their nationalities?

The key to the mystery lies in a sentence at the end of the long letter of the professors. They say of themselves, "We are not young persons. We know very well the meaning of the Pale and the percentage quotas and poverty of the Jewish towns." The three Jewish professors are thus holdovers—and so must be most of the other Jewish professors—from the time when the student body really reflected the examination papers rather than the constituent nationalities of the republic, when more than 20 per cent of the students were Jews. It was six years ago that the system was changed to national quotas, which may

have been a necessary expedient under the local circumstances, but this fact makes nonsense of the statement, coming in the same breath, that the quality of the examination paper is "the only determining factor." The three Jewish professors glory in the fact that the percentage of Jews at the university is 3.2 instead of the 1.9 to which they would be entitled on the basis of nationality. They demand: "Now, what would you say to such a 'quota,' Mr. Novak?" But, as already indicated, calculating the Jewish percentage in the population should take into consideration their concentration in a small number of urban centers. Taken as part of their urban community, the Jews are not 1.9 per cent, but possibly more than 10 per cent. And let us not lose sight of the people behind these figures. What does it all mean to the Jews of Byelorussia? Some years back several hundred Jewish students might study at the University of Minsk; now, only ninety-six. And the reason? Just because they happen to be Jews.

Whether an actual quota is followed or not, the tendency to reduce the number of Jews in institutions of higher learning seems to be general. One hears about "new difficulties in admission" from Jews in various parts of the country. A characteristic case came to my attention in a city in Central Asia. I visited a family which seemed well situated and quite satisfied with its lot. The man was a member of the Party and an expert at his printing trade. His wife had a good office job. Between them they earned enough money to live in comparative comfort. Their daughter was studying at the institute. An artless man, he told me of the difficulties he had had in placing his daughter in the institute. She was graduated with exceptionally good marks from the Ten-Year School, along with a chum, a non-Jewess, whose marks were barely passing. The two girls applied to the same institute on the same day. The chum was readily admitted; his daughter's application was held up for a while and finally rejected. The father appealed to the local secretary of the Party, who happened to be a Jew himself. The Party secretary telephoned to the director of the institute to inquire about the case, dropping a hint that it might be advisable to check on the admission policy generally. He was assured that the rejected application would be reconsidered and full justice

done. The next morning the Jewish girl received notice of her admission. "All's well that ends well," the man naïvely concluded his story. But I wondered what would have happened if the girl's father had not been a member of the Party? Or if the secretary of the Party had not been a Jew? The Jewish girl would probably have had to give up her ambition for a higher education just because she was a Jewess. Possibly her father or mother would have tried "other means" of getting her admitted; the old Czarist evil of oiling the palm of the registrars has apparently been emerging in some spots of the academic world—and not only for Jews—where the number of applicants exceeds the possible admissions.

I was discussing this case with an intelligent Jew of Odessa, himself an educator. He did not go into the matter, but told me an old Jewish story of the proverbial dunderhead teacher and his nanny goat. The nanny was not much of a goat. She did let the teacher milk her, but never yielded a drop of milk. Nevertheless, when a goat plague came to town this nanny was the first to drop dead. The analogy was rather confused; the meaning it sought to convey was that Soviet Jews were regarded as a national entity only when it was to their disadvantage. They were considered assimilated, non-existent as a nationality, when it came to national rights.

Forty-odd years after the October Revolution, the economic status of Russian Jews is still "peculiar." They are still concentrated in a limited range of pursuits of the intelligentsia, and this is still resented by the other elements of the population, with a resultant policy of discrimination, no matter what it is called or how interpreted. Perhaps the peculiarity is not exclusively Jewish. It may be characteristic of all highly urbanized elements of the population. After all, the shoe-shine stands of Moscow are manned not by Russians but by Assyrians and other swarthy people. The economic peculiarity of the Jews would have constituted no problem if no distinction whatever were drawn between Jew and non-Jew. Suppose the non-Jewish population of some urban centers increased by 10 per cent, with as many of them qualifying for the same positions—would a social problem have arisen? The ablest person, or the person with the biggest pull, would have secured the best job, and there would

have been no ado about it. It is the fact that the Jews are set aside as a separate entity that raises the problem of Jewish economic peculiarity. Actually, it is a social and psychological problem rather than an economic one. For if the Jews were fully recognized as a nationality and afforded the opportunity for a socio-cultural life of their own, there would be no problem. There would be no need for underhanded policy, for lip service to principle and action betraying that principle. The matter could be adjusted honestly and in frankness. There would be no more question about the admission of Jewish students to the University of Minsk than there is about the admission of Ukrainian students into that university. The Jews might have their own institutes, or other compensations, and their percentage quotas would be along the lines of the other nationalities. Their status could be objectively examined and fairly re-established. The solution calls for facing the problem of Jewish nationality and taking a clear, unequivocal, just stand. It ill behoves a Socialist state to run away from, or close its eyes to, the facts of its own life.