



# Eastern Europe

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## SOVIET UNION

THE YEAR under review was a year of "cold war," of a mobilization of all material and spiritual resources by countries within the Soviet sphere of influence for the struggle against the West, and of the strengthening of militant Communist control in all fields throughout Eastern Europe.

Inside the Soviet Union, the year saw a drive that aimed at inducing implacable hostility to the Western world and at eradicating all vestiges of Western influences in Soviet life. A systematic campaign of vilification was conducted against all manifestations of "cosmopolitanism" and of nationalism other than Russian. The Soviet publications attacked and violently denounced every opinion and every group which was suspected of admitting the existence of any kind of beneficial foreign influence in Soviet life or Russian culture, in the present as well as in the past, or which stressed any kind of ideological, cultural, or communal ties between groups inside and outside the Soviet sphere of influence. The admitted aim of this campaign was to liquidate such groups and opinions. The result was that all fields of public activities were purged of "cosmopolitan" and "nationalist" tendencies, and persons accused of such deviations were demoted, dismissed from their jobs, exiled, or arrested.

This general trend found one expression in a new attitude toward the Jewish question. The period of silence about Jewish problems<sup>1</sup> was abruptly ended. However, Soviet publications carried no information about the number of Jews, their economic conditions and social stratification, or their communal life. But the Jewish question in Russia came suddenly into the limelight when the Soviet press announced a new party line on Jewish problems and when the new attitude was introduced in a series of public statements.

### *The New Attitude*

This turn in policies was introduced by a programmatic article by the well-known Russian writer Ilya Ehrenburg in the Moscow *Pravda* on September 21, 1948. This article was an official directive for the new policy: it was reprinted, quoted, and interpreted as such again and again. Its main stress was upon denying the existence of any bonds of solidarity between Jews of different countries. Ehrenburg argued that the only bond between them was that imposed by anti-Semitism and persecution. When this persecution ends, he said, the Jews would "simply enter the common life of other nations." The Jewish question could be solved only by the world-wide victory of the Soviet Union and its allies, which would remove the roots of anti-Semitism.

<sup>1</sup> See AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 50, p. 400 ff.

This reaffirmation of traditional Communist assimilationist views was coupled with attacks against Zionism and the government of Israel. Israel was to be considered a transitory place of refuge where Jews from "reactionary," i.e., non-Communist countries might survive until the deluge of anti-Semitism subsided and the Jewish question was definitely solved by the world-wide victory of the Soviet system. Israel should be supported in its fight against "Western imperialism." But the Zionists, being bourgeois nationalists, could not be trusted. Israel, as a capitalist state, was not ruled by the people but by exploiters, and it was the duty of Israeli workers to fight not only against the invaders but also against the reactionary Jewish bourgeoisie.

The final part of the article contained strong warnings against any identification by Russian Jews with Israel. Soviet Jews were urged not to look to the Near East, but rather to build their "socialist fatherland," Soviet Russia.

On October 19, 1949, an article by G. Zhitz, editor of *Einikeit*, the only Yiddish newspaper in Russia which was still in existence at that time, vehemently attacked the idea that Israel was the homeland of all the Jews.

In January, 1949, a pamphlet against Zionism and "Jewish nationalism," written by the economist T. A. Genin, was published by the Soviet Society for the Dissemination of Political and Social Knowledge. About 150,000 copies were reportedly distributed through bookstores and news-stands in Moscow and other large cities. Genin attacked Zionism as a "reactionary and anti-democratic trend of the Jewish bourgeoisie" working for the interests of British and American imperialism.

### *The Liquidation of Jewish Organizations and Press*

At the same time the Soviet government was quietly liquidating all remaining Jewish organizations and press organs. Zionism had been outlawed in Russia in the early twenties and its leaders had died in jails and concentration camps. The remaining Jewish institutions, after many purges, were headed by Jewish Communists who were closely following the party line. Nevertheless, they cultivated the Yiddish language and literature and, during the war, maintained relations with Jews outside the country, trying to impress them with propaganda about the favorable attitude of the Soviet government to Jewish civic equality and to Jewish culture. The center of these activities was the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow, founded for that purpose in 1941, and *Einikeit*, its Yiddish organ. In November, 1948, after the Soviet line changed, *Einikeit* was suddenly discontinued and the Anti-Fascist Committee dissolved, without any public explanation. According to repeated reports, the leaders of the Committee and most of the well-known Yiddish writers were arrested and deported. Among them were Itzik Pfefer, secretary of the Anti-Fascist Committee; L. Goldberg, an editor of *Einikeit*, and the writers Peretz Markish, Nistor, S. Halkin, David Bergelson, Moshe Broderzon, and Leib Kvitko. There was no official announcement about their arrest. But repeated reports of the arrests were never denied; their names disappeared from the press and none of them was mentioned in connection with the pro-Communist "World Congress of Partisans of Peace" held in Paris in April, 1949.

The world Communist press answered repeated questions about their fate with either silence or abuse, carefully evading a clear answer.

At the same time, the Yiddish almanac, *Shtern*, in the Ukraine was discontinued on the charge that it was "cultivating nationalist feelings." No Yiddish periodicals were left in the Soviet Union, except possibly in Birobidjan.

### *The Campaign Against "Cosmopolitanism"*

Beginning in January, 1949, an intense official campaign was conducted in the Soviet Union against "homeless cosmopolitanism." This deviation was officially defined by the noted Soviet author, Konstantin Simonov, as "the desire to undermine the roots of national pride because people without roots are easier to push over and to sell into slavery to American imperialism" (*Pravda*, February 27, 1949). The "cosmopolitans" were denounced as people who were "kowtowing to the West," as "anti-patriotic" and as traitors. They were expelled from the party, fired from their jobs, and in many cases arrested.

The purge of cosmopolitans started with attacks against theater critics, but was subsequently expanded to all kinds of public activities, from art and science to sports and circus performances. Although it was by no means aimed at the Jews exclusively, the Jews constituted more than two-thirds of the known victims. The best known among them were the theater critics Y. Yuzovsky, A. Gurvich, I. Altman, L. Subotsky, A. Leites, A. Erlikh; the literary critics D. Danin, B. Kholtsman, E. Kholodov, A. Kron, F. Levin; the film critics and directors S. Yutkevich, M. Bleiman, V. Volkenshtein, Trauberg; the literary historians B. Yakovlev, E. Byalik, G. Brovman; the professor of philosophy M. Rozentel; the historians I. I. Mintz, N. L. Rubinshtein, Feigina, and Kafengauz; the economic historians I. Blyumin, D. Rozenberg, B. M. Shtein; the architects E. A. Levinson, Moises Gintzburg, I. Khiger, L. Gabrichevsky; the sports writers G. Yasny (Finkelstein), V. Viktorov (Zlochevsky), A. Svetov (Sheidlin) and G. Gurevich; and the scientist S. Altschuler.

Whatever the primary intent of the campaign, its result was a drastic purge of a great part of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia. In addition, the adjectives used to describe the victims—especially those with Jewish names—such as "homeless," "rootless," "passportless," "alien," "wandering," were reminiscent of the stereotypes employed in anti-Jewish propaganda, and probably reinforced anti-Semitic prejudices. There were repeated insinuations that such people were not able to properly understand Russian national character and that Russian national pride was "alien" to them.

But the most startling development in the campaign was the systematic revelation of the original Jewish names of purged persons who had been using Russian names or pseudonyms for many years. This was a radical departure from well-established Soviet custom. Before 1949, the original names of authors, artists, and politicians had been mentioned, in addition to their pseudonyms, only in official decrees about appointments, prizes, and other honors for which the individual had to be clearly identified. But they had never been used in political or literary polemics, and they were often omitted

even from official announcements. Such practices had always been considered anti-Semitic, counter-revolutionary, and criminal.

However, after January, 1949, the Soviet newspapers began to add the original Jewish names to the Russian pseudonyms of the "homeless cosmopolitans." Melnikov was now revealed as Mehlman, Yakovlev as Kholtsman, Kholodov as Meyerovich, Stebun as Katznelson, Burlachenko as Berdychevsky, Sanov as Schmulson, Yasny as Finkelstein, Martish as Finkelstein, Svetov as Sheidlin, Alexander Isbakh as Isak Bakhrakh, etc. In March, 1949, the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* suddenly discovered that the pen-names Zveryev and Vladimirov covered the identity of the "cosmopolitan" scientist whose real name was S. Altschuler.

In many cases, the charge of cosmopolitanism was directly linked to that of "Jewish nationalism." The Jewish State Theater in Moscow was attacked for "anti-patriotic activities," allegedly instilled there through the influence of cosmopolitan Jewish theater critics. The Yiddish theater in Minsk was condemned for producing the classical plays of Abraham Goldfaden, and N. I. Gusarov, secretary of the Bielorussian Communist party, told a party conference in Minsk that "only one theater in the Republic—the Jewish one—has until recently put on anti-patriotic plays." The plays were termed anti-patriotic and cosmopolitan because they "idealized the patriarchal life of the Jewish petty bourgeoisie and praised the life in bourgeois America." An article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* attacked the editors of a glossary to a Soviet encyclopedia because they devoted as much space to world Jewish literature as to the literature of the Uzbeks, Khazaks, and Georgians combined, and because they treated world Jewish literature as an entity. At the end of March, 1949, the Soviet critic B. Byalik was castigated in the same magazine because he had written that the Russian poet Mayakovsky had been influenced by the Jewish writer Chaim Nachman Bialik, described by *Literaturnaya Gazeta* as "a Jewish mystic poet and reactionary." In another article, the Jewish writer Alexander Isbakh (Isak Bakhrakh) was condemned for his "glorification of the Jewish religion" and for "Zionist propaganda," because he had written in a semi-autobiographical book that Zionism had greatly influenced him during his youth and that Jews had gathered in synagogues and studied the Talmud.

Thus, the campaign against Zionism and "Jewish nationalism" was broadened to include attacks on all Jewish cultural and communal traditions, and all traditions of Jewishness were denounced as a form of both "cosmopolitanism" and "nationalism."

The effect of the campaign was to identify all traditions of Jewishness with Jewish nationalism, Jewish nationalism with "reactionary bourgeois Zionism," Zionism with "homeless cosmopolitanism," and cosmopolitanism with "service to imperialism and treason" against the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, measures were taken only against Jewish individuals and groups suspected of "Jewish nationalism" or "cosmopolitanism"; reliable Communists of Jewish origin who took active part in the fight against these heresies were able to keep their positions in the party hierarchy, and among the winners of Stalin prizes for science and art, which were awarded in 1949, there were several citizens with Jewish names.

### *Mass Deportations*

During the Summer of 1949, the Jewish press outside the Soviet Union carried a number of reports about the mass deportations of Jews from the Western border regions of the Soviet Union, especially from White Russia, the Ukraine, Eastern Galicia, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. According to one report, the deportations affected mainly those Jewish citizens who had relatives in America or Western Europe; other sources maintained that the whole Jewish population of some territories was being deported. The reports described, often in great detail, how the secret police rounded up the Jews, put them on deportation trains, and sent them off to unknown destinations, presumably Siberia or the Arctic regions of European Russia. One report asserted that 30,000 Jews had been deported from Lwow (Lemberg) and other cities of former Polish Eastern Galicia, and that the whole region was now free of Jews. Another dispatch described similar proceedings in an unnamed Ukrainian city. Indirect evidence of the veracity of these reports was seen in the fact that Polish Jews who had maintained correspondence with their relatives in the Ukraine and White Russia ceased to receive answers and their letters were returned with the comment: "Returned to sender, addressee has left." According to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency report, the American embassy in Moscow received reports about the deportations but was not able to verify them on the spot, because travel by foreigners in Russia was severely limited. At the same time, similar reports were received about mass deportations of Estonians, Letts, and Lithuanians from the Baltic countries, and of Greeks, Turks, and Armenians from the Black Sea coast.

The American Jewish League Against Communism sent a protest to the Secretary General of the United Nations in which it estimated the number of Jews affected by the deportations as 400,000. The American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists, and Scientists labeled these accusations as "fantastic" and "without foundation." They were also denied by the Communist press in countries outside Russia, but the Soviet government did not issue an official denial. At the time of writing it was impossible to ascertain with any degree of certitude to what extent the reports were true.

### *Birobidjan*

During the year under review, no news was received about the life of Jews in the "Autonomous Region of Birobidjan." The *Ambijan Bulletin*, published by the American Birobidjan Committee, printed lengthy reports about the celebrations of the fifteenth anniversary of Birobidjan, which were held in New York City; about organizational activities of the Committee in the United States; and about alleged anti-Soviet conspiracies in America. But the periodical carried no recent information about Birobidjan.

JOSEPH GORDON

## POLAND

THE merger of the Socialist and Communist parties, in December, 1948, completed the political transition period which started in Poland toward the end of 1947 with the flight of Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, leader of the Peasant party opposition. After the merger, the Communists became the undisputed possessors of the administrative apparatus of the country. Joseph Cyrankiewicz, former leader of the Socialist party (PPS), thereafter a member of the Politburo of the United Workers party, retained his post as prime minister of Poland apparently resigning himself to accepting an unenviable status as a figurehead.

Immediately preceding the fusion congress, the Communist (PPR) and Socialist (PPS) parties underwent a thorough purge in which "rightist" and "nationalist" deviationists were exposed and the guilty removed from leadership posts or simply expelled from the party. Among the well-known leaders of the PPS who were dropped in this fashion were Edward Osobka-Moravski, who was a former prime minister, and Boleslaw Drobner, Stanislaw Szwalbe, and Julian Hochfeld.

In the Communist ranks the purge resulted in the ousting of Wladislaw Gomulka, secretary-general of the PPR and alleged leader of the deviation. He was succeeded in the party hierarchy by Boleslaw Bierut, the President of Poland.

There were widespread rumors of another fight going on among the top leaders of the party and involving Hilary Minc, minister of industry and commerce. There were apparently differences of opinion among Polish Communists concerning the collectivization of agriculture. One school of thought held that collectivization should not be rushed, for fear of provoking the peasant population.

The three-year reconstruction plan, which was scheduled for completion by the end of 1949, was to be succeeded by a new six-year plan which, according to Minc, was to have as one of its chief aims not only the rehabilitation but the expansion of industrial facilities of the country, particularly in the rural districts, as well.

In this connection it should be noted that Poland achieved such substantial progress in the reconstruction of its war-shattered economy that rationing was totally abolished in January, 1949.

Far-reaching reforms in public education were effected. The universities and schools were placed under strong government control, with a government body responsible for the appointment of professors and teachers. The newly established All Polish Youth Union controlled all youth activities. Through this Union the younger generation of Poles was being brought into line with established Communist policy.

Since the fusion of the Socialists and Communists, and notwithstanding the continued existence of a coalition government, supreme power was in the hands of the Politburo of the United Workers party.

## Population

There is no way of ascertaining the exact number of Jews now in Poland. The figures given by some local observers vary from 60,000 and less, to 80,000. During the 1949 Passover registration conducted by the Central Committee of Polish Jews in connection with matzoth distribution, the figure obtained was over 90,000, including about 45,000 Jews residing in Lower Silesia; Lodz reported 13,690 Jews, Warsaw (including some small neighboring towns—Ger, Otwock, Plock) 5,162, Bielsko 900, Bendzin 75, and Kielce 51 (*Dos Naye Lebn*, April 6, 1949). Some local observers, however, have questioned the validity of the figures indicated by the matzoth registration, believing that in several cities the numbers were considerably inflated by local Jewish officials. In the Spring of 1948 there were from 87,000 to 90,000 Jews in Poland. During 1948, several groups of Jewish repatriates returned from Russia (the total of these did not exceed 2,500) and some 1,000 persons returned from the displaced persons camps. On the other hand, from January, 1948, through March, 1949, some 7,000 Jews left Poland legally, most of them for Israel. In addition, several thousand Jews left the country illegally. On the basis of this data, a conservative estimate of the 1949 Jewish population is in the neighborhood of 80,000.

Although the Jewish population was fairly well established in various parts of the country, Jewish leaders were recently concerned with the problem of the transfer of Jews from small towns to larger cities, where employment opportunities were better.

## Economic Status

Data on occupational distribution of the Jewish population showed that in 1948 out of a total of 88,257, 36,954 persons were gainfully employed. The distribution of the gainfully employed is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF POLISH JEWS IN 1948

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Heavy and light industry .....	17,080	46.0
Agriculture .....	677	2.0
Commercial enterprises .....	4,380	11.0
Communications and transportation .....	523	1.0
State, municipal, and community employees .....	6,879	19.0
Schools and cultural institutions .....	1,842	5.0
Medical and social workers .....	3,540	10.0
Various .....	2,033	6.0
Total .....	36,954	100.0

(*Dos Naye Lebn*, December 13, 1948)

With the general recovery and the improvement of economic standards, the Polish Jews undoubtedly took a considerable step forward on the road to eco-

conomic rehabilitation and achieved substantial progress over the previous year. Nevertheless, the social status of the Jews had changed profoundly from the purely economic as well as the psychological point of view.

#### REORGANIZATION OF COOPERATIVES

Immediately after liberation and even as late as 1947, the Jewish community had striven for the reconstruction of its economic position unhindered, but it did so along the lines of traditional Jewish occupations. Even in creating producers' cooperatives, the Jewish community tried to adjust the Jewish economy to the new social structures emerging in Poland. This situation changed radically, however, during the year under review, when new slogans were advanced by the Communist party, and emphasis was laid on total integration in the economic plans of the government. From this point of view the most important changes occurred in the legal situation of Jewish producers' cooperatives, as well as in their composition, following the promulgation of the cooperative law of May 21, 1948, which regulated the status of the whole cooperative sector in the Polish economy. Prior to this law, the Jewish cooperatives had operated rather freely. They were not controlled by the government insofar as their production activities were concerned, and were subject only to periodic financial review by a special body. Before the new law went into effect, the Jewish producers' cooperatives were in a sense private enterprises, owned and directed by their members.

The new law provided for many structural changes in the cooperative movement: it abolished the internal autonomy of the cooperatives, whose production plans were now to be centralized in the top government-controlled body. According to the new law, a Central Union of Cooperatives (CZS) was created as an over-all directing agency, whose aim was to integrate the activities of the cooperatives into the state-controlled economy. All existing cooperatives were then affiliated with the CZS through a number of "centers," each coordinating activities in a particular industry, e.g., dairy cooperatives, meat cooperatives, fish cooperatives, etc. An exception was made for the Jewish producers' cooperatives, which were affiliated with the CZS through the Center for Jewish Producers' Cooperatives, *Solidarnocs*. The *Solidarnocs*, originally created in April, 1946, was dissolved and a new Center for Producers' Cooperatives was established in its place with the aim of maintaining the "productivization" of the Jewish population within the "framework of the general planned economy of the state" (*Official Guide of the Central Union of Cooperatives*, Book I, No. 2, July 5, 1948). The rather loose relationship which had existed between the producers' cooperatives and the *Solidarnocs* was replaced by a rigid government-controlled structure. After the reorganization, *Solidarnocs* was limited to the direction of Jewish producers' cooperatives in the field of handicrafts and small industry. Five Jewish agricultural cooperatives and seventeen meat, fish, and service cooperatives were directed to join their respective non-Jewish trade centers. The remaining 186 Jewish producers' cooperatives were compelled to become members of *Solidarnocs*, which not only supervised production and marketing but was also responsible for the creation of new Jewish producers' cooperatives, if any.

The scope and importance of the Jewish producers' cooperatives in Poland



may be gauged by the fact that in 1948 they were expected to reach a total output of the value of about four billion zlotys (\$10,000,000), and in 1949 over twelve billion zlotys (\$30,000,000). The Jewish producers' cooperatives constituted about 20 per cent of the total cooperatives in Poland and were expected to produce about one-fourth of the total urban cooperative output in 1949. In that year there were in Poland 220 Jewish producers' cooperatives, employing over 9,000 persons (*Yidishe Naves fun Poylen, Wechentlicher Informatzie Bulletin*, Central Komitet fun di Yiden in Poylen, Warsaw, March 18, 1949). These were located in the regions of Lodz, Chorsow, and Warsaw, with about half of the total number in the region of Wroclaw.

In terms of composition, the ever-increasing number of non-Jewish members of cooperatives was of special significance: as of December, 1948, one-quarter of the total membership was non-Jewish. The reasons for this development lay not only in the emigration of substantial numbers of skilled Jewish artisans and workers, but also in the general economic assimilation policy pursued by the directing groups. One aspect of this change in the character of the membership of the cooperatives should be especially mentioned. These enterprises had for years been the backbone of Jewish social life in Poland. From a broader Jewish point of view, their importance in this respect was at least equal to their economic usefulness. Regardless of the place that the producers' cooperatives was to occupy in the general economy of the country, with the increase of non-Jewish membership their role in Jewish life was continuously decreasing.

The Polish government assisted the cooperatives in various ways and particularly by making buildings and factories available. Thus, for instance, the government handed over to Jewish producers' cooperatives a mill plant in Wroclaw, a weaving mill in Walbrzych, a sawmill in Szczegasz, and a soap factory in Szczecin.

### *Communal Organization*

In the years following the liberation and until June 1948, a certain duality existed in the Jewish communal organization in Poland: On the one hand, there was the Central Committee of Polish Jews, a political formation representing a coalition of Jewish political parties and possessing considerable influence in government circles; on the other hand, there were the old pre-war Jewish *kehillot*, with their Committee of Religious Congregations, dealing exclusively with matters of religious interest. Notwithstanding the fact that the quasi-official Central Committee administered all Jewish communal activities and represented Polish Jewry both internally and externally, the Committee of Religious Congregations continued to be regarded as at least partly representing the traditional *kehillot*. As early as 1947, negotiations for a merger between the two organizations were pending, but religious Jewry laid down a number of conditions and resisted "unity" (See AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, Vol. 50, p. 395). Constant pressure was brought to bear on religious Jewry, and finally, at a session in April, 1948, the Committee of Jewish Religious Congregations decided to join the Central Committee of Polish Jews. A compromise was accepted which declared that the Committee of

Religious Congregations was to try to convince the Central Committee to observe the Sabbath whenever the activities of the two organizations coincided, and that *kashrut* would be provided wherever Jews required it. The affiliation of the Committee of Religious Congregations was ratified at a session of the Central Committee held in Warsaw on June 16, 1948.

Commenting upon the decision taken by the Committee of Religious Congregations, Joel Lazebnik, secretary-general of the Central Committee, stated ". . . the Central Jewish Committee felt that the existence of separate representation of Polish Jewry was harmful . . . . The consolidation of both groups brings an end to separate action . . . . Henceforth, there will be one Jewish representative body speaking for the Jews of Poland, the Central Jewish Committee . . . ." (*Jewish Life in Poland*, July, 1948).

Soon after the affiliation of the Committee of Religious Congregations, another step in the direction of "organic unity" was made possible by the merger of the Jewish Socialist Bund with the Communist party.<sup>1</sup> In 1948 the Central Committee of Polish Jews was still organized on a party coalition basis. Its presidium included four persons from the PPR (Communist) and the Socialist Bund, two from United Poale-Zion (left-wing Marxist), one from Poale-Zion C.S. Hitahdut (middle-of-the-road labor), and one representative from Ihud (General Zionist). The popular elections promised by the Central Committee never took place notwithstanding repeated assurances. With the Committee of Religious Congregations joined to the Central Committee and the Bund in the process of "self-liquidation," the way was open for further changes. It was then decided to reorganize the Central Committee by changing its structure from that of an organization based on a coalition of political groups to that of a "mass" organization, enlarged by the inclusion of representatives of all existing agencies, cooperatives, "shock-workers" (*Udarniki*) and all other representatives of the "laboring classes."

#### REORGANIZATION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The Congress for Reorganization of the Central Committee was held in Warsaw on February 26 and 27, 1949. Among its 264 delegates were representatives of local and regional committees, Jewish writers and artists, heads of various Jewish welfare agencies, and fifty shock-workers (*Dos Naye Lebn*, February 28, 1949). The Congress was officially greeted in the name of the government by the minister of administration, Wladyslaw Wolski, who assured the delegates that "there will not be another Kielce (pogrom of Kielce, July 4, 1946) . . . bestial anti-Semitism will be destroyed in Poland. . . ." The new slogans of the Congress for Reorganization reflected the policy adopted by the Communists. The class struggle in Polish Jewish society was emphasized and it was pointed out that the "productivization" of the Polish Jewish population was essentially socialist; Polish Jewry was called upon to strive for better social integration with the Polish working class in order to build the new Socialist Poland (Speech delivered at the Congress by Joel Lazebnik, secretary-general of the Central Committee, *Dos Naye Lebn*, February 28, 1949).

A new Central Committee of Polish Jews, composed of fifty-four members,

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the liquidation of the Jewish Socialist Bund, see p. 348.

was elected at the Congress. The fusion between the Socialist Bund and the Communists, and the presence on the Central Committee of so-called non-party representatives, giving to the Communists by far the largest number of seats, altered completely the character of the organization. The general direction of Committee affairs was entrusted to a presidium of eleven persons, consisting of Simon Zachariach, Adolph Berman, Joel Lazebnik, Hercz Smoliar, Shalom Grayek, Marek Bitter, Chief Rabbi David Kahane, David Sfar, H. Parnas, Salo Fiszgrund, and Pavel Zelicki. Adolph Berman (United Poale-Zion Left) was re-elected president, and Joel Lazebnik (Communist) general-secretary of the Committee. In turn, the presidium elected a small executive bureau of five which became the actual governing body of the Central Committee. Berman was the only non-Communist on the executive bureau, which in addition included among its members Hercz Smoliar, Joel Lazebnik, Marek Bitter, and Salo Fiszgrund (*Yidishe Naves fun Poylen*, March 18, 1949). Berman's forced resignation as president of the Committee, which occurred soon after and his replacement by Hercz Smoliar, a Communist, further underlined the structural changes which occurred in Jewish communal organization. The United Poale-Zion Left, Berman's party, objected to the creation of the executive bureau and its composition (*Arbeiter Zeitung*, No. 3—58, March, 1949), but this protest had no practical results. The reorganization of the Central Committee followed the line of the Eastern-European conception of "unity," with the Communist party clearly and unequivocally at the head of all Committee activities.

### *Religious Activity*

While the Central Committee, by including in its structure all existing Jewish agencies, expanded its influence, the Committee of Religious Congregations suffered a considerable setback and was steadily losing ground. A large number of rabbis left or planned to leave Poland. Toward the end of 1948 and the beginning of 1949, ten rabbis and some twenty religious leaders went to France, and most of them went on to Israel. Of 86 religious congregations existing at the beginning of 1948, only 65, comprising some 100 synagogues and houses of prayer were functioning in Poland in 1949. A meeting of the Rabbinical Council held in June, 1949, in Warsaw, repeated a previous appeal made to the Jews of Israel and other countries to send an authoritative religious scholar to Poland to direct a yeshiva. This was felt to be the only way to assure the continuation of higher religious education in the country. At this writing no practical response to this appeal had been received, and, as far as was known, the only existing yeshiva was that in Lodz, which had twenty students and faced a hopeless situation.

The problem of the exhumation of victims of the extermination and the preservation of seventy-one Jewish cemeteries continued to absorb the attention of the Committee of Religious Congregations. This work was proceeding very slowly despite the government law ordering the return to the Committee of Religious Congregations of tombstones which had been used for building and paving purposes by the Nazi regime.

Rabbi David Kahane, one of the chief representatives of religious Jewry in

the Central Committee of Polish Jews, continued to head the Rabbinical Council.

### *Welfare Activities*

A widespread network of Jewish welfare agencies continued to function in Poland. Conducted by the Central Committee, Committee of Religious Congregations, TOZ (health and child care agency), ORT (vocational retraining agency), and various other organizations, the welfare agencies provided all types of social services to a considerable number of beneficiaries. Welfare activities were directed particularly toward service to special groups— orphaned children, widows, invalids, and the aged. In December, 1948, among other services, sixty-four canteens, fourteen children's homes, twenty-one day nurseries, eight homes for the aged, one hospital, five tuberculosis sanitariums, fifty-three dispensaries, and fifteen infirmaries functioned in Poland. All of these institutions were receiving substantial support from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. In this connection it should be pointed out that a number of the twenty-two foreign agencies engaged in relief work in Poland had recently ceased to operate following a governmental move to reduce to a minimum the contact of the population with foreign organizations.

In addition, the government indicated its willingness to absorb and place under state control some of the local welfare institutions. In a statement on August 13, 1948, to delegates of the Central Jewish Committee, Stanislaw Skrzyszewski, minister of education, declared that the ministry "was willing to nationalize all the Jewish institutions for children, for example, the children's homes and kindergartens" (*Jewish Life in Poland*, October, 1948). At this writing, however, Jewish welfare activities in Poland were still being conducted by the various Jewish agencies and congregations.

### *Political Activities*

While Jewish political parties still existed in Poland, their character and the scope of their activities were greatly affected by the general political evolution in the country. Political actions undertaken were channeled through the Central Committee of Polish Jews, whose spokesmen were considered to represent "the united democratic Jewish masses." On several occasions during the period under review, the Central Committee of Polish Jews participated in world-wide Jewish political activities. Two such occasions deserve special mention: The Committee was represented at the Jewish Cultural Conference in Paris (July 9-13, 1948) organized by the left-wing Jewish groups in order to counteract a similar conference of the non-leftists—the World Jewish Cultural Congress, which was planned for New York. The Committee also participated in the Montreux session of the World Jewish Congress (June, 1948) with which it had been affiliated since January, 1948. Soon after the Montreux session was over, the Central Committee protested against the neutrality stand taken by the WJC in the East-West struggle. The Polish group also objected to the publication in one of the bulletins of the WJC of a survey of the situation of Jewish communities in various countries. The survey indicated the necessity

for mass emigration to Israel by Jews in the countries of the Soviet bloc. When WJC refused to participate in the Peace Congress organized by the Communists and held in Paris, the Central Committee decided that it was "aimless to continue the association with the present administration of the WJC" (*Yidishe Naves fun Poylen*, May, 1949).

#### LIQUIDATION OF JEWISH SOCIALIST BUND

One arm of the Jewish political body was liquidated when the fifty-year-old Jewish Socialist Bund, which for decades had represented strongly anti-Zionist social-democratic Jewish labor, merged with the United Workers party. The Central Board of the Bund and the representatives of its regional organizations convened in Lodz on October 23 and 24, 1948. After acknowledging the past "errors" of the party which, according to its leaders, had always been under "pernicious Menshevik influence," the convention decided to intensify its efforts toward achieving "organic unity" with the Communist workers of the country. Soon after, at a congress held in Wroclaw on January 16, 1949, the "organic unity" was realized, and the Bund decided to dissolve and merge with the United Workers party (*Dos Naye Lebn*, January 21, 1949).

#### *Zionist Activity*

Nor could the Zionist parties, which were still functioning, help but feel the heavy weight of the totalitarian trends now prevailing in Poland. Zionist youth organizations and a Zionist press (among others, *Befrayung*, *Arbeiter Cajtung*, *Nasze Slowo*) were still functioning, but their work was made more and more difficult by the official anti-Zionist position of the Communist party. The middle-of-the-road Poale-Zion C.S. Hitahdut, and even the left-wing Marxist Poale-Zion could not continue their political activities and their propaganda for emigration to Israel with the same freedom as before. The national conference of Jewish workers of the Communist party, held in the Winter of 1948, flatly rejected the "reactionary idea of Jewish exodus from Europe" and decided to fight even more vigorously the Zionist ideology and the "petty bourgeois utopian Halutzim . . ." (*Dos Naye Lebn*, November 17, 1948). The same slogan was repeated again and again on numerous occasions, and became the official line of the Communist party and the Central Committee.

#### *Relations with Israel*

Curiously enough, the strongly anti-Zionist policy had not for the time being affected the favorable attitude toward the state of Israel. In this particular respect the attitude of the Jewish Communists reflected the official position of the Polish government, which on numerous occasions not only supported Jewish demands in the United Nations but encouraged friendly relations with Israel at home. During the war in Palestine, daily meetings were held throughout Poland at which Jews and Gentiles alike expressed support of the Jewish state and contributed to Haganah. Interestingly enough, a Society of Polish-Israeli Friendship was functioning in Warsaw with the

sympathetic support of the government. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Jewish state a solemn celebration was organized by the Society, at which, in addition to the Israeli minister, a number of representatives of the government and intellectuals and writers were present. Professor Rostopinski presided at the celebration, and among those present were the well-known writers Dobrowolski, Zawieiski, Bronewski, and others. The establishment of the Jewish state was greeted with genuine sympathy by some Polish writers. The literary weekly, *Kuznica*, published a number of letters from distinguished literary figures expressing sympathy with and faith in the new state. Catholic writers joined their colleagues in voicing their support of the state of Israel.

### *Youth*

The creative urge and century-old tradition undoubtedly accounted for the widespread cultural and educational activities of the Polish Jews, despite the increasing Eastern-European political pressure in this field of communal endeavor. In line with the government-promoted policy of ideological control of the youth (through the All Polish Youth Union), the Central Committee of Polish Jews developed large-scale Jewish youth activities. In March, 1949, 2,000 youths from factories and producers' cooperatives, 1,000 university students, 1,200 high school pupils, 1,000 students from vocational schools, 2,000 athletes, and some 800 members of youth hostels, were affiliated with the youth department of the Central Committee. Their activities, particularly their ideological training, were conducted under the slogan of service to their "socialist country." A special review, *Nasz Glos*, was published in Polish by the youth department to promote and spread these ideas. Zionists of all shades of opinion were trying to resist Communist penetration through *hachsharot*, youth kibbutzim, and Hebrew courses. Their fight on behalf of the youth of Poland constituted at this time the most important aspect of their work. They labored, however, under great disadvantages, and the dissolution by the authorities of the Coordinating Committee for Zionist Youth in Lodz (*The Day*, New York, June 29, 1949) was an important indication of what the future held for all these efforts.

### *Education*

In the Jewish schools the prevailing trend was in the direction of *Gleichschaltung* of the educational system, in line with the "interest of Polish revolution" (Statement by Lozowski, manager of the school section of the Central Committee, *Dos Naye Lebn*, December 31, 1948). At various educational conventions, the structure of Jewish education was discussed and basic reforms were prepared in order to liquidate the "national separatist tendency" of the traditional Yiddish school. With this in view, an important reform was suggested with respect to the language of instruction. According to the leading educators, Polish was to be the language of instruction for all studies in Polish history, geography, and allied subjects; Yiddish was to be the language for all other subjects up to the fifth grade; starting from the fifth and through

the eleventh grade, some subjects were to be taught in Polish and others in Yiddish. Hebrew was to be taught as a part of the Jewish curriculum from the fifth grade up. In 1948-49 there were 25 Yiddish schools, with 3,086 pupils in Poland. A number of schools were closed because there were not enough pupils in attendance.

At the beginning of the academic year 1948-49, the Yiddish schools were taken over by the government and became part of the state public school system. The connecting link between the government-controlled schools and the Central Committee was to be a special school inspector, appointed by the government but proposed by the Committee.

Of the eleven Hebrew schools whose curricula resembled the pre-war Tarbut Schools, five were closed in the Fall of 1948 by local school authorities. Some of these were later reopened. In January, 1949, 10 Hebrew schools were taking care of some 800 pupils. Hebrew schools were the subject of much discussion at educational conferences and in the press, and it was the opinion of leading circles that there was no place in Poland for separate Hebrew education. Following the decision on unification of all Jewish elementary and high schools taken by the Central Committee, it was resolved at the beginning of April, 1949, to close all the Hebrew schools at the end of the school year 1948-49.

The policy of unification affected the religious schools as well, although because of their specialized character, the parochial school system was the last to be streamlined. At this writing, the fate of the religious schools was uncertain. In January, 1949, the Committee of Religious Congregations conducted 36 talmud torahs, with 1,100 pupils.

### *Cultural Activities*

During the year under review, activities in the field of popular adult education, the theater, research, and publishing were carried on by various Jewish organizations. The Jewish Cultural Society, which directed all cultural life of the community, reported in March, 1949, 57 local chapters with a total membership of about 9,000. The Society had 39 libraries, containing some 40,000 books, 43 small clubs, 6 orchestras, and 3 choral groups. Through its radio department, the Society broadcast four Yiddish programs weekly, including musical and informational programs and talks on political and cultural subjects.

### LITERATURE

In the field of literature it may be recorded that fifteen volumes of fiction, poetry, and drama were published by the Yiddish Book Press, and a second volume of the almanac *Yidische Shriften*, representing fifty-two writers and scholars (eight of whom perished during the occupation), appeared in Lodz. In this connection it should be noted that a number of Jewish writers and intellectuals had recently left Poland, among them some of those who participated in and directed literary activities. Since the liberation some seventy Jewish writers and journalists, some of them among the best representatives of the Jewish belles-lettres, had left Poland. A full list of these writers was published in *Unzer Schtime*, Paris, February 7, 1949.

## *Emigration*

Emigration prospects, which were already bad in 1947, deteriorated further in 1948. According to available reports, emigration was permitted only to politically allied countries. Passport applications made after March 31, 1948, the original deadline set by the government, were more often than not rejected by the authorities. This refusal to grant passports was based chiefly on chapter 3 of the passport regulations, which stipulated that the foreign office was not obligated to divulge to applicants the reasons for refusal. Passports issued were valid for only six months and every extension was considered a new application. Recently the passport fee was increased from 1,000 to 20,000 zlotys (400 zlotys = \$1), and possessors of passports were required to leave the country within three months after their issuance.

In December, 1948, the so-called PaAmt (the office dealing with emigration to Israel) was closed by the Polish authorities, and some of its functions were taken over by the Israeli consulate. Subsequently, in February, 1949, Polish authorities also closed the emigration section of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee office in Poland. Although Polish officials gave repeated assurances that the government would place no obstacles in the way of the emigration of Jews to Israel, only small numbers were permitted to leave the country.

In a statement made to the press in Tel Aviv, Israel, in June, 1949, Barzilai, Israeli minister to Poland, declared that "despite the fact that the Polish government does not permit the emigration of Jews from the country, special arrangements have been made for the relatives of residents in Israel to come to the Jewish state under certain conditions." Barzilai estimated that the number of emigrant relatives averaged several hundred monthly.

## *Summary*

The consolidation of the Communist regime had a profound impact on the small Jewish community. The powerful totalitarian grip of Polish communism considerably affected the social and institutional life of the Jewish community. Those Jews who found it possible to emigrate had done so, but at the time of writing, only very few were allowed to leave the country.

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