



Southeastern Europe

INTRODUCTION

IN THE countries of Southeastern Europe, the year under review was one of consolidation of the Communist regime and of a thorough elimination of all non-conformist elements. In all these countries, the Communist parties obtained absolute power; other political groups in the different "People's" or "Fatherland Fronts," insofar as they were allowed to exist, became simply Communist front organizations without any real influence. The political opposition was outlawed, and its leaders executed, imprisoned, or forced into exile as "traitors" and "imperialist spies." Constitutions were changed accordingly, and elections were held to ratify the *faits accomplis*. The liquidation or complete *Gleichschaltung* of all economic, social, and cultural organizations followed the elimination of opposition in the political field. Finally, purges were staged against heretic Communists suspected of "nationalism" and conspiracy with the Tito government in Yugoslavia.

For a time, the churches and religious communities remained the last relatively independent organizations. Finally, they were confronted with ultimatums to subordinate all their activities to the political and ideological dictates of the state. Those among them which tried to maintain their independence or spiritual and organizational ties with religious organizations outside the Russian orbit became the object of a violent denunciation and of political persecution which culminated in the trials against Josef Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary and the Protestant ministers in Bulgaria.

Economic Life

In the economic field, a new wave of nationalization virtually liquidated the remaining private sector in commerce and industry, and the labor market was restricted by numerous compulsory regulations, including the introduction of forced labor for "unpatriotic" and "idle and unproductive" citizens.

This economic policy ended the restitution of Jewish private properties. The liberal postwar restitution laws were in part revised in such a manner that restitution was almost impossible, and in part were simply disregarded. Promises made to return heirless Jewish properties to Jewish communities were not honored. Those Jewish survivors who had been able to begin a new existence in the private sector of economy, were once again expropriated or squeezed out of business by tax policies, non-delivery of raw materials, and similar economic pressure.

There were no reliable statistics about the absorption of the Jewish popula-

tion in the new economy and administration. A small number of Jews were conspicuous in high party and state positions, which were now accessible to all Communists and fellow-travelers without racial discrimination. Some of the economically displaced former businessmen and professionals found new jobs as managers and administrative employees in nationalized industries and public administrations. Finally, a number of dispossessed Jews found employment as workers in factories and in agriculture. In some countries—especially in Poland and Bulgaria—Jewish producers' cooperatives and retraining courses, organized under government auspices with the financial support of foreign Jewish relief organizations, helped to integrate a part of the Jewish population into the new economy. But these efforts at the "productivization of Jewish labor" helped only a minority of economically displaced Jews. The economic situation of the majority, especially in such countries with large Jewish communities as Rumania and Hungary, was very difficult. There was a relatively large amount of unemployment and under-employment in the Jewish population, and many Jews could maintain themselves only by occasional jobs and by selling their personal properties. Jewish welfare and relief organizations, which had enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy during the first postwar years, were taken over by the state or by the Communist-dominated religious communities. In Hungary and Rumania the offices of foreign Jewish relief organizations were closed by the authorities, and those considerable parts of the Jewish population which were still dependent on relief were hit hard by the liquidation of foreign financial aid.

Education, Culture, and Religion

Jewish educational and cultural institutions also lost their autonomy. Jewish community schools were taken over by the state; Hebrew teaching was abolished and Yiddish instruction substantially reduced. In administration, curriculum, ideology, and in most cases in the language of instruction as well, Jewish schools became indiscernible from other schools except that special pains were taken to fight the ideology of Zionism. Jewish state theaters, cultural associations, and scientific institutes were still maintained in several countries, but their activities had to conform to the Communist party line.

Jewish religious communities were under a Communist-dominated administration. Non-Communists, and Zionist elements in particular, were purged from their leadership. The communities were forced to support Communist policies on the domestic as well as on the international scene. Their cultural and defense activities were seriously curtailed; their religious activities were under thorough governmental supervision. Some interference with religious services and customs was reported, especially in Rumania. In general, purely religious activities were tolerated, provided that communities and rabbis manifested conspicuous loyalty to the Communist regime.

Intergroup Relations

All the new constitutions contained special paragraphs outlawing manifestations of racial or religious hatred. Reports about open anti-Semitic riots were

scarce; anti-Semitic incidents that were reported involved clandestine manifestations, such as anti-Jewish wall inscriptions, desecration of Jewish cemeteries, etc. Anti-Semitic feelings were to a large extent driven underground, but according to all eye-witness reports, they were intense and violent. The official doctrine that anti-Semitism was simply a heritage from the capitalist past to be found only in "Fascist" groups, hampered a sound approach to an effective anti-bias education. Special Jewish activities in combating anti-Semitism were considered unnecessary and obnoxious.

At the same time, anti-Semitic moods and feelings found nourishment and the possibility of some legal expression during the official campaign against "Jewish nationalism" and "cosmopolitanism" in which all anti-Jewish stereotypes about the "rootless," "alien," and "wandering" Jew were profusely used and combined with accusations of economic sabotage and illegal currency traffic.

Israel and Zionism

The official attitudes toward Israel and Zionism underwent a significant change after an article by Ilya Ehrenburg in the *Moscow Pravda* on September 21, 1948.¹ Official friendly relations with the government of Israel were maintained, but at the same time it was denounced as "bourgeois, reactionary, and subservient to Western imperialism." A violent campaign against "reactionary Zionism" and "Jewish nationalism" was conducted in all the satellite countries. Zionists were purged from all posts of influence in the communities, and some of their leaders were arrested on charges of "illicit dealings in foreign currencies" or of "aiding illegal emigration." All Zionist political, cultural, and relief organizations in Rumania and Hungary were dissolved, and Israeli citizens who had come to those countries to help organize emigration were arrested and expelled.

Emigration to Israel

Emigration to Israel met with increasing difficulties and was generally discouraged, but the immediate policy of the Southeastern-European governments varied. In Rumania and Hungary, emigration was practically stopped at the end of 1948; illegal emigrants trying to escape over the "green border" were hounded down by frontier guards and severely punished. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, mass emigration was permitted, with the result that the great majority of the Jewish population left the country. The same policy was followed by the Yugoslav government, and the result was the same. Czechoslovakia concluded an agreement with Israel concerning emigration at the beginning of 1949, and from January 1, through September, 1949, about half of the Jewish population emigrated. Poland concluded a similar agreement, after prolonged negotiations, in September, 1949.

In the Fall of 1949, only two large Jewish communities remained in Southeastern Europe, both in countries where Jewish emigration had halted. There were an estimated 350,000 Jews in Rumania and about 160,000 in

¹ See pp. 356 ff.

Hungary. In Poland, at the time of writing, there were about 80,000 Jews, a large part of whom were preparing to leave. In Czechoslovakia, there were 18,000 to 20,000 Jews, and emigration was continuing. In Bulgaria, where the mass exodus was almost finished, the number of remaining Jews was estimated at 10,000 by the Communist leadership of the Jewish Consistory, and at 4,000 by the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). In Yugoslavia, 4,000 Jews were left, only 2,000 of whom were expected to stay. There were also about 300 Jews in Albania.

Generally, wherever emigration was free, a great majority of the community decided to emigrate. There was no doubt that the same would happen in Hungary and Rumania if the governments of these countries could be persuaded to permit unrestricted emigration.

JOSEPH GORDON

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

AFTER the Communist coup of February, 1948, Czechoslovakia was quickly transformed into a Communist dictatorship. All institutions and organizations, including the non-Communist political parties, were taken over by Communist-dominated action committees. New, one-list elections in May, 1948, gave the Communists an overwhelming majority in the parliament. The Social Democratic party, under a new leadership imposed by an action committee, was forced to fuse with the Communist party; the National Socialist and Catholic People's parties, and two minor Slovak parties headed by pro-Communist collaborators, were allowed to exist and to have representatives in the parliament and in the cabinet only for the purpose of window-dressing. A new constitution was adopted over the objections of President Eduard Benes, who resigned from his office after the elections and lived in enforced seclusion until his death on September 3, 1948. The Communist leader Klement Gottwald became president of the Republic; the Communist union leader, Antonin Zapotocky, was appointed premier. All industrial and commercial enterprises with more than fifty employees were nationalized; subsequently, most of the remaining private businessmen and artisans were forced into liquidation by repressive tax policies, discrimination in access to raw materials, discrimination in rationing, and other means of economic pressure. The forcible fusion of all village economic organizations into "unified cooperatives" and numerous expropriations of agricultural enterprises for non-delivery of food quotas and for "political unreliability" prepared the way for a future collectivization of agriculture. State administration as well as economic and cultural life were radically purged of non-Communist elements; a series of "espionage" and "conspiracy" trials resulted in many sentences of death and long prison terms for political opponents of the regime. "Corrective labor camps" were introduced for "subversive elements," "blackmarketeers," and "saboteurs of socialist planning." Finally, in the Summer of 1949, a violent campaign was conducted against the churches and religious communities which resisted the complete control of all their activities by the state, and especially against the Catholic Church, headed by the Prague Archbishop Josef Beran.

Population

Of the 360,000 Jews in prewar Czechoslovakia, only about 55,000 remained in the country after the war. On June 30, 1948, the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in Bohemia and Moravia counted 24,395 members in these two provinces; of these, 19,123 were "persons of the Mosaic faith," 5,272 were "other members of Jewish communities," mostly agnostic Jews. About 8,500 of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia were recent immigrants from Carpatho-Russia, the easternmost Czechoslovak province, which had been ceded to the Soviet Union in 1945. About 30,000 Jews lived in Slovakia, 24,000 of whom were "persons of the Mosaic faith" and 6,000 "other Jews." These numbers diminished considerably through emigration during the year under review.

At the end of 1948, the Czechoslovak Bureau of Statistics estimated the number of Jews in the country at 42,000. In September, 1949, private Jewish sources reported that 18,000-20,000 Jews were left in Czechoslovakia.

Economic Conditions: Restitution

The prewar Jewish community, especially in the western part of Czechoslovakia, had included a great number of well-to-do middle class and professional persons. As the survivors returned from concentration camps completely destitute, the problem of restitution became vital. The original restitution laws, promulgated after the liberation, were based on liberal principles but had many loopholes and were successfully sabotaged by the authorities even before the Communist coup. The result was that most of the restitution proceedings concerning properties not subject to nationalization at that time were either abandoned or still pending at the beginning of 1948. The paragraph of the original restitution law which provided that heirless Jewish properties were to be given to the Jewish communities, had been abolished in 1947, by a law relating to the currency liquidation fund, which confiscated these properties for the state treasury. After the Communist coup, the purged parliament adopted on April 7, 1948, a revised restitution law which contained the following provisions.

REVISED RESTITUTION LAW

The landed properties which had been distributed (by Nazi or Quisling authorities) among small landholders were not subject to restitution. Industrial and other business properties which were nationalized after the war were not to be restituted even if their size would not have made them subject to nationalization if they had remained in the hands of their original owners. In either event, owners were supposed to receive an indemnity in government bonds but it was left to the cabinet to decide when and how these bonds were to be issued and redeemed. The bonds had not been issued at the time of this writing. Restitution was to be denied in all cases where it was considered to be "against the public interest," the nature of the "public interest" to be decided by national committees whose decisions were binding upon the courts. All persons claiming restitution had to prove their "national reliability." Restitution in kind could not be claimed for persons whose whereabouts were not

known, or for heirs further removed than one degree from the original owner. All restitution claims were decreed null and void if not filed within three months after the promulgation of the revised law, i.e., by July 27, 1948.

This revision ended effectively all restitution claims, because the claimed properties were either in the hands of "small landholders," or nationalized after the war, or re-expropriated for the benefit of Czech or Slovak "patriots." Claims which did not fall into one of these categories were disposed of by the provisions concerning "public interest" and "national reliability." Since whole families had been exterminated in many cases, the exclusion of more remote heirs automatically left their properties in the hands of the state. Immediately after the coup, the Jewish press, which had sharply opposed the revision bill and had devoted much space and energy to restitution problems, ceased writing about them completely. It became unpatriotic and dangerous to raise a restitution claim; and it also became hopeless.

NATIONALIZATION

In the meantime, a new wave of nationalization overwhelmed the small business enterprises which some of the survivors had been able to establish. Later, the medical and legal professions were reorganized in such a manner that doctors and lawyers practically became state employees.

Up to the beginning of 1948, the Jewish community had moved considerably in the direction of self-sufficiency and economic rehabilitation. That success was attributable to the fact that a number of middle-class and professional Jews found jobs in public administration or in nationalized industries as officials, managers, clerks, or workers. On the other hand, small industries and commercial enterprises had not been completely nationalized, and a number of Jews earned their living in this private sector of the economy. After February, 1948, the situation deteriorated again. All hope for restitution was definitely lost and the remaining small private enterprises were nationalized or forced out of business. In August, 1948, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) reported: "The rapid nationalization of industry following the change in the government has displaced a large number of Jewish businessmen who have been the main support of the communities." In June, 1948, about 4,000 persons, 800 of them transients, were receiving cash relief from the JDC. At that time, the relief program had already been reduced to a minimum and the emphasis had been shifted to reconstruction.

But the rehabilitation activities were on a rather small scale: two loan *kassas* and a few producers' cooperatives with a total of 200 to 300 members, supported by the JDC. The ORT retraining courses had an average of 200 to 300 students throughout 1947 and 1948, and about 500 prospective emigrants received vocational training in Zionist *hachscharot* and *kibbutzim*.

Communal Life

The religious communities, reconstituted after the war, were organized in two central organizations: the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in Bohemia and Moravia, and the Association of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia. The Council and the individual communities in Bohemia and

Moravia had representative bodies, elected in 1947. Although unity lists were elected in most communities, the composition of the leading bodies was the result of genuine negotiations between different Jewish groups; in some communities, including Prague, opposition lists were admitted and received proportional representation. Different trends of opinion were represented in the leadership: Zionists, assimilationist-liberal "Czech Jews," and Conservative and Orthodox groups of Carpatho-Russian immigrants. All elected leaders could be considered loyal to the ruling regime, but few of them were outright Communists or fellow-travelers. The Zionists had the majority and the leading positions. Their majority in the leadership was even stronger in Slovakia.

All this changed after the Communist coup. On February 27, 1948, an action committee for the Council of Jewish Religious Communities and for the Prague community was appointed by the district action committee of the National Front in Prague. Its chairman was Mrs. Laura Simek, an employee of the cadre commission in the headquarters of the Communist party. Among the nine original members of the action committee, only two were elected members of the representation of the Prague community, both from the "Czech Jewish" group. Holding no elections, the action committee purged the elected bodies as well as the staffs of the Council and of the communities. The president of the Council, Arnost Frischer, was demoted; its secretary, Kurt Wehle, fled abroad; the chairman of the Prague community, Karel Stein, was forced to resign; the leader of the opposition group in the last elections, Kurt Premysl Heller, was expelled from the elected body; other members were forced to resign and were replaced by appointees of the action committee. The deputy chief rabbi, Hanus Rezek, resigned and left the country soon afterward; he was subsequently killed in an airplane accident in Greece on his way to Israel.

COMMUNIST LINE IN COMMUNAL LIFE

Under the new leadership, the fight for restitution and for the defense of Jewish rights against encroachments within the country was immediately stopped. Complaints of anti-Semitism and discrimination within the country were replaced in the Jewish press by a campaign against anti-Semitism in America, England, and Western Germany. The Jewish press and Jewish organizations followed Communist policies in their domestic as well as in their international activities. They took part in the denunciation of any internal opposition as "Fascist" and "pro-imperialist," as well as in the international Communist "peace offensive."

This line was expressed in an address by the new president, Emil Ungar, at a meeting of the Council on February 6, 1949. Reporting on the first year of the new leadership's activities, Ungar sharply criticized the pre-Communist leadership for its defense of private Jewish restitution claims, for its supposedly excessive relief activities, and especially for its support of transient Jews fleeing from other Iron Curtain countries. He warned against the defense of "narrow, particularist" Jewish communal interests and demanded that the Jews subordinate all their productive forces and all their connections with foreign countries to the fight for a "complete victory of really democratic and progressive forces."

Ungar also revealed the difficult financial situation of the communities. The

subsidies, which the communities had until then received from the so-called "Terezín assets," i.e., from funds expropriated from Jews and found after the war in the ghetto of Terezín, had been discontinued and the assets confiscated for the state treasury. Still, according to the law which continued in force after the Communist coup, all churches and religious communities were entitled to subsidies from the state budget. But the budgets which Jewish communities submitted to the authorities were returned, and the budget for 1949 provided for no appropriations. The communities were forced to reduce their staffs and relief activities substantially, to live on loans, and to sell their properties.

Intergroup Relations

The new Czechoslovak constitution adopted in April, 1948, proclaimed the freedom of religion but prohibited the abuse of religious activities for political purposes. It also contained a paragraph which forbade utterances and activities aimed at threatening the integrity and unity of the state, its constitution, or the institutions of the People's Democracy. The paragraph stated that it was forbidden "to abuse civil rights and liberties" for such purposes, adding that it was forbidden to disseminate in any form Nazism, Fascism, racial or religious intolerance, or national chauvinism.

After the February coup, the official doctrine concerning anti-Semitism was that it is only a heritage of the past, the remnants of which were to be found merely in "Fascist groups." The defense activities of the Jewish religious communities were radically curtailed: interventions in behalf of Jewish interests in restitution matters ceased, special campaigns against anti-Semitism were discontinued, and, as noted above, complaints about discrimination disappeared from the Jewish press.

Nevertheless, anti-Semitic riots, which had been occurring in Slovakia throughout the postwar years, did not stop. On August 20, 1949, violent anti-Semitic demonstrations took place in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. According to a detailed report published in the Bratislava weekly, *Tribuna*, on August 27, 1948, a quarrel between a Jewish and a Gentile woman over precedence in a bread line was the pretext. Crowds assembled, attacked Jewish citizens in the streets, moved to the Jewish quarter and attacked Jewish soup kitchens and the Jewish hospital. The police allowed the crowds to assemble and stood by for a long time without intervening. In some cases, Jews were taken into "protective custody" and beaten up by the police. It was not until the following day, when the riots were resumed, that the police finally intervened and dispersed the crowds. Subsequently, a number of rioters were arrested and condemned to prison and forced labor terms from one month to three years.

Israel and Zionism

The Czechoslovak government had supported the partition of Palestine from the moment Russia decided to support it, in October, 1947. It was among the first governments to recognize the state of Israel (on May 18, 1948). Subsequently, diplomatic and commercial relations were established, and the friend-

ship between both countries was stressed in repeated official declarations. A society for friendship between Czechoslovakia and Israel was founded in Prague under official auspices. The Zionists were allowed to develop their educational and organizational activities and to train prospective emigrants. The official attitude was that Jews who considered themselves as members of the reconstituted Jewish nation were free to go to Israel; those who stayed in Czechoslovakia were to be assimilated totally (Declaration of Václav Kopecky, Minister of Information, on January 26, 1948).

This attitude was modified after an article by Ilya Ehrenburg in the Moscow *Pravda* in September, 1948. The Jewish press started to carry violent attacks against Zionism as a reactionary, bourgeois, nationalist ideology, and the government of Israel was criticized as a "tool of Western imperialists." The Zionist training camps were discontinued in December, 1948, and several Zionist leaders were arrested without published charges or on charges of illicit valuta dealings. The president of the Zionist Organization of Czechoslovakia, Oscar Krasnansky, was arrested in September, 1948. In January, 1949, several other Zionist leaders, among them Leo Rosenthal, head of the Jewish Agency office in Bratislava, and Emmanuel Frieder, president of the Association of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia, suffered the same fate. But the Zionist organizations in Czechoslovakia were still being allowed to continue in the Summer of 1949, when such organizations in Hungary and Rumania had already been dissolved.

Emigration

In 1948, 5,000 Czechoslovak Jews left for Israel, and 3,000 for other countries. In addition, there was some illegal emigration to Austria and the American zone of Germany.

At the beginning of 1949, a new emigration agreement was concluded with the Israeli authorities. It provided for the emigration of 20,000 Jews within four months. The deadline was subsequently extended, and groups of emigrants were leaving via Austria-Italy, and via Rumania, as well, throughout the first half of 1949.

A new policy was introduced in regard to Jewish transients from other Eastern-European countries. As early as 1948, the Czechoslovak government had ceased to issue transit visas to Jewish emigrants from Rumania, and measures were taken to stop the influx of transients at the Hungarian border.

At the end of April, 1949, when the Austro-Hungarian border was closed and tightly watched, several thousands of Hungarian Jewish refugees tried to pass from Hungary to Vienna through the Czechoslovak city of Bratislava. The first groups were allowed to pass after encountering some difficulties, but at the beginning of May, the traffic was stopped by Czechoslovak authorities. Posters displayed in the streets of Bratislava announced that all newcomers would be arrested and returned to Hungary and that Czechoslovak citizens who tried to help them would be punished. The Jewish community of Bratislava declared that it could neither intervene in behalf of the refugees nor give them any material help.

HUNGARY

THE LIFE of Hungarian Jewry was characterized during the period under review by the rapid proletarianization and destitution of the broad Jewish middle class, the growing subordination of the Jewish community, as well as all other religious organizations, to the state, and the outlawing and destruction of the Zionist movement.

An official campaign of political repression of all non-Communist groups in Hungary was responsible for the wave of "voluntary" capitulation which swept the Jewish community.

Against this background of *Gleichschaltung*, these three major trends in the life of Hungarian Jewry followed a rapid and logical development.

Economic and Social Life

The year beginning March, 1948, (the date of the enactment of the decree which nationalized 90 per cent of Hungarian industry and commerce, the bulk of which was owned and managed by Jews) and ending in March, 1949, saw the final completion of a program of nationalization which transformed Hungarian Jewry from an important economic and social factor in the rehabilitation of Hungary after the war into an expendable, marginal social element. It was impossible for this Jewish element to readjust within the new economic order because the Jewish middle class lacked the necessary experience in factory or other types of physical labor. (This was particularly the case with the survivors of concentration camps.) In addition, the authorities were uninterested in admitting members of the middle class to factory jobs. Exacerbating the situation was a preponderance of aged persons and a disproportionately large number of women and invalids, as reported on April 19, 1949, by Imre Kisfaludi, head of Mizrat, an organization to aid Jewish rehabilitation.

The expropriation by the state of all major private undertakings left only retail trade and the handicrafts open as fields of individual business activity. Even within this narrow area, subsequent drastic governmental measures undermined the position of Jewish businessmen. Thus, John MacCormac reported in *The New York Times* on January 9, 1949, that of the 19,000 clothing and textile stores in Budapest (of which 18,000 were owned by Jews), 17,000 had been ordered closed as "superfluous." This complete liquidation was also rapidly proceeding through other, less direct means, such as the prohibitive limitation on private profits, the imposition of exorbitant taxes, the cut-throat price competition of state enterprises, the denial by nationalized industries of merchandise and raw materials to private traders and craftsmen, and the permission granted to state-owned retail stores to keep longer hours than private stores (*Amerikai Magyar Nepozseva*, March 17, 1949). As a result, tens of thousands of trade licenses were "voluntarily" returned by Jewish businessmen as liabilities. *The Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry* by Eugene Levai (Zurich, 1948), asserted that the original assets of the Jewish population in Lesser (Trianon) Hungary constituted between 20 and 25 per cent of the

total wealth of the country, representing a sum believed to be in the neighborhood of seven billion gold pengos, or 1.5 billion dollars.

Many Jewish state employees were dismissed from their positions, and, as reported by John MacCormac, "most of the Jewish members of the Hungarian Workers (Communist) Party have been excluded by a purge now going on in its ranks" (*The New York Times*, January 9, 1949). In most cases, exclusion from the party was tantamount to the loss of position and livelihood. At the time of writing, Hungarian Jewry was reduced to a state of pauperism; it was completely at the mercy of the government, unable to care for its sick, aged, and orphans, or to maintain its religious, cultural, and social institutions. Through the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), American Jewry continued to provide relief and welfare assistance to some 60,000 otherwise helpless Jews in Hungary.

Restitution

On paper, there was a Jewish Rehabilitation Fund in Hungary. Under the treaty of peace, all Jewish heirless assets were to have been transferred to this fund. In actual practice, only a small number of urban real estate units which produced no income was transferred to the fund.

In the Spring of 1948, that part of the so-called "Hungarian Golden Treasure Train" which was captured in Austria by the French army was returned by France to Hungary. At the time of writing, this property had been returned neither to the owners nor to the Jewish Rehabilitation Fund. On January 26, 1949, Ferenc Jeszenszky, director-general of the National Bank of Hungary, declared that the assets were not exclusively Jewish property, since pieces of jewelry with Fascist "Arrow Cross" emblems were found among them. Former high Hungarian government officials in exile asserted that these symbols were simply carved into some of the pieces with pocket knives, in order to furnish an excuse for denying the return of these assets to their Jewish owners.

Communal Affairs

With the assistance of a handful of people, notably Louis Stoeckler, president of the important Jewish community of Pest, and of the Central Board of Jews in Hungary, the official Jewish community organization was regimented during the period under review for the service of the state.

Stoeckler and his community board were never elected to office by the Jewish electorate. The community elections were delayed for almost three and a half years, during which period the two large electoral opposition camps, the middle-class religious group and the Zionists, were disorganized and suppressed with official Communist assistance. Finally, in May, 1948, Jewish community elections were called. On the eve of the elections, Joseph Szucs, a close relative of Stoeckler, was appointed chairman of the electoral board. In this capacity, Szucs simply disqualified the opposition candidates on the ground of "irregularities in form" and declared that "since only one 'regular' list of candidates was received, no voting will take place." Thus, in the absence of an "opposition" Stoeckler and his slate were unanimously "elected" (*Uj Elet*, May 20,

1948). At the end of 1948, a "compact" was concluded between Stoeckler's Central Board and the Communist-dominated government.

RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL LIFE

The agents of the government within the Jewish community achieved the following "results" in the religious life of Hungarian Jewry.

The nationalization of almost all schools formerly owned and managed by the Jewish community; the prohibition of the teaching of Hebrew, even at the Tarbut Hebrew high school; the frequent replacement of Jewish teachers by non-Jewish (Communist) teachers in former Jewish schools; the proclamation of the Sabbath as a day of compulsory instruction in all former Jewish schools, with only a maximum of 20 per cent of the enrollment eligible for exemption upon application (*Uj Elet*, October 7, 1948); and the requirement that Jewish-owned shops and stores be kept open on Saturdays and Jewish holidays during business hours—a clearly discriminatory measure on the part of the government, since the observance of Sunday was compulsory (*Uj Elet*, November 20, 1948).

According to eye-witness accounts, ritual slaughter was prohibited by local municipal order in almost all provincial Jewish communities; and political police spies regularly attended religious services to control the content of sermons. Since the Summer of 1948, repeated attempts had been made by Stoeckler to induce the Orthodox Jewish leadership to agree to the "voluntary" transformation of all religious communities into "Jewish people's communities."

In the May 12, 1949, issue of *Uj Elet*, Stoeckler and a number of his lieutenants in the Jewish community administration appealed to the Jewish public to vote "yes" for the Communist-dominated government slate in the national one-list elections.

LIQUIDATION OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

By the end of 1948, the time was considered ripe for the liquidation of the Zionist movement, which had become the most popular ideology among Hungarian Jews since the end of the war.

In previous years, the response of the Jews of Hungary to the call for emigration to Israel had been slower than that of any other Eastern-European Jewish group. But, late in 1948 and during the first half of 1949, the situation changed radically. A frantic drive to escape gripped the Jewish masses. The number of visa applications to Israel alone reached a total of 60,000 by the end of 1948, before the state intervened.

Unfortunately, during the first postwar years the Zionist leadership had aligned itself with Stoeckler's temporary "caretaker" regime, in opposition to the religious middle-class camp, whose prewar anti-Zionist tendency was well known. The Hungarian Zionists failed to realize that middle-class Jewry all over the world had substantially revised its attitude to Zionism.

On March 14, 1948, Michael Salamon, president of the Zionist Organization of Hungary, publicly admitted that "we have arrived at the conclusion that

today the Hungarian Jewish masses are no longer in a position to conduct any legitimate fight based on principles" (*Uj Elet*, March 18, 1948). On November 11, 1948, the *New York Jewish Morning Journal* reported from London that Jewish Communists in Hungary, following the Soviet reversal of its pro-Israel policy, had launched a propaganda campaign against Zionism and the state of Israel and had actually characterized "the Yishuv and its inhabitants" as "lackeys of Anglo-American capitalism."

This Communist campaign soon became the official stand of the (unelected) Jewish community leadership, as reflected in a front page editorial in *Uj Elet* on December 30, 1948, in which Stoeckler stated, "The great majority of Hungarian Jewry . . . cannot tolerate . . . interference with their affairs on the part of those . . . who consider themselves to have one leg already over the frontier. . . ."

This open declaration of war was followed by an avalanche of "official" statements against Zionism, including an especially vicious denunciation by Max Domonkos, secretary-general of the Pest Jewish community. During the last week of February, 1949, the Zionist leaders were summoned by the Communist Minister of the Interior and confronted with a governmental ultimatum which outlawed the Zionist movement and demanded the immediate cessation of the activities of all of its branches and subdivisions. Accordingly, on March 24, 1949, the "Committee for the Liquidation of the Zionist Organization of Hungary" (appointed by Stoeckler) announced that on March 13, 1949, the national governing committee of the Zionist Organization had adopted a "unanimous resolution . . . voluntarily" discontinuing all Zionist activities in Hungary. On March 22, 1949, an identical pledge was made by the Hungarian Palestine office. Early in March, the government expelled ten Zionist leaders from the country.

Emigration

Despite the obstacles placed in their way by the government, the Jewish masses frantically attempted to escape from Hungary to the West. Between November, 1948, and February, 1949, more than 3,000 Jewish refugees from Hungary arrived in Austria. During February and March, a weekly average of 200 reached Vienna. On the night of April 23 alone, 1,200 refugees arrived in Vienna via Czechoslovakia (barbed wire installations and redoubled frontier guards had previously sealed off the direct route to the Austrian border) (*New York Herald Tribune*, April 24, 1949). *The New York Times* reported on April 27, 1949, that another group of 1,000 immigrants attempting to follow the same route was turned back on the frontier by the Czechoslovak police. According to Harry Greenstein, Adviser on Jewish Affairs in the United States zone of Germany, during the two weeks ending May 12, 1949, more than 3,000 Hungarian Jews in all had fled via Czechoslovakia to Austria. Amazingly, between forty and fifty Hungarian Jews were reported still to be reaching Vienna daily.

This continued emigration of Jews may have prompted the government to climax its war on Zionism in the middle of June, by arraigning ten and sentencing seven leading figures in the Hungarian Zionist movement to prison terms ranging from six months to three years. Those sentenced were Bela Denes, for-

mer president of the Hungarian Mapai, and Alexander Kertesz, lawyer (both to three years' imprisonment); Madge Weiss, an official of the Zionist organization and of Mapai, and M. Feld, merchant (two years and six months); Aladar Felkai, merchant (six months); Nicholas Frankfurter of the Zionist Organization (two years and eight months); and Alexander Dienes, a Christian worker (two years and six months). The convictions were obtained under a 1948 law forbidding any attempt to cross the border illegally—a law contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations.¹

World Reaction

Throughout the year under review, the Israeli government continued to press the Hungarian authorities for an agreement that would open the way for the emigration of at least 30,000 Hungarian Jews to Israel. American Jewry stood prepared to defray the expenses of their transportation. But, at the time of writing the government of Hungary was persevering in blocking Jewish emigration completely.

JOSEPH GORDON

RUMANIA

THE establishment of a full-fledged Communist regime in Rumania was achieved in the second half of 1947 and at the beginning of 1948. The liquidation of the opposition parties, the merger of the pro-Communist wing of the Socialists with the Communist party, the replacement of Foreign Minister Tatarescu by Anna Pauker (November, 1947), the forced abdication of King Michael (December, 1947), and a controlled election which gave the People's Democratic Front 405 of the 415 seats in the parliament (March, 1948) were the main steps in the process of final *Gleichschaltung*. By the beginning of 1948, the Communist dictatorship was firmly established, no opposition was tolerated, and the totalitarian "unification" was carried to the field of non-political, cultural, social, and relief activities. It could not but affect strongly the life of the Jewish minority.

Population

Among the Soviet satellite countries, Rumania had the largest Jewish community. The number of Jews was estimated at 350,000 at the beginning of the year under review. In view of the virtual cessation of legal emigration at the beginning of 1948, and the extreme difficulty of illegal emigration via Hungary or Czechoslovakia to Austria, there was no major change in the number of Jews. The only officially published figure was that of 138,795 Jews who had declared Yiddish to be their mother tongue. The total number of persons who had declared their (ethnic) nationality to be Jewish was not released. Nor were there any new official statistics concerning persons who professed the Jewish faith.

¹ See *United Nations and Human Rights*, pp. 433 ff.

Economic Conditions

The economic conditions of the Jewish community deteriorated considerably with the almost complete nationalization of small industry, trade, and commerce after the completion of the Communist dictatorship. As early as 1947, the Jewish party and the Union of Rumanian Jews, still legal at that time, had complained that none of the promises of the pro-government People's Democratic Front had been fulfilled. At that time a joint memorandum sent by the Jewish party, the Union of Rumanian Jews, the Zionist Organization of Rumania, and the Rumanian Section of the World Jewish Congress to the United Nations' Special Committee on Palestine had stressed that many thousands of Jews were existing solely on relief and that a large number of them considered emigration the only solution to their economic problems. Soon afterwards, a new wave of nationalization overwhelmed the remaining small businessmen; in addition, those whose enterprises were not officially subject to nationalization because of the smallness of their size, were squeezed out of business by currency and taxation policies, and by lack of raw materials.

There were no reliable statistics on the absorption of the Jewish population into the new economy. Certainly, one part of the community eventually found jobs as workers, employees, etc. At the national conference of rabbis and community leaders held in July, 1949, it was reported that over 13,000 unemployed Jews were provided with jobs in the past year, and that 91 vocational schools retrained 2,400 adults and 2,700 children. There was no possibility of checking these figures; nor did the report indicate how many Jews remained unemployed. But according to all unofficial reports, the unemployment among the Jewish population remained considerable. Some reports maintained that 80 per cent of Rumanian Jewry had been left without a regular source of livelihood, and many of them were supporting themselves by the sale of their remaining household goods and clothes. Some were forced to engage in black market activities, and the prisons were consequently filled with Jews. (One report estimated that at one time 2,000 of the 3,000 inmates of Bucharest jails were Jews.) There were laws on the book that prescribed punishments for persons not engaged in "productive activity." They had not been rigidly enforced at the time of writing although there were instances in which public parks were raided and persons unable to prove definite employment in the nationalized economy were arrested and sent to labor camps.

Prosecution of War Criminals

The trial of the culprits of the Jassy massacre of 1941, in which 14,000 Jews had been murdered, took place in June, 1948. Of the 151 persons originally charged with participation in, or responsibility for, the pogrom, only 55 were indicted, and only 33 were present at the trial. Chief defendant was General Georgehe Stavrescu, the commander of the troops who had rounded up the Jews for "deportation" and killed and tortured them in the death trains. The general, five colonels, and eighteen other defendants were sentenced to

hard labor for life; six individuals were sentenced to hard labor for twenty-five years; other defendants received prison sentences down to five years; four were acquitted.

Several minor trials against war criminals guilty of anti-Jewish atrocities were conducted in 1949. In June, three persons found guilty of torturing Jews in Bessarabia were sentenced to solitary confinement for from three to twelve years. In July, a town clerk from the Cernauti district received a prison sentence of five years for mistreating and robbing 150 Jews in a concentration camp. The former assistant police chief of Gura Humora was sentenced for three years for a similar crime. Two army officers were sentenced to hard labor for life for having exterminated fifty Jews, the whole Jewish population of Hancesti, Moldavia. In another case, three officers were sentenced to twenty, ten, and ten years respectively for the mass murder of Jewish civilians.

On the other hand, according to a report published in the New York *Jewish Morning Journal*, Ian Popescu, a notorious anti-Semitic priest who had turned Communist, was appointed secretary of the Ministry of Education. Popescu had participated in the Jassy massacre, leading the mob which roamed the Jewish quarter and killed many of its inhabitants.

Liquidation and Gleichschaltung of Jewish Organizations

During the first postwar years, Rumanian Jewry had an extensive net of communal organizations of all kinds. In addition to the *kehillot*, with their central Federation of Jewish Religious Communities, there were: the Union of Rumanian Jews, a defense organization with a long tradition; the Jewish party, which had been founded in 1931 and had at one time been represented by five deputies in Parliament; a powerful Zionist organization, with all Zionist parties represented and a postwar membership estimated at 130,000; and, finally, the Jewish Democratic Committee, with provincial and local branches all over the country, which was led by Communists but had strong Zionist factions in its ranks and leadership.

In November, 1947, William Filderman, the well-known leader of Rumanian Jews, was forced to resign from the chairmanship of the Union of Rumanian Jews, which he had headed since World War I, as well as from the presidency of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities. A conference of Jewish organizations, at which the Union of Rumanian Jews was absent, adopted a resolution demanding the dissolution of the kehilla boards and the "appointment of new boards elected according to democratic principles." The resolution charged that the previous boards had included members of the Rumanian opposition parties, the National Peasants and the National Liberals. In February, 1948, the government dissolved the board of the Federation of Religious Communities and a new board was "inducted" without the benefit of an election. The Communist H. Serban Leibovici became Secretary-General of the Federation. The chief rabbi, Alexander Shafran, had to flee to Switzerland; and Moses Rosen, a pro-Communist, became the Chief Rabbi.

The Union of Rumanian Jews was forced to re-unite with a left-wing post-war splinter, the Democratic Rumanian Jewish Union. The leader of this group, the Communist M. A. Saraceanu, became one of the two co-presidents

of the united organization. But in November, 1948, the Union was forced to "disband voluntarily" because "its goal has been achieved."

The Jewish party had already been "voluntarily dissolved" in December, 1947.

LIQUIDATION OF ZIONIST ORGANIZATIONS

At the end of 1948, a violent political offensive started against all Zionist organizations with the avowed purpose of liquidating them and eliminating all Zionist influences from Jewish life. The offensive ended with the dissolution of all Zionist organizations and agencies as well as of all local branches of foreign relief organizations. At the same time, all Zionist and pro-Zionist members were purged from the leadership of the Jewish religious communities and from the branches of the Jewish Democratic Committee.

In November, 1948, a police raid was made on the offices of the Jewish National Fund and of the Palestine Foundation Fund. Four managers were arrested on charges of "valuta blackmarketeering" and held incommunicado. Among them was the veteran Zionist leader Leon Itzcar; the others were Solomon Rosenhaupt, Enciu Cohen, and Michel Leiba. *Unirea*, the organ of the Democratic Jewish Committee, started a violent campaign against the Zionists as "blackmarketeers," "disrupters of the socialist economy," and "saboteurs of socialist construction."

Early in December, 1948, the Communists forcibly occupied the headquarters of Zionist organizations and Zionist clubs throughout the country. Groups of Communists also broke into the offices which had been previously closed by the police, smashed the windows, and tore down the pictures of Israeli leaders. Among the organizations affected were the Palestine Office (Jewish Agency), the Jewish National Fund and the Palestine Foundation Fund, Poale Zion, Chovevei Zion, Mizrachi, Tarbut, the Zionist Youth, the Zionist Women's Organization, the B'nai Akiba and the B'nai B'rith. When the Zionist youth rallied and tried to reoccupy the offices, a number of clashes occurred in which several persons were injured. The police intervened only when the Zionists succeeded in regaining about a half of the lost offices. Then a "truce" was imposed on the parties and the decision was left to the Rumanian police authorities. The clashes occurred in Bucharest as well as in the provinces.

On December 15, 1948, the *Unirea* published a resolution of the Political Bureau of the Rumanian Workers' (Communist) party which condemned Zionism and Jewish nationalism as reactionary bourgeois trends and called on Jewish Democratic Committees and other Jewish organizations to purge themselves of Zionists. A violent official campaign against Zionism started; in numerous articles, speeches, and demonstrations, Zionists were denounced as reactionaries, counter-revolutionaries, and agents of Western imperialism.

On December 23, 1948, the Central Board of the Zionist Organization decided to suspend all activities. It appointed a special committee to notify the affiliated groups throughout the country. Each group was to decide whether it would disband "voluntarily" or try to continue its activities as an independent organization. By the beginning of January, 1949, the General Zionists, Mapai, Haeved Hazoni, Mizrachi and the student group Hasmona

had disbanded. The Hechalutz movement needed several more weeks to liquidate its assets. The left-wing Zionist Mapam reduced its activities to a minimum and finally had to disband, too.

In a conference of Jewish Democratic Committees on January 9 and 10, 1949, the Communist deputy Bercu Feldman demanded a merciless fight against Zionism in order to liquidate completely any Zionist influence in Jewish life. He warned his listeners against completely accepting the "voluntary" liquidation of Zionist bodies, because "the enemies of the working class never give up their positions of their own free will." This warning was subsequently repeated several times and some Jewish Communists were reprimanded for lack of vigilance in contending against Zionist influences.

In February, 1949, it was announced that the regional Jewish Democratic Committees of Galati, Timisoara, and Constanta had been completely replaced because they failed to carry out the anti-Zionist measures as thoroughly as had been expected.

LIQUIDATION OF OTHER COMMUNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Next to be liquidated were Jewish relief and social organizations. At the beginning of March, 1949, the government dissolved the religious burial society Chevra Kaddisha. On March 7, 1949, the Bucharest branch of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was closed. The ORT and OSE offices followed several days later. The government decided to dissolve all foreign Jewish relief organizations and to transmit their assets to the Communist-dominated Federation of Jewish Religious Communities. In April, 1949, 256 Jewish charity institutions, such as orphanages, children's homes, etc., were nationalized. Nineteen Jewish hospitals had been taken over before the general decree.

Educational and Cultural Life

In June, 1948, there were in Rumania, according to Laurentiu Cziko, a high official of the Ministry of Education, 69 Yiddish elementary and 23 high schools with more than 1,000 teachers and 13,000 pupils. Cziko declared that the government was pursuing a policy of developing the schools of national minorities. Their teachers were to have civil service status and receive the same salaries and pensions as teachers in other state schools. The curriculum would be the same as in Rumanian public schools, but instruction would be offered in the minority language. But in August, 1949, all the Jewish schools were taken over by the state, which declared that any resistance to that measure would be punishable as sabotage.

After the summer vacation, not a single school with Yiddish as the language of instruction was reopened. But the promise was made that courses in Yiddish language and literature would be introduced into those Rumanian schools 20 per cent of whose enrollment was Jewish, and where Jewish parents demanded Yiddish instruction for their children.

In January, 1949, it was announced that four Yiddish schools would be reopened. At the beginning of March, 1949, two were opened in Bucharest and Timisoara, a third in Jassy, shortly afterward. These three schools were

all that remained of sixty-nine elementary and twenty-three high schools in existence in 1948. In addition, forty Yiddish courses were given in Rumanian schools, according to official reports in July, 1949. These reports stated that "7,000 students are studying Yiddish." Private Jewish reports gave the number of pupils as 970: 400 in Bucharest, 320 in Jassy, and 250 in Timisoara. The discrepancy is probably due to the fact that the official figure included Jewish students of Rumanian schools which had courses in the Yiddish language, while the private figures referred to students in the three Jewish schools.

At the opening of the Bucharest Yiddish school, the official speaker declared that the Yiddish schools would teach their pupils Rumanian patriotism and "will wipe out the bourgeois mentality of Zionism which is unfortunately widespread among the Jewish youth." He also declared that the opening of the school proved that for the first time in Rumanian history the Jews were being accorded equal rights.

At the end of the period under review, there were three Jewish newspapers, one in Yiddish, one in Rumanian, and one in Hungarian, all directed by Communists and serving the aims of anti-Zionist and anti-nationalist propaganda. There were also weekly Yiddish broadcasts of a similar character.

There were Yiddish-language theaters in Bucharest and Jassy, and a number of amateur Jewish theater societies, choirs, etc. The first annual report of the Bucharest theater, issued in August, 1949, stressed that the theater "fought for the unmasking of Zionist nationalism" and that the character of the audiences had changed from "bourgeois and petty-bourgeois" to "working class."

In April, 1949, a conference of Yiddish writers was held in Bucharest in order to mobilize them "to combat Zionist, nationalist, and reactionary tendencies in Yiddish literature." Henceforth, the Yiddish writer Wolf Tambur announced, their work would be inspired by the new socialist life. Soon afterwards, in an article in the Rumanian literary journal *Contemporanul*, T. Faerstein strongly criticized Yiddish writers for "lack of consistency in the merciless fight against any nationalist tendency and against all mystical and bigoted trends." Jacob Gropper, the president of the Yiddish Writers' Association, was attacked for poems depicting Jewish sufferings, because "he did not see the democratic fighters, the non-Jewish partisans who fraternize with the suffering [*sic*] of the Jews." Even Wolf Tambur did not escape censure; although he wrote a novel about a Communist heroine, he "failed to show the typical qualities of a party member."

In May, 1949, the Democratic Jewish Committee banned the works of eighteen "reactionary, nationalist" Jewish writers from public libraries. Among them were Isaac Meier Dick, David Pinsky, H. Leivick, Z. Segalowich, and other Zionist and Bundist authors. After the disappearance of several Russian Yiddish writers, the Yiddish theater in Bucharest dropped the plays of two of them, Peretz Markish and David Bergelson.

Religious Life

Freedom of religion was guaranteed by the new constitution but the "misuse" of this freedom for anti-government purposes was considered a crime.

A law promulgated in 1948 reorganized the churches and religious communities. All denominations except the Rumanian Orthodox Church were ordered to seek renewed state recognition. The law provided that all church officials had to be Rumanian citizens and swear allegiance to the People's Republic. Major religious officials had to be confirmed by the state. The religious communities were only allowed to communicate with foreign communities of the same denomination through the Ministries of Religion and of Foreign Affairs.

New by-laws of the Jewish religious communities promulgated by the government in July, 1949, provided for the merger of all Jewish communities in each city or town into one organization. This meant that the Sephardic, Orthodox, and other groups were unified. Only the rabbis of the unified communities were allowed to perform religious rites.

The religious communities were permitted to continue their activities under Communist leadership. Previous to 1949, religious services had not been disturbed, but during 1948-49 instances of interference with religious life and customs became frequent. During Passover, 1949, many aged Jews were forced to go hungry because Passover food was distributed only to those who could present working cards issued by nationalized enterprises. Furthermore, the state being practically the only employer, Orthodox Jews could not work in enterprises where the Sabbath was observed. Rabbi Yehoshua Aaron Gross, who prepared lists of Orthodox Jews for the purpose of petitioning the government to organize employment facilities for Sabbath observers, was arrested on the charge of engaging in subversive activities. Special taxes were introduced on religious rituals and ceremonies such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, and circumcisions performed in Jewish homes. In many instances, the authorities charged religious groups with misusing religious ceremonies for political purposes. In one case twenty-eight persons, including the bride and the groom, were arrested and sentenced to prison terms for singing *Hatikvah* at a Jewish wedding. The Chief Rabbi of Timisoara was arrested for concluding his sermon with the traditional prayer ". . . and may the Redeemer come unto Zion." Although suffering from sickness, he was kept under arrest and interrogated. The Chief Rabbi died several days after he was released from prison.

An anti-religious Jewish organization was founded under the leadership of the Communist Marcel Fischer. It issued a new "catechism" of how to fight religious ideologies. Young Communists were instructed to enter synagogues, bareheaded, to sing the Rumanian national anthem, and to force the congregations to join them. As a result, many Jews, fearing reprisals, stopped attending synagogues.

Some Orthodox children's homes were abolished, some still existed at the time of writing. Attempts were made to force Orthodox children to move to Communist orphanages, first by cutting off their food supplies, and then, by direct command. The children, most of whom were undernourished survivors of Nazi concentration camps, resisted the blockade and finally dispersed to Orthodox homes or wandered around hungry. A number of Orthodox Jews were being sought by the police because of their support of the children's resistance.

Emigration

Until the end of 1948, emigration to Israel was permitted, although in many cases tremendous sums were exacted for the issuance of passport and exit visas. At the end of 1948, the Communist-controlled community organs insisted on their exclusive right to select and to register prospective emigrants and to exclude Zionist or pro-Zionist organizations from participation. In January, 1949, the government permitted 3,600 of those who registered with the Communists to emigrate, and then stopped further emigration. At that time, all Zionist organizations were dissolved and the *halutz* farms closed. Propaganda for emigration was considered treasonable, and all Zionist emigration activities were practically outlawed.

On February 11-13, 1949, rumors were spread in Bucharest that the Israeli legation was conducting large-scale registration of applicants for emigration. Thousands of Jews jammed the street around the building and applications were handed in by the basketful. Applicants appeared even on Saturday when the office was closed, and threw their appeals through the gates. Legation officials, however, explained that no mass registration was planned and that they could not explain the origin of the rumors. On February 14, 1949, a spontaneous demonstration by an estimated 10,000 Jews took place in the streets near the legation. Crowds gathered to celebrate the opening of the Israeli Constituent Assembly and to demand free emigration; they danced in the streets and shouted "Long live Israel!" and "Aliyah!" On February 17, 1949, rumors again circulated that 100,000 Jews would be allowed to emigrate. Several thousand Jews gathered in front of the legation. The crowd shouted for emigration papers.

Unirea charged that the Zionists were spreading false rumors about Israeli visas in order to "hamper the consolidation of people's democracy" and the Communist deputy Bercu Feldman attacked the demonstration as a "provocation." Seven Israeli citizens, who had come to Rumania to help organize the emigration, were arrested on vague charges of "plotting against the state security." They were released at the beginning of April, 1949, after several diplomatic interventions of Israeli representatives, but had to leave the country. Leon Itzcar and Enciu Cohen, leaders of the Zionist organizations, who had been held in prison from October, 1948, to May, 1949, were sentenced to four months in jail each for "violating currency and tax regulations" in connection with fund-raising and emigration activities.

The emigration ban was in force throughout the first half of 1949, with some minor exceptions. On July 18, Israeli Foreign Minister Sharett revealed in the Knesset that the Israeli government had sent a note to Rumania asking free exit for Rumanian Jews, but had not received an answer. The Israeli representative in Bucharest was instructed to open negotiations on the subject, but no result was achieved. At the end of August, 1949, the Israeli government decided to recall its Bucharest minister, Reuven Rubin, for consultation, and to leave the legation in the hands of a *chargé d'affaires*. This was considered a demonstration against the negative attitude of the Rumanian government, as well as against the prolonged absence of the already appointed

Rumanian minister from Tel Aviv. (The Rumanian legation in Israel was administered for many months by the chargé d'affaires, Paul Davidovici, a violent anti-Zionist.) New negotiations were launched at the beginning of September, 1949, when Shmuel Eliashev, director of the Eastern European Division of the Israeli Foreign Office, arrived in Bucharest on a tour of Eastern European capitals, but the result was not known at the time of this writing.

Illegal emigration, which had been proceeding on a large scale via Hungary to the DP camps in Austria previous to 1947, was made extremely difficult by the severe police measures of Rumanian and Hungarian authorities. The gendarmerie at the Transylvanian border received orders to shoot at emigrants, a number of whom were killed or wounded attempting to cross the frontier. The Hungarian government deported emigrants caught in Hungary back to Rumania, where they were sentenced to heavy prison terms. The dissolution of Zionist organizations in Hungary and the persecution following the Budapest trial of Zionist leaders accused of aiding illegal emigration contributed to the effective closing of this avenue of escape.

JOSEPH GORDON

BULGARIA

THE LAST remnants of legal opposition in Bulgaria were suppressed in 1947 and 1948. The largest independent group, the Peasant party, was liquidated and its leader, Nikola Petkov, executed in August, 1947; a series of trials against former leaders of the party extended until April, 1948, when deputy D. Gichev was sentenced to prison for life, and twenty-five other former officials of the party received long prison terms. The liquidation of the independent Social Democrats and the trial of their secretary-general, deputy Kosta Lulchev, followed in November, 1948. Kosta Lulchev and some of his colleagues were sentenced to prison for life; with them, the last opposition members disappeared from parliament. In the meantime, the "Fatherland Front" was transformed from a coalition of parties into a unified organization under tight Communist control (February, 1948); the pro-Communist wing of the Social Democrats was compelled to merge with the Communist party (August, 1948); and finally, all political parties except the Communists and the Communist-front Agrarian Union were forced to disband (February-March, 1949). Within the Communist party, a large-scale purge of "unreliable" and "nationalist" elements began after the party congress of December, 1948. It reached its climax in the dramatic expulsion from the Politburo of the Vice-Premier and Minister of Economy Traicho Kostov in March, 1949. In June, 1949, Kostov was expelled from the party and jailed. One of the major accusations lodged against him was that he tried "to sow distrust" between the Bulgarian and Soviet Communist parties and to misuse the authority of Premier Georgi Dimitrov for this purpose. At about the same time, Premier Dimitrov went to the Soviet Union to cure his illness; he died there on July 2, 1949. Vasil Kolarov became his successor as Premier and leader of the Communist party.

Simultaneously, new legislation and a series of police measures prepared the

Gleichschaltung of churches and religious communities. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, purged of independent elements, was made an instrument of state policy. A new church law, promulgated in February, 1949, decreed that churches with headquarters outside Bulgaria were forbidden to have missions, orders, or charitable institutions in the country; that religious communities in Bulgaria could maintain relations with analogous communities abroad only through the Foreign Ministry; and that clergymen would have to obtain confirmation by the state authorities to perform their duties. At the beginning of 1949, fifteen Protestant ministers were indicted on charges of "espionage" and "conspiring" with "foreign imperialists." After a public trial in which the defendants confessed to all the alleged crimes, four of them were sentenced to hard labor for life and nine others received prison terms ranging up to fifteen years.

In the field of economy, the private sector in industry and commerce was virtually eliminated by the nationalization laws of 1947 and 1948. Only state enterprises and state-controlled cooperatives remained in urban economic life. But the land remained in the hands of the peasants. Although harassed by attempts to force collectivization and by requisitions of their produce, the peasants, who constituted a majority of the population, resisted tenaciously, though passively, and forced the Communist party to order a partial retreat. At a Central Committee session in June, 1949, the Communists condemned the excesses committed by "local Communists" in the villages, and decided to reduce the tempo of collectivization to permit the peasants to sell their surplus produce on the free market, after delivery of their quotas to the state, and to raise the price of grain.

Jewish Population

Bulgaria was the only country under German domination where the Jewish community escaped total extermination. There had been 48,000 Jews in 1934 according to the last prewar census; after the war, a census taken by the Jewish Central Consistory reported 49,172 Jewish inhabitants, with 56.3 per cent of them residing in Sofia and constituting 3 per cent of its total postwar population; 77 per cent of all Bulgarian Jews were concentrated in seven large communities. Thus, the Bulgarian Jewish community had survived the war with only a small numerical loss, which seemed to have been more than compensated by a natural increase and probably by an influx of refugees fleeing other Balkan countries.

Economic Conditions

The emigration of almost the entire Jewish population could be explained in part by the strong Zionist tradition of Bulgarian Jewry, but it was also an outgrowth of postwar economic and social conditions. While Bulgarian Jewry was not exterminated during the war, it was expropriated and completely impoverished under the pro-Nazi regime. As in other Iron Curtain countries, the postwar restitution laws remained mainly on paper, and a large part of the Jewish population was forced to live in poverty, surviving only with the

help of international Jewish relief organizations. The hope of former businessmen and employees to find a new existence in private enterprise, whose preservation was promised by the early postwar administrations, was crushed by the new wave of nationalization in 1947-48. Mass unemployment among the Jewish people resulted. Although some attempts were made to reintegrate the economically displaced Jews into the new economy with the financial help of Jewish organizations abroad, only a small part of the community was affected. At the end of 1947 there were 26 Jewish producers' cooperatives, financed by the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), with 657 members, and 3 more cooperatives with a preponderantly Jewish membership among their 130 members. Even in the JDC-supported cooperatives not all the members were Jews and, according to some sources, the proportion of non-Jews was close to 50 per cent. In September, 1948, when a representative of the JDC came to Sofia, the total number of Jewish cooperatives was reported to be 38; but only 20 were able to present somewhat brief reports at a conference called for that purpose. The number of their members was not mentioned at that time, but at the end of 1948 it was estimated at about 1,400 (Jews and non-Jews). In any event, the cooperatives helped only a minor part of the Jewish population.

No statistics were available on the absorption of Jews in government and public administration jobs, except for a rather unreliable report of the Sofia community in May, 1947. This report recorded 6 to 7 per cent of the employable Jewish population as state or public employees, representing a definite increase in percentage compared with the prewar years when the number of Jews in public service was negligible. But when the tremendous increase in the number of "public" as against private jobs is taken into account, the increase was not so considerable and certainly could not solve the problem of the economically displaced Jewish population. Thus, Bulgarian Jewry, driven from its traditional place in the economy by Nazi expropriation and unable to resume it because of the postwar economic transformations, remained an impoverished mass and eventually found the only solution of its economic problems in emigration.

Communal Life

After the war the religious communities were reconstituted under Communist leadership. At the same time, the Central Jewish Committee of the Fatherland Front was formed to direct the political and cultural life of the Jewish minority. The Zionist movement had the sympathies of the great majority of Bulgarian Jews. It reported an active membership of 13,000 in 1946, who represented, with their families, about 75 per cent of all the Jews in Bulgaria. In May, 1946, the Zionists were induced to join the Jewish Committee of the Fatherland Front under an agreement assuring parity representation in the leadership. As a matter of fact, with the help of some "sympathizers" the Communists had a majority in the leading organs, and the Jewish Committee of the Fatherland Front as well as the religious communities were forced to follow the Communist line in all important matters of internal and foreign policy. The religious communities were obliged to participate

in election campaigns and in the fight for the elimination of the opposition parties; to refuse the international guarantee of minority rights in the peace treaties; and to accept the *Gleichschaltung* of Jewish schools along with the abolition of the elaborate system of Hebrew education which had existed in Bulgaria for decades.

Education

In 1939, there were fifteen Jewish kindergartens, twenty-five primary schools, fifteen Sabbath schools, and five junior high schools, totaling about 3,800 pupils. Maintained by the Jewish communities, these institutions used Hebrew as the language of instruction. Only the Bulgarian language, literature, and history were taught in Bulgarian.

Reopened after the war, the schools were nationalized at the end of 1946. Bulgarian was made the language of instruction for all subjects except Jewish history and Hebrew. Subsequently, Jewish history was ordered taught in Bulgarian and within the framework of general history. Thus, the schools of the Jewish minority, in administration, curriculum, and ideology, were treated as all other Bulgarian schools, but with only two differences: Hebrew was taught as a foreign language, and special care was taken to fight Zionism and Jewish nationalism. In January, 1947, there were Jewish elementary schools of this type in twelve communities and Jewish junior high schools in four communities, with a total of 1,700 students.

Religion

A decision to separate the synagogue from the Jewish community was adopted at the third conference of Jewish communities in May, 1948. The communities were ordered to stop the financial support of religious institutions, which thereafter were to be supported by the voluntary contributions of observant Jews.

At the same conference it was decided, over Zionist protests, that the Jews were to have only one press organ, the weekly *Evreiski Vesti*, under the complete control of the Communists. The two Zionist weeklies, *Tsionisticheska Tribuna* and *Poale Tsion*, were ordered to cease publication. For a time, they maintained a precarious existence as "internal bulletins" for members of their respective organizations only. But they became the targets of sharp attacks for their "reactionary" and "nationalist" policies, and finally ceased publication.

The Jewish Committee of the Fatherland Front was reorganized into a Jewish subcommittee of the Minority Commission of the Fatherland Front, with appointed members and a purely advisory function. But the Central Consistory, which directed the religious communities, was retained even after the mass emigration at the end of 1948, its "representation" of Bulgarian Jews outside the country being among the reasons offered. In July, 1949, the Central Consistory decided to sever relations with the World Jewish Congress (WJC) because of the "reactionary and pro-Zionist activities" of the WJC leadership and for its refusal to participate in the Communist-organized

"World Congress of Partisans of Peace" held in Paris during the preceding April.

Emigration

During the early postwar period, the Communist leadership of Jewish organizations repeatedly declared that Bulgarian Jews did not wish to emigrate. Emigration was discouraged and made difficult in many ways. With the change in Russian policy on the Palestinian question in 1947 came a change in the official Bulgarian attitude toward emigration. The official Jewish press defended the right of "Jews, who are persecuted by reactionary regimes [to emigrate] to their Fatherland, the independent and democratic Palestine," and even encouraged "active, fighting elements" to go to Israel from the progressive Peoples' Democracies, to fight against the "feudal Arab rulers and their masters, the Anglo-American imperialists."

The Jewish Communists tried to control the flow as well as the composition of emigration, and illegal emigrants were severely punished. In the Spring of 1947 three Jewish youths who tried to cross the Turkish border on their way to Israel were killed by Bulgarian frontier guards, while several others who were captured were sentenced to hard labor. The Jewish communities were forced to declare their agreement with these severe punishments.

Not until October, 1948, did the Bulgarian government agree to permit mass emigration. Transport priorities were continued for young people who were to fight in Israel, yet in principle all Jews were free to leave. The Bulgarian government reserved only the right to hold back such specialists as doctors, nurses, engineers, and technicians. Some 10,000 Jews left for Israel during October, 1948, the first month of the new policy. Some 37,000 Jews in all left the country, according to reports by the Bulgarian communities, 41,000 according to the JDC which paid for the transportation. In closing its office in Sofia in May, 1949, the JDC announced that "less than 4,000 Jews remain in Bulgaria, out of a postwar population of 48,000, while all but 1,000 of those still remaining plan to leave." Organized Jewish communities continued to exist in Sofia, Plovdiv, Russe, Yambol, Burgas, and other towns. In July, 1949, the mass exodus was considered finished, although there were reports that additional groups of about fifty persons might still be leaving periodically.

JOSEPH GORDON

YUGOSLAVIA

THE YEAR under review was the year of the split between the Yugoslav government and the Soviet bloc. It was full of dramatic developments and violent Russian political attacks against "Titoism"—from the famous Cominform resolution in June, 1948, to the denunciation of the Soviet-Yugoslav treaty of friendship in September, 1949. When the general anti-Zionist campaign started in Russia and her satellite countries at the end of 1948, Yugoslavia was already outside of the Cominform bloc.

Of the prewar Jewish population of more than 80,000, only 11,000 survived

the war and Nazi extermination. Some Jewish religious communities were reconstructed after the war; their central body, the Association of Jewish Religious Communities in Yugoslavia, resumed its activities under Communist control.

Immediately after the liberation, the prospects of the survivors were considered favorable; many of them had fought with the partisans, and it was expected that they would be able to participate fully in Yugoslav national life. In April, 1946, the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Problems of Jews in Europe and Palestine reported that there was no evidence of discrimination, and that the majority of the survivors wanted to stay in Yugoslavia. According to the report, only 2,750 of the 11,000 Jews wished to emigrate to Palestine, and 550 to other countries, chiefly to the United States.

But at the end of 1948, when the Yugoslav government permitted mass emigration to Israel, a great majority of the remaining Jews decided to leave the country. About 4,100 emigrants left for Israel in December, 1948; 3,000 followed in July and August, 1949; and 2,000 more were expected to leave in the Fall of 1949. Only 2,000 Jews were expected to stay in Yugoslavia, most of them specialists (doctors, technicians, engineers), who did not get exit permits, and a small number of those who wished to stay. The emigrants were allowed to take with them their personal belongings, including furniture and jewelry, but their houses and land were taken over by the government, without compensation.

Although the Yugoslav government had been the only Eastern-European government which did not support the partition of Palestine (probably in order to appease the Moslem minority in Yugoslavia), it recognized Israel on May 19, 1948, sent a Minister to Tel Aviv (July, 1949), and maintained friendly relations with the Israeli government.

JOSEPH GORDON