Preface

The year under review in this volume was notable for a number of dramatic and significant events of Jewish interest having world-wide repercussions. Chief among these, of course, was the anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet sphere of Europe, which reached its climax during the period from November 1952 to April 1953. The major events in this campaign were the public trials and execution of Rudolf Slánský and other Czech Communists, the attacks on Jewish leaders in Eastern Germany, resulting in their flight to the West; the arrests and deportation of Hungarian Jews; the accusations against the Jewish doctors in the Soviet Union, and the ensuing nation-wide anti-Jewish propaganda in that country which ceased in April after the public reversal of the charges against the doctors.

The summaries of these events, prepared by outstanding authorities on Eastern Europe, are based on a thorough, first-hand knowledge of the countries and careful study of the East European press, supplemented wherever possible by interviews with escapees from behind the Iron Curtain. They are the most authoritative and reliable condensed summaries of the situation appearing in any publication. In addition, the world-wide repercussions of the events are discussed in the reviews of the other countries; the United States reaction is the subject of a special article.

Other overseas topics which aroused great interest during the year are the Finaly case in France, the Naumann episode in Western Germany, the negotiations with Austria on the Jewish restitution claims, and the situation in Israel and the Middle East. All of these are treated by outstanding foreign correspondents or native observers in reports prepared especially for the Year Book. Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify all of them as some have requested that their contributions remain anonymous.

In the United States, the articles for the most part review the normal range of activities of interest to American Jewry in the civic and communal fields. One exception is the article on the reaction to Soviet anti-Semitism, already noted. In the field of statistics the present volume presents a list of current estimates of the Jewish population in communities of the United States having 100 Jews or more. This list is the second revision of the compilation of estimates originally published in the American Jewish Year Book, 1949 [Vol. 50], and subsequently revised for the Year Book, 1951 [Vol. 52]. Included in the figures is a modified estimate of the Jewish population of New York City, by boroughs. In addition, a special effort was made to compile information on the growth of the Jewish population of the New York suburban area, by means of a questionnaire addressed to rabbis and other communal leaders in the suburban communities on Long Island, in Westchester
County, N. Y., and in Northern New Jersey. Budgetary restrictions made it impossible to extend this practice to the suburban areas of other large cities, but it is hoped to do this in future years.

This list is accompanied by an explanatory article prepared by Alvin Chenkin of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and Ben B. Seligman, author of previous articles on this subject in the *Year Book*. The article sets forth the methodology, problems, and limitations of the study. It emphasizes anew the serious gaps in our knowledge of American Jewish demography and the great need to provide adequate resources for securing reliable information.

The editors regret that two additional features, originally scheduled to appear in this volume, are omitted. One is an article on Jewish education, which has been reviewed annually in this series for over a decade. It has been omitted on the advice of the *Year Book*’s consultants on the subject pending the completion of the three-year survey of Jewish education in New York City being conducted by the Jewish Education Committee of New York. The other is an article on Jewish youth-serving programs and the Jewish center movement, which failed to appear for reasons entirely outside the control of the Editors. It is planned to review these topics in future volumes.

During the year covered by this volume world Jewry suffered the loss of the great Zionist statesman and the first president of Israel, Dr. Chaim Weizmann. The *Year Book* is honored to present a brief biographical appreciation of Dr. Weizmann from the pen of Harry Sacher of Great Britain, his long-time associate in the Zionist movement.

The Editors again wish to thank their colleagues on the *Year Book* staff, Miss Dora Cohen and Mrs. Stella Ettlinger, for their splendid collaboration. They are also pleased to acknowledge the editorial services of Maurice Goldbloom and the proofreading aid of Mrs. Freda Imrey.

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