Eastern Europe

Soviet Union

During the period under review the team of First Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Premier Alexei Kosygin continued to control the party and the state. At the 23rd party congress, held in Moscow at the end of March 1966, it was decided that the ruling party presidium be renamed Politburo, as it was known under Stalin, and that the title first secretary be changed to general secretary, the title held by Stalin. Party spokesman Nikolai Yegorichev stated that the return to the old terminology did not mean a return to Stalinism. In addition to Brezhnev and Kosygin, the top members of the ruling group were Nikolai Podgorny, Mikhail Suslov, Genady Voronov, Andrei Kirilenko, and Aleksander Shelepin. There was no indication of stress within the collective leadership. On the contrary, one may assume, on the basis of available information, that the structure of the Soviet power system and methods of state management were very much in line with the policy pursued since Brezhnev's and Kosygin's accession to power in October 1964.

There was ever-increasing reliance on technical experts and on efficiently conducted, businesslike procedures. Both Pravda and Izvestia in Moscow and the local press elsewhere emphasized the achievement of well-run and profit-oriented enterprises as an important socialist goal. While the party apparatus doubtless retained general control of the state bureaucracy, evidence pointed to the growing importance of scientists and other experts in decision-making processes. In fact, there was emerging in the Soviet Union, as in the West, a new power elite of scientists and experts in many fields, whose special knowledge was needed for the development of Soviet technology. Again and again the press acknowledged this fact, and indicated that the party could not “control the activities of the administration of research institutes in the so-called academic or theoretical category” without risking a repetition of the Lysenko-type situation that created such havoc in Soviet biology.* Moreover, speaking to the 23rd party congress, Brezhnev criticized the interference of local Communist party officials with the work of state

* Trofim Lysenko developed the anti-Mendelian theory that acquired characteristics are hereditary.
and local institutions. At the same time, the Soviet press called for wider powers for the Supreme Soviet to permit deputies of both chambers to examine and debate various government proposals.

While the Brezhnev-Kosygin team did nothing to change the continuing process of “liberalization,” Soviet authorities, in February 1966, brought to trial two Soviet writers, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, on the charge that they had published anti-Soviet writings abroad under the pseudonyms Abram Tertz and Nikolai Arzhak (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 368). Both were sentenced to hard labor, Sinyavsky for a term of seven years and Daniel for five years. The sentences handed down by the supreme court provoked a protest movement among Western intellectuals, many of whom were associated with the Communist left. The noted French Communist poet Louis Aragon, denounced the trial, as did the Communist newspaper L'Unita in Rome, the Daily Worker in London, and many others. It was reported from Moscow that some Soviet writers and intellectuals objected to the official legal proceedings as violating the freedom of writers to choose the form and content of their works. As if to underline the importance of the independence of the writer, Aleksander Twardowsky, the well-known editor of the liberal Novy Mir, published a tribute to the late Anna Akhmatova, who had been bitterly attacked and silenced by Stalinist censorship. But, like Boris Pasterнак who had been a target of the Khrushchev regime, she remained a great example of upcoming Russian writers (Novy Mir, Moscow, #3, 1966).

In an effort to discredit the condemned writers further, Soviet propaganda branded them as antisemitic scribblers; this despite the fact that Daniel was a Jew and that both dealt with Jewish problems in some of their writings. Sinyavsky's The Trial Begins, a title apparently alluding to the infamous “doctors' plot,” centered on the case of the Jewish physician Rabinovitch, who was accused of performing an illegal abortion. While, for the time being, the trial seemed not to have affected the situation of Soviet writers, it was clear that the Kremlin rulers had decided to use the case, and more particularly the “smuggling” of the works abroad, to draw a line between “liberal ideas” considered permissible under Soviet conditions and actions and ideas falling into the category of criminal collusion with “enemies of the state.” In this connection it should be noted that the official Soviet press still referred to Kamenev, Zinoviev, and Rykov, colleagues of Lenin who had been liquidated by Stalin, as “enemies of the party” and “saboteurs” (Pravda, Moscow, November 18, 1966).

Economic Policies

The 23rd congress approved the guidelines of the new five-year plan (1966–1970) which technically should have gone into effect on January 1, 1966, when the preceding seven-year plan came to an end. While the party was discussing the new economic goals, it faced the perennial problem of ailing Soviet agriculture. The total 1965 grain crop was estimated at 120
According to available statistics, the rate of industrial production rose from 7.1 per cent in 1964 to 8.6 per cent in 1965. Unlike the ebullient Khrushchev, the present Soviet leadership showed caution in projecting goals for the next five-year period. In his report to the 23rd congress, Kosygin promised higher living standards and thorough-going reform of both industry and agriculture. He also promised higher wages for workers, lower prices of consumer goods, and, more important, a shorter work week. Kosygin predicted that, by the beginning of 1968, about one-third of employed labor would be working in enterprises based on incentive bonuses, profits, and a larger degree of autonomy for factory management.

Foreign Policy

Moscow continued its military assistance to North Vietnam, and Soviet propaganda used every possible channel to condemn American policy in Asia, and particularly in Vietnam. Soviet foreign policy, however, gave all indications that the Kremlin rulers were bent on the continuation of peaceful relations with the United States and the West European powers. In Tashkent, in January 1966, Kosygin acted as the successful mediator in the conflict between India and Pakistan, restoring peace to these warring members of the British Commonwealth. There was no doubt that the Soviet Union was deeply interested not only in establishing peace in a sensitive geographic area, but in trying to prevent a possible move by China which might be willing at an appropriate moment, to experiment with its theory of revolutionary war.

There were persistent reports during the period under review, of the movement of Soviet troops along the frontiers of China. These reports could not be verified; but, in January 1966, Brezhnev visited Ulan-Bator and concluded a 20-year mutual-assistance pact with Mongolia, the major area of confrontation between Moscow and Peking. After the beginning of the “Mao cultural revolution” and the ensuing attacks on Soviet personnel in Peking, Soviet-Chinese relations reached a new level of open enmity. The Soviet leaders made it abundantly clear that border regions “created by the hands of our forefathers and covered with the sweat and blood of our people” would, if necessary, be defended by the USSR with every means at its disposal.

Jewish Community

The new climate of developing Russian nationalism and the continuing policy of Russification created many problems for the Jewish group. Under the pressure of new technological demands and in the total absence of any type of Jewish education, the tempo of assimilation rose visibly. Younger Jews were also faced with a new dilemma of choosing between the Russian language, the language of communication at the top and of the advanced technical establishment, and the local languages of the areas where they hap-
pened to live—the Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Georgia, among others. In many of the new republics the local inhabitants expected their Jewish minority to adopt the language of the area, which was used in the state-controlled enterprises. Available information seemed to indicate that the majority of young Soviet Jews were opting for the Russian language, in keeping with the traditional pattern of behavior in the various national districts of old Russia.

Population

The number of Jews in the Soviet Union at the end of 1966 was estimated at 2,543,000, or slightly more than 1 per cent of the total population of some 234,000,000. This estimate was based on the assumption that the natural increase of the Jewish population was the same as that of the general population: 17 per 1,000 in 1959, 1960, and 1961; 15 per 1,000 in 1962; 14 per 1,000 in 1963; 13 per 1,000 in 1964; 12 per 1,000 in 1965, and 11 per 1,000 in 1966.

Communal and Religious Life

There was no change in the general situation of the Soviet Jewish community. As before, Jewish religious and communal activities were discouraged. No Jewish welfare agencies or Jewish schools existed in the USSR. Local synagogues functioned around dvatzatkas, the formal associations required for opening houses of worship. There was no central Jewish organization to coordinate the work of rabbis or synagogue activities.

Altogether 97 synagogues existed in the Soviet Union (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 370). Although there were minyonim and shitlach in some places, it was obvious that the number of synagogues was inadequate for Soviet Jews. The Soviet authorities looked with disfavor on the synagogue not only because of the state's commitment to atheism, but also because the synagogue remained the most important, in fact the only place where Jews could meet as Jews for purposes of interest only to them. It was reported that the only remaining minyon in Minsk, which met in a private apartment, was closed in September 1966. The old prewar place of worship of the Chertkover Rebbe in Chertkov (Western Ukraine) had been converted into a restaurant. While the authorities have always had an eye on the composition of the dvatzatkas, they have of late increased efforts to control their membership by bringing in individuals with only a remote interest in religious activities. Direct government intervention in Jewish religious affairs occurred whenever it was deemed necessary. Thus, in the summer of 1966, the supervisor of religious cult dismissed Chaim Oks, a trustee (gabbai) of the Cherkisovo synagogue in Moscow. Shlomo Shapiro, head of the Dushanbe (Tadjikistan) synagogue was also dismissed. Similar measures were taken to eliminate “undesirable” elements in the Greek Orthodox Church. (In this connection it is interesting to note that, as part of the present opposition to the policy of accommodation pursued by the Greek Orthodox Church, some Jews who had converted
to Christianity now emphasized their "Jewishness." A leading role in the opposition was played by A. Levitin, one such convert who was a teacher by profession and, according to the atheistic journal *Nauka i Religia* [October 1966], wrote under the pen name Krasnov.

An interfaith delegation visiting Moscow in January 1966 reported that Chief Rabbi Judah Leib Levin was always closely watched when foreign visitors came to see him, and therefore in no position to speak freely. In their opinion, the plight of religious Jewry stemmed largely from "fear on the part of the Jewish leadership of reprisals." Although the promised 10,000 copies of a prayerbook have not been printed (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 370), Rabbi Levin again repeated in a June 1966 letter to Rabbi Bernard Poupko of Pittsburgh, "We hope, please God, that within several months the siddur will appear." Reliable observers, who had occasion to visit synagogues in the Soviet Union, reported that the continuing lack of prayerbooks, talletim, and phylacteries had made it impossible for many religious Jews to participate in religious services. From all indications it would appear that Soviet authorities have done nothing to relieve these shortages.

Rabbi Levin continued to deny reports that Moscow's Yeshivah Kol Jacob had been closed (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 370). Ephraim Kaplan, an administrator of the Moscow Central synagogue, stated that the yeshivah was again functioning, with a total enrolment of 14 students between the ages of 21 to 45, coming from Odessa, Kiev, Riga, Moscow, Georgia, and Bukhara. Only two were studying for the rabbinate; the others were preparing to become cantors and shohatim.

The 1965 relaxation of regulations governing the baking of matzot for Passover was extended in 1966; it was reported that Moscow Jews had enough matzot for the holidays, and that reasonable supplies were also available in Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and other centers. In the smaller cities the situation with regard to both supply and distribution was still unsatisfactory. In Moscow members of the foreign colony attended the seder at the Israel embassy, which was conducted by Israeli ambassador Katriel Katz. The Jews continued to experience difficulty with regard to burial in consecrated ground. Old cemeteries were being filled up, and Soviet authorities discouraged the establishment of new ones, forcing Jews to use mixed grounds.

Notwithstanding the clearly inimical attitude of the Soviet authorities and powerful social pressure, Jews appeared to be maintaining their attachment to Jewish religious traditions. Rabbis Z. Garkavi and A. Shauli published in 1965 in Israel a small volume, *Shomere ha-gahelet* ("Guardians of the Flame"), which contained responsa and theological essays from the Soviet Union and some of the satellite countries. While some of the material bore a necessarily Soviet stamp, it would seem that even under the existing difficult conditions religious Jews continued to ask their rabbis questions on religious laws, as they applied to their life in a Communist-dominated society.

P. A. Ulitzky, a Ukrainian Jew living in the small town of Korsun-Shev-
chenko, wrote to the Ukrainian atheist magazine *Ludina i Svit* (Kiev, April 1966) "defending the ethical teachings of the Torah." American tourists who spent Passover in the USSR stated that services were attended by large crowds. Thousands of Jews blocked the streets outside the Moscow Central synagogue during Rosh Ha-shanah and Yom Kippur services. Similar reports were received from Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, and many other cities. Among the Jewish worshipers were many young people who seemed to pay no attention to anti-religious propaganda and the outright social pressure of the Communist establishment.

**Antisemitism**

For many years the Jews were hardly mentioned by Soviet publications except in critical and even outright antisemitic presentations. Of late, there has been a noticeable change. While forays against the Jews in the Soviet press have not stopped, the Jew as an individual and Jewish life in general have become objects of genuine interest. At times, the subject Jew, which had heretofore been taboo, was treated openly and often with undisguised sympathy, and even friendliness. *Novy Mir* (#5, 1966), for example, carried a story by Lev Slavin, "Predvestyie Istiny" (Foreboding of Truth), about a Jewish family, rabbis, and Jewish workers. Whatever its literary merits, the story recalled the familiar style of pre-World War I Jewish-Russian magazines.

Other works of similar character appeared elsewhere, and *Babi-Yar* a documentary novel by Anatoly Kuznetzov, which originally appeared in the magazine *Yunost* (Youth; Moscow, #8, 9, 10), was later translated into English. The Western press misinterpreted the novel as furnishing proof that Babi-Yar was essentially a Jewish tragedy, in contradiction to the well-known statement by Khrushchev in his polemic against Evtushenko (AJYB, 1964 [Vol. 65], p. 274). While it is true that the author first showed a somewhat new attitude toward Jewish suffering in his compassionate description of the massacre of Kiev Jews, the latter parts of the book were obviously meant to support Khrushchev's contention that there was nothing specifically Jewish about the executions at Babi-Yar. An article by the Soviet sociologist J. Kon on "The Psychology of Prejudice" (*Novy Mir*, #9, 1966), also illustrated the more liberal treatment of Jewish subjects. While it dealt chiefly with American sociological research into prejudice, its frank treatment of the subject, which went beyond narrow Marxist interpretation, opened to the Soviet reader a completely new view of antisemitism, as understood by Western scholars.

At the same time, however, antisemitism continued to manifest itself in many ways. Both the local and central press continued to make use of anti-Jewish stereotypes. Journalists obviously exaggerated daily occurrences involving individuals with Jewish names by emphasizing their "anti-social behavior." Two such pieces appeared in *Pravda* (Moscow, June 19 and July
Although reports of so-called economic trials in which Jewish persons stood accused of various “economic” crimes have largely disappeared from the Soviet press, such items were published from time to time. One reported the death sentence imposed, in August, on a man named Rabinovitch for allegedly masterminding a ring of embezzlers (AJYB, 1964 [Vol. 65], p. 272).

The propaganda against the Jewish religion also had a peculiarly anti-Jewish tone. The well-publicized volume Religion in the History of the Peoples of the World by S. A. Tokarev (Moscow, 1965) emphasized the “reactionary, anti-democratic” meaning of the Old Testament and its adherents’ claim to superiority. Tokarev claimed that the Prophets fought for strict observance of the law, but did not protest against social injustice. He described Judaism as a religion full of bloodthirstiness and cruelty. The recently published anti-religious tract, Zakat Judeiskoi Religii (“The Twilight of Judaism”) by M. Shachnovitch (Moscow, 1965), criticized the cruder forms of anti-religious propaganda. The author took note of Western reaction to the books of Kichko and Mayatski, and devoted a special chapter to what he called “lies about persecution of Judaism in the Soviet Union” (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 371).

There were continuing signs of deep-seated prejudice against the Jews among both the people and the bureaucracy. Soviet Jewish students reported anti-Jewish feelings even among the younger generation. Reliable reports spoke of anti-Jewish acts by officials in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, such as the harassment of a Jewish milkman, who was arrested by local police on charges of diluting his milk with water and “forcibly” interrogated for many days, but who never acknowledged guilt of the crime with which he was charged. Foreign visitors to Kiev reported that local authorities interfered in many ways with Jews who were baking matzot for Passover. In Lvov, in the Western Ukraine, Jews also experienced many difficulties in their dealings with local authorities.

Discrimination

After the 23rd congress of the Communist party and the elections to the Supreme Soviet, it was obvious that the Kremlin rulers were continuing their policy of excluding Jews from top government and party positions. An interesting development of this congress was the substantial increase in non-Russian members of the Politburo. Moscow was giving much attention to the problems of the many nationalities in the Soviet Union, and the newly-elected Politburo included, in addition to Slavs, one member from Latvia (A. Pelshe), one from Kazakhstan (D. Kunaev), one from Georgia (V. Mzhavanadze), and one from Uzbekistan (Sh. Rashidov). Among the 195 members of the central committee of the party was one Jew, Benjamin E. Dimshitz, who was also a deputy premier and chairman of the State Committee for Material Technical Supplies. There were only five Jews among the
1,517 members of the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet. Benjamin E. Dimshitz (district of Chabarovsk) and Yuli Khariton (Gorki district) were in the union chamber; Rafael Khersonski (Birobidjan district), Ilya Ehrenburg (Birsky district in Bashkiria), and Aleksander Chakovski (Torber district of Moldavia) were in the nationalities chamber. It may be significant that among the Jewish Supreme Soviet members were two writers, Ehrenburg and Chakovski, who represented the so-called "liberal" and "reactionary" wings of Soviet literature, respectively. No Jews held top positions in the army or the diplomatic corps, and they had disappeared also from major policy-making posts. There were, of course, many Jews in the arts and sciences, but only because of their special talent or knowledge.

**Western Reaction to Soviet Antisemitism**

The plight of the Russian Jews and the failure of the authorities to take political steps to improve the situation were sharply condemned by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in Western countries. In July, 130 MPs of all parties in the British government signed a motion expressing their concern over "the continuing difficulties confronting Jews in the Soviet Union." Also, a group of leading British intellectuals, in a letter to the London *Times*, protested against the treatment of Soviet Jews. Lord Russell indicated that Jews in the Soviet Union were "still facing the problem of national survival." Twenty-five Jewish organizations in the United States united in the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, which held many special meetings protesting against the inequalities of which Soviet Jews were victims. The conference organized open air demonstrations in which a large number of Jewish congregations and synagogues participated. In May the Socialist International, at its world congress in Stockholm, unanimously adopted a resolution expressing regret over the deprivation of cultural and religious rights suffered by Jews in the USSR.

The obvious anti-Jewish policy of the Soviet Union was also condemned by some Western Communists. In an unprecedented act, the British Communist party made a public appeal to the Soviet Union on behalf of Russian Jewry. A statement issued by the party referred to "remnants of antisemitism against which there is, and must be, a continuous struggle." The Communist party of the United States also expressed concern about antisemitism in the Soviet Union. Rex Mortimer, a leading member of the Australian Communist party, stated that there had been "an inadequate response" by Soviet authorities to queries from abroad about the situation of the Jews. The Italian Jewish Communist Senator Umberto Terracini called upon Moscow to restore full rights to Soviet Jews. It should be noted that during the March 1966 United Nations debates on the draft convention eliminating religious intolerance, which called on all states to combat prejudices such as antisemitism, the Soviet Union abstained from voting after having noted its objection to all references to antisemitism.
Culture

On June 10 Soviet Weekly, organ of the Soviet embassy in London, reported on forthcoming developments in Soviet Jewish affairs. It revealed that a Yiddish school and a Yiddish theater were to be opened in Moscow, and that plans were under way to establish a Yiddish magazine in Kiev and to publish a Russian-Yiddish dictionary. This report, allegedly based on information received from the official Novosti agency, was later denied by its editor Solomon Rabinovitch, a well-known Soviet apologist. At this writing there was neither a Yiddish school nor a legitimate Yiddish theater in the USSR. While Aron Vergelis, editor of Sovietish Heymland and quasi-official spokesman for Jewish affairs, repeatedly declared that Soviet Jews were not interested in additional Jewish activities, Gershon Kenig, editor of the Communist Naye Presse in Paris, stated after a visit to the USSR that Soviet Jews showed strong national Jewish feelings and were eager to have a centralized Jewish organization that could provide for their needs. Despite many promises, only two new Yiddish books appeared in 1966: Trot fun doyres ("March of the Generations"), a novel by Peretz Markish, and Mayn Oytser ("My Treasure"), a volume of poems by Samuel Halkin. Since 1948, only fifteen books in Yiddish have been published in the Soviet Union.

While Soviet authorities did not promote Jewish cultural activities, the new, more permissive climate encouraged interested Jewish groups, writers' unions, and some specialized academic institutions to take important initiatives in this area. The 50th anniversary of the death of Sholem Aleichem was commemorated in many Soviet towns. Special meetings were held in Birobidjan (May 13), Czernovitz (May 16), Kiev (May 19), and Moscow (May 31). The Leningrad public library had a special Sholem Aleichem exhibit organized by Leib Wilsker, comprising some 180 items associated with the Yiddish writer. The Moscow Yiddish drama ensemble, under the direction of Benjamin Schwarger, presented eight performances of Sholem Aleichem's works. The state television agency in Kharkov, Krementchug, and Gomel presented Sholem Aleichem in Ukrainian translation. The city of Kiev, where Sholem Aleichem lived and wrote, named a street for him, as did Minsk and Odessa. The Melodia record factory issued two discs of Sholem Aleichem's Tevye der milkhiger ("Tevye the Milkman") read by the Yiddish actor Joseph Kolin.

Many academic bodies undertook projects in the field of Jewish studies. In connection with the 50th anniversary of the October revolution, the Academy of Science prepared a five-volume study of Soviet languages. Eliahu Falkovitch headed the study of Yiddish which, he maintained, was presently spoken by some four million persons throughout the world, including the USSR. At the second congress of Soviet semitologists in Tbilisi in June, two papers were presented on Hebrew and Yiddish. The Leningrad Institute for Theater and Music was in the process of arranging the archives of the late Moishe Beregovski on Yiddish folklore.
While the authorities obviously did not wish to establish a legitimate Yiddish theater, Yiddish revues, plays, and concerts were heard throughout the Soviet Union. The performances were staged by various art and music groups that have sprung up with the help of professional artists and amateurs. The best known were the Vilna Yiddish Drama Circle, the Leningrad Art Ensemble, the Czernovitz Art Ensemble, the Kovno Drama Ensemble, the Kishinev Drama Ensemble, the Moscow Drama Ensemble, and the recently organized Yiddish Art Ensemble of Tallin. Their repertoires included modern plays as well as Yiddish classics, including Goldfaden. Many Yiddish artists and singers, such as Sidi Tal, Nehamah Lifshitz, Dinah Roitkop, Mikhail Alexandrovitch, and the late Benjamin Chaitovski, attracted huge audiences that included also non-Jews. On Nehamah Lifshitz's program was a song about Babi-Yar which was particularly appreciated by her listeners. A new anthology of Yiddish songs, with original text, music, and Russian translation, was prepared by Aron Winkovitzki.

Sovetish Heymland continued to appear twelve times a year. Its content was broadened in 1966 to include more frequent reports on Jewish life abroad and more articles of historical and literary character. Issue No. 6 noted the death in Israel of Jacob Lestshinsky; No. 3 contained an appreciation of Nochem Stutchkov, and No. 2 reviewed the Yiddish exposition organized by the New York Yivo. In the course of his visit to London, in December, Vergelis mentioned a plan for the insertion of a special Russian-language section for those Jews who cannot read Yiddish. It was reported that the Birobidjaner Shtern, the only Yiddish newspaper in the Soviet Union, had increased its circulation from 1,000 to 12,000.

The Novosti agency in Moscow and the Yiddish publishing agency Yiddish Bukh in Warsaw announced a joint program of publication of books in Yiddish. Among the first books to be published was The October Revolution and Yiddish Literature, by Rivka Rubin and Hersh Remenik. Some two years ago the joint enterprise published Mashe Rolnick's volume, Ich muz dert-seylin ("I Must Tell It") (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 374).

Lev Penkovsky, the well-known Russian poet and translator, gave readings from his Russian translations of Yehuda Halevi at the Cultural House of Writers in Moscow; Mikhail Zand of the Institute of Eastern Studies discussed Halevi's works and importance.

The Jewish artists Mendel Gorshman and Meir Axelrod, whose works often depicted Jewish subjects, were represented at the Moscow exhibit of graphic art and painting in the fall of 1966. Sovetish Heymland recently printed reproductions of works by Soviet Jewish painters who specialized in Jewish art.

Five of the 19 scientists who were awarded Lenin prizes in 1966—Vitalyi Ginsburg, Samuel Reinberg, Vladimir Broude, Emanuel Rashba, and Evgenyi Gross—were Jews. In addition, ten Jews, Solomon Khazan, Benjamin Zilbergberg, Evseyi Benenson, Aron Rabinovitch, Ilya Tepman, Isaak Khanin,
Leonid Kosoy, Abram Zeidel, Leonid Roiter, and Jerokhim Epstein, were among 102 engineers who received the award.

Relations with Israel

Soviet policy toward Israel remained hostile, and Soviet propaganda continuously identified the State of Israel with United States “imperialist designs.” According to the official Moscow Tass news agency, “one could see the activation of aggressive and extremist forces of Israel directed against the neighboring Arab states.” (Pravda, May 28, 1966). This statement was made after Premier Kosygin’s official visit to Cairo, earlier in May, when he again assured the United Arab Republic of Soviet friendship and support. In exchange, the Soviet rulers wanted Nasser to join ranks with other Arab countries against the “reactionary” Arab regimes of Saudi-Arabia and Jordan. Pursuing its policy of penetration into the Middle East, Moscow sided with Syria during the Israeli-Syrian border clashes in July, saying that “Tel-Aviv should not forget that [such actions] would meet with decisive resistance by all interested in peace and security on this part of the globe.”

From time to time, Moscow authorities harassed Israeli diplomatic personnel. In August David Gavish, second secretary of the Israeli embassy, was ordered to leave the Soviet Union. Tass accused Gavish of “activity incompatible with the status of an accredited diplomat,” a charge which the Israeli government rejected outright. Again, in September, Moscow accused Ephraim Taz, a member of the Israeli mission, of “disseminating dirty Zionist propaganda.” Still, Israel and the Soviet Union continued a steady cultural exchange program. The Soviet violinist David Oistraikh gave a concert in Tel Aviv in March, and the Soviet Yiddish actor Meyer Braude presented an evening of Yiddish readings. Soviet cellist Mstislav Rostropovitch and vocalist Galina Vishnevskaya also visited Israel in 1966. Israeli singer Geula Gill and Juki Arkin gave a series of concerts consisting of Hebrew and Yiddish songs in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities. A Histadrut delegation, headed by Bezalel Shachar, visited Moscow at the invitation of the cultural department of Soviet trade unions. However, an exchange between the Moscow State Orchestra and the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, originally scheduled for May, was later cancelled by the Soviet Union.

In 1966 there was a substantial increase in the number of Soviet Jews who were permitted to join relatives abroad, mainly in Israel. In a conversation with French journalists in Paris in December, Kosygin stated that “with respect to reunions of families, if some families want to meet, or if they want to leave the Soviet Union, then the road is open and no problems exist in this respect” (p. 310). At this writing, it was difficult to judge to what extent Soviet authorities would permit emigration. It was estimated that some 500 to 600 Jewish families had left the Soviet Union, chiefly for Israel, but also for other countries. Most of the emigrants were elderly persons. It was reported that Soviet newspapers printed articles having clearly anti-Jewish overtones against the would-be emigrants.
**Commemoration of the Catastrophe**

According to the Soviet press agency *Novosti*, ten designs were prepared for a memorial to be erected at Babi-Yar in Kiev, which was to bear inscriptions in several languages, including Yiddish. In July a group of 22 American rabbis visited Babi-Yar where they conducted a memorial service for the Jews who had been executed by the Nazis. Reports indicated that Soviet Jews were giving increasing attention to the commemoration of Jewish victims of Nazism. A large meeting was held in Tallin in memory of Estonian Jews killed during the occupation. A similar gathering in Riga commemorated the 25th anniversary of the murder of Latvian Jews in the Riga ghetto in November-December 1941. Dinah Roitkop read Yiddish ghetto songs at this meeting. In Kovno, a meeting was held in remembrance of the 25th anniversary of the Nazi murder of thousands of Lithuanian Jews. It was also reported that the remains of some 2,000 Jewish victims of Nazi killings were reinterred in the Jewish cemetery at Baku, Azerbaidjan. All these memorial meetings took place in outlying areas having old traditions of autonomous Jewish life.

**Personalia**

Soviet writers celebrated the 75th birthday of Ilya Ehrenburg, the well-known Russian writer who, at the beginning of World War II, had been one of the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

Benjamin Chaitovski, a well-known concert singer, died early in 1966 at the age of 49. Nahum Shalfin, first vice-chairman of the Jewish autonomous region of Birobidjan, died in June. Chaim Braginski, director of the Crimean Yiddish Theater during the Jewish colonization efforts in that area, died in Simferopol, Crimea, in September. Professor Lev Zilber, a renowned Soviet virologist, died in Moscow in November at the age of 72. Moishe Teiff, a leading Yiddish writer, died in Moscow in December at the age of 62.

*Leon Shapiro*
No changes in the political setup in Poland occurred in 1966. Władysław Gomułka continued as undisputed head of both the Communist party (PPZR) and the state machinery. Edward Ochab remained in the post of chairman of the State Council of Poland, formally the top position in the country. Although Gomułka had conquered the opposition of the “liberals” on the left and “partisans” on the right, a deep social malaise was felt throughout the country. The Communist leadership repeatedly called for a sharp struggle against the social evils of ‘indifference to principles of public morality, nepotism, economic crimes, and corruption.’ In 1965, 6,400 individuals were reportedly expelled from the party for accepting bribes and other acts of dishonesty, among them 219 directors of enterprises, 179 accountants, and 1,150 persons holding responsible positions. In March 1966 a trial was held in Łódź of a group of high officials accused of stealing meat worth 15 million zlotys (at the official rate, $1 = 24 zlotys). Twelve of the 13 defendants were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms of six to 15 years; the ringleader, Henryk Golebiowski, received a life term. The frequency of such economic incidents has become a matter of serious concern to the leadership. It should be noted that, in contrast to the situation in the Soviet Union, these trials had no special Jewish aspects.

Uneasiness among intellectuals and writers persisted; authorities made it clear that “excessive” pronouncements contradicting fundamental party dogmas would not be tolerated. The general congress of the Polish Writers Union, meeting in Krakow December 3-5, proceeded in a calm atmosphere; Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz was reelected the union’s president.

The one thousandth anniversary of Poland was celebrated with great pomp throughout the country, but the event underlined the continuing tension between the state and the church. Stefan Cardinal Wiszynski celebrated mass in the ancient cathedrals, and state officials organized parades and other civic festivities. On May 3 the clergy prayed at the holy shrine at Częstochowa and in nearby Katowice and the government organized various choral and theatrical performances; Ochab participated in the banner-bedecked festivities. The celebration came to a close in October, with the Congress of Polish Culture representing the scholarly, literary, and artistic elite of the country. In his address to the congress, Zenon Kliszko, a member of the Politburo, warned against propagating “ideas hostile to socialism or to the vital interests of the Polish state.”

The propaganda war between the Polish episcopate and the state in connection with the exchange of letters between the Polish bishops and the Germans continued (see AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 379). The government
felt that the Church should not interfere in the very touchy area of German-Polish relations. In January Cardinal Wiszynski was refused a passport to go to Rome where he was expected to participate in a special celebration of 1,000 years of Christianity in Poland. At the same time, it was reported that the Church had increased its opposition to state control over teaching religious subjects in the 48 seminaries training future members of the clergy. Both state and Church, however, avoided any move that could endanger the existing delicate truce.

Polish ruling circles repeatedly emphasized the reestablished friendship with France. At the same time they promoted tourism, trade, and various other forms of cooperation with other East European countries, particularly Czechoslovakia—a situation which, to a degree, was akin to that of pre-World War II days. These moves could be construed as a modest assertion of independence from the Soviet Union, but they were doubtless also dictated by economic necessities that forced East European countries to work together.

Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, the last non-Communist premier of Poland who fled his country in 1947, died in the United States in December 1966.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Polish Jewish leaders stated that 30,000 Jews were living in Poland in 1966, but did not indicate their geographic, age, or sex distribution. Reliable Jewish observers, who visited Poland, estimated the Jewish population at about 25,000 including those who did not identify with the Jews. While there was no official interference with Jewish emigration, only small numbers of Jews left Poland in 1966. It was estimated that some 2,000 Jews were white-collar workers and members of professions, over 2,000 were in the producer cooperatives, and about 500 were skilled workers. About 1,500 were reported to be retired because of age or disability.

**Antisemitism**

Notwithstanding the official ban on antisemitism, anti-Jewish feelings existed among all groups of Polish society. Reliable sources indicated that some intellectuals fought anti-Jewish prejudice, but with little success. In October Jan Nowak, a fireman of Walbrzych who, in a state of drunkenness, had attacked David Malewitz, a Jewish co-worker, and made antisemitic remarks, stood trial in the district court. He was sentenced to six months in prison.

Jewish organizations were particularly concerned with widespread anti-Jewish sentiment among the younger Poles, who apparently have learned little from the experience of their elders under Nazi occupation. Reports emanating from émigré circles indicated that, under Soviet pressure, many Polish Jews have been purged from responsible positions in the state and local bureaucracy; some were said to have been forced to retire on pensions.
While there was no way to check the accuracy of these reports, it appears that the influence of Jews within the party apparatus and in the state machinery has substantially diminished. However, General Waclaw Komar, a Jew, member of the party's liberal wing, and one of the veteran Communists who had fought in the Spanish Civil War, was promoted to deputy minister of the interior.

Communal Life

Jewish communal life centered around the Communist-dominated Cultural and Social Union of Polish Jews. The union's fifth congress took place on May 5-6, with some 200 delegates of local unions and fraternal organizations participating. While the union still had a membership of about 7,500 in 26 cities, Jewish leaders were concerned about the growing disaffection and loss of interest in Jewish affairs among both the older generation and Jewish youth. In an attempt to remedy the situation, the union set up special social commissions for specific tasks and for directing programs, in cooperation with the local unions, where the latter were unable to do so alone. At the end of 1966, 114 such commissions had been established. Leib Domb was reelected president and Edward Reiber secretary general of the Cultural and Social Union.

Construction of the House of Jewish Culture on the Place Grzybow in Warsaw was progressing, but at the time of this writing it was not known when the project would be completed.

Religious Life

Jewish religious life continued to deteriorate. Reliable observers maintained that the younger generations showed little or no interest in religious activities. Rabbi Asher Zives, who had been the only rabbi in Poland, left the country, and the Jewish community had neither rabbis nor mohalim. A few remaining shoḥatīm traveled from town to town, making it possible for observing Jews to have fresh kosher meat. In June seven Israeli shoḥatīm came to Poland for a year to prepare kosher beef for sale in Israel. In a number of synagogues older congregants conducted services, but the number of worshipers was diminishing.

The Union of Jewish Religious Congregations (Wa'ad Ha-kehillot) under the presidency of Isaak Frenkel, has of late succeeded in reasserting itself in many areas of communal endeavor. It is significant that some of its activities were reported in the official Folks-shtimme, which, on September 13, carried New Year's greetings by the Union. The Wa'ad Ha-kehillot claimed a membership of 7,000 in 20 affiliated local kehillot. However, only three cities had religious schools (hedarim); the number of bar mitzvah celebrations was dwindling, and some localities were without anyone qualified to prepare the youngsters for the ceremony. There were enough matzot for all families who observed Passover.
Great concern of all sections of the community over the continuing deterioration of the Jewish cemeteries was discussed in *Folks-shtimme* (September 28, 1966) by Michael Mirsky of the Cultural and Social Union and Isaak Frenkel of the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations. Apparently, little was done to alleviate the situation, for a joint meeting of the presidium of the Cultural and Social Union, and the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations set up a commission to speed up necessary repairs and provide for safeguarding the cemeteries. Some financial help was to be forthcoming from the National Council, the local municipalities, and the All-Polish Council for Monuments.

**Jewish Education**

Five Yiddish state elementary schools functioned in the cities of Wroclaw, Legnice, Lodz, Szczecin, and Walbrzych, with a total enrolment of about 1,000, including many non-Jewish pupils. The schools in Wroclaw, Legnice, and Lodz also had secondary education (*lycée*) programs. At the end of the 1965–66 school year, there were only 27 pupils in the graduating class in Wroclaw and 19 in Lodz. Attendance in the primary grades was so small that there was serious question about how long these schools would be able to function. Since Jewish children did not know Yiddish, a Yiddish language textbook designed for rapid learning had to be especially prepared to enable them to follow instruction in Yiddish subjects. The absence of competent authors made for general shortage of textbooks, particularly for Yiddish subjects.

Written examinations given to students in the Jewish *lycées* included such themes as the impact of new social and economic forces on the life of Russian Jewry at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century, as reflected in Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye der Milkhiger* and *Menachem-Mendel*, and the concept of good and evil in the works of Peretz. No doubt, the Yiddish schools were trying to do important educational work, but their situation had reached a critical stage. The Jewish leadership therefore called on the youth clubs “to share a great part of the task of Jewish education,” to teach the Yiddish language, Jewish history, and other subjects, since “there was no other way to impart this knowledge to Jewish youth in Poland.

**Social Welfare**

A most serious problem of the Jewish community was the continually increasing number of aged, who had neither family, trade union, nor anyone else, to look after them. The Jewish home for the aged in Warsaw, with a capacity of some 100 inmates, was unable to meet the need. Plans were in progress to add a new pavilion, with the aid of JDC.

The general JDC-supported welfare programs were conducted locally through relief committees representing both the Cultural and Social Union and the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations. In mid-1966, they assisted
some 10,000 persons, 5,600 with cash relief, 1,650 with medical aid, and
250 with student aid. JDC also supported 10 kosher kitchens, supervised by
Wa'ad Ha-kehillot, feeding some 500 persons daily. As of October there
were some 560 individuals in the various training programs of ORT, 350
others were enrolled in the technical divisions of Jewish schools. About 2,600
Jewish children benefited from the summer camp program.

**Producer Cooperatives**

There were, in 1966, 16 Jewish producer cooperatives employing 2,150
workers, including 700 home workers. About 1,500 (or 70 per cent) of
those employed by the cooperatives were members of the Social and Cul-
tural Union (AJYB, 1965 [Vol. 66], p. 435). The total value of production
in 1965 was 283 million zlotys, and the net profit approximately 9 million
zlotys. The cooperatives continued to constitute one of Polish Jewry's im-
portant economic bases, as well as a substantial source of revenue of the So-
cial and Cultural Union, to which they allocated approximately 20 per cent
of their income. The 15-member economic commission of the Cultural and
Social Union, under Edward Reiber, administered the producer cooperatives.

**Cultural Activities**

In 1966 the Cultural and Social Union supported 31 art ensembles and
drama circles, 47 youth clubs, and 15 reading groups. Not all libraries spon-
sored by Jewish groups had Yiddish books. Because competent personnel
for conducting Jewish cultural activities was difficult to find, the cultural com-
misson of the Cultural and Social Union devoted a month (October 10 to
November 10) to the intensive training of local persons for various func-
tional activities. When interest in many of the old endeavors waned, an at-
ttempt was made to expand the content of cultural activities. A varied pro-
gram was devised for Jewish participation in the celebration of the millenium
of the Polish state and of Jewish life in Poland. The Jewish Youth Festival,
conducted in Krakow July 13-15, was dedicated to Jewish fidelity to Poland.
It featured a symposium on the significance of the anniversary, and a pil-
grimage to the ancient Rama synagogue. Speaking to the Congress of Polish
Culture (p. 388) in the name of the Social and Cultural Union, David Sfard,
stated that Polish Jews, while deeply loyal to Poland, nevertheless wished to
live their own cultural life. He complained that little of specifically Yiddish
creative effort was available to the Polish reader, and called for a brotherly
relationship between the two cultures.

Among the finalists in a Yiddish art competition, held in June, some 16
amateur singers and actors received special prizes for excellence.

The Jewish publishing house Yiddish Bukh continued its activities, but
had difficulties reaching large numbers of readers. Yet each of its new books
was printed in 2,500 copies.

The Jewish Historical Institute carried on its research and publishing
activities. Berl Mark, the director and author of many volumes on the history of the catastrophe in Poland, died on July 4 at the age of 58, and Aron Eisenbach, the well-known historian of Polish Jewry, was appointed to replace him. It was reported that the Institute recently compiled a list and photograph file of all remaining synagogues in Poland.

The Warsaw Communist Yiddish newspaper, Folks-shtimme, appearing four times weekly, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1966. For this occasion it published a special issue on November 12. A number of special meetings were held to propagandize the paper which reportedly had a circulation of 5,000. The Yiddish State Theater started its 1966 fall season with a new play, “Where is Mr. David?” by British writer S. P. Taylor. It was directed by Ida Kaminska and was received with great interest.

Leon Shapiro
Czechoslovakia

The 13th Congress of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia met in Prague from May 31 to June 4, 1966. Some time before it convened the party bureaucracy took action against relaxation of party control, which had made slow progress in recent years. The literary magazine Tvar ("Form") was discontinued on January 1, when its editors refused to accept the line laid down by the official Writers' Union. Knížní Kultura ("Book Culture"), a periodical which, though published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, had frequently voiced critical opinions, met with the same fate several weeks later. The authoritative voice of the party Zivot Strany ("Party Life") repeatedly attacked the concept of ideological coexistence and stressed the irreconcilability of Communist and bourgeois thinking. The editorial board of Literární Noviny ("Literary News") was reorganized after having been charged with opening the pages of the magazine to irresponsible elements.

At the congress, the delegates endorsed the policies of the party leadership. It did not even attempt to come to grips with the continuing economic and social crisis, and economic reform was a slogan rather than a reality. Czechoslovakia remained a faithful ally and follower of the Soviet Union; Soviet party boss Leonid Brezhnev and party boss Walter Ulbricht of the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (Eastern Germany) were the only leaders of other Communist parties to attend the congress. There were no meaningful changes in the composition of the newly elected central committee. The most discredited prewar Stalinists, who had been dismissed in 1963, and included such men as Karol Bacílek, Bruno Koehler, and Viliám Široký, did not re-emerge. Nor did any of the rehabilitated victims of the purge and trials of the late forties and early fifties move into positions of influence.

A drab affair with no unexpected developments, the 13th congress confirmed the undisputed control of the group in power, which promptly proceeded to assert its "leading role" in cultural matters. At the October meeting of the new central committee, First Secretary and President of the Republic Antonín Novotný expressed dissatisfaction with the direction of Czechoslovakia's artistic and literary life, and shortly thereafter, two writers were jailed. The government precipitated an international incident by waylaying (with Russian connivance) and arresting Vladimir Kazan-Komarek, an ex-refugee who had become an American citizen and the owner of a travel agency in Cambridge, Mass., on charges of having organized and operated an anti-Communist escape ring in Czechoslovakia in 1948. Kazan-Komarek was seized on October 31, when the Soviet plane, on which he was returning from Moscow to Paris, made a detour and an unscheduled stop in Prague.
The accentuation of the hard line had no palpable consequences for the approximately 15,000 Jews in Czechoslovakia, except that permits to leave the country were again more difficult to obtain. Jews who applied for temporary permits experienced lengthy delays and, more often than not, were denied permission to visit Western countries. "We don't trust the Jews," an informant reported having been told when he insisted on seeing an official of the Ministry of the Interior about his application for a permit to visit his mother in the United States.

Officially, however, there was no discrimination, and no obstacles were put in the way of the free exercise of religious observance. Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the Park East Synagogue in New York, who visited countries behind the Iron Curtain in 1966, called on the Soviet Union to give its Jewish citizens the same religious freedom he had found in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. He reported that there was no official interference in Jewish life, and he ascribed its weaknesses to the small number of Jews rather than governmental restrictions.

In its propaganda material aimed at attracting tourists from the West, the Czech tourist office described the importance and beauty of the Jewish quarter of Prague, its synagogue which is the oldest still in use in Europe, and its medieval cemetery. The impressive collections of Jewish religious art, ritual objects, and other memorabilia in the Prague Jewish State Museum, and its several permanent exhibits, were also listed high among tourist attractions.

**Communal Organizations and Religious Life**

In Bohemia-Moravia, the Jewish population remained organized in five religious communities, each subdivided into a number of synagogal congregations. The communities were located in Prague, Plzeň (Pilsen), Usti (Aussig), Brno (Bruenn), and Ostrava (Ostrau). Their central administrative agency was the Rada židovských náboženských obcí v krajích českých (Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech Lands) in Prague. The Jewish congregations in Slovakia were supervised directly by the Ustredný sváž židovských náboženských obcí na Slovensku (Central Association of the Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia). František Ehrmann, chairman of the Prague council, resigned in February and was succeeded by its former vice-chairman František Fuchs. The chairman of the Slovak association was Benjamin Eichler.

The communities had three rabbis altogether: the 91-year-old Chief Rabbi Richard Feder of Bohemia-Moravia, in Prague; Slovakia's Chief Rabbi Eliáš Katz, in Bratislava, and the district rabbi for Eastern Slovakia, Moses Friedlaender, in Košice (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 385). In October the religious community announced that Ervín Šalamon, an 18-year-old youth from Košice, had been sent to the Budapest rabbinical seminary with the consent of
the Czech authorities. The understanding was that he would be appointed rabbi of Prague, after completing his studies.

The new synagogue at the J. F. Kennedy International Airport in New York received a menorah as a gift from the Prague Jewish community. The accompanying letter expressed deep respect for the late John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the "great president of the United States who represented the noble ideas of world peace and the dignity of all men of all races and religions."

Communal Activities

*Věstník* ("Gazette") the 12-page monthly of the Jewish Religious Communities in Czechoslovakia, edited by Rudolf Iltis, covered religious news and local congregational news consisting mostly of obituaries. But this lively, well-written journal also devoted a good part of its space to subjects of literary and historical interest.

The 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Terezín (Theresienstadt) ghetto by the Nazis was widely commemorated. Close to 150,000 Jews had passed through, or died in, Theresienstadt. A handful survived. About one-half of its inmates had been Jews from Bohemia and Moravia; more than 40,000 had come from Germany, about 15,000 from Austria, and 5,000 from the Netherlands. It was Chief Rabbi Feder who called attention to the fact that nothing in contemporary Theresienstadt, a town of 2,500 inhabitants, reminded the visitor that, during the Nazi era, it had been the site of the largest Jewish concentration camp in Central Europe.

1966 was a year of increased organizational contacts with Jewish representatives from the East as well as the West. There were visitors from Israel, from Western Europe, and from the United States and Canada, among them delegations from Hebrew Union College, B'nai B'rith, and the American Jewish Congress and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Rabbi Eliáš Katz visited the United States, and an official Czechoslovak Jewish delegation traveled to Yugoslavia. In September a group from the Evangelical Academy of West Berlin visited Prague, attended religious services in the Old-New and the Jerusalem synagogues, and met with the board of the Jewish council.

On Rosh Ha-shanah Bishop František Tomášek, the Apostolic administrator of Prague, sent greetings to the Jews, invoking "the blessing of the Lord, our common father, for the welfare of the Jewish community." *Židovská Ročenka* ("Jewish Year Book") and The Jewish calendar for the year 5827 appeared in September.

Cultural Activities

The success of Czechoslovakia's film industry was partly related to its artistically successful presentation of Jewish themes. *The Shop on Main Street* was received everywhere as a major film event. *Sweet Light in a Dark Room*, the story of a Czech boy and the Jewish girl he sheltered from deportation by the Nazis, won acclaim and international recognition. Directed by
Jiří Weiss, the movie was originally called *Romeo and Juliet and the Dark*, the title of the book by Jan Otčenášek. The top award of the Monte Carlo television film festival went to another Czech film, *A Prayer for Catherine Horowitz*, whose setting was a Nazi extermination camp.

The Jewish architecture of Prague and the treasures of the Jewish State Museum were the subject of a color film with commentaries in seven languages, including Hebrew. Rudolf Iltis, the editor of the *Gazette*, and Víšem Benda, the director of the Museum, acted as advisers to the producer.

The State Museum published two issues of the semi-annual *Judaica Bohemiae*, written partly in German and partly in French. It featured articles on the history of Jewish names in Bohemia, on tombstone inscriptions in Jewish cemeteries, and other specialized historical essays. One dealt with the relationship of Franz Kafka, the most important Jewish-German writer of this century, to the actor Yizhak Löwy. There was growing interest in the works of Kafka and other internationally known German-Jewish writers from Prague, such as Franz Werfel and Max Brod. Until a few years ago they were hardly ever mentioned. A commemorative plaque was affixed to the house where Kafka was born.

The State Museum also published an English anthology, *The Prague Ghetto in the Renaissance Period*, and a German-language volume, *The Prague Jewish Community of the Sixteenth Century: Its Spiritual Life*. New exhibitions at the State Museum included works of the painter Robert Guttmann, who had died in the Lodz ghetto, and a collection of objects reflecting Jewish traditions and mores. The museum was the subject of a monograph, *Příběh Židovského Musea* ("The Story of the Jewish Museum"), written by Hana Volavková, its former director, which appeared in December.
Hungary

During the period under review the ruling Communist party of Hungary made efforts to regenerate the cadres of its machinery. It reduced the membership of the Politburo from 12 to 11, and replaced two old members with much younger men. One of the new members, the former Social Democrat Rezso Nyers, was particularly interested in economic affairs. The membership of the Central Committee was reduced from 119 to 101, with János Kádár remaining at the helm and Secretary Bela Biszku, second in command. Gyula Kallai continued as premier. Official sources in Budapest maintained that the Politburo changes had no political significance and merely indicated the continuing emphasis on Kádár's economic reforms.

Full realization of the economic plan was expected to take some three years, with partial measures introduced in 1966, further changes in planning to be made in 1967, and a new system of prices and incentives to be put in operation in 1968. The economists in charge of the reforms foresaw a central organization that would be responsible for long-term schedules, leaving short-range plans to be worked out by the individual enterprises, in keeping with market requirements. While the reforms in preparation obviously tended to enlarge the initiative of various industrial units, there were indications of a considerable decrease in the number of gainfully employed artisans in Hungary, from 122,770 in 1957 to 70,431 at the end of 1965. This reduction had an important bearing on the economic situation of the Jewish community for many of its older members were artisans.

Coupled with the developing economic reforms was a liberalization of the political regime, permitting the return of some 60,000 of the 200,000 Hungarians who had fled the country during the 1956 uprising. (Hungary also continued to maintain an open-door tourist policy which, according to official reports, brought a total of 1,218,869 visitors from abroad in 1965, a number reportedly exceeded in 1966.) Unrest among the people continued, however, and repeated reports spoke of arrests of persons involved in "a conspiracy against the present regime." A man named Janos Hamusics was sentenced to death on charges of having committed acts of sabotage against a railway line with eight of his associates. The well-known composer Ferenc Otto was sentenced to two years in prison for "anti-state activities and antisemitism." Among a number of persons arrested for illegal distribution of Boy Scout literature was Joseph Zimmerman, a Hungarian-born Israeli citizen.

The tenth anniversary of the suppression of the 1956 revolt was prominently featured in the press. Party and government officials emphasized
Soviet assistance in crushing the "counterrevolution." At the same time, officials pointed to the increasing trade with the USSR, and reported plans for a new pipeline to the Soviet Union to facilitate the flow of much-needed Soviet oil to Hungary. Hungarian leaders sided with Moscow in the Soviet-Chinese dispute. Kádár repeatedly asserted his solidarity with Soviet foreign policy and his support of the Warsaw Pact, and noted that the current international situation required the continued presence of Soviet troops in Hungary.

**Jewish Community**

It was estimated that there were approximately 80,000 Jews in Hungary in 1966, including some 10,000 who did not participate in Jewish religious or communal activities. Eighty to 90 per cent of the Jewish population lived in the capital city of Budapest. Authorities did not interfere with Jews who wished to emigrate, but only a small number (200 to 300) left for abroad in 1966. Although anti-Jewish acts were forbidden by law, there were occasional reports of antisemitic incidents both in Budapest and in the provinces.

*Community Organization and Religious Life*

Jewish communal life was centered around the Central Board of Jewish Communities (Magyar Izraelitak Orszagos Kepvislete), which also maintained contact with world Jewish organizations and with Jewish communities in other countries. When in January 1966, Geza Seifert, a practicing attorney, took over the presidency of the board, replacing Endre Sos, its president for almost nine years, he said:

> We participated in the rebuilding of our Hungarian fatherland which was destroyed by the fascists and liberated by Soviet heroes. We have participated in the rebuilding of our synagogues and institutions... Our religious demands are determined by the spirit of our holy Torah, the teachings of our Prophets, and also by our Jewish hearts and Jewish feelings.

(Sandor Telepo represented Joseph Prantner, head of the state church office, at the ceremony.)

Both the Orthodox and Neolog (Conservative) communities belonged to the central board, but the individual congregations maintained their own different ways of worship. Rabbi Jeno Schuck was Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox community, and Rabbi Imre Benoschofsky of the Neolog. A total of 30 rabbis ministered to the needs of all Jews in Hungary. Reports had it that most of the 34 largely Orthodox synagogues in Budapest conducted regular services, particularly on the Sabbath and on holidays. On some occasions, these reports continued, they could not accommodate the crowds and had to hold services in shifts. Many of the synagogues, among them the well-known...
Dohany Street synagogue which is considered the chief one of the city, were in urgent need of repair.

The religious community maintained a miqweh, a hevra kaddisha, and all necessary institutions for kashrut. Budapest had nine kosher butcher shops and exported substantial quantities of kosher meat which was also approved by religious authorities in Israel. Matzot, baked in a state factory under the supervision of Jewish religious authorities, were sufficient in quantity even for export to Germany and elsewhere.

**Welfare, Education, and Culture**

The Central Board conducted a widespread system of welfare and educational activities. Cash relief was provided to some 18,000 to 20,000 individuals, mostly older or disabled persons who could find no employment. Communal kitchens in Budapest, served 2,100 kosher noon meals daily. The community also maintained four homes for the aged and a 224-bed hospital. Jewish orphanages, one for boys and one for girls, housed 28 and 30 children, respectively.

The Jewish Theological Seminary, the only institution of its kind in Eastern Europe, had an enrolment of 12 students, three of whom were expected to graduate at the end of the school year 1966–67. Rabbi Alexander Scheiber, the well-known scholar, continued as its head. The Jewish gymnasium (secondary school) was attended by 95 students, 57 from Budapest and 38 from Debrecen, Szeged, Miscolec, Tarcal, and elsewhere in the provinces. The yeshivah qetannah (primary day school) had 40 students, and some 30 Talmud Torahs provided traditional education to about 800 children, approximately 580 in Budapest and 220 in the provinces in Debrecen, Szeged, Pecs, Miscolec, and Tarcal. The Budapest schools had 14 teachers. The seminary, gymnasium and yeshivah qetannah received support from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

The Central Board continued its substantial program of research and publication. Among its undertakings was the Monumenta Hungariae Judaica, a multivolume project of which volumes 10 and 11 were in preparation. Volume 9, covering the period from 1282 to 1739, appeared in 1966 under the editorship of Scheiber. This scholarly work was made possible by a grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany and, since 1965, from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. The Central Board also continued publication of its magazine *Uj Élet.*

While Jews in Hungary enjoyed considerable freedom of cultural and religious expression, the younger generation was facing a difficult problem of choice between the tradition of their fathers and the pressures of the atheistic state on which their livelihood depended. Success in life and a position of status often depended on membership in the party, and such membership would largely preclude a life of active religious observance. The
reported notable decrease in the number of religious marriages and ritual circumcisions attested to this situation.

Personalia

Marcel Steiner, for many years identified with Jewish communal work, and particularly with the *hevra kaddisha*, died in September 1966.  

*Leon Shapiro*
Rumania

In 1966 the Communist rulers of Rumania continued to pursue a vigorous policy of national sovereignty and economic independence from the Communist bloc. Their firm determination to follow this path, despite the growing anger of their powerful Soviet neighbor, was most forcefully expressed in a nationalistic speech by the First Secretary of the Communist Party Nicolae Ceausescu on the occasion of the party’s 45th anniversary celebration in Bucharest on May 7. The greater part of this four-hour speech was devoted to a historical review of the relationship between the Russian and Rumanian parties, which revealed the damaging effect of constant Russian interference in Rumanian affairs on the Rumanian Communist party as well as on the Communist movement generally. Above all, he condemned the existence of military blocs and the presence of Soviet troops on foreign soil as harmful to the Communist cause. At the same time, Ceausescu strongly defended Rumania’s policy of economic independence, formulated in 1964 in what was called a “declaration of independence” (AJYB, 1965 [Vol. 66], p. 445).

The speech, considered abroad the toughest statement ever made in Romania and one that could have farreaching historical significance for Eastern Europe, brought the immediate visit by Soviet party leader Leonid Brezhnev. Concerning the outcome of this visit, the Rumanian press agency Agerpress merely stated (May 30) that there had been an exchange of views regarding the “steady development of mutual cooperation between the two countries.”

Although no comprehensive survey of the functioning of Rumania’s national economy appeared in 1966, isolated items and eyewitness reports pointed to remarkable achievements in certain fields. A further indication was the upward revision of the goals of the current five-year plan, which was to end in 1970. On June 28 the Central Committee and the Grand National Assembly announced that the industrial output would be raised by 1970 to 73 per cent above 1965, instead of the originally planned 65 per cent, and agricultural output by 32 per cent instead of 26 per cent. In industry, priorities were assigned to electronics and metal and machine tool production.

Foreign trade had expanded as well. In an interview with an Italian correspondent, published in the Rumanian Communist party organ Scîntea of June 18, 1966, Ceausescu revealed that, while 69 per cent of the country’s foreign trade still went to Communist bloc nations—35 per cent to the Soviet Union—Rumania’s second largest customer was West Germany. After a promising beginning, trade relations with the United States suffered a setback when the Firestone Rubber and Tire Company did not live up to an
agreement to construct a synthetic rubber plant in Rumania (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], pp. 392–93).

Two important foreign investments, announced in 1966, were the planned construction of two fertilizer plants, at a cost of $2.6 million, by the West German firm Didler Werke Aktiengesellschaft, and of a slaughterhouse and canned meat factory (mainly for export to the United States), at a cost of $6 million, by a New York investment firm headed by Milton A. Gordon.

No great changes occurred in Rumania's internal affairs, although some incidents during the year at times disrupted daily life. Among these were reported disturbances at a Bucharest metal works between followers of Ceausescu and of the late Rumanian President Gheorge Gheorghiu-Dej, and the continued harassment by the authorities of political prisoners released from jail in the last few years (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 393). Many of them were sent to villages to do farm work.

Membership in the Rumanian Communist party, as reported in the New York monthly *East Europe* of June, increased by about 10 per cent to 1,518,000 in 1966 (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 392).

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

In an interview with the London *Jewish Chronicle* (March 3) Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen described the situation of the Jewish community as "greatly improved."

The Jewish population has been much reduced by emigration (AJYB, 1966 [Vol. 67], p. 393). Rabbi Rosen put the number of Jews in Rumania at 100,000, an estimate apparently based only on those registered with the Jewish communities or with congregations. A more realistic figure, suggested by other sources, was 120,000. Bucharest had 50,000 Jewish inhabitants. Throughout the country there were 72 organized Jewish communities and about 300 synagogues. A program, recently inaugurated with government aid, aimed at repairing existing synagogues. Some, whose condition was beyond repair, were being demolished, but none without Rabbi Rosen's knowledge.

The Federation of Jewish Communities, with Rabbi Rosen as its president, was the officially recognized representative body of Rumanian Jews. A conference of the Jewish communities of Moldova, where the majority of the Jewish population was concentrated, was held in Yassy at the end of June. It was attended by delegates of the local communities and by representatives of the federation, including Rabbi Rosen; Emil Schachter, the president of the Bucharest community; Daniel Saniel, and other dignitaries.

A report in the Federation's tri-lingual (Rumanian, Yiddish, Hebrew) organ, *Revista Cultului Mosaic* indicated that, in the cities, kosher meat was sold under rabbinical supervision in government shops, from which smaller communities had to get their supplies. *Shohatim*, who were certified by the Federation, toured the country to prepare the meat.
The most vexing problem now facing many Jewish communities was the rehabilitation and fencing of cemeteries. In the once densely populated and flourishing Jewish communities of Moldova and Southern Bucovina, there were large cemeteries with very old graves of many famous and highly venerated rabbis and spiritual leaders. During the war, these cemeteries were not only neglected, but also desecrated by villagers who often used them as pastures. The shrunken communities in the small towns of Moldova were now called upon to shoulder the burden of rehabilitating and maintaining these large cemeteries, without help from the government or any other source. The size of the undertaking may be illustrated by the fact that the news of the completion of the fence around the cemetery in Yassy was cabled by JTA (December 29) to the Jewish press around the world—the kind of coverage reserved for great national achievements. According to this dispatch, the fence was two kilometers long and, in part, constructed of prefabricated material at a cost of 300,000 lei.

Impressive observances memorialized the 25th anniversary of the Nazi massacres of the Rumanian Jews. (The three-day pogrom in Bucharest, January 21–23, 1941, took the lives of 120 Jews; the persecutions in Yassy, in June of 1941, when Jews were deported in sealed cattle cars, claimed over 10,000 victims. At that time, massacres also took place in Dorohoi and many other towns and cities of Moldova.) The Rumanian government was represented at the memorial celebrations by a number of high officials, including State Secretary Viorel Tiron and Dumitru Andronic of the department for religious affairs. A representative of the Orthodox Metropolitan of Moldova and delegations of local clergymen also participated. There were memorial services in Bucharest, Yassy, Târg Frumos, Roman, Radăutz, and many other cities.

Some 3,000 Torah scrolls from synagogues in depopulated Jewish communities were being sent as a gift of Rumania to Israel, with the request that they be placed, if possible, in synagogues used by Rumanian immigrants. The first group of 1,058 scrolls was transferred in August to Vienna, where Israeli Minister for Religion Zerah Warhaftig was to receive them. This friendly gesture of the Rumanian government toward Israel was very well received in the Jewish world. In New York, the Jewish Daily Forward (December 24) pointed out that the Rumanian government could easily have sold the scrolls for $1 million and that, in choosing to give them to Israel, it was making a gift of some significance.

As in the past, Revista Cultului Mosaic, the only Jewish publication in Rumania, avoided all mention of Jewish cultural activities. It ignored even the two Yiddish state theaters, whose performances were occasionally reviewed in the Rumanian language press. Correspondence in the Warsaw Yiddish Folks-shtimme, October 6, 1966, revealed that a Bucharest Yiddish troupe toured many cities and small towns in Rumania with great success. Other reports indicated that the state theaters had become focal points for other cultural activities, such as lectures and recitals. One of the lectures was
on the late American-Yiddish novelist Joseph Opatoshu. The *Folks-shtimme* (July 19, 1966), also stated that a new volume of Sholem Aleichem’s novels was issued by the government publishing house in 1966. The omission of any references to Jewish cultural life in Rumania seemed to indicate that, except for narrow religious observance, all aspects of Jewish life were being discouraged by the regime.

Joseph Kissman
Yugoslavia

In recent years Yugoslav ruling circles continued the liberalization policy enunciated earlier by President Josip Broz Tito. The constitutional court, established by the 1963 constitution and invested with powers to test the constitutionality of laws, actually acted as defender of strict legality, often without regard to demands by governmental organs. In June 1966 the Socialist Alliance of Working Peoples, a national coalition organization directed by the Communist League, called for full consideration of diverse opinions and for tolerance of the views held by non-Communist members of the alliance. In July the league ousted Aleksandar Rankovic, second in command in Yugoslavia, from his government post of vice president and his party post of secretary of the Central Committee for Organizational Affairs. He was charged with promoting his own "one-man rule" of the secret police and with obstructing the implementation of "democratically-arrived-at decisions." In October Marshal Tito was elected to the newly-created post of president of the Communist League, whose secretary general he had been since 1937. Together with Edward Kardelj and Veljo Vlahovic, two of the highest-ranking party men, Tito was elected to the 35-member Central Committee. While the party undoubtedly retained full control of the country, there was a continuing process of change, encouraged by Tito and his top leadership. The party seemed to move toward gradual decentralization of its structure, with corresponding decentralization of the state machinery.

However, the case of Mihajlo Mihajlov, the writer and university lecturer whose critical writings occasionally appeared abroad, demonstrated continued party control. His difficulties with the state began in 1965, when the literary magazine Delo published his critical essay, "Moscow Summer 1964," considered inimical to a friendly foreign state. At the end of 1966, under a Tito amnesty, Mihajlov as well as the well-known writer and Tito's former deputy Milovan Djilas were freed. Mihajlov's subsequent independent stance and his announced intention to issue an opposition magazine were viewed by the authorities as being against the interests of the state, and he was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment for "spreading false information among the population."

In the course of moves toward reorganizing the state machinery, the ruling circles emphasized the development of a uniquely Yugoslav system of industrial management, known as workers councils, which they believed should be the basic social units of government structure. At the same time, the government signed an agreement with the Vatican that re-established the diplomatic ties, broken in 1952. There were vast differences between the Communist policies of the Soviet Union and those of Hungary, Rumania,
and Czechoslovakia; the “road to socialism” pursued by Tito’s Yugoslavia was fundamentally different from all systems in the Soviet bloc.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

**Jewish Population**

According to available information, the Jewish community of Yugoslavia had 6,454 registered members in 1964. The total number of Jews, including those not registered, was about 7,000. It should be noted that the size of the older age group in the Jewish population was disproportionately large. Serbia, including the autonomous districts of Voivodina, Kosovo, and Metohija, had 2,822 registered Jews in 15 communities; Croatia, 2,095 in 10 communities; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1,350 in 9 communities; Macedonia, 81 in one community, and Slovenia, 106 in one community. There were no Jews in Montenegro.

**Communal and Religious Life**

Jewish communal life was coordinated by the Federation of Jewish Communities with which 36 local communities were affiliated. Its officers were Lavoslav Kadelburg, president, and Luci Petrovic, secretary. The federation enjoyed full freedom of activity and was accorded recognition by state authorities. With the approval of the authorities, the federation affiliated with the World Jewish Congress and maintained constant close contact with Jewish communities and organizations abroad, including the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Joint Distribution Committee, and the Standing Conference of Jewish Organizations in Europe.

Depleted by the Nazi persecutions during World War II and by subsequent emigrations to Israel, the Yugoslav Jewish community was beset by many difficulties. It had a severe shortage of rabbis, Jewish teachers, and qualified communal workers. Rabbi Menahem Romano of Sarajevo, who was quite old, was the only spiritual leader; repeated efforts to bring a rabbi from abroad remained unsuccessful. If Sabbath and holiday services were held in the large cities, they were usually conducted by laymen. *Jevrejski Pregled* ("Jewish Review") reported that at the Rosh Ha-shanah and Yom Kippur services in Zagreb, Hinko Geld, a layman, chanted the *mussaf*, and Cantor Leon Altaras officiated. In Osijek, High Holy Day services were conducted by Mavro Vizner, an active member of the congregation; in Split, they were conducted by Mento Altaras, the secretary of the community. Many foreign visitors, including tourists from the United States, participated in the services at Split. Special festivities were organized in the larger communities to celebrate Purim, Hanukkah, and other holidays. In Skoplje, the Albert Vajs Jewish community center, erected in memory of the late president of the Federation, was inaugurated in October 1966.

The problem of maintaining the more than 150 Jewish cemeteries con-
continued to burden the communities, which had difficulty obtaining the necessary funds, especially for cemeteries in towns no longer inhabited by Jews. Plans were under way to transform all sectarian cemeteries in Sarajevo, including the 400-years-old Jewish cemetery, into public parks. Since the Yugoslav community had no shohet, it found it almost impossible to obtain kosher meat or to assure kashrut. The Federation issued a Jewish calendar for the year 5727, compiled by Rabbi Romano.

**Cultural Life**

The cultural and educational programs of the Federation of Jewish Communities were partially supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Local leaders put great emphasis on youth activities, which they conducted with the help of specially trained youth instructors from Israel. Youth clubs were active in such cities as Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Subotica, Osijek, Novi-sad, Skoplje, and Split. Some 100 young persons participated in a conference of youth clubs held in Sarajevo at the end of 1965. A delegate of the youth clubs attended a seminar for youth instructors, organized by the Standing Conference of European Jewish Community Services in Paris. In the fall of 1966 two Yugoslav youths participated in a seminar of the World Union of Jewish Students. In July Jewish youths from Belgrade, Sarajevo, Novi-sad, and other cities spent several weeks at Kibbutz Gat in Israel.

The federation maintained Jewish libraries in Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Novi-sad, Subotica, Osijek, and Skoplje. Its expanded publication program included the periodical *Jevrejski Pregled; Kadima*, a magazine for youths which devoted many pages to Peretz, Bialik, and Mendele, and the annual *Jevrejski Almanah* ("Jewish Almanac") with a collection of essays, stories, and poetry of largely Jewish content. The last *Almanah* for 1963–64 appeared in 1965. The law faculty of Belgrade University published a special volume dedicated to the memory of Albert Vajs, who was one of its professors and, at the time of his death in April 1964, was president of the federation. The Jewish Historical Museum moved into new quarters, and plans were being made for new exhibits. The Jewish choral groups, Brothers Baruch of Belgrade and Mosa Pijade of Zagreb, continued to give concerts featuring local music as well as traditional Jewish and Israeli songs.

**400th Anniversary of Jewish Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The 400th anniversary of the Jewish community in Bosnia and Herzegovina was celebrated in Sarajevo in October, amid pomp and festivity, the first such celebration in Eastern Europe in many years. Jewish delegations came from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Rumania, West Germany, Chile, Luxembourg, and Switzerland. Among the guests were Rabbi Eliahu Pardes and David Sitton of the Jerusalem Sephardi community: Rabbi Solomon Gaon, Chief Rabbi of Sephardi communities
of Great Britain; Mark Uveeler of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture; Gerhard Riegner and Armand Kaplan of the World Jewish Congress; Herbert Katzki of JDC, and many others. At a solemn meeting, which was part of the celebration, greetings were extended by Salko Lagumdzija, president of the Sarajevo municipal assembly; Dzemal Bijedic, vice president of the assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Moni Finci, director of the Museum of the Revolution. A special commemorative volume was published under the editorial supervision of Samuel Kamhi, Moni Finci, Jakob Gaon, Avram Pinto, and Joza Engel. It contained much valuable material on the history of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Jews, including articles on the Sarajevo Haggadah by Muhamed Karamehmedovic, the Ashkenazim in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Julije Hahamovic, and on Jewish writing in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Haim Kamhi. A closing banquet brought together some 150 local leaders and representatives from abroad.

Social and Welfare Activities

Jewish welfare activities, including aid to the indigent, aged persons, and orphans, were partially supported by JDC. The home for the aged in Zagreb had a capacity of 114 beds. Religious services were conducted during the High Holidays, and holiday dinners were provided for all the inmates. Summer camps for children and youth, with special lecture programs on Jewish subjects, were organized.

Relations with Israel

Yugoslavia continued its friendly relations with the State of Israel. The Jewish community celebrated the founding of the state, and Jevrejski Pregled noted the occasion by publishing a special article expressing warm congratulations to Israel on the occasion. On June 9, 1966 the trade agreement between Yugoslavia and Israel was extended to May 1967. Avigdor Dagan, the Israeli minister in Yugoslavia, estimated that the volume of trade between the two countries would reach some $25 million. During the opening ceremonies of the Zagreb trade fair, President Tito and President of the Federal Assembly Edward Kardelj visited the Israeli pavilion, where Dagan welcomed them.

Leon Shapiro
Bulgaria

No changes occurred in 1966 in the political situation of Bulgaria, which remained loyal to the Soviet Union in both foreign and domestic policy. However, Bulgaria did not adopt the new organizational principle of filling the two top positions in party and government with two different persons, as practiced by the USSR and the countries of the East European Soviet bloc. Since Bulgaria has no opposition party, 416 members of the Fatherland Front were elected to the People’s Assembly in February 1966. The new parliament reelected Todor Zhivkov premier; he also retained the post of first secretary of the Communist party.

While traditionally devoted to the Soviet Union, Bulgaria showed signs of slowly moving toward the firmer establishment of an independent policy toward the West and, in many ways, also toward its immediate neighbors, Turkey, Greece, Rumania, and Yugoslavia. Reforms in the country’s economic program were not as extensive as in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, but it also emphasized the need for incentives and more efficient methods of marketing. Bulgaria and the Soviet Union signed a new, farreaching trade agreement for 1966–1970, which involved 53 per cent of Bulgaria’s foreign trade. In October Zhivkov, accompanied by Defense Minister Dobry Dzhurov, visited the USSR, where they were received with warmth and expressions of friendship. In the same month Bulgaria also signed a military and cultural pact with the Soviet Union.

During the debate in the United Nations on an Israeli complaint against incursions from Syria, the Bulgarian delegate defended Syria and suggested that Israel was representing “imperialist forces.”

JEWISH COMMUNITY

There were about 7,000 Jews in Bulgaria, 4,000 in the capital city of Sofia, 1,000 in Plovdiv, and the remaining 2,000 mainly in Varna, Rus, Yambol, Pazardzhik, Pleven, Burgas, and Khaskovo.

Religious and Communal Life

Jewish religious life continued to disintegrate (AJYB, 1964 [Vol. 65], pp. 297–98). There were no qualified rabbis, and religious services, if any, were conducted by old men who were reared in the tradition of Judaism. Sofia had a hazan, Chaim Meshulam. There were no Jewish religious schools, and very few bar mitzvahs were celebrated. The rate of intermarriage was increasing, and in some communities the young people were losing all ties to Judaism. The Sofia Central synagogue, said to have been declared “a national cultural monument,” was opened to tourists.

Jewish religious affairs were administered by the Jewish Religious Council
under the direction of Isaak Moskona, who was also a member of the cultural committee of the community's lay organization. This organization, the Cultural and Educational Society of Jews in Bulgaria, was now in charge of all Jewish activities in Bulgaria. It was a Communist-dominated, non-religious group based on the ethnic principle, created in 1957 to replace both the old Consistoire, which had coordinated religious and all other communal affairs, and the separate Jewish religious communities. The society had a central committee of 31 members and an executive committee of 11 members, chaired by Josip Astrukov. David Asa was vice-chairman, and Leon Rubenov, secretary. Among the active leaders were also Solomon Bali, Beti Danon, Bezalel Markov, Israel Meier, Isidor Solomonov, Buko Isaakov, Yerocham Pardo, and Moise Pasi.

According to its own statements, the Cultural Society's principal aim was the mobilization of Bulgarian Jews around the slogans of the Communist party and, more particularly, their participation in "the building of a socialist society in Bulgaria." It organized its efforts in such a way as to "emphasize specific problems and the progressive traditions of Bulgarian Jewry and to promote feelings of love for their socialist fatherland and feelings of pride at being [allowed] to live in and defend their fatherland. . ." The society was also conducting an ideological campaign against the Zionist movement, upon which it looked as the "representative of international reaction and imperialism."

Cultural Life

The Cultural and Educational Society had at its disposal a Jewish House of Culture, where it conducted a continuous program of lectures, concerts, exhibits, and others. Similar programs were also presented in the local Jewish communities. Press reports indicated that many lectures were devoted to general political propaganda. The society had its own theater group and a choral ensemble, whose performances were highly appreciated also by non-Jewish audiences. Recently, an exhibit was presented on the martyrdom of the Jews under Nazi occupation. Among some 100 items, many dealt with Jewish resistance. The society also continued publication of its bi-weekly Yevreiski Vesty ("Jewish News") under the editorship of Isidor Solomonov. In addition to general party material, it contained articles of Jewish interest taken from the Warsaw Folks-shtime, the Paris Naye Presse, and the Moscow Sovetish Heymland, and some news items from Israel.

The old Jewish library was taken over by the Jewish Institute, an old-established institution devoted to the study of Jewish history and economics, which had recently been incorporated into the Institute of Balkan Studies (AJYB, 1964 [Vol. 65], p. 298). It contained over 2,000 rare old manuscripts, many of them unique and dating back to the 16th century. The institute was preparing a catalogue of this extant collection, of which Part I, compiled by Eli Eshkenazi and Strakhil Gitschev, was nearing completion. As part of an overall research program, the institute was sponsoring a study
by Sniejka Panova of the economic activities of the Jews in the Balkans in the 16th and 17th centuries, and another of Jewish folk music in the Balkans by Stamatka Kaludova. Plans were also under way for the preparation of a history of Bulgarian Jews and for a study of the use of Ladino in Bulgaria. In 1966 the first yearbook of the Jewish Cultural Society, Godishnik (vol. 1) was published in Sofia. Its editorial board, headed by David Benvenisti, included Eli Eshkenazi, Isidor Solomonov, Israel Meier, Klara Pincas, Renata Natan, and Salvator Israel. Included were articles on the history of the Bulgarian Jews and on the situation of the Jews under Nazi occupation, as well as an essay by Sniejka Panova, dealing with the subject matter of her larger study mentioned above. There were no statistical data or detailed information on the current Jewish situation.

Attitude toward Jews and Relations with Israel

While the government strongly discouraged contact between Bulgarian Jews and Jewish communities abroad, they enjoyed full equality at home. The constitution of December 4, 1947 proclaimed full equality of all citizens and made punishable every type of act involving racial, national, or religious slander. If any anti-Jewish feelings existed, they were weak and not vocal. The Jewish Cultural and Educational Society enjoyed recognition as a representative of the Jews. At the end of 1965 it received a special award for its "work for peace." Many Jews staffed government-run institutions and enterprises; they also occupied prominent positions in literature, the arts, and the professions. Among them were Ruben Avramov Levi, a member of the central committee of the party and a director of the Institute of Party History; David Solomon Elazar, alternate member of the central committee, and David Isaac Davidov, vice-chairman of the committee for labor and remunerations of the Council of Ministers. The first two volumes of Jack Melamed's trilogy, Yellow Horizons and The Great Stone House, dealing with the life of Jewish youth in Bulgaria, was received with great interest by Jewish and non-Jewish readers alike.

Among the many personalities in the arts, who were honored by the state in 1966, were Dora Gabai, noted poet; Mati Pincas, singer with the Sofia Opera Company, and Nioma Belayorski, well-known theatrical producer. Jews recently honored for special achievements in the industrial field included Jack Kalderon, Solomon Solomonov, and Isi Danon. State authorities and the party continued to commemorate Jewish heroes who died fighting the Nazis by holding special annual services on the anniversary of their death. Among the many so honored were Leon Tadzher, Violet Yaakov, Emil Shekerdjiski, Miko Papo, Ana Ventura, Jack Benbasat, and Solomon Aladzh.

While the authorities did not object to emigration, there were, in fact, no departures for Israel. There was, however, a lively Bulgarian-Israeli tourist trade which used the facilities of El Al Israeli Airlines. The Israelis continued to emphasize the warm friendship of the Bulgarians for the Jews.