During 1979 the question of succession, although avoided in the press, obviously preoccupied Soviet leadership. Both the party chief, Leonid Brezhnev, and the head of government, Aleksei Kosygin, were seriously ill and not always able to attend to their duties. Toward the end of the year, 74 year old Nikolai Tikhonov, first deputy premier and a close associate of Brezhnev, was promoted to full membership in the politburo. At the same time, Mikhail Gorbachev, a national party secretary in charge of the all-important agriculture sector, was made a candidate member of the politburo. It was significant that Gorbachev was the only Soviet leader under the age of 50 in a group where the average age was about 70.

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Eastern Europe

Soviet Union

Domestic Affairs

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were introduced for a variety of goods, including cars, furs, imported furniture, and jewelry. While this affected a relatively small number of individuals with substantial savings, increases in restaurant charges were a blow to a larger sector of the population. Soviet ideologists repeatedly argued that inflation was a curse of capitalist societies, but Soviet citizens were well aware that the ruble, like some Western currencies, was losing more and more of its value. Around Christmas a pound of turkey cost more than 7 rubles or the equivalent of over 10 dollars. The average monthly wage was about 160 rubles or some $240 at the official rate of exchange. Retirees, who received pensions of some 50 rubles, were the hardest hit.

The 1979 harvest was hurt by drought, and in June the Kremlin contracted for an additional 730,000 metric tons of grain from the United States. (A U.S. embargo imposed in 1980 substantially reduced the amount of grain exported to the USSR.)

The Moscow leadership, concerned about an increase in crime, drunkenness, and general lawlessness, issued a decree in September calling for a national effort to strengthen public order, especially in the urban centers. The increase in urban crime was perhaps one of the factors shaping the ambivalent attitude toward Stalin that was very much present in Soviet society; many people favorably compared Stalin's stern law-and-order regime with the present "soft" leadership.

Dissidence

There was a degree of relaxation in some areas of Soviet life, notwithstanding instances of harsh treatment of individual dissidents. It was significant that the Leningrad Ballet Ensemble, oriented toward modern expression and using "rock" music, was permitted to extend its work to wider audiences in many cities. Nonetheless, firm control and censorship prevailed in all areas of life. When a group of well-known writers attempted to publish an unofficial "thick" magazine, Poiski (Search), devoted to expressing divergent views—Marxist, liberal, Slavophile, etc.—the initiative was harshly suppressed. The police raided the apartments of the participating authors, and warned one of Poiski's editors, Piotr Egides, that the magazine constituted slander against the Soviet system. Egides was forced to emigrate in 1979, but during the year three issues of Poiski appeared—quite an achievement for a periodical of this kind. Among the Poiski group was Raisa Lert, a member of the party for over 50 years, who was expelled in March as a result of her connection with the magazine. Vasily Aksenov, a leading literary figure of the postwar period, resigned from the Union of Soviet Writers in protest against the organization's refusal to reinstate two young authors expelled for arguing against censorship.

The authorities did not react when a group of dissidents circulated an open letter requesting that the government demand the immediate release of the American hostages held in Iran. Among the signers of the letter were several of the contributors to Poiski. However, when poet Bella Akhmadulina spoke in defense of Andrei Sakharov, the human rights activist and Nobel Prize winner, the authorities
responded by depriving her of some of the material perquisites enjoyed by writers in the USSR.

An interesting development in the Soviet dissident movement—bringing a new voice to the fore—was the appearance in the fall of an uncensored publication devoted to the problems of women in the Soviet Union.

According to Amnesty International, more than 40 dissidents were brought to trial in the USSR in the last third of 1979. Among those arrested was Viktor Nekipelov, a pharmacist and poet, who had already served a two-year prison term. Nekipelov is a Karaite from the Crimea; one of his poems was devoted to Chufut Kale, the ancient Karaite center there.

In April five Soviet dissidents—Aleksandr Ginzburg, Edward Kuznetsov, Mark Dymshits, Valentin Moroz, and Georgii Vins—were released from detention centers and flown to New York in exchange for two Soviet spies sentenced to long prison terms in the United States. Kuznetsov and Dymshits had been sentenced to death in 1970 for participation in the aborted plot to hijack a Soviet plane to Israel; their sentences were commuted to long prison terms. Interestingly, Ginzburg, a practicing Greek Orthodox Christian, took the name of his Jewish mother in defiance of the prevailing antisemitism. He was active in relief work on behalf of arrested dissidents, distributing funds coming from royalties received by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Georgii Vins was active in opposition to the official All-Soviet Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists. Valentin Moroz was a strongly nationalist Ukrainian.

In an open letter to a Washington meeting of human rights activists, Andrei Sakharov pointed out that dissidence was developing in the Soviet satellite countries.

Nationalities

Although Moscow was firmly in control of the large number of national minorities residing in various areas of the USSR, there was deep unrest, particularly among the local intelligentsia who resented increased efforts at russification. In the Baltic countries—Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—the government had brought in Russians and Ukrainians, who were not only taking over a great many of the available jobs, but were changing the demographic character of the region. Dissidents among the Ukrainian intelligentsia, particularly in the Western Ukraine, were having success in attracting writers and teachers who remained in the party but resented Russian dictates. Nationalist protests also continued in Georgia and Armenia. Thousands of Armenians, including many who went to the USSR after World War II, were seeking to emigrate. Between 1970 and 1978, 3,000 Armenians left the Soviet Union for the United States, and the rate of emigration was on the rise. Among others, the Crimean Tatars, victims of deportations decreed by Stalin, were protesting their inability to return to the Crimea, presently part of the Ukrainian Republic.
The Communist apparatus mobilized all of its resources to stop the growth of local nationalist dissent. Following up on the decision of the 25th party congress (1978), a serious effort was being made to mold the younger generation into Soviet patriots. In May a conference on "Russian Language, the Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the People of the USSR" took place in Tashkent (Uzbekistan). The focus of the deliberations, in which language specialists, educators, and school administrators participated, was the idea that the Russian language should be introduced into every non-Russian school beginning with the earliest grades. If and when this suggested reform was adopted, it would surely encounter strong opposition in Georgia, Lithuania, Kirghizia, etc., since its intent was the application of a policy of forced assimilation.

Foreign Affairs

In June there was a summit meeting in Vienna that brought together Leonid Brezhnev and Jimmy Carter. The two leaders signed the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT), which required approval by the U.S. Senate before going into effect. Although developments in Chinese-U.S. relations did not please the Soviets, Sino-Soviet talks were entered into toward the end of 1979. Both the Soviets and the Chinese were aware of the need to normalize relations, but much remained to be done to push both sides to concrete results. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union conducted large-scale military maneuvers along the Chinese border, and from time to time there were reports of clashes between Soviet and Chinese forces.

The policy of detente did not stop the Kremlin leaders from pursuing a policy of overt and covert expansion. In neighboring Afghanistan, Moscow engineered a change of presidents, replacing Nur Mohammed Tarak with Hafizullah Amin. In September Soviet troops were flown into Kabul.*

Relations with Israel

Moscow maintained its strong anti-Israel policy, supporting the PLO and the Arab demand for a Palestinian state in the area, including East Jerusalem. At the same time, Moscow Radio, in its programs directed to the Arab world, disseminated crude anti-Zionist propaganda, emphasizing the "racist character" of Zionism and the "racist" policies of Israel. In the United Nations, Moscow indicated its unhappiness with President Carter’s Camp David efforts at peace in the Middle East.

Reports by Israeli leftists that the Kremlin leaders were beginning to rethink their harsh anti-Israeli policy appeared to be wishful thinking. However, in August a group of Israeli political scientists did participate in the International Conference on Political Science held in Moscow. On the Sabbath, the Israeli delegates went to the synagogue, where Professor Zev Katz addressed the congregation in Yiddish,

*The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan will be discussed in the next volume of the AJYB.
and expressed hope that peace would come to the Middle East. Meanwhile the Soviets continued to send large supplies of weapons to many of the Arab states.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

*Demography*

Preliminary results of the 1979 Soviet census were released, but the figures had to be viewed with care. According to the 1959 census, the Soviet Jewish population stood at 2,268,000, while the 1970 census indicated some 2,161,000 Jews, or a decline of 117,000. The 1979 census gave the figure for Jews as 1,810,000, or 460,000 less than in 1959 and some 350,000 less than in 1970. While part of the decline was due to emigration (as of 1978 about 175,000 Jews had left the Soviet Union), there were still about 285,000 Jews unaccounted for as persons belonging to the Jewish national group. According to the 1959 census there were 875,307 Jews in the RSFSR (Russian group) and 840,311 in the Ukraine, as against 700,000 and 634,000, respectively, indicated in the present census. In other words, the Jewish population of these two Slavic republics declined by some 380,000. What happened to these Jews remains an open question, particularly if one takes into account the fact that the total population of the Soviet Union showed an approximately 8 per cent increase over 1970—some 260,000,000 in 1979, as against 242,000,000 in 1970. The most likely explanation is that in addition to purely demographic factors, i.e., a declining birth rate and increased emigration, Jews were being "passed" into the Russian, Ukrainian, and, probably, Belorussian nationalities.

The 1979 census revealed that a falling birth rate had particularly affected the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian nationalities, who now constituted 72 per cent of the total population, as against 74 per cent in 1970. The number of ethnic Russians fell from 54.6 per cent in 1959, to 53.4 per cent in 1970, and then to 52.4 per cent in 1979. At the same time, among the more than one hundred nationality groups living in the USSR, many, which had not yet reached the level of industrialization and urbanization attained by the Slavs, experienced considerable population growth.

A well-known Soviet demographer, M.B. Tatimov, in *The Development of Population and Demographic Policy*, pointed out that by the year 2000 the proportion of ethnic Russians in the total population would be reduced to some 46 per cent. Russians and other Slavs represent the leading national and political elements in the Soviet Union, and their numerical decline worries the leadership. Under these circumstances, it appears the Kremlin leaders have allowed a gradual "passing" of some Jewish elements into the corresponding Slavic populations, at least in terms of national identification. Respondents to the Soviet census do not have to present their internal passports, and are able to identify themselves according to choice. Many assimilated Jews, it seems, are quite willing to register as Russians,
Ukrainians, etc. From the Kremlin's point of view this not only boosts the total figures of the dominant Slavic groups, but also reduces the weight of the so-called Russian Jewish intelligentsia. However, a Jew remains a Jew whether he is registered as a Jew, a Russian, or a Ukrainian. The same, of course, is true of assimilated Jews. It is estimated that in 1979 there were some 2,630,000 Jews in the Soviet Union. This figure assumes a rate of natural increase of about 5 per cent, and allows for Jewish emigration during the year. It is important to note that in the census 14.2 per cent of the respondents listed Yiddish as their mother tongue, while others listed Judeo-Tadzhik and other Jewish dialects.

Emigration

According to available figures, some 50,000 Jews left the USSR in 1979, bringing the total since emigration became possible in 1970 to approximately 225,000. As years went by, about 75 per cent of the emigrants went to countries other than Israel. Oddly enough, hundreds of Jewish families went to West Berlin. There were an estimated 250,000 Jews still seeking to leave the Soviet Union. Of great significance was the increasing number of non-Jews who were applying for exit visas. Among them were many representatives of the Russian intelligentsia—writers, musicians, and painters. Several thousand Armenians have left the USSR, as have several tens of thousands of Volga Germans. Among the religious denominations, thousands of Pentacostals were clamoring for permission to leave.

Communal and Religious Life

Whatever remained of Jewish communal life in the USSR was concentrated around the small number of still-functioning synagogues; the synagogues were the only places where Jews with national feelings felt at home. The precise number of synagogues was not known, but apparently, in addition to the legally constituted congregations (the so-called dvaadtsatkas), there were minyonim assembling privately. Iakov Fishman was rabbi of the Moscow synagogue. In the spring Adolf Shayevich was installed as deputy rabbi. Shayevich, a native of Birobidzhan, was trained by special permission at the Jewish Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest, where two other Russian students were awaiting ordination. Several thousand Armenians have left the USSR, as have several tens of thousands of Volga Germans. Among the religious denominations, thousands of Pentacostals were clamoring for permission to leave.

In 1979 a sufficient quantity of matzot was provided in Moscow and Leningrad. Rabbi Pinhas Teitz of Elizabeth, New Jersey reported that his shipments of esrogim, lulavim, and hadasim reached Jews in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Vilno, Tashkent, Tbilisi, Kovno, Chernovitz, Baku, Minsk, Bobruisk, and Lvov. In May the authorities in charge of religious cults gave the Moscow synagogue permission to import
1,500 prayer shawls, 250 pair of tefilin, and 300 mezuzot. This news was greeted with joy, since the production of religious articles was discouraged and a black market for them had developed.

There was no formal religious education in the USSR. Chedorim were strictly forbidden, and underground religious education could not be provided to more than a very limited number of youth. There were signs, however, of awakening interest in Jewish religious observance. This, no doubt, was connected with the increased concern for Jewish national identification. Under these conditions, synagogues become centers of Jewish affirmation, although in many cases with a peculiar secular tinge. The lack of formal Jewish religious education was a factor in the conversion to Christianity of some Jews seeking deeper religious experience. The well-known Christian church historian, A. Levitin-Krasnov, recently wrote about Mikhail Meerson Aksenov, a priest, and his wife, now in the United States, both of whom were young Jews inspired by the Christian ideal.

All religious activities in the Soviet Union were strictly controlled by the state. However, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Moslem religious group were favored for political reasons, and from time to time used this to their advantage. Thus, Patriarch Pimen of Moscow announced that new Greek Orthodox churches had been opened in Vladivostok, Novokuznetsk, and in the Novgorod region. Representatives of various sects—Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and others—who displeased the authorities were arrested and sent to prison camps; Vladimir A. Shelkov, a Seventh-Day Adventist, died in a camp near Yakutsk, Siberia.

Along with other representatives of religious groups, Rabbi Fishman issued a statement in support of the SALT II agreement. "This agreement," said Fishman, "will be a model for settling tensions in the world, including the Middle East."

**Antisemitism and Discrimination**

Anti-Jewish sentiments continued to pervade Russian society. Indeed, judging by the literature on Jews, Judaism, and Israel appearing in the Soviet Union, it was clear that nothing had changed in this regard since Tsarist times. Not only did the Soviets put Jews in a special category, they also attempted to eradicate the Jewish past. At this late date, the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was still being utilized to warn of the danger that Jews presented to the USSR. In February, not long before the election to the Supreme Soviet, a mimeographed sheet circulated in Leningrad calling on "the faithful sons of Russia to throw the Zionists out of the Kremlin." Anti-Jewish feelings were even expressed in some dissident circles, particularly among those which were inspired by Slavophile ideology.

In May an unsigned statement, distributed privately, accused Soviet poet Andreii Voznesensky of being a Zionist because, during a visit to Moscow by Marc Chagall, Voznesensky had referred to him as "a great Russian artist." Evgenii Evseev, a notorious antisemitic writer, characterized Aron Vergelis, editor of Sovietish Heimland, as a crypto-Zionist. In his pamphlet, Zionism in the Cause of Imperialism,
Evseev called Zionism the "most dangerous of all fascist forms." The International Affairs Publishing House in Moscow issued a new book by Lidiia Magzhorian under the title Zionism as a Form of Racism and Racist Discrimination. Among other things, Magzhorian argued that the Jewish question was created under Tsar Nikolai I by Jews from Western Europe who were trying to penetrate, with their capital, into the Russian empire.

Anti-Jewish quotas were in effect throughout the Soviet structure, both in agencies providing employment and in the major institutions of higher learning. Grigorii Freiman, a mathematics professor, indicated that whereas in the 1960's one-fifth of the mathematics students at Moscow University were Jewish, in the mid-1970's there were only two or three Jewish mathematics students at Leningrad University. While there were still many Jews in industry and science, it was clearly difficult for them to obtain advancement, or to be employed in a responsible post. With the exception of Veniamin Dymshits, the perennial deputy premier of the USSR, there were no Jews in top positions in the party, state, or armed forces. On occasion one noticed a Jewish retired general among the officers of a Soviet agency, e.g., General Mikhail Milshteint at the Moscow Institute of the United States and Canada.

From time to time, there were developments that were inexplicable in the context of Soviet anti-Jewish policy. Thus, in the summer, Moscow's Tretiakov Gallery organized an exhibition of paintings and illustrations by Leonid Pasternak (the father of Boris Pasternak, author of Doctor Zhivago), who left Russia after the October revolution. In Tbilisi, Georgia, the state television station presented a 50-minute program on medieval Jewish poetry, including the Zion poems of Yehuda Halevi.

Jewish Resistance

Jewish dissidents and "refuseniks" who protested against the obstacles placed in the way of would-be emigrants received harsh treatment at the hands of Soviet authorities. Among those arrested in the summer was Igor Guberman, who was involved in many Jewish cultural endeavors, including the underground magazine Jews in the USSR. Moscow "refuseniks" Viktor and Irina Brailovskv were repeatedly interrogated; the former was threatened with arrest as a "parasite." Yecheskiel Zaks, in Tashkent, was given a two-year suspended sentence for baking and selling matzot.

Although Jewish dissent centered around the emigration issue, some Jews looked for means to improve the quality of Jewish life in the Soviet Union. There were an estimated 60 Hebrew teachers active throughout the USSR, with 34 in Moscow and 14 in Leningrad. Samizdat material on Jewish history and thought was being circulated. Isai Goldstein, a meteorologist in Tbilisi, suggested to party officials in Georgia that, in line with Soviet nationalities policy, a Jewish radio and television station and a Jewish cultural institution be established. In December a seminar on Jewish history was held in Kishinev, with Hanukah the subject of discussion.
The authorities continued to discourage Jewish cultural activities. There were no Jewish schools, and only one Yiddish periodical, *Sovetish Heimland*, edited by Aron Vergelis.

Despite the attitude of the authorities, and the departure for abroad of a number of Yiddish writers and actors, some Yiddish activities were maintained. The Moscow Yiddish Drama Ensemble, under the direction of Joseph Riklin, performed in Moscow and other cities around the capital. Lia Sokolovskaia, a member of the Moscow Ensemble, gave a recital of Jewish songs. The Vilno Yiddish Folk Theater added to its repertoire a new play, *Chelmer Chachomim* (The Wise of Chelm), by Moshe Gershonson. Its music ensemble of 25 members, under the direction of V. Glushko, presented Yiddish songs to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Jewish music was also heard at the Festival of Russian Winter in Moscow, when Evgenii Svetlanov conducted the Academic State Symphony in such works as Bloch’s *Bal-Shem Tov*, and Zinovii Kompaneets’ *Rhapsody on Jewish Themes*. The Yiddish Chamber Theater in Birobidzhan, the only professional Yiddish theater group in the USSR, under the direction of Iuri Sherling, presented the premiere of *Lo Mir Alle in Einem* (Let Us All Together) with musical arrangement by Mikhail Gluz. The group was enthusiastically received in many cities of the Ural region as well as in Chernovitz. Amateur Yiddish groups continued their activities in Kovno, Leningrad, and Kiev.

As far as could be ascertained, the following new Yiddish books became available: *Harbst Lieder* (Autumn Songs), by Shika Driz; *Intervegs* (On the Way), by Itsik Kipnis; *Di Eibike Mos* (Eternal Measure), by Shmul Gordon; *In Farshidene Tseitn* (In Various Times), by Iosif Rabin; *Der Mench is Gut* (Man is Good), by Moishe Kulbak; and *Di Kleine Erd* (The Little Land), by Leonid Brezhnev—a translation of the Soviet leader’s memoirs. The official Soviet statistical publications failed to include a listing of Yiddish books appearing in the Soviet Union. It would appear that between 1948 and 1979 only 71 books in Yiddish were published in the USSR—an average of two books a year.

*Sovetish Heimland* carried an article by the well-known semitologist Leib Wilsker on the Yiddish and Hebrew holdings of the Leningrad Library, which included over 18,400 books in Hebrew and related languages, and some 18,800 in Yiddish. In February the Leningrad Library organized an exhibition of Sholem Aleichem’s works, both in the original and in translation. Many thousands of Jews crowded the International Book Fair held in Moscow on September 4–10 to examine books of Jewish interest written in English, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Russian. Among 40 books excluded by Soviet authorities were four dealing with Jewish subjects.

Among artists dealing with Jewish themes was Peisach Krivoruski, who exhibited his sculptures (including those of Yiddish writers and actors) in Repino, near Leningrad. Tankhum Kaplan, the well-known illustrator of Sholem Aleichem, had his works on Chekhov included in an exhibition at the Leningrad Museum. Many of the graphic works of Gershon Kravtsov were placed on exhibit in Moscow.
An interesting event was sponsored by the Moscow University's ethnographic department: Vladimir Tchernin, a student, prepared a paper on the history and culture of the Karaites and Krymchaks (Crimean Jews). Among other sources, Tchernin used the works of the Karaite scholar Avram Firkovich. He also presented songs recorded locally.

**Birobidzhan**

There were some 15,000–16,000 Jews living in Birobidzhan. After two years of preparation, Yiddish courses were being taught there by 12 teachers in three high schools; the teachers were employing textbooks prepared before World War II. This was the first time in decades that courses in Yiddish were available for teenagers. However, there was very little interest among the youth in Yiddish as a language.

*Communist*, an official publication, ran an article by Lev Shapiro, the first secretary of the Jewish regional committee of the party in Birobidzhan, in which he described the history of Birobidzhan and pointed out that the *Birobidzhaner Shtern* was the only Yiddish newspaper in the USSR. He also noted that in the recent election to the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities, Rakhel Geller, a Jewish worker, had become the deputy of Birobidzhan.

**Commemoration of the Holocaust**

On October 28, 1979, the 38th anniversary of the murder of the Jews in the Kovno ghetto, an impressive gathering took place at 9th Fort, where a wreath bearing Yiddish and Lithuanian inscriptions was placed on the mass grave. Mune Gitkind, a Kovno ghetto survivor, recited a poem. There was a similar gathering at 7th Fort.

In November an international conference of Auschwitz committees was held in Moscow. Stefan Grayek, a former partisan leader now living in Israel, represented the Jewish Resistance Fighters.

In July the Supreme Court of Lithuania sentenced Ionas Mecislovas Plunge to death for his participation in the mass murder near Minsk of 46,500 Jews, Poles, and Belorussians.

**Personalia**

Sonia Frey, a Communist writer and member of the editorial group of *Sovetish Heimland*, died at the age of 75. Iekhiel Tchichelnitskii, the deputy editor of *Sovetish Heimland*, died at the age of 70. Iasha Rubin, a Yiddish writer, died at the age of 66.

Anatoly Kuznetsov, a non-Jewish Russian writer, died in London at the age of 49; he had defected to Britain in 1969. Kuznetsov was known for his book, *Babi-Yar*, which recounted the German murder of Jews in Kiev in 1941.

Leon Shapiro
Soviet Bloc Nations

Introduction

There were no significant political changes during the period under review in the East European countries controlled by the Soviet Union.* The Soviet Bloc nations conformed to Kremlin policy, while trying, where possible, to preserve a limited independence in domestic affairs. All of them were integrated into the Soviet Union's economic plans, and were compelled to participate in economic exchanges with the USSR on terms dictated by the Kremlin.

The situation of the Jewish communities in Eastern Europe depended in large part on the internal political structure and degree of liberalization prevailing in each of the various Soviet satellite states. While dissident movements, in varying degrees, played an important role in the countries concerned, they had no significant effect on the official Jewish communal structure. The size of the individual Jewish communities, of course, also had an impact in determining their ability to maintain a certain level of religious and secular Jewish life.

This survey will deal with the Jewish communities of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Poland

The decline in the economic situation in Poland made it impossible for the government to meet workers' demands for higher wages and adequate supplies of consumer goods. The annual rate of growth in industrial production fell from 10.9 per cent in 1975 to about 2.8 per cent in 1979. Sporadic strikes were a regular occurrence in various cities. The regime did make small concessions to avert a major explosion, but subsidies for consumer goods and promises of a better future did not stop the growing social ferment. Dissidence was growing and was apparently attracting even some elements that followed the Communist party line. The

*The events in Poland in August 1980 will be discussed in the next AJYB.
opposition, particularly the Workers Defense Committee, with Jacek Kuron and Edward Lipinski, the aged economist, among its leaders, enlarged its demands, calling not only for economic changes, but also for independent workers trade organizations, free bargaining, and the elimination of censorship. It succeeded in maintaining Zapis and Robotnik as censorship-free publications.

In November 1979 some 150 individuals, including members of the free trade union movement, students, and writers, openly demonstrated in Warsaw, demanding radical changes in the country. The police arrested the demonstrators, but released them the next day; the authorities were clearly unwilling to provoke further incidents. At the same time, the authorities tried to suppress the "Flying University," which was organized by academics and intellectuals, and provided uncensored lectures on history, economics, and literature.

The Catholic Church maintained its position as an essential factor in Polish life. Its importance was underscored during the visit of the Pope, the former Karol Cardinal Vojtyla, which, notwithstanding the official atheistic policies of the state, occasioned an unprecedented demonstration of religious devotion. In the course of his visit to Auschwitz, the Pope paused before a Hebrew memorial and stated: "This inscription awakens the memory of the people whose sons and daughters were intended for total extermination." "This people draws its origin from Abraham, our father in faith," he added. Perhaps as a result of the election of a Pole as Pope, relations between the Catholic Church and the government improved markedly. Among new policies adopted was an exemption from military draft of young men studying for the priesthood. Stefan Cardinal Wyszinski, the Polish primate, announced that the authorities had permitted the construction of 14 new churches. Under current conditions, the Church was a stabilizing factor in the country.

The Soviet Union has for years maintained a substantial military presence in Poland. For obvious reasons, this has been a factor in limiting moves by competing social groups.

Edward Gierek continued in the post of secretary-general of the Polish Communist party (PPRZ) and thus was the actual leader of the country. Henryk Jablonski was head of state, a largely ceremonial post. Prime Minister Piotr Jaroczewicz was removed from his post and ousted from the ruling politburo; he was replaced by Edward Babiuch.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

There were about 6,000 Jews in Poland. Some sources cited a figure of 8,000, apparently including in their estimate Jews who had changed their names, intermarried, and become integrated into Polish society. The Warsaw Jewish population numbered some 2,500; in Wroclaw there were 1,000 Jews; in Krakow and Lodz about 600 each; in Katowice and Tarnow about 100 each; and there were small groups elsewhere.
Jewish activities were coordinated by the secular Jewish Cultural and Social Union (JCSU), whose membership was estimated at about 1,500, and which had affiliates functioning in 14 cities, among them Warsaw, Wroclaw, Krakow, Lodz, Walbrzych, Dzierzsonow, Szczecin, Katowice, and Lublin; the executive secretary was Ruta Gutkowska. In the early post-World War II period, JCSU had organized a wide range of activities, including schools, "folk universities," libraries, publications, cultural clubs, and theatrical productions. In the course of the last seven or eight years, however, most of these activities had been liquidated. In 1979 the Union was maintaining a party propaganda program, party literary forums, and an occasional lecture series.

The Jewish Historical Institute, headed by Maurizi Horn, was still in existence but under strict party control. Its substantial archives and library facilities were being used for research on Jewish subjects.

The Warsaw-based Yiddish State Theater, named for Esther Rachel Kaminska, enjoyed a substantial state subsidy and gave Yiddish performances three times a week before Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Earphones were provided for simultaneous translation into Polish, as knowledge of Yiddish was practically nil. The Theater employed eight non-Jewish performers who had been trained in Yiddish. Among the directors was Jacob Rotbaum, who was well-known to Yiddish audiences in the United States, where he had directed many Yiddish productions. The head of the Theater was Szymon Szurmiej, who studied in the Soviet Union during the war years and returned to Poland in 1946. The Theater's repertoire included plays about the Holocaust as well as contemporary dramas such as *Death of a Salesman*.

*Folks-sztyme*. JCSU's newspaper, edited by M. Tenenblat, published a Polish supplement for the younger generation. It had a circulation of about 3,000.

Of late, some assimilated Jews among the intelligentsia had begun to show an interest in Jewish life as part of a quest for roots.

Jewish religious life in Poland continued to deteriorate. There were no rabbis or cantors, and *chedorim* for religious education of the young were forbidden. The Union of Religious Congregations (URC) provided an address for what remained of religious Jewry in Poland; it was presided over by Moses Finkelsztein. Since there were no rabbis, services were conducted by knowledgeable men of the older generation. On occasion a rabbi from Hungary visited a Polish synagogue. However, in February 1979, Asher Zibes, a Brooklyn rabbi, reported to be Polish-born, was appointed to serve as a rabbi. It was expected that he would soon take over rabbinical responsibilities.

URC provided for burials and tried to cope with the problem of rapidly deteriorating Jewish cemeteries. It provided *matzot* for Passover. In addition to its purely religious activities, it operated a kosher communal kitchen in Warsaw.

While Poland had no diplomatic relations with Israel, some contacts between Polish Jews and Israel were maintained. A Polish-Jewish delegation participated in a conference of Polish Jews from many countries held in Israel in February 1979. Among the delegates were Szymon Szurmiej and Moses Finkelsztein.
University hosted a congress devoted to Hebrew Language and Culture in which Israeli scholars and Hebrew activists participated.

President Carter’s Commission on the Holocaust announced in December 1979 that the Polish government had agreed to renovate the spot in Warsaw from which hundreds of thousands of Jews had been deported to the Nazi extermination camps. At the same time, it was reported that Polish authorities had asked UNESCO to include the former Auschwitz camp in the World Heritage List. If this should come to pass, it would confer on Auschwitz the protection provided under the Convention for the Preservation of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was adopted in 1972. In support of the request, the World Jewish Congress stated that the inclusion of Auschwitz would “insure the safeguarding of its unique character as a place that witnessed unparalleled crimes of profound significance for the history of mankind.”

Hungary

The Hungarian Communist leadership had succeeded for some years in pursuing a policy which, while remaining faithful to overall Soviet dictates, afforded substantial independence in the conduct of internal affairs. A striking feature in this regard was an economic policy based on the profit motive. Plans were being made for a redistribution of the labor force that would put some 10 per cent of workers in new jobs. It was expected that some old enterprises would be closed, and that functioning enterprises would pay full prices for raw materials based on world rates. Once established, factories would be monitored for both productivity and profit.

Under the continuing direction of Janos Kadar, secretary-general of the Communist party, the authorities permitted greater freedom in internal life than that generally prevailing in the Soviet sphere of influence. This was also true with respect to church-state relations; there was a continuing dialogue between Marxists and Catholics. The government permitted tourist exchange, and many Hungarians traveled abroad. Limitations, however, were imposed on the activities of writers and other intellectuals. Release of a volume of essays by Gyula Illyes, a well-known poet and writer, was delayed by the authorities because they objected to his views on the situation of the Hungarian minorities living in neighboring Rumania and Czechoslovakia. In October 1979 seven intellectuals, led by Lazlo Rajk, son of the former Communist leader of the same name who was executed in 1949, signed a letter of protest against the persecution of dissidents in Czechoslovakia.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

It was estimated that the Jewish population of Hungary (including Jews who did not identify with Jewish activities) stood at about 80,000, making the Hungarian Jewish community the second largest in Eastern Europe. Large numbers of Jews had become completely integrated into the surrounding society. Antisemitism was
strictly forbidden by the authorities. As a consequence, there was no desire for emigration.

Jewish activities were coordinated by the Central Board of Jewish Communities, which included both the Neolog (Conservative) and Orthodox trends. Imre Heber was president of the Board; Mrs. I. Seifert was secretary. Central Board records indicated some 70 affiliated Jewish communities maintaining several dozen synagogues, including the famous Budapest Dohanyi Synagogue, where several hundred men and women attended regular Sabbath services. There were seven Orthodox synagogues in Budapest. The Board maintained a Bet-Din, a ritual bath, and a hevra kadisha to deal with burials. As was the case with other religious denominations, salaries of religious personnel were provided by the state.

The Central Board maintained a home for the aged caring for some 100 individuals, and supported a 200-bed hospital; both institutions provided kosher food and had adequate facilities. The Board also operated a kosher restaurant, a kosher butcher shop, and a matzot bakery.

The Central Board's educational efforts included a gymnasium that offered Jewish studies to high school students and an elementary yeshiva for younger children. A Jewish museum was functioning in Budapest. Of special importance was the operation of Budapest's Rabbinical Seminary—established a century ago—the only institution offering rabbinc training in Eastern Europe. Directed by the well-known scholar, Rabbi Alexander Scheiber, the school had an enrollment of 17, including one student from Czechoslovakia, two from Bulgaria, and three from the Soviet Union. Students at the Seminary were helpful in performing religious services in the provincial communities. The Seminary's academic staff conducted research encompassing Jewish history, literature, and thought. The significance of the school, whose budget was covered in equal parts by the state and the Jewish community, could not be overestimated.

The Jewish research and publication program conducted in Budapest included the issuance of a new volume of Monumenta Hungariae Judaica, a scholarly encyclopedic work begun long before World War II. In preparation were a history of the Jews of Kaposwan, a volume dealing with Jews in the Tolna district, and a 1980–1981 yearbook. Efforts were also being made to prepare a register of archival and library holdings.

The educational and cultural work of the community was supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

Erno Gero, the last Stalinist leader before the 1956 rebellion, passed away in Budapest at the age of 82. He had been removed from office and replaced by Janos Kadar.

Czechoslovakia

The government of Gustav Husak, state president and secretary-general of the Communist party, continued its fight against what it called "subversion of the republic." It did not, however, succeed in silencing the many intellectuals who
opposed the regime and demanded radical social change. Among the dissidents were individuals who wrote for the Samizdat Pedlice Press and actors who participated in the Living Room Theater. In October 1979 six human rights activists—Vaclaw Havel, Peter Uhl, Vaclaw Benda, Jiri Dienstbier, Mrs. Ota Bednarova, and Mrs. Dana Nemcova—were convicted of “anti-state” activities; all received prison sentences ranging from two to six years. The six were affiliated with the Charter 77 movement and the Group for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted. One of the defendants, Vaclaw Havel, was well-known in the West; two of his plays had been performed in New York, and one had received an Obie Award during the 1968 season. The trial of the six dissidents was one of the largest of its type among the Eastern European satellites, and provoked protests from, among other groups, the French, Italian, and Spanish Communist parties. In another case, Pavel Kohut, a playwright, was stripped of his citizenship. Jiri Leder, a Jewish journalist and one of the signers of the Charter 77 manifesto, who was jailed in 1977, was released from prison.

Following the general hard-line policy of the Kremlin, the Prague government pursued a strong pro-Arab, anti-Israel policy. The anti-Zionist attitude of the authorities was often transformed into open anti-Jewish propaganda; “Jewish bankers and capitalists of the USA” were attacked in the media, and Soviet antisemitic literature was translated into Czech and Slovak. A series, “Unknown Chapters from Zionist History,” was made available in the ideological journal Tribuna; the author, Svatopluk Dolejs, argued that there was close cooperation between the Zionists and the Nazis.

**Jewish Community**

It was estimated that the Jewish population of Czechoslovakia numbered some 12,000, including persons of Jewish origin who had become integrated into the surrounding population. Membership in the Community of Religious Congregations amounted to some 4,000–5,000, including 1,500 in Prague and 1,200 in Bratislava. Most of the members were elderly. Bedrich Bass was chairman of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in Czech Lands (CJRC); Artur Radvanski was secretary-general. Julius Ehrenthal was chairman of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia. Both Bass and Ehrenthal participated as observers in the conference of the European Council of Jewish Communal Service held in Vienna in November 1978.

Jewish religious and cultural life continued to deteriorate. Jewish education for the young was, to all intents and purposes, non-existent. Czech Jews had been without a rabbi for many years. In Slovakia, Rabbi Isidor Katz died in December 1978. It was expected that a Czech student at the Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest would take over the rabbinical post in Prague upon his graduation.
Religious services were conducted in synagogues, and there were also private *minyonim*. The religious community in Prague celebrated Purim and arranged for seder meals and the sale of *matzot*. There was a kosher restaurant that received meat supplies from Bratislava.

In Prague, a lecture series on Jewish subjects was organized, and a Women's Committee, under the chairmanship of Vilma Holzer, was formed. The condition of the Jewish museum in Prague continued to worsen; systematic research projects were no longer being conducted.

Jewish cemeteries continued to deteriorate. It was reported that CJRC was seeking ways to preserve some of the 400 cemeteries in Bohemia and Moravia. According to *Vestnik*, CJRC's organ, some of the ancient cemeteries in Bohemia were scheduled to be razed so that housing projects could be built. Since 1977, 14 Jewish cemeteries—two in Bohemia, two in Moravia, and ten in Slovakia—had been destroyed.

*Vestnik* celebrated its 40th anniversary in 1979. In addition, the Jewish community had at its disposal a yearbook which published studies dealing with Jewish historical subjects.

Ludvik Svoboda, former president of Czechoslovakia, passed away in Prague at the age of 83. Svoboda had been elected to office in March 1968, some five months before the Russians invaded Prague and liquidated the liberal Dubcek regime. Svoboda remained in high office until 1975, when he retired.

*Leon Shapiro*