

# Eastern Europe

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## Soviet Union

### *Domestic Affairs*

**O**N MARCH 11, 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the fourth Soviet Communist party leader of the 1980s, succeeding Konstantin Chernenko, who died after only a year in office. In contrast to his three elderly predecessors (Chernenko, Yuri Andropov, and Leonid Brezhnev), Gorbachev entered office at the relatively young age of 54, following a meteoric rise through the Stavropol-area Komsomol and party hierarchies. Gorbachev's rise to the general secretaryship of the party was widely interpreted, in and out of the USSR, as the definitive end of the "Brezhnev Era," which had begun in 1964. Soviet citizens and foreign observers alike looked to see how Gorbachev would deal with his country's mounting problems: a sluggish and increasingly corrupt economy and society; a stagnant political system that seemed to have lost some of its dynamism at home and much of its appeal abroad; and increased tensions between the superpowers.

In the first months of his regime, Gorbachev moved quickly in the area of personnel, more cautiously in the area of policy. In the month following his assumption of office he named three new members of the Politburo, including the head of the KGB. A number of government ministers were retired, and on lower levels many changes were made in both party and state hierarchies.

In September the chairman of the Council of Ministers ("prime minister"), Nikolai Tikhonov, retired at age 80 and was replaced by Politburo member and economics specialist Nikolai Ryzhkov, aged 56. Earlier, Foreign Minister and long-time diplomat Andrei Gromyko had been made chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet ("president" of the USSR) and been replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze, a younger man with no foreign-policy experience, whose career had been in the party apparatus of Georgia.

A major change instituted by Gorbachev was a widely publicized campaign against alcoholism, the country's most severe social problem. From the specific measures put into effect, it seemed clear that this was not going to be a repeat of previous half-hearted programs but a long-term effort to change deeply ingrained habits and behavioral patterns.

Another theme struck by the new leader was the need for more *glasnost*, openness and frankness, in Soviet society. Problems of red tape, venality, irrational behavior on the part of officials, *pro forma* fulfillment of official duties, and lack of enthusiastic participation in political activities were some of the subjects which began to be discussed more openly. Both the possibilities and the limitations of the new *glasnost* were illustrated by an episode involving Yevgeniy Yevtushenko, the well-known poet and writer. Addressing a closed session of the Writers Congress in December, he strongly criticized censorship, special privileges, cover-ups of Stalin's purges, the enormous human losses during the collectivization drives, and the rewriting of history to suit political needs. However, what was allowed in a speech to a closed group could not be revealed to a mass readership: the published version of the poet's address in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (December 18) omitted many critical references.

Gorbachev's approach to improving the Soviet economy leaned toward upgrading the quality of leadership, creating more effective policies, and eliminating corruption, rather than making major structural changes. Though proposals for such reforms were discussed openly, and officials made favorable comments about Hungarian economic reforms, no major structural changes were carried out in the Soviet economy in 1985. One small but noteworthy change was announced in November: five ministries and a state committee dealing with agriculture were abolished and their functions combined in a new "superagency," the State Committee for Agro-Industrial Complexes.

### *Human Rights*

In December Elena Bonner, wife of Andrei Sakharov, the scientist and champion of human rights, arrived in Italy for medical treatment, following a long struggle for permission to go abroad. Although she had agreed not to make public statements concerning her husband's and her own exile in the city of Gorky, it became clear that Sakharov had gone on extended hunger strikes until she was allowed to leave.

In line with earlier commitments, at the end of the year the Soviets permitted two Soviet citizens to emigrate in order to join their American spouses. Although the problem of "divided families" had long been under discussion by the USSR and the United States, it was apparent that the issue would not be resolved quickly. For example, American-born Abe Stolar received permission for himself, his wife, and his sons to emigrate; however, since permission was refused for his son's wife, the entire family decided to remain in the USSR.

### *Foreign Affairs*

Since neither Secretary Gorbachev nor Foreign Minister Shevardnadze had had any significant experience in international relations prior to his elevation to high office, the new regime proceeded cautiously in the international arena. Limited probes were made toward China and Japan, and in December it was announced that,

for the first time in 20 years, Chinese and Soviet foreign ministers would exchange visits (in 1986). The Soviet leadership failed in its attempt to negotiate Euromissile agreements directly with France and Britain but succeeded in establishing diplomatic ties with Zimbabwe and the United Arab Emirates.

East-West relations proceeded unevenly. On the one hand, there were tensions around several cases of spying and defection. On the other hand, a summit meeting between Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan of the United States took place in Geneva in November. Although the summit produced no major breakthroughs, the talks were generally described as cordial and useful. Agreements were reached on a number of lesser items, such as air safety, environmental protection, and the reestablishment of educational, scientific, cultural, and athletic exchanges between the two countries.

Two weeks after the summit meeting, a U.S.-Soviet agreement on academic cooperation was signed. The five-year agreement, covering more than a hundred joint research groups, included projects in Judaic studies, mainly the cataloging and publication of large collections of Judaic manuscripts in libraries in Moscow and Leningrad. No progress was made on the trade issue. Addressing 400 American business representatives in Moscow on December 10, Gorbachev said that "political obstacles" were preventing "normal" Soviet-American trade, among them the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which linked most-favored-nation status to free emigration.

### *Relations with Israel*

Hopes were raised on several occasions during the year that a change in Soviet attitude toward Israel might be in the offing. In July the Soviet ambassador to France, Yuli Vorontsov, met with the Israeli ambassador to that country, Ovadia Sofer. Early in October, on a visit to France, Gorbachev told a press conference that once the situation in the Middle East was "normalized," the Soviet Union could consider restoring diplomatic relations with Israel. According to the report in *Izvestiia*, the Soviet leader said, "There will be no obstacles for us then. We recognize the sovereignty of that state and its right to life and to security. But as to how security is understood, as to how Israel's ruling circles and we understand it—there are major differences here."

Toward the end of October, when world leaders gathered in New York to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres met with Soviet foreign minister Shevardnadze. A few days later, stopping off in Paris on his way home, Peres reported a French offer to fly Soviet Jews directly to Israel, in the event that the USSR agreed to expand emigration and permit such flights. According to the *New York Times* (October 26), Peres also "strongly suggested" that if the USSR were to permit mass emigration, Israel might consider Soviet participation in a Middle East peace conference.

In addition to increased diplomatic contacts, there were a few other indications of a slight thawing in the Soviet attitude toward Israel. For the first time since 1967,

an Israeli television correspondent was permitted to work in the Soviet Union. Also, a Soviet delegation spent a week in Israel, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Subsequently, an Israeli delegation that included past and present Knesset members visited Moscow, Leningrad, and Tashkent at the invitation of a Soviet peace committee.

Counterbalancing the hopeful signs, the USSR cast its customary vote against seating Israel in the General Assembly. Among the Soviet bloc countries, Rumania and Yugoslavia voted for seating Israel, as they had in the past. For the first time, however, Poland and Hungary, which had always voted with the opposition, abstained.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

### *Demography*

The Jewish population of the USSR was estimated at 1.8 million, with the largest concentration in the Russian republic (700,651) and the second largest in the Ukraine (634,154), where Jews were the third-largest nationality.

Some direct figures on intermarriage among Jews became available, albeit limited to one Soviet republic. Boris Viner defended a dissertation at Leningrad State University on "Inter-Ethnic Marriages in the Ukraine, 1923-1982, Based on a Study of Vinnitsa." He found that in the early 1980s nearly 40 percent of marriages involving Jews were ethnically mixed. This proportion was about the same as among Ukrainians, but significantly lower than among Russians, and much lower than among Poles of the area. Previous estimates had placed Jewish intermarriage in the Ukraine at somewhat less than 40 percent, about one-third.

### *Emigration and Emigration Activists*

In 1985, 1,139 Jews emigrated from the USSR, slightly more than the 869 who left in 1984 but far below the annual figures for the 1970s. The number of those who had requested *vyzovs* (invitations to emigrate) was estimated at about 400,000.

The government continued its persecution of Hebrew teachers and emigration activists. At least a dozen Jews were arrested and sentenced, usually to three-year sentences, mostly on charges of "hooliganism," "anti-Soviet slander," or "anti-Soviet propaganda." Thus, for example, when 53-year-old Mark Niepomniashchy appealed to the West on behalf of the arrested Yakov Levin, his daughter's fiancé, Niepomniashchy was sentenced to three years for "anti-Soviet slander." Leonid Volvovsky, arrested in Gorky, and Leonid Shrayer, of Chernovtsy, were given similar sentences. Among others jailed or sentenced to labor camps were Alexander Kholmiansky, Roald (Alex) Zelichonok, Yevgeniy Aizenberg, Vladimir Frenkel, and Vladimir Brodsky. Anatoly Virshuvsky of Moscow, a 24-year-old observant

Jew, was arrested in Kiev on charges of stealing books from the local synagogue. Yuri Fedorov, the last defendant in the 1970 Leningrad trials still behind bars, was released after serving his full term, but Alexei Murzhenko, the other non-Jewish defendant in those trials, was rearrested for alleged parole violations (he had served a 14-year term). Yevgeniy Koifman of Dnepropetrovsk was arrested on drug charges, as were others, all of whom claimed the police had planted the drugs. Dmitri (Dan) Shapiro was arrested and tried in June, receiving a suspended sentence because he had "repented" and "did not represent a social danger." He made a public recantation of his Zionist beliefs on television.

In November the *New York Times* reported a "senior Reagan administration official" as saying that if the Soviet Union would allow a "significant movement" of Jews and others from the USSR, the United States would move to ease trade restrictions. For their part, the Soviets continued to maintain that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, "as is known, aims at making the development of trade-economic ties between the USSR and USA dependent on irrelevant issues" (*Moscow News*, October 29–November 1). Toward the end of the year, while there was no increase at all in the overall number of emigrants, some well-known and long-standing refuseniks were allowed to leave. In the early fall, Isaac Shkolnik of Vinnitsa and Mark Nashpits of Moscow received exit permits for Israel, both having been "in refusal" for more than a decade, and both having been imprisoned for Zionist activities. World Jewish Congress president Edgar Bronfman met with Elishah (Ilya) Essas in September and urged his release when meeting with Soviet officials. In December, Essas, one of the leaders of the *ba'al t'shuvah* movement (newly observant Jews), was permitted to leave for Israel, where he and his family were reunited with his parents. Yakov Mesh of Odessa, a Zionist activist who had been severely injured in prison, was also allowed to emigrate.

### *Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism*

Soviet media, books, mass media, and official spokesmen continued to condemn and attack Zionism as a major force for evil in the world. In November *Leningradskaya pravda* published a long article "exposing" Hebrew study groups as centers of Zionist activity. Based on statements by "Soviet citizens who had fallen under the influence of certain nationalistic and pro-Zionist elements," the writer concluded that the *ulpanim*, or Hebrew study groups, were used by foreign contacts sent by "Zionist centers" to deliver information which is "of a pronounced propagandistic, pro-Zionist nature." Further, the article charged, *ulpan* participants "vote for Komsomol decisions at meetings, but in the evenings they run to the synagogue and study literature supplied by Zionist emissaries, wittingly or unwittingly preparing themselves for a 'struggle against the Soviet regime on a narrow front.' No one is allowed to do this in our country, and they will not be allowed to."

The Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public, which thus far did not seem to have opened the local branches originally proposed, or even to be particularly

active, sent a telegram to the U.S. Congress protesting the "715 anti-Semitic acts of vandalism, insults and attacks on Jews and Jewish organizations" reported to have taken place in the United States during the previous year. The committee, a body composed of well-known Jews, opposed "all forms of chauvinism, whether Zionism or anti-Semitism" and called on American lawmakers "to do all necessary to put an end to these acts" and to secure the human rights and personal safety of all American citizens.

Soviet officials continued to deny the existence of anti-Semitism in the USSR. *Pravda* and *Isvestiia* both published (October 2) Mikhail Gorbachev's press conference statement that "if there is any country in which Jews enjoy the political and other rights that they do in our country, I would like to hear about it." According to Gorbachev, "the Jewish population, which makes up 0.69 percent of the country's total population, is represented in its political and cultural life on the order of at least 10 to 20 percent."

### *Religion*

There was no significant change in the religious life of Soviet Jewry in 1985, at least not in the numbers of synagogues (about 60) and rabbis (10–12). There was some evidence of a growing tendency among young people to adopt a religious way of life, especially in Moscow and Leningrad. It was estimated that in Moscow 300 persons, the great majority under the age of 30, were involved in systematic study of Bible, Talmud, and other religious works. Outside the two major cities, this phenomenon of *ba'alei t'shuva* was not as widespread.

### *Culture*

Soviet sources reported considerable activity in Judaic scholarship. Early in the year, the Leningrad branch of the Russian-Palestine Society (founded in 1882 as the Russian Orthodox Palestine Society) honored the noted Hebraist Klavdia Borisovna Starkova, on her 70th birthday, with a special gathering. Ten of the twelve papers read at the event related to Hebrew, biblical studies, or the history of Palestine. Shimon Yakirson and Igor Voevutskii, both described as "young scholars," presented papers on early Hebrew books, on collections of religious books compiled in the 19th century by M. Fridland and D. Chwolson, and on Judaeo-Spanish. M. Zislin spoke about two medieval Hebrew grammarians, Ibn Janah and Abu Al-Faraj Harun Ibn Al-Faraj. The Leningrad branch of the society was reported by *Sovetish haimland* (No. 8, p. 162) to have about 50 members "of different generations."

The 850th birthday of Maimonides was commemorated in an article by Samuil Kliger and Efim Drutz in *Sovetish haimland* (No. 9), in which the authors assert that "Maimonides' philosophical heritage is relevant today. It is suffused with the spirit of optimism, rationalism, and belief in people's creative potential. In its content it is not a strictly Jewish heritage, but its ethical pathos, its call to peace in the world, express the international hopes of all peoples." The authors devote six

pages to a biography of Maimonides, noting that his scientific work influenced Soviet medicine; they also refer to a Russian translation of his *Guide for the Perplexed* that appeared in 1969.

Papers on contemporary Hebrew language were delivered at meetings of the Institute of Slavistics and Balkan Studies of the Academy of Sciences. Candidates of Linguistic Sciences Alexander Barulin and Alexandra Eikhenvald were reportedly developing a computerized system for translating from Russian to Hebrew. In November TASS announced that the Nauka publishing house would publish a book entitled *Contemporary Hebrew* by Eikhenvald, to include essays on Hebrew syntax, morphology, and phonetics. Eikhenvald, who was born in 1957 into a long-assimilated Jewish family, was a graduate of the applied linguistics department at Moscow State University. Her senior thesis was on Hittite languages, her candidate's thesis on Berber languages. She studied Hebrew with Candidate of Historical Sciences Mikhail Chlenov, and had been employed since 1980 by the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences, in Moscow.

One-third of the book *Lyrical Poetry of the Ancient East*, published this year by Nauka, is a translation into Russian of the biblical Song of Songs. The translator, the well-known Semitics specialist I. Diakonov, based his translation on a text of the Bible from the year 1008 that was found in the Leningrad Saltykov-Shchedrin Library.

The Leningrad Institute of Oriental Studies published a catalogue of Hebrew incunabula, arranged by Shimon Yakirson and Ilya Shifman. The State Ethnographic Museum of the Estonian Republic, located in Tartu, issued an annotated catalogue of its Jewish collection of about 110 items, prepared by the Estonian Yiddish-speaking scholar Paul Ariste.

The administrator of the Yiddish and Hebrew sections of the Lenin State Library in Moscow, Leib Angovich, estimated that there were 30,000 Hebrew and 25,000 Yiddish books and periodicals in the general holdings, among them the Ginzburg collection of mainly 16th- to 18th-century items, mostly of a religious nature, and the Poliakov collection of some 15,000 items, including Hebrew incunabula and books from the 16th and 17th centuries. In an interview with *Sovetish haimland* (No. 10, p. 149), Angovich related that he was born in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania, graduated from a secular Hebrew *gymnasium*, and served in the Soviet army from 1940 to 1973. He began working in the Lenin Library in 1978.

Announcement was made of a forthcoming anthology of Yiddish prose and poetry in Lithuania (19th century to 1941), to be published in two volumes in 1987 in Lithuanian translation. The editor, 28-year-old Emanuelis Zingeris, was writing a doctoral dissertation on "Lithuanian-Yiddish Literary Connections."

On August 18 the 10,000th issue of the newspaper *Birobidzhaner shtern* appeared. Writing on the publication's philosophy, the editor, Leonid Shkolnik, took pains to point out that the newspaper was not limited to Jewish subjects. "When we write about successes or shortcomings in this or that group we do not differentiate according to the nationalities involved. The newspaper is fully Soviet and Communist." Shkolnik mentioned eight "veteran" and seven "young" members of the staff. The

latter, he said, learned Yiddish on their own and "develop their knowledge of the language in the course of their work."

Also in Birobidzhan, it was reported that Zinaida Belman was teaching Yiddish in "one of the groups of the Birobidzhan Pedagogic School." Some of her former students were employees of the *Birobidzhaner shtern* and some were actors in the local people's theater. As her texts, she was using the recently published Russian-Yiddish dictionary and a new primer, *Alefbais*.

The Jewish Musical Chamber Theater was included in the program of the Twelfth World Youth Festival in Moscow. The report in *Sovetish haimland* (No. 10, p. 142) stressed that Israeli participants in the festival were particularly impressed, because "in the Jewish state there is no Yiddish theater."

The Moscow Jewish Dramatic Ensemble, directed by Yakov Gubenko, gave performances in six cities in the RSFSR during the year. In Moscow it presented Arkady Stavitsky's *40 Sholem Aleichem Street*, a topical play about the emigration of a Jewish family from Odessa and the reactions of neighbors to their departure.

David Belkin, identified as a Candidate of Philological Sciences, published an article in *Sovetish haimland* (No. 4) about a critique of the Habimah Theater written by Maxim Gorky in 1918. (Habimah was a Hebrew-language company that originated in Russia, left the country in the 1920s, and settled in Palestine, where it became the leading repertory theater.) What is noteworthy about the Belkin piece is that the author nowhere mentions that Hebrew was the language of the theater, or the fact that the company left the USSR, or why.

In the area of popular culture, national television showed a Russian-language performance of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevey* during prime viewing time. Reviews in major newspapers, including *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, and *Sovetskaia kultura*, were uniformly positive, especially in praise of the actors. Neither *Pravda* nor *Izvestiia* mentioned the words "Jew" or "Jewish" even once, and *Pravda* described *Tevey* merely as a "resident of Kasrilevke." All the reviews stressed the universality of the story, and some noted the vivid depiction of *Tevey's* "patriotism" and attachment to his homeland.

### Personalia

USSR People's Artist Maia Plisetskaia, a ballerina with the Bolshoi Ballet, received the title of Hero of Socialist Labor with the Order of Lenin and the Hammer and Sickle Gold Award for contributions to Soviet choreography.

Among prominent Soviet Jews who died in 1985 were pianist Emil Gilels, aged 69; painter Vladimir Veisberg, aged 60; Rabbi Israel Shvartsblat, formerly of Odessa and most recently instructor in Talmud at the Moscow Choral Synagogue, in his 70s; and Genrikas Oshervich Zimanas, veteran Communist activist and former editor of the Lithuanian party newspaper, aged 76.

## Soviet Bloc Nations

**T**HE SELECTION OF Mikhail Gorbachev as general secretary of the Soviet Communist party, in March, brought no sign of any loosening of the military, political, and economic ties within the Soviet bloc. Moreover, at a meeting in April of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (established 1955), the member nations renewed the pact, unchanged, for another 20 years, with an automatic extension of 10 additional years built into the agreement. On the economic front, except for the German Democratic Republic (GDR), whose economy seemed to be on an even keel, most of the countries of the area experienced serious problems in 1985.

### *Bulgaria*

In Bulgaria the standard of living dropped markedly, as a harsh winter strained Bulgarian resources to an extent unknown since the 1950s. The major social and political issue of the year was the campaign to "Bulgarize" the Turkish minority—some 10–15 percent of the population—by discouraging Turkish-language use in public, closing mosques, restricting religious practices, and prohibiting emigration to Turkey.

#### JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish population of Bulgaria was estimated at about 5,000. According to the local Jewish newspaper, during the previous five years, 420 Jews had been awarded highest national honors in science, culture, and politics. The community continued to publish its yearbook in Bulgarian and in English translation.

### *Czechoslovakia*

The political leadership continued on its cautious, conservative path, reassuring new Soviet leader Gorbachev that there would be no Czech deviations from orthodoxy in either foreign or domestic policies. Church-state conflict flared up over the 1,100th anniversary of St. Methodius, a national as well as a religious hero. Despite efforts by the state to play down the religious significance of the occasion and to emphasize its cultural importance, about a quarter of a million people attended celebratory masses. The Czechoslovak government maintained its militantly anti-Zionist posture and, unlike Hungary and Poland, had few if any contacts with Israel. Still, 29 Israelis, former inmates of the Terezin camp, were invited for a two-week tour of the country, during which they participated in ceremonies marking the 40th anniversary of the camp's liberation by the Soviet army.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish population of Czechoslovakia was estimated at 5,000. There were said to be 5 functioning Jewish communities in Bohemia and Moravia and 11 in Slovakia. The only rabbi in the country was the recently ordained Daniel Meyer, aged 27, a graduate of the Budapest Jewish Theological Seminary. His wedding in March was attended by official representatives of the Hungarian Jewish community and by other foreign visitors.

The North American and British tours of the "Precious Legacy" exhibit, composed of ritual and domestic objects from the State Jewish Historical Museum in Prague, focused Western attention on the history of Jews in Czechoslovakia. The success of the exhibit apparently resulted in some increase in Western Jewish tourism to that country.

*Hungary*

The Hungarian economy ran into difficulties in 1985, with declining exports to the West, energy shortfalls, and a foreign debt that rose to nearly \$9 billion. Under its recently reformed system, which loosened government controls and allowed more free-market competition, wealth differentials were perhaps greater in Hungary than anywhere else in Eastern Europe. One result was an increase in social instability, with divorce and suicide rates among the highest in the world and a crime rate that seemed to be rising.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY

With no firm data available on the size of the Hungarian Jewish population, estimates ranged from 35,000 to 100,000.

The community suffered the loss of two major personalities during the year. Professor Alexander Scheiber, rector of the Budapest Jewish Theological Seminary, the only such institution in Eastern Europe, passed away on March 3, at the age of 71. Professor Scheiber's scholarly interests encompassed several fields, including rabbinics, linguistics, and folklore. His Friday-evening lectures were popular among younger elements of the Jewish population, and his books reached a wide audience. In July Chief Rabbi Laszlo Salgo of Budapest died at the age of 75. In the months prior to his death, Dr. Salgo had taken over some of Professor Scheiber's functions at the seminary and had also been elected to the national parliament. In earlier years, Dr. Salgo officiated at the Dohanyi Street Temple, one of the largest in the world, but that building had been closed for some time, in need of major repairs to make it safe for public use. The adjacent Jewish Museum was closed during the winter months because the heating system, dating to the prewar era, had broken down.

For the first time in its history, Hungary issued a series of postage stamps depicting Jewish art in the country, primarily ritual objects.

## Poland

With Poland's economy continuing to slip, General Wojciech Jaruzelski's military regime tried hard to improve its image abroad, at least partially in order to regain international confidence so as to obtain economic assistance. The elections to the national parliament (Sejm) in October were regarded as a crucial test of "normalization," that is, of a return to civilian rule. Since leaders of the now illegal Solidarity organization had called on the people to boycott the election, the government made the voting a test of its and Solidarity's relative strength. Not surprisingly, in the event, both sides claimed victory, with the authorities citing 21 percent nonparticipation and Solidarity, 34 percent. Even if one accepted the government figure, the turnout was the lowest by far of any national election since 1947.

### JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish population of Poland was estimated at 5,000, of whom nearly 2,000 were registered with the religious community.

The Eighth Congress of the Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews (TSKZ) elected Szymon Szurmiej of the Warsaw Yiddish Theater as chairman of its Central Board, and A. Kwaterko as vice-chairman. Szurmiej was elected to parliament in the October national election.

The 40th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz was observed with special ceremonies at the camp site. Two members of the Knesset, eight "Mengele twins"—of whom five were from Israel—and a dozen or so other survivors, with relatives and friends, participated in the event, which included a symbolic reenactment of the two-mile death march from Auschwitz to Birkenau.

Israeli Stefan Grayek, president of the World Federation of Jewish Fighters, Partisans, and Camp Inmates, was awarded a medal by the central board of ZBoWiD, the Polish veterans' association. An Israeli delegation was present at the ceremony, held in Warsaw. Later in the year, Grayek and Yitshak Arad, of the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem, decorated 50 Poles for acts of heroism during the war. The ceremony took place in the presence of Polish government, party, and military officials.

A number of gestures favorable to Jewish culture and Israel were made by the authorities during the year. The change in attitude may have stemmed from a desire to improve Poland's image among world Jewry—believed by some Poles to play a major role in world financial markets and international politics—or from a growing appreciation of the role Jews had played in Poland's history and culture. Either way, the result was small steps being taken to restore some semblance of a Jewish cultural presence in Poland and to improve cultural ties with the Jewish state.

A lectureship in Yiddish was established at the University of Warsaw in January, with Michal Frydman of the TSKZ named as lecturer. Roman Marcinkowski of the same university, which offered instruction in Hebrew, participated in a conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the teaching of Hebrew.

The Public Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries and Cultural Monuments carried out a survey of Jewish cultural remains in 14 cities, compiling a list of the most important extant Jewish cemeteries. With the help of a donation of \$50,000 received from a group of American rabbis, the committee was able to complete restoration work on the graves of Gerer, Belzer, Bobover, and other Hasidic rabbis. A plaque was affixed to the building that once housed the yeshivah Khachmei Lublin, one of the largest and most famous of the 1930s, forced to close after the Nazi invasion of 1939. The building had since become part of the Marie Curie-Sklodowska University.

The American musical *Fiddler on the Roof* was given six performances in April, in Warsaw, by the Gdynia Musical Theater. This company presented the first Polish version of the show in Lodz in 1983 and performed it in Poznan and Gdynia in 1984. Proceeds from all 120 performances to date were contributed to the above-mentioned committee to preserve Jewish monuments.

A Polish theater group was warmly received when it performed in Tel Aviv, and talks were held regarding a proposed visit by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra to Poland. There was also a proposal to send the Cameri Theater of Tel Aviv and an Israeli dance company to Poland, and the Warsaw Philharmonic and the ballet of the Polish National Opera to Israel, in 1986.

Excerpts from the film *Shoah*, produced by Claude Lanzmann of France, were shown on Polish television, followed by a televised studio debate. The program stimulated a great deal of press commentary, particularly concerning the portrayal of Poles in the film. Typical of reaction in Poland was a long commentary by Jerzy Turowicz, editor-in-chief of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, an independent Catholic newspaper published in Krakow. Writing in the issue of November 10, 1985, Turowicz criticized Lanzmann's "anti-Polish, anti-Catholic and anti-peasant prejudices," asserting that "Polish anti-Semitism, which we do not mean to diminish or justify, had nothing to do with the extermination of the Jews." Turowicz also criticized Lanzmann for ignoring the Nazi persecution of Poles and for neglecting to show that "hundreds of thousands" of Poles had actively aided the Jews during the German occupation. Like some of Lanzmann's milder critics abroad, including Jan Karski, the courier who brought out news of the Warsaw ghetto to the West and who was featured in the film, Turowicz reprimanded the filmmaker for ignoring the fact that the Western allies "did nothing" to help the Jews, even after they learned of what was happening.

### *Rumania*

Continuing efforts to reduce his country's huge foreign debt, President and Party Secretary Nicolae Ceausescu imposed drastic measures to cut energy consumption. These included a ban on heat in private dwellings and public places, electrical power stoppages, a three-month ban on private automobile traffic, and cuts in television programming. Industrial production was disrupted, and many foodstuffs were unavailable or in extremely short supply.

Several ambitious plans were announced by Ceausescu. One called for moving pensioners out of the cities and resettling them in the countryside. Another was the construction of a grandiose political-civic center in the heart of the older section of Bucharest. To make room for the structure, several historic churches and monasteries were taken down, and major portions of the traditional Jewish quarter were slated to be razed.

#### JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Rumanian Jewish population, standing at 26,000 in 1985, was declining rapidly as a result of emigration and the high mortality rate of an aged population. In each of the preceding few years about 1,000 Jews had died and between 1,000 and 1,500 had emigrated, most to Israel. Population figures for some individual communities, based on communal records, were: Timisoara—1,400, only 50 of whom were under age 20; Sibiu—121; Arad—900, with fewer than 20 children; Bacua—700; Dorohoi—366; Piatra Neamt—378; Botosani—411; and Iasi—around 1,800.

The central body of Rumanian Jewry, the Federation of Jewish Communities, headed by Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, encompassed over 60 local communities. Religious schools (*talmudei torah*) functioned in 24 communities, with a total enrollment of between 500 and 800 students. The number of functioning synagogues was down to 105 (from 120 in 1983); there were 18 choirs and 4 amateur orchestras under Jewish auspices; 11 cities and towns had kosher restaurants. There were only three rabbis for the entire country and eight ritual slaughterers. In Bucharest, Iasi, and a few other communities, a total of nearly 600 people who were unable to go to the kosher restaurants were provided with "meals on wheels." There were about 450 beds in six old-age homes, three of them in Bucharest and the others in Timisoara, Arad, and Dorohoi. The communities in Bucharest, Botosani, and Iasi also ran day centers for the elderly. The largest old-age home, situated in Bucharest, and named in honor of Chief Rabbi Rosen and his wife, had 210 beds in a modern, well-equipped facility.

A major event of the year was the visit of Prime Minister Shimon Peres in February. During an official visit to Rumania, the Israeli leader paid his respects to the Bucharest Jewish community. He was greeted by a large audience in the Choral Synagogue, where he delivered an address.

Chief Rabbi Rosen was elected for the seventh time as a deputy to the Grand National Assembly.

#### *Yugoslavia*

Yugoslavia continued to experience social unrest caused by conflicting nationalist groups and severe economic difficulties. By November the cost of living was 100 percent higher than it had been the previous year, the inflation rate was the highest in Europe, and about 1.3 million persons were unemployed. Officials looked to sales

of the Yugo automobile in the United States, which began during the year, to help reduce the country's \$23-billion foreign debt.

#### JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Yugoslav Jewish community numbered only about 5,000 and included many intermarried families. According to a demographic study carried out by the Belgrade Jewish community at the end of 1983, 33 percent of the Jews in the capital were over 65 years old, 28 percent were aged 46–65, and only 11 percent were under 26.

Despite its small size, the Yugoslav Jewish community was well organized and active. The community-run Pirovac summer camp enrolled some 120 children, the majority Yugoslavs and the rest residents of other socialist countries. A "Little Maccabiah" athletic competition held on the island of Brac attracted about 400 participants.

At a ceremony held in the Federation of Jewish Communities building in Belgrade, the only rabbi in the country, former partisan fighter Tsadik Danon, was awarded the Order of Merit with Golden Wreath by the president of Yugoslavia. Professor Teodor Kovac, a medical scholar and vice-president of the Novi Sad Jewish community, was awarded the Order of Merit with Golden Rays, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the victory over Nazism and fascism.

The community continued to publish *Pregled*, a Jewish review, in 2,700 copies, and the *Zbornik*, a scholarly publication, in 1,000 copies. A functioning library and a museum were housed in the building of the federation in Belgrade. There was one professional Jewish communal worker in Belgrade and one in Zagreb. The latter city had the only Jewish old-age home.

ZVI GITELMAN