

clashes were isolated incidents. But many Austrian Jews consider them an expression of the same hostility which existed before Hitler, which was intensified through Goebbels propaganda, and which did not disappear with the collapse of the Third Reich. "Anti-Semitism," stated one of the Vienna Gemeinde leaders, "is just as prevalent as it was in the darkest days of 1938" (*Christian Science Monitor*, June 27, 1946).

13. POLAND

By Leon Shapiro

IN POLISH JEWISH ANNALS, 1946 will be remembered as a period of mass exodus. A year after the liberation of Poland, the remnants of what was once the largest Jewish community were still living in an atmosphere of open hostility and daily anti-Semitic excesses. After tribulations suffered by the entire population under the German occupation, and after extermination of about 90 per cent of the Polish Jews, it might reasonably have been expected that traditional ill-feeling toward the Jews would be eradicated or at least mitigated. In reality, the year 1946 was marked by frequent anti-Semitic incidents. Fluctuating conditions made it hard to predict the future. But careful study of available material revealed that the Jewish community was not only struggling for survival, but had achieved considerable success in the field of social and communal activity, as well as in the sphere of economic rehabilitation.

POPULATION—REPATRIATION—EXODUS

In the course of 1946, the composition of the Jewish population registered important changes. In January 1946, the Central Jewish Committee took a census which disclosed that a total of 86,060 Jews lived in the 13 districts of Poland, with

the largest number (20,000) in Upper Silesia. But very soon this figure had to be revised under the impact of a steady wave of westward migration counterbalanced by a wave of refugees repatriated from the Soviet Union. The planned repatriation of Polish Jewish refugees from Russia began in February, and was completed toward the end of June, 1946. From February through May 10, 118 transports brought to Poland 72,279 Jews, among them 9,000 children (*Bulletin* No. 6, Central Committee of Polish Jews, Warsaw, May 20, 1946). As of June 15, the total number of Jewish repatriates reached 115,000, and toward the end of the month the last batch of 20,000 arrived in Poland. The overall number of Jewish repatriates, including individual and unplanned migration, amounted to about 140,000 (*Dos Naye Leyben*, No. 20-45, 21-46, Lodz, June 21 and 28, 1946). Of the 115,000 repatriated to the end of June 1946, 60,000 were settled in Lower Silesia, 25,000 in Stettin, and 30,000 in other towns, among which Lodz was foremost. To realize the true weight of these figures, it should be borne in mind that estimates of the number of Jews evacuated to Russia at the beginning of the German-Russian war vary considerably, fluctuating between a minimum of 250,000 and a maximum of 600,000. It was recently reported that many Jewish refugees from Poland still live in Russia, and that 15,000 of these are in the process of repatriation.

The endeavors of the Jewish community to adjust itself to the difficult conditions prevailing in Poland suffered a setback with the Kielce pogrom of July 4, 1946. Even before that memorable date, thousands of Jews had left the country, spurred not only by the surrounding hostility, but no less by the all-too-human desire to shun places where family, kin, and fellow-Jews were slain, with little or no protest from non-Jewish compatriots.

Westward Trek

After the Kielce pogrom the migration westward took on the proportions of mass exodus. During the period of July-September, 1946, 61,963 Jews passed through Czechoslovakia

on their way to the American zone of Germany. Almost all these transients came from Poland. The tragic fate of the Jews in that country was reflected in the increased number of Jewish displaced persons in Germany, recorded by the JDC in Munich. According to the latter's statistics, of the total number of 63,387 refugees who arrived in Germany during the three months of July (16,733), August (23,395) and September (23,259), the majority consisted of Polish Jews who had spent the war years in Russia. While the peak of the exodus was reached in the period July-September, more Polish Jews continued to leave the country in the succeeding months. The following figures serve to illustrate the overall movement of the Jewish population: at the beginning of 1946 the number of Jews in Poland was 86,000, and by the time the repatriation from Russia was terminated this number increased to about 220,000; of these persons 15,000 left by way of regular emigration, and 105,000 fled illegally.

As a result of the Kielce pogrom the Jewish population decreased at the end of 1946 to about 100-105,000 (85,000 adults (45,000 men and 40,000 women), and 15,000 children—6,000 boys and 9,000 girls. According to reliable local observers, a few thousand Jews remained in the country using assumed, Polish-sounding names. The exact number of Jewish children still boarding with Christian families or institutions was not known. It was said to be about 700-800.

As to the geographical distribution of the Jewish population in Poland, about 50,000 lived in Lower Silesia, 17,000 in Upper Silesia, 12,000 in Lodz, 7,000 in Szczecin, 7,000 in Krakow, 5,000 in Warsaw, and the remainder in various other towns. Despite an unmistakable economic uptrend, and signs of general stabilization, conditions in Poland could not be considered as settled, and the shifting of population would probably continue for some time to come. Developments in this regard will depend on the ultimate decision concerning displaced persons in Germany, Austria and Italy.

So far repatriation from displaced persons' camps to Poland has not involved the Jewish group. During his stay in Paris, last March, the Polish Foreign Minister, Zygmunt Modzelewsky, stated that "the Jewish exodus has now defi-

nately stopped. The terrorists have for the first time been adequately punished. The Polish Government expects a mass return of Jews to Poland, and is happy to receive back its citizens." On April 7, 1947, the J. T. A. reported that 15,000 Jews in German and Austrian camps had registered for repatriation. On the basis of this information, it is expected that the reinstatement of these persons will be completed within the next three months. On April 12, last, the Polish Jewish newspapers reported the arrival in Lower Silesia of the first trains with Jewish repatriates, and the resettlement of the newcomers by the Jewish Committee of that area.

ANTI-SEMITISM

The Polish Government's stern measures for cutting short the anti-Jewish outrages have so far not proved entirely effective. Assaults on Jews continued, especially in small towns, where conditions sometimes become unendurable for them. Violence against Jews traveling on the roads, or even in trains, was a common occurrence. According to reliable data, between January 1 and May 4, 1946, 55 Jews were killed by Polish bandits.

Circles connected with the Polish Government-in-exile have been charged with instigating anti-Jewish riots as a device in their struggle against the existing regime. It must be pointed out, however, that among the Polish emigrants in London there are representatives of groups whose Socialist record and pro-Jewish activities over decades cast doubt on such accusations. Though persons rallying around General Wladyslaw Anders and the old reactionary anti-Semitic parties may have participated in some way or other in the spreading of anti-Jewish propaganda, the fact remains that independently of their efforts the political conditions existing in Poland have created a climate favoring violence and rioting.

It cannot be denied that large groups of the Polish people are still infected with a profoundly irrational hostility toward Jews. This attitude, whatever its causes, reveals century-old

prejudice surviving unabated the tragic experience of war and occupation. Polish anti-Semitism is by no means confined to land-owners, peasants or bourgeois; it has taken firm root among workers and professionals as well.

The Kielce Pogrom

Time and again this hostility has burst into open riots. The worst of these since the liberation of Poland was the pogrom in Kielce on July 4, 1946. In this pogrom 41 Jews were killed and 60 injured, among those killed was Dr. Kahane, Chairman of the local Jewish Committee. American correspondents reported that the riots had run rampant for some time, with the police conspicuously absent.

The government spokesman, Gen. Victor Grosz, admitted that the Kielce pogrom was "in the long and sad tradition of our country." He stated that the assault had begun shortly before noon, after a rumor had spread that Jews had killed Polish children. Groups of armed hooligans attacked Jews on the streets and in their apartments, killing old and young, men and women. The ritual murder story was originated by a nine-year-old boy, Henryk Blasczyk, who pretended to have been kidnapped by Jews and kept for two days in the cellar of a house where he had seen corpses of fifteen other Polish children. Later, when questioned by the police, the boy confessed that he had spent two days in the home of an anti-Semitic Pole who had taught him how to spread the ritual murder story.

The Kielce riot broke out soon after the government had won an important victory in the referendum on the Polish Constitution. The coincidence of the two events added fuel to the fire. Government circles tried to blame the pogrom on the enemies of the regime and their terroristic activity. Vice-Premier, Wladyslaw Gomulka even charged the peasant leader, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, with responsibility for the pogrom. These charges were later repeated by Premier Osubka-Moravski, who also lashed out against the Catholic Church which, he declared, did nothing to stop anti-Semitic propaganda.

Cardinal Hlond

Actually, the reaction of the Catholic hierarchy to the events in Kielce was shockingly un-Christian. On July 11, August Cardinal Hlond, Primate of Poland, made a declaration on the Kielce pogrom. Said the Cardinal: "The course of the highly regrettable events in Kielce shows that they did not occur for racial reasons, but grew up on a totally different, painful and tragic foundation. These events are a tragedy which fills me with sadness and regret. The Catholic clergy in Kielce carried out their duty, as soon as news of the events reached them . . . During the exterminating German occupation, the Poles, although they themselves were persecuted, helped to hide Jews, and saved them at the risk of their own lives . . . The fact that this condition is deteriorating is to a great degree due to the Jews who today occupy leading positions in Poland's government, and endeavor to introduce a governmental structure which the majority of the people do not desire. This is a harmful game, as it creates dangerous tension. In the final battle of weapons on the fighting political front in Poland, it is to be regretted that some Jews lose their lives, but a disproportionately large number of Poles also lose their lives."

A curious sidelight on this statement was the fact that prior to the Kielce pogrom Cardinal Hlond was asked to issue a pastoral letter denouncing anti-Semitism, but evidently considered such a step unnecessary. When the Polish Catholic Primate did make a statement, he actually repeated the old anti-Semitic fable placing collective responsibility on a people for deeds of individuals, and accusing the Jews of being the cause of their misfortunes. Cardinal Hlond's statement, carrying all the authority of the Catholic Church, certainly helped very little. When asked to comment, the peasant leader Mikolajczyk categorically condemned the Kielce outrages but declined to give his opinion of the Cardinal's declaration (*The New York Times*, July 13, 1946).

The Polish Government took strong measures to punish the perpetrators. On July 11, twelve persons accused of participating in the pogrom were convicted. Nine of them

were sentenced to death, and three to various prison terms. On November 27, a second trial took place, and nine more persons went to jail. More trials were expected at a later date. On May 19, 1947, the J. T. A. reported that "highly placed officers who were in charge of the security forces in Kielce have been tried for neglect of duty." Meanwhile, during the ten days following the pogrom, 33 Jews were yanked from trains and killed on their way to Germany: 22 between Lodz and Wroclaw, 6 at Zereby-Koscielne and 5 near Lublin.

In the winter of 1946, the Polish Government succeeded in reducing organized anti-Jewish riots, and somewhat improving the situation. Yet now and then incidents occurred which shattered the hopes and efforts of the surviving Jews. It was reported last April that some of the 12,000 Fascists amnestied by the government had resumed their anti-Semitic propaganda, which had resulted in anti-Jewish incidents in Krakow, Lodz and other provincial towns. In Czestochowa hoodlums attacked a synagogue on the last day of Passover, but were driven off.

COMMUNAL ACTIVITIES

By the beginning of 1947, the mass exodus of Polish Jews to the American zone of Germany had practically stopped, except for some small groups still on the move. During these trying times, the Polish Jewish community showed an amazing recuperative power and great persistence in its drive for the reconstruction of social and economic life. Jewish political parties developed large-scale activities, though the traditional Jewish political divisions, sharpened in the years of war and occupation, reappeared with new vigor. At present, Jewish activities and interests are centered in Central Committee of Polish Jews, which was established on a party coalition basis immediately after liberation. In 1946, the Board of the Central Committee was made up of 23 members representing 7 parties and groups. It consisted of 5 members of Ichud (a Zionist coalition group); 3 of the Left Poale Zion; 3 of the Poale Zion C. S. (Right); 1 of the Ha-

shomer Hatzair, 6 of the Workers Party (Communists); 4 of the Bund; and 1 of the Jewish Partisans. Among the leaders of the Central Committee were: Dr. Sommerstein, Dr. Herman Parnas (Ichud); M. Bitter, P. Zelicki, B. Mark, M. Mirsky (Workers Party); A. Berman (Poale Zion Left); Dr. Herszenhorn, Fischgrund, Michael Schuldenfrei (Bund); Prof. J. Sak (Poale Zion C. S.). In the spring of 1946, Dr. Sommerstein, Chairman of the Committee, fell ill during his visit to the United States, and on February 6, 1947, A. Berman was elected to replace him.

The Central Committee

Owing to the wide range of its activity, the Central Committee virtually obliterated the old communal structure of Polish Jewry. Based on its local committees, and in conjunction with political Jewish groups, the Central Committee has become the most powerful factor in Jewish life in Poland. In 1946 the Central Committee had 16 district (*Wojewodstwo*), 35 regional (*powiat*) and 99 local committees. The district committees were located in Warsaw, Bialystok, Katowice, Krakow, Lublin, Lodz, Przemysl, Szczecin, Wroclaw, Bjd-goszcz, Chestochowa, Gdansk, Olsztyn, Poznan, Tarnow and Wloclawek.

An outgrowth of the underground organizations that sprang up during the occupation, the Central Committee still bears marks of its origin. It is not an elected body, but a coalition of several groups. But recently the plan to reform the organization has received increasing support. The Central Committee decided last February that the time was ripe for a democratic election of the central and local committees. A conference of all regional and district Jewish committees, assembled in Warsaw (February 28-March 1, 1947), reaffirmed the necessity of holding an election in the near future.

The activities of the Central Committee reached into practically every sphere of Jewish life, including social welfare, economic rehabilitation and cultural advancement. It was also active in a wider field, representing the interests of the

Jewish community, and participating in the political battles which were joined in 1946 and early in 1947. Before the Referendum of June 30, 1946, the Central Committee called upon the Jews of Poland to support the government, and to answer "yes" to the three questions posed in the Referendum. The third of these questions, which pertained to the western borders of Poland, was of particular importance to the Jews, since it was in this area that a large number of Jewish repatriates from Russia were resettled.

In the national elections last January, all the Jewish parties supported the government bloc. Since the Jewish electors were few in number, they did not present their own list of candidates. Instead, two Jewish candidates were included in the general list of the government bloc. The two Jewish deputies now are Dr. M. Schuldenfrei (Bund) and Prof. J. Sak (Right Wing Zionist Labor).

After the elections, the Central Committee adopted a resolution hailing the government victory, and saying in part: "The Central Committee of the Jews in Poland is sure that with the great electoral victory, the Jewish community and the Jewish committees will enlarge and better all their positions, aiming at a further expansion of all the institutions, schools, cultural work, cooperatives."

Religious Organizations

Purely religious organizations are not represented on the Central Committee. The recognized body for Jewish religious affairs is the Organization Committee of the Jewish congregations. In 1946, there were 78 Jewish religious congregations in Poland; of them 22 were in Lower Silesia, 20 in the Krakow district, 12 in the Lodz district, 12 in the Katowice district and 12 in the Warsaw district. Fifteen rabbis ministered to the religious needs of the congregations, in cooperation with a special Rabbinical Council. Since the Jewish congregations were not represented in the Central Committee, they acted independently in the fields of social welfare and religious education.

Congregations maintained 36 Talmud Torahs, 3 Day Boarding Schools, 2 Children's Homes, 2 Homes for the Aged, and 57 Kosher canteens. In addition, they supervised 77 cemeteries and a number of ritual baths. Although the Kehilloth lost their representative functions, they seem to exert a substantial influence in Jewish life in Poland. The congregations enjoy the financial support of the JDC. According to latest reports, plans for uniting the activities of the Central Committee and the congregations were gaining ground, and negotiations for their implementation were under way.

ECONOMIC REHABILITATION

In spite of adverse circumstances, strenuous efforts were made by the Jewish population toward economic rehabilitation. These efforts seem to have been crowned with substantial success. At the beginning of 1947, 40,000 Jews, about 40 per cent of the total, were gainfully employed, among them 4,000 in producers' cooperatives, 5,000 in individual handicraft, 3,500 in textiles, 3,280 in metallurgy, railroads and coal mines, about 1,000 in agriculture and about 1,000 in commerce. In addition, some 5,000 were engaged in civil service and 2,700 in social work.

Producers' Cooperatives

The most significant development on the Jewish scene, reflecting the new economic pattern in Poland, was the creation of producers' cooperatives, which at the beginning of this year comprised about 4,000 members, representing about 160 cooperatives. About 140 were connected with the Central Committee and the rest were partly founded by political parties and were partly independent industrial enterprises. The importance of the Jewish producers' cooperatives may be gauged from the fact that in March 1947 out of 1,000 cooperatives in Poland, 160 were Jewish. Most of the Jewish producers' cooperatives were smaller units.

The problem of the producers' cooperatives was a stock subject in the Jewish press, and some of the Polish Jewish leaders maintained that these cooperatives had to a large degree become a cover for private commerce, a device enabling Jewish middlemen to operate on the free market.

It was contended in the Jewish Polish press that the number of Jewish cooperatives is too great in proportion to the Jewish population, and that more centralization was needed to keep down competition and unnecessary expense. It was consequently planned to increase the membership of the old, and to prevent the foundation of new cooperatives. Thus, at a conference of the rehabilitation sections in the newly incorporated western territories, held on November 17, 1946, it was unanimously decided to unite all small cooperatives producing the same type of commodities into one larger unit. Identical recommendations were made by a conference of 26 cooperatives working in Lodz. A debate which developed at the convention of producers' cooperatives, held in Lodz on April 8 and 9, revealed a tendency to adjust the work of cooperatives to the Polish Three Year Plan, and to limit the initiative of the members in the selling of finished products.

This tendency to centralize the productive activities ran parallel with the drive of Jewish handicraft and small business to develop its own free sector. In Lodz, of 887 loans granted by the Jewish cooperative bank from April through December, 1946, 828 were given to individual artisans who had succeeded in reestablishing their businesses. The producers' cooperatives availed themselves of an elaborate system of financing through a loan fund (*Bank dla Produktywizacji Żydów*), an institution established and managed by the Central Committee, and financed by the JDC.

Restitution

The return of Jewish property, if claimed by the owner or his descendant, and if not subject to state control, proceeded more or less smoothly. Other categories of formerly Jewish property were classified as ownerless, and managed by a special government office entitled to any income it yielded.

Recently, the Central Committee and the Committee of Jewish Congregations submitted a memorandum to the government asking the restitution of Jewish communal property, which in several towns was used by the non-Jewish population for clubs and recreational centers. According to a decree concerning former German and so-called abandoned property, all interested persons had to register their property claims before December 31, 1947.

Because of the shortage of many commodities, and the specific situation of the Jews, the earnings of the Jewish population were barely sufficient to cover the necessities of life. The American Joint Distribution Committee, engaged in a large program of relief and rehabilitation, has not only supplied to the Polish Jewish community the means of economic rehabilitation, but has supported a widely ramified program of social welfare. In September of 1946, the American Joint Distribution Committee reported that it was financing in Poland 95 canteens, 32 children's homes, 18 day nurseries, 5 tuberculosis sanatoria, 7 dispensaries and 50 clinics—all managed by various local organizations. About 80 per cent of the budget of the Central Committee was covered by the JDC.

CULTURAL REVIVAL

Economic rehabilitation, however, was not the only concern of the Jewish community in Poland. Harassed by surrounding ill-will, it has manifested a remarkable inner strength in the pursuit of its cultural needs. The pattern of Jewish cultural activities in present-day Poland follows the political divisions even more clearly than before the war. Alongside of the Central Committee, which has set up a large network of schools, every political group supports a number of educational institutions. According to JDC reports, in 1946 there were 349 JDC.-supported cultural and educational institutions, servicing some 20,000 persons. This number includes 35 high schools, 11 Hebrew schools, 66 day-care schools, 50 boarding schools, 40 educational institutions and 11 voca-

tional schools. Among the 35 high schools supported by the Central Committee were 20 schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction (Lower Silesia), 1 Hebrew (Bialystok) and 3 Polish (Warsaw, Krakow, Lublin) schools. Of the 11 Hebrew schools, 9 were located in Lodz, Biton, Bielawa, Wroclaw, Walbrzych, Lignica, Krakow, Rychbach and Szczecin. It is reported that 90 per cent of the Jewish children attend Jewish schools. In November of 1946, the first Jewish pedagogical congress of Poland was held, at which problems related to the activities of the schools were discussed. The extent of the Jewish cultural revival may be judged by the fact that in the fall of 1946, 18 Jewish newspapers were published and a large almanac, *Yiddishe Shriften*, was published in Lodz by the Union of Jewish Writers and Journalists. Thirty-seven Yiddish writers contributed to the almanac.

The Jewish community in Poland was torn between two opposite tendencies—between those advocating an all-out Jewish exodus, with Palestine as the ultimate goal, and those aspiring to restoration of Jewish life in their native land. At present the mass exodus has ceased, and unless some new outbreak of violent anti-Semitism occurs, a small Jewish community will try to rebuild Jewish life in Poland. The government is bent on promoting this adjustment, and has created a special department to combat anti-Semitism. It is sponsoring educational campaigns throughout the country, and is creating facilities for channeling the Jewish youth into productive activity. What the effect of this program will be remains to be seen.

14. SOVIET UNION

By *George J. Glikzman*

THE JEWISH POPULATION of the USSR today ranks in size next to that of the United States. Hence the intense interest Jews everywhere evince in the fate of Russian Jewry, and in data pertaining to its demographic trends, geographic distribution, economic differentiation, and cultural and religious development.

Statistics concerning the Russian Jews were meager and not always reliable even before the war, but material occasionally published could still serve as the basis of a critical analysis. In 1939, however, all official publication of such data was discontinued and the only subsequent work in the field of Jewish statistics (L. Singer: *A Rejuvenated People*, Moscow, 1941) does not go beyond 1939.

Pieced together from a wide variety of unofficial Soviet data and other sources, available information is necessarily fragmentary and often hypothetical. There is no adequate basis for presenting a complete picture of present-day Soviet Jewry or assessing the far-reaching changes caused by the war and the period of post-war reconstruction.

Population Data

Accurate population statistics for the Soviet Union are scarce; this is even truer for Soviet Jewry than for other groups. The last published official statistics, based upon the 1939 census, gave the number of people who declared themselves of Jewish nationality as 3,020,000. (There is no religious breakdown of population statistics in the USSR.) How many citizens of Jewish extraction declared their nationality as other than Jewish, it is impossible to establish.

In 1939-40 the eastern part of Poland, Bessarabia and Bukovina, and the Baltic states were incorporated into the USSR. About two million Jews were concentrated in these territories. The total number of Jews within the boundaries of the Soviet Union before the outbreak of the Russo-German war in June 1941 can therefore be taken as about 5,500,000, including about 350,000 war-refugee Polish Jews. Corliss Lamont (*The Peoples of the Soviet Union*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1946) estimates the number of Soviet Jews at this period as 5,300,000, exclusive of non-Soviet refugees.

But these figures by themselves contribute little to an estimate of present Jewish population of the Soviet Union. For this we would have to know not only the number who lost their lives as a result of Nazi atrocities, but the birth rate of Soviet Jews, the number of Jewish soldiers who fell during the war, mortality among those deported and evacuated to Central Asia and Siberia, and the scope of postwar repatriation to Poland and Rumania. Only on the last of these points, however, do we have accurate information. Of about 350,000 Jews from Eastern and Central Poland who sought refuge in the Soviet zone in 1939-40, the vast majority were deported by the Soviet authorities to Siberia, Central Asia, etc. (a substantial number to concentration camps). It must be emphasized that these people went as compulsory exiles, not as refugees. A few thousand left the USSR with the Polish army evacuated to Iran in 1942, approximately 150,000 returned to Poland in 1946, and only a few thousand elected to stay in the USSR. The remainder—almost 200,000—probably died there.

The most conspicuous discrepancies concern the estimated number of victims of the German mass-murders. These estimates range between 1,500,000 (Corliss Lamont, *op. cit.*) and 3,000,000 (Jacob Lestschinsky). Only an insignificant percentage of Jews (perhaps only 1 per cent) who remained in the territories overrun by the Germans managed to escape alive. The number of Jews evacuated from these territories prior to the German occupation is, therefore, exceedingly important, but this cannot be accurately determined. It seems certain that the optimistic estimates published outside the

Soviet Union both during the war and at its close were exaggerated. The German occupation of the Baltic states, the Ukraine, and White Russia—all areas with large, concentrated Jewish settlements—proceeded very quickly and the Soviet transportation system was unable to carry out the evacuation speedily enough, nor on a sufficiently large scale. Many evacuation transports were overtaken by the swift German offensive.

Kulischer, in his study *The Displacement of Population in Europe* (International Labor Office, Montreal, 1943), estimates that 1,100,000 Jews from the pre-1939 territory of the Soviet Union, 30,000 from the Baltic States and 500,000 from Western Bielorussia and Western Ukraine, were evacuated into unoccupied Soviet territories. In this latter figure he includes those forcibly deported in 1939–1940. Others consider these figures excessive.

These discrepancies naturally lead to different estimates as to the number of Jews now living in Russia. Even Dr. Frank Lorimer of Princeton, an outstanding authority, in his work, *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects* (Geneva, League of Nations, 1946), does not venture such an estimate.

Unofficial Soviet publications mention 2,500,000 as the present Jewish population of the USSR. This figure, which is also Kulischer's estimate, (*Rescue*, July-August 1946), appears to be exaggerated.

Estimates of the number of Jews in various parts of the Soviet Union have been made by such sources as the *Ambijan Bulletin*, as well as by B. Z. Goldberg of the *New York Day*, who visited the USSR in 1946. These estimates do not seem, however, to be very reliable. Often a single source offers contradictory data in regard to the same locality, and these discrepancies can be only partly due to variations in the periods to which reference is made and the instability of the present Jewish settlements in Russia. Where discrepancies exist, we will cite only the higher figure.

Where before the war there were about 1,000,000 Jews in the Russian Federated Soviet Republic, there are now reported to be about 250,000 in Moscow. No data are available for other cities of Central Russia.

The total number of Jews in the Ukraine is now said to be about 1,000,000. Before the war there were 1,500,000, exclusive of the territories annexed from Poland and Rumania in 1939-40. The principal Ukrainian cities with large Jewish settlements are Kiev with 120,000 Jews; Odessa—120,000; Kharkov—85,000; Dniepropetrovsk (Ekaterinoslav)—60,000; Vinnitsa—18,000.

Only fragmentary information exists as to the percentage of the total population which Jews constitute in each particular locality. Thus they form approximately one-fourth of the total population of Odessa (40 per cent before the war); 33 per cent (6,000) in Proskurov, etc. Numerous Ukrainian towns with sizeable Jewish communities before the war no longer contain a single Jew.

Cernauti (Czernowitz), formerly a Rumanian city, is said to have a Jewish population of about 60,000, as large as before the war. This city now constitutes the major Jewish point of concentration in Western Ukraine, into which it has been incorporated.

The only information about former Polish territories concerns Lvov (Lemberg), with a Jewish population of 5,000, and Vilna, where there are said to be 15,000 Jews (other sources give the number of Vilna Jews as 5,000).

We could find no statistics concerning the total number of Jews in White Russia. Before the war 375,000 Jews lived in the eastern part of White Russia alone. Now approximately 30,000 are said to be in Bobruisk, 20,000 in Minsk, 15,000 in Vitebsk. There is no information for other important centers.

Statistics were likewise unobtainable for the present Jewish population in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, with a total pre-war Jewish population of 85,000. In the five Asiatic republics—the Uzbek, Kazakh, Tadzhik, Turkmen, and Kirghiz Socialist Soviet Republics—the pre-war Jewish population exceeded 80,000. Soviet sources vary widely in their estimates of the present number of Jews in these areas. In wartime these regions gave refuge to several hundred thousand Jews from the western parts of the Soviet Union. The majority of the evacuees returned to former dwelling places, but some

will undoubtedly remain in Asia. Thus in Aktyubinsk (Kazakhstan) 2,000 Ukrainian Jews are said to have settled permanently.

The only data available on the former Baltic states concern Riga, with a reported Jewish population of approximately 20,000.

These unofficial estimates are severely criticized by the Jewish economist Jacob Lestschinsky. According to his analysis, the total number of Jews within present Soviet boundaries does not exceed 1,500,000 (*The New Leader*, March 8, 1947, New York). He claims to have calculated, on the basis of unofficial Soviet information, that the maximum number of Jews living in the 60 major Jewish settlements of European Russia is 800,000. To the smaller settlements of the European part of the USSR, Lestschinsky ascribes a figure of less than 100,000 Jews; to the Asiatic parts, 500—600,000 Jews. Thus he arrives at his total of 1,500,000 Jews in the Soviet Union.

This figure, when compared to the 5,500,000 Jews on Soviet soil before the outbreak of the war in 1941, shows a difference of 4,000,000. To explain these missing 4,000,000 Jews, Lestschinsky estimates that about 200,000 Jewish Red Army men lost their lives in the fighting, and about 500,000 Jews died in Siberia and Central Asia (principally from among the deported and evacuated). It would thus follow that the Germans massacred more than 3,000,000 Soviet Jews. Lestschinsky's figures are also, obviously, hypothetical.

The Research Department of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in New York estimates the present number of Soviet Jews as 1,800,000. This includes the Asiatic provinces, but is exclusive of the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) where there are reported to be 32,500 Jews. (The pre-war Jewish population in these countries was 255,000.)

The estimates of the JDC appear likely to be closest to the facts; however, until the publication of official, reliable statistics, the actual present Jewish population of the USSR cannot be definitely ascertained.

Cultural Activities

We lack sufficient information to evaluate the true extent of Jewish cultural activities in the USSR, or to judge the possibilities and trends of development. There is, however, little room for doubt that the Jewish cultural crisis, which was already evident in the Soviet Union in pre-war days, was sharpened by the war years. Cultural activities in Yiddish, once vigorous, are now in a state of steady decline. Cultural activities in Hebrew, including the publication of Hebrew-language writings, have not been permitted in Russia. *Judaica*, in the Russian language, except for belles lettres, are almost non-existent.

There was a time, notably in the twenties and early thirties, when a network of schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction flourished in Russia, comprising hundreds of schools at different educational levels and tens of thousands of students. Yiddish schools still exist, especially lower-level institutions (and largely in the territories recently incorporated into the USSR), but their number, location, number of pupils they accommodate, and time devoted to instruction of Jewish cultural subjects cannot be determined. Neither does the Jewish youth, educated in general schools, receive complementary Jewish education of any kind.

More information is available concerning activities in the fields of creative writing and the theater. In 1938 five Yiddish magazines, fourteen newspapers, and 372 books in Yiddish were published in the Soviet Union (Corliss Lamont, *op. cit.*). The most important of these publications were the two dailies, *Der Emes* and *Oktiabr*. At the present time a single Yiddish newspaper is being published in the Soviet Union (exclusive of the Jewish Autonomous Region): the *Ainikeit*, six-page organ of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, edited by S. Zhits and published in Moscow three times a week. No publication dedicated to Jewish topics and problems exists in Russian or any other language.

Jewish publishing activities revolve around the Emes Publishing House, Moscow, the annual budget of which amounts to 2,500,000 rubles.

It is planned to revive pre-war publishing activities in the Ukraine. The first book selected for publication here is *The Yiddish Language during the War for the Fatherland*, by E. Spivak. *An Almanac of Soviet Jewish Writers* is in course of preparation by the Jewish Section of the White Russia Writers' Union.

Most of the Jewish books published in the Soviet Union during 1946-47 deal with the war. They include: E. Fininberg, *In the Gigantic Fire*; M. Taldayevsky, *Like a Soldier*; A. Petchorsky, *The Uprising in Sobibor*; H. Smolar, *From the Ghetto in Minsk*; L. Katsovitch, *From Home to Home* (describing war-time evacuation of a factory, complete with personnel, from the western territories); I. Falikman, *The Light Comes from the East* (the struggles of Jewish workers in Poland against the Germans in 1939-45); G. Moshovitch (Riga), *From the Ghetto in Riga*. I. Schreibman; *Three Summers* (describing the "miracle, of evacuation") ; A. Sutskever, *From the Vilna Ghetto*; Bela Dizur, *The Song of the Warsaw Ghetto* (in Russian).

At the time of the general elections to the Soviets, *Emes* published a Yiddish-language collection of political election literature (Stalin's speeches, etc.).

In the Soviet Union Sholem Aleichem is by far the most popular of the Jewish classical writers, and the 30th anniversary of his death was commemorated in many Jewish settlements. The Government Book-Publishing House (OGIZ) assigned funds for a 20-volume edition of his writings, to be published in the course of 1947-51. An exhibition of Sholem Aleichem relics opened in Vilna. The Jewish painter Hershl Ingler did a set of illustrations for *Tevie der Milkhiker*.

In the fields of both Jewish creative writing and translations into Yiddish, however, there is apparent a tendency to avoid the reprinting of classics and older works, and to favor new Soviet authors.

Recently, Soviet writers received a severe jolt. A speech by A. Zhdanov, President of the Council of the Union, in August 1946, concerning the literary magazines *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, assailed several well-known literary figures for favoring an "improper" approach to the new Soviet reality and for antiquated and non-social topical preferences. This was followed by attacks upon several Soviet authors, notably the writers

Zoshtschenko and Akhmatova. Special resolutions were adopted by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party concerning these matters. The result was a still more pronounced uniformity of literary theme and ideological slant, and the strengthening of political and social emphasis in general.

Soviet Jewish literature adapted itself immediately to the new lead. A number of articles in *Ainikeit* called on Jewish writers to bring their stories up to date, to show primary concern for the immediate problems of Soviet life, to "paint Soviet reality" (Vergelis, *Ainikeit*, Moscow, Sept. 12, 1946). Topics recommended in these articles included "the War for the Fatherland, Jewish war heroes, the brotherhood of peoples," etc. Already several new works by Jewish authors are the result of these admonitions.

Jewish books and booklets published in the USSR are usually printed in quantities of 5-10,000 copies. After *From the Vilna Ghetto*, by A. Sutskever, appeared in print, 1,000 copies were sold in Minsk within a few days; 1,300 copies of *From the Ghetto in Minsk*, by Smolar, were sold in the same city within this same short period of time.

Because of the limited editions of literary works, cultural *soirees* attain an importance greater than elsewhere. They were dedicated to the writings of these poets: I. Fefer, L. Kvitko, Peretz Markish, and others. In the Academy of the Soviet Writers' Union a lecture was delivered on the old-Russian translation of *Megilas Esther*, and Professor Dobrushin spoke on "Jewish Folk Verse."

Among the better known Soviet Jewish writers who continued their work were David Bergelson, Der Nester, Sh. Halkin, A. Kushnirov, Prof. Nusinov, and Vasili Grosman.

The plans of these and other writers—a total of fifty names—were discussed in *Ainikeit* (New York, Vol. 59, No. 4. April 1947) in reply to a questionnaire.

During the war years some well-known writers, refugees from German-occupied Poland, lived and worked in the USSR. Those included Khaim Grade, A. Sutskever, Rachel Korn, M. Grossman, N. Bomze and others. They left Soviet

soil in 1946 to return to Poland, whence several subsequently proceeded to Western Europe.

Of the Jewish theatrical companies which once played a considerable part in pre-war Jewish cultural life, only a few remain. The most important is the Jewish Governmental Theater in Moscow, directed by Sh. Mikhoels. In addition, small theatrical companies exist in Kiev, Cernauti (Czernowitz), Minsk, Riga, and the tours of these companies also reach distant Jewish settlements in Siberia and Central Asia. A Jewish Dramatic and Comedy Ensemble is active at the Government Philharmonic Society in Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan). Several amateur groups are in existence.

A school of dramatics exists in Moscow. In 1946, 18 students were graduated from this school, the total number of students being 58.

In connection with the seventieth anniversary of the Yiddish theater of A. Goldfaden, creator of the Yiddish stage, there were suitable celebrations and special performances of his plays. Jewish theatrical companies commemorated the anniversary of the death of Sholem Aleichem by staging his *Tevie der Milkhiker*, *Stempenyu*, and *200.000*.

I. Dobrushin completed his book on the dramatic writings of Goldfaden, Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, and Mendele Moicher Sforim.

Apart from these classics of the Yiddish stage, the repertory of Soviet Jewish theaters contains some few plays by older Russian writers (Ostrovsky), foreign classics (Molière), and sometimes works of contemporary foreign playwrights (Shaw).

Official pressure on Soviet writers also affected the stage. The repeated performance of classical or foreign plays was condemned as contrary to current Soviet artistic trends. The General Committee of the All-Union Communist Party demanded that the theater accommodate more plays eulogizing Soviet reality. This policy bore fruit in theatrical productions about the war and the post-war reconstruction period such as I. Fefer's *The Sun Never Sets* (the heroic struggle of the Jewish people under German occupation); Lirov's *Far from Stalingrad*; M. Tulalaysky's *For the Rest of Our Lives* (the part played by Soviet Jewish youth in the war); Peretz Markish's *The Ghetto*

Uprising; I. Rabin's *Good Luck* . . . (post-war socialist reconstruction).

Jewish music and the Jewish folksong were the theme of several special concerts. The composer Michael Gnesin received the Stalin Prize for his *Sonata Fantasia*, based on Jewish melodies.

In the field of the plastic arts the sculptor Z. Sh. Azgur, a Stalin Prize winner, and L. Dubinovsky, named "Worthy Man of Arts of the Moldavian Republic," deserve mention.

A Jewish Cultural Division has been established at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. The Division consists of three sections, devoted to language, literature, and folklore, respectively. Among its aims are the safeguarding of Jewish cultural relics, and the preparation of several works for publication, including a Russian-Yiddish dictionary (Editor-in-Chief: E. Spivak), and a collection of war folklore.

The Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR Cultural Department plans to restore the monument of Mendele Moicher Sforim in Odessa, demolished by the Germans; and to rebuild the house in Pereyaslav in which Sholem Aleichem was born.

Stalin Prizes have been awarded to Alexander Tishler, Prof. Sh. Mikhoels, and Benjamin Zuskin.

Economic Situation

There are no exact data of any kind relating to the present economic situation of the Jews in the USSR. In particular, we lack information as to the effect of the war and post-war period upon the occupational distribution of the Soviet Jews, or the success of efforts to increase their productivity (by employment in industry and agriculture). It is impossible to ascertain whether the percentage of Jews among the middle-of-the-run and lower administrative officials (particularly in the government and cooperative commercial establishments) remains at its relatively high pre-war level. Likewise, we do not know whether the process of leaving traditional Jewish trades (tailoring, shoe-making, etc.), of entering heavy industry, and of assimilation to the mass of the population in type of employment—a trend discernible before the war—still

continues. Nor can we tell to what degree Jewish agricultural units, concentrated mainly in the Southern Ukraine and the northern part of the Crimean Peninsula and completely destroyed under German occupation, have recovered. There is complete silence regarding this problem, although the Moscow *Ainikeit* (Dec. 14, 1946) finds space for the following item about more remote parts: "A Sholem Aleichem Collective Farm (*Kolvirt*) was established in July 1946 in the Atanay District (Southern Sakhalin). Twenty-four Jewish families settled on this farm."

We can only estimate the Russian Jews' living standards on the basis of data pertaining to the population as a whole. The standards of the average city laborer or white collar worker would be indicative here, since the Jews are mostly city dwellers (in 1939 about 90 per cent of all Jews lived in the cities), and few of them belong to the highest, privileged group of government officials. According to Singer (*op. cit.*), 71.2 per cent of all Soviet Jews were workers and office employees.

The average monthly salary of a Soviet worker or clerk is, according to official figures, 500 rubles. (The ruble is worth 19 cents at the official rate of exchange, 8 cents at the "diplomatic" rate available to foreigners on duty in Russia, and considerably less in actual purchasing power.)

The most important item in the Soviet family budget is food. The normal allotment of rationed foodstuff to the average worker or office help is (Moscow, 1946): bread—500 gm. daily; fats—800 gm. monthly; meat—900 gm. monthly; sugar—900 gm. monthly; cereals—2 kg. monthly; (1 kg.—1,000 gm.—2.2 lbs.).

However, due to insufficient supplies in the food stores, it is rarely possible to obtain one's lawful share, particularly in the provincial towns where food conditions are much worse than in Moscow.

In September 1946 the prices for rationed food were raised sharply: "Black" bread went up from 1 to 3.40 rubles per kg., white bread from 5 to 8, butter from 25 to 60, meat from 14 to 34, sugar from 6 to 17. A simultaneous increase in wages (25 per cent) was proportionately much smaller.

Food products are also obtainable from the special government stores where food is not rationed (but prices are considerably higher) and the markets where the collective farmers sell their products. The prices on the free market, however, are so steep—even after the price reduction of non-rationed products in September 1946—that for the majority of the populace this source of goods is available only to a small extent.

Religious Life

Article 124 of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR states

In order to ensure to all citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the USSR is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti-religious propaganda are recognized for all citizens.

Similar provisions have existed in Soviet law since 1917.

In practice this freedom of religion assured by law was conveniently forgotten, while anti-religious propaganda was not only permitted, but officially encouraged and carried out on an extremely large scale. For a score of years following the revolution the religious life of the Soviet people was consciously destroyed.

This affected the Jewish faith even more than other religions—not as a result of any particular enmity on the part of the authorities, but because of the especially militant anti-religious attitude of the Jewish Communists.

Religious observance, or even a tolerant attitude toward religion as such, was sufficient cause for hazing by the authorities. This resulted in a decline not only in religious life itself, but in the weakening of national characteristics and traditions which, as in the case of the Jews, were closely tied up with religious rites and customs.

Part of the older generation of Russian Jews, brought up in the spirit of religion, continued to adhere to its precepts and traditions. Festivals were celebrated in hiding, religious rites were secretly performed, and even kosher food regulations observed. Religious Jews were, however, deprived both of the

opportunity to manifest their religious sentiments publicly and, more important, to bring up their children in the spirit of their faith. Small wonder, then, that Soviet youth is almost wholly non-religious. According to Karpov, Chairman of the Council for Affairs of the Orthodox Church, 15 per cent of Soviet youth is positively inclined toward religion. With regard to Jewish youth, the percentage would probably be even lower.

During the war the peoples of the Soviet Union were, in fact, given more freedom to practice the religions of their choosing. Some shrines were opened to the public, and religious dignitaries were freed from prison and permitted to perform their duties. Observance of religious customs and the possession of religious objects ceased to be causes of disfavor on the part of the authorities. Anti-religious propaganda sharply declined. These changes were given wide publicity in the Soviet and pro-Soviet press, where ostentatious notices of services were printed, as well as pronouncements of higher church officials. This change of attitude towards religion was based on political considerations, and remained closely tied to the requirements of wartime propaganda. Today, all denominations, and above all the Greek (Russian) Orthodox Church, serve as instruments of the regime.

It is quite impossible to determine either the extent of present-day Jewish religious life in the USSR, or the forms in which it manifests itself. From infrequent notices in the press only general conclusions can be drawn. These point to the existence of a number of synagogues and houses of worship in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa, and other places which draw Jewish devotees, particularly during the religious holidays. Rabbis perform their duties, and so do kosher slaughterers. Matzoth are being baked.

According to B. Z. Goldberg, 78 registered religious communities exist in the Ukraine. On the other hand, trustworthy reports of witnesses (among others, Polish Jews in the USSR during the war) make it clear how difficult it is for religious Jews to conform to the requirements of their faith. Sacred objects, prayer books, *Sefer Torahs*, are available only in very limited quantities. These objects were either carefully pre-

served throughout the period of violent anti-religious policies, or brought from abroad by war refugees. The mailing of sacred objects into the Soviet Union from abroad is still forbidden. No Jewish calendars are published in the Soviet Union. Religious instruction continues to be non-existent.

The new, less stringent regulations seem to have benefited the Jews less than other religious groups. In an article on "The Non-Orthodox Religions in the USSR During and After World War II"¹ Prof. John F. Curtiss states that "little has been heard about the status of the Hebrew religion in the USSR," that in 1943 a Bureau of Hebrew Religious Affairs was organized in Moscow with Samuel Chodrutsky at its head; and that Chobrutsky sent a telegram to Stalin telling him that they were fervently praying to the Almighty "to grant you, our beloved leader and the chosen one of the Lord, long life and strength." After this, Prof. Curtiss states that "no subsequent information about the Hebrew religious body has been received."

Other published information concerning Jewish religious life in the USSR likewise contains nothing but generalities.

The stagnation of Jewish religious life is not a result of anti-Jewish discrimination on the part of Soviet authorities. (All religions in the Soviet Union today are legally on an equal footing.) It can, rather, be attributed to the lack of sufficient driving force among the Jews themselves, and particularly among the Jewish youth brought up at the time when anti-religious propaganda was at its height.

Only the older generation has, to a certain extent, maintained its religious attachments, and continues to observe traditional Jewish rites and customs.

As a result of the unprecedented Jewish catastrophe, a certain increase in national consciousness is evident among a substantial part of Soviet Jewry. The Russian Jews, however, are deprived of all opportunities to translate these national trends into organizational forms of any kind whatever, since no separate Jewish political, social or relief organizations exist; and since, also, Soviet Jews — again isolated from the

¹ *The American Review on the Soviet Union*, New York, November 1946.

Jews of America, Europe, and Palestine — take no part in Jewish life outside the borders of the USSR.

Birobidjan

The Jewish Autonomous Region in the Soviet Far East (until May 7, 1934 the Birobidjan District) is situated south of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, along the Manchurian frontier, in a bend of the Amur River and its two tributaries, the Bira and the Bidjan.

The publications of the American Birobidjan Committee (Ambijan) claim for the region a multitude of natural resources, and Corliss Lamont states that the country is "rich in fertile agricultural land, succulent grasses for pastures," etc.; but Professor Lorimer (*op. cit.*) sees Birobidjan "located in a strategically vital and precarious situation," and "handicapped by swampy soil."

The area of Birobidjan is 14,205 square miles. The population is engaged in agriculture, the raising of cattle, fishing, and bee-keeping. According to the Ambijan Committee, there are also a number of coal, iron ore, and gold mines, and during the last few years several light industrial establishments have come into being.

Sufficient impartial and reliable data for a more thorough analysis of the natural and economic situation of the region are, however, not available. Neither are exact demographic statistics at our disposal.

At the time when Birobidjan was declared a national district for Jewish settlement in 1928, its population amounted to 34,000 persons, 78 per cent of whom were Russians, 12 per cent Koreans and Chinese, and 10 per cent indigenous. There were no Jews in Birobidjan at that time. Beginning with 1928, Jewish immigration into Birobidjan was encouraged, but there were also large return movements. In January 1939, according to official data, the total population of Birobidjan was 108,419 persons, of whom about one-fourth, or perhaps somewhat more, according to Lorimer, were Jews. (The Moscow Jewish daily *Emes* of April 3, 1937, stated that 23.8 per cent were Jews.) Corliss Lamont estimates that in 1941 the total was

114,000 persons, of whom 40 per cent were Jews. Since the total population increased by 5,500 between 1939 and 1941, the rise in the percentage of Jews from 25 per cent to 40 per cent (i. e., a rise of 17,500) would seem improbable, for an exodus of several thousand non-Jews would then have to be assumed.

In an official publication of the American Birobidjan Committee¹ we find a note to the effect that the population of the region at the present time is estimated at 175,000 of which number 115,000 are Jews. These figures appear excessive. For they would indicate an increase in the total population of Birobidjan by 66,000 since 1939, and a rise of 87,500 in the Jewish population for the same period (an almost four-fold increase).

Far from these figures are the estimates of J. Lestschinsky (*The Jewish Daily Forward*, New York, July 6, 1946), who claims that Birobidjan has a Jewish population of only about 20,000 (constituting 18 per cent of the total population).

Lately the Soviet authorities have exerted a certain amount of pressure to increase Jewish immigration to Birobidjan. The government resolution stating the desirability of an increase in resettlement was echoed in the Soviet press, in resolutions adopted by the Moscow Jewish Writers' Union, etc.

Up to the present, however, resettlement has been very limited. According to the Moscow *Ainikeit* (January 4, 1947) the first post-war transport of immigrants left Vinnitsa (in the Ukraine). It comprised skilled workers as well as professionals, and totaled 326 persons, including 16 families. It was given wide publicity in the Soviet press.

Stalingrad Jewish orphans, numbering 3,500 children, were taken to Birobidjan and placed in a Children's Home. Plans to move 30,000 more Jewish orphans to Birobidjan have been announced, but there is no information on how far the plan was carried out.

Data published by Soviet sources regarding educational cultural activities in Birobidjan do not clearly distinguish be-

¹ *What is Birobidjan?* American Birobidjan Committee (Ambijan), New York, 1947.

tween information relating to the population as a whole, and the Jews in particular. There are various types of schools, some with Yiddish as the language of instruction, in others the study of Yiddish is compulsory. Of the libraries, the largest is the Sholem Aleichem Library which contains some 30,000 volumes of Judaica in Yiddish, Russian, and other languages. The single Yiddish-language newspaper is the *Birobidjan Star*. The L. Kaganovich Jewish Theater gives performances, and there also exist a number of amateur groups and clubs.

15. CZECHOSLOVAKIA

By Leon Shapiro

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, now in the eastern sphere of influence, has been a country of western political traditions, the most democratic State in this part of Europe in the period between the two World Wars. Today, Czechoslovakia is economically the strongest country of this area and politically enjoys much more freedom than any other state within the Russian orbit. The elections of May 1946, the first since the end of the war, brought to power a national front government whose component parties maintain positions in relation to their electoral strength. Communists, who polled about thirty per cent of the vote, hold the premiership and key positions in the government. Following the general political trend a two-year economic plan was initiated, combined with far-reaching governmental control.

Jews of German Nationality

As part of the profound political changes, which took place immediately after liberation, only the Czechs and Slovaks retained full constitutional rights, and this, of course, had an important bearing on the Jewish situation in a country where