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# Eastern Europe

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## INTRODUCTION

**D**URING THE YEAR under review (July 1, 1953, through June 30, 1954), the rulers of the Soviet empire were striving to overcome a major crisis arising from Josef Stalin's death, the struggle for power between his most prominent successors, Georgi M. Malenkov and Lavrenti P. Beria, and the unrest in the population. This unrest had found its most conspicuous expressions in the East German uprising of June 1953, in strikes in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, in passive resistance by peasants throughout the Soviet satellites, and in a revolt of slave laborers in the Vorkuta camps in the Soviet Union, all in the summer of 1953.

The struggle between Malenkov and Beria reached its bloody conclusion with the trial and execution of Beria and his aides in December 1953, and in an extensive purge and reorganization of the secret police. The leaders of the Communist Party reasserted their power; Premier Georgi M. Malenkov and Party secretary Nikita S. Khrushchev emerged as the most influential individuals. But neither of them had yet attained the status of omnipotence and infallibility enjoyed during his lifetime by Stalin. The Byzantine cult of the leader was publicly deprecated, and the regime stressed "the principle of collective leadership," as it had after the death of Lenin and before Stalin ascended to exclusive power.

### *Foreign Policy*

The much-heralded New Look in foreign policy in fact merely continued the tactical turn inaugurated by the nineteenth congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1952, when it was still under Stalin's leadership. The aim of the New Look was to disrupt the great defensive alliance of the democratic countries, in order to neutralize European and Asiatic powers and to isolate the United States; its immediate objective was to prevent the rearming of Western Germany and the strengthening of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Europe. For this purpose, the Soviet Union toned down its own and the Communist parties' propaganda in Western countries, and made a series of diplomatic advances to various powers, ranging from Great Britain and France to Yugoslavia and Turkey. But it did not make any substantial concessions: The Soviet Union remained intransigent in its opposition to the unification of Germany on the basis of free elections, and refused to sign a state treaty for Austria even

when the Western powers offered to accept the Soviet-proposed text without changes. The Soviet Union's hold on the satellite countries was in no way relaxed; in Asia, Communist aggression continued with full Soviet support; and Soviet behavior toward the United States remained openly aggressive in its propaganda, as well as in numerous incidents in which American airplanes were shot down and American citizens killed.

### *Economic Conditions*

In economic policies, there was a change in emphasis. The crisis in Soviet and satellite agriculture, which could no longer sustain the accelerated tempo of industrialization, was openly acknowledged. Industrial plans were revised, the build-up of some branches of heavy industry was slowed down (though not halted), and measures were taken to increase the production of agriculture and of light industry. In the Soviet Union, pressure on individual members of the collective farms was relaxed, and new agricultural colonization was undertaken in the Asiatic parts of the country. In the satellites, the complete collectivization of agriculture was postponed until times should improve. Everywhere, there was an effort to produce more consumer goods; but progress was slow and there were many complaints of new shortages, inferior quality, and a "sabotage" of the new policy by the bureaucratic apparatus.

### *Political Situation*

Economic concessions to the population were not matched by any relaxation in political rule. Following Lenin's prescription from the days of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921, Communist leaders combined a partial economic retreat with a strengthening of the dictatorship and its oppressive machinery. Amnesties decreed in the Soviet Union and the satellite countries in the spring and summer of 1953 excluded the overwhelming majority of political prisoners from their benefits. In Eastern Germany a campaign of terror was waged against all those who were suspected of having played an active role in the strikes and demonstrations of June 1953, "unreliable" workers were fired from their jobs, and many Communists were purged because they had been "soft" toward the strikers. In all satellite countries, security organizations were purged of real or suspected partisans of Beria, and the police was reorganized and streamlined. In the summer of 1954 the Communists were wooing Tito's Yugoslavia and stopped all public attacks against "Titoism." There were rumors that some Communists arrested for "Titoism" were being released from jail in Hungary and Bulgaria. The belated release of the American citizens Noel and Herman Field (on November 16, 1954, and October 25, 1954, respectively) seemed to belong to the same category. But there was no revision of the charges against Rudolf Slánský and his numerous "accomplices," accused of participation in a worldwide "Zionist conspiracy."

## *Jewish Situation*

There was little change in the situation of the Jews. Openly anti-Semitic campaigns in the press disappeared and diplomatic and commercial relations with Israel were resumed, but anti-Jewish propaganda in the guise of anti-Zionism continued. A long series of trials against the "co-conspirators" of Slánský was conducted in Czechoslovakia, and many of the defendants—most of them Jews—were sentenced to jail for life or for decades. In other satellite countries, Jewish co-defendants played a prominent role in proceedings against disgraced leaders of Communist parties.

At the same time, a campaign of mass terror was organized against former leaders of the Jewish communities, most of whom had been held in jail since 1949–50. Hundreds of them received severe sentences for their activities in the Zionist movement and in Jewish communal institutions, which had been perfectly legal before their arrest. In Rumania the victims included practically all the well-known former leaders of the Jewish communities; in Hungary even the Communist-imposed Jewish commissars shared the fate of their Zionist and liberal predecessors.

Jewish religious services were still held in a small number of synagogues, and this fact was utilized by Communist propaganda abroad as a proof of "complete religious freedom." But the surviving Jewish religious communities—as well as the few surviving Jewish schools and theaters in Poland and Rumania—were under complete Communist control, and the rabbis still tolerated were forced not only to participate in Communist political and propaganda campaigns but also to sign manifestoes destined for foreign use which asserted that Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain was free and blooming.

JOSEPH GORDON

## EASTERN GERMANY

THE SHOCK induced in Communist ruling circles by the mass uprising of June 17, 1953 (*see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK*, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 267-68), persisted during the period under review (July 1, 1953, through June 30, 1954). It led to the imposition of cruel penalties upon those suspected of having been actively involved; but there was also some relaxation of the measures of regimentation and coercion applied to the general population. The collectivization of agriculture and the nationalization of private business proceeded, but at a much slower pace. Interference with church affairs became less noticeable. Foodstuffs and consumer goods remained dearer, scarcer, and shoddier than in West Germany, but they became available at lower prices, in greater quantity, and of better quality than in the earlier postwar years.

Certain of the domestic measures served to lend emphasis to the regime's primary propaganda theme, the demand for German reunification. Thus, barriers between West Berlin and the Soviet zone were largely removed. "Interzonal passes" were abolished; permits authorizing residents of East Ger-

many to visit relatives or friends in the West, and vice versa, were issued comparatively freely. Travel and mail curbs were reduced to a minimum. For the annual laymen's convention of the German Protestant Church, held in the Soviet zone for the first time since World War II, 100,000 West Germans and 400,000 East Germans were allowed to congregate at Leipzig in a mighty demonstration of religious faith.

Within the Soviet zone itself, there were various efforts to raise the living standard of the population. Some remained on paper, but others were in fact carried out. In July 1953 the wages of low-paid workers in nationalized factories and of sales clerks in the state-owned HO stores were increased. In these retail establishments, which sold scarce or rationed goods at a huge mark-up, prices for a variety of items were slashed repeatedly. Tax cuts benefited not only workers but also artisans, peasants, and the remaining private businessmen, who received larger allocations of merchandise and raw materials. Even the Five Year Plan was modified with the aim of boosting production of consumer goods by 10 per cent, a higher increase than that stipulated for heavy industry.

In May 1953 the Soviet Union had dissolved the Soviet Control Commission and created a High Commission of the Soviet Union in Germany. After negotiations conducted at Moscow in August 1953, the Soviet Union announced that it would terminate the levying of reparations as of January 1, 1954, that it would reduce occupation costs, return Soviet-confiscated plants to the East German government, and wipe out certain East German debts. In March 1954 the Soviet Union granted "full sovereignty" to Eastern Germany, "except for functions in connection with security and with obligations deriving from four-power agreements on Germany." The Soviet High Commission was transformed into an embassy.

Perhaps the change in the psychological climate was best epitomized by the reactions, only one year apart, to two American offers of aid. In July 1953 a proposal by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to furnish \$15,000,000 worth of foodstuffs to Eastern Germany was turned down; the East German parliament termed it "provocatory and insulting." In July 1954 a United States offer to supply relief foodstuffs to East German flood victims through the International Red Cross was accepted with thanks.

But although conditions improved somewhat during the year under review, Eastern Germany remained a police state where basic human rights were trampled underfoot and where the material conditions of life continued to be unsatisfactory. During the 1953 calendar year, 326,000 people fled from Eastern to Western Germany. The rate declined somewhat toward the end of 1953 and in 1954, but there was no blinking the fact that during 1949-54 nearly 2,000,000 Germans had crossed to the West from the Soviet zone and from East Berlin, which together had a population of only 18,500,000.

### *Reparations*

Whenever the occasion offered, the East German authorities spoke out against the West German reparations pact with Israel and called for its im-

mediate revocation. Thus, government spokesman Albert Norden (*see below*) stated at a special press conference in November 1953 that the East German government would not recognize the "completely unjustified" reparations agreement.

Interested in pressing its claim against Eastern Germany for reparations of \$500,000,000, and safeguarding the smooth continuation of reparations deliveries in the event a unified Germany was created, Israel was represented at the Four Power Conference held in Berlin in January 1954 by Chaim Yahil, deputy head of the Israel Purchasing Mission in Germany. The world Jewish organizations supported the Israel goals, and in special memoranda again indicated their interest in the extension to Eastern Germany of restitution and indemnification legislation enacted in Western Germany. However, these issues did not become acute, since reunification never had a serious chance of realization. Eastern Germany, for its part, showed itself adamant in its refusal to recognize any moral obligation to redress the wrongs perpetrated by Germany. The East German foreign minister went so far as to receive Syria's envoy to Bonn, and to assure him that Eastern Germany would not deviate from its policy in regard to reparations.

### *After-Effects of the Anti-Jewish Purge*

In the wake of the 1952-53 anti-Jewish purge (*see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK*, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 268-71), certain personnel shifts took place in the summer of 1953, and the Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Nazi Regimes--VVN (Association of Victims of Nazism), once one of the mainstays of the regime, was dissolved. On July 28, 1953, the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the Communist party of Eastern Germany, eliminated the last remaining two Jews from its top leadership. Rudolf Herrstadt, editor of the authoritative central party organ, was excluded from the Party Central Committee and placed in seclusion in a provincial town; later he was expelled from the Party altogether. Hermann Axen, the Party's one-time cadre chief and more recently its political agitation head, was dropped from the Party Secretariat and shifted to a lesser job in East Berlin. On July 30, 1953, Bernd Weinberger, who had served as an important member of the Soviet Zone cabinet, was demoted to a subcabinet post, which was abolished some months later. Weinberger was the last cabinet member of Jewish origin.

In October 1953, the well-known Communist playwright, author, physician, and diplomat, Friedrich Wolf, died in his sixty-fifth year. Wolf had been recalled as East German ambassador to Warsaw amid the initial stirrings of the anti-Jewish wave. Paul Baender, another Jewish-born official ousted at the onset of the purge from his position as state secretary in the ministry of commerce and supply, was given six years at hard labor (July 1954) for allegedly "upsetting the food supply of the population by deliberately false planning and through wrong directives."

In the course of the late summer and fall of 1953, the campaign against "Zionists" and "Slanskyites" abated. In January 1954 Alexander Abusch and Albert Norden, two Communists of Jewish birth who had long before re-

nounced all identification with Judaism, were elevated to the rank of state secretaries, in a move interpreted as part of the more conciliatory Communist policy adopted in preparation for the Big Four Conference in Berlin and the Communist-propagated reunion of Eastern and Western Germany. Both Abusch and Norden had lived in the Americas during World War II, and their presumed familiarity with the Western world apparently was regarded as an advantage in this situation.

### *Jewish Community*

As the anti-Jewish purge and the publicity campaign against "Zionists" subsided, the exodus of Jews (*see* AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 268-71), came to a halt. Out of the previously estimated Jewish population of 2,700 in East Berlin and in the Soviet zone proper, almost 600 had fled in the course of the six months from December 1952 through May 1953. They had crossed to West Berlin, whence more than half either were moved to Western Germany, or else emigrated to other countries.

Because the refugees included practically the entire communal leadership and many of those who had been most interested in Jewish affairs, Jewish life was vestigial in the seven congregations outside of East Berlin—Leipzig, Dresden, Erfurt, Magdeburg, Halle, Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt), Schwerin, and Plauen. The Association of Jewish Communities in the German Democratic Republic was reorganized, but was simply a letterhead.

In East Berlin, the Rykestrasse synagogue, the largest in Germany and the only one in East Berlin, was renovated during 1953 with the financial assistance of the East Berlin municipality, and rededicated for the High Holy Days by the Rev. Martin Riesenburger, a preacher and former schoolteacher of religious subjects who was now the only religious functionary in all of Eastern Germany. In October 1953 a simple black-granite monument to the victims of Nazism was unveiled at the Weissensee Jewish cemetery in East Berlin.

## SOVIET UNION

THERE WERE still no reliable data about the number of Jews in the Soviet Union. The most acceptable estimate put their number at about 1,800,000 persons.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish population of the capital, Moscow, was estimated at between 250,000 and 500,000. The old centers of Jewish population in the western territories of the Soviet Union, in the Ukraine and Bielorrussia, had been depopulated, partly by the mass extermination under the Nazi occupation, partly by the postwar deportation of Jews to the eastern territories. A large part of the Jewish population was now concentrated in the Asiatic parts of the Soviet Union, in Siberia, and in the Central Asiatic republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, and Kazakhstan. According to some

<sup>1</sup> For another estimate of the Jewish population of the Soviet Union, *see* p. 291.

reports, Tashkent in Central Asia had emerged as the city with the second largest Jewish population in the Soviet Union. Most of the Jews now residing in this Soviet Asiatic area were newcomers; only a small fraction of the Asiatic Jewish population were the descendants of long-settled groups of Central Asiatic Jews.

### *Deportees*

Most of the Jews in Siberia and Central Asia were refugees or deportees from the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, of World War II, and of the postwar period. Some of the refugees had settled in the East "voluntarily" because they had no place to go to in the "liberated" western territories. Others had returned after the war only to be deported to the East in the new wave of deportations that took place in 1948-49. Still others, after having served their time in slave-labor camps, had been released on condition that they settle in the eastern territories as "free" workers or "specialists." They were allowed to accept civilian jobs, but forbidden to leave the territory. Such settlers were dispersed in the wide area from the Turkestan deserts up to and behind the Polar Circle. Allowed to travel in Siberia in the summer of 1953, Harrison E. Salisbury, the Moscow correspondent of *The New York Times*, met these deportees in many places, including the Polar Circle city of Yakutsk in north-east Siberia. Salisbury wrote (*The New York Times*, September 28, 1954):

From the Ukraine and Bielorussia, many Jews have been sent to far northern Yakutia with its permafrost (permanently frozen subsoil), its Lena River, ice-bound until June, and its dark and frigid winters. Many of the Jews have found work in the city of Yakutsk, in its small factories and service industries. I asked a young Jewish engineer who had been shipped out to work in the Yakutsk bakery, after getting into "trouble" in a Moscow factory, how his life compared with that in Moscow. He did not reply. He simply snorted and looked at me as if I had lost my wits.

In addition to these "free" settlers, there were also many Jews in the slave-labor camps. New reports about these slave-labor camps reached the West in 1953 when the Soviet government released several hundred citizens of Germany and Austria. These survivors reported having met Jews—of Soviet as well as of Central European origin—in the camps of Vorkuta behind the Polar Circle in European Russia, and in Central Asia. One of the released persons, Maria Jacobi, who was allowed to emigrate in 1954, was of Jewish origin. She had operated a *matsoh* bakery in West Berlin in 1947, her products being distributed by the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in the Eastern sector of Berlin. On a shopping trip to East Berlin, Mrs. Jacobi had been arrested, deported to Moscow, and from there to Central Asia, where she had been detained in the slave-labor camp in Spassk. There Mrs. Jacobi had met many prisoners of German, Hungarian, and Czech origin. Many Jews from the satellite countries had been deported the same way; in only a few exceptional cases had they found their way back to freedom.

## *Jewish Communal Life*

The death of Josef Stalin in March 1953 did not affect the ban on all manifestations of Jewish cultural and communal life in the Soviet Union. There were no Jewish periodicals, publications, theaters, schools, welfare institutions, or associations of any kind. Many of the estimated 1,800,000 persons of Jewish origin had, except for childhood memories, no ties with the Jewish communities or traditions. Their attitude was expressed in an interview that N. B. Levinson, deputy director of the Moscow State Puppet Theater, gave to the correspondent of the [London] *Jewish Chronicle* in July 1954. Asked about the reasons for the closing of the Jewish Theater in Moscow in 1949, Levinson replied: "There was . . . the problem of finding themes for the plays. There are no particular Jewish problems in the Soviet Union and it is extremely difficult to find Jewish authors to write for a Yiddish theater." (Levinson did not mention that all Soviet Yiddish authors had been arrested and deported in 1948.) Asked about the number of Jews, Levinson said: "I do not know. I could tell you about the number of Ukrainians, who have their own language, but not about the Jews." When asked what being a Jew meant to him, Levinson cited some childhood memories. However, he added that his conception meant nothing to Jews under the age of thirty—they had no similar memories. "I never . . . have discussions with other Russian Jews about religion or about Jewishness."

Other reports stressed the acceleration of assimilation through intermarriage. "The younger generation," reported the [London] *Jewish Chronicle* on June 25, 1954, "brought up in Communist schools and with no knowledge whatsoever of Judaism, almost invariably marries out of the faith." The report added that many young Jews married non-Jews to demonstrate their allegiance to party principles and their "complete emancipation" from Jewish and bourgeois, religious and other prejudices.

## *Religious Life*

The only surviving Jewish institutions were a few synagogues still kept open in Moscow and several other places, in order to facilitate police supervision of the remaining believers and to demonstrate to foreign visitors that there was "religious freedom" in Russia. The Moscow synagogue was visited by several delegates to the meeting of the council of the Communist-dominated International Union of Students held in Moscow in August 1954. The delegates—some of them from Israel, some from England—were not allowed to speak to the members of the congregation. They were seated apart: after the service, as the delegates left the congregants stood up, but did not approach them. One of the visitors also saw the synagogue in Leningrad, which looked deserted and decaying. Salisbury was allowed to visit the "tiny" synagogues in Birobidjan and Bokhara—everywhere, the congregations consisted of elderly, poorly dressed, unhappy looking persons.

## ANTI-RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA

A strong anti-religious propaganda campaign was waged with new vigor in the summer of 1954. Sharp articles against religious "superstitions" appeared in the press, and clergymen were attacked at meetings. The campaign was so violent that on November 11, 1954, the Moscow *Pravda* printed a directive signed by the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, "correcting" certain "abuses." The decree stressed that anti-religious propaganda should be conducted on a more "scientific basis" and with more tact: it should not gravely offend the feelings of the believers, and persons should not be considered "politically suspect" just because they were religious. But the article stressed that the campaign against religion should be continued. Jewish religion was not especially singled out for attack—the battle against Jewish traditions was waged more on the political and cultural fronts, under the flag of "anti-Zionism" and "anti-cosmopolitanism." But neither was Judaism spared: The 1954 edition of the Soviet *Philosophical Dictionary* described it as "superstitious" and "reactionary."

*Birobidjan*

Birobidjan was still formally in existence as the Jewish Autonomous Province. In the general elections in March 1954, Birobidjan elected five deputies to the Soviet of Nationalities, the upper chamber of the Supreme Soviet. But only one of these five was of Jewish origin.

Communist delegations to the Soviet Union, though not allowed to visit Birobidjan, repeated the usual propaganda reports about a "blooming Jewish life" in that province that they had heard in Moscow. Thus, the Communist women's delegation from Israel "reported" the existence of fifty-two Yiddish public schools, ten Yiddish high schools, and two Yiddish technical colleges in Birobidjan, and a Yiddish department at the Khabarovsk University in eastern Siberia. This delegation also spoke of movie houses playing Yiddish films—without saying where they were produced—and of "Jewish" *kolkhozes* (collectives) and tractor stations. The *kolkhozes* and tractor stations may have been enterprises whose personnel was partly of Jewish origin. But almost certainly there were no Yiddish schools in Birobidjan.

The province had been closed to foreign visitors for seven years. Promises that the Israel ambassador to Moscow, Shmuel Eliashiv, would be allowed to visit Birobidjan, had remained unfulfilled up to the time of this writing (November 1954).

However, in the summer of 1953, Soviet authorities did allow Salisbury to stop in Birobidjan. The police surveillance of the visitor was extraordinary even for Soviet conditions. A secret police officer established himself as the ostensible manager of the hotel, and whenever Salisbury emerged from his room, police agents followed his every step. Free conversation with the local residents was impossible.

Among the few visible remainders of Jewish life were street signs in Rus-

sian and Yiddish; Salisbury also saw a few copies of the *Birobidjaner Shtern*, a small newspaper in Yiddish, which had been allowed to appear, with frequent interruptions, in Birobidjan during the postwar years.

Birobidjan had become part of the eastern Siberian slave-labor territory ruled by the secret police, and Salisbury was able to discover a prisoners' camp next to the unpaved main street of the province's capital.

### *Anti-Semitism*

After Stalin's death in March 1953, and the retraction of the charges against the Moscow doctors in April 1953 (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 273 and f.), open anti-Jewish propaganda disappeared from the columns of the Soviet press. But, except for the doctors, none of the victims of the vast anti-Semitic campaign was rehabilitated, and nothing was done to repair the damage inflicted upon the Jewish population. The accusation against Zionism as a world conspiracy was never retracted, and while the persecution of real and imaginary Zionists continued in the satellite countries, in the Soviet Union the belief that Zionism was counter-revolutionary and subversive remained an article of Communist faith.

In April 1953 the Soviet government had denounced two high officials of the ministry of state security as primarily responsible for falsely incriminating the doctors. One of them, Mikhail D. Ryumin, was arrested, and on July 7, 1954, sentenced to death. But strangely enough, the paragraph invoked when Ryumin was sentenced was not the one dealing with counter-revolutionary incitement to group hatred, but rather article 58, point 7 of the Criminal Code, punishing the "undermining of state industry, transport, trade, currency or credit . . . carried out for counter-revolutionary purposes." According to the sentence passed on him, Ryumin's chief crime seems to have been the arrest, not of the Jewish doctors, but of some unspecified leaders of the Soviet economy.

Ryumin's chief, the former minister of state security, Semyon D. Ignatiev, was only temporarily demoted in April 1953. A few months later, after the fall of Beria, Ryumin was appointed the secretary of the Communist Party in the Autonomous Republic of Bashkiria, and in the March 1954 elections, he was nominated and elected as a deputy to the Supreme Soviet.

### *Relations With Israel*

Soviet diplomatic relations with Israel, broken off after the attempt on the Soviet legation in Tel Aviv on February 11, 1953 (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 277) were resumed several months after Stalin's death. Preliminary contacts between both governments were established in April 1953; negotiations were then conducted between the Soviet ambassador in Sofia and the Israel *chargé d'affaires* there. The Soviet government demanded that Israel make the first official approach, which Israel did in a note dated May 28, 1953. Further negotiations followed, and finally, Israel officially asked for the resumption of diplomatic relations on July 6, 1953. In a

letter to Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov, the Israel government expressed once again its regrets at the attempt on the Soviet legation, offered apologies, promised compensation for the injuries and damages suffered, and pledged further efforts to apprehend and punish the culprits. The note also stressed that Israel would not be a party to any alliance or pact aiming at aggression against the Soviet Union.

On July 15, 1953, the Soviet government accepted these statements and agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations. On August 2, 1953, the Israel government reappointed Shmuel Eliashiv minister to Moscow, while Moscow appointed a new minister to Israel, Alexander N. Abramov. But it was some time before relations were really fully resumed. Eliashiv, who arrived in Moscow in November 1953, presented his credentials on December 14; the same month, Abramov presented his credentials to the Israel president in Jerusalem. But the seat of the Soviet embassy was not, as had been expected, transferred to Jerusalem—it remained in Tel Aviv.

Reviewing Soviet foreign relations in an address to the Supreme Soviet on August 8, 1953, Premier Georgi M. Malenkov stressed that Israel had promised not to join any aggressive alliance against the Soviet Union. Malenkov declared that this promise would assist the development of cooperation between the two countries, but added that the resumption of diplomatic relations did not imply any weakening of the Soviet Union's friendly relations with the Arab countries. And in fact subsequently, the Soviet Union did continue to support Arab claims in the United Nations. After the resumption of Soviet relations with Israel, several trade agreements were concluded. The export of Israel oranges and other fruit to the Soviet Union was renewed, while the Soviet Union began to deliver to Israel considerable quantities of crude oil.

In June 1954 both countries agreed to transform their legations into embassies.

On August 3, 1954, Soviet newspapers published a *Tass* dispatch from Tel Aviv alleging that Israel had proposed a mutual defense pact to the United States. The Israel legation sent the Soviet foreign office a note denying this report and asking for the publication of this denial. On August 10 the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* actually published the denial—an unusual occurrence in the Soviet press, which only rarely printed repudiations of its own reports.

## *Emigration*

The hope that the resumption of Soviet diplomatic relations with Israel would lead to a relaxation of the ban against Jewish emigration to Israel was disappointed. As in previous years, only some dozen exceptions were made for hardship cases, and a few old men and women whose children were abroad were given exit permits. Generally, emigration remained forbidden, and Soviet Jews were cut off from any contacts with the Jewish communities abroad.

JOSEPH GORDON

## POLAND

THE POLITICAL CHANGES in the Soviet Union and the satellite countries that followed the death of Josef Stalin in March 1953 did not come to Poland until March 1954. Apparently in the wake of the second congress of the Polish United Workers Party (Communist), held in Warsaw March 10-17, 1954, the Polish government was reorganized and brought into step with the new line of "collective leadership" announced in Moscow after Stalin's demise. Boleslav Bierut relinquished his government post of prime minister to become first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. Bierut was succeeded as prime minister by Joseph Cyrankiewicz, a former Socialist, who had joined the Communist Party in 1948 and, in fact, had been prime minister before Bierut took over the position.

This new division of responsibilities coincided with a new policy of concentrating on meeting the needs of the peasants and consumers—i.e., with the proclamation of the "new line" in Poland. "Brutal ways" of forcing peasants into collectives were strongly condemned at the Party congress, and Hilary Minc, chief economist of the regime, stressed the necessity of a "new look" at the Polish economy, particularly with respect to over-all planning, shortages, etc. In fact, the New Look seemed to have coincided with reports from Poland, as well as other satellite countries, of serious trouble among the workers, whose wages were lagging desperately behind the prices of consumer goods. As of the end of 1953, Poland had over 8,000 collective farms, with about 100,000 peasant members.

*General Position of the Jews*

The anti-Jewish policies that characterized the last year of the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union did not affect Poland in the same degree as they did the other satellite countries, although they did produce fertile soil for the strong anti-Semitic feelings still alive in Poland. There was a case toward the end of 1953 of the murder of a Jewish couple in Wroclaw (western Poland) which was allegedly perpetrated by anti-Semitic Poles. A general feeling of insecurity and fear was reported to be widespread among Polish Jews—particularly in the western areas of Poland, whose legal status might be challenged in the event of a new political settlement. Reports from Poland indicated that many Polish Jews still desired to quit the country, most of them to go to Israel.

Poland seemed to have escaped the worst features of the anti-Jewish trends—no leading Jewish Communists had been purged and no Zionist groups had been brought to trial. There were the usual vituperative articles in the press against Zionism, and against leading officials of the State of Israel, but these seemed more in the nature of anti-Zionist than anti-Jewish attacks. Thus, the Jewish workers in shops and factories were forced to vote for strong anti-Zionist motions condemning the Israeli "reactionary Fascists," pledging themselves to foster the economic and military developments of

their fatherland, etc. American Jews were singled out for attack, particularly in connection with the visit to Western Germany of Rabbi Norman Salit of the Synagogue Council (*Folksztyme*, January 3, 1954).

Continuing rumors of the gradual demotion of Hilary Minc, vice premier and chief economic planner, seemed to have been unfounded, at least at this writing (December 1954). In fact, at the second congress of the Polish United Workers Party (Communist), which was held in Warsaw on March 10-17, 1954, Minc delivered one of the most important reports on the economic tasks for 1954-55 within the general framework of the six-year plan. The new Politburo of the Central Committee of the Party elected at this congress included, among others, Minc (fourth in the listing) and Jacob Berman (eighth). Both men were also nominated to a vice premiership, Minc to be first vice premier in addition to his other positions. Szymon Zachariacz, a leading member of the Jewish Cultural and Social Union, was listed among the members of the Central Control Commission. Although there were persistent reports of the gradual elimination of Jewish employees from responsible positions in the state and city government, no reliable information on this score could be obtained.

### *Jewish Population*

Verifiable data on Jewish population in Poland were not available. Nor were there data on such matters as distribution by occupation and age groups. From official reports it was known, however, that the great majority of the gainfully employed Jews were in light and small industry, servicing occupations, and individual handicrafts (report by Hersz Smoliar to the enlarged plenum of the presidium of the Cultural and Social Union held in Warsaw November 15, 1953 [*Folksztyme*, Warsaw, November 18, 1953]). Current estimates of the number of Jews in Poland varied from 35,000 (as reported in *The Jewish Daily Forward*, October 9, 1954, on the basis of an estimate by an Israeli diplomat) to 72,000. The latter figure was quoted by the British Laborite member of parliament Ian Mikardo after his visit to Poland (*The Jewish Chronicle* [London], October 15, 1954). The figure had apparently been supplied by official Jewish groups in Poland, but there was no substantial material to back it up. Mikardo reported that in 1954, 90,000 persons took out *matzot* for the Passover holiday, of whom 15,000 to 20,000 were non-Jews. As there had been no report of an influx of Jews to Poland from other satellite countries, this sudden increase cannot be explained. The previous estimate of 45,000 (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 283) was based on a careful study of the population data available since the liberation and seemed to be nearer to the real situation than any other figure. The Jewish population was distributed in about 30 cities, with 5,000 living in Warsaw and about 12,000 in Wroclaw.

### *Communal Life*

Most of the efforts of the official Cultural and Social Union of Polish Jews were devoted to an ideological re-education of the Jewish people and to

combatting "nationalism and bourgeois trends." According to official reports, during the period of five months between December 1953 and May 1954, 336 meetings were held in the various shops and cooperatives where these problems were presented and discussed. These meetings were arranged by special "social commissions," which were created in all the communities to serve as the watchdog organs of the local committees. Their efforts did not, however, succeed in overcoming the so-called "nationalist" trend—judging by the angry comments of the Communist leaders of the Union. Nor did it overcome the widespread apathy and lack of interest in Union activities. Apparently individual members did not care to pay dues, and the local committees themselves did not care to collect them. This peculiar situation was discussed again and again at meetings of the presidium and in the press (S. Fiszgrund, *Folksztyme*, July 13, 1953).

The membership of the Union on April 1, 1954, was 11,640, including 8,640 with long-standing affiliation and 3,000 new members (*Folksztyme*, April 7, 1954). There were no changes in the leadership; Hersz Smoliar and David Sfarid were still holding the positions of president and secretary general respectively. In addition, Szymon Zachariacz, Joel Lazebnik, Bynem Heler, and Salo Fiszgrund were among the leading members of the presidium.

### *Religious Life*

Very little was known about Jewish religious life in Poland, except that the officially recognized Union of the Congregations of the Mosaic Faith still existed. Though there was no information about the over-all number of synagogues, some were mentioned as still existing in Warsaw, Lodz, and Cracow. There were reliable reports of small prayer houses in a few other communities. There were, however, no qualified rabbis, no religious teachers, no *shochetim*, no *yeshivot* or other kind of religious schools. The number of mixed marriages was reported as continually increasing. Jewish cemeteries were not being taken care of, and the Jewish rabbinate was not represented at the official commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising held in Warsaw in April 1954.

### *Jewish Education*

It was difficult to construct an accurate picture of the Jewish school system in Poland. Meager reports indicated that state-supported schools still existed in a number of cities. The Jewish lycée in Lodz had 400 pupils at the beginning of the 1953-54 academic year, the school in Lignice 320. There was also a Jewish lycée in Wroclaw and schools in Dzerzcionow, Walbrzych, Szczecin, and other cities. The interesting thing about these Jewish schools was the difficulty that they experienced in teaching Jewish subjects. Not only was it true that nothing was taught in those schools of Jewish history, Jewish national movements, or of the Hebrew language, but even instruction in the Yiddish disciplines left much to be desired. These difficulties were discussed frequently and openly in the press—although apparently with some

reticence, since such discussion might have been construed as "nationalist" deviation. Absenteeism in the schools took on alarming proportions—in some schools about 25 per cent of the pupils did not attend school. There were also continuing difficulties in regard to a dearth of Jewish textbooks, and the continuing lack of qualified teachers. In fact, some local writers attributed the high incidence of absenteeism among the pupils to the prevailing low level of the teaching—as well as to the gradual disappearance of interest in things Jewish among the younger generation. There was no information as to the number of Jewish students in universities, where it was said that the old Polish anti-Semitic tradition persisted.

### *Cultural Activities*

Jewish cultural activities seemed to have changed in character, at least in the sense that more and more propaganda had replaced the earlier and broader endeavors of the various clubs. For that matter, there seemed to have been a discernible general trend towards narrowing Jewish activities to such cultural forms as art, choral singing, and dance groups, and identifying those activities increasingly with the general work which the local committees of the Union were supposed to carry on. This trend was only natural under the prevailing conditions of state-regimented conformity. In 1954 there were in Poland 42 such Jewish art ensembles, with 1,064 members (*Folksztyme*, April 7, 1954).

The Jewish Writers Club continued to function as a part of the Polish Union of Writers. In 1954, the club was headed by Ber Mark, Bynem Heler, and Mojsze Szkliar. The publishing agency *Dos Yiddishe Buch* continued its activity. A conference devoted to Jewish books and press took place in Wroclaw on November 22, 1954, with 250 delegates representing about 30 cities participating in its work. During 1954 *Dos Yiddishe Buch* had 5,087 subscribers, and its publishing plans included not only original works in Yiddish but also translations from German, Polish, and Russian, as well as special children's literature. Altogether, it was planned to issue thirty-four items.

### HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

The Jewish Historical Institute continued its activities in research and publication of the quarterly *Bleter far Geshichte*. Its work and publications, as always, conformed to the Communist line not only in interpreting recent events, but also in rewriting the history of the past. The working plans of the institute included, among other things, a collective study on the extermination of Jews during the German occupation, and the publication of works created in the ghetto by martyred Jewish writers. Preparations were also under way to publish a special issue of the *Bleter far Geshichte* devoted to the eleventh anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

A new find of material dealing with Jewish life under the occupation was reported. It consisted of sixty boxes containing written records of the ghetto of Lodz (*Folksztyme*, January 9, 1954).

*Personalia*

During the period under review a number of Jewish writers, artists, and journalists received special awards from the state. The painter Kalman Gleb and the theatrical director Jacob Rotboym were awarded the State Prize of the third degree for a series of drawings, *The Fighting Ghetto*, and the adaptation and direction of *Der Loif zu Pragola*, respectively. A Gold Merit Cross was awarded to Nathan Meisler, an actor from the Yiddish theater, and a Silver Merit Cross to Abraham Kwaterka, a member of the staff of *Folksztyme*. The writer Bynem Heler was awarded the Chevalier Cross of the Order of the Polish Renaissance.

Julian Tuwim, one of the most important contemporary Polish poets, died in December 1953 in Zacopane, Poland. The poet had spent the war years in the United States, but returned to Poland soon after the end of hostilities.

LEON SHAPIRO

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

THE LAST RELIABLE ESTIMATES of the Jewish population, dating from 1949, had indicated about 15,000 persons of Jewish origin as residing in Czechoslovakia. Since that time, emigration had been forbidden. On the other hand, the Jewish population, which had a disproportionate number of elderly people, had probably suffered a decrease.

*Community Organization*

The surviving Jewish religious communities were completely dominated by the Communists and forced to take part in Communist peace campaigns. Their central organization in the western part of Czechoslovakia, the Council of Jewish Religious Communities, had not been allowed to function as a legal body for several years, its by-laws, submitted to the authorities for approval, having been held up by these authorities for five full years.

Finally, in the fall of 1953, the by-laws were approved, and the communities were allowed to hold their conference in Prague on November 22, 1953. French- and English-language reports of the conference were widely circulated in democratic countries in an attempt to prove the existence of religious freedom in Czechoslovakia. The report contained some palpable falsehoods—as for instance, that this was the first time the Jewish communities had been allowed to have a central organization. As a matter of fact, such an organization had existed in democratic Czechoslovakia as well as in the first years of the Communist rule after World War II. There had been a council in existence, and the monthly *Věstník* in Prague had described itself as its organ, up to January 1952 (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1953 [Vol. 54], p. 244).

The council organization revived at the conference included all the Jewish religious communities in the western part of Czechoslovakia, the Czech-speaking provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia. The eastern part, Slovakia, evidently had, as before, its own Federation of Jewish Religious Communities, whose chairman and chief rabbi attended the Prague conference as guests.

There had been 217 Jewish religious communities in the three western provinces before World War II; after the war, 51 of these communities had been revived, and had distributed among themselves the territories of the extinct communities. In 1953, 9 religious communities were left: Prague, Karlovy Vary, Ústí n.L., Liberec, and Plzeň were their seats in Bohemia; Brno, Kyjov, Olomouc, and Ostrava, in Moravia and Silesia. Each of the communities administered vast geographical areas; there were synagogue congregations without administrative jurisdiction in several smaller towns.

According to *Věstník*, daily services were held in synagogues in Prague, Brno, and Karlovy Vary, Sabbath services in a second synagogue in Prague and in nine synagogues in provincial cities. In addition to Chief Rabbi Gustav Sicher in Prague, there were four peripatetic district rabbis, who toured extensive areas. There were two old-age homes, which had been transferred from the capital cities of Bohemia and Moravia to smaller places.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the eight-page monthly *Věstník*, the council published a year book and a religious primer. The communities reported in *Věstník* anniversaries and deaths of community members and meetings commemorating the deportations and exterminations of the Jewish population under the Nazi rule. The council issued occasional statements supporting Communist peace campaigns and called for the elections of the Communist "Unity Lists" in local and provincial elections.

The financial situation of the religious communities was precarious; some of them tried to meet their current expenses by selling such properties as unused synagogue buildings. Often, even the funds resulting from such sales did not help the communal treasury. Thus, when the Prague community sold its synagogue building destroyed during World War II and located in the suburb of Vinohrady, the community succeeded in obtaining 19,000 crowns for it. But the community had to pay 9,000 crowns for the demolition of the ruins, and was then forced to "volunteer" the remaining 10,000 crowns for the reconstruction of North Korea.

In the spring of 1954, the council appealed to the State Office for Church Affairs for financial help in maintaining and reconstructing several hundred deserted Jewish cemeteries. The office had no objections to this work, but ordered the communities to maintain the cemeteries at their own expense and to organize voluntary labor brigades among their members. Reports of the activities of such brigades appeared in *Věstník* throughout the summer of 1954, but only a few cemeteries could be salvaged with the modest means at the communities' disposal.

<sup>1</sup>In November 1954, the Free Europe Committee received a report about one of these homes, which had been transferred to Mariánské Lázně. The home was described as horribly crowded, and the inmates as forced to begging in the street. Four of the inmates had committed suicide; two others had disappeared.

## *Anti-Semitism*

The purge of Jews, which had reached its climax in the famous Slánský trial (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 288-94), continued throughout 1953 and 1954 and up to the spring of 1954, with trials of Slánský's alleged co-conspirators.

On May 26, 1953, four high officials of the diplomatic service, three of them Jews, were tried in Prague. Slánský's brother, Richard, and Eduard Goldstuecker, former Czechoslovak minister to Israel, were sentenced to prison for life, Pavel Kavan and Karel Dufek to twenty-five years. On August 7, 1953, Shimon Ohrenstein, an Israel citizen, received a life sentence. On October 9, 1953, his cousin, the left-wing Mapam deputy of the Israel Knesset, Mordecai Oren, was sentenced to fifteen years in jail. All these defendants were convicted for their participation in a world-wide "Zionist conspiracy" allegedly directed by the statesmen of Israel and the leaders of American Jews (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 294-95). There were repeated rumors that Ohrenstein and Oren would be granted pardon, and Ohrenstein was actually released in October 1954, after thirty-four months of imprisonment; Oren, at the time of this writing (November 1954), remained in jail.

In the meantime, the trials continued. On January 29, 1954, seven other alleged accomplices of Slánský stood trial in Prague. Six of them were Jewish: Jarmila Taussigová, former secretary of the Communist Party Control Commission, received a term of twenty-five years' imprisonment; Mikuláš Landa (Landau), former district secretary in Ústí n.L., twenty years; Bedřich Hájek (Karpeles), deputy head of the Party's cadre commission, twenty years; Ervín Polák, former Party district leader, eighteen years; Vítězslav Fuchs and Hanuš Lomský (Gabriel Lieben), former district secretaries in Ostrava and Plzeň, fifteen years each. The only non-Jewish defendant, Marie Švermová, the widow of the national hero Jan Šverma, was described as the mistress of the Jewish "traitor" Otto Šling, who had been executed in the Slánský trial. She received a life sentence. Landa was accused of having used his Zionist connections to enrich himself through the restitution of Jewish properties, and Ervín Polák was denounced as a "Jewish bourgeois nationalist." The anti-Semitic intent of these charges was unmistakable.

The anti-Semitic implications were still more conspicuous in another trial which took place in Bratislava, Slovakia, in March 1954. The defendants were five former leaders of the Slovak Communist Party, friends of the executed Foreign Minister Vlado Clementis. Though none of them was Jewish, they were charged with having tolerated Zionist activities and with having failed to punish persons who were described as "Zionists," "Jewish capitalist smugglers," and Jewish agents of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). The JDC was denounced as a branch of American military intelligence. The trial was "popularized" in a broadcast which, according to the [London] *Jewish Chronicle*, was "provocatively anti-Jewish." The charges of alleged pro-Zionist activities by the defendants were stressed.

## COMPLETION OF PURGE OF JEWS

By the time of the tenth congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, held in Prague in June 1954, the purge of Jews from Party positions was complete. Of the ninety-seven members of the Central Committee who had been elected at the ninth convention in 1949, sixty-three had disappeared. Of this number, four had been executed, including two Jews: Rudolf Slánský and Otto Šling; seven had been jailed for treason, including four Jews: Růžena Dubová, Hanuš Lomský, Vítězslav Fuchs, and Jarmila Taussigová; of the ten who had disappeared after being condemned as deviationists, three were Jews: Gustav Bareš (Breitenfeld), Koloman Moško (Moškovič), and František Vais. The convention elected a new Central Committee consisting of eighty-four members and twenty-eight candidates. Though the Central Committee included several Sudeten Germans and Hungarians, there was not one person of Jewish origin.

Nor were there any persons of Jewish descent remaining among the cabinet members. Of the higher officials, only Gertruda Sekaninová-Čakrtová, the Czechoslovak representative to the United Nations, was known to be of Jewish parentage.

## ARRESTS IN JEWISH COMMUNITIES

The extent to which the purge of Jews in prominent positions had been accompanied by reprisals against rank-and-file members of the Jewish communities was revealed by several local reports. Apparently, during the period of the Slánský trial, many Jews had been arrested and held in jails for one or two years without specific charges. Thus, a dispatch from Prešov, Slovakia, reported the return of some twenty Jews who had been imprisoned since 1952; four others had died in prison. Another dispatch reported the return to Jihlava, Moravia, of ten Jews who had been detained for two years. In Ostrava, Moravia, fifty Jews had been arrested on the charge that they had helped Jewish refugees from neighboring Poland.

More recent reports reaching Radio Free Europe told of the arrest of twenty-one members of the Jewish community in České Budějovice, Bohemia, in February 1954. Eighteen of them were subsequently released, but three, including a former rabbi, remained in jail. Another report published in the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), describing the arrest of twenty-three Jews in Plzeň, Bohemia, in February 1954, was officially denied in Prague.

*Emigration*

During the period under review (July 1, 1953, through June 30, 1954), it was theoretically possible for a citizen of Czechoslovakia to apply for an emigration permit, but such permits were granted only in a few exceptional cases. Of 2,500 requests for exit visas pending in May 1954, only twenty-two visas for elderly persons with near relatives in Israel were authorized. Ac-

ording to a report (published in the JTA, October 6, 1954), the Jewish community was informed that it was useless to submit requests for any large number of exit permits.

JOSEPH GORDON

## HUNGARY \*

NO STATISTICS WERE AVAILABLE on the Jewish population of Hungary during 1953-54. It was estimated that between 130,000 and 150,000 had survived World War II and the Nazi deportations. The extent to which this remnant had been still further reduced by mass deportations, and perhaps also by an excess of deaths over births due to the age structure of the community and its economic impoverishment under Communist rule, was unknown. Approximate figures compiled by the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in 1947 showed that more than half the members of the community were over the age of thirty-four, and nearly 20 per cent were over sixty. At that time the majority lived in Budapest, and the proportion of workers and artisans was low. Of the 70,000 persons capable of engaging in gainful employment, between 25,000 and 35,000 were engaged in trade, while some 10,000 were employed by nationalized enterprises. The remainder managed somehow to sustain a hand-to-mouth existence, with the aid of the JDC and of relatives abroad; they suffered constant official and unofficial harassment as undesirables and expendables.

The ruthless extermination of private trading after 1947 must have made the situation significantly worse. Emigration was rigidly barred after the departure of a final 3,000 persons, who were permitted to leave for Israel under an order issued in November 1949. The closing down of the JDC in January 1953 ended its efforts to help Jews find new methods of gaining a livelihood within the framework of a state which would not let them go, and rendered their position more desperate than ever. Moreover, mass deportations between 1951 and 1953 removed approximately one-third of the Jewish population from Budapest and other major cities to provincial towns and villages, where their opportunities for earning a living were even less and their living conditions even worse than they had been in the capital. Early in 1954, as a part of the New Look which followed Stalin's death, the decrees providing for these deportations were revoked, and the system of mass deportations liquidated, on paper. But, in fact, many of the surviving deportees were not permitted to return to their original places of residence, especially to Budapest. Resettlement permits from the municipal authorities were required before deportees were permitted to return, and these were issued only if relatives could assure shelter to the returnees. Thousands of Jewish deportees had not received such permits, and were compelled to remain among the hostile populations of the poverty-stricken villages to which they had been deported.

\* Prepared with the assistance of G. E. R. Gedye.

## *Jews in Government Service*

Before 1948 a considerable number of persons of Jewish descent had held more or less important positions in the government service, including the political police. Hence many anti-Communists, in a country where anti-Semitism was always rife, blamed the Jews for their sufferings under the Communist dictatorship. Beginning in 1948, however, a series of purges eliminated most of the Jews who had held government positions. Some were executed or officially sentenced to prison terms; others simply disappeared. Among those who were eliminated were the head of the political police, General Gabor Peter, and his immediate assistants. Peter was probably arrested on January 8, 1953. Doubtless he was intended to serve as principal in a Hungarian version of the "Slánský trial." An attempt was being made by the Hungarian authorities to assign to General Peter the sole responsibility for all the abuses which they now admitted had taken place in the period prior to Stalin's death.

## *Purges*

The open official use of anti-Semitism went out of style in Hungary when, after Stalin's death, the "Jewish doctors' plot" campaign was dropped in Moscow. But Jews were still regarded with suspicion by the regime, and their elimination from key positions continued. Many Jewish technicians, as well as white-collar and industrial workers, lost their livelihoods in connection with the abandonment of part of the plan of forced industrialization. And in the government itself, the last Jews of importance, Mathias Rakosi and Erno Gero, were dropped from the cabinet and seemed to be gradually disappearing from the scene altogether. (At the same time, however, the Jewish former head of the State Planning Board, who had disappeared in 1953 and been rumored executed, reappeared—apparently as the chosen instrument of Gero's downfall.)

In December 1953 the Vienna Jewish community protested to the Hungarian minister to Austria against the treatment of Bela Denes, former Hungarian Zionist leader, Henrik Galos, former secretary general of the Budapest Zionist movement, and Abraham Kornitzer, a representative of Orthodox Jewry. The three were known to have been arrested and put on trial on charges of participating in Zionist activities and facilitating emigration to Israel, although at the time they had engaged in these activities they were perfectly legal. The Hungarian government ignored the protest. The fate of the accused was not known. Denes had been arrested when the Zionist movement in Hungary was liquidated in 1949, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment for having aided emigration to Israel. Although this sentence expired in April 1952, he was not released from prison. The present charges dated back to before his first arrest (before the prohibition of Zionism). Galos and his family had been deported from Budapest in 1949. It was also

reliably reported that a former Jewish youth leader, George Schay, had been secretly tried by a military court on December 2, 1953, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment on a charge of "espionage."

There was also a purge of the Communist-appointed officials of the Jewish community in 1953. Lajos Stoeckler, who had been appointed by the government to the positions of head of the Budapest Jewish community and president of the Union of Jewish Communities in Hungary, was arrested, together with Laszlo Benedek, the Communist Party's supervisor of Jewish community life, at the same time as Gabor Peter. A number of Jewish physicians were also arrested at the same time. It was probable that these arrests were intended as preliminaries to a mass trial similar to that of the doctors in Moscow. Due to Stalin's death and the subsequent change of line, however, no such trial ever took place. Nothing was known of the fate of the physicians arrested. Stoeckler and Benedek were believed to have been tried secretly on December 8, 1953. Nothing definite was known as to the charges or sentences, although it was rumored that Stoeckler had been sentenced to a prison term equal to the time he had been held before trial, and then released.

Like the Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran clergy, the rabbis had been forced to sign repeated declarations of loyalty to Communism and denials that persecution existed (*see* AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1953 [Vol. 54], p. 350-51).

### *Community Organization and Activity*

An account of a public meeting of the Budapest Jewish community held on June 28, 1953, was published in the Budapest Jewish periodical *Uj Elet* ("New Life") in August 1953. The meeting was presided over by Lajos Heves, a lawyer who had succeeded Stoeckler as head of the Budapest Jewish community and president of the Union of Jewish Communities. Speakers said that the state would provide for the maintenance of charity homes, but that the organization of religious affairs was the sacred duty of the Jews. Their obligations in this respect were explained by the deputy president, Gyula Seifert. Proposals were submitted calling for increased contributions by members of the communities. These were to be used to take care of indigent old people (this seemed at variance with the previous statement that charitable homes would be provided for by the state), as well as to maintain the synagogues. The representative for religious, educational, and cultural affairs promised to use the sums at his disposal as thriftily as possible "to fight for faith with faith." Miklos Vida spoke of financial difficulties. Raffael Fuchs discussed the Jewish secondary school where, he said, thousands of boys and girls had once been educated. But conditions had deteriorated. (As a gesture of post-Stalin "liberalism" the government apparently now permitted the operation of one secondary school; in 1947 there had been six secondary and forty-two elementary schools.) The school was now not sufficiently well known, and parents showed indifference about sending their children to attend its sessions.

## RUMANIA

WITH AN ESTIMATED 200,000 inhabitants of Jewish origin, Rumania remained the home of the largest Jewish group behind the Iron Curtain outside the Soviet Union. Of about 400,000 Jewish survivors of World War II and the Nazi occupation, almost one-half had left Rumania—legally or illegally—when it was still possible to do so. There was little doubt that most of the remaining Jews would follow their example if they were allowed to.

In August 1953 Leon Stern, the president of the Bucharest Jewish religious community, told Lore Scheer, a British delegate to the Communist-sponsored Youth Festival, that out of 200,000 Jews, 90,000 were living in the capital. Sheer's report, published in the [London] *Jewish Chronicle* on October 2, 1953, quoted Stern as saying that "the figures were only estimates, since no census had been taken recently."

*Jewish Communal Life*

The data about Jewish religious institutions given by Stern were even more in the nature of unreliable "estimates." Stern spoke of "500 synagogues and places of worship," and of "about 200 rabbis, *schochetim*, and other full-time officials." However, he neglected to indicate how many of the 500 synagogues were open for services, and how many of the 200 full-time employees were rabbis and how many Communist commissars. When, in August 1954, the government found it necessary to issue a statement denying persecution of Jews, and to have it signed by *all* the rabbis, there were only 32 signatures. That number of rabbis obviously was not able adequately to serve 500 synagogues.

An informational bulletin released by the Rumanian legation in Paris in July 1954 claimed that there were 126 Jewish communities in Rumania, and that services were held "daily" in 500 synagogues, 50 of them in Bucharest. But according to information gathered from Israel diplomats by H. Seidman, and published in *The Day-Jewish Journal*, New York, November 1, 1954, only six synagogues were open in the capital.

In addition to the synagogues, there were three state schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction, located in Bucharest, Jassy, and Timisoara. Yiddish was also taught as a subject in a few other state schools, not in the "hundreds" that Stern claimed. The state schools were indoctrinating Rumanian Jewish youth in an anti-Zionist, anti-religious, Communist spirit.

There were two Yiddish state theaters, located in Bucharest and Jassy. Their repertoire included plays by Sholem Aleichem, as well as by Molière, Schiller, Gogol, and Communist authors.

The two "Jewish" periodicals under Communist domination, *Viata Noua* (in Rumanian) and *Ykuf Bleter* (in Yiddish), had ceased to reach foreign subscribers at the end of 1952. There were rumors that the Jewish Democratic Committee, a Communist-dominated association which had been repeatedly

purged in previous years, had been dissolved. It was not mentioned among the Jewish institutions enumerated in great detail by Stern in the interview mentioned above.

### *Trials of Jewish Leaders*

About 200 leaders of Jewish religious communities, Zionist associations, and communal institutions had been arrested during the years 1949–50. Since that time, they had been held in jails, incommunicado. All efforts to secure their release or to learn the nature of the accusations against them remained fruitless.

The death of Stalin in March 1953 and the retraction of the charges against the Moscow Jewish doctors did not change the fate of the Rumanian Jewish prisoners. None of them was released when the Rumanian government, following the Soviet example, announced an amnesty in the summer of 1953. And in the fall of that year, the government began a new campaign of persecution. The Jewish prisoners were tried in a series of secret trials which lasted throughout the period under review (July 1, 1953, through June 30, 1954). The defendants were found guilty of having engaged in Zionist activities, aided emigration to Israel, collected and distributed funds for these purposes, maintained contacts with the Israel legation and the World Jewish Congress—all activities which had been perfectly legal and sometimes even encouraged by the authorities at the time they were conducted. Some of the defendants were charged with having been British or American spies, because they had helped British parachutists or fliers shot down during the war; others were smeared as Nazi "collaborators."

There were no official reports of the trials. But relatives of the defendants were allowed to attend—probably in order to spread terror in the Jewish communities—and details of the proceedings leaked out abroad. They were published by the Israel press and radio, as well as in the reports of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), of the [London] *Jewish Chronicle*, and of the *Israelitisches Wochenblatt* in Zurich. These reports were sometimes inexact or contradictory in minor details, such as the first names or the spelling of the surnames of the defendants, and the exact dates of individual trials. But the reports agreed on all major items, and made it possible to arrive at the following reliable, if perhaps incomplete, picture of the anti-Semitic campaign in Rumania during 1953–54.

The first of the major trials was conducted in August 1953 and involved six leaders of the Revisionist movement. The defendant Edgar Kenner, who refused to "confess" and proudly reasserted his Zionist convictions, was sentenced to sixteen years in jail; A. Horowitz, to fifteen years; Solomon (or Samuel) Schittnowitzer, Pascu Schechter, and Jancu Tabacaru, to ten years each; the sentence meted out the last defendant, Jean Cernauteanu, was unknown.

The next trial came in November 1953. The defendants were Jean A. Littman, a leader of the Rumanian section of the World Jewish Congress, and Mrs. Suzanne Benvenisti, leader of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) and wife of Mishu Benvenisti, former president of the

Rumanian Zionist organization. The main charge against the defendants was that they had maintained contact with the World Jewish Congress. Littman was sentenced to fifteen years, Mrs. Benvenisti to ten years in jail.

A third trial, that took place in March 1954, was of twenty-two members of the left-Socialist Zionist organization, Hashomer Hatzair. The organization's former leader, Armand (alias Abir) Mark, defended himself courageously and received a sentence of twenty years' imprisonment; similar sentences were meted out to Mark's co-defendants Sattinger, Antonier, Mrs. Antonier, Ze'ev Lazarovici, Motzi Moscovici, and Mrs. Szold. Other defendants received prison sentences ranging between three and eight years.

In a fourth trial, A. L. Zissu, the former president of the Jewish Party and of the Zionist Organization of Rumania, Mishu Benvenisti, another former president of the Zionist Organization, and Jean Cohen, former president of the Rumanian section of the World Jewish Congress, were sentenced to prison for life; Mrs. Mille Jancu, former leader of the Oeuvre pour Secours des Enfants Israélites (OSE), Moshe Weiss, a former prominent member of the Zionist youth organization, and Mishu Moshkowitz, a former employee of the Israel legation, were each sentenced to twenty years in prison.

The campaign reached its climax in a trial against thirty-two (or, according to other reports, of forty) former community leaders. Among the defendants were Cornel Jancu, former deputy chairman of the World Zionist Federation; Bernard Roehrlich, former president of the Zionist Organization of Rumania; Leon Itzcar, former chairman of the Jewish National Fund; Dan Ieshanu, former chairman of the Poale Zion; and the well-known historian, Theodor Loewenstein. These prominent leaders, as well as the defendants J. Mandelowitz, Joseph Aberkorn, M. Osterer, and M. Jakerkaner, received sentences of ten or eight years in jail; other defendants, including M. Tomergrin, the former legal adviser of the Israel legation, received prison sentences of between one and five years. Finally, a trial of nineteen Zionist youth leaders counted among its victims M. Argintaru, Leon Weinstein, S. Drimmer, Itzhak Permo, Jacob Rosenblatt, and Leiba Grossman.

In other proceedings, the Jewish leaders Ludovic Gardos and Moshe Weissberg were sentenced to twelve years, Stefan Kraus to three years in prison.

Persons connected in any way with the Israel legation were a special target for persecution. As of this writing (December 1954) no fewer than ten employees of the legation had been sentenced. These included, in addition to those mentioned above, Paul (or David) Blumenthal, who had been first arrested in 1950, and had served his sentence. Blumenthal was rearrested on March 27, 1954, and sentenced to fifteen years in jail in July 1954. His "crime": "misuse of the diplomatic pouch" for "conspiracy against the People's Democracy."

Another victim was the night watchman of the legation, Gertler, who lived in the legation and dared not leave the building for fear of arrest. Gertler was lured out by a phone call describing an alleged accident in which his wife was supposed to be seriously injured, and arrested.

Finally, in September 1954 the police arrested a former legation employee of Rumanian nationality, Jancu Aron Grinberg, a former leader of the Zion-

ist youth association Gordonia. Grinberg was accused of having tried to leave Rumania illegally with a passport issued to him by the first secretary of the legation, Daniel Laor. Laor was declared *persona non grata* and had to leave the country.

#### REACTION ABROAD

The persecution of Rumanian Jews led to vehement protests by Jewish communities and organizations throughout the world which culminated in an organized hunger strike of Jewish leaders in Israel in May 1954 (*see* p. 473). The Rumanian government first ignored the protests, then in June 1954 tried to counter them with broadcasts and statements by "communal leaders" that there was no persecution of Jews in Rumania. The reports of a "blooming Jewish life" mentioned at the beginning of our report were part of this campaign.

In August 1954 there were rumors that some of the arrested Jewish leaders had been released. The names of released persons mentioned in these reports were: Aaron Kahane, described as a "leading Zionist"; Efraim Guttman, described as a brother (or son) of a Bucharest rabbi; S. Saltzman (or Zalman), the former physician of the Israel consulate; M. H. Baddi (or Bady), a journalist; Mrs. Bluma Lupu; and Mishu Dascalu, a former member of the Rumanian parliament. There were also rumors that the sentences against Jean A. Littman and Mrs. Benvenisti had been quashed on appeal to a higher court. But an overwhelming majority of the leaders of Rumanian Jewry, sentenced in the secret trials to draconic punishments, remained in jail.

There were also new arrests. The most prominent victim was Miklos Feinfeld, the rabbi of Arad, who was arrested in December 1953. Feinfeld may have been released later, because his name appeared on Communist-inspired statements denying that there was any persecution in Rumania.

#### *Trials of Jewish Party Members*

The anti-Semitic campaign in Rumania was reinforced by the role which defendants of Jewish origin were forced to play in show trials against dissident Communists. The latter were accused of having committed treason and espionage in the service of "Western imperialism."

One of these trials took place in Bucharest in April 1954. The chief defendant was Lucretiu Patrascanu, a prominent Communist lawyer, who had defended Ana Pauker in the "Thirties and had been minister of justice in the first postwar Rumanian cabinets. Patrascanu had been forced to resign and had disappeared from the political scene in 1948, had been arrested soon afterward, and had spent a number of years in prison. In April 1954 he was tried on the charges of having been an agent of the Gestapo, of the pre-war Rumanian secret police, and of the American legation; Patrascanu was sentenced to death, and executed.

There were ten co-defendants in this trial. Most of them had never been Patrascanu's close friends and were evidently associated with him only for

the purposes of the show trial. At least five of the defendants were of Jewish origin. One of them, Remus Kofler, was executed. The four others, Emil Kalmanovic, Herbert Silver, Jacques Berman, and Harry Brauner received jail sentences ranging from twelve years to life imprisonment. Kofler's brother, Mishu, who returned to Rumania from Israel, was arrested soon afterward, and though an Israel citizen, was refused a permit to return to Israel.

In another show trial, of the former Politburo member and deputy premier Vasile Luca, which took place in October 1954, one of the main defendants was Alexandru Jacob, former deputy minister of finance. Luca was sentenced to prison for life; Jacob received a sentence of twenty years.

There were repeated rumors that another trial was being prepared of Ana Pauker, former Politburo member and foreign minister of Rumania. But as of the time of this writing (December 1954), nothing reliable was known of Ana Pauker's fate.

### *Emigration*

Emigration from Rumania remained forbidden throughout the period under review, in spite of many rumors that it would be resumed. Some Rumanian emigrants to Israel registered for return to Rumania, had their passage back paid by the Rumanian government, and were used for Communist anti-Israel propaganda. In August 1954 some of these returnees were interviewed on the Bucharest radio. Reading from prepared papers, they criticized conditions in Israel and praised Rumanian "freedom." But other returnees were reported by the JTA, May 19, 1954, to be without homes and jobs, though both had been promised them.

JOSEPH GORDON