Eastern Europe

INTRODUCTION

During the period under review (July 1, 1954, through November 1955), the behind-the-scene maneuvering for supremacy in Soviet leadership was temporarily resolved by the installation of new leaders in the highest state offices. On February 5, 1955, Premier Georgi M. Malenkov suddenly resigned and after confessing grave errors was demoted to the office of one of the vice premiers. Nikolai A. Bulganin became Premier and Marshall Grigori K. Zhukov Minister of National Defense, while Anastas I. Mikoyan, Mikhail G. Pervuchin, and Maxim Z. Saburov were promoted to “first” vice premiers, joining Vyacheslav M. Molotov and Lazar M. Kaganovich, who had this title before. But the highest man in Soviet hierarchy was now Nikita S. Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, who—though he held no office in the cabinet—appeared everywhere with Bulganin and evidently was the leading spirit. Foreign Minister Molotov retained his office, but was publicly reprimanded for a theoretical deviation in October 1955. The slogan of “collective leadership” was upheld, but there was little doubt that Khrushchev was the top man in the powerful Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (formerly Politburo) which ruled the Soviet Union.

Economic Development

Malenkov’s fall marked the end of the economic policy which had put the main stress on the production of consumer goods and on a swift increase in the standards of living for the broad strata of the population. This policy was condemned as a deviation, and the main effort was again concentrated on the rapid development of heavy industry and modern armaments. Everywhere the government attempted to introduce the methods of rationalized production and modern technology, trying to learn from advanced Western countries wherever necessary. A tremendous effort was also made to increase agricultural production by the colonization of virgin soil in Kazakhstan and other steppe regions; hundreds of thousands of city workers were mobilized to strengthen state farms in this area, while in other regions attempts were made to increase productivity by the introduction of more economical crops (mainly corn). The result was disappointing: the crop in the newly cultivated regions was a failure, and only good weather conditions in old agricultural areas allowed a moderate over-all increase over 1954. But the production of heavy and armament industry increased substantially, and at the end of 1955 the Soviet Union was able to test very large thermonuclear weapons.

411
Limited Political Relaxation

The political relaxation was very limited. Since the time of Lavrenti P. Beria, who had been tried and executed in December 1953, overconcentration of power in the apparatus of the secret police had been considered dangerous for the Soviet rulers themselves. While the purge of former Beria aides was continuing, and a number of them were shot after secret trials in military courts, the powers of the secret police were cut and the influence of army leaders strengthened as a counterbalance. There were rumors that the military divisions of the secret police (a counterpart of the German Waffen-SS) had become subordinated to the army command, and that the right of the police officers to sentence citizens to death or long terms in slave labor camps without court trial had been abolished. In any case, citizens were sent to labor camps by the courts, which were often military tribunals and whose proceedings were in many cases secret. The reform of penal law, promised in 1953 for the near future, had not yet materialized. But arrests for political crimes were less frequent, the regime in some slave labor camps became more tolerable, and a considerable number of prisoners were released, though many of them were forced to settle in the inhospitable regions surrounding the places of detention. There was also a certain relaxation in the extreme regimentation of science, art, and literature. The writers and artists were still compelled to follow the Communist Party line and to create in the official style of "socialist realism," the scientists had still to adhere to "Marxist-Leninist" doctrines; but some of the self-defeating absurdities of the last years of Stalin’s rule were abolished.

An increased number of foreigners were allowed to visit the Soviet Union, most of them as members of official delegations, but some also as private travelers. The opportunities for contacts with the population were more frequent, the reception friendly, but Soviet citizens were afraid to tell the guests anything that did not agree with the Party line. The Iron Curtain, somewhat relaxed at the border, surrounded the visitors once they entered the Soviet Union.

Foreign Policy

Most conspicuous seemed to be the changes in foreign policy. The "peace offensive," begun after the nineteenth Communist Party convention in 1952 and reinforced after Stalin’s death, was continued with more flexibility and imagination. During the second half of 1954, the Soviet leaders used all kinds of threats and maneuvers to prevent the ratification of the Paris Accords which made Western Germany a part of the North Atlantic Alliance. When this tactic failed, the Soviet government unilaterally abolished its treaties with France and Great Britain, concluded formal alliances with its European satellites, and strengthened its hold on East Germany. At the same time, the Soviet Union conducted a world-wide campaign for peaceful co-existence and disarmament and for negotiations "at the summit."

In April 1955, the Soviet government agreed to recall its troops from Austria on condition that the Western powers did the same and Austria
agreed to declare herself neutral. The Austrian treaty was signed in Vienna on May 15, 1955, and ratified by the Soviet Union on June 11; all foreign troops left Austria.

At the end of May 1955 Khrushchev and Bulganin visited Yugoslavia, where, declaring that the excommunication of Yugoslav rulers from the Soviet camp had been a mistake ascribable to the intrigues of Beria, they renewed friendly relations with the independent Communist dictatorship of Tito.

In June 1955, Indian Premier Nehru visited the Soviet Union and signed with the Soviet leaders an appeal for peace, disarmament, the abolition of military blocs, and the recognition of Red China.

The immediate aims of Soviet strategy clearly were: to strengthen Communist rule over the satellites and to achieve its recognition by the West; to keep the Soviet hold on East Germany until such time as West Germany could be forced out of the Western coalition and opened up for Communist infiltration; to detach as many countries as possible from the Western bloc and keep them “neutral” under Communist pressure; to dissolve the North Atlantic Alliance as well as other defense organizations of the free world; to expand the power of Red China; to abolish allied military bases around the world; to win former and present colonial nations over to collaborating in a struggle against the Western democracies; and to achieve disarmament without effective control.

With this program the Soviet delegation came to the Geneva “summit conference” in July 1955. There was much friendly talk from both East and West; but nothing except an agenda for a new conference of the foreign ministers of the four great powers was agreed upon.

Immediately afterward, Soviet leaders visited Berlin and proclaimed their intent to support their East German satellite. In September 1955 negotiations were conducted with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany in Moscow; Moscow again refused to agree to German unification, and the only result of the conference was the renewal of diplomatic relations with West Germany and the promised release of 9,626 German war criminals. The visit of East German leaders to Moscow that followed immediately afterward ended in a demonstrative recognition of the “sovereignty” of the East German puppet state and a manifestation of Soviet solidarity with it. In parallel negotiations with Finland, the Soviet government agreed to evacuate its military base in Porkkala in exchange for the extension of the common defense treaty with Finland.

The conference of foreign ministers held in Geneva in October and November 1955 ended in complete disagreement. The Soviet Union refused to agree to the unification of Germany and to the German right to a free decision about future alliances, though the Allied powers offered a European security treaty in exchange. The Soviet Union also rejected all proposals to secure effective control of future disarmament, and refused to facilitate an exchange of visitors and ideas between East and West by relaxing censorship, abolishing the ban on foreign press and literature, and ending the jamming of foreign broadcasts.

In the meantime, the Soviet Union and its satellites consented to deliver
considerable quantities of modern weapons to Egypt and offered similar deals to other Arab countries. This changed the balance of strength between the Arabs and Israel and threatened to unleash a war in the Middle East.

The year 1955 ended with a trip by Khrushchev and Bulganin to India, Burma, and Afghanistan, during which the Soviet leaders sharply attacked the Western powers in numerous speeches.

The communiqués issued in the capitals of the Asian countries visited attacked "Western colonialism," asked for the dissolution of "military blocs," i.e., treaties for common defense, demanded the recognition of Red China and its seating in the United Nations, favored the delivery of Formosa and South Viet Nam into Communist hands, and praised "peaceful co-existence" on that basis. Promises of Soviet economic aid to underdeveloped countries were combined with plans for an infiltration of Soviet advisers and technicians. Though still invoking the "Geneva spirit," the Soviet leaders continued their political and diplomatic offensive against the free world.

JOSEPH GORDON

EAST GERMANY

DURING 1954 and early 1955 East Germany was in the forefront of the propaganda struggle first against the European Defense Community (EDC) and then against the Paris Accords (see p. 366). East Germany participated in the Moscow Conference (November 29-December 2, 1954) and in the Warsaw Conference (May 11-14, 1955), both devoted to this aim. In Warsaw, the Soviet Union and its seven European satellites concluded a twenty-year Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. East Germany, however, did not at that time join the companion military pact setting up a united command in Moscow for the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Rumania. In September 1955 a treaty signed in Moscow gave East Germany, in theory, roughly the same degree of sovereignty as the Paris Accords gave West Germany.

Elections to the East Berlin People's Chamber took place in October 1954. It was announced that "98.41 per cent of all eligible voters went to the polls, of whom 99.46 per cent cast their ballots for the joint electoral list of the National Front."

The East German standard of living continued low because of the concentration on capital expenditures. On the whole, however, there was a slight improvement in the form of a price reduction in September 1954, mainly for food products sold outside the ration in the state-owned stores. The exodus to West Germany continued almost unabated, with 184,000 persons fleeing in 1954. The rate of emigration did not decrease during the first half of 1955.

Cultural and sports relations between the two parts of Germany, which had been almost completely interrupted, were resumed in fragmentary fashion, but along with such measures of "relaxation" there were heavy-handed
threats against West Germany and such measures as the exorbitant increase in road-use tolls for truck traffic between West Germany and West Berlin. Travel between the two parts of Germany did become easier, however.

In July 1954 East Germany amnestied many prisoners who had been sentenced in 1949–50 for war crimes or Nazi activity. The Soviet Union returned to East Germany documents from the old German foreign office and other ministries that had been taken to Moscow. Similarly, hundreds of paintings were returned to the Dresden Art Gallery.

Albert Norden, one of the many state secretaries in the East German government and the executive head of a Communist-sponsored Committee for German Reunification, was in April 1955 appointed a member and one of the secretaries of the central committee of the Communist Socialist Unity Party—SED. This was the first time since the purge of Jewish functionaries in 1952–53 that a Jewish-born Communist had been given a position of influence in the German Party apparatus.

**Jewish Prisoners**

An effort to secure the release of Jewish prisoners in East Germany, including a former president of the postwar Berlin Jewish community and the former chairman of the Berlin Mizrahi, was undertaken in the summer of 1955 by the Zentralwohlfahrtstelle der Juden in West Germany (ZWS), in cooperation with the German Red Cross and other German humanitarian organizations. The ZWS also sought the reunion of families, where one member lived in West Germany and others in Eastern Europe.

**Indemnification**

The February 1955 indemnification resolution adopted at the meeting of the Council of the Evangelical Church (see p. 396) was addressed to the West and East German governments alike. The East German government countered with a press statement to the effect that “recognized Nazi victims” were receiving “all the care required.” Actually, no legislation for restitution or indemnification even existed, with the exception of some regulations governing the payment of old-age or invalidism pensions to victims of Nazism who actually lived in the Soviet Zone.

In November 1954 a civil court at Frankfurt in West Germany took judicial cognizance of the fact that restitution legislation did not exist in the Soviet Zone, and ruled that, under special circumstances, Jewish victims of Nazism from that part of Germany might protect their interests by taking certain legal steps in West Germany. In March 1955 the Frankfurt Superior Court upheld this judgment.

**Cultural Life**

In March 1955, the People’s Theatre in East Berlin staged the world premiere of Bonaparte in Jaffa, a play written by Arnold Zweig in 1934, while he was a resident of Haifa. The East German state publishing house
Volk und Welt reprinted a pre-Hitler translation, by Alexander Eliasberg, of Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye der Milchiker*.

The cantor of the Leipzig synagogue, Werner Sander, conducted Mendelssohn's *Elijah* oratorio in Leipzig.

**Religious Life**

In December 1954 a small new synagogue was dedicated in Magdeburg, one of the oldest Jewish communities in the Soviet Zone, to serve approximately 125 Jews in the area. The East German government contributed part of the funds needed to remodel a house to accommodate the synagogue.

**Relations with Israel**

In September 1954 a spokesman for the Israel Purchasing Mission in Cologne made it clear that Israel did not take part in the Leipzig fair, when his attention was drawn to statements in the East German press listing Israel as one of the participating countries.

The first trade contact between the two countries developed when East Germany purchased 5,000 cases of citrus fruit from Israel during the 1954-55 season. West Germany, in contrast, bought 398,500 cases.

**SOVIET UNION**

**Jewish Population**

In September 1955 Moscow's Chief Rabbi Solomon M. Schlieffer, interviewed at a diplomatic reception, estimated the number of Jews in the Soviet Union at about 3,000,000. There was no information as to the basis of this estimate, which far exceeded the generally accepted figure of 2,000,000. This smaller figure was supported by a report published in the *Jewish Daily Forward* in January 1954, based on estimates of the number of Jews in 550 Soviet cities and towns privately collected by a source in the Soviet Union. The compiler of these figures estimated the total Jewish population in the country at "over 2,000,000," but added that it was very hard to ascertain the real number of Jews because of frequent intermarriages and the fact that children in thousands of Jewish families did not consider themselves Jews.

Moscow had, without doubt, the largest Jewish population. The estimates of correspondents, foreign visitors, and local Jews with whom these visitors spoke ranged from 300,000 to 500,000.

For other Soviet cities, there were only widely varying estimates by foreign reporters, local Jews, and recent emigrants. According to one report, the second greatest Jewish center was Tashkent in Central Asia, with more than 100,000 Jews; another report spoke of only 50,000 Jews in Tashkent. Some
reports listed Leningrad, Odessa, Kiev, Kharkov, Baku as cities with about 100,000 Jewish inhabitants each, but other reports put their Jewish populations much lower. Thus Harry Schwartz, a correspondent of *The New York Times*, during his visit to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1955, was informed that there were 40,000 to 50,000 Jews in Baku. For Lwow (Lemberg) in the western Ukraine (eastern Galicia), there was one estimate of 100,000, and another of 30,000 Jewish inhabitants. In Vilna and Kovno, in Soviet Lithuania, according to a recent emigrant, there were 40,000 Jews. Minsk, in Byelorussia, was reported to have between 30,000 and 50,000 Jewish inhabitants, about 10 per cent of the city’s population. Riga in Soviet Latvia, Czernowitz (Cernauti) in Bukovina, and Kishinev in Bessarabia, were among cities with substantial Jewish populations. A report of 200,000 Jews in the Transcaucasian Soviet Republic of Georgia seemed considerably exaggerated. Harry Schwartz was told in Tiflis that there were 60,000 Jews in Georgia. Generally, the Jewish population was concentrated in large cities. Geographically, the center of gravity had moved from the western territories in the former Jewish Pale towards the East, with the largest Jewish population in Moscow, and substantial concentrations in Soviet Central Asia. There were also many Jews in Siberia, in forced labor camps as well as among the “free” settlers who were allowed to live and work outside the camps, but were confined to certain territories. In the summer of 1953, *The New York Times* correspondent Harrison Salisbury encountered Jews in many places in eastern Siberia. In Birobidjan, the so-called Jewish Autonomous Province, there were about 40,000 Jews, who formed only a minority of the population of the territory and not more than 2 per cent of the over-all Jewish population of the Soviet Union.

**Religious Life**

No data were available on the membership of Jewish religious congregations, the only Jewish organizations allowed in the Soviet Union. Though Soviet law obliged religious communities to register with local authorities and list their members, no statistics were published. In the aforementioned interview, Rabbi Schlieffer said that there were “more than 100” congregations but did not estimate the membership of these congregations. A Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) report from Moscow describing the Rosh ha-Shanah services there, published on September 20, 1955, quoted Jewish community leaders as saying that there were 12,000 “religious Jews” among 300,000 Jewish inhabitants of the capital. A subsequent report about Yom Kippur services in 1955 estimated that 5,000 Jews crowded into the Central Synagogue, which had room for only 2,000 worshippers. A report of a foreign visitor who saw the Rosh ha-Shannah services in Leningrad, a city with perhaps as many as 100,000 Jewish inhabitants, estimated the attendance at 1,500. In Minsk, 150 persons (out of 30,000 to 50,000 Jewish inhabitants) participated in the celebration of Succot. Reports from other places showed a similar disproportion. Only a few Jews, most of them elderly persons, attended Sabbath services.
Communal Organization

Jewish religious communities were still regulated by the April 8, 1929, decree on religious associations. This defined religious societies as local associations of believing citizens over eighteen years of age. They had to have at least twenty members to register with the local authorities, and had to list their members. Registration could be refused by the authorities; grounds for refusal were not specified in the decree. No unregistered community could function. Religious communities did not enjoy the rights of juridical bodies. They could not own their places of worship, but might rent them from local authorities. The members of the communities were collectively and individually responsible for their maintenance.

Intercommunal regional or central assemblies could take place only with the permission of local authorities. They could elect their executive organs by open vote. Local authorities had the right arbitrarily to eliminate from the executive organs "any individual person." During the post-World War II period the Russian Orthodox Church and several other denominations had such central organizations. The Jews did not.

Religious communities were strictly limited to matters of worship. They were expressly forbidden to create cooperatives or mutual aid societies, or to use their property for any purpose other than the satisfaction of their religious needs; to assist their members by giving them material support; to organize meetings for children, youths, or women for the purposes of prayer, the teaching of religion, or biblical or cultural education; to found libraries or reading rooms; to organize sanatoriums or medical assistance. In buildings used for worship, only books directly required for religious purposes could be kept.

The teaching of religion in schools was strictly forbidden. Private religious instruction could be given only to groups of no more than three students. Violations of these regulations were punishable by forced labor of up to twelve months—that is, if they were not subject to the severer penalties meted out to "counterrevolutionary activities." Theological instruction for future clergymen was allowed only with the special permission of the ministry of the interior. In recent years, theological seminaries had been organized for the Russian Orthodox Church and some other denominations, but not for the propagation of the Jewish religion.

The activities of clergymen, preachers, and other "servants of religion" were limited to the homes of members of the local religious associations, and to the places of worship.

Members of religious societies had the right to organize collections and accept voluntary donations, but only from members of their denominations, and solely for the upkeep of the places of worship and the maintenance of religious personnel. Any other collections for religious purposes were subject to criminal prosecution.

Religious services and prayers could be conducted in regular places of worship without previous notice, in other places only with the prior permission of local authorities. The performance of any religious rite or ceremony in any government, social, cooperative, or private establishments was strictly
prohibited; only the performance of religious rites for persons dying in hospitals (if they could be performed in separate rooms) and the funeral rites in cemeteries were exempt from this prohibition.

This was the extent of religious freedom according to the letter of the law. But its real extent depended much more on the policies of the Communist Party and the so-called mass organizations it directed, such as the labor unions, the cooperatives, the collective farms, and the Communist Youth. Whenever the party adopted strongly antireligious policies, believers were discriminated against and persecuted in their jobs, in their organizations, and in social life. They were excluded from higher positions in the administration, in economic life, in the Party, and in mass organizations—not by law but by Party policies and directives. The Party and the organizations under its control kept people from religious services and ceremonies by the practically irresistible pressure of an organized “public opinion.”

The degree of this pressure had varied at different times; it had not been evenly applied to all religions. During World War II and the postwar period there had been a considerable relaxation of pressure against the Russian Orthodox Church, which had become a pliable instrument of government policies, and against such minority churches as Christians of the Armenian rite and Baptists. In 1944 a special government committee for the affairs of the Orthodox Church had been organized by the Council of Peoples’ Commissars. The Orthodox Church had been allowed to elect a new patriarch, to keep a central organization, to publish a religious periodical, and under strict governmental supervision to maintain relations with Orthodox and other churches abroad. The Orthodox Church had been able to organize theological seminaries. Antireligious propaganda had been toned down.

At the end of 1953 came a reversal in Soviet religious policy. In December 1953 an article in Komsomolskaya Pravda opened a campaign against the survival of “religious superstitions.” New antireligious museums and exhibitions were opened, and the Society for the Dissemination of Political and Social Sciences (a successor to the League of Militant Atheists) began a broad campaign of antireligious agitation. In many places, as the Communist Party leadership itself later admitted, local Communist organizations and authorities engaged in “administrative interference with the activities of religious groups,” and there were many cases of insults to clergymen and worshipers.

These excesses were condemned in a resolution passed by the central committee of the Communist Party, which was published in the Moscow Pravda on November 11, 1954. After condemning the abuses mentioned, the resolution reaffirmed that the spread of “scientific atheism” was a task of the Communist Party; antireligious propaganda should not stop, but had to be improved. Antireligious agitators ought not to insult believers, but ought to convince them by the use of scientific arguments. The resolution asserted that in the changed social conditions the majority of the clergy had become loyal to the Soviet government.

An official interpretation of this new line was given by Nikita S. Khrushchev, first secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, in an interview with a French parliamentary delegation in the summer of 1955. Khrushchev said that the power of the Soviet state had become so great that it could now
tolerate religion. A section of the clergy had ceased their opposition to the government, and could now be tolerated. But one was not to draw the wrong conclusions. The Communists had remained atheists and had not changed their opposition to religion. They were doing everything to eliminate the "bewitching power of the opium of religion."

After the November 1954 resolution, antireligious articles still appeared in the Soviet press, but their tone became calmer and more academic. Members of Soviet organizations, especially of the Communist Youth, were still castigated for participating in or compromising with religious observances and ceremonies, but many Orthodox churches were reopened or repaired, more facilities were provided for the education of priests, and church dignitaries appeared more frequently and prominently at official functions and diplomatic receptions.

As to the Jewish religion, the Communist attitude towards it was summarized in the 1954 edition of the *Short Philosophical Dictionary*, a work published by the government and considered a standard guide for Soviet thought. According to its article on Judaism:

Like any other religion, Judaism is uncompromisingly hostile to science, and preaches anti-scientific views on nature and society. The rabbis were always enemies of enlightenment and secular education, and persecutors of progressive thought. Judaism sanctifies social inequality and private ownership; it deifies the rule of kings and exploiters. In Judaism the role of spiritual opium is played by the conceptions of life in the hereafter, which have been carefully developed by the rabbis: paradise for those who obediently follow the reactionary instructions of the Jewish religion, and hell for those who reject these instructions and participate in the class struggle.

The characteristic Jewish doctrine regarding the exceptionalism of this religion, and the "chosenness" of those who profess the religion of Jehovah, has always served to inflame religious intolerance and [to accentuate] national differences from peoples of other nationalities and religions. The same effect is accomplished by the rabbinical doctrine of Messianism—the coming of a heavenly savior—which serves as a means of dulling the class consciousness of the workers and of reconciling them to the domination of the exploiters. These traits of Judaism are extensively used by the Jewish bourgeois Zionist nationalists to stupefy the Jewish toilers with nationalism, in order to cut them off from the common front of the class struggle waged by all toilers against capitalism.

The next paragraph accuses the Zionist movement of associations with British imperialism, Kaiser Wilhelm II, the Czarist regime, Pilsudski, Mussolini and "those who brought Hitler to power." After World War II, the article charges, Zionism entered completely into the services of American imperialists; these are charged with subsidizing Zionist organizations and using them for espionage and sabotage activities. Zionism with "its reactionary national-clericalist ideology" was regarded as an enemy of democracy and Socialism, of the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Democracies.

With this attitude still prevailing in 1954, it is understandable that, though religious services were tolerated in Moscow and several other places, Jewish religious communities for a long time did not enjoy the benefits accorded to
other denominations. They were not allowed to have a central representative body, to publish periodicals, or to organize facilities for the education of rabbis.

A few signs of relaxation appeared in the spring and summer of 1955, evidently in connection with the preparations for the Geneva conference and the expected influx of foreign visitors.

On March 18, 1955, the Soviet newspaper Izvestiya published a peace appeal and protest against the atomic threat signed by eight rabbis described as the “religious leaders of the largest Jewish communities.” In addition to Rabbi Schlieffer, the signers were the rabbis of Kiev, Odessa, Riga, Minsk, Vilna, Kovno, and Kutais (in the Caucasus). The importance of this appeal was that it was the first collective statement by Jewish religious leaders in several years. By implication, the Jewish religious communities were thus recognized as a legitimate part of the Soviet scene, even though this was done primarily for Communist propaganda abroad.

On July 17, 1955, the Soviet delegation to the United Nations in New York gave the JTA a statement about Jewish religious life in the Soviet Union. It was a reprint of the article by one M. Rabinovich, otherwise unknown, in the June 15 issue of the Bulletin of the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

The article declared that “citizens of Jewish nationality” were to be found in different regions of the Soviet Union, but it gave no statistics or estimates of their numbers. Rabinovich stated that adherents of the Jewish faith had their own religious communities, and that local authorities placed synagogues or prayer buildings at their disposal, but he did not mention their number. He emphasized that no one interfered with religious services, that foreign visitors visited the synagogues, and that the synagogues were well attended on Jewish holidays. Rabinovich acknowledged that Jewish religious societies had no central representative body, but asserted that rabbis of neighboring synagogues were in contact with one another and were “discussing religious questions of general significance.” Rabinovich stressed that the leaders of the congregations were participating in the “struggle for peace,” and quoted the appeal of the eight rabbis against atomic weapons. In general, the article contained no new information and gave a misleading picture of the state of religious freedom, quoting only the permissive and concealing the restrictive provisions of the law on religious communities. But after years of silence, it was the first semiofficial attempt to justify the Soviet treatment of the Jews before the Western world.

After the Geneva conference of July 1955, there appears to have been a further relaxation. Some congregations, not active in previous years, seem to have renewed regular services. Foreign visitors reported that on the High Holy Days in October 1955 there were services in three synagogues in Moscow. Other visitors and emigrants mentioned synagogues in Leningrad, Minsk, Odessa, Riga, Vilna, Kovno, Tiflis, Baku, Tashkent, Bokhara, and other places. However, there was no synagogue in Kharkov, a city with an estimated 100,000 Jews. Compared with previous years, the number of believers attending services seems to have increased in 1955, though they constituted only a small percentage of the Jewish population and were almost
exclusively elderly. Rabbi Schlieffer now appeared at diplomatic receptions. In several interviews with foreign visitors he asserted that the government would soon provide facilities for the education of rabbis and allow a re-printing of prayer books to replace those now in use, which had been printed before the revolution.

Cultural Life

Since 1948-49 there had been no Jewish newspapers, magazines, almanacs, or other periodicals in the Soviet Union; no Jewish schools of any kind; no Jewish publishing houses; no Jewish theaters; no Jewish cultural associations or activities. Not only were there no Jewish publications or institutions using Yiddish; there were none using Russian or any other language.

The only exception to this rule was Birobidjan. Asked by foreign visitors about Jewish cultural life, Soviet Jews sometimes referred to Birobidjan as the place where Jewish cultural activities were flourishing, but nobody was able to give any concrete details. When Harrison Salisbury of The New York Times visited Birobidjan in 1953, he was shown copies of the local Yiddish newspaper, the Birobidzhaner Shtern. This paper, according to official Soviet sources, had had a circulation of 1,500 in 1939. It had not been seen in the West or in Soviet territories outside of Birobidjan since 1948. But in October 1955 the Communist Folksztyme in Warsaw and other Communist papers in the West published photostats of the masthead of an issue dated September 11, 1955. It seems that the newspaper, discontinued during the years of anti-Jewish campaigns, had now resumed publication. There were also Communist reports of Jewish schools in Birobidjan. Outside this province, Jewish cultural life was nonexistent.

In this respect, the situation of the Jewish minority differed from that of most of the other “nationalities,” i.e., ethnic groups, in the Soviet Union. Though all Soviet publications and educational and cultural activities had to hew to the Communist Party line, other nationalities could at least express themselves and educate their children in their own languages, and, within the limits of official policies, they could develop cultural activities. The interest of each minority in its language, literature, theater, and folklore was approved and furthered by the government. But since 1948-49, the slogan of a culture “socialist in content” and “national in form” (i.e., language) was no longer applied to the Jewish minority. At that time, the last remaining Jewish cultural publications and institutions had discontinued their activities, not because of a lack of interest on the part of the Jewish public, but by order of the government. All of the prominent Yiddish writers and cultural leaders, though loyal Soviet citizens and for the most part active Communists, had been arrested.

After several years during which it had not been used in publications or schools, Yiddish was still frequently spoken by a large part of the Jewish population. Almost all foreign visitors who knew Yiddish reported that they were able to converse in it with most of the Soviet Jews they met. Even a Communist-led delegation of women from Israel which visited the Soviet Union in the fall of 1954 reported that Yiddish was often heard on the streets
of Moscow. Its use was still more widespread in the cities of the western Soviet territories. On October 1, 1955, Harry Schwartz reported from Minsk that Yiddish was "still a living language among Jewish adults there," and that it could be heard in the streets more frequently than in Moscow.

The complete lack of Yiddish publications and cultural institutions was described by many recent foreign visitors. Thus, Haim Shurer, editor of the Histadrut's Tel Aviv daily Davar, who spent forty days in the Soviet Union during 1954, inquired in Moscow bookstores for Yiddish books or Russian books on a Jewish theme. He found none; the result was the same in other Soviet cities with large Jewish populations. Neither did he find any Jewish books in Soviet libraries, with the sole exception of the Lenin library in Moscow, where there were a few volumes by Sholem Aleichem and Judah Loeb Peretz on the shelves. There was not even a Jewish calendar available in the city, except for a copy, written in longhand and placed on the door of the synagogue, to be copied by observant Jews. In an address to the Zionist General Council in Jerusalem on August 25, 1955, Shurer reported that at least half of the Russian Jewish population was interested in things Jewish, but that there was no communal life, "no Jewish theater, school, library, bookshop, or restaurant."

When the Soviet writers' congress gathered in Moscow in December 1954, the central committee of the Communist Party greeted it with a letter stressing "the development and mutual enrichment of national literatures" and the "multinational character" of Soviet writing. Though the congress duly registered the achievements of other ethnic minorities, Yiddish literature—even Communist literature in Yiddish—was not mentioned. No Yiddish books were listed as having appeared in the Soviet Union in recent years. A considerable number of Russian writers of Jewish origin were present at the congress, but of the authors who wrote in Yiddish and who had attended former Soviet writers' congresses, none were there.

The official explanation for the complete lack of Jewish cultural activities was that they had ceased because there was no interest in them among the Jews. Thus, two British Jews, Cyril Wolfe and Stanley Forman, who visited the Soviet Union in 1954, reported that they heard everywhere the official pronouncement that Soviet Jews had no interest in maintaining their Jewishness, and that Jewish cultural activities had ceased because the Jewish community refused to support them. Rabbi Schlieffer told Wolfe that the Jewish theater in Moscow had closed because of small audiences and lack of funds to subsidize its operations. Another explanation offered for the closing of the Jewish theater was that there were no Jewish plays, because there were no Jewish playwrights and no Jewish problems in the Soviet Union.

This line was maintained even after the Geneva conference. In September 1955 Ilya Ehrenburg told Western Jewish journalists in Geneva that he was an anti-Zionist and assimilationist, and that he believed that Soviet Jews should be Russified. He even denied knowing the Yiddish language. Ehrenburg did not say that other Soviet Jews, who did not share his extreme assimilationist views, had the right to develop their own language and culture in the same way as other Soviet nationalities. In view of the fact that Ehrenburg had often been the official Soviet spokesman on Jewish problems, and
that he had inaugurated the anti-Zionist campaign in 1948 by an article in *Pravda* (see *American Jewish Year Book*, 1950 [Vol. 51], p. 336), this omission was significant.

In the summer and fall of 1955 there were some slight relaxations of the absolute ban against Yiddish in public life. A Soviet actor, Isaak Rakitin, toured the Soviet Union reciting the works of Sholem Aleichem in both Russian and Yiddish. On August 16, 1955, the Jewish singer and story teller Sidi Tal recited a tale by the same author in the Pushkin theater in Moscow. There were several concerts by Jewish artists. The composer Dmitri Shostakovich revealed in an interview with the foreign press that one of his latest works was an adaptation of eleven Jewish songs. It was reported that a book of stories by Sholem Aleichem and a collection of poems by the Yiddish writer Leib Kvitko would soon appear in Russian and Byelorussian translations. Two poems by the Yiddish poet Aaron Vergelis appeared in a translation in the magazine *Novi Mir*. There were reports that Yiddish books, which had been published before the ban on Yiddish and had disappeared from the book market, were turning up here and there in second-hand book stores, and because of their rarity were selling at high prices.

On the other hand, the *Manchester Guardian* reported on September 16, 1955, that according to a recent traveler to the Soviet Union, the secret police had searched several hundred Jewish homes in Moscow one night in August 1955 and had seized Jewish publications everywhere. A number of Jews had been arrested and their families had not heard from them since. The report added that these arrests caused considerable anxiety among the Jewish population, which had hoped that the days of anti-Jewish policies were over. A similar report of searches and arrests of Jews in Leningrad appeared in the London *Observer* and in the *New York Herald Tribune* in October 1955.

The post-Geneva contacts between the free world and the Soviet Union brought new inquiries and some information about the fate of the Yiddish writers arrested in 1948. For seven years the Soviet government had left all questions about the whereabouts of these writers unanswered. In the fall of 1955 some Soviet diplomats and journalists traveling in the West were confronted with repeated questions, and had to break their silence. Though most of their answers were still evasive and often contradictory, some information was obtained in this way. Speaking to the Jewish journalist Samuel L. Schneiderman in New York, Leonid P. Ilyichev, chief of the press office of the Soviet foreign ministry, said that the Yiddish writers had been involved in the "unclean affairs of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee." In this way he admitted that the Yiddish writers had been arrested in connection with the purge of that committee in 1948 (see *American Jewish Year Book*, 1950 [Vol. 51], p. 337). Ilyichev added that the name of Solomon Mikhoels, leader of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, who had died under mysterious circumstances and had then been posthumously accused in connection with the famous Doctors' Plot (see *American Jewish Year Book*, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 273 and f.) had been cleared. Ilyichev said that he did not know what had happened to Itzik Pfeffer and David Bergelson, but asserted that the Yiddish writer Peretz Markish was alive, and that he had "recently" seen him in Moscow. But on October 19, 1955, N. M. Gribachev, a member of the
Soviet journalist delegation to the United States and a prominent leader of the Union of Soviet Writers, was quoted as saying that Markish was dead. Other members of the same delegation confirmed the death of David Bergelson. About other Yiddish writers, the Soviet delegates were not able to furnish any information.

At the time of writing (October 1955) only three of the more than sixty arrested Yiddish writers had reappeared. They were Moshe Broderzon, a Yiddish writer from Poland who had come to the Soviet Union during the war and was now reported to have returned to Moscow from a forced labor camp; Jakob Sternberg, a Rumanian Jewish poet, whose family in Rumania after an interval of several years had been informed that he had returned to his old place of work; and Shimon Halkin, who was reported to have been seen in Moscow.

FORCED DETentions

During 1954-55 new information was obtained about Jews detained in Soviet prisons and forced labor camps. A number of foreign citizens, mostly Germans and Austrians, were released from slave labor camps and allowed to return to their homes abroad. Some of them wrote books about their experiences. Joseph Scholmer's *Vorkuta* appeared in an English translation in New York; Antoni Ekart's *Vanished Without Trace* was published in London; Brigitte Gerland's *Die Hoelle Ist Ganz Anders* was published in Stuttgart, Germany. These three books described life in the slave labor camps around Vorkuta in the Russian far north, and contained much information about the life of Jewish prisoners there. Other witnesses, Jewish and non-Jewish, Germans, Austrians, and other foreigners, told of their experiences in other camps when they were released and reached the free world.

All witnesses agreed that there was a large number of Jews among the prisoners in all forced labor camps, in European Russia as well as in Central Asia and Siberia. Many of them had been arrested for reasons connected with their Jewish origin. They were accused of "counterrevolutionary activities" allegedly motivated by their "Zionism," their "Jewish bourgeois nationalism," their "cosmopolitanism," or their "reactionary religious ideology." There were few real Zionists from the pre-war territories of the Soviet Union among them; Zionism had been outlawed in Russia in the Twenties, and the Zionists arrested at that time had long since perished in prisons and concentration camps. The few genuine Zionists encountered in the camps were Jews from eastern Poland, the Baltic countries, Bessarabia, and other territories annexed by the Soviet Union during and after World War II, or deported to the Soviet Union from the satellite countries, East Germany, and Austria.

There were, to be sure, many other Jews accused of having participated in "Zionist plots," but these plots were the fabrications of the secret police. Scholmer mentions that, in each of the thirty slave labor camps around Vorkuta, there were several members of a group arrested in Odessa at the time of the anti-Semitic campaign. Their crime was that they had met a foreign rabbi who had visited Odessa during the war. Several years later, all persons who had talked to the rabbi, as well as their friends and relatives, were ar-
rested as members of a “Jewish-Zionist conspiracy.” One of those Scholmer knew in the camp had never seen the rabbi; another, the headmaster of an Odessa school, had exchanged a few words with the rabbi when he visited the school. In the summer of 1953, after the death of Stalin and the release of the Moscow Jewish doctors, some of the prisoners were sent to Odessa for reinterrogation; after a few months, they were returned to the camp—the old charges were upheld and the sentences confirmed.

According to Brigitte Gerland, the wife of one of the Jewish doctors involved in the spurious “murder plot” of 1953 was still in the camp. She had been arrested for withholding information on the “criminal activities” of her husband from the secret police. In April 1953 her husband was released and officially pronounced an innocent victim of a secret police frame-up. But his wife remained in the camp, despite her protests and appeals.

Scholmer also met a former actor from the Jewish theater in Moscow, a Polish Jew named Nissenzweig who had fled to the Soviet Union during the war. He told Scholmer that all the personnel of the theater “down to the night watchman” had been arrested and sentenced to ten years in slave labor camps when the theater was closed.

There were also many Jews imprisoned for “illegal” religious activities. Brigitte Gerland encountered a group of about twenty middle-aged Jews from eastern Poland who had been arrested for illegally teaching the Torah to young people. Ekart met several rabbis from Western territories, among them Rabbi Notes of Vilna, who had been sentenced to eight years as a “socially dangerous element,” and had died in Vorkuta. Some of the religious Jews in the camps courageously tried to observe the precepts of the Jewish faith under the most difficult circumstances.

Very tragic was the fate of the Jews who had survived Nazi captivity or occupation by hiding the secret of their Jewish origin. The fact that though they were Jews they had not been killed was considered by the Soviet authorities as sufficient evidence that they “must have” collaborated with the Germans. Thus, a young Jewish woman had served as a doctor in the Soviet army. Captured by the Germans, she lived through endless physical and mental suffering. But the Germans never discovered that she was Jewish. She survived, was liberated, was sent back to the Soviet Union—and arrested before she could see her old mother. She was asked why she had not committed suicide rather than surrender; true patriots were not supposed to surrender. She received ten years for treason: since she was Jewish and the Germans had not killed her, she must have been a Gestapo spy. There were many similar cases.

While the books from which these examples are taken deal with the group of concentration camps around Vorkuta, other returnees reported that the situation in other camps and regions was the same. Selig Segal, a Romanian Jew who had been arrested in Vienna and returned there with a transport of released Austrians in April 1955, reported in an interview published in the London Jewish Chronicle on May 6, 1955, that he had worked in various camps in the Soviet Union, the Urals, and Siberia, and “everywhere he had met many Jews who had been deported because of their (suspected) loyalty to Israel.” Asked why they had been arrested, many of
them answered that they were in the camps "for Golda." The allusion was to Golda Myerson, the first Israel ambassador to the Soviet Union, whose presence at services in the Moscow synagogue had been greeted by a silent demonstration of Moscow Jews which gave rise to the anti-Jewish measures and mass arrests in 1948 and in subsequent years. According to Selig Segal, most of the Jews he had met had little hope of ever attaining their freedom. Another returnee, Solomon Fenster, was quoted by the *Jewish Chronicle* of June 24, 1955, as saying that there were still many Jews from Austria and other European countries in Siberian camps. Elizabeth Glatter reported in the *Jewish Chronicle* on November 12, 1954, that the transport which had taken her to the slave labor camp of Anzhero-Sujensk had consisted mostly of Jewish women from Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. On September 16, 1955, the same paper reported from Vienna that up to that date there had been only a few Jews among the prisoners who returned to Austria. These Jews asserted that there were still many European Jews in Siberian camps, "hundreds of them, or even thousands." The returnees were very reluctant to talk about their experiences in the camps.

Some of the returnees reported that there was little open anti-Semitism among the prison guards, and that the prisoners were given the same treatment, whether they were Nazis or victims of Nazism. Others said that in some camps Jewish prisoners were not called by their names, but rather addressed as *zhid*, the Russian equivalent of "kike." But all agreed that there was widespread anti-Semitism among the non-Jewish prisoners, especially those from the Ukraine, the Baltic countries, and Rumania.

Scholmer, who devoted a whole chapter of his book to the Jews and anti-Semitism, thought that anti-Semitic feeling among these prisoners was more intense than it had been among the German middle classes under Hitler. Among the prisoners from these territories there were, together with the innocents, real Nazi collaborators. Scholmer quoted some of them as boasting of the number of Jews they had exterminated; he described examples of brutal attacks by anti-Semites on Jewish co-prisoners. Similar violent incidents were described by Brigitte Gerland. The camp administration did not interfere; many former Nazi collaborators were now spying for the Soviet secret police and were rewarded by easier work and supervisory positions in the camps. At the time of the official anti-Jewish campaign in 1952-53, many prisoners of this kind eagerly listened to Soviet broadcasts and read *Pravda* articles with anti-Jewish implications. At that time, too, the guards were heard uttering anti-Semitic remarks and threats.

The number of persons returning from Soviet slave labor camps increased in 1955. In the negotiations leading to the state treaty with Austria, the Soviet government agreed to release Austrian citizens detained in the Soviet Union. After the negotiations with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer on the resumption of diplomatic relations with West Germany, and the subsequent agreement with the East German Communist regime in September 1955, the Soviet government announced that it would release 9,626 German prisoners held in the Soviet Union as war criminals. Of these, 8,877 were to be released unconditionally and returned to their homes in West or East Ger-
many, while 749 were to be handed over to German authorities for further proceedings. In connection with this decision, the Soviet government on September 18, 1955, published a decree granting amnesty to Soviet citizens who had collaborated with the Nazis during the war. Those with sentences of up to ten years were to be released; persons with sentences of more than ten years were to go free after serving one half of their sentence. But persons who had served in the German army, police, and special German units were to be released irrespective of the length of their sentence. Only criminals convicted of murder or torture of Soviet citizens were excluded. The amnesty covered even collaborators with the Nazis who had fled abroad but were ready to return to the Soviet Union. It also wiped out the criminal records of the released collaborators.

During the fall of 1955 there were repeated unofficial reports of releases of prisoners from slave labor camps. Some of the released prisoners were forced to settle as "free laborers" in the Arctic and Siberian regions where the labor camps were located; others were allowed to return to their homes. Among the persons released were some Jews. There were unconfirmed reports that in addition to the three Yiddish writers already mentioned, a number of Jewish citizens who had been arrested because of their religious activities had returned to Lwow and other places. But at the time of writing (October 1955) no general amnesty similar to the amnesty of September 18 for Nazi collaborators had been granted Jewish prisoners jailed because of their Jewish activities.

Anti-Semitism

For many years, there had been little systematic information about the extent and intensity of anti-Semitic feeling among the population of the Soviet Union. The question was never openly discussed in the Soviet press. Officially, anti-Semitism was considered nonexistent or negligible, a vanishing survival of the Czarist past. This fiction had been maintained even at the time of the most violent anti-Jewish persecutions during the last years of Stalin's rule. Jewish and other refugees from the Soviet Union and some foreign visitors had reported that, under the cover of official silence, anti-Semitism was widespread and violent, but there was no systematic collection of pertinent information.

Recently, such information became available in a series of reports published by the external research staff of the office of intelligence research of the United States Department of State, under the title The Soviet Union as Reported by Former Soviet Citizens. These reports were based on intensive interviews with refugees from the Soviet Union who had found asylum in western Europe in postwar years. The refugees were interrogated in detail about their lives, their views, the conditions in the Soviet Union, and the moods of the population. Among the topics discussed were the relations among various ethnic groups. The persons interviewed belonged to all strata of Soviet society, from simple kolkhoz peasants to the higher layers of Soviet intelligentsia and bureaucracy. They were members of various ethnic nationalities; a great majority were non-Jews. Most had been Communist Party or
Communist Youth members, but some came from former "bourgeois" families. Their views differed in many respects. But there was remarkable agreement on the extent of anti-Semitism.

Almost all the informants considered anti-Semitism to be the most widespread and most acute form of intergroup antagonism in the Soviet Union. This was especially remarkable because in other judgments about intergroup tensions they differed among one another substantially. Some believed that differences between ethnic groups were gradually disappearing; others—especially members of minority "nationalities"—spoke of deep resentments and hatreds among different ethnic groups. But almost all agreed that there was intense anti-Semitism throughout the Soviet Union. And some of the informants, though they tried to conceal it, were themselves visibly infected by anti-Semitic prejudices. Many of them had witnessed verbal and physical attacks on Jewish citizens. Some remembered open threats of pogroms at the time the German armies were approaching Moscow, and anti-Jewish clashes after the war. Asked about the reasons for anti-Semitism, many of them cited the usual anti-Jewish stereotypes: "People said that the Jews were crafty, clannish, they always got the softer jobs, they evaded service at the front, etc." Most informants spoke of a "great deal" of anti-Semitism, "much enmity" towards the Jews; they considered the population "very unfriendly" towards the Jewish minority. Some thought that anti-Semitism was evenly spread among all ethnic groups and social classes. Others believed that anti-Jewish feeling was especially virulent among the peasants and in the Red Army, whose soldiers were mostly of peasant origin, and that Slavic ethnic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians) were more anti-Semitic than the others.

All of the informants agreed that anti-Semitism had increased during World War II. And most of them had no doubt that it had been exploited and often inspired by the government. They said that the Communist Party campaign against "cosmopolitanism" was basically anti-Semitic, that it was due to the Kremlin's suspicion of the Jews, and that this kind of anti-Semitism emanated from the top rather than from the bottom. They adduced many examples of surreptitious discrimination against citizens of Jewish origin. This was especially significant in view of the fact that all the informants had left the Soviet Union before the climax of the official anti-Jewish campaign in the Slansky trials and the Doctors' Plot. Thus, the anti-Semitic intent of the policies of the Communist Party and of the Soviet government was known and understood by the Soviet population long before those sensational events.

The picture this testimony gave of the war and early postwar period was confirmed by new information on the acutely anti-Semitic period of 1950–53 collected from Jewish sources in Russia when foreign Jewish visitors were again allowed to visit the country in 1955. According to a typical account, written by Alexander Parkson and published in the New York Jewish Daily Forward on October 15, 1955:

"The sad fact is that during 1950–53 Soviet Jews experienced their most bitter years since the Revolution of 1917. . . . Although there were no pogroms, life in this period was comparable, and not favorably, with life
under the Czars. The air was polluted with anti-Semitism. The Soviet press did not hesitate to refer openly to "dangerous cosmopolitans," which for the simple Russian masses was synonymous with "Jewish traitors."

Jews were deported from their homes, and sent to remote areas. Many were arrested on charges that were never stated. One was simply labeled a security risk, and that was that. The exact number of Jews who were arrested and disappeared cannot be determined exactly, but certainly they numbered in the tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands. These do not include the Jews who returned from exile physically and spiritually broken.

In the factories and offices Jewish workers were insulted, and in the stores and shops Jewish customers were pointed out as "traitors." Some Jews were even abused physically. Jews were afraid to be seen in public places, afraid to walk in the streets. Even in their homes they did not feel safe. They never knew when a policeman might not show up to arrest them on some vague charge. But they could not remain at home. They had to go out and work. And work was hard to get. Working papers carried the identification, "Jew." The situation reached its climax in 1952 with the arrest of the Jewish doctors. Fear rose so high that they were reminded of the Hitler period.

Parkson reported that the anti-Semitic campaign was now remembered as the "Beria period," and that Beria had been made responsible for anti-Semitism, as well as for all the other evils of the Stalin regime. This was, of course, false. Actually, the charges against the Jewish doctors had been trumped up by the anti-Beria faction in the secret police on direct orders from Stalin and as a first move against Beria, who was to be implicated in the "murder plot" later. And Beria was the man who had released the doctors and stopped the anti-Semitic campaign when he had temporarily recovered control of the secret police after Stalin's death (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 280).

After 1953 the public anti-Jewish campaign in the Soviet press had stopped. The Jews were no longer singled out as a group especially suspect of anti-Soviet activity and common crime. But nothing was done to repair the damage inflicted on the Jewish minority by years of anti-Jewish agitation. There was no effort to re-educate a public infected by anti-Semitism.

In fact, the existence of anti-Semitism was not even mentioned in the press. In 1953, when the Moscow doctors were released, there had been a few suggestions that the action against them might have been motivated by a feeling of "national enmity" and "racial hatred," but the word anti-Semitism had never been used (see AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK, 1954 [Vol. 55], p. 281). The silence on anti-Semitism was not broken until July 1955, when the magazine Partyinaya Zhizn ("Party Life") carried in its book review and bibliography department a survey by S. Kazakov of the orthodox Leninist-Stalinist literature on the nationality policy of the Communist Party. This article stressed the fight against "bourgeois nationalism," as well as against "cosmopolitanism and national nihilism, which are essentially the other side of the coin of bourgeois nationalism." It reminded the readers of Lenin's sharp polemics against the supporters of the Jewish Socialist Bund, who wanted to organize the labor movement under Czarism as a federation of
ethnic groups. Kazakov criticized the “bourgeois nationalist program of cultural autonomy” proposed by “Bundists, liquidators, and other foes of Bolshevism,” and thus once more condemned a solution of the Jewish question which would enable the Jews to live their own cultural life. Kazakov cited numerous articles by Stalin and Party resolutions condemning the “local nationalism” of ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union. But his article also contained a short paragraph saying that, in combatting bourgeois nationalism, the Communist Party directed the attention of the working people to the special danger of anti-Semitism. Lenin, wrote Kazakov, had exposed the criminal policy of the capitalists, who incited hostility towards the Jews in order to divert the workers’ attention from their real enemy, capitalism. After quoting Lenin’s attack on Czarism for “torturing and persecuting the Jews,” and Lenin’s words: “Shame on those who sow hatred against the Jews,” Kazakov concluded with the statement that the Communist Party had always waged a merciless struggle against anti-Semitism as a phenomenon profoundly hostile to the Soviet system.

Since this was the first official condemnation of anti-Semitism in a Soviet publication for many years, this paragraph was singled out for comment in the Western press. In the context in which it was published, Kazakov’s article constituted a reiteration of the traditional Leninist doctrine which had never officially been abandoned even during the days of the most violent anti-Jewish campaigns. But Kazakov tended to depict anti-Semitism as a phenomenon belonging to the Czarist past, and he did not come to grips with the problem of anti-Semitism under Soviet conditions. His repeated diatribes against the Jewish Socialist Bund and cultural autonomy indicated that there would be no concessions to what the Soviets considered “Jewish bourgeois nationalism.”

Relations with Israel

Throughout 1954 and the first half of 1955 relations between the Soviet Union and Israel remained normal. The Israel embassy in Moscow was headed by Ambassador Shmuel Eliashiv, and after Eliashiv’s illness and recall to Israel in February 1955, by Ambassador Yosef Avidar. In 1955, when high Soviet leaders made a point of visiting foreign diplomatic representations and engaging in friendly talks at diplomatic receptions, the Israel embassy was left out. On April 27, 1955, only junior officials of the Soviet foreign ministry attended a reception commemorating the founding of the State of Israel.

Commercial relations were governed by a trade agreement signed in Moscow in December 1953. The Soviet government agreed to deliver 100,000 tons of crude oil to Israel, with an option for another 100,000 tons, and to buy citrus fruit and bananas to a total of $2,900,000. In February 1954 Israel took up the option for the second 100,000 tons of oil, and in subsequent agreements agreed to buy another 250,000 tons in exchange for fruit exports. Similar agreements were concluded between Israel and several satellite states. The statistics for 1954 showed a triple increase of Israel imports from the Soviet bloc. This trade continued in 1955. Israel citrus fruits were regularly delivered to the Soviet port of Odessa, while Soviet tankers brought crude
oil to Haifa. In July 1955 the two governments concluded a shipping agreement granting each other preferential treatment in such matters as port and dock facilities and charges.

At the same time, the Soviet government was assiduously wooing the Arabs. Addressing the Supreme Soviet in Moscow on February 8, 1955, Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov not only expressed the friendly feelings of “Soviet peoples” toward the Arab states, but also assured them that “in the Soviet state they had and will continue to have a reliable bulwark in the cause of defense of their sovereignty and national independence.” Israel was not mentioned.

In July 1955, Dimitri P. Shepilov, one of the secretaries of the central committee of the Communist Party, editor of Pravda, and prominent Soviet authority on foreign affairs, visited Cairo. Shepilov praised the “great Socialist experiment,” undertaken by the Egyptian government, and told the Egyptian people that they “had demonstrated great energy in the struggle against imperialist oppressors” and “an implacable resolve to defend their national rights.” Soon after Shepilov’s return, Premier Gamal Abdel Nasser received and accepted an invitation to visit Moscow.

On August 18, 1955, the chairman of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Marshal Klimenti E. Voroshilov, took the unusual step of congratulating Nasser on a Moslem holiday. A few days later Vice Chairman M. P. Tarasov, of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet, in receiving the credentials of a new Egyptian ambassador, El Kouni, expressed his warm sympathy for the “national aspirations” of the Egyptian people. At the same time, pilgrims to Mecca from the Soviet Union visited the Moslem El Azhar University in Cairo and invited a delegation from the university, as well as Sheik Ahmed Hassan el Bakouri, Egyptian minister of religious institutions, to visit the Soviet Union.

A Syrian parliamentary delegation visited Moscow in July 1955 and was received by Premier Nikolai A. Bulganin and Foreign Minister Molotov. Its leader, Rafiq Bachour, vice president of the Syrian chamber of deputies, told the press in Moscow that Bulganin and Molotov had promised to support the legitimate demands of the Arab peoples and had sharply criticized Israel. Bachour added that imperialism was responsible for the creation of Israel; so long as Israel existed, Arab security was threatened. The Soviet news agency Tass only quoted Bachour as thanking the Soviet Union for helping the Arabs to frustrate imperialist plots in the United Nations.

At the same time, Arab language broadcasts from the Communist countries were stepped up, and the Soviet press reported in detail and with sympathy numerous nationalistic statements by Arab leaders and newspapers. On the other hand, Israel was accused of planning to conclude a treaty of alliance with the United States, thereby allegedly violating its obligation not to join any military alliance directed against the Soviet Union.

On August 30, 1955, United States Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced in a press conference that he had information that the Soviet Union had offered military equipment to Arab states. On September 12, the Israel ambassador to Moscow, Yosef Avidar, called on A. Zaitsev, the director of the Near East department at the Soviet foreign ministry, to inquire about
these reports. According to an official Israel account, Zaitsev replied that he was authorized to state that these reports and statements were devoid of any foundation and were nothing but fantasies. The Soviet Union had not sold any arms to Arab states, and was not carrying on any negotiations with these states regarding such sales. Zaitsev also said that he was not aware of any similar negotiations conducted by any of the Peoples' Democracies. But he added that the Soviets would regard such arms shipments as purely commercial transactions.

On September 27, Premier Gamal Abdel Nasser officially announced that an agreement for delivery of weapons to Egypt had been concluded with the Czechoslovak republic. Details were not officially published but all reports agreed that the deliveries were to be substantial, that they would include MIG fighter planes, tanks, artillery, and even submarines, and that they would radically change the balance of power between Israel and the Arab countries. The weapons were to arrive on Soviet and satellite ships that were to be loaded in the Soviet port of Odessa and the Rumanian harbor of Constanza; the submarines, which could hardly have been produced and tested in Czechoslovakia, were reported to have been built in the Polish naval base in Gdansk (Danzig). The weapons were to be paid for partly by exports of Egyptian cotton and rice, and partly by money transferred through the Soviet State Bank. There was no doubt that the Czechoslovak arms deal had been arranged under the auspices of the Soviet government.

On September 29, 1955, Premier Moshe Sharett summoned the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Tel Aviv, Nikolai Klimov, and told him that deliveries of arms to Egypt by the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia necessarily aroused anxiety and resentment among the Israel people; he asked how the Soviet move fitted with Zaitsev's recent denial, and with Soviet declarations about the necessity of peace and armament reduction. Sharett was told only that his views would be conveyed to the Soviet government.

An indirect answer was soon given in a Soviet communiqué disseminated by Tass at the beginning of October 1955. The communiqué said that pressure has been exerted on some Middle Eastern countries to make them buy weapons exclusively from the Western powers. The Soviet government's view was that any country had the right to buy arms from any other country, and that no foreign state had the right to intervene. Since "unfounded complaints" had been made against the Czech-Egyptian arms deal, the Soviet government had expressed these views to the Czechoslovak, Egyptian, British, and American governments. On October 24, a Tass communiqué published in the Soviet press categorically denied rumors that weapons had also been offered to Israel.

By the second half of October 1955 arms were already arriving in Egyptian ports.

Emigration

Union in 1954. The discrepancy may be due to the fact that the statistics included immigrants whose country of origin had been the Soviet Union, but who had come to Israel from other countries where they had resided temporarily.

Emigrants continued to arrive in 1955. Most of them were elderly and often sick persons who had children or other near relatives in Israel. Many had waited for exit visas for many years. Some had appealed directly to Stalin but without result. Their exit visas had been granted after Stalin's death by Georgi M. Malenkov. A few Soviet Jews had been allowed to rejoin their families in other countries.

JOSEPH GORDON

POLAND

The policy of collective leadership, inaugurated somewhat later in Poland than in other Soviet satellite countries, continued during 1954–55 without spectacular consequences either in respect to the top leadership or to the practical policies of the regime. Toward the end of 1954, and closely following the pattern set in the Soviet Union after the fall of Lavrenti P. Beria in July 1953, the security system of Poland was reorganized, with Władysław Wicha replacing Stanisław Radkiewicz as the head at the ministry of internal affairs. Władysław Dworakowski was put at the head of a special committee for public security with wide powers.

Although the Polish regime continued to call for more rapid collectivization of agriculture, only about 8 per cent of the farmland—a little over 1,800,000 hectares of land—had been brought into 10,000 collectives by the middle of 1955. No vigorous collectivization campaign seemed to be planned by the government.

In the now familiar pattern, the Polish regime promised the people more comforts and more food. In fact, however, food shortages continued, creating a vicious circle in which lack of food undermined the productivity of the worker, and lack of consumer goods discouraged the food producer from producing for the market.

On May 19, 1955, the Polish People's Republic ratified the Warsaw Collective Security Pact concluded by the Soviet Union and all the satellite countries at a conference held in Warsaw May 11–14, 1955.

General Position of the Jews

Poland did not experience the worst excesses of the anti-Semitic trend which characterized the Soviet satellites during the last year or so of Stalin's life. In fact, the fight against "cosmopolitans" had little effect on the Jews of Poland, and its traces had by 1954–55 disappeared entirely from the daily press and publications. Local observers, however, reported that anti-Semitism, always present in Poland, was still felt in various circles, in no way limited to any one group or social class. The government was aware of this situation
and, according to official reports, took measures to combat anti-Semitic prejudices (*The Day-Morning Journal*, August 21, 1955).

The easing of East-West tensions undoubtedly affected the tone of the polemics against the State of Israel and Zionism in the Jewish press. Not that vituperation against Israel stopped entirely—there were occasional violent outbursts against the "Fascist dreamers" of Israel and sharp criticism of David Ben-Gurion and the politics associated with him. At the same time, however, there were signs of easing of the old line. There were reports from Israel that the Polish government had expressed a desire to expand its trade relations with Israel, and that a trade delegation from Poland was expected in Israel shortly.

**Jewish Population**

There were still no reliable data on the number of Jews in Poland. During his visit to Paris in June 1955, Hersz Smoliar, president of the Social and Cultural Union of Polish Jews, estimated the Jewish population of Poland at somewhere between 75,000 and 80,000 (*The Day*, August 2, 1955). Other estimates varied from 50,000 (by A. Harkavi, in *Australian Jewish Herald*, May 20, 1955) to 35,000—40,000 by Israel sources. Careful examination of available material on Polish Jewry failed to elucidate the basis of Smoliar's calculations. In fact, it would seem to contradict all previous information, including matzoth registration, data on Jewish immigration to Israel, etc. The previous estimate of 45,000 (*American Jewish Year Book*, 1955, [Vol. 56], p. 411) would seem to be nearer to the actual situation. Half the Jewish population in Poland resided in the western provinces (Lower Silesia), with Jewish groups distributed over thirty localities, including 5,000 in Warsaw, 5,000 in Lodz, and 5,000 in Szczecin.

Data on the occupational distribution of Polish Jews were not available. According to Smoliar, 70 per cent of the gainfully employed Jews were in the leather, textile, and other light industries. Some were in metallurgy, coal mining, and other heavy industries, and in service trades and liberal professions.

**Communal Life**

Jewish communal life continued to be completely dominated by the Communists. This was true of the Cultural and Social Union of Polish Jews and all its local affiliates. The local Jewish population showed little interest in the official activities of the union, and the leaders were disappointed by the increasing apathy and lack of participation in the various campaigns fostered by the union. To remedy this situation, special meetings of local branches of the union were held throughout October 1954, and efforts were made to impress upon them the "necessity of more active participation by the masses in the work of the committees." Judging from the reports in the press, these efforts were unsuccessful. In fact, the elections of local officers in Bytom and Jary were canceled by the central presidium of the union because of the small number of members present at the meetings (*Folksztyme,*
Warsaw, October 13, 1954). The news of the cancelation of elections in those places was widely published in the press and was accompanied by editorial appeals for more “democracy” and “active participation.”

The new line in East-West relations and the easing of the tensions of the cold war apparently brought a new approach in the tactics of Jewish Communists in Poland. For the first time in a number of years the delegation of the union to the left-wing “peace” demonstration held in Paris in June 1955, included a representative of religious Jewry in the person of S. Ferber of the Jewish Religious Congregation of Poland. In addition to Ferber the delegation included Hersz Smolian, Ber Mark, Ida Kaminska, and S. Fiszgrund.

According to official reports, the Social and Cultural Union had a membership of 12,000 in 1955 (Folksztyme, February 12, 1955). Hersz Smolian and David Sfard continued in their positions of president and secretary general, respectively. Among the leading members of the presidium of the union were Joel Lazebnik, S. Fiszgrund, and Szymon Zachariacz, all of whom had for years held top positions in the organization. Some uneasiness about this situation was apparent among the leadership of the union, and public pronouncements by the leaders hinted that it was time to think of changes in the communal structure of Polish Jewry. However, nothing was done in this direction during 1954–55. It is noteworthy that there was still a separate Jewish section of the Communist Party in Poland—though it was uncertain how long this situation would continue.

Religious Life

Reports from Poland indicated continuing disintegration of Jewish religious life. While religious congregations still existed in Poland (Abraham Banker was the president of the congregational organization in 1954), fewer and fewer Jews were participating in religious observances. According to Harry Schwartz, who visited Warsaw during the High Holy Days in 1955, fewer than 100 Jews congregated in the only synagogue there for Rosh ha-Shanah services (The New York Times, September 18, 1955). An Israel reporter who visited this synagogue in 1954 saw only fourteen worshippers during an ordinary Sabbath service (The Day, December 21, 1954). The situation was even worse in respect to children and youth, as no religious school, Talmud Torah, or yeshiva had functioned in Poland for several years. Thus there was no way of preparing children for bar mitzvah or for imparting to them any education in Jewish religious tradition. According to local observers, the situation in other Polish cities was no better than in Warsaw, though synagogues were said to exist in Lodz, Crakow, and a few other communities. It was reported that Rabbi Perzowsky was the chief rabbi of Warsaw; significantly, no shochet (ritual slaughterer) was available in that city.

Jewish Education

In the course of an interview given by the Polish Jewish delegates to the Paris “peace” demonstration, one of them said that 3,000 Jewish pupils attended Jewish schools in Poland in 1955 (The Day, August 2, 1955). Actually,
it was difficult to obtain a realistic picture of Jewish education in Poland. Reports available in the Polish Jewish press indicated that Jewish elementary and secondary schools existed in Bielawa, Walbrzich, Lodz (Lycee), Wroclaw (Lycee), Szczecin, Lignyce, and Dzerzionow. There were reports that at the beginning of the academic year 1954-55 about 500 new pupils replenished the Jewish schools in Poland—100 in Lodz, 90 in Dzerzionow, 70 in Wroclaw, 70 in Lignyce, 60 in Szczecin, 40 in Bielawa, 40 in Walbrzich (Folksztyme, July 7, 1954). Local sources pointed to the difficulties that continuously beset the Jewish schools, particularly in smaller cities, where it was almost impossible to get competent teachers. There was also the problem of textbooks, whose continuous revision has plagued Jewish schools since their establishment at the end of World War II. A special conference of Jewish school teachers, called by the ministry of public instruction, was held in Lodz January 2 to 5, 1955, and was attended by an official of the Social and Cultural Union and representatives of the government. A number of the teachers emphasized the difficulty they encountered in teaching Yiddish disciplines to children who did not speak the language and did not hear Yiddish spoken in their homes.

Cultural Activities

Official sources of the Social and Cultural Union reported the existence, in 1954-55, of thirty clubs. Some of these clubs had dramatic circles, small libraries, and choral ensembles, through which the Communist leadership developed the customary propaganda activities, current slogans, etc. At the beginning of 1955, a national festival of Jewish art groups was held in Wroclaw. Twenty art groups, representing 700 amateurs in various fields of artistic expression, participated in the festival.

In connection with the tenth anniversary of the “establishment of People's Poland,” a special exhibition was organized in Wroclaw in November 1954. Dos Yiddishe Buch, the officially sponsored publishing organization, continued its activity throughout 1954-55, and some 5,500 subscribers could make selections from among the thirty volumes issued by it.

In connection with the fortieth anniversary of the death of Judah Loeb Peretz, there was a pilgrimage to the grave of the writer on April 4, 1955, and a number of memorial meetings were held in the various communities.

Historical Institute

The Jewish Historical Institute, which in 1955 celebrated its tenth anniversary, enlarged its activities to include not only research on Jewish life under the occupation, resistance movements, etc., but also the general history of Polish Jewry and studies of the Jewish past. It did not, however, change its approach, which had always conformed to the current Communist line laid down by the regime. In addition to its general publishing activities, the institute continued the issuance of Bleter far Geschichte and of a bulletin in Polish. Ber Mark continued the director of the institute.
Yiddish Theater

The Yiddish Theater, which in previous years had been active mainly in Wroclaw and Lodz, received special recognition in 1955. It was reported that the government put at its disposal premises at Kruglewska Street, in Warsaw, to be known as the Yiddish State Theater, and to serve as a center not only for the theater proper but also for all sorts of related activities. During the period 1950–55 the Yiddish Theater had presented twenty-seven plays and performed in twenty-four cities and towns.

Personalia

In connection with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of People's Poland, a number of Jewish writers, artists, workers, and party militants received special state awards. Among the recipients of special medals were the writers Leib Olitzki, Ber Mark, David Sfard, Hadassah Rubin, Bynem Heller, Wolf Iwin, Leib Morgenthalau, Hersz Smoliar, Simche Katz, and Moshe Skliar. Michal Mirski, member of the presidium of the Social and Cultural Union, received the Officer Cross of Polish Renascence, and Icchak Gordin-Lenowitch, a party militant, was awarded the Chevalier Cross of the Polish Renascence. Joel Lazebnik was decorated with the State Order of the Labor Flag, Second Class.

Leon Shapiro

Czechoslovakia

There were no new statistics or official estimates of the number of Jews in Czechoslovakia. In 1949, when emigration to Israel had been discontinued, the remaining Jewish population had been estimated at 15,000. Since the Jewish community consisted mostly of elderly people, it must have decreased further, even without emigration.

The only new concrete figure available pertained to the capital. According to a report obtained by Radio Free Europe, there were 1,863 Jews in Prague in May 1954. This compared with 7,572 "persons of the Mosaic faith" and 3,188 "other members of the Jewish community," counted in Prague on June 30, 1948. It is not clear whether the 1954 figure included only persons professing the Jewish religion or other people of Jewish origin as well. But even if it covered only religiously affiliated Jews, the decline was very large. The Free Europe report attributed this decline partly to emigration (which was allowed until 1949); other causes cited were natural decrease, persecution, deportations, and the transfer of destitute aged persons to social institutions in the provinces.

Reports of the conferences of Jewish religious communities in Bohemia and Moravia (held in Prague on November 22, 1953), and in Slovakia (held in Bratislava on March 27, 1955), failed to give any indications as to the
number of the members of these communities or of the Jewish population in general. But the Slovak Chief Rabbi, Eliáš Katz, termed the communities "extraordinarily weak in membership," and added that many communities had only "an infinitesimal number of members."

Communal Organization

After a lapse of several years, two federations of Jewish religious communities were allowed to reconstitute themselves in the fall of 1953 and spring of 1954, respectively: the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech Lands, with its seat in Prague and jurisdiction over Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia; and the Central Association of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia, with its seat in Bratislava.

The bylaws of the Slovak central association adopted at the conference mentioned above were similar to those previously adopted by the Bohemian-Moravian communities. They provided for administrative religious communities in the district centers, and for local synagogue congregations. There were nine administrative communities and an unknown number of local synagogue congregations in Bohemia and Moravia; the report on the Slovak conference revealed forty-two local synagogue congregations in Slovakia, most of them with a very small number of congregants. In addition to the Prague chief rabbi, there were four other rabbis, who served large districts in Bohemia and Moravia. Chief Rabbi Eliáš Katz told the Bratislava conference that where more than 300 rabbis had attended such conferences before World War II, now "when we count all rabbis in Slovakia, there are no more than we two." The other rabbi mentioned served a large district around Košice in East Slovakia.

Describing the role of the Jewish communities, Prague Rabbi Gustav Sicher told the Slovak conference that they "are no more nor less than religious communities. The State has relieved them of various other nonreligious activities to be able fully to devote themselves to their only task, i.e., religion, worship, and ritual. This is today their only task, and their administration serves none but religious purposes."

This statement must be viewed against the background of the first post-war years when the Jewish religious communities in Czechoslovakia had had much broader responsibilities and had engaged in many cultural, welfare, and other communal activities. Considering themselves the representatives of the Jewish people, they had tried to serve Jewish interests in many fields, including defense against anti-Semitism and discrimination. Now, though there were no other Jewish organizations to fulfill these tasks, the religious communities were no longer allowed to engage in them and were confined to the religious field.

Political Activity

Only one additional field of activity was allowed to the religious communities, that of supporting the political campaigns of the government and the Communist Party, especially in respect to peace propaganda. At the
Slovak conference in Bratislava, Chief Rabbi Eliáš Katz declared that the activities of the Jewish religious communities were based on two "inseparable principles—the spirit of the Torah and the spirit of People's Democracy," and that the Czechoslovak Jews, together with other citizens, struggled to build up Socialism and Communism, against the "devilish plans of the imperialists and war mongers" expressed in the Paris treaties and the threat of atomic war.

This policy found concrete expression in a series of political appeals and resolutions adopted by the leadership of Jewish religious communities. Thus in December 1954 the Council of Jewish Religious Communities and the rabbis in Bohemia and Moravia adopted a manifesto entitled "For Peace! Against the Remilitarization of West Germany," and sent it to the chief rabbis and religious communities of France, Great Britain, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Italy, and Norway. In similar language, the Central Association of Slovak Communities supported the Soviet proposal for a European system of collective security. Both these resolutions were printed in January 1955 in Věstník, the bulletin of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in Prague. In February 1955 rabbis and Jewish religious communities repeated the same appeal to "co-religionists in Czechoslovakia and abroad" in connection with Purim. In May 1955 another manifesto signed by the Czech and Slovak rabbis and communities celebrated the tenth anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia, expressed thanks to the Red Army, and promised their devoted collaboration in the building of Socialism and in the peace movement—according to "the precepts of the Victory Day and of our holy religion."

Religious Activities

The religious activities of individual communities were reported in greater detail during 1954–55 than in previous years in the Prague Věstník, which now extended its coverage to many communities in Slovakia. Its reports seem to indicate that during 1954–55, within strict limits, religious observances were being allowed to take place more freely and with greater participation by the Jewish population than in the years immediately preceding.

Announcements published from time to time in Věstník indicated that two synagogues were open in Prague, one for daily, another only for Sabbath services. In Brno, the capital of Moravia, the synagogue was open on the Sabbath; on other days services were conducted in the home for the aged. Of the other towns of Bohemia and Moravia, daily services were conducted only in Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad), and regular Sabbath services were held in ten additional places, including the home for the aged in Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad). It was not known how many synagogues were open in Slovakia. Several reports on holiday or ceremonial services mentioned that attendance was greater during 1954–55 than in the previous years, and that sometimes the places of worship could not accommodate the unexpectedly increased number of worshippers.

The district rabbis came to individual communities to conduct services from time to time; their visits were usually reported in Věstník with ex-
pressions of thanks from the communities concerned. In Slovakia, where there were only two rabbis, one in Bratislava and one in Košice, the reports sometimes mentioned a "clergyman-shochet" as the person heading religious activities in provincial towns.

Matzot were baked in Bratislava, Slovakia, and delivered not only to other Slovak towns, but also to the entire western part of the country. There was a kosher canteen operated under the supervision of the religious community in Prague which served daily lunches and Friday evening meals. A ritual bath existed in Prague and probably in other Slovak communities. In Bratislava there was a chevra kadisha religious burial fraternity.

Reports from the communities described in great detail some religious ceremonies performed in individual localities: religious weddings in Prague and Bratislava, a few cases of circumcision, and several bar mitzvahs. These were evidently extraordinary occasions which were invariably attended by guests and representatives of Jewish communities from many quite distant places.

Věstník also reported a number of local Purim festivals and communal Seders. It is worth noting that they were sometimes attended by children and young people, some of them members of the Communist Pioneer organization.

There were numerous services and meetings commemorating the victims of Nazism and the soldiers who had lost their lives in the war, or celebrating the anniversary of Czechoslovakia's liberation and similar occasions. The sermons and speeches delivered at these occasions praised the Soviet Union, the Red Army, and the People's Democracy, and attacked German rearmament and Western defense alliances.

In large part, the reports from the communities were devoted to eulogies of aged citizens celebrating their birthdays and to obituaries.

A great deal of attention was devoted to the care of Jewish cemeteries. Many of these had fallen into serious disrepair; untended, their walls were crumbling and graves were being desecrated. Most of the communities lacked the means to reconstruct the cemeteries at their own expense; they organized voluntary labor brigades to repair the worst damage. The problems they faced were vividly illustrated by a report from Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia, in Věstník on July 1, 1955. In 1951, according to this report, the Košice community had discussed the state of the cemetery; thirty yards of the wall had crumbled, and "irresponsible elements" were entering the cemetery and defiling the graves. The community did not have the means to repair the havoc, though it was a rather small sum; the possibility of a public collection was discussed. However, nothing was done until 1955, when the community organized a brigade of fourteen members who repaired the wall cheaply. The report ended with an appeal to other communities facing similar problems to follow the Košice example.

In March 1954, the last "accomplices" of Rudolf Slánský had been sentenced in Bratislava to long prison terms on charges of having, among other things, tolerated "Zionist activities" and protected "Jewish capitalist smugglers" (see American Jewish Year Book, 1955 [Vol. 56], p. 416). There were no new public anti-Semitic trials during 1954–55. But the accusations
against the Jews voiced in connection with the Slánský trial and subsequent proceedings against his "co-conspirators" were never repudiated. While the charges of Titoism, which had played a major role in all these trials, were implicitly disavowed after Moscow's rapprochement with Tito (see p. 413), the charges of "Zionism" and "Jewish bourgeois nationalism" were left intact.

As far as was known, the Czechoslovak Jewish citizens sentenced in the anti-Semitic trials had not been released. Of the two Israel citizens implicated in the trials, Shimon Ohrenstein, a former employee of the Israel legation in Prague, was pardoned in October 1954 and allowed to proceed to Israel, after serving three years of his life sentence. There were repeated rumors that a pardon would also be extended to Mordecai Oren, member of the Israel parliament and a leader of the left-wing Mapam, who had been condemned to a fifteen-year jail sentence, but in spite of many foreign intercessions, Oren had not been released at the time of writing (October 1955).

Some of the Jewish citizens not directly implicated in the Slánský trial who had been arrested during the anti-Jewish campaign in 1952 and held in jail without charges seem to have been released in 1954 and 1955. A report from the Slovak town of Bardejov stated that eleven citizens of Jewish origin who had been held in prison in Košice for two years without charges were released in January 1955. They were ordered to leave Bardejov with their families and to settle in small communities to which they were assigned by the authorities and which they could not leave without special permission.

**Cultural Activity**

The only Jewish periodical in the country was *Věstník*, formerly the organ of the Council of Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech Lands, which now described itself as the organ of the Jewish religious communities in all of Czechoslovakia, and extended its coverage to Slovakia. It was a twelve-page monthly in the Czech language, with reports from Slovakia printed in Slovak. Beginning in 1954 the religious communities also published a yearly almanac containing the Jewish calendar, articles by several Czech rabbis, articles and stories by Czech writers of Jewish origin, and translations of stories by Sholem Aleichem, Judah Loeb Peretz, and the Prague German-Jewish writer Hugo Salus.

**Relations with Israel and Egypt**

Czechoslovakia's diplomatic relations with Israel followed the pattern of the Soviet Union. Following the reestablishment of Soviet-Israel diplomatic relations after the rupture of 1953, they became outwardly correct. But the charges levied against Israel at the time of the Slánský trial were never disavowed, and Israel's intercession on behalf of Oren remained unsuccessful.

On September 27, 1955, Egyptian Premier Gamal Abdel Nasser announced over the radio that Czechoslovakia had agreed to deliver weapons to Egypt. This was the result of negotiations conducted first between Egypt and the Soviet Union, then between Egypt and Czechoslovakia. Nasser declared that
Czechoslovakia had agreed to "supply all our needs for arms" on a "purely commercial basis," in exchange for Egyptian cotton and other products. On September 30 the Czechoslovak radio confirmed the reports and quoted favorable comments from the Egyptian press. On October 2 it disclosed that Premier Nasser had accepted an invitation to visit Czechoslovakia. The quantity and kind of arms to be delivered was not revealed; but all reports agreed that the deliveries included modern airplanes and tanks, and that the quantity was sufficient to change the military situation in the Middle East and the balance of power between the Arab states and Israel.

JOSEPH GORDON

HUNGARY

During the year under review (July 1, 1954, through June 30, 1955), Hungary passed through greater political oscillations than any other Soviet satellite.

After Josef Stalin's death in March 1953, it was apparently difficult for the new "collective" Soviet leadership to apply a uniform pattern of political treatment to the satellite orbit as a whole. The political and economic changes in the Soviet Union itself spread only unevenly and haphazardly across its frontiers. In Hungary, popular discontent seemed so great as to call for more serious modifications of the original rigid policy than elsewhere. The struggles for leadership in Moscow were reflected in the efforts of local Communist Party factions to secure the support of one or another of the groups in the Kremlin. The more moderate wing, which apparently relied on the ascendancy of Georgi M. Malenkov, won out temporarily in June 1954. Imre Nagy, an agricultural expert and leading advocate of a priority of consumer goods over armaments, became prime minister on July 11, 1954.

The victory of the right wing of the party was, however, far from complete. Contrary to widespread rumors, Matyas Rakosi was simultaneously confirmed as general secretary, retaining the central power position he had held throughout Stalin's lifetime. At the same time Erno Gerö, although dropping behind Nagy in Party rank, was still third in the party hierarchy and retained the powerful ministry of the interior (police). Gen. Michael Farkas, Minister of War, of the Rakosi faction, ranked fourth on the official party list. Rakosi never ceased to thunder against the Nagy regime's "opportunist right-wing distortions of policy," particularly its action in letting peasants leave the large collective farms and in slowing the tempo of industrialization. Confusion and disarray was spreading beyond the ranks of the ruling party itself. Premier Nagy tried to bolster his position by creating a new and broader People's Independence Front, to rally the people behind his regime and to act as that link between government and the public that the Communist Party so signally failed to provide.

Early in July 1954, Erno Gerö was replaced as Minister of the Interior by Gen. Laszlo Piros, reputed organizer of the Miskolcz pogrom in August 1946, and later successor of the purged Gen. Gabor Peter as head of the secret
police. Gerö was reputed to have been a follower of Lavrenti P. Beria (Reuters, Vienna, July 6, 1954).

But by the fall of 1954, the situation of the Nagy regime already seemed desperate. His bitter complaints early in October 1954 against “left-wing deviationism and sectionalism” and party opposition to the People’s Independence Front betrayed the failure of his New Look policies (The New York Times, October 10, 1954).

The downfall of Malenkov on February 8, 1955, as head of the Soviet regime sealed Nagy’s fate. In February 1955, he was reported ill with a heart condition. A few weeks later he was openly censured by the Central Committee for “right-wing deviationism.” On April 18, 1955, Nagy was dismissed from the premiership and all his party posts. At the same time, Defense Minister Michael Farkas was ousted from that position and his membership in the party secretariat. Thus, of the four top leaders only Matyas Rakosi remained politically alive, as the party boss and “elder statesman” of captive Hungary. His victory was reflected in the main charge leveled against Nagy in the Communist press, “the neglect of the Nagy regime to build up war industry” (The New York Times, Vienna, April 18, 1955).

Andras Hegedus, Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Premier, succeeded Nagy as Prime Minister. At the same time, the anti-Semitic Minister of the Interior Gen. Laszlo Piros became a “candidate member” of the party’s Political Committee (Reuters, Vienna, April 18, 1955).

Population

Throughout these sharp political struggles and changes, very little information about the situation of Jews and Jewish community life in Hungary leaked out of that country. One vital statistical fact seemed, however, to be confirmed by estimates offered by various recent emigrants from, or visitors to, Hungary. These witnesses placed the present number of confessing Jews in Hungary who were enrolled in the Jewish community at only about 120,000, instead of 140,000, which has been the standard estimate in recent years. This marked decline seems to reflect the effect of the sustained economic plight of the majority of Hungarian Jews and of the sufferings of large numbers deported to rural areas in the early 1950’s. Over two-thirds of this population was believed to live in Budapest, whither most of the surviving deportees had returned.

The end of the system of rural deportations early in 1954 by no means signified, however, that arbitrary deprivation of individual freedom was a thing of the past in Communist Hungary. On the contrary, thousands of Jews were still living in detention and forced labor camps.

Attitude Toward Jews

The attitude of the regime toward the Jews of Hungary continued to be characterized by suspicion and hostility. The fact that a confirmed anti-Semite was retained as police minister was probably a reflection of this attitude. This hostility, however, did not find expression in traditional anti-Semitic terms but was camouflaged in the language of anti-Zionism sys-
tematically used in official propaganda, and in trials of party or state functionaries of Jewish descent, such as Nagy, Gerö, and Farkas, charged with "deviations" and other political crimes.

The economic plight of the Jewish population remained desperate.

Jewish Community Affairs

With regard to Jewish community life in Hungary, only scant information was available. In November 1954, Hungarian legations issued reports which painted a rosy picture of the situation. They asserted that 150 synagogues and 89 rabbis were serving the Jewish communities and that many famous synagogues were being repaired by state subsidies. But the reports failed to specify the location of these functioning synagogues and the identity of the rabbis (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, JTA, Tel Aviv, November 14, 1954). It was true, however, that Imre Nagy's government seemed to display a friendlier attitude to Jewish community life than its predecessors. Thus in January 1955, Nagy received Lajos Heves, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities, for the purpose of discussing "religious and humanitarian questions" (JTA, Vienna, January 26, 1955).

The only Jewish educational institution reported to be still functioning was the seventy-seven-year-old Jewish Theological Seminary of Budapest. In September 1954, three candidates received the unusual degree of "deputy rabbi" (Jewish Chronicle [London], September 29, 1954).

A marked improvement in Jewish communal affairs seemed to be reflected in the removal early in 1953 of Lajos Stoeckler and Ladislas Benedek, the agents whom the Communists themselves had imposed as leaders of the Jewish community. In their stead, Lajos Heves, a lawyer and the son of the late Rabbi Cornel Heves of Szolnok, became president of both the Federation of Jewish Communities and the Budapest community; Miklos Vida became vice-president, and Jeno Laszlo secretary-general of both organizations. None of these individuals was known to be an exponent of Communist interests. The new director for Jewish affairs in the ministry of education was Miklos Szabolcsi, whose father and grandfather had edited what was then the leading Jewish weekly in Hungary. This milder attitude toward the Jews of Hungary may explain the fact that attendance at Sabbath services in Budapest was greater during Nagy's regime than at any time since the consolidation of Communist rule in the late 1940's.

During 1954–55 no manifestations of popular anti-Semitism were reported from Hungary. Competent eyewitnesses believed that the fact that Jews were suffering under prevailing conditions at least as much as the average Hungarian had tended to reduce popular animosity against them. The absence, since Stalin's death, of direct anti-Semitic official propaganda, and the end of the last traces of higher economic standards enjoyed by enterprising Jews, may also have contributed to this development. The elimination of Communist functionaries of Jewish origin from a wide range of official positions may have been another factor in reducing overt anti-Semitic activity.

But notwithstanding these changes for the better during 1954–55, the Jews
of Hungary continued to find their situation basically unbearable and their future fraught with uncertainty and danger. It was certain that if permitted to emigrate, many thousands of Hungarian Jews would leave that country without a moment's hesitation.

RUMANIA

According to data given by the Communist leaders of the Rumanian Jewish community to Shimon Samet, a representative of the Israel newspaper *Haaretz*, when Samet visited Bucharest in December 1954, the number of Jews in Rumania was between 220,000 and 240,000. This compared with an estimate of 200,000 given to a British visitor by the president of the Bucharest Jewish community in August 1953 (see *American Jewish Year Book*, 1955 [Vol. 56], p. 421).

According to Samet's information, about 90,000 Jews lived in Bucharest, most of them still concentrated in the old Jewish quarter. The second largest Jewish center was Jassy, the capital of the province of Moldavia, with a Jewish population of 17,000. Bacău was said to be the third largest Jewish city, but no figures for its Jewish population were given. Botoshani and Galatz, with 7,000 Jewish inhabitants each, were other important Jewish centers in Old Rumania. In Transylvania, Timisoara (Temesvar) and Arad, with 8,000 Jews each, were the cities with the largest Jewish population. Oradea Mare (also known as Nagyvárads or Grosswardein), once a large Jewish center, now had only 4,000 Jewish inhabitants. All these data were evidently only estimates.

Religious and Cultural Activities

The Jewish officials told Samet that there were 120 Jewish religious communities in the country, 86 of them being "larger" and the rest "smaller" communities. In 1954 Rumanian official statements had mentioned 126 communities, 500 synagogues, and 200 "rabbis, *shochetim* (ritual slaughterers), and other full-time officials of Jewish communities" (see *American Jewish Year Book*, loc. cit.). Fifty synagogues were said to be open in Bucharest, seventy-five in Jassy, and forty-five in Botoshani. These figures were open to question, especially in the case of Botoshani, a city with 7,000 Jews. There also was a great disproportion between the alleged number of functioning synagogues (500) and the number of rabbis. Samet was officially told that there were 36 rabbis in the country, 150 of the other "religious officials" being *shochetim*. The figure of 36 rabbis agreed with the number of rabbinical signatures to a propaganda statement issued in August 1954 (see *American Jewish Year Book*, loc. cit.).

There were several Talmud Torahs. The largest, in Timisoara, had 200 students; another in Bucharest had 60 students. Though the communities had to participate in the peace campaigns, and the rabbis' sermons had to conform to the official policy of the government, the religious services proper
as well as religious studies in the synagogues were allowed to proceed without interference by the authorities. None of the devout gathered for religious study in a Bucharest synagogue when Samet visited it was younger than fifty. "Until now, they have not prevented us from studying the Torah," a participant told Samet in Hebrew.

On the High Holy Days in 1955 the synagogues were crowded. According to The New York Times correspondent Jack Raymond, who was in Bucharest on Yom Kippur in September 1955, most of the Jews in the capital attended the services; these included young men, young women, and a few children.

Some of the communities maintained ritual baths and facilities for ritual slaughter. Kosher meat was available. The community tax on ritual slaughter provided a large part of the income of the religious communities. Though there were practically no kosher restaurants (only one in Bucharest), the consumption of kosher food seemed to be widespread.

According to Raymond, most of the Rumanian Jews spoke Yiddish, and seemed to have maintained their devotion to Jewish culture. In a conversation with Samet, the Jewish Communist leader Bercu Feldman and Israel Bacal, the chairman of the Federation of Jewish Religious Communities, admitted that many Jews were privately teaching their children Hebrew, and many were listening to Israel broadcasts. Bacal expressed the hope that the next generation, which was enjoying the benefits of a revolutionary education, would become assimilated.

The Yiddish newspaper Ykuf Bleter had ceased publication in 1952. When asked why, Bacal answered that there was no need for or interest in a Yiddish periodical.

The three state schools with Yiddish as the language of instruction still existed in Bucharest, Jassy, and Timisoara. They constituted a small remnant of a Yiddish school system which had in 1948 comprised 69 elementary and 23 high schools with 13,000 students. The three remaining schools indoctrinated the youth in the Communist ideology, which was anti-Zionist and antireligious.

The most popular of the few remaining Jewish cultural institutions were the two Yiddish state theaters, one in Bucharest, the other in Jassy. In 1953 there were 119 performances with 11,000 visitors. In addition to Communist plays, the repertoire included plays by Abraham Goldfaden and Sholem Aleichem.

**Trials of Jewish Leaders**

Secret trials, in which about 200 Jewish leaders were sentenced to severe jail terms for their activities connected with the Zionist movement when such activity still was legal, had continued up to the summer of 1954 (see American Jewish Year Book, 1955 [Vol. 56], p. 422-24).

But under the pressure of world public opinion, the policy of the Romanian government underwent certain modifications. So far as is known, no new trials were organized after July 1954. Some prominent prisoners were released, but there was no general amnesty for the victims of the anti-Zionist persecution. In most cases, the Supreme Court quashed the sentences im-
posed by the local military tribunals and ordered retrials. In these retrials, the defendants were usually convicted again, but their sentences were reduced to terms shorter than those they had already served, and they were released from jail. Some prisoners held by the police under "administrative arrest," without having received any court sentence, were also released. Others remained in jail.

Jean A. Littman, a leader of the Rumanian section of the World Jewish Congress, and Mrs. Suzanne Benvenisti, a leader of the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), who had been sentenced in November 1953 to fifteen and ten years' imprisonment, respectively, had their sentences reduced to ten months each. As they had already served several years in jail, they were released. In August 1954 the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) reported that ten Zionist leaders who had been under administrative arrest, and nine others serving short court-imposed terms, had been freed. These included David Sternlieb, former chairman of the Zionist Federation of Galatz, Mishu Dascalu, former member of the Rumanian parliament, and Mrs. D. E. Leibovits, whose husband remained under arrest.

In March 1955 it was reported that the Supreme Court had ordered the retrial of sixty Jewish leaders sentenced to prison terms of between four and twenty years by lower military courts. They included twenty members of the left-wing Zionist organization Hashomer Hatzair and forty Zionist leaders. Among them were Bernard Roehrlich, former president of the Zionist Organization of Rumania, Cornel Jancu, former deputy chairman of the World Zionist Federation, and the well-known historian Theodor Loewenstein.

In July 1955 it was reported that Mark Abir, the leader of Hashomer Hatzair, had been convicted again after a retrial, but his sentence had been reduced from twenty to four years. Since he had already been in jail for six years, Abir was released.

In August 1955, a report from the JTA in Vienna included a list of the names of thirty-one Rumanian Jewish leaders who had been acquitted on retrial, or whose sentences had been reduced up to that time. These included Cornel Jancu and Theodor Loewenstein (see above), Dan Jeshanu, former chairman of the Labor Zionist Poale Zion, Leon Itzcar, former chairman of the Jewish National Fund, and several other defendants sentenced in the trial of forty Zionist leaders in 1953.

On the other hand, there was no report of the release of A. L. Zissu, former president of the Jewish Party; Mishu Benvenisti, former president of the Zionist Organization; Jean Cohen, former president of the Rumanian Section of the World Jewish Congress, who had been sentenced to prison for life; or many other Jewish leaders.

It was expected that the released Zionist leaders who had been preparing for emigration to Israel before their arrest in 1949 and 1950 would now be allowed to leave Rumania. But up to the time of writing (October 1955), none of them had been permitted to emigrate.

Emigration

Throughout 1954–55, there were repeated rumors that the Rumanian government would allow Jewish emigration, at least of persons whose fami-
lies were residing in Israel. In May 1955 reports published in Israel announced that the Rumanian ministry of the interior had begun accepting applications for exit visas from Jews who desired to join their families. In June there was an unconfirmed report that emigration permits would be issued to Jews over fifty-five years of age.

On July 10, 1955, five Jews from Rumania arrived in Tel Aviv. They were the first Rumanian Jews to reach Israel in three years. Idov Cohen, a member of the Knesset who welcomed the newcomers, expressed his disappointment at their small number. At this rate, he said, many years would elapse before broken families were reunited. At the time of writing (October 1955) emigration on a larger scale had not occurred.

On the other hand, some Jewish emigrants had returned from Israel to Rumania. According to reports which reached Radio Free Europe in August 1955, the Rumanian authorities detained the returnees in special camps, and used their statements about economic difficulties in Israel for the purposes of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel propaganda.

JOSEPH GORDON