

Eastern Europe

Poland

AMONG the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, Poland, as the ancient center of Jewish religious and secular life, occupies a special place. Today it contains a small Jewish remnant valiantly trying to preserve some semblance of Jewish life. It is difficult to predict if such efforts will prove successful; much depends on general political conditions and the attitude of the authorities.

In 1977, there were no changes in the top leadership of the country. Edward Gierek was secretary of the PPZR (Polish Communist Party), and Piotr Jaroszewicz was prime minister. The head of state, whose power was limited, was Henryk Jablonski. The crisis of June 1976, when workers rioted in protest against increases in food prices, subsided, but the essential problems of the Polish economy remained unsolved. The continuing contradictions within industrial enterprises, some 75 per cent of which were integrated into large corporations, resulted in a growing bureaucracy without affecting productivity or helping to stop the upward spiral of prices. In fact, the authorities quietly introduced price increases, which in some sectors reached 20 to 45 per cent.

At the end of 1977, 14 top members of the Party, including former head of state Edward Ochab, demanded radical revision of domestic policy with a view to resolving the problem of a continuing lack of essential food products. At the same time, Polish dissidents gained increased support among both intellectuals and workers. The Congress of Polish Writers, which met in April 1978 in Katowice, provided an interesting illustration of the oppositionist spirit prevailing among Polish intellectuals. Speakers openly demanded changes in the political line—more freedom and the abolition of censorship. A list of some 80 writers in official disgrace was made public.

Professor Edward Lipinski, an economist, was active in the Workers Defense Committee, created to defend workers who were fined, jailed, or dismissed from their jobs following the 1976 riots. Professor Lipinski, a Marxist, protested against what he called the “Russian type” of socialism.

There were some moves toward reconciliation between the authorities and the Catholic Church. In the fall of 1977, there was a meeting between Gierek and Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski. In December 1977, Gierek visited Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. In January 1978, during the visit of United States President Jimmy Carter, his wife

Rosalyn, and Zbignew Brzezinski, Carter's adviser on national security had an unusual meeting with the Catholic Primate. In October 1978, the Communist leadership of Poland hailed the election of Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyla as Pope. The Polish head of state went to Rome for the Pope's investiture.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish population of Poland was estimated to be 6,000. This number included some Jews who did not identify with the Jewish community. There were varied estimates of the number of Jews who had changed their names and integrated into Polish society. Some local observers believed that their number was considerable.

Officially, some 1,500 Jews were affiliated with the Cultural and Social Union of Polish Jews, which held its seventh annual congress in October 1977 in Szedzborow. Delegates representing 17 local affiliates participated in the congress; they were greeted by a representative of the PPZR. Ruta Gutkowska, executive head of the Union, continued in the post of secretary. The Union, which was based in Warsaw, undertook efforts in, among other places, Wroclaw, Katowice, Zary, Walbrzych, Dzierzoniow, Krakow, Szczecin, and Lodz. These activities were limited mainly to lectures, amateur theatricals, and the like. There are no Jewish schools in Poland. The younger generations of Polish Jews do not understand Yiddish.

Folksztyme, the official Yiddish weekly, also published a Polish edition. The Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw maintained its activities and was in contact with the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture in New York. *The Bulletin*, a periodical issued by the Institute, included articles on the Holocaust and the Jewish situation in Poland before World War II; studies dealing with the former subject strictly followed the Communist Party line.

The Jewish State Theater, under the direction of Szimon Szurmily, presented its repertoire in Yiddish, but audiences were provided with Polish translations. The theater added to its repertoire a new play, *Widerstand* ("Resistance"), by the late Soviet Yiddish writer Noah Luria. The play, directed by Jacob Rotboim, deals with Jewish life in the ghetto under German occupation.

In addition to the secular Cultural and Social Union, there was a Union of Religious Congregations which was based in Warsaw and claimed several local affiliates. There were no rabbis, no *mohalim*, and very few open synagogues. Religious life is deteriorating to a critical stage. During the Passover holiday, *matzot* were made available, but it was difficult under the existing conditions to observe *kashrut*. There was in Warsaw, however, a Jewish communal kitchen, sponsored by the Union of Religious Congregations, which distributed kosher meals. Little, if anything, was done to maintain old Jewish cemeteries in places where Jews no longer lived.

In April 1978, there was a commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Some 15 countries, including the United States, Israel, West Germany, France, and the Soviet Union, were represented at the ceremonies. The Israeli delegation was headed by Gideon Hausner, the prosecutor of Adolf Eichmann, and included the Polish-Jewish resistance fighter Stefan Grayek. General Yitzhak Arad represented Yad Vashem. On April 17 Janusz Wiczorek, the minister in charge of war veterans, reopened the Jewish pavilion at Auschwitz, which had been closed since 1967, when the antisemitic policy of the government resulted in an exodus of many Jewish activists and intellectuals from the country. Dr. Nahum Goldmann, representing the World Jewish Congress, delivered an address in Yiddish.

On April 18, Yad Vashem awarded Righteous Gentile medals to 19 Poles who, during the occupation, at great personal risk, saved the lives of many of their Jewish compatriots. On the same day, a memorial meeting took place in Philharmonic Hall in Warsaw, with Ruta Gutkowska as the principal speaker representing the Polish Jewish community. On April 19, foreign delegations to the commemoration laid wreaths at the Warsaw Ghetto monument, which was surrounded by a military guard. This was the first time in many years that the annual commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt assumed a distinctly Jewish character.

In the city of Rypin, in the region of Wroclaw, the authorities opened a home for orphans in the name of Janusz Korczak. Representatives of the Cultural and Social Union participated in the dedication ceremony, which included a presentation of *Korczak and His Children*, a play about the great Jewish educator and his martyrdom under the Nazis, presented by the local drama circle of the Teachers Union.

LEON SHAPIRO

Yugoslavia

HAVING ADOPTED a new constitution in 1974, the Yugoslav Assembly in 1976 promulgated a new labor law which, according to its sponsors, codified the Yugoslav concept of "self-managing socialism." Marshal Tito, president-for-life of Yugoslavia, and his collaborators viewed this "self-managing" approach as totally different from the "centralist" type of Communist management found in the USSR and China. The Belgrade model is based on the assumption that workers should directly control the government and economy.

The authorities were faced with dissent on many fronts: intellectuals calling for greater freedom; separatists, particularly among the Croats, putting forth nationalist claims; and "hardliners" advocating the return of Yugoslavia to the Soviet bloc and, concomitantly, to Soviet methods of administration. Yugoslav leaders also had to deal with various religious groups, including the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and Moslems, who were promoting educational activities and distributing religious literature. The official press repeatedly called the attention of the authorities to the fact that children of members of the Communist League were being baptized, sometimes without the knowledge of their parents.

While the authorities were combating pro-Soviet tendencies and protesting "Soviet meddling" in the affairs of Yugoslavia, Soviet boss Leonid Brezhnev visited Belgrade (November 1976). Brezhnev decried the "fairy tales" about Soviet designs on Yugoslavia, and repeatedly pledged to honor Yugoslav sovereignty. In any event, Yugoslav leaders made it clear that they would fight for their freedom and their "own way to socialism." The political situation was further complicated by the advancing age of Tito, who is in his mid-80's.

Yugoslavia continued its support of Yasir Arafat and the PLO. Arafat, during a visit to Belgrade in December 1976, was received with the honor accorded a chief of state. Although Yugoslav-Israeli relations had been terminated following the Six-Day War in 1967, the authorities did not interfere with the Jewish community's support of the State of Israel. The aging president was frequently reported as seeking to promote a peaceful solution to the Israel-Arab conflict.

In January 1977, the Yugoslav prime minister, Dzemal Bijedic, was killed in an airplane crash. He was replaced by Veslin Djuranovic, a Montenegrin by birth.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Jewish population of Yugoslavia was estimated to be 6,000, with 1,500 in the capital city of Belgrade, 1,200 in Zagreb, and 1,100 in Sarajevo. Jewish communal

activities were conducted by the Federation of Jewish Communities, an officially recognized body. Lavoslav Kadelburg, an eminent Jewish leader, continued to serve as president of the Federation; its executive head was the secretary, Lucy Petrovic. The Federation promoted Jewish activities in, among other places, Belgrade, Dubrovnik, Zagreb, Skopje, Split, Sarajevo, Subotica, Novi Sad, Ljubljana, and Zemun. According to official data, many cities with a Jewish population did not have a synagogue. In fact, the Federation was essentially a secular body dealing only peripherally with religious matters. In some places, Sabbath and holiday services were conducted by qualified laymen, mostly older people. There was no formal system of religious education, and the absence of trained religious personnel made it difficult to maintain religious life. Inter-marriage was widespread in most of the communities.

The Federation was affiliated with the World Jewish Congress and was in close contact with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture in New York, both of which supported its social and cultural activities.

The Federation of Jewish Communities maintained a wide variety of cultural activities. In the ten largest communities, it sponsored Jewish youth clubs and children's groups that met regularly. From time to time, these groups attended lectures given by persons from abroad. The Federation operated summer camps at which children from Yugoslavia joined with others from Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Israel. Included in the camp experience were visits to Jewish historical sites. The Federation organized seminars for young lay leaders. It maintained a central Judaica library which supplied Jewish literature to at least nine community libraries.

Jewish publications appeared regularly. Five issues of *Zbornik*, an anthology devoted to Jewish concerns, were published. Other publications included *Jevrejski Pregled* ("Jewish Review"); *Kadima*, a youth magazine; *Jevrejski Almanah* ("Jewish Almanac"); and a *luah* (calendar), edited by Rabbi Cadik Danon, containing some prayers printed in Hebrew and transliterated into Latin letters. The Federation was preparing a short history of the Jewish people in the Serbo-Croatian language, a volume on the Sephardic tradition in Yugoslavia, and, in collaboration with Hitahdut Olei Yugoslavia in Tel Aviv, a Jewish guide to Yugoslavia. In Belgrade and Zagreb, two Jewish choirs continued their activities, presenting programs of Jewish music to Yugoslav audiences, as well as audiences abroad. Courses in Hebrew for teenagers and young adults were provided through the Federation.

The Jewish Historical Museum and the Historical Archives, both in Belgrade, had accumulated a large number of artifacts and documents relating to the Jewish past in Yugoslavia. Much of this material, however, still remained to be classified and catalogued. Concern was expressed as to whether the oldest Yugoslav synagogue, in Dubrovnik, was being properly maintained. As in other East European countries, many old Jewish cemeteries were in urgent need of repair.