

Eastern Europe

Soviet Union

Domestic Affairs

TWO EVENTS DOMINATED THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE of the Soviet Union in 1980: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the workers' revolt in Poland.

In invading Afghanistan, a Moslem country coveted since Tsarist days by Russian nationalists, the Soviets went outside the borders of the Soviet Bloc. The Soviets underestimated the force of the Moslem spirit of independence and failed to take into account the consequences of imposing their will on a buffer state in which the West was greatly interested. The Western response to the Soviet move was immediate and forceful, and signified the end of the policy of *détente*. As of this writing Afghanistan was in the throes of a war of resistance, with the Soviets, not unlike the United States in the war of Vietnam, gradually increasing their military force, now estimated at over 200,000.

In Poland the Soviet Union confronted an extremely serious situation: the danger of an organized proletarian revolution overwhelmingly supported by all classes within society. The Polish workers, who were joined by the farmers and supported by the powerful Catholic church, stuck to their demands for social changes which in time could transform the geopolitical map of Eastern Europe and have a significant impact on the Soviet Union itself.

Aleksei Kosygin, erstwhile partner with Leonid Brezhnev and Nikolai Podgorny in the collective leadership of the Soviet Union since the ouster of Nikita Krushchev in October 1964, died in Moscow on December 20, at the age of 76. Podgorny had been ousted by Brezhnev in 1977. On Kosygin's resignation as prime minister, due to illness, his duties had been transferred to Nikolai Tikhonov, who had earlier been promoted to full membership in the politburo. Tikhonov, 75 years old, had not been at the center of power before his promotion; he had risen to the top as a technical manager. The ascension of Tikhonov brought no changes in the Soviet structure. Brezhnev's position as *primus inter pares* was well established. Tikhonov retained his managerial functions, although at a higher level. His former post of vice-premier was turned over to Vladimir Makeev who, at age 50, belonged to the important younger group in the Soviet state apparatus.

Mikhail Gorbachev, 48 years old, a candidate member of the politburo, was elected a full member of the ruling body. Tikhon Kiselev, head of the party in Belorussia, on the Polish border, was elected a candidate member of the politburo, emphasizing the strategic importance of the region. During the last ten years, the membership of the central committee of the party has remained almost unchanged—about 90 per cent of its 279 members were reelected at the 25th congress held in 1976. Russians retained the top positions of power in the multinational USSR.

Soviet society continued to go through a process of significant transformation in both values and self-image. The Soviet Union was becoming deeply conservative and, while paying lip-service to the old idea of world proletarian revolution, was in reality looking to traditional Russian nationalism in all its variations, including antisemitism, for inspiration. The anti-Jewish policies of the regime had much to do with this peculiar evolution of Soviet society.

The rising Soviet defense budget may well have amounted to 15 per cent of the gross national product. At the same time the Soviet Union was in a difficult economic situation. Speaking in Moscow in October, Brezhnev stated that the grain harvest would be unsatisfactory. Experts were convinced that the Soviet Union would be forced to import large amounts of foreign grain. U.S. grain deliveries were embargoed by President Carter after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Dissidence

The Soviet regime was clearly unprepared to reinstitute the severe repression that was characteristic of Stalin's rule. It maintained a modicum of liberalization, and this apparently satisfied the large number of intellectuals who had abandoned the tenets of socialist realism and were looking for greater freedom in their work. The authorities continued, however, to apply strict measures against those individuals who spoke out against the fundamental principles of the regime. In January the KGB arrested Andrei Sakharov, the well-known scientist and defender of human rights. Before his detention, Sakharov, together with the Moscow Helsinki Watch Committee on Human Rights, had demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Sakharov was immediately stripped of his awards and banished to the city of Gorky, where he was placed in a private apartment under the constant surveillance of the police. Gorky, a center of war industry, was closed to foreigners.

Victor Sorokin and Iurii Grimm, who were among the editors of the unofficial journal *Poiski*, were sentenced to three years imprisonment each; Sorokin had pleaded guilty to charges of slandering the Soviet Union. Vladimir Gershuni, one of the oldest participants in the human rights movement, was forcibly placed in a Moscow mental hospital. Dmitri Dudko, a celebrated Greek Orthodox priest from Moscow, was imprisoned for anti-Soviet propaganda. After several months in solitary confinement, he publicly recanted and was released. Another Russian Orthodox dissident, Victor Kapitanchuk, of the Christian Committee for Religious Rights, pleaded guilty to charges of anti-Soviet propaganda. Lev Regelson, a converted Jew

and a member of the same committee, received a suspended sentence after pleading guilty to charges of anti-Soviet activities. Father Gleb Iakunin, founder of this group, was sentenced to five years in a labor camp. All told, during 1980, 45 members of the Helsinki monitoring committee were sentenced to prison terms.

While most of the dissidents were professionals representing the Soviet intelligentsia, the resistance began to penetrate into factories and the industrial unions. In June a group of workers at a large factory in Vinnitsa (Ukraine) organized Unity, an independent trade union which demanded betterment of the social and economic conditions of the workers. The leader of the group, Boris Golubenko, fled to West Germany, where he sought political asylum. Another dissident, Vladimir Borisov, who was expelled from Russia, declared in Vienna that the workers' movement in the USSR was growing rapidly.

Despite harassment by the KGB, some Soviet intellectuals, writers, and musicians continued to struggle for freedom of expression. The authorities, however, were firm in expelling writers and artists unwilling to submit to the demands of socialist realism. During the period under review the Soviets exiled many outstanding intellectuals, among them Vladimir Voinovich, Vasily Aksenov, a talented writer of the younger generation, and Lev Kopelev, a literary scholar specializing in German literature. Kopelev, born into a Jewish family in Kiev, was said to be the model for Lev Rubin, the still-believing Stalinist, in the Solzhenitsyn novel *The First Circle*.

In November an unofficial theater in Moscow staged a production which was viewed with disapproval by the government. In order not to create problems, the authorities immediately granted exit visas to the participants, and most of them, including Iuri Belov, the director, left the country.

Andrei Amalrik, who had been exiled from the Soviet Union in 1976, was killed in an automobile accident while on his way to the Madrid review conference on the Helsinki accords. The author of *Will the Soviet Union Survive until 1984?*, he had rejected on principle a Soviet suggestion that he apply for a visa to Israel. Amalrik, a non-Jew, was well aware that the Soviets used Israel as a channel for emigration, so that they could label Soviet Jews as unpatriotic.

There was no question that the arrest of some dissidents and the exile abroad of others substantially weakened the opposition, including both defenders of human rights and the nationalistic elements.

Nationalities

There was continuing unrest among the nationality groups of the Soviet Union. The nationalist mood affected not only the local intelligentsia, but party stalwarts as well. Party functionaries in the Ukraine, particularly in the western regions of the area, and in the Baltic states and Soviet Asia resented the fact that the most important power positions in their countries were held mainly by Russians. Three hundred and sixty-five Georgian academicians and writers, including six members

of the Georgian Academy of Science, addressed a letter to Brezhnev and Edward Shevarnadze, first secretary of the party in Georgia, protesting the regulation introduced in June 1978 requiring that dissertations for academic degrees be presented in both the Russian and Georgian languages. They pointed out that the introduction of the two-language curriculum in Georgian schools tended to discredit Georgian national culture.

There were indications that the Islamic revival in neighboring Iran was having an impact on the border regions of Asian USSR, where the Moslem population numbered about 40 million.

The Polish rebellion had a significant impact in the Baltic countries of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. Students and groups of the intelligentsia intensified their demands for independence for Estonia, where 12 per cent of the population was Russian, as compared with some 5.6 per cent before World War II. A similar mood was widespread in Latvia, where 47 per cent of the population was now Russian.

Kremlin leaders were concerned about changing Soviet demographic patterns. Census figures indicated that natural increase among the Islamic population, particularly in Azerbaidzhan, Kazakhstan, Tadzhikistan, and Kirghizia, was making the Moslems competitors with the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians for the dominant national position. The local Moslem youth were increasing the ranks of the local intelligentsia and competing with Russians for available jobs and, indeed, power.

Foreign Affairs

Sino-Soviet relations continued to deteriorate. Talks entered into in 1979 had no substantial results. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan increased feelings of insecurity on the part of the Chinese, who faced 44 Soviet divisions. In fact, twice as many troops were stationed on the Chinese border as were committed to the West German area. The end of adversarial relations between the U.S. and China was interpreted in the USSR as an additional anti-Soviet factor.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought an end to hopes for ratification of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) entered into by Brezhnev and President Carter. The Soviet exploit also met with criticism and disavowal among Communist parties in the West, particularly in Spain and Italy.

The Soviet Union also continued its policy of covert intervention in the affairs of many underdeveloped countries, using Castro's Cuba as a channel for transporting arms supplies, and in many cases providing military advisers.

Relations with Israel

Moscow maintained its strong anti-Israel policy. It supplied weapons to the Arab states and supported the Palestine Liberation Organization in its uncompromising anti-Israel stand. Following the Soviet setback in relations with Egypt, with Cairo

putting itself *de facto* on the side of the Western powers, the Kremlin intensified its friendship with Libya, using the geographical position of that country as a possible counterforce against Egypt and making it one of the largest customers for Soviet arms. Moscow supported Syria in its fight against the Lebanese Christians, whose sole assistance came from Israel.

Soviet authorities continued to disseminate brutal anti-Zionist literature. This material was translated and circulated by pro-Soviet regimes in the countries of the third world. In September a conference of Soviet Moslems took place in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), with 33 delegations from Asia, Africa, and Europe participating. A resolution was adopted rejecting the Camp David accords, accusing Israel of genocide, and expressing support for the PLO.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

Demography

The 1979 official Soviet census put the Jewish population of the Soviet Union at about 1,810,000. A more accurate figure, however, even allowing for emigration, would be approximately 2,619,000. The official Soviet figure could not be explained by purely demographic factors. Moreover, Soviet Jews were being "passed" into the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian nationalities in the course of official registration. This point was made clear by Iakov Kapelush in an article which appeared in the official Yiddish periodical *Sovetish Heimland* (#12, 1980):

Censuses of the population of the USSR show a decrease in the number of Jews. In 1959, there were in the country 2,268,000 Jews; in 1970, 2,151,000; in 1979, 1,811,000. The leading factor determining this process is assimilation, which Lenin considered a progressive phenomenon. We should mention that the drop in the number of Jews is also tied up with the census-taking procedure, according to which the registrants do not have to present any documents and all information is taken down orally as the basis of data freely given by the registrants. A number of Jews, particularly among the youth, which does not feel the slightest difference in national and cultural terms between themselves and their comrades in work or in school, responded to the questions of the census-taker in the same way as did their fellow workers—Russian, Ukrainian, etc. Some responded, '[I am] a Soviet man.'

The official Soviet census showed that a great majority (approximately 1,500,000) of the Jewish population in 1979 was concentrated in the RSFSR, the Ukraine, and Belorussia, residing mainly in the large cities. While the Jewish population as a whole represented about one per cent of the total population of the Soviet Union, in some cities the proportion of Jews was five and even ten per cent.

Intermarriage had assumed significant proportions and in some cities was becoming a mass phenomenon. Thus, research carried out in the Soviet Baltic republics from 1960 to 1968 indicated that marriages between Jews and Russians and

Latvians stood at 36 per cent; in Riga (Latvia) and Tallin (Estonia) the figures reached 50 and 70 per cent, respectively. It appeared that children of mixed marriages usually adopted the Russian nationality.

Emigration

According to available data, some 21,400 Jews left the Soviet Union in 1980. This was 58 per cent less than in 1979, when over 50,000 left. Since the departures had begun in 1970, some 246,000 Jews had left the USSR. Rules governing the granting of exit visas were tightened, making it dependent on close family relationship—parents, wives, husbands, children. In addition, the authorities required parental permission, even in cases of 40-year-old children.

In line with the pattern of recent years, some 75 per cent of the emigrants chose not to settle in Israel. (The vast majority went to the United States.) West Berlin municipal authorities began to restrict the admission of Jewish emigrants. The decision to do so, it was reported, was made with the approval of the West Berlin Jewish leaders, who were afraid that the emigrants could not be provided with necessary communal services.

Communal and Religious Life

There were no Jewish communal or social organizations in the Soviet Union. Around the legally-constituted congregations (*dvadtsatkas*), some 50 synagogues were functioning, in addition to private *minyotim*. There were synagogues in Alma-Ata, Astrakhan, Berditchev, Baku, Bukhara, Chernovtzi, Dnepropetrovsk, Duchambe, Gori, Irkutsk, Kaunas, Kazan, Kishinev, Kiev, Kuibishev, Kutaisi, Leningrad, Malakhovka, Minsk, Moscow, Odessa, Riga, Rostov, Samarkand, Slavuta, Sukhum, Sverdlovsk, Tashkent, Tallin, Tbilisi, Ujgorod, Vilnus, Vinnitsa, and Zhitomir. There were two synagogues each in Moscow, Leningrad, Tashkent, and Tbilisi. Iakov Fishman continued as rabbi of the Moscow synagogue, which functioned as the religious center for the Jews in the USSR.

A persistent problem was the lack of rabbis. After many demarches, the Soviet Council on Religious Affairs permitted two more individuals, Isaac Fuchs of Kiev and Iuri Kerzhenevich of Moscow, to go to Budapest, where they were to receive training at the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary, a Neolog institution corresponding to the conservative trend in the United States. Fuchs and Kerzhenevich would be joining two other students from the Soviet Union, Mikhail Povzhitkov and A. Nudel. Adolf Shayevech had graduated from the seminary in 1979, and was serving as deputy to Rabbi Fishman in Moscow. Unfortunately, a plan to send two students to Yeshiva University in New York did not materialize. One of them, Boris Gram, was appointed chairman of the Moscow Jewish community. The Moscow yeshiva, started by the late rabbi Solomon Shliefer, was not successful.

Observant Jews in the larger cities did not have difficulty in obtaining *matzot*; 150 tons were provided for the Moscow Jewish community in 1980. A seder for 200

people was conducted in the Moscow synagogue quarters. In connection with Passover, Rabbi Fishman called for "peace and friendship among nations." The 1902 Vilna edition of the Bible was reproduced by a Moscow art publishing house. The continuing lack of prayer books made it difficult to maintain the necessary standards of religious observance.

There was no formal religious or secular Jewish education; *chedorim* and other Jewish schools were forbidden. Still, many Soviet Jews retained a deep attachment to their Jewish roots and created their own forms of Jewish expression. For example, Jews came in large numbers to the Moscow synagogue on the high holy days, Simchas Torah, and Passover. In Moscow concerned Jews held communal gatherings once or twice a year in a wooded area near the Ovrazhki railroad station; on Simchas Torah 1,500 Jews, mostly young people, gathered there to sing traditional Jewish songs. There were similar open demonstrations of Jewish solidarity in the Leningrad synagogue.

In this context, a recent preliminary report of a survey of Jewish attitudes in the Soviet Union is enlightening. The report, prepared by Benjamin Fain, Dan Caspi, and Mervin Verbit under the sponsorship of the Jerusalem Institute for Federal Studies, was based on a questionnaire submitted to 1,500 Jews living in the USSR in 1976. The work was done, of course, in secret. The police confiscated some of the material, but 1,216 questionnaires were saved and taken out of the country. Fifty-nine per cent of the respondents felt strong ties to other Jews. Seventy-five per cent expressed feelings of attachment to Jews outside the USSR. Eighty-seven per cent indicated that they would go to Jewish coffeehouses or restaurants if such were available. There would thus appear to be a significant potential for Jewish life in the Soviet Union, given the proper conditions. We shall have to await the full publication of the material, in order to obtain a more adequate picture of the situation.

It was a peculiarity of Soviet life that, despite the atheistic policies of the state, conversions to Christianity, particularly among Jewish intellectuals, were quite frequent. Nadezhda Mandelstam (widow of the great Russian poet Osip Mandelstam), born into a Russian Jewish family in Kiev, and a convert to Russian Orthodoxy, passed away in December. Her funeral, conducted in a Moscow Russian Orthodox church, was attended by many intellectuals.

All religious activities in the USSR were subject to strict control and limitations. The Independent Union of Evangelical Baptists suffered continuous persecution and the arrest of its clergy and members. Only some 50 Russian Orthodox churches were functioning in Moscow, but there was an obvious revival of faith among the masses. At Christmas and Easter the churches were packed with believers. Patriarch Pimen, the leader of Russian Orthodoxy, appointed a commission to prepare for the 1,000th anniversary of the conversion of Russia to Christianity. Notwithstanding a number of arrests of clergymen, the Kremlin had obviously established a special relationship with the Russian Orthodox church, using it for its own political ends. On the occasion of the celebration of Pimen's 70th birthday in 1979, the state had awarded him a special Order of Friendship of Peoples, a quite exceptional honor.

Antisemitism and Discrimination

With the rise and social legitimization of Russian nationalistic feelings, anti-Jewish sentiments were also increasing, even among groups that would otherwise be critical of the regime. Anti-Zionist propaganda and a pro-Arab policy made their own contributions to this sorry situation.

While there were still many Jews occupying high positions in science and technology, the younger generation of Jews trying to penetrate the academic establishment were encountering often insurmountable difficulties. In 1960 Jewish university students numbered 77,176; in 1965, 94,000; in 1972, 88,500; and in 1976, 66,900.

Anti-Jewish quotas pervaded the entire Soviet structure. Except in the case of an individual of great talent or genius, a Jewish scientist had little chance of advancement. Valery Soifer was removed from his position as scientific director of the Moscow Institute of Applied Molecular Biology and Genetics because he was half-Jewish by birth.

With the exception of Veniamin Dymshits, the deputy premier who dealt with management, there were no Jews in top party and state positions.

The Soviet press published vicious antisemitic propaganda. "Experts" on Jewish affairs, including Vladimir Begun, Lev Korneev, and Evgenii Evseev, produced Nazi-type materials. So far did this go, that the Soviet Academy of Science felt compelled to reprimand Evseev. Alexandr Sazonov, a high official of the Communist party central committee in Moscow, reportedly stated that the party viewed the writings of Begun, Evseev, and others as containing open anti-Jewish pronouncements. Nothing was done, however, to stop these publications.

On October 10, *Pionerskaia Pravda*, a newspaper read by some ten million Russian youngsters, informed its readers that the American media were mainly in the hands of Zionists; that the American arms industry was controlled by Jewish bankers; that Zionism was a contemporary form of fascism; and that it was due to Zionist efforts that there was such a strong opposition to the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.

Sputnik, a publication of the Novosti Press, carried an article by Vladimir Begun in which he referred to the late Julius Katz-Suchy, former Polish representative at the United Nations, as a "spy." Katz-Suchy died in Denmark in 1977, after having been forced to leave Poland during the antisemitic campaign conducted by the Gomulka government in 1968. *Sovetish Heimland* felt it necessary to respond to Begun's "oeuvre." The author of the response, R. Brodsky, pointed out Begun's anti-Jewish bias and accused him of falsifying history in order to write his "gossipy" material.

A short pamphlet by Lev Korneev was issued by Novosti Press under the title *Israel, the Reality Behind the Myth*. In it, the author referred to Jewish money-grubbers and virtually repeated the language of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

Jewish Resistance

In late winter the authorities closed many privately-conducted Jewish religious classes. At approximately the same time the police prevented some 200 Jews from holding a seminar at the apartment of the Jewish activist Victor Brailovsky, who had earlier been arrested by the KGB. Brailovsky was one of the editors of the journal *Jews in the USSR* that had appeared since 1972 to provide a forum for individuals interested in preserving Jewish life in Russia. Brailovsky's wife Irina was told by the police that the authorities would prevent the holding of future seminars and that she herself faced possible exile. The seminars were organized some eight years ago and served as a stimulus for Jewish intellectual activities in the city. In Kiev, Mikhail Elbert, a "refusenik," was beaten up by KGB agents when he was seen escorting foreign tourists. Anatoly Shcharansky, who was in prison for "espionage," wrote to the Madrid conference on human rights about conditions in the Perm labor camp. Yankel Groberman, Anatoly Feldman, and Alexandr Milner were sentenced to four, four, and six years, respectively, for anti-Soviet actions.

Coincident with the opening of the Madrid parley on human rights, 139 Jews in Moscow and six other cities went on a three-day hunger strike. Earlier, 94 protesters had marched to the reception hall of the supreme Soviet presidium demanding an explanation for the continuing curbs on Jewish emigration and the inordinate delays in the issuance of exit visas. While Jewish resistance was predominantly focused on matters of emigration, of late there have been protests by individuals and groups seeking to improve the quality of Jewish life in the USSR. Harsh treatment notwithstanding, Jewish men and women, individually and in groups, kept up their resistance to the Soviet policy of forced assimilation.

Culture

Despite the negative attitude of the authorities and the continuing departure of Jews abroad, some Jewish cultural activities were maintained in both Moscow and other cities. *Sovetish Heimland*, which in 1980 published its 200th issue, expanded its framework to include a monthly literary supplement of about 60 pages containing fiction and non-fiction in Yiddish. Among the authors represented in the supplements were Nota Lurie, Hersh Remenik, Moishe Altman, and Shmul Gordon. It was obvious that in launching this "little library" the periodical intended to compensate Yiddish readers for the scanty number of Yiddish books published in the Soviet Union. (According to the 1979 census, 14.2 per cent of Jews indicated Yiddish as their native language.) *Sovetish Heimland* criticized the *American Jewish Year Book* for not giving a full listing of Yiddish publications, and as proof cited Yiddish works translated into Russian, Ukrainian, and other languages. While interesting in themselves, these translations could not be considered as belonging to Yiddish literature proper.

As far as could be ascertained, two new Yiddish books were available in 1980: Zelik Axelrod's *Lieder* (Poems) and Misha Lev's *Der Mishpot nochn Urteil* (Trial

after Verdict). Four other books, all published in 1979, were also available: Elie Gordon, *Unter der Heiser Zun* (Under the Hot Sun); Riva Baliasne, *Goldene Bletterfol* (Fall of the Golden Leaves); Misha Mogilevich, *Ofenharzig* (From the Open Heart); Buzi Miller, *Yedn Dor Zains* (To Each Generation Its Own). From 1948 through 1980, the total number of Yiddish books published in the Soviet Union was 78.

In addition to the one legitimate Yiddish theater, the Yiddish Chamber Theater of Birobidzhan, a number of amateur Yiddish theater groups were active in various cities of the USSR. The Birobidzhaner Chamber Theater, under Iurii Sherling, presented a program of Yiddish folksongs, which was enthusiastically received by Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. The Moscow Yiddish Drama Ensemble performed in Moscow and other cities throughout the country. In Moscow it presented a play on a Jewish theme in the Russian language—the first such event. The play, moreover, dealt with a previously forbidden theme: the mass murder of Jews by the Nazis at Babi Yar. The Kovno Yiddish Folk Theater presented a program in celebration of the 35th anniversary of the victory over Germany.

Jewish music was performed by individual artists and small groups. Veteran singer Ana Sheveleva gave a recital of Yiddish songs at an event arranged by *Sovetish Heimland*. Melodia, a Moscow firm, issued recordings by Sidi Tal and Sofia Saitan.

In June in Moscow there was a large exhibit of the works of one of the older Jewish painters, Hersh Inger. The exhibit included graphic works and illustrations of Jewish classics (Mendele, Sholem Aleichem, Peretz). Official representatives of the Moscow art establishment participated in the proceedings.

Moscow radio aired a half-hour program in commemoration of the 90th birthday of Lev Kvitko, the Yiddish writer who was murdered under Stalin in 1952.

The chair of semitology at Leningrad University arranged a symposium at which Gita Gluskina discussed a book on Hebrew semantics by the Israeli scholar Gad Zorfati. Greta Davidova discussed the morphology of Aramaic, and Leib Vilsker reported on two Samaritan documents newly found in a Leningrad library. An interesting effort was the publication in Tbilisi (Georgia) of a volume of Hebrew poetry in Georgian translation by Agiashvili. The jacket of the book bore both the Hebrew and Georgian titles. Among the poets included were Ibn-Gabirol and Ibn-Ezra.

Jews were prominently represented (nine to ten per cent of the total) among recipients of the Lenin and State prizes awarded to scholars, scientists, writers, and artists. Among the winners in 1979 were Isak Goren (science), Leon Tsinober (science), Semen Krulevetski (industry), Vladimir Velinkovich (technology), Ilia Silberstein (art history), Iurii Notstein (theater), and Mark Fradkin (music). Recipients in 1980 included Alexandr Braunstein (science), Abram Abkin (chemistry), Vladimir Krinsky (mathematics), Abram Binger (scientific management), Kushel Slavin (theater), Elia Gutman (theater), and Arkadi Raikin (theater).

Birobidzhan

According to the 1979 census, the Jewish population of Birobidzhan stood at 10,166, or about five per cent of the total population of the region. Over the years this once Jewish region had largely lost its Jewish character, although there was still a Jewish newspaper (the *Birobidzhaner Stern*, which celebrated its 50th birthday), a Yiddish radio station, and a Yiddish curriculum in three high schools. There was also a library of 150,000 Jewish books in Yiddish, Russian, and other languages. A special film, *Oif di Bregn fun Biro un Bidzhan* (On the Banks of Biro and Bidzhan), was released by the Film Agency of the Far East. All in all, the younger generation had little or no interest in things Jewish.

Personalia

Tanhum Kaplan, the well-known painter and graphic artist who illustrated many Jewish books, including those of Sholem Aleichem, passed away at the age of 78. Alexandr Tishler, a painter whose work included Jewish subjects, passed away. Iekhiel Chichelnitski, associate chief editor of *Sovetish Heimland*, passed away at the age of 71. Ari Sternfeld, a rocket expert and writer on space technology, died in Moscow at the age of 75.

LEON SHAPIRO

Soviet Bloc Nations

Introduction

THE INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN and the collapse of the policy of détente created feelings of fear throughout Eastern Europe and increased Soviet pressure for conformity. The external debt of the six countries comprising the Soviet Bloc—Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and East Germany—reached some 48 billion dollars. There was a continuing need in these countries for Western technology. At the same time, they were closely connected with the Soviet Union, which in addition to various other trade arrangements, supplied their oil and energy.

Events in Poland could not but attract the attention of the Communist bosses in Eastern Europe. Though dissident groups of varying size and importance were present in almost all the satellite countries, the Polish opposition constituted a veritable revolution involving millions of workers, including large numbers affiliated with the ruling Communist party. It was a development of extraordinary importance, and one that under certain conditions could spread throughout the area, putting in direct and immediate danger the regimes in the Soviet satellites, and representing a challenge to the Soviet Union itself.

Poland

The inability of the Communist leadership to cope with the continuing lack of food and increasing prices brought Poland to the edge of political upheaval. After 18 days of strikes involving over 500,000 workers (bus drivers, garbage collectors, shipyard workers, among others), in hundreds of factories and workplaces, an agreement was reached on August 30, 1980 between the Polish workers and the government, giving Solidarity (Solidarnosc), the newly-established workers organization, the right to represent the interests of the Polish working class. This was the first time in a Communist country that an organization outside of state control had assumed an official role in representing millions of citizens. Born out of the strikers' movement, Solidarity also reflected the efforts of the dissident Workers Defense Committee (led by Jacek Kuron and Edward Lipinski) and the Catholic church, which had the continuing devotion of the majority of Poles. The Solidarity leader, a worker named Lech Walesa, was a dedicated Catholic, and important meetings of the organization always began with a Catholic mass.

In the course of 1980 the state structure of Poland was totally transformed, bringing to the fore, in addition to the ruling Communist party (PPZR), the

Catholic church and Solidarity. The Church, in addition, won the right to broadcast Sunday mass over the national radio. There was no question that the liberalization in Poland went much further than anything attempted in 1968 by the Dubcek regime in Czechoslovakia. In fact, if and when stabilized, and barring Soviet intervention, it would represent a complete revolution, both in the political and the social sense, in the status of a Soviet satellite state and in its relationship with Moscow. Naturally, the situation in Poland was far from stable; the Soviet Union continued both its open and covert threats, and it would take some time for the outcome to become clear.

The party and the government initially tried to appease the strikers by promising substantial pay increases, which might have alleviated, at least partially, the rising costs. The officials remembered the lessons of the 1956 uprising of workers in Poznan and the riots in Gdansk in 1970. President Henryk Jablonski stated in an appeal that "what is at stake . . . [is] Poland, the fate of the nation. . . ." In a show of strength, the police arrested Jacek Kuron and other leaders of the Workers Defense Committee. However, the movement continued, and the workers' demands multiplied. Gdansk was in fact paralyzed by the strike.

Edward Gierek, the party leader, was replaced in early September, when it became clear that he was not able to solve the problems facing the country and the party. Stanislaw Kania, a politburo member in charge of security, became first secretary of the PPZR. Earlier in 1980 Babiuch, the prime minister, had been replaced by Joseph Pinkowski, who in turn soon gave up his post to General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Jaruzelski also remained at the head of the defense ministry, making it the first time that a military man had taken over the second most important power position in Poland. According to available reports both of the men represented a moderate, centrist trend in the internal party structure. As always in such cases, great numbers of leading men and women were purged from their posts. Interestingly enough, it was reported that General Mieczyslaw Moczar, a man associated with anti-Jewish policy during the regime of Wladyslaw Gomulka, reappeared again as a member of the new politburo.

The elections for the new parliament took place in March 1980; 460 seats were contested by 646 candidates, and over 99 per cent of the electorate voted for the list of the National Unity Front, which, in addition to the PPZR, included the two pro-government groups—the Catholic "Pax" and the Christian Social Organization—as well as "Znak," identified with the Church.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

There were about 6,000 Jews in Poland. This figure reflected Jews who were members of the existing Jewish organizations, or otherwise identified themselves with Jewish communal endeavors. Competent sources indicated that 1,500–2,000

Jews had changed their names, intermarried, and had been integrated into the surrounding Polish society. The largest Jewish groups were in Warsaw (2,500) and in Wroclaw (1,000). The bulk of the Jewish population consisted of senior citizens receiving state pensions.

The mood of liberalization and the deepening freedom in the country had a substantial impact on the small Jewish community. Soon after the establishment of Solidarity, a group of 21 Polish intellectuals published an open letter in the party periodical *Polityka* (December 11, 1980), calling public attention to the thorny question of Polish-Jewish relations, and requesting reexamination of the events of 1968, when Gomulka had carried out an anti-Jewish campaign, dismissing some 9,000 Jews from their jobs and forcing the emigration abroad of great numbers, including card-carrying party members. The letter pointed out that Jews, who had been living in Poland for several hundred years, had made great contributions to Polish national culture and the Polish state. Among the signers of the letter were Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, a writer; Maja Komorowska, an actress; and Janusz Slawinski, a literary historian. It was an important letter, coming at a time when some frightened Poles, seeking to blame the Jews for Poland's problems, had begun a campaign against Solidarity and Lech Walesa, accusing them of being the tools of "evil Zionism." It was felt that perhaps there was some official encouragement of this kind of crude propaganda, spoken in the name of "pure Polish patriotism"—if not by those in the highest leadership positions, then by individuals working at lower levels.

Jewish activities were coordinated by the secular Jewish Cultural and Social Union, inaugurated in 1950, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 1980. While the Jewish Cultural and Social Union was a Communist agency, it was expressly stated at its plenary meeting, held on October 25, 1980, that the Jewish population in Poland should react to events taking place in the country and, more particularly, be on guard against the dangers of antisemitism. Jews were urged to demand rehabilitation for the events of 1968.

Limited Jewish cultural efforts were maintained by the local affiliates of the Union in Warsaw, Wroclaw, Krakow, Lodz, Walbrzych, Dzierzcionow, Szczecin, Katowice, Lublin, Sosnowiec, and Lignice. Whatever remained of secular Jewish life in Poland concentrated around these efforts, which included literary discussions and amateur dramatics. There were no Jewish schools in Poland, and many erstwhile cultural projects were liquidated.

Edward Reiber, 70 years old and in poor health, continued as the president of the Union, but the de facto manager, Ruta Gutkowska, who was the perennial secretary, relinquished her post and was replaced by Abraham Kwaterko, a journalist and a veteran of Jewish activities. Perhaps as a result of the continuing democratization of life in Poland, the Union showed a desire to intensify Jewish activities. Various plans were considered, and there was talk of requesting assistance from Jewish organizations abroad. The secular Union went so far as to create a committee for the coordination of all activities—religious, social, and cultural; the committee,

including the veteran Joseph Gitler-Barski, Shmuel Tenenblat, and Abraham Kwarterko, was charged to prepare the necessary plans. In connection with the 30th anniversary of the Union, a number of the Union activists were awarded state orders of distinction.

The Union sent greetings in honor of the 85th birthday of Nahum Goldmann, leader of the World Jewish Congress. Quite significantly, Szymon Szurmiej, Shmuel Tenenblat, and Moses Finkelsztein participated as observers in the sessions of the World Jewish Congress, held in Jerusalem in January 1981.

The Jewish Historical Institute, headed by Maurycy Horn, maintained its activities and was in contact with the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Its researchers were engaged in various projects involving the Jewish past in Poland. In 1979, 400 interested individuals visited the Institute library, including a number of scholars from abroad. Among the recent titles appearing under its imprint were Emmanuel Ringelblum's *Archives of the Warsaw Ghetto, July 1942–January 1943* and Henryk Krosztor's *Pages of the History of Jews in Warsaw XIX and XX Centuries*. The Institute was obviously renewing its efforts, and it was reported that the Jewish Museum building would undergo repairs, with the budget of 2,230,000 zł. for 1980 being covered entirely by the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Szymon Szurmiej continued to head the Jewish State Theater. Unfortunately, a Jewish audience with a knowledge of Yiddish had decreased considerably, and it was necessary for the theater to use a running translation into Polish. The Jewish Cultural and Social Union created an advisory council for the Yiddish Theater, including the well-known theater director Jakob Rotbaum.

Folks-sztyme, the Jewish Cultural and Social Union's newspaper, continued to appear under Shmuel Tenenblat's editorship.

Jewish religious life in Poland continued to deteriorate. There were no rabbis, and no *chedorim* for the religious education of children.

The Union of Religious Congregations claimed 19 affiliated congregations in Warsaw, Bielsko-Biala, Bytom, Czestochowa, Dzierzcionow, Katowice, Krakow, Lublin, Lodz, Wroclaw, and Walbrzych. Its religious calendar for 1980–1981 listed all 19 congregations and indicated their addresses. Moses Finkelsztein was the president of the Union. The Union provided 60,000 kosher dinners annually.

Commemoration of the Holocaust

On April 17, 1980 the Jewish Cultural and Social Union commemorated the 37th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt. An Israeli delegation, including Stefan Grayek, president of the Ghetto survivors organization, and Izchak Arzi, vice-mayor of Tel Aviv, participated in the proceedings. On April 20 official commemorations took place at Auschwitz, with the participation of President Jablonski and other guests.

In November 1980 a Yad Vashem delegation visited Poland. It consisted of Izchak Arad, Bronia Kliwenska, Aharon Weiss, and Eliahu Stern.

Hungary

There were no significant changes in Hungary. Under the continuing leadership of Janos Kadar, the Communist party succeeded in evolving a policy that satisfied the Kremlin, while at the same time allowing for substantial independence in internal affairs. Under the economic liberalization plan initiated in the late 1960's and later modified, Hungary decentralized its economy, introduced profit incentives, and largely freed foreign trade from bureaucratic interference.

While there was an intellectual opposition among writers and artists, no special campaign against dissidents took place in Hungary. It was reported that a number of intellectuals, including the well-known writer Georg Lukacs, were publishing *samizdat* appeals for human rights, and were otherwise criticizing the present regime.

Events in neighboring Poland created a feeling of uneasiness in Hungary, with the leadership fearing that possible Soviet intervention would have a negative effect on East-West relations. Such a situation would have serious consequences for Hungary, which was engaged in valuable trade with the West. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was treated with much restraint—almost as if such events in the USSR did not concern Hungary.

JEWISH COMMUNITY

It was estimated that the Jewish population of Hungary stood at about 80,000, including Jews who did not identify with Jewish communal life. It was the second largest Jewish community in Eastern Europe. Antisemitism was outlawed by the authorities, and Jews were largely integrated into the general society. There was very little interest in Jewish tradition among the younger generation of Jews, and intermarriage was quite normal. Interestingly enough, the community seemed to be satisfied with these conditions, since there was no emigration, nor any apparent desire for a change.

Jewish activities were coordinated by the Central Board of Jewish Communities, which included both the Neolog (Conservative) and Orthodox trends. However, of late, the Orthodox elements had been steadily decreasing. Imre Heber served as president of the Board; Mrs. I. Seifert was the secretary. About 70 Jewish communities were affiliated with the Board, which maintained a Beth Din, a ritual bath, and a *hevra kadisha*. The Board also organized a very extensive program of social and cultural activities and administered a Jewish museum. Its budget was partially covered by the state, which paid the salaries of the religious personnel of all religious groups. Among the Board's institutions were a home for the aged and a 200-bed hospital, with both institutions providing kosher food. In Budapest there was a kosher restaurant, a kosher butcher shop, and a *matzot* bakery. All Jewish families desiring to observe Passover had an adequate supply of *matzot*.

There were a Jewish gymnasium and a yeshiva for younger children in Budapest. The century-old Budapest Rabbinical Seminary—the only such institution in the Soviet area—maintained its program, though with a rather small enrollment, including students from other countries of the Soviet bloc. One student, Adolf Shae-vich, returned to the Soviet Union after graduation, and was installed as a rabbi in Moscow. In this connection, a delegation, including Imre Heber, Chief Rabbi Laszlo Salgo of Budapest (who was awarded a special state distinction in connection with his 70th birthday), and Aleksander Scheiber, the director of the Seminary, journeyed to Moscow and participated in the ceremony there. In addition to rabbinic training, the Seminary provided for scholarly research in Jewish history and religious thought. The budget of the school was covered jointly by the Jewish community and the state.

The Jewish research and publication program, unique in Eastern Europe both in terms of scope and standards, included continuation of the *Monumenta Hungariae Judaica*, an important scholarly endeavor begun before World War II. It also encompassed a number of historical studies covering various Jewish communities in Hungary, as well as the period of the Holocaust. The budget of the Board for cultural work was provided by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture in New York.

Rumania

Rumania, which some years ago broke away from the rigid control of the Soviet Union, maintained its own “road to socialism” under Nicolae Ceausescu, who was both the head of the party and the president of the state. Ceausescu followed an independent foreign policy, not only differing from many Soviet stands, but continuing friendly relations with China. Rumania also maintained friendly relations with Israel, though supporting some Arab demands. Speaking at the party congress at the end of 1979, Ceausescu declared that “Rumania will do everything for the continuous expansion of our . . . relations with all countries regardless of social system. . . .” He also called for abolition of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Significantly, at the end of a state visit by Lord Carrington of Britain in March 1980, the Rumanian government issued a joint statement indirectly criticizing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Though the Ceausescu administration maintained an independent line with regard to Moscow, internally it continued a regime of control and censorship. However, books by Western writers were available, and the attitude toward Western thought and art was relatively tolerant.

Rumania maintained close trade relations with the Soviet Union, and was a member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance of the Soviet Bloc. At the same time it received substantial trade concessions from the United States as a “most-favored nation.” This status was linked to the conditions set by the Rumanian authorities for individuals desiring to leave the country, and was reviewed annually by the U.S. Congress. Most recently, Congress determined that “the Rumanian

government is living up to the commitments . . . as far as registration and relaxing procedures for those Jews who wish to immigrate to Israel.”

JEWISH COMMUNITY

According to a study prepared by Rumania's chief rabbi, Moses Rosen, the country's Jewish population stood at 37,000. It was not clear if this figure included those secular elements who did not identify with Jewish communal life. Rabbi Rosen declared that in the last 35 years over 90 per cent of the Jewish population had left for Israel. About half of the population—over 17,000—lived in Bucharest, and the balance was found in 68 other communities. Only some seven per cent of the Jewish population were aged 20 or under; almost 52 per cent were over 60 years old.

There was little overt antisemitism, although in September an antisemitic article appeared in *Septamana*, a weekly published by the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education. The article was condemned by the authorities, and the editors were forced to apologize for it.

While Rumanian Jews enjoyed all religious and social rights accorded other national minorities, Jewish life, because of the general restrictions imposed by the regime, continued to decline. Jewish activities involving synagogues, kashruth, clubs, choirs, and talmud torahs were coordinated by the Federation of Jewish Communities. While there were some 130 synagogues, many of them did not have daily services. Talmud torahs provided religious instruction to 125 pupils in 12 communities; Hebrew language instruction was available to some 300 individuals in 22 communities. The Federation supported 17 choirs with 300 participating youth. In August 1980 the student choirs of the Federation went to Israel, where they participated in a festival organized by the municipality of Tel Aviv and the Society of Israeli-Rumanian Friendship. The Federation issued a semimonthly paper, *Revista Culturui Mosaic*, in three languages—Yiddish, Hebrew, and Rumanian—covering material from rabbinical sources, Hebrew and Yiddish literature, and matters of current Jewish interest. It maintained a library and a small museum, and issued a Jewish calendar.

The Federation budget was covered from its own sources, in addition to funds provided by the state for the salaries of clergy and administrative personnel. Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen continued as president of the Federation, and was, in fact, the organizer and initiator of all Jewish religious work in the country. Together with Haim Rimmer, he participated in the proceedings of the Fourth Conference on Hebrew Language held in Warsaw in August 1980. There were a few rabbis in Rumania, among them Izchak-Meir Marilus of Bucharest, P. Wasserman of Dorohoi, and Ernest Neuman of Timisoara. Emil Sechter was the general secretary of the Federation; Sami Edelstein served as head of the department of assistance.

Among the active communal leaders were Theodor Blumenfeld in Bucharest, Simon Kaufman in Iassi, Ernest Fried in Oradei, and Nathan Moscovici in Botosani.

With the approval of the authorities, the Federation was affiliated with the World Jewish Congress. Rabbi Rosen maintained close contact with Jewish organizations abroad, including the World Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and organizations in Israel.

In addition to the activities conducted by the Federation, there was a secular Jewish sector, maintaining a fairly well-developed program, including a highly-regarded State Yiddish Theater, with its own 300-seat building. It presented, with great success, Sholem Aleichem's *Menachem-Mendel*, directed by Beno Popliker. A number of Yiddish books were issued by the state publishing house, Criterion: among them were *Yunge Yorn* (Young Years) by I. Caro, *Harbst mit Sun* (Fall with Sun) by Wolf Tambur, *Froen Alein* (Women Alone) by Reri Blis, and *Bukareshter Shriftn*, Vol. III (Bucharest Writings), an annual.

The Federation conducted an extensive welfare program, mostly in Bucharest, but also in the provincial cities. It operated kosher kitchens in Iassi, Dorohoi, Botosani, Galatzi, Cluj-Napoca, Oradei, Timisoara, Arad, Brazov, Bakau, and Bucharest. For the Passover holiday the Federation organized seders, and distributed *matzot* and kosher wine in Bucharest and in some 28 other cities. Special rabbinical tours were conducted through the provincial communities, and public celebrations were organized during Purim and Hanukkah. The aged and sick received medical care through the Federation clinics; Lazar Kleinman was the chief physician directing medical activities. A home for the aged in the name of Rabbi Rosen and his wife Amalia was renovated in 1979, and dedicated in the presence of Donald Robinson and Ralf Goldmann, representing the JDC, which had contributed generously to the project. Ion Rosianu, head of the religious department of the government, participated in the ceremony. In all, there were some nine homes and hostels operated by the Federation. In addition to care for the aged and sick, cash relief was provided to needy old people and to invalids.

The Federation's social welfare activities were funded by the JDC, and the cultural activities by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, both in New York.

The Jewish community maintained close contacts with Jews abroad. Among visitors to Rumania were Israeli minister of education Zebulun Hammer, British chief rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, and Rabbi Abraham Schneier and a delegation of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation from New York.

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