During 1981 the Soviet Union faced continuing resistance in Russian-invaded Afghanistan, an unstable situation in Poland, and growing economic problems.

Agricultural production was only about 150,000,000 tons, putting the country at the mercy of foreign suppliers. In addition, poor transportation impeded efforts to deliver the available produce to the centers of industrial production. Soviet party chief Leonid Brezhnev stated in November that food was “economically and politically the central problem of the five-year plan. . . .” For the second consecutive year, industrial growth was markedly smaller than the planned output.

While the Soviet masses lived under economic hardship, the bureaucrats—party and state functionaries, estimated to number some 700,000 individuals—were the beneficiaries of a preferential regime that supplied them with a variety of imported goods. Huge food imports greatly increased the Soviet trade deficit with the West, and created problems with the payment of short-term debts.

The sorry state of affairs in the USSR was well known in Western Europe, where it had a significant impact on the various Communist parties. Increasing disenchantment with the Soviet Union made itself felt at the 26th congress of the Soviet Communist party which was held in Moscow in February and March. Giancarlo Pajetta, one of the leaders of the Communist party in Italy, was refused the floor, because it was known that he favored such things as the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, dialogue with the Polish opposition, and social reforms in the USSR.

There were no significant changes in the leadership of the Communist party or in the ruling politburo. Among the newcomers to the central committee was Georgii Arbatov, the top Soviet expert on the United States and Canada. There were continuing reports of conflict within the top Soviet group, but the aged leadership maintained its power, with Brezhnev at the head.

While “socialist realism” continued to be the controlling principle in published writings, some of the themes covered in contemporary letters reflected the painful
realities of Soviet life. Illustrative of this trend were the writings of the very talented Valentin Rasputin. In his popular *Farewell to Matera*, he described the horrors imposed on Russian peasants by rapid industrialization. This subject had previously been taboo; the new discussion indicated that important changes were taking place beneath the surface of Soviet society.

Paralleling the new non-conformist literature were the songs of Soviet “bards,” that treated the various problems faced by the Soviet people. The popularity of the bards was such that tens of thousands of men and women of all Soviet classes came to the funeral of Vladimir Vysotski, a leading singer, when he passed away in Moscow at the age of 42. For weeks Vysotski’s grave at the Vagankov cemetery attracted large crowds, even though the authorities had discouraged his artistic activities and his concerts had gone unadvertised.

**Dissidence**

General Semion Tsvigun (now deceased), first deputy chairman of the KGB, writing in the September issue of the party magazine *Communist*, maintained that the movement of dissent in the Soviet Union had been completely eliminated by the authorities. According to Tsvigun, the human rights movement, associated with such names as Andreii Sakharov and Yurii Orlov, no longer existed. In fact, however, severe repression by the authorities was unable to stamp out dissent, either among the general population or in the lower ranks of the Communist party. Various groups were demanding strict application of human rights principles in line with the 1975 Helsinki accords.

The police took into custody virtually all members of the Helsinki Watch Committee on Human Rights, that had sprung up in various cities after the signing of the Helsinki accords. Toward the end of the year, Ivan Kovaliov was arrested by the authorities. His father, Sergei, and his wife, Tatiana, were already serving prison terms for their activities.

In December the police arrested Evgenii Kozlovski, Nikolaii Klimontovich, Vladislav Lion, and Bakhyt Kenzheev when they attempted to establish an independent writers club. Also in December the Leningrad historian Arsenii Roginskii was brought to trial for “illegally” using the state’s libraries and archives in his research work.

*Socialism and Our Future*, a new Samizdat magazine giving voice to the old Russian democratic socialist tradition, appeared in Moscow.

Toward the end of the year, Andreii Sakharov and his wife, Elena Bonner (who had been exiled to the city of Gorky), went on a hunger strike to protest the refusal of Soviet authorities to issue an exit visa to Elizaveta Alekseeva, wife by proxy of their stepson, Alekseii Semionov. The KGB apparently decided it was not good policy to make a martyr of Sakharov, and permitted Alekseeva to join Semionov in the United States.

Interestingly, the Hare Krishna movement suddenly appeared in various Soviet cities, winning disciples among the technical intelligentsia. Evgenii Tretiakov, a
leader of the movement, was arrested by the authorities and declared a "social parasite." It was not clear whether his arrest liquidated the activities of the devotees.

The continuing resistance of the Polish workers affected the attitudes of workers within the Soviet Union. There was a strike by bus drivers in Togliatti. In Gorky there was a strike in factories producing military goods. The workers in the Leninets factory in Leningrad organized a work stoppage. Strikes were also reported in the Minsk tractor factory in Pechenga, and in Tartu in Estonia.

Nationalities

The growth of great-Russian nationalism, centering on the glorification of the Russian past, had a substantial impact on the various nationality groups inhabiting the Soviet Union. Tatar historians, for example, began to question the traditional view that the end of Tatar independence and the destruction of Tatar culture by the Russians were necessary steps in the progressive development of society. These historians called for an objective study of the history of their groups.

In November a group of Volga Germans demonstrated in Red Square, demanding the right to leave the USSR. Their banners, similar to those of Jewish protesters, read, "We want to go home." According to official sources in Bonn, some 100,000 Volga Germans had applied for exit visas, in addition to the 85,000 who had already left the Soviet Union. Other sources estimated the number of departures at around 65,000.

It was reported that the Kremlin authorities were quietly changing the upper echelon of the Communist party in the Asian, mostly Moslem, areas of the Soviet Union, where the Afghanistan invasion and the upheavals in neighboring Iran had made an impact on the local intelligentsia and some party workers. The authorities sent extra security forces to Caucasus, where disorders had taken place. A mood of dissent and discontent was also present in the Ukraine and in the Baltic republics, where the local ethnic populations were being deeply affected by the Polish upheaval. Reliable dissident sources reported that mass searches took place in many cities of Estonia, particularly in the homes of families associated with the Baptist denomination, which had official status. The authorities confiscated copies of the Bible and other religious literature. Among those arrested was Endel Rose, who had advocated the restoration of traditional names to Estonian cities that had been renamed by the Russians.

Foreign Affairs

The Soviet Union maintained 11 divisions in Afghanistan, numbering about 110,000 men.

While contacts between the USSR and China seemed to increase, there was no change in Sino-Soviet relations; both countries maintained substantial armed forces on their common border.
Following the installation of the Reagan administration in Washington, very little remained of détente, although the Geneva disarmament talks continued. Moscow endeavored to convince the West European nations that it had no covert designs against them, and pointed to the economic benefits of strong trade relations. In the course of a visit to West Germany, Brezhnev assured his hosts of the continuing friendship of the Soviet Union, and of his willingness to negotiate with the West on peace and disarmament. At the same time, the Soviet Union obtained the right to have the Russian navy enter various harbors in Malta and Greece.

**Relations with Israel**

In his presentation to the Communist party congress, Brezhnev devoted considerable attention to the Middle East problem. He called for an international conference in which the Soviet Union, the United States, Israel, and the PLO would participate.

During the year Moscow received a great number of Arab leaders, including President Qaddafi of Libya, King Hussein of Jordan, Kuwaiti minister Sabah el Akhmed, and PLO chief Yasir Arafat. The Soviet Union maintained substantial arms deliveries to the Arab countries. After Israel annexed the Golan Heights, Moscow promised Syria an increase in various types of modern weaponry. According to reports, Soviet military advisors were stationed in Syria.

The Soviet authorities maintained a strong anti-Israeli policy, and anti-Zionist slogans and propaganda filled the pages of the press in Moscow and in the provincial cities. On January 5 Izvestia informed its readers that the Israelis were endeavoring to completely wipe out the Palestinian people. Horror stories about the lives of Jews who had left the Soviet Union for Israel were printed in many publications, including the Yiddish Sovetish Heimland.

There were sporadic contacts between the USSR and Israel. A Soviet delegation went to Israel at the invitation of the Israeli-Soviet Friendship Society to participate in a commemoration of the victory over fascism in the Second World War. Vladimir Karpov, secretary of the Writers Union of USSR and editor of Novyi Mir, headed the delegation, which also included Urii Mikheev, a journalist, and Jan Frenkel, a composer. Karpov's "A Voyage to Israel," in Yiddish translation, was issued as a supplement to Sovetish Heimland.

Genrikas Zimans, Jewish editor of Communistas, an important theoretical journal published in Lithuanian, participated as a friendly delegate in the congress of the Communist party of Israel, which took place in Haifa.

The Soviet Peace Committee invited a number of Israelis to visit the USSR, among them Knesset members Rabbi Menahem Hacohen and Ora Namir, Communist party members David Chinin and Selim Jubran, and Haika Grossman, a fighter in the Bialystok ghetto uprising. During his visit, Rabbi Hacohen chanted the haftorah at the synagogue in Leningrad.
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, would be approximately 2,620,000, constituting about one per cent of the total population of some 268,000,000. (See the discussion in the 1982 AJYB, p. 233.)

Emigration

According to official data, some 9,500 Jews left the USSR in 1981. This was about 80 per cent less than in 1979 (over 50,000) and around 55 per cent less than in 1980 (over 21,000). Since the beginning of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union in 1970, approximately 256,000 Jews had left the country. One interpretation of the decline in emigration was that the Soviet authorities were sending a signal to the United States about the need for improved relations.

Candidates for emigration were required to receive a request for departure (vyzov) from a close family member residing in Israel. Of course, many Soviet Jews did not have relatives in Israel. Moreover, many vyzovs were not delivered by Soviet postal authorities. The Soviet agency entrusted with matters of emigration—the so-called OVIR—often disregarded applications to leave the country or took the position that particular applicants could not depart because they had a knowledge of state secrets.

Continuing the pattern of the last several years, most of the Soviet emigrants went to the West (U.S., Canada, etc.); a minority went to Israel. The per cent of those settling outside of Israel rose from 50 in 1977 to about 66 in 1980. This situation led to a split between the government of Israel and some American Jewish organizations. The former contended that the refusal of Soviet Jewish emigrants to go to Israel jeopardized the departure of other would-be emigrants. HIAS, in charge of immigrant operations from Vienna to the United States and other countries, affirmed the principle of freedom of choice. Toward the end of the year, under increasing pressure from the Israeli government, HIAS reversed itself and accepted on a trial basis (a three-month period) a plan that effectively curtailed the flow of emigrants to countries other than Israel.

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 minyonim. Soviet officials reported that the synagogue in Odessa had been repaired and that a sukkah had been built in the synagogue compound. Boris Gram continued as chairman of the Moscow congregation; Arkadii Zitran was the chairman in Odessa. Both men were in their middle thirties.
There were very few rabbis. In Moscow the aged Rabbi Iakov Fishman and Rabbi Adolf Shayevich, a recent graduate of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary, ministered to the needs of the congregants. The Moscow yeshiva founded by the late Rabbi Solomon Shliefer was not successful. *Soviet Life*, the foreign propaganda publication of the Soviet embassy in Washington, reported in October that the Moscow yeshiva had five students. It was obvious, however, that under present conditions, without an adequate staff, the yeshiva could not train rabbis.

There was no formal religious or secular Jewish education; chedorim and other Jewish schools were forbidden. A bat mitzvah ceremony performed by Ann Kogan in Leningrad represented a rare demonstration of Jewish identification. The ceremony took place at home in the company of friends and relatives of the girl.

Novosti, the Soviet press agency, reported that the Moscow synagogue baked 130 tons of *matzot* for Passover and that *matzo shmura* was also available. Rabbi Fishman stated that *matzot* were also baked in the provincial cities.

With the help of Rabbi Pinhas Teitz of Elizabeth, New Jersey, Soviet authorities permitted a group of Braslaver hasidim to visit the grave of the rabbi of Braslav in Uman (Ukraine).

Jews attached to their ethno-religious roots developed various forms of Jewish identification. For years Jewish men and women had been gathering in large numbers outside the synagogues in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities during the high holy days, Simchat Torah, and Passover. Soviet official sources reported that in 1981 high holy day services were held in 92 synagogues—a figure that seemed highly exaggerated—and that 5,000 Jews attended the Moscow Choral Synagogue.

New and more sophisticated forms of Jewish self-expression were being developed; there were seminars dealing with Jewish subjects, Hebrew lessons, and lectures in Jewish history, thought, and literature. While most of the participants in these activities were would-be emigrants and "refuseniks," they had been joined of late by individuals who were simply interested in obtaining a Jewish education.

The paucity of open religious life in the Soviet Union was also characteristic of other religious groups—Christian, Moslem, etc. In the 1970's, there were only some 4,500 Russian Orthodox churches openly functioning throughout the USSR. However, the Soviet government had a special relationship with the Russian Orthodox denominations. The official magazine of the Moscow Patriarchate (No. 10, 1981) reported that a new building was put at the disposal of the publishing department of the church. The opening of the building was an official affair, with P. Makartsev, the vice president of the Council of Religious Affairs, in attendance. At the same time, such Christian dissidents as Vladimir Poresh, Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, Nikolai Goretoi, Pavel Akhterov, Ivan Fedotov, and Vladimir Murashkin were arrested.

**Antisemitism and Discrimination**

Anti-Jewish feelings and overt antisemitism were characteristic of Soviet life. The authorities were returning to the old quota system practiced under the Tsarist regime. Higher technical schools in the Ukraine, for example, permitted only a five
per cent Jewish student enrollment. Quota systems were applied in most Soviet enterprises, in academic degree-granting, and in bureaucratic advancement. Well-qualified Jews were often told by university administrators not to seek academic careers, since they had little chance of being accepted, or, if they were, of advancing. In the last decade more than 40 top mathematicians had left the Soviet Union because of official antisemitism in the universities. Apparently, the authorities were not concerned about a "brain drain"; Lev Pontriagin, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, was said to have stated, "Jewish mathematics is bad mathematics. . . ."

Maxim Shostakovich, a conductor and the son-of the celebrated composer, reported, after escaping from the USSR, that it was necessary to intervene with the authorities on the highest level in order to have a Jewish musician appointed to an orchestra position.

With few exceptions, Jews had disappeared from high party posts and leading positions in the government. Veniamin Dymshits was the deputy premier and a member of the central committee of the party. Other Jews holding membership in the central committee were Lev Volodarskii, head of the Soviet central statistical office, Georgii Tsukanov, an assistant to Brezhnev, and Georgii Arbatov. Lev Shapiro of Birobidzhan and Aleksandr Chakovskii, editor of Literaturnaia Gazeta (Moscow), were candidate-members.

As in Tsarist Russia, Soviet newspapers and periodicals were obsessed with things Jewish. In March the armed forces magazine carried an article by Vladimiro Bolshakov, the notorious author of Zionism in the Service of Anti-Communism, arguing that American Zionists had taken control of Lockheed, General Dynamics, and other corporations linked to the Pentagon. Roman Brodsky, in The Truth About Zionism, argued in the same vein. The Kiev satirical weekly Peretz (No. 12) carried a Nazi-like cartoon denouncing international Zionism. In a movie based on Chekhov's story, "Step," Moiseii Moiseevich, the Jewish character, was presented in the most disgusting manner. Another film, Zionist Street, depicted the Israelis as engaged in the genocidal destruction of the Arabs. Vadim Kozhlinov, a critic, in reviewing the poetry of Unna Moritz in Den Poezii 1981, took note of its "Jewish" character, and threw in a reference to Shylock for good measure.

Antisemitism was present in some Samizdat publications. Mnogaia Leta ("Many More Years"), edited by G. Shimanov and supposedly presenting a Christian point of view, fulminated against the Jews. In one article Shimanov argued that the well-known Moscow priest Father Aleksandr Men, a converted Jew, was a "Zionist agent" who had penetrated the Greek Orthodox church in Russia.

**Jewish Resistance**

Despite severe oppression, including lengthy sentences meted out to dissidents, Soviet Jews continued the struggle for emigration and national Jewish identity. Kim Fridman, a radio operator in Kiev who had been seeking to leave the Soviet Union for nearly a decade, was sentenced to a year in prison for "parasitism." Another
Jewish activist in Kiev, Vladimir Kisik, received a three-year sentence in a labor camp on a trumped-up charge of hooliganism. Stanislav Zubko received a four-year camp sentence. Still, a group of Kiev "refuseniks" sent a letter to the Soviet authorities indicating that they would begin a hunger strike if their exit visas were not forthcoming.

In Kharkov, Aleksandr Paritski was sentenced to three years forced labor. An engineer and researcher at the Ukrainian Academy of Science, he had taken a leading role in a Jewish studies program that was functioning in the city.

The authorities prevented Moscow Jews from celebrating Israel’s independence day in the Ovrazhki forest, where gatherings had been held during the last few years. Nonetheless, some “refuseniks” marked the occasion at a meeting outside the city. Also in Moscow, the police stopped a demonstration on behalf of the prisoners of Zion, among whom were Anatoly Shcharansky, Ida Nudel, Iurii Fedorov, and Aleksei Murzhenko. The latter two individuals were participants in the celebrated Leningrad trial. A third participant, Josif Mendelevich, was released from prison in February.

In Kishinev (Bessarabia) 50 "refuseniks" organized a march to protest denial of their exit visas.

Judith Lerner, wife of the well-known “refusenik” scientist Aleksandr Lerner, passed away in July. The Lerners had been denied exit visas for nearly a decade.

The authorities continued their actions against Jewish studies seminars and the Hebrew teaching programs that had sprung up. Some 80 teachers of Hebrew were threatened by the police.

Culture

Despite the negative attitude of the authorities, some Jewish cultural activities were maintained in Moscow and other cities. Since there was no central communal organization, secular Jewish activities were focused around *Sovetish Heimland*, an official Yiddish language publication now in its 21st year of existence. The magazine strictly followed the Communist party line, and its editor, Aron Vergelis, attacked Israel at every opportunity. Over the years *Sovetish Heimland* had published the works of some 100 Yiddish writers and poets; 55 novels, 63 long poems, and 25 plays had appeared in its pages. A supplement to *Sovetish Heimland* (August, No. 8) contained a detailed bibliographical index covering the years 1961–1981. The index, however, omitted those Yiddish writers who had appeared in *Sovetish Heimland* but had subsequently gone to Israel.

Because there were no Yiddish schools in the Soviet Union, there was a serious shortage of professionally-trained personnel who could be employed in Yiddish journalism, editorial work, etc. To deal with this shortage, the Gorky Institute of Literature started a two-year course of study to train young students as Yiddish language editors, proofreaders, and translators. Among the teachers involved in the program were Rivka Rubin (Yiddish classics), Chaskl Zaan (Yiddish language).
Uran Guralnik (Yiddish and Russian literature), Muni Shulman (History of Soviet Yiddish literature), and Shmuel Gordon (History of Soviet Yiddish literature).

As far as could be ascertained, 12 books in the Yiddish language were available in 1981: *Der Lebn Geit Veiter* ("Life Goes On") by Yosef Burg; *Di Viner Karete* ("The Vienna Carriage") by Moishe Altman; *Der Morgenshtern* ("The Morning Star") by Avrom Gontar; *Menchn oif der Milkhome* ("Men in the War") by David Dragunskii; *Baginen* ("At Dawn") by Shmuel Helmond; *Di Zeit* ("Times") by Aron Vergelis; *Mai in Kazan* ("May in Kazan") by Boris Mogilner; *Nochemke Esreg* by Aleksandr Lizan; *Zunike Shtamen* (poems) by Pinie Kiritchanskii; *Nechtn un Haint* ("Yesterday and Today") by Iasha Rubian; *Yiddishe Avtonome Gegent* ("Jewish Autonomous Region"), issued in Chabarovsk; and *Shtaplen* ("Steps") by Hersh Remenik. Between 1948 and 1981 a total of 90 Yiddish books, an average of some three a year, had been published in the USSR. This compared with 500–600 volumes a year allotted to some national groups in Siberia and other parts of Asia. It should be noted that in the 1979 census 14.2 per cent of the Jews in the RSFSR (Russia) listed Yiddish as their native language.

Soviet customs agents, checking the foreign books brought to the third Moscow International Book Fair, seized, among other volumes, the 1981 *American Jewish Year Book* and the youth edition of Abba Eban's *History of the Jews*.

In February and June *Sovetish Heimland* carried scholarly articles by the well-known semitics scholar Leib Wilsker, devoted to Jehuda Halevi and Saadia Gaon. Wilsker's collection of pieces on Russian Jewish history appeared in a supplement to *Sovetish Heimland* in September.

The Yiddish Musical Chamber Theater of Birobidzhan, the only legitimate Yiddish theatrical group in the Soviet Union, gave many performances in Baku (Azerbaijan). Freilachs, a newly-created amateur ensemble, performed in Tashkent, Bratsk, Novosibirsk, and Irkutsk. The Moscow Yiddish Drama Ensemble premiered Sholem Aleichem's *Blonzhende Shtern* ("The Straying Stars"). The Vilno Yiddish Folk Theater maintained its activities and was preparing a recording of songs at the Moscow Melodia Studio. Its new presentation, *Chelmer Chachomim* ("The Sages of Chelm"), directed by E. Khersonskii, was enthusiastically received. The Vilno group celebrated its 25th anniversary with a production of *L'Haim* ("To Life"). The Kovno Yiddish Folk Theater presented its programs in many cities.

Sofia Saitan, a well-known Jewish actress, was awarded the title of "Honored Artist" of the RSFSR. Her recordings of Yiddish and Russian material had substantial success among the art-loving public.

In April and May there was a large exhibition of paintings by the late Moscow Jewish artist Meir Axelrod (1902–1970) at the Tbilisi State Museum. A catalogue of Axelrod's works was issued in the Georgian language, and posters pointed out the "national Jewish character" of his art.

An interesting aspect of Jewish cultural life was underground music. A number of composers, including Sergei Slowinskii and Maks Goldin, wrote Jewish music that was either excluded from the approved repertoire or presented under a neutral title. Some of this music had recently been brought to Israel.
Moscow Television devoted part of its regular evening broadcast "Goodnight Children" to the songs of the Yiddish poet Shika Driz.

**Birobidzhan**

There were no changes in the Jewish autonomous region. The Jewish population was about 10,000, with some 13 per cent of the Jews listing Yiddish as their native language. There were reports, particularly in the Russian emigre press, that the presidium of the Supreme Soviet had abolished five autonomous regions, including Birobidzhan, in December. However, the Soviet press continued to refer to the Jewish autonomous region. A Jewish library was functioning and the *Birobidzhaner Stern* continued to appear. There were also Yiddish radio broadcasts. All in all, it was clear that Birobidzhan, which had important strategic value and a small Jewish population, was being gradually Russified.

**Holocaust**

In Kiev, in September, five Jews—Mikhail Elman, Pavel Astrakhan, Aleksandr Lorenson, Svetlana Efimova, and Vladimir Tereshchenko—were sentenced to 10 to 15 days in prison for trying to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Nazi massacre at Babi Yar. In Moscow, in May, the KGB prevented a large group of Jews from commemorating the Holocaust. However, commemorative events took place in smaller cities, sometimes with the participation of local officials.

In August the “liberal” *Novyi Mir* carried a long article by the well-known Soviet translator of German poetry Lev Ginsburg, in which he described Jewish suffering under the Nazis, particularly in the Riga ghetto.

**Personalia**

Zinovii Kaminskii, a well-known Yiddish actor, died in Moscow at the age of 69. Moishe Altman, a veteran Yiddish writer, died in Czernovitz at the age of 91. Avrom Gontar, a Yiddish writer, died at the age of 73. Gontar was an editor of Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee publications in Moscow during the Second World War. Hersh Remenik, a Yiddish writer and critic, died at the age of 75. Gershon Kravtsov, a painter and illustrator, died at the age of 75. Aleksandra Azarch, a well-known actress and pedagogue, died in Moscow at the age of 88. Azarch was a close collaborator of the murdered Jewish actor and director Shlome Mikhoels. Yuri Trifonov, an important Soviet writer who remained in Russia despite the fact that his works were not always considered acceptable by the authorities, died at the age of 55. Anatolii Rybakov, author of *Heavy Sand*, a novel dealing sympathetically with the Jewish plight during the Nazi period, spoke at Trifonov’s funeral, alluding to the tragedies of Russian life under Stalin.

Leon Shapiro
Soviet Bloc Nations

Introduction

The Soviet Union was unhappy with the continuing process of change taking place in its satellite empire, fearing that it would result in a loss of control over the East European Communist regimes. While Moscow accepted certain deviations in the economic program of Hungary, as well as an independent foreign policy in Rumania, it viewed the Solidarity rebellion in Poland as a "creeping counterrevolution" promoted by capitalist circles of the West. The Kremlin bosses hinted that if "law and order" were not reestablished in Poland, they might intervene directly. In the meantime, the Soviet Union was busy dealing with its own problems—falling production, a lack of food, and heavy fighting in Afghanistan.

Poland

The social and political upheaval that had begun in August 1980 continued unabated, with an increasingly large number of Communist party members joining the opposition and clamoring for reform; party membership dropped from 3,200,000 to some 2,900,000. In April 1981 the central committee of the PPZR (Communist party) ousted Joseph Pinkowski, a former prime minister, and Emil Wojtaszek, who was in charge of foreign affairs, from the politburo. Two former ministers in Edward Gierek's regime committed suicide: Jerzy Olszewski, minister of chemical industry, and Edward Barszcz, minister of construction. In the course of a party congress held in Warsaw in July 1981, Gierek himself was expelled from the party. The congress represented a watershed in post-World War II Poland, in that, for the first time, the delegates were elected by secret ballot.

In addition to Solidarity, the workers' movement headed by Lech Walesa, a union of independent peasants was established under the leadership of Jan Kulaj. The two movements together constituted a substantial force for political and social change in Poland. The Polish church, under the late Stefan Cardinal Wyshynski, and his successor, Archbishop Joseph Glemp of Gniezno and Warsaw and primate of Poland, played an important advisory role to Solidarity and the peasants' union.

The Polish situation greatly worried the Soviet Union. Moscow feared that the internal reforms that had been introduced in Poland might spread to other countries, thus endangering its rigid system of alliances and military pacts. Radio Moscow asserted that Solidarity "wants to declare war on the people's power." The Soviet press pointed to a "mass campaign by the Zionists" to destroy socialist Poland.
By autumn 1981 it had become clear that the Polish authorities and the elements around Solidarity were on a collision course, involving opposing ideas about the very structure and character of the state. In October, after being in office for about one year, Stanislaw Kania, in an unprecedented move, was replaced as secretary-general of the party by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the first professional military man to be placed at the top of a Communist regime. Jaruzelski had to grapple not only with the hopeless state of the Polish economy, but also with the increasingly menacing attitude of the Kremlin. In order to quiet Soviet fears, the Committee for Self-Defense (KOR), which had been active in the launching of Solidarity, disbanded itself in Gdansk on September 28; this was announced to the public by KOR's elderly leader, Edward Lipinski. Solidarity leaders meeting in Gdansk suggested that a referendum be made on the form of the government in Poland and the nature of the Polish-Soviet relationship.

On December 13, 1981 Jaruzelski, using the army and the special police, proceeded with what was in fact a coup d'etat, placing the country under martial law. The newly-established Martial Council for National Redemption drastically restricted civil rights and suspended Solidarity and other similar groups. Among the people taken into custody were Lech Walesa, Committee for Social Self-Defense organizers Jan Kuron and Adam Michnik, Edward Gierek, former prime ministers Piotr Jaroszewicz and Edward Babiuch, and former politburo member Jerzy Lukasziewicz. Official newspapers attacked Michnik and Kuron in particular, pointing out their Jewish origin. It was clear that Jaruzelski's actions had the approval of the Kremlin leadership.

As the end of the year approached, there were strikes, confrontations, and violence in Poland. Reliable sources put the number of those arrested at over 5,000. In reaction to the repression, the United States government decided to apply sanctions against both the USSR and Poland. However, the United States permitted Poland to defer payment of 90 million dollars due on the Polish debt, which totalled about 26 billion dollars.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

The upheaval in Polish society had a considerable impact on the small community of about 6,000 Jews who identified with Jewish life. (It was estimated that another 1,500–2,000 Jews had “passed” into the surrounding population through intermarriage and conversion.) There was an effort to revive and intensify the limited activities conducted by small Jewish clubs in various cities. In 1981, according to official reports, Jewish activities of various sorts (lectures, dramatic presentations, song evenings) numbered 27 in Wroclaw, 12 in Krakow, 26 in Katowice, 13 in Lodz, 12 in Gliwice, 21 in Zary, 24 in Lignice, 10 in Szczecin, 37 in Dzierzoniow, four in Warsaw, 26 in Bielosko-Biala, eight in Lublin, and seven in Walbrzych. Indicative
of the changing times was the fact that the Jewish clubs commemorated the 120th anniversary of the birth of the great Jewish historian Simon Dubnow.

The Jewish Historical Institute maintained its research activities under the direction of Maurycy Horn; its library and museum were open to interested scholars. Some of the Institute's projects were supported by the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture based in New York. After a lengthy interval, the Bleter far Geschichte (vol. XIX) reappeared with articles devoted to Jewish history. The State Yiddish Theater performed in Zagreb (Yugoslavia), Vienna (Austria), and various cities in Israel. A group of Hebrew writers from Israel, including Benzion Tomer, Gabriel Maked, Haim Gury, and Debora Emer, visited Poland at the invitation of the Polish Writers Union and the Janusz Korczak Society.

In the course of the year, the Jewish Cultural and Social Union, which conducted all secular Jewish activities, organized memorial meetings for the victims of Maidaneck and Auschwitz; the group also commemorated the 38th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto revolt. An official representative of the Communist party, Stanislaw Kociolek, participated in the proceedings. Edward Reiber was the president of the Jewish Cultural and Social Union, but he was in poor health, and the organization's activities were directed by Abraham Kwaterko, the secretary. Other Jewish activists were Shmuel Tenenblat, editor of Folks-szytme and vice-president of the Union; Szymon Szurmiej, the director of the Yiddish State Theater; and Joseph Gitler-Barski, who dealt with research and documentation.

Jewish religious life continued to deteriorate. There were no rabbis in Poland, nor was there any religious education for children. Organized prayer services were few and far between. According to the official community calendar, there were 19 religious congregations in Warsaw, Katowice, Krakow, Lodz, Lublin, Wroclaw, and other cities. The Union of Religious Congregations provided over 50,000 kosher meals to interested individuals. The president of the Union, Moses Finkelsztein was awarded a Golden Cross of Merit by the government on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

The Jewish Cultural and Social Union and the Union of Religious Congregations had begun to develop closer ties, with Moses Finkelsztein participating in the activities of both organizations. With the support of the government, a committee was formed to take care of Warsaw's Jewish cemetery, which was in a very poor state. Some funds had already been provided by the government, but they were insufficient for the purpose. The Jewish Cultural and Social Union participated in a meeting of the World Jewish Congress, and detailed reports about the proceedings were printed in Folks-sztyme.

In the spring Warsaw University and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations signed an agreement whereby important archival documents dealing with Jewish life in Poland would be made available to American scholars. The agreement also covered joint research to be undertaken in certain areas.

In July 1981 an American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) delegation visited Warsaw. Included in the group were JDC president Henri Taub, executive
vice-president Ralf Goldman, and JDC's European representative Akiva Kahane. The delegation was received by Jerzy Kubelski, minister of religious affairs. The leaders of the Jewish community suggested that the JDC renew its activities in Poland. A special coordinating committee of the Jewish Cultural and Social Union and of the Union of Religious Congregations was established to oversee the distribution of aid.

Antisemitism remained a very potent force in Poland. During the months of the political spring, crude anti-Jewish propaganda, disseminated by Grunwald, a veterans group, appeared in Warsaw and other cities. Not only was Grunwald's material openly distributed, it was endorsed by official circles. A Grunwald meeting was shown on television, and the bulletin of the Warsaw Communist party sympathetically reported the proceedings. A delegation of the Jewish Cultural and Social Union went to see Stanislaw Demianuk, secretary of the central committee of the party, demanding that the anti-Jewish actions of Grunwald be stopped, and that the Union's protest against antisemitism be made known through the press. Demianuk stated that "antisemitism has no place in Poland." However, little was done to suppress the anti-Jewish militants of the right.

Some anti-Jewish sentiments also surfaced in the Solidarity movement. Marian Jurczyk, the head of the Szczecin trade union, declared in a speech that "the government is filled with Jews who have changed their names to conceal their real identities." This was given as a reason why the government had to be changed. On the other hand, Solidarity's official publications consistently protested against acts of anti-Jewish hooliganism that took place in various cities.

Interestingly, the Jewish Cultural and Social Union, referred publicly, for the first time, to the anti-Jewish pogrom which had taken place in Kielitz in July 1946. The Union warned that strict measures had to be taken to prevent a repetition of that tragedy.

Joel Lazebnik, an old Communist stalwart and one of the leading figures in the Jewish Cultural and Social Union, died away on September 14, 1981.

Rumania

Nicolae Ceausescu, head of the Communist party and president of the state, maintained rigid political control over Rumania. At the same time, he stressed the continuity of national history as a basis for political and social development in the country. In accordance with this doctrine of "national Communism," Ceausescu dissented from Soviet foreign policy and rejected a number of Moscow's significant moves. The Rumanian government continued to maintain close relations with Israel, notwithstanding its support for some Arab demands.

Although Rumania was a member of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance of the Soviet Bloc, it maintained close relations with the United States, which accorded it important trade concessions as a "most favored nation." This status was conditional on the maintenance of a flexible emigration policy, whereby individuals
desiring to leave the country could do so without undue difficulty. Compliance with this principle was reviewed annually by the United States Congress. While there were some problems, Rumania was thought to be basically living up to its commitments. According to official sources, 1,119 people left Rumania in 1980 and 1,067 in 1981.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

Antisemitism was outlawed, and the authorities took whatever steps were necessary to prevent its occurrence. President Ceausescu, in a speech to a workers conference, condemned an antisemitic pamphlet that had been distributed in Bucharest. (It was claimed that the material had been smuggled into Rumania from abroad by fascist groups.) Ceausescu's remarks were reported in the press and on radio and television.

While Rumanian Jews enjoyed all the religious and social rights accorded other minorities, the small community of about 37,000 Jews continued to decline. Many active Jews had left the country, and the younger generation showed less interest in things Jewish. Jewish activities were coordinated by the Federation of Jewish Communities, under the chairmanship of Rabbi Moses Rosen, who was also chief rabbi; Emil Schechter was general secretary of the Federation. Under difficult conditions, Rabbi Rosen continued to provide dynamic leadership, traveling throughout the country to visit local communities. Among the active leaders of Rumanian Jewry were Theodor Blumenfeld, president of the Jewish community of Bucharest; Simion Kaufman, president of the community in Iasi; Paul Friedlander, president of the community in Timisoara; Julius Wenger, president of the community in Bacou; and Ivan Koves, president of the community in Brasov. The very small rabbinical corps included, in addition to Rabbi Rosen, rabbis Itschak Meir Marilus, Ernest Neiman, Carol Jolesz, and Srul Moscovici. Professor Chaim Rimer was editor of the *Revista Culturui Mosaic*, a semimonthly periodical published by the Federation in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Rumanian. The *Revista* devoted part of its content to rabbinic sources and ancient Jewish history, and the remainder to matters of current Jewish interest.

The Federation encompassed 68 Jewish communities and 27 smaller units. It was responsible for 118 synagogues, 45 of which held daily services, while 73 were open only on the Sabbath and holidays. There were talmud torahs and courses for young people in 23 communities. Iasi, Bucharest, and Brasov had small communal orchestras; 16 synagogues maintained choirs. Some of the communities also arranged cultural programs. In Bucharest there were weekly gatherings to discuss topical Jewish subjects. A memorial meeting for the victims of the Holocaust was held in the Bucharest Choral Synagogue. *Revista's* 25th anniversary was celebrated by the Federation, with many Jewish leaders from abroad sending greetings. Among those
saluting the Rumanian Jewish community on the occasion were Yitzhak Navon, president of Israel; Zevulun Hammer, Israel's minister of education; Edgar Bronfman, head of the World Jewish Congress; Arie Dulchin, chairman of the Jewish Agency; Henri Taub, president of JDC; and the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Collective sedorim were held in 30 communities, and 120,000 kg. of matzot and matzah-meal were distributed throughout the country. It was estimated that some 12,000 individuals participated in Hanukkah and Purim festivities. Eleven kosher canteens provided 2,500 dinners daily, either gratis or for a token payment. Kosher meat was generally available.

A difficult problem was the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries in places where Jewish communities no longer existed. In the last five years the fences surrounding 49 such cemeteries had been repaired.

The Federation's welfare program assisted 6,700 individuals, most of them senior citizens or invalids. Some 7,160 clothing packages and 46,000 food parcels were distributed among the needy. Home help was provided to 672 invalids. Rest homes offering kosher food were operated in the summer in Eforie Nord, Borsec, and Christian (Brasov). The Federation's medical center was directed by Arthur Meerson.

Part of the Federation's budget was covered by the state, which allocated money for the salaries of the clergy and the administrative personnel. The Federation's social welfare activities were funded by the JDC, while its cultural activities were financed by the New York-based Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

The Rumanian Jewish community maintained close contact with Jews abroad. The Federation was affiliated with the World Jewish Congress, and participated in various Jewish projects of a general character. Rabbi Rosen went to Israel in December 1980 to attend the Labor party congress. In January 1981 he, together with Amalia Rosen and Emil Schechter, participated in the plenary meeting of the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem; Rabbi Rosen was elected to the governing body of the organization. Rosen also participated in the work of a special committee of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture that met in Paris, under the chairmanship of Nahum Goldmann.

Many prominent guests visited Bucharest, among them Nisan Harpaz, secretary of the Workers' Council of Jerusalem; Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation of New York; and Jack Spitzer, president of B'nai B'rith. The latter two men were received by President Ceausescu.

In addition to the activities conducted by the Federation, there was an active secular Jewish sector, including the well-known State Yiddish Theater and a small Yiddish publication program.

 Bulgaria

At age 70, Todor Zhivkov continued to serve as first secretary of the Communist party, a position that he had initially assumed in 1954. Bulgaria was the most loyal
member of the Soviet empire, following Moscow’s lead not only in the area of foreign policy, but also in the application of strict totalitarian rule at home. Like Moscow, Bulgaria was strongly hostile to Israel; it had no diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Attacks on Zionism in Sofia resembled similar outbursts in Moscow.

**JEWISH COMMUNITY**

There were around 7,000 Jews in Bulgaria. It was likely that some Jews had “passed” into the general population, since Bulgarian Jewry as a whole was highly assimilated. Intermarriage was widespread; few Jews continued to speak Ladino. Jews were well represented in the universities: Angel Chaim Astrug held a chair in the Academy of Medicine; Elieser Iakov Gershonov was the director of the ministry of electronics; and Moritz Albert Iomtov was a faculty member of the Institute of Parasitology. Two Jews, Ruben Avramov Levi and David Solomon Elasar, were members of Parliament as well as the central committee of the Bulgarian Communist party. Elasar was also director of the Institute of Party History. Another member of Parliament was Iosif Astrukov, chairman of the secular Jewish Social, Cultural, and Educational Organization of Bulgaria. Other Jewish activists included David Vidas, Baruch Shamliyev, Isa Beracha, Moise Pasi, Armand Baruch, Iako Molchov, Salvador Israel, Albert Dekalo, Iosif Baruch, Sarina Pencheva, Robert Beracha, Solomon Levi, and Moise Benaroia.

The Jewish Social, Cultural, and Educational Organization, which was centered in Sofia, had branches in many provincial cities, including Burgas, Plevni, Yambol, and Varna. The Organization conducted a program of lectures, concerts, and meetings that was largely geared to the propaganda efforts of the state. Some of the lectures, however, dealt with Jewish writers such as Isaac Babel and Sholom Aleichem. There were no Jewish educational programs for children, either secular or religious.

The Jewish Social, Cultural, and Educational Organization published *Evreiski Vesti* (“Jewish News”), a Communist party organ that appeared biweekly. This newspaper carried some material from *Sovetish Heimland* as well as from the Jewish press in other countries of the Soviet Bloc. The Organization also published *Godishnik*, a yearbook; volume 15 appeared in 1980. *Godishnik*’s editor-in-chief was David Benvenisti; the editorial board included David Cohen, Jana Molhova, Israel Mayer, Isaac Moscona, Iosif Conforti, Clara Pincus, Mancho Rachamimov, Renata Nathan, Salvador Israel, and Solomon Levi. Among other things, the 1980 issue contained indices to *Evreiski Vesti* (1944–1976) and *Godishnik* (1966–1980). While *Godishnik* was obviously a Communist publication, some of the material dealt with the history of Bulgarian Jews, and was thus useful to researchers.

Jewish religious life in Bulgaria continued to deteriorate. There were no qualified rabbis and few religious marriages. There were great difficulties in obtaining kosher
meat and other kosher products. The government, however, did allocate a subsidy for synagogue maintenance and the salary of a cantor. It also financed the reconstruction of old buildings, including the Sofia synagogue, which was badly damaged by an earthquake in 1977.

There was no open antisemitism. The authorities paid tribute to Jewish participants in the resistance to the Nazis; there were memorials throughout the country honoring Jewish war heroes. From time to time, Jewish writers, artists, and musicians were awarded special medals and distinctions. Alexis Weissenberg, a world-renowned pianist who was born in Sofia, was given the title, "People's Artist." Also awarded the title "People's Artist" were violinist Dina Shnaiderman and singers Mati Pinkas and Yulia Winer.

Since the Jewish Social, Cultural, and Educational Organization rejected all ties to Jewish organizations abroad, the Bulgarian Jewish community was totally isolated from world Jewry.

Leon Shapiro