

Two
Hundred
Years
Together

by
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Chapter XVIII: In The 1920s

The 1920s in the Soviet Union was an epoch with a unique atmosphere, a grand social experiment which intoxicated world liberal opinion for decades. And in some places this intoxication still persists. However, almost no one remains of those who drank deeply of its poisonous spirit.

The uniqueness of that spirit was manifested in the ferocity of class antagonism, in the promise of a never-before-seen new society, in the novelty of new forms of human relationships, in the breakdown of the nation's economy, daily life and family structure. The social and demographic changes were, in fact, colossal. The great exodus of the Jewish population to the capitals began, for many reasons, during the first years of communist power. Some Jewish writers are categorical in their description: "Thousands of Jews left their settlements and a handful of southern towns for Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev to find real life."

Beginning in 1917, Jews flooded into Leningrad and Moscow. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, hundreds of thousands of Jews moved to Moscow, Leningrad and other major centers, in 1920, 28,000 Jews lived in Moscow, by 1923 it was about 86,000; according to 1926 USSR census, 131,000 and in 1933, 226,500. Moscow became fashionable, they used to say halfseriously in Odessa.

Lurie-Larin, a fanatical and zealous Bolshevik leader during War Communism writes that in the first years that not less than a million Jews left their settlements; in 1923 about half of Ukraine's Jews lived in large cities, pouring as well into parts of Russia formerly off-limits to Jews (so called "prohibited provinces") from Ukraine and Byelorussia, into Transcaucasia and Central Asia. The magnitude of this flow

was half a million, and four-fifth of them settled in RSFSR. One in five of the Jewish migrants went to Moscow. M. Agursky considers Larin's numbers to be substantially undercounted and points out that this demographic change affected interests important to the Russian population.

During War Communism with its ban on private trade and limitations on craftsmen and on those of certain social origins there arose a new social category—the *lishenets* (deprived of civil rights). Many Jews were deprived of civil rights and numbered among the “deprived.” Still, the migration of the Jewish population from Byelorussia into the interior of the USSR, mainly to Moscow and Leningrad did not slow. The new arrivals joined relatives or co-ethnics who offered communal support.

According to the 1926 USSR census, 2,211,000 or 83 percent of the Jewish population lived in cities and towns. 467,000 lived in rural districts. Another 300,000 did not identify themselves as Jews and these were practically all city dwellers. About five out of six Jews in the USSR were urban dwellers, constituting up to 23 percent and 40 percent of the urban population in Ukraine and Byelorussia respectively.

Most striking in the provincial capitals and major cities was the flow of Jews into the apparatus of the Soviet government. Ordzhonikidze in 1927 at the 15th Communist Party Congress reported on the “national make up of our party”. By his statistics Jews constituted 11.8 percent of the Soviet government of Moscow; 22.6 percent in Ukraine (30.3 percent in Kharkov, the capital); 30.6 percent in Byelorussia (38.3 percent in Minsk). If true, then the percentage of Jews in urban areas about equaled that of Jews in the government.

Solomon Schwartz, using data from the work of Lev Singer maintained that the percentage of Jews in the Soviet

government was about the same as their percentage of the urban population (and it was significantly lower in the Bolshevik party itself). Using Ordzhonikidze's data, Jews at 1.82 percent of the population by 1926 were represented in the Apparatus at about 6.5 times their proportion in the population at large.

It's easy to underestimate the impact of the sudden freedom from pre-revolutionary limits on civil rights: "Earlier, power was not accessible to Jews at all and now they had more access to power than anyone else" according to I. Bikerman. This sudden change provoked a varied reaction in all strata of society. S. Schwartz writes "From the mid-twenties there arose a new wave of anti-Semitism which was not related to the old anti-Semitism, nor a legacy of the past. It is an extreme exaggeration to explain it as originating with backwards workers from rural areas as anti-Semitism generally was not a fact of life in the Russian countryside." No, it was a much more dangerous phenomenon. It arose in the middle strata of urban society and reached the highest levels of the working class which, before the revolution, had remained practically untouched by the phenomenon. It reached students and members of the communist party and the Komsomol and, even earlier, local government in smaller provincial towns where an aggressive and active anti-Semitism took hold.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* writes that from the beginning of the 20th century "though official Soviet propaganda writes that anti-Semitism in the latter part of the Twenties was a legacy of the past, the facts show that, it arose mainly as a result of colliding social forces in large cities." It was fanned by the widely held opinion that power in the country had been seized by Jews who formed the nucleus of the Bolsheviks. Bikerman wrote with evident concern in

1923 that “the Jew is in all corners and on all levels of power. The Russian sees him as a ruler of Moscow, at the head of the capital on Neva, and at the head of the Red Army, a perfected death machine. He sees that St. Vladimir Prospect has been renamed Nakhimson Prospect... The Russian sees the Jew as judge and hangman; he sees Jews at every turn, not only among the Communists, but among people like himself, everywhere doing the bidding of Soviet power. Not surprisingly the Russian, comparing the present with the past, is confirmed in his idea that power is Jewish power, that it exists for Jews and does the bidding of Jews.”

No less visible than Jewish participation in government was the suddenly created new order in culture and education. The new societal inequality was not so much along the lines of nationality as it was a matter of town versus country. The Russian reader needs no explanation of the advantages bestowed by Soviet power from the Twenties to the Eighties on capital cities when compared to the rest of the country. One of the main advantages was the level of education and range of opportunities for higher learning. Those established during the early years of Soviet power in capital cities assured for their children and grandchildren future decades of advantages, *vis-avis* those in the country. The enhanced opportunities in post-secondary education and graduate education meant increased access to the educated elite. Meanwhile, from 1918 the ethnic Russian intelligentsia was being pushed to the margins.

In the Twenties students already enrolled in institutions of higher learning were expelled based on a social origins policy. Children of the nobility, the clergy, government bureaucrats, military officers, merchants, even children of petty shop keepers were expelled. Applicants from these classes and children of the intelligentsia were

denied entry to institutions of higher learning in the years that followed. As a nationality repressed by the Czar's regime, Jews did not receive this treatment. Despite their bourgeois origin, Jewish youth was freely accepted in institutions of higher learning. Jews were forgiven for not being proletarian.

According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, "with the absence of limitations based upon nationality for entry to institutions of higher learning, Jews came to make up 15.4 percent of all university students in the USSR, almost twice their proportion of the urban population at large." Further, owing to a high level of motivation Jews quickly bypassed the unprepared proletarian factory workers who had been pushed forward in the education system, and proceeded unhindered into graduate school. In the Twenties and Thirties and for a long time after, Jews were a disproportionately large part of the intelligentsia.

According to G. Aronson, wide access to higher and specialized education led to the formation of cadres of doctors, teachers and particularly engineers and technical workers among Jews, which naturally led to university faculty posts in the expanding system of higher education and in the widely proliferating research institutions. In the beginning of 1920s, the post of the State Chair of Science was occupied not by a scientist but a Bolshevik official, MandelshtamLyadov.

Even sharper changes gripped the economic life of the country. Bukharin publicly announced at a Communist Party conference in 1927 that "during War Communism, we purged the Russian petty and middle bourgeoisie along with leading capitalists. When the economy was later opened up to free trade petty and middle Jewish bourgeoisie took the place of the Russian bourgeoisie and roughly the same happened with our Russian intelligentsia which bucked and

sabotaged our efforts. Its place has been taken in some areas by the Jewish intelligentsia. Moreover, Jewish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia are concentrated in our central regions and cities, where they moved in from western provinces and southern towns. Here even in the Party ranks one often encounters anti-Semitic tendencies. Comrades, we must wage a fierce battle against anti-Semitism.”

Bukharin described a situation that was obvious to all. Unlike the Russian bourgeoisie, the Jewish bourgeoisie was not destroyed. The Jewish merchant, much less likely to be damned as a man of the past, found defenders, relatives or sympathizers in the Soviet apparatus who warned about impending arrests or seizures. And if he lost anything, it was just capital, not life. Cooperation was quasi-official through the Jewish Commissariat at the Sovnarkom. The Jews until now had been a repressed people and that meant, naturally, they needed help. Larin explained the destruction of the Russian bourgeoisie as a correction of the injustice that existed under the Czars before the Revolution.

When the NEP (New Economic Policy) was crushed, the blow fell with less force against Jewish NEPmen, owing to connections in Soviet ruling circles.

Bukharin had been speaking in answer to a remarkable speech by Prof. Y.V. Klyutchnikov, a publicist and a former Kadet. In December 1926, the professor spoke at a meeting on the Jewish question at the Moscow Conservatory. “We have isolated expressions of hooliganism... Its source is the hurt national feelings of Russians. The February Revolution established the equality of all citizens of Russia, including Jews. The October Revolution went further with the Russian nation proclaiming self-renunciation. A certain imbalance has developed with

respect to the proportion of the Jewish population in the country as a whole and the positions they have temporarily occupied in the cities. We are in our own cities and they arrive and squeeze us out. When Russians see Russian women, elders and children freezing on the street 9 to 11 hours a day, getting soaked by the rain in their tents at the market, and then they see relatively warm covered Jewish kiosks with bread and sausage, they are not happy. These phenomena are catastrophic and must be considered. There is a terrible disproportion in the government structure, in daily life and in other areas... We have a housing crisis in Moscow. Masses of people are crowding into areas not fit for habitation and at the same time people see others pouring in from other parts of the country taking up housing. These arrivals are Jews. A national dissatisfaction is rising and a defensiveness and fear of other nationalities. We must not close our eyes to that. A Russian speaking to a Russian will say things that he will not say to a Jew. Many are saying that there are too many Jews in Moscow. This must be dealt with, but don't call it anti-Semitism".

But Larin regarded Klyutchnikov's speech as a manifestation of anti-Semitism, saying "this speech serves as an example of the good nature of Soviet power in its battle against anti-Semitism because Klyutchnikov was roundly criticized by speakers who followed at the same meeting, but no administrative measures were taken against him." (Here it is, the frustration of the Communist activist!) Agursky writes: "One would expect repression to swiftly follow for such a speech in the Twenties and Thirties," but Klyutchnikov got off. Maybe he received secret support from some quarters? But why look for secret causes? It would have been too much of a scandal to punish such a famous publicist, who just returned from abroad and could have harmed the

reverse migration that was so important for Soviet authorities [return of people who emigrated from Russia during previous period of revolutions and Civil War.]

The Twenties were spoken of as the conquest by the Jews of Russian capital cities and industrial centers where conditions were better. As well, there was a migration to the better areas within the cities. G. Fedotov describes Moscow at that time: “The revolution deformed its soul, turning it inside out, emptying out its mansions, and filling them with a foreign and alien people.” A Jewish joke from the era: “Even from Berdichev and even the very old come to Moscow: they want to die in a Jewish city.”

In a private letter in 1927 V.I. Vernadsky writes: “Moscow now is like Berdichev; the power of Jewry is enormous - and anti-Semitism (including in communist circles) is growing unabated”.

Larin: “We do not hide figures that demonstrate growth of the Jewish population in urban centers. It is completely unavoidable and will continue into the future.” He forecast the migration from Ukraine and Byelorussia of an additional 600,000 Jews. “We can’t look upon this as something shameful, that the party would silence... we must create a spirit in the working class so that anyone who gives a speech against the arrival of Jews in Moscow would be considered a counter-revolutionary”.

And for counter-revolutionaries there is nine grams of lead - that much is clear.

But, what to do about anti-Semitic tendencies even in our party circles was a concern in the upper levels of the party. According to official data reported in *Pravda* in 1922, Jews made up 5.2 percent of the party. M. Agursky: “But their actual influence was considerably more. In that same

year at the 11th Communist Party Congress Jews made up 14.6 percent of the voting delegates, 18.3 percent of the non-voting delegates and 26 percent of those elected to the Central Committee at the conference". (Sometimes one accidentally comes upon such data: a taciturn memoirist from Moscow opens *Pravda* in July, 1930 and notes: "The portrait of the 25-member Presidium of the Communist Party included eleven Russians, eight Jews, three from the Caucasus, and three Latvians." In the large cities, close to areas of the former Pale of Settlement, the following data: In the early Twenties party organizations in Minsk, Gomel and Vitebsk in 1922 were, respectively, 35.8 percent, 21.1 percent, and 16.6 percent Jewish, respectively. Larin notes: "Jewish revolutionaries play a bigger part than any others in revolutionary activity, thanks to their qualities, Jewish workers often find it easier to rise to positions of local leadership."

In the same issue of *Pravda*, it is noted that Jews at 5.2 percent of the Party were in the third place after Russians (72 percent) and Ukrainians (5 percent), followed by Latvians (2.5 percent) and then Georgians, Tatars, Poles and Byelorussians. Jews had the highest rate of per capita party membership - 7.2 percent of Jews were in the party versus 3.8 percent for Great Russians.

M. Agursky correctly notes that in absolute numbers the majority of communists were, of course, Russians, but "the unusual role of Jews in leadership was dawning on the Russians." It was just too obvious.

For instance, Zinoviev gathered many Jews around himself in the Petersburg leadership. Agursky suggests this was what Larin was referring to in his discussion of the photograph of the Presidium of Petrograd Soviet in 1918 in

his book. By 1921 the preponderance of Jews in Petrograd CP organization was apparently so odious that the Politburo, reflecting on the lessons of Kronstadt and the anti-Semitic mood of Petrograd, decided to send several ethnic Russian communists to Petrograd, though entirely for publicity purposes. So Uglanov took the place of Zorin-Homberg as head of Gubkom; Komarov replaced Trilisser and Semyonov went to the Cheka. But Zinoviev objected to the decision of Politburo and fought the new group, and as a result Uglanov was recalled from Petrograd and a purely Russian opposition group formed spontaneously in the Petrograd organization, a group forced to counter the rest of the organization whose tone was set by Jews.

But not only in Petrograd. At the 12th Communist Party Congress (1923) three out of six Politburo members were Jewish. Three out of seven were Jews in the leadership of the Komsomol and in the Presidium of the all-Russia Conference in 1922. This was not tolerable to other leading communists and apparently preparations were begun for an anti-Jewish revolt at the 13th Party Congress (May 1924). There is evidence that a group of members of CK was planning to drive leading Jews from the Politburo, replacing them with Nogin, Troyanovsky and others and that only the death of Nogin interrupted the plot. His death, literally on the eve of the Congress, resulted from an unsuccessful and unnecessary operation for a stomach ulcer by the same surgeon who dispatched Frunze with an equally unneeded operation a year and a half later.

The Cheka-GPU had second place in terms of real power after the Party. A researcher of archival material, whom we quoted in Chapter 16, reports interesting statistics on the composition of the Cheka in 1920, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1927. He concludes that the proportion of national

minorities in the apparatus gradually fell towards the mid-Twenties. In the OGPU as a whole, the proportion of personnel from a national minority fell to 30-35 percent and to 40-45 percent for those in leadership.” (These figures contrast with 50 percent and 70 percent respectively during the Red Terror.) However, we observe a decline in the percentage of Latvians and an increase in the percentage of Jews. The Twenties was a period of significant influx of Jewish cadres into the organs of the OGPU. The author explains this: “Jews strived to utilize capabilities not needed in the pre-revolutionary period. With the increasing professionalism and need for organization, Jews, better than others, were able to meet the needs of OGPU and the new conditions.”

For example, three of Dzerzhinsky’s four assistants were Jews - G. Yagoda, V.L. Gerson, and M.M. Lutsky. In the Twenties and Thirties, the leading Chekists circled over the land like birds of prey flying quickly from cliff to cliff. From the top ranks of the Central Asian GPU off to Byelorussia and from Western Siberia to the North Caucasus, from Kharkov to Orenburg and from Orel to Vinnitza—there was a perpetual whirlwind of movement and change. And the lonely voices of those surviving witnesses could only speak much later, without precise reference to time, of the executioners whose names flashed by them. The personnel, the deeds and the power of the Cheka were completely secret.

For the 10th anniversary of the glorious Cheka we read in a newspaper a formal order signed by the omnipresent Unshlicht (from 1921 – deputy head of Cheka, from 1923 - member of Revvoensovet, from 1925 - Deputy Narkom of the Navy). In it, Yagoda was rewarded for particularly valuable service, for “sacrifice in the battle with counterrevolution”; also given awards were M. Trilisser

(distinguished for his “devotion to the revolution and untiring persecution of its enemies”) as well as 32 Chekists who had not been before the public until then. Each of them with the flick of a finger could destroy anyone of us! Among them were Jakov Agranov (for the work on all important political trials - and in the future, he will orchestrate the trials of Zinoviev, Kamenev, the Industrial Party Trial, and others; Zinovy Katznelson, Matvey Berman (transferred from Central Asia to the Far East) and Lev Belsky (transferred from the Far East to Central Asia).

There were several new names: Lev Zalin, Lev Meyer, Leonid Bull (dubbed “warden of Solovki”), Simeon Gendin, Karl Pauker. Some were already known to only a few, but now the people would get to know them. In this jubilee newspaper issue we can find a large image of slick Menzhinsky with his faithful deputy Yagoda and a photograph of Trilisser. Shortly afterward, another twenty Chekists were awarded with the order of the Red Banner, and again we see a motley company of Russians, Latvians, and Jews, the latter in the same proportions, around one-third.

Some of them were avoiding publicity. Simeon Schwartz was director of the Ukrainian Cheka. A colleague of his, Yevsei Shirvindt, directed the transport of prisoners and convoys throughout the USSR. Naturally, such Chekists as Grimmeril Heifetz (a spy from the end of the Civil War to the end of WWII) and Sergei Spigelglas, a Chekist from 1917 who, through his work as a spy, rose to become director of the Foreign Department of the NKVD and a two-time recipient of the honorary title of distinguished Chekist, worked out of the public eye. Careers of others, like Albert Stromin-Stroyev, were less impressive (he conducted interrogations of scientists during the Academy trial in 1929-31.)

David Azbel remembers the Nakhamkins, a family of Hasidic Jews from Gomel. (Azbel himself was imprisoned because of snitching by the younger family member, Lev.) “The revolution threw the Nakhamkins onto the crest of a wave. They thirsted for the revenge on everyone—aristocrats, the wealthy, Russians, few were left out. This was their path to selfrealization. It was no accident that fate led the offspring of this glorious clan to the Cheka, GPU, NKVD and the prosecutor’s office. To fulfill their plans, the Bolsheviks needed rabid people and this is what they got with the Nakhamkins. One member of this family, Roginsky, achieved brilliant heights as Deputy Prosecutor for the USSR, but during the Stalinist purges was imprisoned, as were many, and became a cheap stool pigeon. The others were not so well known. They changed their last name to one more familiar to the Russian ear and occupied high places in the Organs.”

Unshlict did not change his name to one more familiar to the Russian ear. See, this Slavic brother became truly a father of Russians: a warplane built with funds of farmer mutual aid societies (that is on the last dabs of money extorted from peasants) was named after him. No doubt, farmers could not even pronounce his name and likely thought that this Pole was a Jew.

Indeed, this reminds us that the Jewish issue does not explain the devastation of revolution, albeit it places a heavy hue on it. As it was also hued by many other unpronounceable names from Polish Dzerzhinsky and Eismont to Latvian Vatsetis. And what if we looked into the Latvian issue? Apart from those soldiers who forced the dissolution of the Russian Constituent Assembly and who later provided security for the Bolshevik leaders during the entire Civil War, we find many high-

placed Latvian Bolsheviks. Gekker suppressed the uprising in Yaroslavl Guberniya. Among others, there were Rudzutak, Eikhe, Eikhmans from Solovki, M. Karklin, A. Kaktyn, R. Kisis, V. Knorin, A. Skundre (one of those who suppressed the Tambov Uprising); Chekists Petere, Latsis, and an “honorary Chekist” Lithuanian I. Yysis. This thread can lead directly to 1991 (Pugo...) And what if we separate Ukrainians from Russians (as demanded by the Ukrainians these days)? We will find dozens of them at the highest posts of Bolshevik hierarchy, from its conception to the very end.

No, power was not Jewish power then. Political power was internationalist, and its ranks were to the large extent Russian. But under its multi-hued internationalism it united in an anti-Russian front against a Russian state and Russian traditions.

In view of the anti-Russian orientation of power and the multinational makeup of the executioners, why, in Ukraine, Central Asia and the Baltics did the people think it was Russians who had enslaved them? Because they were alien. A destroyer from one’s own nation is much closer than a destroyer from an alien tribe. And while it is a mistake to attribute the ruin and destruction to nationalist chauvinism, at the same time in Russia in the Twenties the inevitable question hanging in the air that was posed many years later by Leonard Schapiro: why was it highly likely that anyone unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of the Cheka would go before a Jewish interrogator or be shot by a Jew?

Yet most modern writers fail to even acknowledge these questions. Often Jewish authors thoughtlessly and meticulously comply and publish vast lists of Jewish leadership of the time. For example, see how proudly the article *Jews in the Kremlin*, published in the journal *Alef*, provides a list of the highest Soviet officials-Jews for 1925.

It listed eight out of twelve directors of Gosbank. The same level of Jewish representation was found among top trade union leaders. And it comments: “We do not fear accusations. Quite opposite—it is active Jewish participation in governing the state that helps to understand why state affairs were better then than now, when Jews at top positions are as rare as hen’s teeth.” Unbelievably, that was written in 1989.

Regarding the army, one Israeli scholar painstakingly researched and proudly published a long list of Jewish commanders of the Red Army, during and after the Civil War. Another Israeli researcher published statistics obtained from the 1926 census to the effect that while Jews made up 1.7 percent of the male population in the USSR, they comprised 2.1 percent of the combat officers, 4.4 percent of the command staff, 10.3 percent of the political leadership and 18.6 percent of military doctors.

And what did the West see? If the government apparatus could operate in secret under the communist party, which maintained its conspiratorial secrecy even after coming to power, diplomats were on view everywhere in the world. At the first diplomatic conferences with Soviets in Geneva and The Hague in 1922, Europe could not help but notice that Soviet delegations and their staff were mostly Jewish. Due to the injustice of history, the long and successful career of Boris Yefimovich Stern is now completely forgotten (he wasn’t even mentioned in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (GSE) of 1971). Yet he was the second most important assistant to Chicherin during Genoa Conference, and later at Hague Conference, and still later he led Soviet delegation during longstanding demilitarization negotiations. He was also a member of Soviet delegation at the League of Nations. Stern was ambassador in Italy and

Finland and conducted delicate negotiations with the Finns before the Soviet-Finnish war. Finally, from 1946 to 1948 he was the head of the Soviet delegation at UN. And he used to be a longstanding lecturer at the High Diplomatic School (at one point during “anti-cosmopolitan” purges he was fired but in 1953 he was restored at that position).

An associate of Chicherin, Leon Haikis worked for many years in the Narkomat of the Foreign Affairs (NKID). In 1937, he was sent to a warmer place as ambassador to the embattled Republican government of Spain (where he directed the Republican side during the Civil War), but was arrested and removed. Fyodor Rothshtein founded the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, and in that very year he was a member of the Soviet delegation in negotiations with England! Two years later he represented RSFSR at The Hague conference As Litvinov’s righthand man he independently negotiated with ambassadors to Russia in important matters; until 1930 he was in the Presidium of NKID and for 30 years before his death, a professor at the Moscow State University.

And on the other side of the globe, in southern China, M. Gruzenberg-Borodin had served for five years when the December 1927 Canton Rebellion against the Kuomintang broke out. It is now recognized that the revolt was prepared by our Vice Consul, Abram Hassis, who, at age of 33 was killed by Chinese soldiers. *Izvestia* ran several articles with the obituaries and the photographs of “comrades in arms” under Kuibishev, comparing the fallen comrade with highly distinguished communists like Furmanov and Frunze. In 1922 Gorky told the academic Ipatiev that 98 percent of the Soviet trade mission in Berlin was Jewish and this probably was not much of an exaggeration. A similar picture would be found in other Western capitals where the Soviets were

ensconced. The “work” that was performed in early Soviet trade missions is colorfully described in a book by G.A. Solomon, the first Soviet trade representative in Tallinn, Estonia— the first European capital to recognize the Bolsheviks. There are simply no words to describe the boundless theft by the early Bolsheviks in Russia (along with covert actions against the West) and the corruption of soul these activities brought to their effecters.

Shortly after Gorky’s conversation with Ipatiev he was criticized in the Soviet press for an article where he reproached the Soviet government for its placement of so many Jews in positions of responsibility in government and industry. He had nothing against Jews *per se*, but, departing from views he expressed in 1918, he thought that Russians should be in charge. And *Pravda*’s twin publication *Der Emes* (Pravda in Yiddish) objected strongly: “Do they (i.e. Gorky and Shalom Ash, the interviewer) really want for Jews to refuse to serve in any government position? For them to get out of the way? That kind of decision could only be made by counterrevolutionaries or cowards.”

In *Jews in the Kremlin*, the author, using the 1925 Annual Report of NKID, introduces leading figures and positions in the central apparatus. “In the publishing arm, there is not one nonJew” and further, with evident pride, the author examines the staff in the Soviet consulates around the world and finds “there is not one country in the world where the Kremlin has not placed a trusted Jew.”

If he was interested, the author of *Alef* could find no small number of Jews in the Supreme Court of RSFSR of 1920s, in the Procurator’s office and RKI. Here we can find already familiar A. Goikhbarg, who, after chairing the Lesser Sovnarcom, worked out the legal system for the NEP era,

supervised development of Civil Code of RSFSR and was director of the Institute of Soviet Law.

It is much harder to examine lower, provincial level authorities, and not only because of their lower exposure to the press but also due to their rapid fluidity, and frequent turnover of cadres from post to post, from region to region. This amazing early Soviet shuffling of personnel might have been caused either by an acute deficit of reliable men as in the Lenin's era or by mistrust (and the "tearing" of a functionary from the developed connections) in Stalin's times. Here are several such career trajectories.

Lev Maryasin was Secretary of Gubkom of Orel Guberniya, later – chair of Sovnarkhoz of Tatar Republic, later – head of a department of CK of Ukraine, later – chair of board of directors of Gosbank of USSR, and later – Deputy Narkom of Finances of USSR. Moris Belotsky was head of Politotdel of the First Cavalry Army (a very powerful position), participated in suppression of the Kronstadt Uprising, later – in NKID, then later – the First Secretary of North Ossetian Obkom, and even later was First Secretary of CK of Kyrgyzstan.

A versatile functionary, Grigory Kaminsky was Secretary of Gubkom of Tula Guberniya, later – Secretary of CK of Azerbaijan, later – chair of Kolkhozcenter, and later – Narkom of Health Care Service.

Abram Kamensky was Narkom of State Control Commission of Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Republic, later Deputy Narkom of Nationalities of RSFSR, later Secretary of Gubkom of Donetsk, later served in Narkomat of Agriculture, then – director of Industrial Academy, and still later he served in the Narkomat of Finances.

There were many Jewish leaders of the Komsomol.

The ascendant career of Efim Tzetlin began with the post of the First Chairman of CK RKSM (fall of 1918); after the Civil War he became Secretary of CK and Moscow Committee of RKSM, since 1922. He was a member of the executive committee of KIM (Young Communist International), in 1923-24 a spy in Germany. Later he worked in Secretariat of Executive Committee of Communist International, still later in the editorial office of Pravda, and even later he was head of Bukharin's secretariat, where this latter post eventually proved fatal for him.

The career of Isaiah Khurgin was truly amazing. In 1917, he was a member of Ukrainian Rada [Parliament], served both in the Central and the Lesser chambers and worked on the draft of legislation on Jewish autonomy in Ukraine. Since 1920 we see him as a member VKPb, in 1921 – he was the Trade Commissioner of Ukraine in Poland, in 1923 he represented GermanAmerican Transport Society in USA, serving as a de facto Soviet plenipotentiary. He founded and chaired Amtorg (American Trading Corporation). His future seemed incredibly bright but alas at the age of 38 (in 1925) he was drowned in a lake in USA. What a life he had!

Let's glance at the economy. Moses Rukhimovitch was Deputy Chair of Supreme Soviet of the National Economy. Ruvim Levin was a member of Presidium of Gosplan (Ministry of Economic Planning) of USSR and Chair of Gosplan of RSFSR (later – Deputy Narkom of Finances of USSR).

Zakhary Katzenelenbaum was inventor of the governmental Loan for Industrialization in 1927 and, therefore, of all subsequent "loans". He also was one of the founders of Soviet Gosbank.

Moses Frumkin was Deputy Narkom of Foreign Trade from 1922 but in fact he was in charge of the entire Narkomat. He and A. I. Vainstein were long-serving members of the panel of Narkomat of Finances of USSR.

Vladimirov-Sheinfinkel was Narkom of Provand of Ukraine, later – Narkom of Agriculture of Ukraine, and even later he served as Narkom of Finances of RSFSR and Deputy Narkom of Finances of USSR.

If you are building a mill, you are responsible for possible flood. A newspaper article by Z. Zangvil describes a celebratory jubilee meeting of the Gosbank board of directors in 1927, five years after introduction of chervonets [a former currency of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union] and explains the importance of chervonets and displays a group photograph. The article lauds Sheinman, the chairman of the board, and Katzenelenbaum, a member of the board. Sheinman's signature was reproduced on every Soviet chervonets and he simultaneously held the post of Narkom of Domestic Commerce (from 1924). And hold your breath, my reader! He didn't return from a foreign visit in 1929! He preferred to live in bloody capitalism!

Speaking of mid-level Soviet institutions, the well-known economist and professor B. D. Brutskus asks: "Did not the revolution open up new opportunities for the Jewish population? Among these opportunities would be government service. The large numbers of Jews in government are obvious, particularly in higher posts," and "most of the Jewish government employees come from the higher classes, not the Jewish masses." He maintained "there are many

Jewish public servants particularly in the commissariats devoted to economic functions."

But upperclass Jews required to serve the Soviet government did not gain, but lost in comparison with what they would have had in their own businesses or freely pursuing professions. As well, those who moved through the Soviet hierarchy had to display the utmost of tact to avoid arousing jealousy and dissatisfaction. A large number of Jewish public servants, regardless of talent and qualities, would not lessen anti-Semitism, but would strengthen it among other workers and among the intelligentsia. Larin put it more simply: “The Jewish intelligentsia in large numbers served the victorious revolution readily, realizing access to previously denied government service.” G. Pomerantz, speaking 50 years later justified this: “History dragged Jews into the government apparatus. Jews had nowhere else to go besides to government institutions,” including apparently the Cheka, as we commented earlier. The Bolsheviks also had no other place to go – the *Jewish Tribune* from Paris explains “there were so many Jews in various Soviet functions because of the need for literate, sober bureaucrats.”

However, one can read in *Jewish World*, a Parisian publication, that “There is no denying that a large percentage of Jewish youth from lower social elements — some completely hopeless failures, were drawn to Bolshevism by the sudden prospect of power; for others it was the world proletarian revolution and for still others it was a mixture of adventurous idealism and practical utilitarianism.”

Of course, not all were drawn to Bolshevism. There were large numbers of peaceful Jews whom the revolution crushed. However, the life in the towns of the former Pale of Settlement was not visible to ordinary non-Jewish person. Instead the average person saw, as described by M. Heifetz, “arrogant, self-confident and self-satisfied adult Jews at ease

on Red holidays and Red weddings ... We now sit where Czars and generals once sat, and they sit beneath us". These were not unwaveringly ideological Bolsheviks. The invitation to power was extended to millions of residents from rotting *shtetls*, to pawn brokers, tavern owners, contrabandists, seltzer-water salesmen and those who sharpened their wills in the fight for survival and their minds in evening study of the Torah and the Talmud. The authorities invited them to Moscow, Petrograd and Kiev to take into their quick nervous hands that which was falling from the soft, pampered hands of the hereditary intelligentsia—everything from the finances of a great power to nuclear physics and the secret police.

They couldn't resist the temptation of Esau, the less so since, in addition to a bowl of pottage, they were offered the chance to build the promised land, that is, communism. There was a Jewish illusion that this was their country.

Many Jews did not enter the whirlwind of revolution and didn't automatically join the Bolsheviks, but the general national inclination was one of sympathy for the Bolshevik cause and a feeling that life would now be incomparably better. The majority of Jews met the revolution, not with fear, but with welcome arms. In the early Twenties, the Jews of Byelorussia and Ukraine were a significant source of support for the centralization of power in Moscow over and against the influence of regional power. Evidence of Jewish attitudes in 1923 showed the overwhelming majority considered Bolshevism to be a lesser evil and that if the Bolsheviks lost power it would be worse for them.

Now, a Jew can command an army. These gifts alone were enough to bring Jewish support for the communists. The disorder of the Bolshevism seemed like a brilliant victory for justice and no one noticed the complete

suppression of freedom. Large number of Jews who did not leave after the revolution failed to foresee the bloodthirstiness of the new government, though the persecution, even of socialists, was well underway. The Soviet government was as unjust and cruel then as it was to be in '37 and in 1950. But in the Twenties the bloodlust did not raise alarm or resistance in the wider Jewish population since its force was aimed not at Jewry.

* * *

When Leskov, in a report for the Palensky Commission [a pre-revolution government commission] one by one refuted all the presumed consequences for Russians from the removal of restrictions on Jewish settlement in Russia he couldn't have foreseen the great degree to which Jews would be participating in governing the country and the economy in the Twenties. The revolution changed the entire course of events and we don't know how things would have developed without it.

When in 1920, Solomon Luria [aka Lurie], a professor of ancient history in Petrograd, found that in Soviet, internationalist and communist Russia anti-Semitism was again on the rise, he was not surprised. On the contrary, events substantiated the correctness of his earlier conclusion that the cause of anti-Semitism lies with the Jews themselves and currently with or in spite of the complete absence of legal restrictions on Jews, anti-Semitism had erupted with a new strength and reached a pitch that could never have been imagined in the old régime.

Russian (more precisely Little Russian) anti-Semitism of past centuries and the early 20th century was blown away with its seeds by the winds of the October

revolution. Those who joined the Union of the Russian People, those who marched with their religious standards to smash Jewish shops, those who demanded the execution of Beilis, those who defended the royal throne, the urban middle class and those who were with them or who resembled them or who were suspected to be like them were rounded up by the thousands and shot or imprisoned.

Among Russian workers and peasants there was no anti-Semitism before the revolution – this is attested to by leaders of the revolution themselves. The Russian intelligentsia was actively sympathetic to the cause of the oppressed Jews and children of the post-revolution years were raised only in the internationalist spirit.

So, stripped of any strength, discredited and crushed completely, where did anti-Semitism come from?

We already described how surprising it was for Jewish-Russian émigrés to learn that anti-Semitism had not died. They followed the phenomenon in writings of socialists E.D. Kuskova and S.S. Maslov, who came from Russia in 1922. In an article in the *Jewish Tribune*, Kuskova states that anti-Semitism in the USSR is not a figment of the imagination and that “in Russia, Bolshevism is now blending with Judaism — this cannot be doubted.” She even met highly cultured Jews who were anti-Semites of the new Soviet type. A Jewish doctor told her: “Jewish Bolshevik administrators ruined the excellent relations he had with the local population.” A teacher said “children tell me that I teach in a Jewish school” because we have “forbidden the teaching of the Ten Commandments and driven off the priest. There are only Jews in the Narkomat of Education. In high school circles (from radical families) there is talk about the predominance of the Jews.

“Young people, in general are more anti-Semitic than the older generation... and one hears everywhere ‘they showed their true colors and tortured us.’ Russian life is full of this stuff today. But if you ask me who they are, these anti-Semites, they are most of society. So widespread is this thinking that the political administration distributed a proclamation explaining why there are so many Jews in it: ‘When the Russian proletariat needed its own new intelligentsia, mid-level intelligentsia, technical workers and administrative workers, not surprisingly, Jews, who, before had been in the opposition, came forward to meet them... the occupation by Jews of administrative posts in the new Russia is historically inevitable and would have been the natural outcome, regardless of whether the new Russia had become KD (Constitutional Democrat), SR (Socialist Revolutionary) or proletarian. Any problems with having Aaron Moiseevich Tankelevich sitting in the place of Ivan Petrovich Ivanov need to be ‘cured’.”

Kuskova parries “in a Constitutional Democratic or SR Russia many administrative posts would have been occupied by Jews, but neither the Kadets nor SR’s would have forbidden teaching the Ten Commandments and wouldn’t have chopped off heads. Stop Tankelevich from doing evil and there will be no microbe of anti-Semitism.”

The Jewish émigré community was chilled by Maslov’s findings. Here was a tested SR with an unassailable reputation who lived through the first four years of Soviet power. “Judæphobia is everywhere in Russia today. It has swept areas where Jews were never before seen and where the Jewish question never occurred to anyone. The same hatred for Jews is found in Vologda, Archangel, in the towns of Siberia and the Urals.” He recounts several episodes affecting the perception of the simple Russian peasants such

as the Tyumen Produce Commissar Indenbaum's order to shear sheep for the second time in the season, "because the Republic needs wool." (This was prior to collectivization, no less; these actions of this commissar caused the Ishim peasant uprising.)

The problem arose because it was late in the fall and the sheep would die without their coats from the coming winter cold. Maslov does not name the commissars who ordered the planting of millet and fried sun-flower seeds or issued a prohibition on planting malt, but one can conclude they did not come from ordinary Russian folk or from the Russian aristocracy or from yesterday's men. From all this, the peasantry could only conclude that the power over them was Jewish. So too did the workers. Several workers' resolutions from the Urals in February and March of 1921 sent to the Kremlin complained with outrage of the dominance of the Jews in central and local government. The intelligentsia, of course did not think that Soviet power was Jewish, but it noted the vastly disproportionate role of Jews in authority when compared to their numbers in the population.

And if a Jew approaches a group of non-Jews who are freely discussing Soviet reality, they almost always change the topic of conversation even if the new arrival is a personal acquaintance. Maslov tries to understand the cause of the widespread and bitter hatred of Jews in modern Russia and it seems to him to be the identification throughout society of Soviet power and Jewish power. "The expression 'Yid Power' is often used in Russia and particularly in Ukraine and in the former Pale of Settlement not as a polemic, but as a completely objective definition of power, its content and its politics. Soviet power in the first place answers the wishes

and interests of Jews and they are its ardent supporters, and in the second place, power resides in Jewish hands.”

Among the causes of Judæphobia Maslov notes the “tightly welded ethnic cohesion they have formed as a result of their difficult thousands year-old history. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to selecting staff at institutions – if the selection process is in the hands of Jews, you can bet that the entire staff of responsible positions will go to Jews, even if it means removing the existing staff. And often that preference for their own is displayed in a sharp, discourteous manner which is offensive to others. In the Jewish bureaucrat, Soviet power manifests more obviously its negative features... the intoxicating wine of power is stronger for Jews and goes to their head... I don’t know where this comes from.” Perhaps because of the low cultural level of the former pharmacists and shopkeepers. Maybe from living earlier without full civil rights?

The Parisian Zionist journal *Sunrise* wrote in 1922 that Gorky essentially said that the growth of anti-Semitism is aided by the tactless behavior of the Jewish Bolsheviks themselves in many situations.

That is the blessed truth!

And Gorky wasn’t speaking of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev – he was speaking of the typical Jewish communist who occupies a position in the collegia, presidia and petty and midlevel Soviet institutions where he comes into contact with large swaths of the population. Such individuals occupy leading front-line positions which naturally multiplies their number in the mind of the public.

D. Pasmanik comments: “We must admit that many Jews through their own actions provoke acute anti-Semitism... all the impudent Jews filling the communist ranks, these pharmacists, shopkeepers, peddlers, dropouts

and pseudo intellectuals are indeed causing much evil to Russia and Jewry. Hardly ever before inside of Russia or outside of Russia have Jews been the subject of such an active and concentrated hostility. It has never reached such an intensity nor been so widespread. This elemental hostility has been fed by the open and undeniable participation of Jews in destructive processes underway in Europe as well as by the tales and exaggerations about such participation. A terrible anti-Semitic mood is taking hold, fed exclusively by Bolshevism which continues to be identified with Jewry.”

In 1927 Mikhail Kozakov (shot in 1930 after the Food Workers’ Trial) wrote in a private letter to his brother overseas about the “Judæphobic mood of the masses (among non-party and party members) ... it is no secret that the mass of workers do not love the Jews.”

And Shulgin, after his secret trip to the USSR in 1928 says: “No one says anymore that anti-Semitism is propaganda planted by the Czar’s government or an infection limited to the dregs of society... Geographically it spreads wider each day threatening to engulf all of Russia. The main center today seems to be Moscow... anti-Semitism is a new phenomenon in Great Russia, but is much more serious than old anti-Semitism in the South.” (Anti-Semitism of the South of Russia was traditionally humorous and mitigated by anecdotes about Jews).

Larin brings up an anti-Jewish slogan allegedly used for propaganda purposes by the White Guards — “Russians are sent to Narym [a locale in the far north] and Jews to the Crimea” [a vacation spot].

The Soviet authorities eventually became seriously concerned with the rise of anti-Semitism. In 1923 the *Jewish Tribune* writes, albeit with skepticism, “The Commissariat of Internal Affairs has established a commission to study the

question of protecting the Jews from dark forces.” In 1926 Kalinin (and other functionaries) received many questions about Jews in letters and at meetings. As a result, Larin undertook a study of the problem in a book on Jews and anti-Semitism in the USSR. From his own reports, queries and interviews (taken, we can presume, from communists or communist sympathizers) he enumerates 66 questions from those the authorities received, recording them without editing the language. Among these questions:

Where are the
Jews in
Moscow
coming from?
Why is
authority
predominantly
Jewish?

How come Jews don't wait in line?

How do Jews arriving from Berdichev and other cities immediately receive apartments?

(There is a joke that the last Jew left Berdichev and gave the keys to the city to Kalinin.) Why do Jews have money and own their own bakeries, etc?

Why are Jews drawn to light work and not to physical labor?

Why do Jews in government service and in professions stick together and help each other while Russians do not?

They do not want to work at everyday jobs, but are concerned only with their careers.

Why do they not farm even though it is now allowed them?

Why are Jews given good land in the Crimea while Russians are given inferior land?

Why is Party opposition 76 percent Jewish? [the opposition to the general line of the Party within the Party itself.]

Why did anti-Semitism develop only against Jews and not against other nationalities?

What should a group agitprop leader do when he tries to counter anti-Semitic tendencies in his group and no one supports him?

Larin suspects that these questions were dreamed up and spread among the masses by an underground organization of counter-revolutionaries! As we will see later, this is where some official explanations came from. But he fixates on the unexpected phenomenon and tries to address scientifically the question “How could anti-Semitism take hold in the USSR in those strata of society — [factory workers, students], where, before the revolution, it was little noted?” His findings were:

Anti-Semitism Among The Intelligentsia

“Among the intelligentsia anti-Semitism is more developed than in any other group.” However, he maintains that dissatisfaction rises not from the large number of Jews, but from the fact that Jews presumed to enter into competition with the Russian intelligentsia for government jobs.

“The obvious development of anti-Semitic attitudes among city clerks and workers by 1928 cannot be explained by excessive numbers of Jews claiming jobs.”

“Among the intellectual professions, anti-Semitic tendencies are felt in the medical sphere and in

engineering... The army has good political training and there is no anti-Semitism there, even though the command staff of the Red Army has a significantly higher percentage of Jews than are present in the country as a whole.”

Anti-Semitism Among The Urban Bourgeoisie

“The root of anti-Semitism is found in urban bourgeois philistinism.” But, “the battle against anti-Semitism among the bourgeoisie is mixed in with the question of the destruction of the bourgeoisie in general. The anti-Semitism of the bourgeoisie will disappear when the bourgeoisie disappears.”

Anti-Semitism In The Countryside

“We have almost completely pushed out the private trader of the peasant’s grain, therefore among the peasant masses anti-Semitism is not showing itself and has even weakened against its pre-war levels. Now it appears only in those areas where Jews have been resettled on the land, allegedly from Kulaks and former landowners. “

Anti-Semitism Among The Working Class

“Anti-Semitism among the workers has grown noticeably stronger during the decade, and by now [1929] there can be no doubt of its existence. Now it occurs with more frequency and intensity than a few years ago. It is particularly strong among the backward parts of the working class — women and seasonal workers. However, an anti-Semitic mood can be observed among a broad spectrum of

workers, not only among the corrupted fringe. And here economic competition is not a factor — it arises even where there is no such competition; Jews make up only 2.7 percent of the working class.”

“In the lower level professional organizations, they try to paint over anti-Semitism. Difficulties arise because attempts to hide anti-Semitism come from the active proletariat itself; indeed, anti-Semitism originates from the active proletariat. In many cases Party members and members of Komsomol demonstrate anti-Semitism. Talk of Jewish dominance is particularly widespread, and in meetings one hears complaints that the Soviet authority limits itself to battle with the Orthodox religion alone.”

What savagery — anti-Semitism among the proletariat?! How could this occur in the most progressive and politically aware class in the world?! Larin finds that it arose because “no other means remained for the White Guard to influence the masses besides anti-Semitism.” Its plan of action moves along “the rails of anti-Semitism”. This was a theory that was to have frightening consequences.

Larin’s views on the anti-Semitism of the time were to find echoes later in other authors.

S. Shwartz provides his own variant on anti-Semitism as being the result of a “vulgar perception of Jews as the main carriers of the New Economic Policy (NEP).” But he agrees: “The Soviet government, not without basis, saw in anti-Semitism a possible tool of the counter-revolution”.

In 1968 the author adds: “After the civil war, anti-Semitism began to spread, gripping layers of society which were free of this tendency before the revolution”.

Against this it was necessary to engage not in academic discussion but to act energetically and forcefully. In May 1928 the CK of the VKPb issued an Agitprop

communication about “measures to be taken in the battle with anti-Semitism.” (As was often the case in implementation of party directives, related documents were not publicized, but circulated among party organizations.) The battle to create an atmosphere of intolerance of anti-Semitism was to be taken up in educational programs, public reports, lectures, the press, radio and school textbooks and finally, authorities were “to apply the strictest disciplinary measures to those found guilty of anti-Semitic practices.” Sharp newspaper articles followed. In *Pravda*’s article by a highly connected Lev Sosnovsky, he incriminates all kinds of party and educational officials in anti-Semitism: an official in Kiev “openly fires Jews with the connivance of the local district party committee”; defamatory anti-Jewish graffiti is widespread etc. From a newspaper article: “With the growing battle against anti-Semitism there are demands to solve the problem by increasing repression on those carriers of anti-Semitism and on those who protect them.” Clearly it was the GPU speaking through the language of a newspaper article.

After Larin’s report, the issue of anti-Semitism was included into various educational curricula, while Larin himself continued to research the ways to overcome anti-Semitism decisively. “Until now we were too soft, allowing propaganda to spread. Locally officials often do not deal with anti-Semitism as rigorously as they should.” Newspapers “should not fear to point attention to the Jewish issue (to avoid dissemination of anti-Semitism) as it only interferes with the fight against counter revolutionary sabotage. Anti-Semitism is a social pathology like alcoholism or vagrancy. Too often when dealing with communists we let them off with mere censure. If a person goes to church and gets

married, then we exclude him without discussion — anti-Semitism is no less an evil.”

“As the USSR develops towards socialism, the prognosis is good that Soviet anti-Semitism and the legacy of pre-Soviet relationships will be torn out by the roots. Nevertheless, it is absolutely necessary to impose severe controls on intellectual anti-Semitism especially in the teaching profession and civil service.”

But the very spirit of the brave Twenties demands stronger language. “The nature of modern-day anti-Jewish agitation in the USSR is political and not nationalistic. Agitation against the Jews is directed not just against Jews, but indirectly against the Soviet power.” Or maybe not so indirect: “anti-Semitism is a means of mobilization against Soviet power.” And “those against the position of Soviet authorities on the Jewish question are against the working class and for the capitalists. Any talk of Jewish dominance will be regarded as counterrevolutionary activity against the very foundation of the nationalities policy of the proletarian revolution. Parts of the intelligentsia, and sometimes the White Guards are using anti-Semitism to transmit bourgeois ideology.”

Yes, that’s it – clearly there is a White Guard whispering campaign, planned agitation by secret White Guard organizations. Behind “the philistine anti-Jewish agitation, secret monarchist organizations are leading a battle against Soviet power. And from the central organs of anti-Soviet emigration (including Jewish bankers and Czarist generals) an ideology is transmitted right into our factories proving that anti-Jewish agitation in the USSR is class-based, not nationality-based. It is necessary to explain to the masses that encouragement of anti-Jewish feelings in essence is an attempt to lay the groundwork for counter-revolution. The

masses must regard anyone who shows sympathy to anti-Semitism as a secret counter-revolutionary or the mouthpiece of a secret monarchist organization. (There are conspiracies everywhere!) The term *anti-Semite* must take on the same meaning in the public mind as the term counter-revolutionary.

The authorities had seen through everything and named everything for what it was:
counter-revolution, White Guards, monarchists, White generals and anyone suspected of being any of the above.

For the thickheaded, the revolutionary orator elaborates: “The methods to fight anti-Semitism are clear.” At a minimum, to conduct open investigations and sessions of a “people’s tribunal against anti-Semitism” at local levels under the motto ‘explanations for the backward workers’ and ‘repressions for the malicious.’ There is no reason why Lenin’s decree should not apply.”

Under Lenin’s decree (that from July 27, 1918) active anti-Semites were to be placed outside of the law — that is, to be shot even for agitating for a pogrom, not just for participating in one. The law encouraged each Jew to register a complaint about any ethnic insult visited upon him.

Now some later author will object that the July 27 Act was ultimately not included in the law and was not part of the criminal code of 1922. Though the criminal code of 1926 did include an article about the instigation of ethnic hostility and dissension, there were no specific articles about acts of anti-Semitism. This is not convincing. Article 59-7 of the Criminal Code (“propaganda or agitation intended to incite national or religious hatred or dissension”) was sufficient to send one to prison and the article provided for confiscation of the property of perpetrators of widespread disturbances and, under aggravated circumstances (for instance, class

origin) – death. Article 59-7 was based on the RSFSR Penal Code of Feb 26, 1927, which widened the definition of instigation of national hatred making it equal in seriousness to dissemination or preparation and storing of literature.

Storing books! How familiar is that proscription, contained in the related law 58-10! [the infamous Article 58 of the Penal Code of RSFSR dealt with so-called counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet activities.]

Many brochures on anti-Semitism were published and finally, on Feb 19, 1929 Pravda devoted its lead article to the matter: “Attention to the battle with anti-Semitism.” A 1929 resolution of CK of Communist Party of Byelorussia stated that “the counter-revolutionary nature of anti-Semitic incidents is often ignored” and that organs of justice should “intensify the fight, prosecuting both perpetrators of the law and those who inspire them.”

The secretary of the CK of Komsomol said, “most dangerous in our conditions are secret anti-Semites who hide their anti-Semitic attitudes.” Those who are familiar with Soviet language understand what is being said here: “it is necessary to cut off suspicious ways of thinking and get rid of anyone suspected of impure thoughts.” This recalls Grigory Landau, speaking of his Jewish opponents: “They suspect or accuse other groups around them of anti-Semitism ... Anyone who voices a negative opinion about Jews is accused of being an open anti-Semite and others are called secret anti-Semites.”

In 1929, a certain I. Zilberman in *Daily Soviet Jurisprudence* (no. 4) writes that there were too few court trials relating to anti-Semitism in Moscow Province. In the city of Moscow alone for the year there were only 34 cases (that is, every 10 days there was a trial for anti-Semitism

somewhere in Moscow). The *Journal of Narkomyust* was read as an instruction manual for bringing such cases.

Could the evillest anti-Semite have thought up a better way to identify Jews with Soviet power in the opinion of the people?

It went so far that in 1930 the Supreme Court of RSFSR ruled that Article 59-7 should not be used by members of national minorities seeking redress in conflicts of a personal nature. In other words, the judicial juggernaut had already been wound up and was running at full speed.

* * *

If we look at life of regular, not “commanding” Jewish folk, we see desolation and despair in formerly vibrant and thriving *shtetls*. The *Jewish Tribune* reproduced a report by a special official who inspected towns and *shtetls* in the south-west of Russia in 1923, indicating that as the most active inhabitants had moved into the cities, the remaining population of elders and families with many children lived to a large extent by relying on humanitarian and financial aid from America.

Indeed, by the end of the period of War Communism (1918-1920) when all trade, or any buying and selling, were prohibited under threat of property confiscation and fines, the Jews were helped by Jewish charities like the Joint All-Russian Public Committee for assistance to victims of pogroms and destitute Jews. Several other charities protected the Jewish population later at different times, such as the SC (Society of Craftsmen, which after the revolution moved abroad), EKOPO (the Jewish committee for assistance to victims of war) and EKO (the Jewish colonizing society). In 1921-22, Soviet-based Jewish charities functioned in

Moscow and St. Petersburg. Despite intervention and obstacles from YevSeks (Jewish communist organizations), Joint provided Soviet Jews with extensive financial and other assistance, whereas SC was dedicated to establishment and development of Jewish industry and agriculture in the south of Ukraine during first half of 1920s.

The first Soviet census provides insight into Jewish life during the liberalized NEP period. Forty percent of Jews were classified as active (not dependents.) Of those, 28 percent were public servants, 21 percent craftsmen, 19 percent industry workers (including apprentices), 12 percent merchants, 9 percent peasants, one percent military men, and the remainder were classified as

“others.” Among public servants, Jews were well represented in trade-related occupations. For instance, in Moscow business organizations 16 percent of the clerks were Jews, in credit and trade organizations 13 percent (30 percent according to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*) in public organizations 19 percent, in fiscal organizations 9 percent, in Sovdeps 10 percent, with virtually no presence in the police force. The percentages were correspondingly higher in the former Pale of Settlement areas, up to 62 percent in the state trade of Byelorussia, 44 percent in Ukraine (77 percent in category of private state servants.) The flow of Jewish workers into industry was much slower than government wished. There were almost no Jews among railroad men and miners’ they rather preferred the professions of tailor, tanner, typographer, woodworker and food-related specialties and other fields of consumer industry. To recruit Jewish workers into industry, special professional schools were created with predominantly foreign funding from Jewish organizations abroad.

It was the time of NEP, which improved economic conditions of Jewish population within a new, Soviet framework. In 1924 Moscow 75 percent of the perfume and pharmaceutical trade was in Jewish hands, as well as 55 percent of the manufactured goods trade, 49 percent of the Jewelry trade, 39 percent of the small ware trade, and 36 percent of the wood-depots. Starting business in a new place, a Jew usually ran down prices in private sector to attract clientele. The first and most prominent NEPmen often were Jews. To a large extent, anger against them stemmed from the fact that they utilized the Soviet as well as the market systems: their commerce was routinely facilitated by their links and pulls in the Soviet apparatus. Sometimes such connections were exposed by authorities as in the case of famous Paraffin Affair. During 1920s, there were abundant opportunities to buy up belongings of oppressed and persecuted “former” people, especially high quality or rare furniture. S. Ettinger noted that Jews made a majority of NEPmen and new-riches, which was supported by impressive list of individuals who failed to pay state taxes and dues in *Izvestia* in 1929.

However, at the end of NEP, authorities launched an anti-capitalist assault against financiers, merchants and manufacturers, many of whom were Jewish. As a result, many Jews turned into “Soviet trade servants” and continued working in the same spheres of finance, credit and commerce. A steamroller of merchandise and property confiscations, outright state robbery and social ostracizing (outclassing people into the disenfranchised *lishenets* category) was advancing on private commerce. Some Jewish merchants, attempting to avoid discrimination and endlessly increasing taxation, declared themselves as having no occupation during the census. Nevertheless, virtually the

entire Jewish male population in towns and *shtetls* passed through the torture chambers of GPU during the campaign of gold and jewelry extortion in the beginning of 1930s. Such things would be regarded as an impossible nightmare in the Czar's Russia. Many Jewish families, to avoid the stigma of being *lishenets*, moved into large cities. In the end, only one-fifth of Soviet Jews lived in the traditional Jewish settlements by 1930s.

Socioeconomic experiments by the Soviet authorities including all kinds of nationalization and socialization had not only devastated the middle classes, but also hit badly the small merchants and craftsmen. Due to a general lack of merchandise and solvent customers as well as low liquidity and exorbitant taxes, many *shtetl* merchants had no other choice but to close down their shops, and while the most active left for cities, the remaining populace has nothing else to do but aimlessly roam decrepit streets, loudly complaining about their fate, people and God. It is apparent that Jewish masses completely lost their economic foundations. It was really like that in many *shtetls* at that time. To address the problem, a special resolution of Sovnarkom was issued in 1929.

G. Simon, a former emigrant, came to the USSR in the end of 1920s as an American businessman with a mission to investigate tool shortages of Jewish craftsmen. Later, in Paris, he published a book with an emotional and ironic title, *Jews Rule Over Russia*. Describing the situation with Jewish manufacturing and trade, its oppression and destruction by Soviets, he also shares his impressions. Quoting many conversations, the general mood of populace is pretty gloomy. "Many bad things, many crimes happen in Russia these days but it's better to suppress that blinding hatred"; "They often fear that the revolution will inevitably end in the

Russian manner, i.e. by mass-murder of Jews”. A local Bolshevik-Jew suggests that “it’s only the revolution that stands between the Jews and those wishing to aggrandize Russia by the rape of Jewish women and spilling the blood of Jewish children”.

A well-known economist B. D. Bratskus, who in 1920 provided a damning analysis of the socialist economy (he was expelled from the country in 1922 by Lenin), published an extensive article *The Jewish Population Under Communist Power* in *Contemporary Notes* in 1928, chronicling the NEP in the former Pale of Settlement areas of Ukraine and Byelorussia. The relative importance of private enterprise was declining as even the smallest merchants were deprived of their political rights. They became disenfranchised *lishenets* and couldn’t vote in Soviet elections, and thus lost their civil rights. In contrast, handcraftsmen still enjoyed a certain semblance of rights. The fight of Soviet authorities against private enterprise and entrepreneurs was in large part a fight against Jewish populace. Because in those days not only almost the entire urban private enterprise in Ukraine and Byelorussia was represented by Jews, but the Jewish participation in the small capitalist upper class in the capital cities of Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kharkov had also become very substantial.

Bratskus distinguished three periods during the NEP: 1921-23, 1923-25 and 1925-27. Development of private enterprise was least impeded by communists during first two and half years when Bolsheviks were still overwhelmed by their economic debacles. The first communist reaction followed between the end of 1923 and the spring of 1925. Wholesale and shop trade in the former Pale of Settlement was destroyed, with only small flea market trade still permitted. Crafts were burdened by taxation. Artisans lost

their last tools and materials (the latter often belonged to their peasant customers) to confiscation. The concept of Jewish equality virtually turned into fiction as two-thirds of Jews lost their voting rights.

Because YevSek (the Jewish section of the Communist Party) inherited a specific hatred toward the Jewish petty bourgeoisie cultivated by earlier Jewish socialist parties and saw their own purpose in fighting it, its policy in the beginning of NEP was substantially different from the general party line. During the second part of NEP, the YevSek attempted to complete the dismantling of Jewish bourgeoisie, which began with War Communism. However, information about the bleak life of the Jewish population in the USSR was leaking out into the Jewish press abroad. YevSek attempted to blame that on the Czar's regime which allegedly obstructed Jewish participation in productive labor, that is by Communist definition, in physical labor. And since Jews still preferred unproductive labor, they inevitably suffer. Soviet authorities had nothing to do with it. But Brutskus objected, claiming that in reality it was opposite. The class of Jewish craftsmen nearly disappeared with the annihilation of petty Jewish manufacture. Indeed, the professional Jewish classes grew and become diversified while excessive numbers of petty Jewish middlemen slowly decreased under the Czar because of the gradual development of ethnic Russian enterprise and deepening business connections between the Pale of Settlement and inner Russia. But now the Jewish population again was turned into a mass of petty middlemen.

During the third period of NEP, from spring of 1925 to autumn of 1926, large tax remissions were made for craftsmen and street vendors and village fairs were relieved of taxation while activities of state financial inspectors

supervising large businesses were brought under the law. The economy and well-being of the Jewish population started to recover rapidly. It was a boom time for Jewish craftsmen and merchants specializing in agriculture. Petty manufacturing grew and successfully competed for raw materials and resources with state manufacture in the western provinces. At the same time, a new decree granted political (and, therefore, certain civil) rights to many Jews.

The second communist assault on private enterprise, which eventually resulted in the dismantling of NEP, began at the end of 1926. First, private grain trade was prohibited, followed by bans on raw skins, oil seeds and the tobacco trade. Private mills, creameries, tanneries and tobacco houses were expropriated. Fixed prices on shop merchandise were introduced in the summer of 1927. Most craftsmen couldn't work because of shortage of raw materials.

The state of affairs in the *shtetls* of western Russia alarmed international Jewry. For instance, Pasmanik wrote in 1922 that Jews as people are doomed to disappear under Bolsheviks and that communists reduced all Russian Jewry into a crowd of paupers. However, the Western public (including Jews) did not want to hear all this. The West saw the USSR in good light partly because of general left-leaning of European intelligentsia, but mainly because the world and American Jewry were now confident in bright future and security of Russian Jews and skillful Soviet propaganda only deepened this impression.

Benevolent public opinion was extremely instrumental for Soviet leaders in securing Western, and especially American, financial aid, which was indispensable for economical recovery after their brave War Communism. As Lenin said at the Party Congress in 1921, "As the revolution was not spreading to other countries, we should

do anything possible to secure assistance of progressive capitalism and for that we are ready to pay hundreds of millions and even billions from our immense wealth, our vast resources, because otherwise our recovery would take decades.” And the business went smoothly as progressive capitalism showed no scruples about acquiring Russian wealth.

The first Soviet international bank, Roskombank, was founded in 1922. It was headed by the already mentioned Olof Aschberg (who was reliably delivering aid to Lenin during entire revolutionary period) and by former Russian private bankers (Shlezinger, Kalashkin and Ternovsky). There was also Max May of Morgan Guaranty Trust in the U.S. who was of great assistance to the Soviets. Now they developed a scheme allowing Roskombank directly to purchase goods in U.S. despite the futile protests from the Secretary of State Charles Hughes, who asserted that this kind of relations meant a de-facto recognition of the Soviet régime. A Swedish Roskombank adviser, Professor G. Kassel, said that it was reckless to leave Russia with all her resources alone.

Concessioners flocked into the USSR, where they were very welcome. Here we see Lenin’s favorite, Armand Hammer, who in 1921 decided to help rebuild Ural industry and procured a concession on asbestos mines at Alapayevsk. Lenin mentioned in 1921 that Hammer’s father would provide two million stones of bread on very favorable terms (5 percent) in exchange for Ural Jewelry to be sold in America. And Hammer shamelessly exported Russian art treasures in exchange for the development of pencil manufacturing. Later, in the times of Stalin and Khrushchev, hammer frequented Moscow, continuing to export Russian

cultural treasures (e.g., church utensils, icons, paintings, china, etc. in huge volumes.)

However, in 1921-22 large sums were donated by American Jewry and distributed in Russia by the American Relief Administration (ARA) for assistance to the victims of “bloody pogroms, for the rescue of towns in the South of Russia and for the peasantry of Volga Region.” Many ARA associates were Jews.

* * *

Another novel idea from the Twenties, not so much an idea originating among Jews as one dreamed up to appeal to them, was Jewish colonization of agricultural land. It is said their history of dispersion had denied them possibilities in agriculture and forced them to engage in money lending, commerce and trade. Now at last Jews could occupy the land and thereby renounce the harmful ways of the past to labor productively under Soviet skies, and thus putting to flight the unflattering myths which had grown up about them.

Soviet authorities turned to the idea of colonization partially to improve productivity, but mostly for political reasons. This was sure to bring a swell of sympathy, but more important, financial aid. Brutskus writes: “The Soviet government, needing credits, searched for support among the foreign bourgeoisie and highly valued its relations with the foreign Jewish bourgeoisie.”

However, toward 1924 the donations stopped pouring in and even the Jewish American Charity (Joint Committee) was forced to halt its work in Europe. To again collect large amounts of money (as they had through the American Relief Administration in 1921), they needed to create, as they say in the U.S., a boom. Colonization became the boom for

Jewish charities. The grandiose project for resettling 100,000 Jewish families on their own land was, apparently, mostly a public relations ploy. The committee for the State Land Trust for Jewish Laborers (KomZET) was founded in 1924, followed by the all-Soviet Volunteer Land Society of Jewish Laborers (OZET). I remember as school children we were made to join and pay membership dues by bringing money from home to ODD (Society of Friends of the Children) and OZET. In many countries sister organizations to OZET sprung up.

It was immediately clear that the assistance of the Soviet government in the passage of poor Jews to the land was a matter of international significance. Through this the foreign proletariat could judge the power and solidity of the Soviet government. This development had the active participation and financial support of the powerful America Joint. Committee. *The Jewish*

Chronicle of London, Oct 16, 1925: “The Crimea has been offered as replacement for Palestine. Why send Jews to Palestine which is so unproductive and which will mean so much sacrifice and hard work when the rich land of Ukraine and fruited fields of the Crimea are smiling upon suffering Jews. Moscow will be the benefactor and defender of Russian Jewry and will be able to seek moral support from Jews around the globe. As well, the plan will cost nothing, as American Jews are covering all expenses.”

It didn't take the Russian émigré press long to recognize the Soviet maneuver. P. Struve in the Parisian journal *Renaissance* wrote: “This entire undertaking serves to bind Jewry – both Russian and international – to communist power and definitively mark Jews with the brand of communism.” In a lead editorial from the Berlin *Rul*: “It's true the world

identifies the Bolsheviks with the Jews. There is a need further to connect them with shared responsibility for the fate of hundreds of thousands of poor. Then you can trick wealthy American Jews with a threat: the fall of Soviet power followed by a mass pogrom which sweeps away the Jewish societies they founded.

Therefore, they will support Soviet power at all costs.”

In a fateful irony, the Bolshevik bluff met American enterprise and the Americans fell for it, not knowing what was going on in the USSR.

Actually, the world Jewish community was excited by hope in the rehabilitation of Jewish agriculture. In September 1925 at the all-German session, the Jewish bourgeoisie under the leadership of the Director of the German National Bank, Hjalmar Schacht decided to support the project. Leon Blum founded the Jewish Construction Fund in France which sent tractors to the settlers. The Society for Aid for Jewish Land Colonization was founded in New York. In countries around the globe, all the way to South Africa, money was collected for the colonization plan from Social Democrats, anarchists, and, so they say, ordinary workers.

The editors of the American magazine *Morning Journal*, posed the question, as did many others, “Is it ethical for Russian Jews to colonize land that was expropriated?” The *Jewish Chronicle* recalled that most of the former land owners were in prison, shot or exiled. They were answered by the leading American jurist Louis Marshall and chairman of the World Joint Committee who claimed the beneficent right of revolutionary expropriation. Indeed, during the years 1919-1923 more than 23,000 Jews had settled in former estates near the towns and villages in the former Pale of Settlement. By spring 1923, no more of this land remained

available and the first small groups of Jews started to form for resettlement to the free steppe land in Southern Ukraine. This movement picked up speed after 1925.

The international Jewish Agro-Joint was formed by Marshall with the banker Paul Warburg as the director. Here our chroniclers of the history of communism decline to issue a denunciation of class enemies, and instead, approve of their efforts.

The Agro-Joint concluded an agreement with KomZET about the contribution of tractors, farm machinery, seed, the digging of artesian wells and professional training for Jewish youth. EKO assisted as well. At a 1926 session of OZET Kalinin spoke out forcefully against any plans for Jewish assimilation and, instead, proposed a wide-ranging program for Jewish autonomy known in the West as the Kalinin Declaration.

The early plans called for resettlement to the south of Ukraine and northern Crimea of approximately 100,000 families or 20 percent of the entire Jewish population of the USSR. The plans contemplated separate Jewish national regions as well. Many remained jobless and nevertheless declined the opportunity to work and only half of all Jews who agreed to resettle actually took up residence in the villages they were supposed to resettle in.

However, American Zionists objected to the OZET plan and saw in the propaganda for the project of widespread Jewish agricultural colonization in the Soviet Union a challenge to Zionism and its idea for the settlement of Eretz Israel. OZET falsely claimed its plans did not contradict at all the idea of colonization of Palestine.

Great hope was placed on Crimea. There were 455,000 hectares given over to Jewish colonization in Ukraine and Byelorussia; 697,000 hectares set aside in

Crimea for that purpose. According to the 10-Year Plan for the settlement of Jews in Crimea, the Jewish proportion of the population was to grow from 8 percent in 1929 to 25 in 1939. (It was assumed that the Jews would substantially outnumber the Tatars by that time.) “There shall be no obstacles to the creation in the Crimean ASSR a Northern Crimean Autonomous Jewish Republic or oblast”.

The settlement of the Jews in the Crimea provoked the hostility of the Tatars (“Are they giving Crimea to the Jews?”) and dissatisfaction of local landless peasants. Larin writes “Evil and false rumors are circulating throughout the country about removal of land from non-Jews, the expulsion of non-Jews and the particularly strong support the authorities have given to the Jewish settlers.” It went so far that the chairman of the CIK of the Crimean ASSR, Veli Ibraimov published an interview in the Simferopol paper *Red Crimea* (Sept 26, 1926) which Larin does not quote from, but which he claims was a manifestation of “evil bourgeois chauvinism” and a call for a pogrom. Ibraimov also promulgated a resolution and projects which were “not yet ready for publication” (also not quoted by Larin). For this, Larin denounced Ibraimov to the Central Control Commission of CK of VKPb, recounting the incident with pride in his book. As a result, Ibraimov was removed and then shot, after which the Jewish colonization of Crimea gained strength.

As was typical for the communist régime, the closed trial of Ibraimov resulted in a political conviction for “connections with a Kulak bandit gang,” officially, for banditry. A certain Mustafa, the assistant to the chair of the CIK, was also shot with Ibraimov as a bandit.

Rumors of the effective assistance given to the Jewish settlers did not die down. The authorities tried to counter them. A government newspaper in 1927 wrote “the generous assistance to Jewish settlers” is coming from “Jewish community organizations” (without mentioning they were Western organizations), and not from the government as was rumored. To refute the rumors, Shlikhter (that young brawler from Kiev’s Duma in October 1905), now Narkom of Agriculture of Ukraine, toured over the South of Ukraine. Rumors that the Jews were not working the land given to them but were renting it out or hiring farm laborers, were met with: “We haven’t observed this behavior, but the Jewish settlers must be forbidden to rent out their land and the unhealthy atmosphere surrounding the Jewish resettlement must be countered with the widest possible education campaign.”

The article allows one to judge about the scale of events. It states that 630 Jewish households moved into Kherson Province between the end of 1925 and July of 1927. In 1927, there were 48 Jewish agricultural settlements in Ukraine with a total population of 35,000. In Crimea, 4463 Jews lived in Jewish agricultural settlements in 1926. Other sources implausibly claimed that by 1928, 220,000 Jews lived in Jewish agricultural colonies. Similarly, Larin mentioned 200,000 by the beginning of 1929. Where does this order of magnitude discrepancy come from? Larin here contradicts himself, saying that in 1929 the share of Jews in agriculture was negligible, less than 0.2 percent and almost 20 percent among merchants and two percent in population in general. Mayakovsky saw it differently:

*“A hard-toiling Jew
Tills the rocky land.”*

However, the program of Jewish land colonization, for all practical purposes, was a failure. For many of the settlers there was little motivation to stay. It didn't help that the resettlement and the building project had come from on high and the money from western organizations. A lot of government assistance for Jewish settlers didn't help. It is little known that tractors from neighboring collective farms were ordered to till Jewish land. Despite the flow of 2-3 thousand resettling Jewish families, by the end of five years' work Jewish settlements in Crimea listed only around five thousand families instead of the pre-planned 10 to 15 thousand. The reason was that settlers frequently returned to their place of origin or moved to the cities of Crimea or other parts of the country. This mass departure of Jews from agriculture in the 1920s and 30s resembles similar Jewish withdrawal from agricultural colonies in the 19th century, albeit now there were many new occupations available in industry and in administration, a prohibited field for Jews in Czarist Russia.

Eventually, collectivization arrived. Suddenly in 1930 Semyon Dimanstein, for many years the head of the Jewish Section of CK of VKPb, a staunch communist who bravely put up with all Soviet programs in the Twenties, came out in the press against universal collectivization in the national regions. He was attempting to protect the Jewish colony from collectivization which he had been warned about. However, collectivization came, not sparing the fresh shoots of Jewish land stewardship. At almost the same time, the Jewish and non-Jewish *kolkhozes* [collective farms] were combined under the banner of internationalism and the program of Jewish settlement in Ukraine and Crimea was finally halted.

The principal Soviet project of Jewish colonization was at Birobidzhan, a territory nearly the size of Switzerland between the two branches of the Amur river near the Chinese border. It has been described variously. In 1956 Khrushchev bragged in conversations with Canadian communists that the soil was rich, the climate was southern, there was much sun and water and rivers filled with fish and vast forests. The Socialist *Vestnik* described it as covered with wild taiga. Swampland made up a significant portion of the territory. According the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: a plain with swamps in places, but a fertile land along the Amur.

The project came about in 1927 from the KomZET (a committee of the CIK) and was intended to turn a significant part of the Jewish population into a settled agricultural people in one location (Kalinin). Also the Jewish Autonomous Republic was to serve as a counterweight to Zionism, creating a national homeland with at least half a million population. (One possible motive behind the plan which cannot be excluded: to wedge a loyal Soviet population into the hostile Cossack frontier.)

OZET sent a scientific expedition to Birobidzhan in 1927 and, before large settlements of Jews began arriving, in 1928 started preparations and building for the settlement using laborers from the local populace and wandering work crews of Chinese and Koreans.

Older residents of the area – Trans-Baikal Cossacks exiled there between the 1860's and the 1880's and already tested by the hardships of the frontier woods – remember being concerned about the Jewish settlement. The Cossacks needed vast tracts of land for their farming methods and feared they would be crowded out of lands they used for hunting and hay harvesting. The KomZET commission report was a preliminary plan for the possible gradual

resettlement of 35,000 families. But reality was different. The CIK of VKPb in 1928 assigned Birobidzhan for Jewish colonization and preparation of first settler trains began immediately. For the first time ever, city dwellers (from Ukraine and Byelorussia) without any preparation for agricultural labor were sent to farm the land. (They were lured by the prospect of having the status of *lishenets* removed.).

The Komsomol published the Monthly OZET and Pioneer delegations traveled around the country collecting for the Birobidzhan resettlement. The hastily dispatched Jewish families were horrified by the conditions they met upon arrival. They moved into barracks at the Tikhonkaya railroad station, in the future town of Birobidzhan. Among the inhabitants were some who never left the barracks for the land, living off the loans and credits they managed to obtain for making the move. Others less nimble lived in abject poverty.

During the first year of work at Birobidzhan only 25 huts were built, only 125 hectares were plowed and none were planted. Many did not remain in Birobidzhan; 1,000 workers arrived in the spring of 1928 and by July, 25 percent of all those who arrived in 1928 had left. By February 1929 more than half of the population had abandoned Birobidzhan. From 1928 to 1933 more than 18,000 arrived, yet the Jewish population grew only by 6,000. By some calculations only 14 percent of those Jews who resettled remained in 1929. They returned either to their homes or moved to Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.

Larin, who devotes no small number of reasoned and impassioned pages to the building of Jewish agriculture sniffs that “an unhealthy fuss has been raised around Birobidzhan, a utopian settlement of a million Jews.

Resettlement was practically presented as a national obligation of Soviet Jews, Zionism turned inside out, a kind of back-to-the-province movement.” International Jewish organizations provided no finances for Birobidzhan, from the beginning considering it too expensive and risky for them. More likely the western Jewish organizations, Agro-Joint, ORT and EKO could not support the distant project beyond the Urals. It wasn't a Jewish plan, but a scheme of Soviet authority's eager to tear down and build life anew in the country.

* * *

From the October revolution to the end of the Twenties the lives of ordinary Jews were affected by the actions of Yevseks – members of the YevSek (the Jewish section of the CK of VKPb.) Besides the Jewish Commissariat, an active Jewish organization grew up in the VKPb. As well from 1918 local organizations were formed in the guberniyas. They created an environment fanatically inspired with the idea and ideas of communism, even more so than was Soviet authority itself and at times these organizations even opposed Soviet projects. For example, at the insistence of the YevSek, the Jewish Commissariat decreed Hebrew to be a language of reaction and counterrevolution in early 1919, requiring Jewish schools to teach in Yiddish. The Central Bureau of the YevSek was part of the CK of VKPb and local YevSeks operated in the former Pale of Settlement. The purpose of the YevSek was communist education and Sovietization of the Jewish population in their native language of Yiddish.

From 1924 to 1928 responsibility for all Jewish education and culture was under the Jewish Bureaus of the

republic-level administrative bodies, but these were abolished for excesses in forced Yiddishization and more power accrued to the YevSek.

The activities of the YevSek in the Twenties were contradictory. On one hand, they carried out active agitprop work in communist education in Yiddish and mercilessly battled against Judaism, traditional Jewish education, Jewish social structures, independent Jewish organizations, political parties and movements, Zionism and Hebrew. On the other hand it opposed assimilation with its support of the Yiddish language and a Yiddish culture and organizations of Jewish education, Jewish scientific research and activity to improve the economic status of Soviet Jews. In this the YevSek often held a more radical position than even the central party bodies.

The anti-Zionist YevSek was made up to a large degree of former Bundists and socialistterritorialists who were thought of as traitors or neophyte communists in VKPb. The purpose of the YevSek was to develop communist influence on Russian Jewry and to create a Jewish Soviet nation isolated from world Jewry. But at the same time its actions paradoxically turned it from a technical apparatus urging the Jewish population to build socialism into a focal point for Jewish life in the USSR. A split arose in the YevSek between supporters of forced assimilation and those who thought its work was a necessary means of preservation of the Jewish people.

The *Book of Russian Jewry* observes with sympathy that the activity of the YevSek still carried a clear and expressly Jewish stamp under the banner of the Proletariat. For instance in 1926 using the slogan “to the countryside!” [meant to rouse interest in working in and propagandizing rural areas] the YevSek came up with “to the *shtetl!*”

This activity resonated widely in Jewish circles in Poland and in the U.S. The author further calls it a many-faceted Jewish nationalism in communist form. But in 1926 the CP halted the activity of the YevSek and turned it into the Jewish Bureau. In 1930 the Jewish Bureau was closed along with all national sections of VKPb. After that the activity of the YevSeks continued under the banner of communism. Russian Jewry lost all forms of self-expression, including communistic forms.

The end of the YevSek symbolized the final dissolution of the Bund movement to allow a separate nationalist existence, even if it went against strict social-democratic theory. However, after the YevSek was abolished, many of the former Yevseks and Jewish socialists did not come to their senses and put the building of socialism higher than the good of their own people or any other good, staying to serve the party-government apparatus. And that overflowing service was evident more than anything. Whether statistically or using a wealth of singular examples, it is obvious that Jews pervaded the Soviet power structure in those years. And all this happened in the state that persecuted freedom of speech, freedom of commerce and religion, not to mention its denigration of human worth.

* * *

Bikerman and Pasmanik paint a very gloomy picture of the state of Jewish culture in the USSR in 1923: “All is torn up and trampled underfoot in the field of Jewish culture”, “All foundations of a nationalist Jewish culture are shaken and all that is sacred is stomped into the mud.” S. Dubnov saw something similar in 1922 and wrote about “rueful wreckage and a picture of ruin and the progress of

dark savages, destroying the last remnants of a bygone culture”.

However, Jewish historiography did not suffer destruction in the first ten years after the revolution, as is attested to by the range of allowed publications. Government archives, including those from the department of police, opened after the revolution have given Jewish scholars a view on Jewish participation in the revolutionary movement, pogroms, and blood libel trials. The Jewish Historical-Ethnographical Society was founded in 1920 and published the 2-volume *Material on the History of anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia*. The Society later came under attack from the YevSek and it was abolished in 1929. The journals *Jewish News* and *The Jewish Chronicle* were shut down in the mid-twenties. S. Dubnov's *Jewish Antiquity* remained in publication (even after he left the USSR in 1922) but was closed in 1930. The Jewish Ethnographical Museum functioned from 1916, but was closed in 1930.

In the 1920s, Jewish culture had two divergent fates — one in Hebrew and one in Yiddish. Hebrew was strongly repressed and forbidden as authorities saw it as a carrier of religion and Zionism. Before the consolidation of Soviet power in the years 1917-1919 there were more than 180 books, brochures, and journals in Hebrew (mostly in Odessa, but also in Kiev and Moscow.) The feeling that the fate of Hebrew was connected with the fate of the victorious communist revolution held in the early Twenties among young people attempting to create a revolutionary literary tribune, under whose banner they hoped to unite the creative youthful strength of world Jewry. However at the insistence of the YevSek, Hebrew was declared a reactionary language and already in 1919 the People's Commissariat of Education had forbidden the teaching of Hebrew in all educational

institutions. The removal of all Hebrew books from libraries had begun.

Yiddish culture fared much better. Yiddish was the language of the Jewish masses. According to the 1926 census, 73 percent of Jews listed Yiddish as their mother tongue (another source cites a figure of 66 percent – that is the Jewish population could preserve its culture in Yiddish. Soviet authorities used this. If in the early years of Soviet power and Bolshevism the opinion prevailed that Jews should discard their language and nationality, later the Jewish Commissariat at the Narkomat of Nationalities, the YevSek, and the Jewish sections of the republican narkomats of education began to build Soviet culture in Yiddish. In the Twenties Yiddish was declared one of the official languages of Byelorussia. In Odessa of the Twenties and even the Thirties it was a language of many government institutions, with “Jewish hours” on the radio and court proceedings in Yiddish.

A rapid growth in Yiddish schools began in 1923 throughout the Soviet Union. Beginning in 1923 and continuing through 1930 a program of systematic “Yiddishization” was carried out, even forced, upon Jewish schools in the former Pale of Settlement. Many schools were switched to Yiddish without considering the wishes of parents. In 1923 there were 495 Yiddish schools with 70,000 Jewish children, by 1928 there were 900 schools and in 1930 they had 160,000 children. This can be partially explained by the fact that Ukrainians and Byelorussians at this time received full cultural autonomy and saw Jewish children as potential agents of Russification; Jewish parents didn’t want their children in Ukrainian or Byelorussian schools and there were no more Russian schools — they had no choice but to go to Yiddish schools. They did not study Jewish history in

these schools; instead there was class war and the Jews. (Just as in the Russian schools there was no study of Russian history, or of any history, only “social sciences”.) Throughout the Twenties even those few elements of a specifically Jewish education were gradually driven out of Soviet Jewish schools. By the early Thirties the autonomously functioning system of Soviet Jewish schools had been officially done away with.

From 1918 there were independent Jewish schools of higher education — ENU (Jewish People’s University) until 1922 in Moscow; PENU in Petrograd which became Petrograd IVEZ (Institute of Higher Jewish Learning, one of whose founders and later Rector was Semyon Lozinsky) boasting a number of distinguished scholars among faculty and large number of Jewish graduates. Supported by Joint, IVEZ functioned until 1925. Jewish divisions were established at educational science departments at Byelorussian University (1922) and at Second Moscow State University (1926). Central Jewish CP School teaching in Yiddish was established in 1921. Jewish educational system included special educational science technical colleges and more than 40 industrial and agricultural training schools.

Jewish culture continued to exist and even received no small encouragement — but on the terms of Soviet authorities. The depths of Jewish history were closed. This took place on a background of the destruction of Russian historical and philosophical sciences complete with arrests of scholars.

Jewish culture of the Twenties could more accurately be called a Soviet “proletarian” culture in Yiddish. And for that kind of Jewish culture the government was ready to provide newspapers and theatre. Forty years later the *Book of*

Russian Jewry gives a less than gloomy assessment of the cultural situation of Jews in the USSR in the early Soviet years. In Moscow, the worldwide Jewish Telegraphic agency (ETA) continued to exist into the Forties as an independent unit — the only such agency in the Soviet nation that did not come under TASS, sending communications abroad (of course, subject to Soviet censorship.) Newspapers were published in Yiddish, the main one being the house organ of the YevSek, the *Moscow Der Amos* from 1920 to 1938. According to Dimanstein there were 34 Yiddish publishers in 1928.

Yiddish literature was encouraged, but, naturally, with a purpose: to turn Jews away from an historical Jewish past; to show “before October” as a gloomy prologue to the epoch of happiness and a new dawn; to smear anything religious and find in the Soviet Jew the “new man.” Even with all this, it was so attractive to some prominent Jewish writers who had left the country that they started to return to the USSR: poets David Gofstein (always suspected of harboring nationalist sentiment) and Leib Kvitko (easily accommodated to Soviet environment and become a prolific poet) returned in 1925; Perez Markish (easily understands the needs of the party) — in 1926; Moses Kulbak and Der Nistor (the real name of the latter was Pinkhos Kaganovich, he later wrote novel *Mashber Family* characterized as the most “un-Soviet and liberal work of Jewish prose in Soviet Union) — returned in 1928. David Bergelson returned in 1929. He paid tribute to those in power: “the revolution has a right to cruelty.” (Which he, Markish and Kvitko were to experience themselves in 1952.)

The “bourgeois” Hebrew culture was suppressed. A group of writers headed by H.N. Byalik left for Palestine in 1921. Another group of Hebrew writers existed until the mid-

30s, occasionally publishing in foreign journals. Some of these authors were arrested and disappeared without a trace while others managed to escape the Soviet Union.

Regarding Jewish culture expressed in Russian language, Yevseks interpreted it as the result of government-directed efforts to assimilate Jews in Czarist Russia. Among those writing in Yiddish, a split between “proletarian” writers and “companions” developed in mid-Twenties, like in Soviet literature at large. Majority of mainstream authors then switched to Russian language.

The Jewish Chamber Theater in Yiddish in Moscow flowered since 1921 at a high artistic level with government aid (in 1925 it was transformed into the State Jewish Theater, GosET). It traveled through Europe and became an unexpected representative of Soviet power in the eyes of world Jewry. It made fun of pre-revolutionary ways and religious life of the shtetl. Mikhoels excelled as an actor and in 1928 became the director.

The history of the Hebrew theater Gabima, which began before the revolution was much more complicated. Originally supported by Lunacharsky, Gorky and Stanislavsky it was persecuted as a “Zionist nest” by the YevSek and it took a decision by Lenin to allow it to exist. Gabima became a government theatre. It remained the only outpost of Hebrew in the USSR, though it was clear it had no future. The theatre critic A. Kugel said it had departed from Jewish daily life and lost its Jewish spirit. In 1926 the troupe went on a European tour and did not return, disappearing from history soon after.

By contrast, the government Yiddish theatre was a real boon for Jewish theater arts in the USSR. In the early Thirties, there were 19 professional Yiddish theater groups

with a training school at GosET in Moscow, and Jewish dramatic arts studios in Kiev, Minsk and Moscow.

Here it is worth remembering the posthumous treatment of the ill-fated “Jewish Gogol”, Semen Ushkevitch. His book *Episodes*, published in 1926 satirizes revolution-era Jewish bourgeois. He died in 1927 and in 1928 the Soviet censor banned his play *Simka The Rabbit Hearted* based on his earlier book. As an anti- bourgeois work it should have been fine, but taking place in a Jewish setting and making fun of the stupidity, cowardice and greed of its subjects, it was banned because of fears that it would cause Judeophobic feelings.

Zionism In the Soviet Union

In the meantime, what was the condition of Zionist organizations in the USSR? They were fundamentally incompatible with communist authority and were accused of international imperialism and collaboration with the Entente. Because of their international standing the Soviets had to deal carefully with them. In 1920 the YevSek declared a “civil war on the Jewish street” against the Zionist organizations. Repression of Zionism deepened with the ban on Hebrew. However anti-Zionist pressure did not exist everywhere and was not sufficiently severe — that is long-term imprisonment and exile were relatively rare. In spring 1920 right-wing Zionists were frightened with arrests, but on May 1 were amnestied.

The dual policy of the Kremlin was apparent in its discussions with representatives of the World Zionist Organization. Chicherin did not dismiss out of hand the latter’s solicitations as the Soviets were not yet ready to denounce Zionism once and for all as had the YevSek. The

more so since from the beginning of NEP, lessening government pressure gave Zionist groups a breathing space. Interestingly, Dzerzhinsky wrote in 1923 that “the program of the Zionists is not dangerous to us, on the contrary I consider it useful,” and again in 1924 “principally, we can be friends with Zionists.” The Central Zionist Bureau existed in Moscow from 1920 to 1924. In March of 1924 its members were arrested and only after much pleading from within the country and from overseas was exile to Central Asia replaced with exile abroad. In 1923 only two officially permitted Zionist organizations remained: Poale-Zion and the “legal” portion of the youth organization Gekhaluz, whose purpose was agricultural colonization of Palestine. They saw experience with collective farms in the USSR as preparation for this. They published a journal from 1924 to 1926. Even the left-wing of the Zionist socialist party Zirei-Zion (Youth of Zion) adopted a sharper tone *vis-a-vis* the Bolsheviks, and when the arrests in 1924, though short in duration, became more widespread they went underground. This underground movement was finally dispersed only in the late Twenties.

“Jewish blood will not oil the wheels of revolution,” an organizational slogan of the movement, conveys the sense of the underground Zirei-Zion with its significant youth organizations in Kiev and Odessa. Regarding the government, they formally recognized Soviet authority, but at the same time declared opposition to the dictatorship of the communist party. Much of its work was directed against the YevSek. In particular, they agitated against the Crimean resettlement plan, seeing it as disturbing their national isolation. From 1926 the party weakened and then disappeared.

There was a wave of arrests of Zionists from September to October of 1924. Some of those arrested were

tried in secret and given sentences of three to ten years in the camps. But in

1925 Zionist delegates were assured by the CIK of VKPb (Smidovitch) and the Sovnarkom (Rykov) and the GPU that they had nothing against Zionists as long as they did not arouse the Jewish population against Soviet power.

D. Pismanik suggested in 1924 that “Zionists, Orthodox and nationalist Jews should be in the front ranks of those fighting alongside Soviet power and the Bolshevik worldview”. But there was no united front and no front rank.

In the second half of the Twenties, persecution of the Zionists was renewed and the exchange of prison sentences for exile abroad was sharply curtailed. In 1928 authorities dissolved the until-then still quasi-legal Poale Zion and liquidated the legal Gekhaluz, closing its farms. Almost all underground Zionist organizations were destroyed at that time. Opportunities to leave declined sharply after 1926. Some of the Zionists remained in prison or were exiled.

The mass attraction of young urban Jews to communist and Soviet culture and programs was matched with a no less stubborn resistance from religious Jewry and older Jews from the former Pale. The party used the rock of the YevSek to crush and suppress this resistance.

One only has to be in a Jewish city such as Minsk or Vitebsk to see how all that was once worthy in Judaism, respected and worthy of respect had been turned upside down, crushed with poverty, insult, and hopelessness and how those pushed into higher places were the dissolute, frivolous, arrogant and brazen. Bolshevik power became the carrier of terrible ruin, material and moral in the Jewish world. The mass of Jewish Bolsheviks on one hand and of Jewish NEPmen on the other indicate the depth of the

cultural collapse of Jewry. And if radical healing from Bolshevism among the Russian people was to come from a revival of religious, moral and nationalist life then the Jewish idea must work for that also in their lives.

And work they did, but indicators vary as to degree of intensity and success. A near contemporary considered that Jewish society turned out either to have no rudder and no sail, or was confused and in this confusion spiritually turned away from its sources, in contrast to Russian society where there was still some resistance, albeit clumsy and unsuccessful. From the end of the Twenties to the beginning of the Thirties the Jews abandoned their traditional way of life on a mass scale. In the past 20 years Russian Jewry had gone further and further away from its historical past, killing the Jewish spirit and Jewish tradition. And a few years later on the very eve of WWII with the ascension in Russia of the Bolshevik dictatorship, the fight between fathers and children in the Jewish street had taken a particularly bitter form.

Taking stock, a half-century later, M. Agursky reminisces in Israel that the misfortunes that befell Jews after the revolution to a large degree were brought on by the renunciation by Jewish youth of its religion and national culture, “the singular, exclusive influence of communist ideology. The mass penetration by Jews in all areas of Russian life and of the Soviet leadership in the first 20 years after the revolution turned not to be constructive for Jews, but harmful.”

Finally, an author in the 1990s writes: “Jews were the élite of the revolution and on the winning side. That’s a peculiar fact of the Russian internationalist socialist revolution. In the course of modernizing, Jewry was politically Bolshevized and socially Sovietized. The Jewish community as an ethnic, religious and national structure

disappeared without a trace.” Jewish youth coming to Bolshevism were intoxicated by its new role and influence. For this, others too would have gladly given up their nationality. But this turning from the old ways to internationalism and atheism was not the same as assimilation into the surrounding majority, a centuries-old Jewish fear. This was leaving the old, along with all other youth, to come together and form a new Soviet people. Only a small stream was truly assimilationalist in the old sense, like those people who converted to Orthodox Christianity and wished their own dissolution in the Russian culture. We find one such example in attorney Y. Gurevich, legal defender of metropolitan Venamin during his fatal trial in 1922.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* writes of Jewish workers in the party and government apparatus of economic, scientific and even military organizations and institutions, that most did not hide their Jewish origins, but they and their families quickly absorbed Russian culture and language and being Jewish lost its cultural content.

Yes, the culture which sustained them suffered, “Soviet Man” was created, but the decades which followed showed that a remnant of Jewish self-awareness was preserved and remained. Even in the flood of the internationalism of the Twenties, mixed marriages (between Jews and Russians or Jews and any non-Jew), as measured from 1924-1926, were only 6.3 percent of the total marriages for Jews in the USSR, including 16.8 percent in the RSFSR, but only 2.8 percent in Byelorussia and 4.5 percent in Ukraine (according to another source, on average in USSR, 8.5; in RSFS percent R, 21 percent in Byelorussia, 3.2 percent and in Ukraine, five percent. Assimilation had only begun.

The Jewish Religion Under Soviet Rule

And what was the status of the Jewish religion in the new conditions? Bolshevik power was hostile to all religions. During the years of the hardest blows against the Orthodox Church, Jewish religious practice was treated with restraint. In March 1922 *Der Emes* noted that the department of agitprop of the Central Committee would not offend religious feeling. In the Twenties, this tolerance did not extend to Russian Orthodoxy, which the authorities considered one of the main enemies of the Soviet order. Nevertheless, the confiscation of church valuables extended to synagogues as well. E. Yaroslavsky wrote in *Izvestia* an article titled *What Can be Taken from a Synagogue*: “Often rabbis will say there is nothing of value in a synagogue. Usually that is the case. The walls are usually bare. But menorahs are often made of silver. These must be confiscated.” Three weeks before that 16 silver objects were taken from a Jewish preaching house on Spasso-Glinischevsky avenue and in the neighboring choral synagogue 57 silver objects and two of gold. Yaroslavsky further proposes a progressive tax on those who buy costly seats in the synagogue. Apparently, this proposal went nowhere.

However, functionaries from the YevSek demanded of authorities that the same policy applied towards Christianity be carried out towards Judaism. In the Jewish New Year, 1921 the YevSek orchestrated a public trial of the Jewish religion in Kiev. The *Book of Russian Jewry* describes this and other show trials in 1921-1922: there was a court proceeding against a Cheder (a traditional elementary school with instruction in Hebrew) in Vitebsk, against a Yeshiva (a

Jewish school for study of the traditional, texts, the Talmud, the Torah, and the Rabbinical literature) in Rostov and even against Day of Atonement in Odessa. They were intentionally conducted in

Yiddish, as the YevSek explained, so that Jewish Bolsheviks would “judge” Judaism.

Religious schools were closed by administrative order and in December 1920 the Jewish section of the Narkomat of Education issued an encyclical about the liquidation of Cheders and Yeshivas. Nevertheless, large numbers of Cheders and Yeshivas continued teaching semi-legally or completely underground for a long time after that. In spite of the ban on religious education, as a whole the Twenties were rather a liberal period for Jewish religious life in the USSR.

At the request of Jewish laborers, of course, there were several attempts to close synagogues, but this met with bitter opposition from believers. Still during the Twenties, the central synagogues were closed in Vitebsk, Minsk, Gomel, Kharkov, Bobruisk. The central Moscow synagogue on Maroseika managed stay open thanks to the efforts of Rabbi Maze in the face of Dzerzhinsky and Kalinin. In 1926, the choral synagogue in Kiev was closed and children’s Yiddish theatre opened in its place. But the majority of synagogues continued to function. In 1927, 1034 synagogues and prayer halls were functioning in Ukraine and the number of synagogues towards the end of the Twenties exceeded the number in 1917.

Authorities attempted to institute Living Synagogues based on the model of the Living Church imposed upon the Russian Orthodox Church. A portrait of Lenin was to be hung in a prominent place of such a synagogue, the authorities brought in red rabbis and communized rabbis.

However, they failed to bring about a split among the believers and the vast majority of religious Jews was decisively against the Living Synagogue, bringing the plan of Soviet authorities to naught.

At the end of 1930 a group of rabbis from Minsk was arrested. They were freed after two weeks and made to sign a document prepared by the GPU agreeing that: (1) the Jewish religion was not persecuted in the USSR and, (2) during the entire Soviet era not one rabbi had been shot.

Authorities tried to declare the day of rest to be Sunday or Monday in Jewish areas. School studies were held on the Sabbath by order of the YevSek. In 1929 authorities tried the five-day work week and the six-day work week with the day of rest upon the 5th or 6th day, respectively. Christians lost Sunday and Jews lost the Sabbath. Members of the YevSek rampaged in front of synagogues on holidays and in Odessa broke into the Brodsky Synagogue and demonstratively ate bread in front of those fasting and praying. They instituted community service days during sacred holidays like Yom Kippur. During holidays, especially when the synagogue was closed, they requisitioned Tallies, Torah scrolls, prayer shawls and religious books. Import of matzoh from abroad was sometimes allowed and sometimes forbidden. In 1929, they started taxing matzoh preparation. Larin notes the amazing permission granted to bring matzoh from Königsberg to Moscow for Passover in 1929.

In the Twenties, private presses still published Jewish religious literature. In Leningrad, Hasids managed to print prayer books in several runs, a few thousand copies each while Katzenelson, a rabbi from Leningrad, was able to use the printing-house *Red Agitator*. During 1920s, Jewish calendars were printed and distributed in tens of thousand

copies. The Jewish community was the only religious group in Moscow allowed to build religious buildings. A second synagogue was built on Visheslaviz alley nearby Sushchevsky Embankment and a third in Cherkizov. These three synagogues stayed open throughout the Thirties.

But young Jewish writers and poets gleefully wrote about the empty synagogues, the lonely rabbi who had no one to teach and about the boys from the villages who grew up to become the terrible red commissars. And we saw the Russian members of Komsomol rampaging on Easter Sunday, knocking candles and holy bread out of worshippers' hands, tearing the crosses from the cupolas and we saw thousands of beautiful churches broken into a rubble of bricks and we remember the thousands of priests that were shot and the thousands of others who were sent to the camps.

In those years, we all drove God out.

Soviet Jewish Intelligentsia in the 1920s

From the early Soviet years, the path for Jewish intelligentsia and youth was open as wide as possible in science and culture, given Soviet restrictions. (Olga Kameneva, Trotsky's sister, patronized high culture in the very early Soviet years.)

Already in 1919, a large number of Jewish youth went into moviemaking — an art praised by Lenin for its ability to govern the psychology of the masses. Many of them took charge of movie studios, film schools and film crews.

For example, B. Shumyatsky, one of the founders of the Mongolian Republic, and S. Dukelsky were heads of the main department of the movie industry at different times. Impressive works of early Soviet motion cinematography were certainly a Jewish contribution. The *Jewish*

Encyclopedia lists numerous administrators, producers, directors, actors, script writers and motion picture theorists. Producer Dziga Vertov is considered a classic figure in Soviet cinema, mostly nonfiction. His works include *Lenin's Truth*, *Go Soviets*, *Symphony of the Donbass* [the Donetsk Basin], and *The Three Songs about Lenin*. (It is less known that he also orchestrated desecration of the holy relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh.)

In the documentary genre, Esther Shub, by tendentious cutting and editing of fragments of old documentaries, produced full-length propaganda movies including *The Fall of Romanovs* (1927) and others, and later glorifying ones. Other famous Soviet names include S. Yutkevitch, G. Kozintsev and L. Trauberg (SVD, New Babel). F. Ermler organized the Experimental Movie Studio. Among notable others are G. Roshal (*The Skotinins*), Y. Raizman (*Hard Labor Camps*, *Craving of Earth* among others.).

By far, the largest figure of Soviet cinematography was Sergei Eisenstein. He introduced the epic spirit and grandeur of huge crowd scenes, tempo, new techniques of editing and emotionality into the art of cinematography. However, he used his gifts as ordered. The worldwide fame of *Battleship Potemkin* was a battering ram for the purposes of the Soviets and in its irresponsibly falsified history encouraged the Soviet public to further curse Czarist Russia. Madeup events, such as the massacre on the Odessa Steps scene and the scene where a crowd of rebellious seamen is covered with a tarpaulin for execution, entered the world's consciousness as if they were facts. First it was necessary to serve Stalin's totalitarian plans and then his nationalistic idea. Eisenstein was there to help.

Though the *Jewish Encyclopedia* lists names in the arts by nationality, I must repeat: not in nationalism does one find the main key to the epoch of the early Soviet years, but in the destructive whirlwind of internationalism, estranged from any feeling of nationality or traditions. And here in theater but close to authorities we see the glorious figure of Meyerhold, who became the leading and most authoritarian star of the Soviet theater. He had numerous impassioned admirers but wasn't universally recognized. From late recollections of Tyrkova-Vyazemskaya, Meyerhold appears as a dictator subjugating both actors and playwrights alike to his will by his dogmatism and dry formalism. *Komissarzhevskaya* sensed that "his novelty lacks creative simplicity and ethical and esthetical clarity." He "clipped actor's wings... paid more attention to the frame than to the portrait". He was a steady adversary of Mikhail Bulgakov. Of course, the time was such that artists had to pay for their privileges. Many paid, including Kachalov, Nemirovitch-Danchenko and A. Tairov-Kornblit, the talented producer of the Chamber Theater and a star of that unique early Soviet period. (In 1930, Tairov denounced the Prompartia in the party newspapers.)

Artist Marc Chagall emigrated by 1923. The majority of artists in the Twenties were required to contribute to Soviet mass propaganda. There some Jewish artists who distinguished themselves, beginning with A. Lisitsky who greeted the revolution as "a new beginning for humanity." He joined a number of various committees and commissions, made first banner of all-Russian Central Executive Committee, which was displayed on the Red Square in 1918 by members of government. He created the famous poster "Strike Whites with the Red Wedge," designed numerous Soviet expositions abroad from 1927 on and propaganda

albums for the West (“USSR Builds Socialism” etc.). A favorite with the authorities was Isaac Brodsky who drew portraits of Lenin, Trotsky and others including Voroshilov, Frunze and Budenny. After completing his portrait of Stalin he became the leading official portrait artist of the USSR in 1928 and in 1934 was named director of the all-Russian Academy of Arts.

During early years after revolution, Jewish musical life was particularly rich. At the start of century, the first in the world Jewish national school of music in the entire world, which combined both traditional Jewish and contemporary European approaches, was established. The 1920s saw a number of works inspired by traditional Jewish themes and stories, such as *Youth of Abraham* by M. Gnesin, *The Song of Songs* by A. Krein, and *Jewish Rhapsody* by his brother G. Krein. In that age of restrictions, the latter and his son Yulian were sent on an eight-year study trip to Vienna and Paris to “perfect Yulian’s performance.” Jews were traditionally talented in music and many names of future stars were for the first time heard during that period. Many administrators of music appeared also, such as Matias Sokolsky-Greenberg, who was chief inspector of music at Department of Arts of Ministry of Education and a senior editor of ideological Music and Revolution. Later in 1930’s Moses Greenberg, a prominent organizer of musical performances, was director of the State Publishing House in music and chief editor of the Department of Music Broadcasting at the State Radio Studio. There was the Jewish Conservatory in Odessa as well.

Leonid Utesov (Lazar Vaysbeyn) thundered from the stage. Many of his songs were written by A. d’Aktil. A. P. German and Y. Hayt wrote *The March of Soviet Aviation*. This was the origin of Soviet mass singing culture.

Year after year, the stream of Soviet culture fell more and more under the hand of the government. A number of various state organizations were created such as the State Academic Council, the monopolistic State Publishing House which choked off many private publishing firms and even had its own political commissar, a certain David Chernomordnikov in 1922-23, and the State Commission for Acquisition of Art Pieces (de facto power over artist livelihood). Political surveillance was established. The case of A. K. Glazunov, Rector of the Leningrad Conservatory, will be reviewed below. Of course, Jews were only a part of the forward triumphal march of proletarian culture. In the heady atmosphere of the early Soviet epoch no one noticed the loss of Russian culture and that Soviet culture was driving Russian culture out along with its strangled and might-have-been names.

Jewish Opposition Against Stalin

A vicious battle for the dominance within the Party was waged between Trotsky and Stalin from 1923 to 1927. Later Zinoviev fought for first place, equally confident of his chances. In 1926 Zinoviev and Kamenev, deceived by Stalin, united with Trotsky (the United Opposition) — that is, three of the most visible Jewish leaders turned out on one side. Not surprisingly, many of the lower rank Trotskyites were Jewish. (Agursky cites A. Chiliga, exiled with Trotskyites in the Urals: indeed, the Trotskyites were young Jewish intellectuals and technicians, particularly from Left Bundists.

The opposition was viewed as principally Jewish and this greatly alarmed Trotsky. In March of 1924 he complained to Bukharin that among the workers it is openly stated: “The kikes are rebelling!” and he claimed to have

received hundreds of letters on the topic. Bukharin dismissed it as trivial. Then Trotsky tried to bring the question of anti-Semitism to a Politburo session but no one supported him. More than anything, Trotsky feared that Stalin would use popular anti-Semitism against him in their battle for power. And such was partially the case according to Uglanov, then secretary of the Moscow Committee of the CP. "Anti-Semitic cries were heard" during Uglanov's dispersal of a pro-Trotsky demonstration in Moscow November 7, 1927.

Maybe Stalin considered playing the anti-Jewish card against the United Opposition, but his superior political instinct led him away from that. He understood that Jews were numerous in the party at that time and could be a powerful force against him if his actions were to unite them against him. They were also needed in order to maintain support from the West and would be of further use to him personally. He never parted from his beloved assistant Lev Mekhlis, and from the Civil War at Tsaritsyn, his faithful aide Moses Rukhimovitch.

But as Stalin's personal power grew towards the end of the Twenties the number of Jews in the Soviet apparatus began to fall off. It was no accident that he sent Enukidze to take photographs among the Jewish delegates at a workers and peasants conference during the height of the struggle for party dominance.

Yaroslavsky writes in Pravda: "Incidents of anti-Semitism are the same whether they are used against the opposition or used by the opposition in its fight against the party." They are an "attempt to use any weakness, any fissures in the dictatorship of the proletariat... there is nothing more stupid or reactionary than to explain the roots of opposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat as related to the nationality of this or that opposition group member."

At the same Party Congress, the 25th, where the United Opposition was decisively broken, Stalin directed Ordzhonikidze to specifically address the national question in his report to the Central Committee, as if in defense Jews. (Statistics from the report were discussed earlier in this chapter.) “The majority of the apparatus is Russian, so any discussion of Jewish dominance has no basis whatever.” At the 26th Party Congress in 1930 Stalin declared “Great Russian chauvinism” to be the main danger of the national question. Thus, at the end of the Twenties Stalin did not carry out his planned purge of the party and government apparatus of Jews, but encouraged their expansion in many fields, places and institutions.

At the 25th Congress in December 1927, the time had come to address the looming peasant question — what to do with the presumptuous peasantry which had the temerity to ask for manufactured goods in exchange for their grain. Molotov delivered the main report on this topic and among the debaters were the murderers of the peasantry — Schlikhter and YakovlevEpstein.

A massive war against the peasantry lay ahead and Stalin could not afford to alienate any of his reliable allies and probably thought that in this campaign against a disproportionately Slavic population it would be better to rely on Jews than on Russians.

He preserved the Jewish majority in the Gosplan. The commanding heights of collectivization and its theory included, of course, Larin. Lev Kritzman was director of the Agrarian Institute from 1928. As Assistant to the President of the Gosplan in 1931-33 he played a fateful role in the persecution of Kondratev and Chayanov. Yakov Yakovlev-Epstein took charge of People’s Commissariat of Agriculture in 1929. Before that he worked in propaganda field: he was

in charge of Head Department of Political Education since 1921, later — in the agitprop division of Central Committee and in charge of press division of Central Committee.

His career in agriculture began in 1923 when during the 13th Party Congress he drafted resolutions on agricultural affairs. And thus he led the “Great Change,” the imposition of collectivization on millions of peasants with its zealous implementers on the ground. A contemporary writer reports: “For the first time ever a significant number of young Jewish communists arrived in rural communities as commanders and lords over life and death. Only during collectivization did the characterization of the Jew as the hated enemy of the peasant take hold, even in those places where Jews had never been seen before”.

Of course, regardless of the percentage of Jews in the party and Soviet apparatus, it would be a mistake to explain the ferocious anti-peasant plan of communism as due to Jewish participation. A Russian could have been found in the place of Yakovlev-Epstein — that’s sufficiently clear from our post-October history.

The cause and consequences of de-kulakization and collectivization were not only social and economic: The millions of victims of these programs were not a faceless mass, but real people with traditions and culture, cut off from their roots and spiritually killed. In its essence, dekulakization was not a socio-economic measure, but a measure taken against a nationality. The strategic blow against the Russian people, who were the main obstacle to the victory of communism, was conceived of by Lenin, but carried out after his death. In those years communism with all its cruelty was directed mostly against Russians. It is amazing that not everything has perished during those days. Collectivization, more than any other policy of the

communists, gives the lie to the conception of Stalin's dictatorship as nationalist, i.e. Russian.

Regarding Jewish role in collectivization, it is necessary to remember that Jewish communists participated efficiently and diligently. From a third-wave immigrant who grew up in Ukraine. I remember my father, my mother, aunts, uncles all worked on collectivization with great relish, completing 5-year plans in 4 years and writing novels about life in factories [a mainstream Soviet literary genre in the Twenties.]

In 1927 *Izvestia* declared "There is no Jewish question here. The October revolution gave a categorical answer long ago. All nationalities are equal – that was the answer." However, when the dispossessors entering the peasant huts were not just commissars but Jewish commissars the question still glowered in the distance.

"At the end of the Twenties" writes S. Ettinger, "in all the hardship of life in the USSR, to many it seemed that Jews were the only group which gained from the revolution. They were found in important government positions, they made up a large proportion of university students, it was rumored that they received the best land in the Crimea and have flooded into Moscow."

Half a century later, June 1980, at a Columbia University conference about the situation of Soviet Jewry, I heard scholars describe the marginalized status of Jews in the USSR and in particular how Jews were offered the choice of either emigration or denying their roots, beliefs and culture in order to become part of a denationalized society. *Bah!* That was what was required of *all* peoples in the Twenties under the threat of the Solovki prison camp, and emigration was not an alternative. The "golden era" of the Twenties cries out for a sober appraisal. Those years were filled with the cruelest

persecution based upon class distinction, including persecution of children on account of the former life of their parents – a life which the children did not even see. But Jews were not among these children or parents.

The clergy, part of the Russian character, centuries in the making, was hounded to death in the Twenties. Though not majority Jewish, too often the people saw Jews directing the special ecclesiastical departments of the GPU which worked in this area.

A wave of trials of engineers took place from the end of the Twenties through the Thirties. An entire class of older engineers was eliminated. This group was overwhelmingly Russian with a small number of Germans.

Study of Russian history, archeology, and folklore were suppressed — the Russians could not have a past. No one from the persecutors would be accused having their own national interest. (It must be noted that the commission which prepared the decree abolishing the history and the philology departments at Russian universities was made up Jews and non-Jews alike — Goykhbarg, Larin, Radek and Ropstein as well as Bukharin, M. Pokrovskii, Skvortsov-Stepanov and Fritche. It was signed into existence by Lenin in March 1921.) The spirit of the decree was itself an example of nationalist hatred: It was the history and language of the Great Russians that was no longer needed. During the Twenties, the very understanding of Russian history was changed — there was none! And the understanding of what a Great Russian is changed — there was no such thing.

And what was most painful, we Russians ourselves walked along this suicidal path. The very period of the Twenties was considered the dawn of liberated culture, liberated from Czarism and capitalism! Even the word “Russian,” such as “I am Russian” sounded like a

counterrevolutionary cry which I well remember from my childhood. But without hesitation everywhere was heard and printed “Russopyati”! [a disparaging term for ethnic Russians.]

Pravda published the following in a prominent place in 1925 by V. Aleksandrovsky (not known for any other contribution):

*“Rus! Have you rotted,
fallen and died?
Well... here’s to your
eternal memory.
You shuffle, your crutches
scraping along,
Your lips smeared with
soot from icons,
Over your
vast
expanses the
raven caws,
you have
guarded
your grave
dream.
Old woman — blind and
stupid...”*

V. Bloom in Moscow Evening could brazenly demand the removal of history’s garbage from city squares: to remove Minin-Pozharsky monument from Red Square, to remove the monument to Russia’s thousand-year anniversary in Novgorod and a statue of St. Vladimir on the hill in Kiev.

“Those tons of metal are needed for raw material.” (The ethnic coloring of the new names has already been noted.)

Swept to glory by the political changes and distinguished by personal shamelessness, David Zaslavsky demanded the destruction of the studios of Igor Graybar used to restore ancient Russian art, finding that “reverend artist fathers were trying again to fuse the church and art.”

Russia’s self-mortification reflected in the Russian language with the depth, beauty and richness of meaning were replaced by an iron stamp of Soviet conformity. We have not forgotten how it looked at the height of the decade: Russian patriotism was abolished forever. But the feelings of the people will not be forgotten. Not how it felt to see the Church of the Redeemer blown up by the engineer Dzhevalkin and that the main mover behind this was Kaganovich who wanted to destroy St. Basil’s cathedral as well. Russian Orthodoxy was publicly harassed by warrior atheists led by Gubelman-Yaroslavsky. It is truthfully noted: “That Jewish communists took part in the destruction of churches was particularly offensive. No matter how bad the participation of sons of Russian peasants in the persecution of the church, the part played by each non-Russian was even worse.” This went against the Russian saying: “if you managed to snatch a room in the house, don’t throw God out”.

In the words of A. Voronel, “The Twenties were perceived by the Jews as a positive opportunity while for the Russian people, the decade was a tragedy.”

True, the Western leftist intellectuals regarded Soviet reality even higher; their admiration was not based on nationality but upon ideas of socialism. Who remembers the lightning crack of the firing squad executing 48 food workers for having caused the Great Famine (i.e., rather than Stalin):

the wreckers in the meat, fish, conserves and produce trade? Among these unfortunates were not less than ten Jews. What would it take to end the world's enchantment with Soviet power? Dora Shturman attentively followed the efforts of B. Bratskus to raise a protest among Western intellectuals. He found some who would protest – Germans and rightists. Albert Einstein hotheadedly signed a protest, but then withdrew his signature without embarrassment because the “Soviet Union has achieved a great accomplishment” and “Western Europe will soon envy you.” The recent execution by firing squad was an isolated incident. Also, “from this, one cannot exclude the possibility that they were guilty.” Romain Rolland maintained a noble silence. Arnold Zweig barely stood up to the communist rampage. At least he didn't withdraw his signature, but said this settling of accounts was an “ancient Russian method.” And, if true, what then should be asked of the academic Ioffe in Russia who was prompting Einstein to remove his signature? No, the West never envied us and in those “isolated incidents” millions of innocents died.

We'll never discover why this brutality was forgotten by Western opinion. It's not very readily remembered today.

Today a myth is being built about the past to the effect that under Soviet power Jews were always second-class citizens. Or one sometimes hears that there was not the persecution in the Twenties that was to come later. It's very rare to hear an admission that not only did they take part, but there was a certain enthusiasm among Jews as they carried out the business of the barbaric young government. The mixture of ignorance and arrogance which Hannah calls a typical characteristic of the Jewish parvenu filled the government, social and cultural elite. The brazenness and ardor with which all Bolshevik policies were carried out,

whether confiscation of church property or persecution of bourgeois intellectuals, gave Bolshevik power in the Twenties a certain Jewish stamp.

In the Nineties another Jewish public intellectual, writing of the Twenties said: “In university halls Jews often set the tone without noticing that their banquet was happening against the backdrop of the demise of the main nationality in the country. During the Twenties Jews were proud of fellow Jews who had brilliant careers in the revolution, but did not think much about how that career was connected to the real suffering of the Russian people. Most striking today is the unanimity with which my fellow Jews deny any guilt in the history of 20th century Russia.”

How healing it would be for both nations if such lonely voices were not drowned out. Because it’s true. In the Twenties, Jews in many ways served the Bolshevik Moloch not thinking of the broken land and not foreseeing the eventual consequences for themselves. Many leading Soviet Jews lost all sense of moderation during that time, all sense of when it was time to stop.

Chapter XIX: In The 1930s

The 1930s were the decade of an intense industrialized spurt, which crushed the peasantry and altered the life of the entire country. Mere existence demanded adaptation and the development of new skills. But through crippling sacrifices, and despite the many absurdities of the Soviet organizational system, the horrible epic somehow led to the creation of an industrialized power.

Yet the first and second five-year plans came into existence and were carried out not through the miracle of spontaneous generation, nor as a result of the simple violent round-up of large masses of laborers. It demanded many

technical provisions, advanced equipment, and the collaboration of specialists experienced in this technology. All this flowed plentifully from the capitalist West, and most of all from the United States. Not in the form of a gift, of course, and not in the form of generous help. The Soviet communists paid for all of this abundantly with Russia's mineral wealth and timber, with concessions for raw materials markets, with trade areas promised to the West, and with plundered goods from the empire of the Czars. Such deals flowed with the help and approval of international financial magnates, most of all those on Wall Street, in a persistent continuation of the first commercial ties that the Soviet communists developed on the American stock exchanges as early as during the Civil War. The new partnership was strengthened by shiploads of Czarist gold and treasures from the Hermitage.

But wait a second, were we not thoroughly taught by Marx that capitalists are the fierce enemies of proletarian socialism and that we should not expect help from them, but rather a destructive, bloody war? Well, it's not that simple: despite the official diplomatic nonrecognition, trade links were completely out in the open, and even written about in *Izvestia*: "American merchants are interested in broadening of economic ties with the Soviet Union." American unions came out against such an expansion (defending their markets from the products of cheap and even slave Soviet labor.) The Russian-American Chamber of Commerce, created at that time, simply did not want to hear about any political opposition to communism, or to mix politics with business relations.

Anthony Sutton, a modern American scholar, researched the recently-opened diplomatic and financial archives and followed the connections of Wall Street with the

Bolsheviks; he pointed to the amoral logic of this long and consistent relationship. From as early as the Marburg plan at the beginning of the 20th century, which was based on the vast capital of Carnegie, the idea was to strengthen the authority of international finance, through global socialization, for control and for forced appeasement. Sutton concluded that: “International financiers prefer to do business with central governments. The banking community least of all wants a free economy and de-centralized authority. Revolution and international finance do not quite contradict each other, if the result of revolution should be to establish a more centralized authority,” and, therefore to make the markets of these countries manageable. And there was a second line of agreement: Bolsheviks and bankers shared an essential common platform — internationalism.

In that light, the subsequent support of collective enterprises and the mass destruction of individual rights by Morgan-Rockefeller was not surprising. In justification of this support, they claimed in Senate hearings: Why should a great industrial country, like America, desire the creation and subsequent competition of another great industrial rival?

Well, they rightly believed that with such an obviously uncompetitive, centralized and totalitarian régime, Soviet Russia could not rival America. Another thing is that Wall Street could not predict the further development of the Bolshevik system, nor its extraordinary ability to control people, working them to the very bone, which eventually led to the creation of a powerful, if misshapen, industry.

But how does this tie in with our basic theme? Because as we have seen, American financiers completely refused loans to pre-revolutionary Russia due to the infringement of the rights of Jews there, even though Russia was always a profitable financial prospect. And clearly, if

they were prepared to sacrifice profits at that time then now, despite all their counting on the Soviet markets, the Morgan-Rockefeller Empire would not assist the Bolsheviks if the persecution of the Jews was looming on horizon in the USSR at the start of the 1930s.

That's just the point: for the West, the previously described Soviet oppression of the traditional Jewish culture and of Zionists easily disappeared under the contemporary general impression that the Soviet power would not oppress the Jews, but on the contrary, that many of them would remain at the levers of power.

Certain pictures of the past have the ability to conveniently rearrange themselves in our mind in order to soothe our conscience. And today a perception has formed that in the 1930s the Jews were already forced out of the Soviet ruling élite and had nothing to do with the administration of the country. In the 1980s, we see assertions like this: in the Soviet times, the Jews in the USSR were practically destroyed as a people. They had been turned into a social group, which was settled in the large cities as a social stratum to serve the ruling class.

No. Not only far from serving, the Jews were to a large extent member of the ruling class. And the large cities, the capitals of the constituent Soviet republics, were the very thing the authorities bought off through improved provisioning, furnishing and maintenance, while the rest of the country languished from oppression and poverty. And now, after the shock of the Civil War, after the War Communism, after the NEP and the first five-year plan, it was the peace-time life of the country that was increasingly managed by the government apparatus, in which the role of the Jews was quite conspicuous, at least until 1937-38.

In 1936, at the 8th Congress of Soviets of the Soviet Union, Molotov, on orders from Stalin (perhaps to differ from Hitler in the eyes of the West) delivered this tirade: “Our brotherly feelings toward the Jewish people are determined by the fact that they begat the genius and the creator of the ideas of the communist liberation of Mankind, Karl Marx; that the Jewish people, alongside the most developed nations, brought forth countless prominent scientists, engineers, and artists [that undoubtedly had already manifested itself in the Soviet 1930s, and will be even more manifest in the post-war years], and gave many glorious heroes to the revolutionary struggle and in our country *they gave and are still giving* new, remarkable, and talented leaders and managers in all areas of development and defense of the cause of socialism.”

The italics are mine. No doubt, it was said for propaganda purposes. But Molotov’s declaration was appropriate. And the defense of the cause of socialism” during all those years was in the hands of the GPU, the army, diplomacy, and the ideological front. The willing participation of so many Jews in these organs continued in the early and mid-1930s, until 1937-38.

Here we will briefly review – according to contemporary newspapers, later publications, and modern Jewish encyclopedias – the most important posts and names that had emerged mainly in the 1930s. Of course, such a review, complicated by the fact that we know nothing about how our characters identified themselves in regard to nationality, may contain mistakes in individual cases and can in no way be considered comprehensive.

After the destruction of the Trotskyite opposition, the Jewish representation in the party apparatus became noticeably reduced. But that purge of the supreme party

apparatus was absolutely not anti-Jewish. Lazar Kaganovich retained his extremely prominent position in the Politburo; he was an ominously merciless individual and, at the same time, a man of notoriously low professional level. Nevertheless, from the mid-1930s he was the Secretary of the Central Committee, and simultaneously a member of the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee. Only Stalin himself had held both these positions at the same time. And he placed three of his brothers in quite important posts. Mikhail Kaganovich was deputy chair of the Supreme Soviet of the National Economy beginning in 1931; from 1937 he was narkom of the defense industry; later he simultaneously headed the aviation industry. Yuli Kaganovich, passing through the leading party posts in Nizhniy Novgorod (as all the brothers did), became deputy narkom of the foreign trade. Another, absolutely untalented brother, was a big gun in Rostov-on-Don.

It reminds me of a story by Saltykov-Shchedrin, where one Vozhd Oshmyanskiy tried to place his brother Lazar in a profitable post. However, both the ethnic Russian opposition factions, that of Rykov, Bukharin and Tomsky, and that of Syrtsov, Ryutin, and Uglanov, were destroyed by Stalin in the beginning of the 1930s with support of the Jewish Bolsheviks; he drew necessary replacements from their ranks. Kaganovich was the principal and the most reliable of Stalin's supporters in the Politburo: he demanded the execution of Ryutin (October 1932-January 1933) but even Stalin wasn't able to manage it then.

The purge of 1930-1933 dealt with the Russian elements in the party. Out of 25 members in the Presidium of the Central Control Commission after the 16th Party Congress in 1930, ten were Jews: A. Solts, "the conscience of the Party" (in the bloodiest years from 1934 to 1938 he

was assistant to Vyshinsky, the General Prosecutor of the USSR); Z. Belenky (one of the three above-mentioned Belenky brothers); A. Goltsman (who supported Trotsky in the debate on trade unions); ferocious Rozaliya Zemlyachka (Zalkind); M. Kaganovich, another of the brothers; the Chekist Trilisser; the militant atheist Yaroslavsky; B. Roizenman; and A. P. Rozengolts, the surviving assistant of Trotsky. If one compares the composition of the party's Central Committee in the 1920s with that in the early 1930s, he would find that it was almost unchanged — both in 1925 as well as after the 16th Party Congress, Jews comprised around one sixth of the membership. In the upper echelons of the Communist Party after the 17th Congress (“The Congress of the Victors”) in 1934, Jews remained at one-sixth of the membership of the Central Committee; in the Party Control Commission — around one third, and a similar proportion in the Revision Commission of the Central Committee. It was headed for quite a while by M. Vladimirsky. From 1934 Lazar Kaganovich took the reins of the Central Control Commission. Jews made up the same proportion, one third of the members of the Commission of the Soviet Control. For five years filled with upheaval (1934-1939) the deputy General Prosecutor of the USSR was Grigory Leplevsky.

Occupants of many crucial party posts were not even announced in Pravda. For instance, in autumn 1936 the Secretary of the Central Committee of Komsomol (the Union of Communist Youth) was E. Fainberg. The Department of the Press and Publishing of the Central Committee – the key ideological establishment – was managed by B. Tal. Previously, the department was headed by Lev Mekhlis, who had by then shifted to managing Pravda full-time; from 1937

Mekhlis became deputy narkom of defense and the head of Political Administration of the Red Army.

We see many Jews in the command posts in provinces: in the Central Asia Bureau, the Eastern Siberia Krai Party Committee (kraikom), in the posts of first secretaries of the obkoms [party committee of oblasts] of the Volga German Republic, the Tatar, Bashkir, Tomsk, Kalinin, and Voronezh oblasts and in many others.

For example, Mendel Khatayevich, a member of the Central Committee from 1930, was consequently secretary of Gomel, Odessa, Tatar, and Dnepropetrovsk obkoms, secretary of the Middle Volga kraikom, and second secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Yakov Chubin was secretary of the Chernigov and Akmolinsk obkoms and of the Shakhtinsk district party committee; later he served in several commissions of the Party Control in Moscow, Crimea, Kursk, and Turkmenia, and from 1937 he was the first secretary of the Central Committee of Turkmenia. There is no need to list all such names, but let's not overlook the real contribution of these secretaries into the Bolshevik cause; also note their striking geographical mobility, as in the 1920s. Reliable cadres were still in much demand and indispensable. And there was no concern that they lacked knowledge of each new locality of which they took charge.

Yet much more power was in the hands of the narkoms. [People's Commissars] In 1936 we see nine Jewish narkoms in the government. Take the worldwide-famous narkom of foreign affairs Litvinov. In the friendly cartoons in *Izvestia*, he was portrayed as a knight of peace with a spear and shield taking a stand against foreign filth. No less remarkable, but only within the limits of the USSR, was the narkom of internal affairs Yagoda; the ascending and all-glorious "Iron Narkom" of railroads, Lazar Kaganovich;

foreign trade was headed by A. Rozengolts (before that we saw him in the Central Control Commission); I.Ya. Weitser was in charge of domestic trade; M. Kalmanovich was in charge of *sovkhoses* [state owned farms that paid wages] when he was the foods-commissar from the end of 1917; I.E. Lyubimov was narkom of light industry; G. Kaminskiy was narkom of healthcare; his instructive articles were often published in *Izvestia*. And the abovementioned Z. Belenky was the head of the Commission of the Soviet Control.

In the same Government, we can find many Jewish names among the deputy narkoms in various people's commissariats: finance, communications, railroad transport, water, agriculture, the timber industry, the foodstuffs industry, education, justice. Among the most important deputy narkoms were: Ya. Gamarnik (defense), A. Gurevich (he made a significant contribution to the creation of the metallurgical industry in the country); Semyon Ginzburg was deputy narkom of heavy industry, and later he became narkom of construction, and even later minister of construction of military enterprises.

The famous Great Turning Point took place from the end of 1929 to the beginning of 1931. Murderous collectivization lay ahead, and at this decisive moment Stalin assigned YakovlevEpshtein as its sinister principal executive. His portraits and photos, and drawings by I. Brodsky, were prominently reproduced in newspapers then and later, from year to year. Together with the already mentioned M. Kalmanovich, he was a member of the very top Soviet of Labor and Defense. (There was hardly anyone apart from Stalin, Molotov, Mikoyan, Ordzhonikidze, Voroshilov in that organ.) In March of 1931, at the 6th Session of Soviets, Yakovlev reported on the progress of collectivization – about the development of *sovkhoses* and

kolkhozes, that is, the destruction of the way of life of the people. On this glorious path to the ruination of Russia, among Yakovlev's collaborators, we can see deputy narkom V.G. Feigin, members of the Board of the People's Commissariat of agriculture M.M. Volf, G.G. Roshal, and other experts.

The important organization, the Grain Trust, was attached to the People's Commissariat of agriculture to pump out grain from peasants for the state; the chairman of the board of directors was M.G. Gerchikov, his portraits appeared in *Izvestia*, and Stalin himself sent him a telegram of encouragement. From 1932 the People's Commissariat of Sovkhozes and Kolkhozes with M. Kalmanovich at the helm was separated from the people's commissariat of agriculture. From 1934 the chairman of the national Soviet of Kolkhozes was the same Yakovlev-Epshtein.

The chairman of the Commission of Purveyance was I. Kleiner (who was awarded the Order of Lenin). During the most terrible months of collectivization, M. Kalmanovich was deputy narkom of agriculture. But at the end of 1930 he was transferred into the People's Commissariat of Finance as deputy narkom; he also became chairman of the board of the Gosbank [the State Bank], for in monetary matters a strong will was also much needed. In 1936, Lev Maryasin became chairman of the board of the Gosbank; he was replaced in that post by Solomon Krutikov in 1936. In November 1930, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade was created, and A.P. Rozengolts served for seven years as its head. Jews comprised one-third of its board members.

Among them was Sh. Dvoylatsky, who simultaneously served in the Central Commissions on Concessions; in 1934-1936 he became the Soviet trade representative in France. At the end of 1930 the People's Commissariat of Supply was

created with A. Mikoyan at the helm; on its board, we see M. Belenky — that is another, actually the fifth, man with the surname Belenky encountered here; soon he himself became the narkom, replacing Mikoyan. In general, in the People's Commissariats of Trade and Supply, the Jewish component was higher than in the upper party echelons — from a quarter to a half. Still let's not overlook the Tsentrsoyuz, the bureaucratic center of Soviet pseudo-cooperation. After Lev Khichuk in the 1920s, it was managed from 1931 to 1937 by I.A. Zelensky, whom we met earlier as a member of the board of the people's commissariat of foodstuffs.

Let me point it out once more: all these examples are for illustrative purposes only. They should not be taken to create the impression that there were no members of other nationalities on all those boards and in the presidiums; of course, there were. Moreover, all the above-mentioned people occupied their posts only for a while; they were routinely transferred between various important positions.

Let's look at transport and communications. First, railroads were managed by M. Rukhimovich. His portraits could be found in the major newspapers of the time; later he became narkom of the defense industry, with M. Kaganovich as his deputy, while the command over railroads was given to L. Kaganovich. There were important changes in the Coal Trust: I. Schwartz was removed from the board and M. Deych was assigned to replace him. T. Rozenoer managed Grozneft [Grozny Oil]. Yakov Gugel headed the construction of the Magnitogorsk metallurgical giant; Yakov Vesnik was the director of the Krivoy Rog Metallurgical industrial complex; and the hell of the Kuznetsk industrial complex with its 200,000 hungry and ragged workers was supervised by S. Frankfurt, and after him by I. Epshtein. The latter was arrested in 1938 but landed on his feet because he was sent

to take command over the construction of the Norilsk industrial complex.

The Supreme Soviet of the National Economy still existed, but its significance waned. After Unshlikht, it was headed by A. Rozengolts, and then by Ordzhonikidze, with Jews comprising the majority of its board. At that time, the Gosplan [state planning ministry] gathered strength. In 1931, under the chairmanship of Kuibyshev, Jews comprised more than half of its 18-member board.

Let's now examine the top posts in economy during the last burgeoning year of Stalin's era, 1936. In 1936 *Izvestia* published the complete roster of the board of the people's commissariat of domestic trade. Those 135 individuals had essentially ruled over the entire domestic trade of the USSR, and they were hardly disinterested men. Jews comprised almost 40 percent of this list, including two deputies to the narkom, several trade inspectors, numerous heads of food and manufactured goods trades in the oblasts, heads of consumer unions, restaurant trusts, cafeterias, food supplies and storage, heads of train dining cars and railroad buffets; and of course, the head of Gastronom No.1 in Moscow ("Eliseyevsky") was also a Jew. Naturally, all this facilitated smooth running of the industry in those far from prosperous years. In the pages of *Izvestia* one could read headlines like this: "The management of the Union's Fishing Trust made major political mistakes." As a result, Moisei Frumkin was relieved of his post at the board of the People's Commissariat of Domestic Trade. We saw him in the 1920s as a deputy of the Narkom of Foreign Trade. Comrade Frumkin was punished with a stern reprimand and a warning; comrade Kleiman suffered the same punishment; and comrade Nepryakhin was expelled from the party.

Soon after that, *Izvestia* published an addendum to the roster of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry with 215 names in it. Those wishing to can delve into it as well. A present-day author thus writes about those people: by the 1930s the children of the déclassé Jewish petty bourgeois succeeded in becoming the commanders of the great construction projects. And so it appeared to those who, putting in 16 hours a day for weeks and months, never leaving the foundation pits, the swamps, the deserts, and taiga that it was their country. However, the author is wrong: it was the blackened hard-workers and yesterday's peasants, who had no respite from toiling in foundation pits and swamps, while the directors only occasionally promenaded there; they mainly spent time in offices enjoying their special provision services ("the bronze foremen"). But undoubtedly, their harsh and strong-willed decisions helped to bring these construction projects to completion, building up the industrial potential of the USSR.

Thus the Soviet Jews obtained a weighty share of state, industrial, and economic power at all levels of government in the USSR.

The personality of B. Roizenman merits particular attention. See for yourself: he received the Order of Lenin in recognition of his exceptional services in the adjustment of the state apparatus to the objectives of the large-scale "offensive for socialism." What secrets, inscrutable to us, could be hidden behind this offensive? We can glance into some of them from the more direct wording: for carrying out special missions of top state importance on the clean-up of state apparatus in the Soviet diplomatic missions abroad.

Jews in Diplomacy, Politics, and Military Affairs

Now let's look at the state of affairs in diplomacy. The 1920s were examined in the preceding chapter. Now we encounter other important people. For example, in spring of 1930, *Izvestia* reported on page one and under a separate heading that "F.A. Rotshtein, the board member of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, returned from vacation and resumed his duties." Well, didn't they only write this way about Stalin? To the best of my knowledge, neither Ordzhonikidze, nor Mikoyan – other very top functionaries – was honored in such a way. Yet very soon Rotshtein made a slip and his career ended just two months later, in July 1930. With the designation of Litvinov as narkom, Rotshtein was removed from the board (even though, we may remember, he claimed credit for the creation of the British Communist Party.) In the 1930s, at the peak of Litvinov's power, a new generation appeared. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* writes: "there was a notion of 'the Litvinov school of diplomacy'" that included the outstanding personalities of K. Umansky, Ya. Surits, B. Shtein (he was already successful by the beginning of the 1920s) and E. Gnedin (son of Parvus). Ehrenburg added here the name of E. Rubinin. Just as in the 1920s diplomacy attracted a cadre of Jews, so it did through the early and mid-1930s. From the moment, the USSR was accepted into the League of Nations, we see Litvinov, Shtein, Gnedin, and also Brenner, Stashevsky, Marcus, Rozenberg, and Svanidze (a Georgian) as the senior members of the Soviet delegation.

It was these people who represented Soviet Russia at that forum of nations. There were Soviet plenipotentiaries in Europe of Jewish origin: in England — Maisky; in Germany

(and later in France)—Ya. Surits; in Italy—B. Shtein (after Kamenev); we also see Jewish plenipotentiaries in Spain, Austria, Romania, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, Belgium, Norway, and in Asia. For example, the above-mentioned Surits represented the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as early as the Russian Civil War; later, from 1936, B. Skvirsky served in Afghanistan; for many years, he was the unofficial Soviet representative in Washington. In the early and mid-1930s, a great number of Jews successfully continued to work in Soviet trade delegations. Here we find another Belenky, already the sixth individual of that name, B. S. Belenky, who was the trade representative in Italy from 1934 to 1937.

Concerning the Red Army, the aforementioned Israeli researcher, Aron Abramovich, writes that in the 1930s “a significant number of Jewish officers served in the army. There were many of them, in particular in the Revolutionary Military Soviet, in the central administrations of the people’s commissariat of defense, in the general staff, and at lower levels – in the military districts, in the armies, corps, divisions, brigades, and all military units.”

The Jews still played a prominent role in the political organs. The entire Central Political Administration of the Red Army came under command of the trustworthy Mekhlis after the suicide of the trustworthy Gamarnik. Here are several names from the cream of the Political Administration: Mordukh Khorosh was the deputy director of the Political Administration of the Red Army in the 1930s, and later, until his arrest, he was in charge of the Political Administration of the Kiev military district.

From 1929 through to 1937, Lazar Aronshtam headed the political administration of the Belorussian military district, then of the Special Far Eastern Army, and later – of

the Moscow military district. Isaak Grinberg was the Senior Inspector of the Political Administration of the Red Army, and later the deputy director of the Political Administration of the Leningrad district.

Boris Ippo (he participated in the pacification of Central Asia during the Civil War as the head of the Political Administration of the Turkestan Front and later of the Central-Asian district) was the head of the political administration of the Caucasus Red Army; and later the director of the Military Political Academy.

The already-mentioned Mikhail Landa from 1930 to 1937 was the chief editor of *Krasnaya Zvezda* [The Red Star, the official newspaper of the Soviet military.)

Naum Rozovsky was a military prosecutor since the Civil War; by 1936 he was the chief military prosecutor of the Red Army.

Gamarnik remained the deputy to Voroshilov, the chairman of the Revolutionary Military Soviet until 1934 (when the organization was disbanded). In the 1930s, in addition to those named in the previous chapter, among the heads of the central administrations of the Red Army, we encounter the following individuals:

*Abram Volp, the head of the Administrative Mobilization Administration. In the previous chapter he was identified as the chief of staff of the Moscow military district;

*Semyon Uritsky of the Military Intelligence Administration, until 1937; Boris Feldman – the head of the Central Personnel Administration, and Leontiy Kotlyar — the head of the Central Military Engineering Administration in the pre-war years. Among the commanders of the branches of the military we find

*A. Goltsman, the head of military aviation from 1932. We already saw him in the Central Control Commission, and as a union activist; he died in a plane crash. Among the commanders of the military districts we again see Iona Yakir (Crimean district, and later the important Kiev District), and Lev Gordon (Turkestan district.)

Although we have no data on Jewish representation in the lower ranks, there is little doubt that when a structure, be it a political administration of the army, a supply service, or a party or a commissariat apparatus was headed by a Jew, it was accompanied, as a rule, by a quite noticeable Jewish presence among its staff.

Yet service in the army is not a vice; it can be quite constructive. So, what about our good old GPU-NKVD? A modern researcher, relying on archives, writes: “The first half of the 1930s was characterized by the increasingly important role of Jews in the state security apparatus.” And “on the eve of the most massive repressions the ethnic composition of the supreme command of the NKVD can be understood with the help of the list of decorated Chekists on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Cheka-OGPU-NKVD. The list of 407 senior officials published in the central press contained 56 Jews (13.8 percent), and 7 Latvians (1.7 percent).

When the GPU was reformed into the NKVD (1934) with Yagoda at the head, they twice published the names of the supreme commissars of the NKVD (what a rare chance to peek behind a usually impenetrable wall!):

Commissars of State Security of the First Rank:

Ya.S. Agranov (the first deputy to Yagoda),

V.A. Balitsky,

T.D. Deribas,

G.E. Prokovev,

S.F. Redens,
L.M. Zakovsky;

of the Second Rank:

L.N. Belsky,
K.V. Pauker (they were already decorated in 1927 on
the decennial of the Cheka), M.I. Gay,
S.A. Goglidze,
L.B. Zalin,
Z.B. Katsnelson,
K.M. Karlson,
I.M. Leplevsky,
G.A. Molchanov,
L.G. Mironov,
A.A. Slutsky,
A.M. Shanin, and
R.A. Pilyar.

Of course, not all of them were Jews, but a good half were. So, the Jewish Chekists were still there; they didn't leave, nor were they forced out of the NKVD, the same NKVD which was devouring the country after the death of Kirov, and which later devoured itself.

A.A. Slutsky was the director of the NKVD's foreign section; that is, he was in charge of espionage abroad. His deputies were Boris Berman and Sergey Shpigelglas. Pauker was a barber from Budapest, who connected with the communists while he was a Russian POW in 1916. Initially, he was in charge of the Kremlin security and later became the head of the operations section of the NKVD. Of course, due to secrecy and the non-approachability of these highly placed individuals, it is difficult to judge them conclusively.

Take, for instance, Naum (Leonid) Etingon, who orchestrated the murder of Trotsky and was the organizer of the Cambridge Five espionage ring and who oversaw the nuclear espionage after the war — a true ace of espionage.

Or take Lev Feldbin (he used a catchy pseudonym of Aleksandr Orlov.) A prominent and long-serving Chekist, he headed the economic section of the foreign department of GPU, that is, he supervised all foreign trade of the USSR. He was a trusted agent, of those who were instructed in the shroud of full secrecy on how to extract false confessions from the victims. Many of the NKVD investigators ended up being subordinate to him. And yet he was completely hidden from the public and became famous only later, when he defected to the West. And how many such posts were there?

Or take Mikhail Koltsov-Fridlyand, political advisor to the Republican government of Spain, who took part in some of the major GPU adventures.

M. Berman was assigned as deputy to the Narkom of Internal Affairs Ezhov within three days after the latter was installed on September 27, 1936. Still, Berman remained the director of the GULAG. And along with Ezhov came his handymen. Mikhail Litvin, his long-time associate in the Central Committee of the party, became the director of the personnel department of the NKVD; by May 1937 he rose to the unmatched rank of director of the Secret Political section of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD.

In 1931-36, Henrikh Lyushkov was the deputy director of that section; he deserted to Japan in 1938 and was then killed by a Japanese bullet in 1945 – by the end of the war the Japanese did not want to give him back and had no option but shoot him. In this way, we can extensively describe the careers of each of them. In the same section, Aleksandr Radzivilovsky was an agent for special missions.

Another long-time Ezhov colleague, Isaak Shapiro, was Ezhov's personal assistant from 1934, and then he became the director of the NKVD Secretariat, and later was the director of the infamous Special Section of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD.

In December 1936, among the heads of ten sections for secrecy designated only by number, of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD, we see seven Jews:

The Security section (section #1)—K. Pauker;
Counter-Intelligence (3) — L. Mironov;
Special section (5)—I. Leplevsky;
Transport (6)—A. Shanin;
Foreign
section
(7) — A.
Slutsky;
Records
and
Registrati
on (8) V.
Tsesarsky
; Prisons
(10)—
Ya.
Veinshto
k.

Over the course of the meat-grinding year of 1937 several other Jews occupied posts of directors of those sections:

A. Zalpeter—Operations section (2);
Ya. Agranov, followed by
M. Litvin—Secret Political

section (4); A Minaev-Tsikanovsky—Counter-Intelligence (3); and I.

Shapiro – Special section.

I named the leadership of the GULAG in my book, *Gulag Archipelago*. Yes, there was a large proportion of Jews among its command. Portraits of the directors of construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal, which I reproduced from the Soviet commemorative corpus of 1936, caused outrage: they claimed that I have selected the Jews only on purpose. But I did not select them, I've just reproduced the photographs of all the High Directors of the BelBaltlag [White Sea - Baltic Canal camp administration] from that immortal book. Am I guilty that they had turned out to be Jews? Who had selected them for those posts? Who is guilty?

I will now add information about three prominent men, whom I did not know then. Before the BelBaltlag, one Lazar Kogan worked as the head of the GULag; Zinovy Katsnelson was the deputy head of the GULag from 1934 onward; Izrail Pliner was the head of the GULag from 1936, and later he oversaw the completion of construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal (1937).

It can't be denied that History elevated many Soviet Jews into the ranks of the arbiters of the fate of all Russians.

* * *

Never publicized information about events of different times flows from different sources: about the regional Plenipotentiaries of GPU-NKVD in the 1930s before 1937. The names of their offices fully deserved to be written in capital letters, for it was precisely them and

not the secretaries of the obkoms, who were the supreme masters of their oblasts, masters of the life and death of any inhabitant, who reported directly only to the central NKVD in Moscow.

The full names of some of them are known, while only initials remain from others; and still of others, we know only their last names. They moved from post to post, between different provinces. (If we could only find the dates and details of their service! Alas, all this was done in secret). And in all of the 1930s, many Jews remained among those provincial lords. According to the recently published data, in the regional organs of State Security, not counting the Main Directorate of State Security, there were 1,776 Jews (7.4 percent of the total members serving). A few Jewish plenipotentiaries are listed here:

In Belorussia – Izrail Leplevsky (brother of the deputy General Prosecutor Grigory Leplevsky, we already saw him in the Cheka; later, he worked in a senior post in the GPU as a

Commissar of State Security of Second Rank; and now we see him as the Narkom of Internal Affairs of Belorussia from 1934 to 1936;

In the Western Oblast – I.M. Blat, he later worked in Chelyabinsk;

In the Ukraine – Z. Katsnelson, we saw him in the Civil War all around the country, from the Caspian Sea to the White Sea. Now he was the deputy head of the GULag; later we see him as Deputy Narkom of Internal Affairs of Ukraine; in 1937, he was replaced by Leplevsky.

We see D.M. Sokolinsky first in Donetsk Oblast and later Vinnitsa Oblast;

L.Ya. Faivilovich and Fridberg – in the Northern Caucasus;

M.G. Raev-Kaminsky and Purnis – in Azerbaijan;
G. Rappoport – in Stalingrad Oblast;
P.Sh. Simanovsky – in Orlov Oblast;
Livshits – in Tambov Oblast;
G.Ya. Abrampolsky – in Gorkov Oblast;
A.S. Shiyron, supervising the round-up of kulaks in
Arkhangel Oblast;
I.Z. Ressin – in the German Volga Republic;
Zelikman – in Bashkiriya;
N. Raysky – in Orenburg Oblast;
G.I. Shklyar – in Sverdlovsk Oblast;
L.B. Zalin – in
Kazakhstan; Krukovsky
– in Central Asia;
Trotsky – in Eastern
Siberia, and Rutkovsky
– in the Northern Krai.

All these high placed NKVD officials were tossed from one oblast to another in exactly the same manner as the secretaries of obkoms. Take, for instance, Vladimir Tsesarsky: was plenipotentiary of the GPU-NKVD in Odessa, Kiev and in the Far East. By 1937 he had risen to the head of the Special section of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD (just before Shapiro).

Or look at S. Mironov-Korol: in 1933-36 he was the head of the Dnepropetrovsk GPUNKVD; in 1937, he was in charge of the Western Siberian NKVD; he also served in the central apparatus of the GPU-NKVD. In the mid-1930s, we see L. Vul as the head of Moscow and later of Saratov Police.

The plenipotentiary in Moscow was L. Belsky (after serving in Central Asia); later, he had risen to the head of the Internal Service Troops of the NKVD. In the 1930s, we see

many others: Foshan was in charge of the border troops; Meerson was the head of the Economic Planning section of the NKVD; L.I. Berenzon and later L.M. Abramson headed the finance department of the GULag; and Abram Flikser headed the personnel section of the GULag. All these are disconnected pieces of information, not amenable to methodical analysis. Moreover, there were special sections in each provincial office of the NKVD. Here is another isolated bit of information: Yakov Broverman was the head of Secretariat of the Special Section of the NKVD in Kiev; he later worked in the same capacity in the central NKVD apparatus.

Later, in 1940, when the Soviets occupied the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the head of the Dvinsk NKVD was one Kaplan. He dealt so harshly with the people there that in 1941, when the Red Army had hardly left and before the arrival of Germans, there was an explosion of public outrage against the Jews.

In the novel by D. P. Vitkovsky, *Half-life*, there is a phrase about the Jewish looks of investigator, Yakovlev (the action is set during Khrushchev's régime.) Vitovsky put it rather harshly so that Jews, who by the end of the 1960s were already on the way of breaking away from communism and in their new political orientation developed sympathy to any camp memoirs, were nonetheless repulsed by such a description.

I remember V. Gershuni asked me how many other Jewish investigators did Vitovsky come across during his 30-year-long ordeal? What an astonishing forgetfulness betrayed by that rather innocent slip! Would not it have been more appropriate to mention not the 30 years but 50 years, or, at least, 40 years? Indeed, Vitovsky might not have encountered many Jewish investigators during his last thirty

years, from the end of the 1930s (though they could still be found around even in the 1960s.) Yet Vitovsky was persecuted by the Organs for forty years; he survived the Solovki camp; and he apparently did not forget the time when a Russian investigator was a less frequent sight than a Jewish or a Latvian one.

Nevertheless, Gershuni was right in implying that all these outstanding and not so outstanding posts were fraught with death for their occupants; the more so, the closer it was to 1937-38.

Stalin As Jew-Killer

Our arbiters confidently ruled from their heights and when they were suddenly delivered a blow, it must have seemed to them like the collapse of the universe, like the end of the world. Wasn't there anyone among them before the onslaught who reflected on the usual fate of revolutionaries?

Among the major communist functionaries who perished in 1937-38, the Jews comprise an enormous percentage. For example, a modern historian writes that if from 1 January 1935 to 1 January 1938 the members of this nationality headed more than 50 percent of the main structural units of the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, then by 1 January 1939 they headed only six percent.

Using numerous execution lists that were published over the recent decades, and the biographical tomes of the modern *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia*, we are able to trace to some degree the fates of those outstanding and powerful Chekists, Red commanders, Soviet party officials, diplomats, and others, whom we mentioned in the previous chapters of this book.

Among the Chekists the destruction was particularly overwhelming. The names of those executed are italicized:

Matvey Berman, 1939;
Boris Berman, 1939;
Iosif Blat, 1937;
Ya. Veinshtok, 1939;
Leonid Vul, 1938,
Mark Gai-Shtoklyand, 1937;
Semyon Gendin, 1939;
Benjamin Gerson, 1941;
Lev Zadov-Zinkovsky, 1938;
Lev Zalin-Levin, 1940;
A. Zalpeter, 1939;
Lev Zakharov-Meyer, 1937;
N. Zelikman, 1937;

Lazar Kogan, 1939;
Mikhail Koltsov-Fridlyand, 1940;
Georg Krukovsky, 1938;
Israel Leplevsky, 1938;
Natan Margolin, 1938;
A. Minaev-Tsikanovsky, 1939;
Lev Mironov-Kagan, 1938;
Sergey Mironov-Korol, 1940;

,

Mikhail Raev-Kaminsky, 1939;
Aleksandr Radzivilovsky, 1940;
Naum Raysky-Lekhtman, 1939;
Grigoriy Rappoport, 1938;
Ilya Ressin, 1940;
A. Rutkovsky;
Pinkhus Simanovsky, 1940;

Abram Slutsky, poisoned in 1938;
David Sokolinsky, 1940;
Mikhail Trilisser;
Leonid Fayvilovich, 1936;
Vladimir Tsesarsky, 1940;
Shanin A. Rutkovsky, 1937;
Isaak Shapiro, 1940;
Evsey Shirvindt, 1938;
Grigoriy Shklyar; Sergey
Shpigelglas, 1940;
Genrikh Yagoda, 1938.

Nowadays entire directories, containing lists of the highest officials of the Central Apparatus of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD who fell during the Yezhov period of executions and repressions are published. There we see many more Jewish names.

But only accidentally, thanks to the still unbridled glasnost that began in the beginning of the 1990s, we learn about several mysterious biographies formerly shrouded in secrecy. For example, from 1937, professor Grigory Mayranovsky, a specialist in poisons, headed the Laboratory X in the Special Section of Operations Technology of the NKVD, which carried out death sentences through injections with poisons by the direct decision of the government in 1937 and in 1950; the executions were performed in a special prisoner cell at Laboratory X as well as abroad even in the 1960s and 1970s. Mayranovsky was arrested only in 1951; from his cell he wrote to Beria: “Dozens of sworn enemies of the Soviet Union, including all kinds of nationalists, were destroyed by my hand.”

And from the astonishing disclosure in 1990 we learned that the famous mobile gas chambers were invented,

as it turns out, not by Hitler during the World War II, but in the Soviet NKVD in 1937 by Isai Davidovich Berg, the head of the administrative and maintenance section of the NKVD of Moscow Oblast. Sure, he was not alone in that enterprise, but he organized the whole business. This is why it is also important to know who occupied middle-level posts. It turns out, that I. D. Berg was entrusted with carrying out the sentences of the troika of the

NKVD of Moscow Oblast; he dutifully performed his mission, which involved shuttling prisoners to the execution place. But when three troikas began to work simultaneously in the Moscow Oblast, the executioners became unable to cope with the sheer number of executions. Then they invented a time-saving method: the victims were stripped naked, tied, mouths plugged, and thrown into a closed truck, outwardly disguised as a bread truck. On the road the exhaust fumes were redirected into the prisoner-carrying compartment, and by the time the van arrived to the burial ditch, the prisoners were ready. Well, Berg himself was shot in 1939, not for those evil deeds, of course, but for anti-Soviet conspiracy. In 1956 he was rehabilitated without any problem, though the story of his murderous invention was kept preserved and protected in the records of his case and only recently discovered by journalists.

There are so many individuals with outstanding lives and careers in the list above! Bela Kun, the Butcher of Crimea, himself fell at that time, and with him the lives of twelve Commissars of the communist government of Budapest ended.

However, it would be inappropriate to consider the expulsion of Jews from the punitive organs as a form of persecution. There was no anti-Jewish motive in those events. Notwithstanding, that if Stalin's praetorians valued

not only their present benefits and power but also the opinion of the people whom they governed, they should have left the NKVD and not have waited until they were kicked out. Still, this wouldn't have spared many of them death, but surely it would have spared them the stigma. The notion of a purposeful anti-Jewish purge doesn't hold water: according to available data, at the end of the 1930s the Jews were one of the few national minorities, belonging to which did not constitute a "crime" for an NKVD official. There were still no regulations on national and personnel policy in the state security agencies of the kind that were enforced from the end of the 1940s to the early 1950s.

* * *

Many Party activists fell under the destructive wave of 1937-1938. From 1936-37 the composition of the Soviet of People's Commissars began to change noticeably as the purges during the pre-war years ran through the prominent figures in the people's commissariats. The main personage behind collectivization, Yakovlev, had met his bullet; the same happened to his comrades-in-arms, Kalmanovich and Rukhimovich, and many others. The meat-grinder devoured many old "honored" Bolsheviks, such as the long-retired Ryazanov or the organizer of the murder of the Czar Goloshchekin, not to mention Kamenev and Zinoviev. Lazar Kaganovich was spared although, he himself was the "iron broom" in several purges during 1937-38; for example, they called his swift purge of the city of Ivanov the "Black Tornado."

They offer us the following interpretation: "This is a question about the victims of the Soviet dictatorship; they were used by it and then mercilessly discarded when their

services became redundant.” What a great argument! So, for twenty years these powerful Jews were really used? Yet weren’t they themselves the zealous cogs in the mechanism of that very dictatorship right up to the very time when their services became redundant? Did not they make the great contribution to the destruction of religion and culture, the intelligentsia, and the multi-million peasantries?

A great many Red Army commanders fell under the axe. By the summer of 1938 without exception all commanders of military districts who occupied these posts by June 1937 disappeared without a trace. The Political Administration of the Red Army suffered the highest losses from the terror during the massacre of 1937, after the suicide of Gamarnik. Of the highest political officers of the Red Army, death claimed all 17 army commissars, 25 out of 28 corps commissars, and 34 out of 36 brigade (divisional) commissars. We see a significant percentage of Jews in the nowpublished lists of military chiefs executed in 1937-38.

Grigory Shtern had a very special military career; he advanced along the political officer’s path. During the Civil War, he was military commissar at regimental, brigade, and divisional levels. In 1923-25 he was the head of all special detachments in the Khorezm [a shortlived republic after the Bolshevik revolution] and commanded troops during the suppression of rebellions in Central Asia. Until 1926, he was the head of the political administration division. Later he studied at the military academy for senior military officers and thus became eligible for proper military posts; in 1929-34 he was a military advisor to the Republican government in Spain (not to be confused with Manfred Shtern, who also distinguished himself among the Red Spaniards under the alias of “General Kleber”). Later he was the Chief of Staff of the Far Eastern Front and conducted

bloody battles at Lake Khasan in 1938 together with Mekhlis, at the same time conspiring against Marshall Blücher, whom he ruined and whose post of the front commander he took over after the arrest of the latter. In March 1939, at the 18th Party Congress, he made this speech: “Together we have destroyed a bunch of good-for-nothings— the Tukhachevskys, Gamarniks, Uborevichs [former Soviet Marshalls] and similar others.” Well, he himself was shot later, in autumn 1941.

Shtern’s comrade-in-arms in aviation, Yakov Smushkevich, also had a head-spinning career. He too began as a political officer (until the mid-1930s); then he studied at the academy for top officers. In 1936-37 he had also fought in Spain, in aviation, and was known as “General Douglas.” In 1939, he was commander of the aviation group at Khalkhin Gol on the ManchurianMongolian border, site of Soviet-Japanese battles won by the Russians. After that he rose to the command of all air forces of the Red Army – the General Inspector of the Air Force. He was arrested in May 1941 and executed in the same year.

The wave of terror spared neither administrators, nor diplomats; almost all of the diplomats mentioned above were executed.

Let’s name those party, military, diplomatic, and managerial figures whom we mentioned before on these pages who now were persecuted. The names of the executed are italicized:

Samuil Agursky, arrested in 1938;

Lazar Aronshtam, 1938;

Boris Belenky, 1938;

Grigory Belenky, 1938;

Zakhar Belenky,1940;

Mark Belenky, 1938;
Moris Belotsky, 1938;
German Bitker, 1937;
Aron Vainshtein, 1938;
Yakov Vesnik, 1938;
Izrail Veitser, 1938;
Abram Volpe, 1937;
Yan Gamarnik, committed suicide in 1937;
Mikhail Gerchikov, 1937;
Evgeny Gnedin, arrested in 1939;
Philip Goloshchekin, 1941;
Ya. Goldin, 1938;
Lev Gordon, arrested in 1939;
Isaak Grinberg, 1938;
Yakov Gugel, 1937;
Aleksandr Gurevich, 1937;
Sholom Dvoilatsky, 1937;
Maks Deych, 1937;
Semyon Dimanshtein, 1938;
Efim Dreitser, 1936;
Semyon Zhukovsky, 1940;
Samuil Zaks, 1937;
Zinovy Zangvil,
Isaak Zelensky, 1938;
Grigory Zinoviev, 1936;
S. Zorin-Gomberg, 1937;
Boris Ippo, 1937;
Mikhail Kaganovich, committed suicide in
expectation of arrest, 1941;
Moisey Kalmanovich, 1937;
Grigoriy Kaminsky, 1938;
Ilya Kit-Viytenko, arrested in 1937 and spent 20
years in camps;

I.M. Kleiner, 1937;
Evgeniya Kogan, 1938;
Aleksandr Krasnoshchyokov-Tobinson, 1937;
Lev Kritsman, 1937;
Solomon Kruglikov, 1938;
Vladimir Lazarevich, 1938;
Mikhail Landa, 1938;
Ruvim Levin, 1937;
Yakov Livshits, 1937;
Moisey Lisovsky, arrested in 1938;
Frid Markus, 1938;
Lev Maryasin, 1938;
Grigory Melnichansky, 1937;
Aleksandr Minkin-Menson, died in camp in 1955;
Nadezhda Ostrovskaya, 1937;
Lev Pechersky, 1937;
I. Pinson, 1936;
Iosif Pyatnitsky-Tarshis, 1938;
Izrail Razgon, 1937;
Moisey Rafes, 1942;
Grigory Roginsky, 1939;
Marsel Rozenberg, 1938;
Arkady Rozengolts, 1938;
Naum Rozovsky, 1942;
Boris Royzenman, 1938;
E. Rubinin, spent 15 years in camps;
Yakov Rubinov, 1937;
Moisey Rukhimovich, 1938;
Oskar Ryvkin, 1937;
David Ryazanov, 1938;
Veniamin Sverdlov, 1939;
Boris Skvirsky, 1941;
Iosif Slavin, 1938;

Grigoriy Sokolnikov-Brilliant, killed in prison, 1939;
Isaak Solts, died in confinement in 1940;
Naum Sokrin, 1938;
Lev Sosnovsky, 1937;
Artur Stashevsky-Girshfeld, 1937;
Yury Steklov-Nakhamkis, 1941;
Nikolay Sukhanov-Gimmer, 1940;
Boris Tal, 1938;
Semyon Turovsky, 1936;
Semyon Uritsky, 1937;
Evgeny Fainberg, 1937;
Vladimir Feigin, 1937;
Boris Feldman, 1937;
Yakov Fishman, arrested in 1937;
Moisey Frumkin, 1938;
Maria Frumkina-Ester, died in camp, 1943;
Leon Khaikis, 1938; Avenir Khanukaev;
Moisey Kharitonov, died in camp, 1948;
Mendel Khataevich, 1937;
Tikhon Khvesin, 1938;
Iosif Khodorovsky, 1938;
Mordukh Khorosh, 1937;
Isay Tsalkovich, arrested in 1937;
Efim Tsetlin, 1937;
Yakov Chubin;
N. Chuzhak-Nasimovich; Lazar
Shatskin, 1937;
Akhiy Shilman, 1937;
Ierokhim Epshtein, arrested in 1938;
Iona Yakir, 1937;
Yakov
Yakovlev-
Epshtein,

1938;
Grigory
Shtern,
1941.

This is indeed a commemoration roster of many top-placed Jews.

Below are the fates of some prominent Russian Jewish socialists, who did not join the Bolsheviks or who even struggled against them.

*Boris Osipovich Bogdanov (born 1884) was an Odessan, the grandson and son of lumber suppliers. He graduated from the best commerce school in Odessa. While studying, he joined Social Democrat societies. In June 1905, he was the first civilian who got on board the mutinous battleship *Potemkin*, when she entered the port of Odessa; he gave a speech for her crew, urging sailors to join Odessa's labor strike; he delivered letters with appeals to consulates of the European powers in Russia. He avoided punishment by departing for St. Petersburg where he worked in the Social Democratic underground; he was a Menshevik.

He was sentenced to two 2-year-long exiles, one after another, to Solvychevodsk and to Vologda. Before the war, he entered the élite of the Menshevik movement; he worked legally on labor questions. In 1915, he became the secretary of the Labor Group at the Military Industrial Committee, was arrested in January 1917 and freed by the February Revolution. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Petrograd, and regularly chaired its noisy sessions which attracted thousands of people. From June 1917, he was a member of the Bureau of the All-Russian Central Executive

Committee and persistently opposed ongoing attempts of the Bolsheviks to seize power.

After the failed Bolshevik rebellion in July 1917 he accepted the surrender of the squad of sailors besieged in the Petropavlovsk Fortress. After the October coup, in 1918 he was one of the organizers of anti-Bolshevik workers movement in Petrograd. During the Civil War he lived in Odessa. After the Civil War, he tried to restart Menshevik political activity, but at the end of 1920 he was arrested for one year. That was the beginning of many years of unceasing arrests and sentences, exiles and camps, and numerous transfers between different camps — the so-called “Great Road” of so many socialists in the USSR. And all that was just for being a Menshevik in the past and for having Menshevik convictions even though by that time he no longer engaged in politics and during brief respites simply worked in economic posts and just wanted a quiet life; however, he was suspected of economic “sabotage.”

In 1922, he requested permission to emigrate, but shortly before departure was arrested again. First, he was sent to the Solovki prison camp and later exiled to the Pechora camp in the Urals; his sentences were repeatedly extended by three years; he experienced solitary confinement in the Suzdal camp and was repeatedly exiled. In 1931, they attempted to incriminate him in the case of the All-Soviet Bureau of Mensheviks, but he was lucky and they left him alone. Yet he was hauled in again in 1937, imprisoned in the Omsk jail (together with already-imprisoned communists), where he survived non-stop interrogations which sometimes continued without a pause for weeks, at any time of the day or night (there were three shifts of investigators); he served out 7 years in the Kargopol camp (several other Mensheviks were shot there); later he was exiled to Syktyvkar; in 1948,

he was again sentenced and exiled to Kazakhstan. In 1956, he was rehabilitated; he died in 1960, a worn-out old man.

*Boris Davidovich Kamkov-Kats (born 1885) was the son of a country doctor. From adolescence, he was a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Exiled in 1905 to the Turukhan Krai, he escaped. Abroad, he graduated from the Heidelberg University School of Law. He was a participant in the Zimmerwald [Switzerland] Conference of socialists in 1915.

After the February Revolution, he returned to Russia. He was one of the founders of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party; at the time of the October coup he entered into a coalition with the Bolsheviks. He took part in the dispersal of the Russian Constituent Assembly in January 1918. From April, he urged breaking the alliance with the Bolsheviks; in June he already urged “a revolutionary uprising against them. After the failed rebellion of the Socialist Revolutionaries, he went underground. After a brief arrest in 1920, he was arrested again in 1921, and exiled in 1923. Between exiles he spent two years in prison and experienced the same Great Road. In 1933, he was exiled to Archangel; he was arrested again in 1937 and executed in 1938.

*Abram Rafailovich Gots (born 1882) was the grandson of a millionaire tea merchant, V.Ya. Visotsky. From the age of 14, he was in the the Socialist Revolutionary movement from the very creation of the SR party in 1901 (his brother Mikhail was the party leader.) From 1906, he was a terrorist, a member of the militant wing of the SRs. From 1907-1915 he was in hard labor camps; he spent some time sitting in the infamous Aleksandrovsky Central. He was a participant of the February Revolution in Irkutsk and later in Petrograd. He was a member of the executive committees of the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies of Petrograd

and of the Soviet Peasant's Deputies and a member of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. From 25 October 1917, he headed the anti-Bolshevik Committee for the Salvation of the Motherland and Revolution. During the Civil War, he continued his struggle against Bolsheviks. In 1920, he was arrested; at the trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1922 he was sentenced to death, commuted to five years of imprisonment.

Later he experienced the Great Road of endless new prison terms and exiles. In 1939, he was sentenced to 25 years in the camps and died in one a year later.

Mikhail Yakovlevich Gendelman (born 1881) was an attorney-at-law and a Socialist Revolutionary from 1902. He participated in the February Revolution in Moscow, was a member of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies, a member of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, and a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. On 25 October 1917, he left the meeting of the 2nd All-Russian Congress of the Soviets in protest against the Bolsheviks. He was elected to the Constituent Assembly and participated in its only session, on 5 January 1918. Later in Samara he participated in the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly. He was arrested in 1921; in 1922, he was sentenced to death at the trial of the Socialist Revolutionaries, commuted to 5 years in prison. After numerous prison terms and exiles, he was shot in 1938.

*Mikhail Isaakovich Liber-Goldman (born 1880) was one of the founders of the Bund (1897), a member of the Central Committee of the General Jewish Labor Bund of Lithuania, Poland and Russia in Emigration; he represented the Bund at the congresses of the Russian Social Democratic

Workers' Party. He participated in the revolution of 1905-06. In 1910 he was exiled for three years to Vologda Province, fled soon thereafter and emigrated again. He was a steady and uncompromising opponent of Lenin. He returned to Russia after 1914, and joined the Socialist Defender movement (Defense of the Motherland in War). After the February revolution, he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies, and later he was a member of the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. He left the latter post after the October coup. Then he briefly participated in the Social Democratic Workers' Party of the Mensheviks. He worked on economic positions and was one of the leaders of the Menshevik underground in the USSR. His Great Road arrests and exiles began in 1923. He was arrested again and executed in Alma-Ata in 1937.

For many, there was a similar fate, with repeated sentences and exiles, right up to the climax of 1937-38.

Yet in those years purges swept all over the country, destroying the lives of countless ordinary people, including Jews, people who had nothing to do with politics or authority. Here are some of the Jews who perished:

*Nathan Bernshtein (born 1876) a music scholar and critic; he taught the history of music and aesthetics and wrote a number of books; arrested in 1937, he died in prison.

*Matvei Bronshtein (born 1906) a talented theoretical physicist, Doctor of Science, who achieved extraordinary results. He was the husband of Lyudmila K. Chukovskaya. Arrested in 1937, he was executed in 1938.

*Sergey Ginter (born 1870) an architect and engineer; arrested in 1934, exiled to Siberia, arrested again in 1937 and executed.

*Veniamin Zilbermints (born 1887) a mineralogist and geochemist; specialist on rare elements, he laid the foundation for semi-conductor science. He was persecuted in 1938.

*Mikhail Kokin (born 1906) an Orientalist, Sinologist and historian, arrested in 1937 and executed.

*Ilya Krichevsky (born 1885) a microbiologist, immunologist (also trained in physics and mathematics), Doctor of Medical Sciences, founder of a scientific school, chairman of the National Association of Microbiologists; arrested in 1938 and died in 1943.

*Solomon Levit (born 1894), geneticist; he studied the role of heredity and environment in pathology. Arrested in 1938 and died in prison.

Iokhiel Ravrebe (born 1883), an Orientalist, Judaist, one of the founders of the reestablished Jewish Ethnographic Society in 1920. Accused of creating a Zionist organization, he was arrested in 1937 and died in prison.

*Vladimir Finkelshtein (born 1896), a chemical physicist, professor, corresponding member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences; he had many works in applied electrical chemistry; persecuted in 1937.

*Ilya Khetsrov (born 1887), a hygienist and epidemiologist; he studied environmental hygiene, protection of water resources, and community hygiene. Arrested in 1938 and executed.

*Nakhum Schwartz (born 1888), a psychiatrist, studied Jewish psychology. In 1921-23 he taught Hebrew and wrote poetry in Hebrew. Accused of Zionist activity, he was arrested in 1937 and later died in prison.

Here are the fates of the three brothers Shpilrein from Rostov-on-Don. Jan (born 1887) was a mathematician; he applied mathematical methods in electrical and heat

engineering, he was professor at the Bauman Moscow State Technical University and later the dean of its Electrical Engineering Department. He was arrested and died in 1937. Isaak (born 1891) was a psychologist, Doctor of Philosophy. In 1927, he became the head of the All-Russian Society of Psychotechnology and Applied Psychophysiology; he performed extensive psychological analysis of professions and optimization of working environment. He was arrested in 1935 and later executed. Emil (born 1899) was a biologist, the dean of the Biology Department of Rostov University. He was shot in 1937.

*Leonid Yurovsky (born 1884) Doctor of Political Economy, one of the authors of the monetary reform of 1922-24. A close friend to A.V. Chayanov and N.D. Kondratiev [prominent Russian scientists], he was arrested in 1930, freed in 1935, then arrested again in 1937 and executed.

* * *

Despite the overwhelming percentage of high-placed, “aristocratic” Jews, who fell under Stalin’s axe, the free Western press did not perceive the events as specifically the persecution of Jews: the Jews were massacred simply because of their abundance in the top tiers of the Soviet hierarchy. Indeed, in 1939 we read such a stipulation in the collection of works *Evreysky Mir* [Jewish World]: “No doubt that the Jews in the USSR have numerous opportunities, which they did not have before the revolution, and which they do not have even now in some democratic countries. They can become generals, ministers, diplomats, professors, the most high-ranking and the most servile aristocrats.” Opportunities but in no way rights, because in the absence of such rights, Yakir, Garmanik, Yagoda, Zinoviev, Radek,

Trotsky and the rest fell from their heights and lost their very lives. Still, no nationality enjoyed such a right under the communist dictatorship; it was all about the ability to cling to power.

The long-time devoted socialist, emigrant S. Ivanovich (S.O. Portugeis), admitted: “Under the Czars, the Jews were indeed restricted in their right of living; yet their right to live was incomparably greater than than under Bolshevism.” Indeed. However, at the same time, despite being perfectly aware of collectivization, he writes that the “awkward attempts to establish socialism in Russia took the heaviest toll from the Jews”; that “the scorpions of Bolshevism did not attack any other people with such brutal force as they attacked Jews.”

Yet during the Great Plague of dekulakization, it was not thousands but millions of peasants who lost both their right of living and the right to live. And yet all the Soviet pens (with so many Jews among them) kept complete silence about this cold-blooded destruction of the Russian peasantry. In unison with them, the entire West was silent.

Could it be really out of the lack of knowledge? Or was it for the sake of protecting the Soviet régime? Or was it simply because of indifference? Why, this is almost inconceivable: 15 million peasants were not simply deprived of entering the institutes of higher learning or of the right to study in graduate school, or to occupy nice posts — no! They were dispossessed and driven like cattle out of their homes and sent to certain death in the taiga and tundra. And the Jews, among other passionate urban activists, enthusiastically took the reins of the collectivization into their hands, leaving behind them persistent evil memory.

And who had raised their voices in defense of the peasants then?

And now, in 1932-33, in Russia and Ukraine – on the very outskirts of Europe, five to six million people died from hunger! And the free press of the free world maintained utter silence. And even if we take into account the extreme Leftist bias of the contemporary Western press and its devotion to the socialist “experiment” in the USSR, it is still impossible not to be amazed at the degree to which they could go to be blind and insensitive to the sufferings of even tens of millions of fellow humans.

If you don't see it, your heart doesn't cry.

During the 1920s, the Ukrainian Jews departed from their pro-Russian-statehood mood of 1917-1920, and by the end of the 1920s the Jews are among Ukrainian chauvinists and separatists, wielding enormous influence there—but only in the cities. We can find such a conclusion: the destruction of Ukrainian-language culture in 1937 was in part aimed against Jews, who formed a genuine union with Ukrainians for the development of local culture in Ukrainian language. Nevertheless, such a union in cultural circles could not soften the attitudes of the wider Ukrainian population toward Jews. We have already seen in the previous chapter how in the course of collectivization a considerable number of Jewish communists functioned in rural locales as commanders and lords over life and death. This placed a new scar on Ukrainian Jewish relations, already tense for centuries. And although the famine was a direct result of Stalin's policy, and not only in Ukraine—it brutally swept across the Volga Region and the Urals—the suspicion widely arose among Ukrainians that the entire Ukrainian famine was the work of the Jews. Such an interpretation has long existed, and the Ukrainian émigré

press adhered to it until the 1980s. Some Ukrainians are convinced that 1933 was the revenge of the Jews for the times of Khmelnytsky. [A 17th century Cossack leader who conducted bloody anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukraine].

Don't expect to reap wheat where the weed was sown. The supreme authority of so many Jews along with only a small number of Jews being touched by the grievances which afflicted the rest of population could lead to all sorts of interpretations.

Jewish authors who nervously kept an eye on anti-Semitism in the USSR did not notice this trampled ash, however, and made rather optimistic conclusions. For instance, Solomon Schwartz writes: "From the start of the 1930s, anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union quickly abated", and "in the mid-1930s it lost the character of a mass phenomenon ...anti-Semitism reached an all-time low point." He explains this, in part, as the result of the end of the NEP (the New Economic Policy) and thereby the disappearance of Jewish businessmen and petty Jewish merchants. Later, forced industrialization and lightning-fast collectivization, which he favorably compares with a kind of shock therapy, i.e., treatment of mental disorders with electric shocks, was of much help. In addition, he considers that in those years the ruling communist circles began to struggle with Great-Russian "chauvinism." (Well, they did not begin; they just continued the policy of Lenin's intolerance). Schwartz soundly notes that the authorities were "persistently silent about anti-Semitism, in order to avoid the impression that the struggle against Great-Russian chauvinism is a struggle for the Jews."

In January 1931, first the *New York Times*, and later the entire world press published a sudden and ostentatious announcement by Stalin to the Jewish Telegraph Agency:

“The Communists, as consistent internationalists, cannot help but be an irreconcilable and sworn enemy of anti-Semitism. In the USSR, anti-Semitism is strictly prosecuted by law as a phenomenon deeply hostile to the Soviet order. Active anti-Semites are punished, according to the laws of the USSR, with the death penalty.”

See, he addressed the democratic West and did not mind specifying the punishment. And it was only one nationality in the USSR that was set apart by being granted such a protection. And world opinion was completely satisfied with that. But characteristically, the announcement by the Leader was not printed in the Soviet press (because of his cunning reservations); it was produced for export and he hid this position from his own citizens; in the USSR, it was only printed at the end of 1936. Then Stalin sent Molotov to make a similar announcement at the Congress of Soviets.

A contemporary Jewish author, erroneously interpreting Molotov’s speech, suggests that speaking on behalf of the government he threatened to punish “anti-Semitic feelings” with death. Feelings! No, Molotov did not mention anything like that; he did not depart from Stalin’s policy of persecuting “active anti-Semites.” We are not aware of any instance of death penalty in the 1930s for anti-Semitism, but people were sentenced for it according to the Penal Code. (People whispered that before the revolution the authorities did not punish as harshly even for libels against the Czar.)

But now S. Schwartz observes a change: “In the second half of the 1930s, these sentiments people’s hostility toward Jews became much more prevalent, particularly in the major centers, where the Jewish intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia were concentrated. Here again the legend about Jewish domination gradually began to come back to life, and

they began to spread exaggerated notions about the role of Jews in the middle and top ranks of government.”

Well, whether or not it was really a legend, he immediately attempted to explain it, though in a quite naïve manner, suggesting the same old excuse that the Jewish intelligentsia and semiintelligentsia simply had almost no other source of livelihood under Soviet conditions except the government service.

This is so shameful to read. What oppression and despair! See, they had almost no other sources of livelihood, only privileged ones. And the rest of population was absolutely free to toil on kolkhoz fields, to dig pits, and to roll barrows at the great construction projects of the Five-Year Plans.

In official policy, nothing had changed in the 1930s in the Jewish Question from the time of the revolution; no official hostility toward Jews existed. Indeed, they used to dream and proclaim about the impending end of all national conflicts.

And the foreign Jewish circles did not and could not sense any oppression of the Jews in the USSR. In the article *The Jews and the Soviet Dictatorship*, S. Ivanovich wrote: “Abroad, many believe that there is no anti-Semitism in Russia, and on that basis, they are favorably disposed toward the Soviet authorities. But in Russia they know that this is not true.” However, Jews “pray for the long-life of the Soviet regime and are strongly afraid of its demise,” for “Stalin protects them from pogroms and hopefully would protect them in future.” The author sympathizes with such an opinion, although he considers it flawed: “If the Bolshevik dictatorship falls, no doubt there will be wild anti-Semitic ravages and violence. The fall of the Soviet regime would be a catastrophe for the Jews, and any friend of the Jewish

people should reject such a prospect with horror”; yet at the same time he remarks that the Soviet dictatorship is already embarrassed by the Judeophilia and Jewish dominance attributed to it.

The resolution on Stalin’s report at the 16th Party Congress provided the general political direction for the 1930s, calling for an energetic struggle against chauvinism, and primarily against the Great Russian chauvinism. The Party language was easily understood by all. And for several more years this struggle was enthusiastically carried on. Yet what kind of Stalinist madness was it? By that time there was no trace left of the Great Russian chauvinism. Stalin was not able to envision the immediate future [of WWII] – when only Russian patriotism would save him from imminent doom.

Then they have already started to sound the alarm about the danger of any rebirth of Russian patriotism. In 1939, S. Ivanovich claimed to notice a trend of this dictatorship returning to some national traditions of Moscovite Russ and Imperial Russia; he caustically cited several stamps that entered popular discourse around that time such as the love for the Motherland, national pride etc.

See, this is where the mortal danger for Russia lurked then, immediately before Hitler’s assault – in that ugly Russian patriotism!

This alarm did not leave the minds of Jewish publicists for the next half century, even when they looked back at that war, when mass patriotism blazed up, at the war which saved Soviet Jewry.

So, in 1988 we read in an Israeli magazine: “Vivid traditions of the Black Hundreds were the foundation of vivifying Soviet patriotism, which blossomed later, during the Great Patriotic War.” [The official Russian designation for the Eastern front in WWII].

Looking back at that war of 1941-1945, let's admit that this is a highly ungrateful judgment.

So, even the purest and most immaculate Russian patriotism has no right to exist – not now, not ever?

Why is it so? And why it is that Russian patriotism is thus singled out?

Liquidating the Jewish Intelligentsia

An important event in Jewish life in the USSR was the closing of the YevSek at the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks in 1930. Though in accord with the Soviet blueprint, this act blocked any separate development of a Jewish society having national, cultural, and individual Jewish autonomy. From now on Jewish cultural development lay within the Soviet mainstream.

In 1937-38 the leading Yevseks – Dimanshtein, Litvakov, Frumkina-Ester and their associates Motl Kiper, Itskhok Sudarsky, Aleksandr Chemerissky – who, in words of Yu.

Margolina, “in the service of the authorities carried out the greatest pogrom against Jewish culture,” were arrested and soon executed. Many Yevseks, occupying governing positions in the central and local 275 departments of the Society for Settling Toiling Jews on the Land (OZET) and in the Jewish community, Jewish cultural and educational structures, also fell under the juggernaut. In 1936-39, the majority of them were persecuted. The poisonous atmosphere of 1930s now reached these levels too. During open public meetings, they began to accuse and expose prominent Jewish communists, who at some time before were members either of the Bund or of the Zionist Socialist

Party, or even of Poale-Zion, all of which were crippled under the Soviet regime. Was there anyone, who's past the Bolsheviks did not try to criminalize?

"Who have you been before...?" In 1938 *Der Emes* was closed also.

What about education? Right up to 1933 the number of Jewish schools and Jewish students in them increased despite the early (1920s) critique of nationalistic overzealousness in the actions of the Yevseks on the forced transition of Jewish education into Yiddish. From 1936 to 1939 a period of accelerated decline and even more accelerated inner impoverishment of the schools in Yiddish was noted. After 1936-37 the number of Jewish schools began to decline quickly even in Ukraine and Belorussia; the desire of parents to send their children to such schools had diminished. Education in Yiddish was seen as less and less prestigious; there was an effort to give children an education in the Russian language. Also, from the second half of the 1930s the number of institutions of higher education lecturing in Yiddish began to decline rapidly; almost all Jewish institutions of higher education and technical schools were closed by 1937-38.

At the start of 1930s the Jewish scientific institutes at the academies of science of Ukraine and Belorussia were closed; in Kiev the Institute of Jewish Proletarian Culture fell into desolation. And soon after this. arrests followed. Mikhail Kokin of the Leningrad Institute of Philosophy, literature and History was executed; Iokhiel Rabrebe, formerly of the Petrograd Institute of Higher Jewish Studies, who in the 1930s headed the Jewish Section of the Public Library, was sentenced to 8 years and died in the transit camp.

Persecutions spread to writers in Yiddish: Moyshe Kulbak was persecuted in 1937; Zelik Akselrod, in 1940;

Abram Abchuk, a teacher of Yiddish and a critic, in 1937; writer Gertsl Bazov, was persecuted in 1938. Writer I. Kharik and critic Kh. Dunets were persecuted also.

Still, literature in Yiddish was actively published until the end of the 1930s. Jewish publishers were working in Moscow, Kiev, and Minsk. Yet what kind of literature was it? In the 1930s the overwhelming majority of works were written stereotypically, in accordance with the unshakable principles of socialist realism. Literature in Yiddish from the 1930s up to June 1941 was marked by the cult of Stalin. Unbridled flattery for Stalin flowed from the bosom of Jewish poetry.

Itsik Feder managed to light up even official propaganda with lyrical notes. These monstrous sayings are ascribed to his pen: “You betrayed your father — this is great!”, and “I say ‘Stalin’ but envision the sun.”

Most of these writers, who zealously tried to please Stalin, were arrested ten years later. But some of them, as mentioned above, had already drawn this lot. Similarly, the ideological press of official communist doctrine signified for many Jewish artists and sculptors a complete break up, quite often tragic, with the national Jewish traditions. (Still, what culture in the USSR was not touched by this?) So,

it comes as little surprise that the overwhelming majority of Jewish theaters devoted much attention to propaganda performances. This included all 19 aforementioned professional Yiddish theaters and numerous independent collectives, studios, and circles.

Concerning Hebrew culture which preserved the national traditions: it was by now conclusively banished and went underground.

It has already been mentioned that the Zionist underground was crushed by the beginning of the 1930s.

Many Zionists were already rounded up, but still many others were accused of the Zionist conspiracy. Take Pinkhas Dashevsky (from Chapter 8) – in 1933 he was arrested as a Zionist. Pinkhas Krasny was not a Zionist but was listed as such in his death sentence. He was former Minister of Petliura's Directorate, emigrated but later returned into the USSR. He was executed in 1939. Volf Averbukh, a Poale-Zionist from his youth, left for Israel in 1922, where he collaborated with the communist press. In 1930, he was sent back to the USSR, where he was arrested.

Most of the semi-legal cheder schools and yeshivas were shut down around that time. Arrests rolled on from the late 1920s in the Hasidic underground. Yakov-Zakharia Maskalik was arrested in 1937, Abrom-Levik Slavin was arrested in 1939. By the end of 1933, 237 synagogues were closed, that is, 57 percent of all existing in the first years of Soviet authority. In the mid-1930s, the closure of synagogues accelerated. From 1929, the authorities began to impose excessive tax on matzo baking. In 1937, the Commission on the Questions of Religions at the Central Executive Committee of the USSR prohibited baking matzo in Jewish religious communities. In 1937-38 the majority of clergy of the Jewish religious cult were persecuted. There were no rabbis in the majority of still-functioning synagogues.

In 1938 a “hostile rabbinical nest” was discovered in the Moscow Central Synagogue; the rabbis and a number of parishioners were arrested. The Rabbi of Moscow, Shmuel-Leib Medalia, was arrested and executed in 1938. (His son, Moishe Medalia, was arrested at the same time). In 1937, the Rabbi of Saratov, Iosif Bogatin, was arrested.

Birobidzhan

In the early 1930s, when the Jewish religion was restricted in the USSR, the closing of thousands of Orthodox Christian churches and the destruction of many of them rolled along throughout the entire country. They especially hurried to liberate Soviet Moscow from the church; Boris Iofan was in charge of that reconstruction. In that bitter and hungry year of devastating breakdown throughout the country, they promoted projects for a grand Palace of Soviets in place of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. *Izvestia* reports: “So far, eleven projects are presented at the exhibition. Particularly interesting among them are the works of architects Fridman, B. Iofan, Bronshtein, and Ladovsky.”

Later, the arrests reached the architects as well. The move toward settling the toiling Jews on the land gradually became irrelevant for Soviet Jews. The percentage of Jewish settlers abandoning lands given to them remained high. In 1930-32, the activity of foreign Jewish philanthropic organizations such as Agro-Joint, OKG, and EKO in the USSR, had noticeably decreased. And although in 1933-38 it had still continued within the framework of new restrictive agreements, in 1938 the activity ceased completely. In the first half of 1938, first the OZET and then the Committee for Settling the Toiling Jews on the Land (KomZET) were dissolved. The overwhelming majority of remaining associates of these organizations, who were still at liberty, were persecuted. By 1939, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine decided to liquidate the artificially-created national Jewish districts and boroughs.

Nonetheless, the idea of a Jewish colony in Birobidzhan was not abandoned in the 1930s and was even actively advanced by government. In order to put spirit into the masses, the authorities staged the Second All-Union

Congress of the OZET in Moscow in December 1930. By the end of 1931, the general population of that oblast was 45,000 with only 5,000 Jews among them, although whole villages with homes were built for their settlement and access roads were laid, sometimes by inmates from the camps nearby; for example, the train station of Birobidzhan was constructed in this manner. Yet non-Jewish colonization of the region went faster than Jewish colonization.

In order to set matters right, in autumn of 1931 the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR decreed that another 25,000 Jews should be settled in Birobidzhan during the next two years, after which it would be possible to declare it the Jewish Autonomous Republic. However, in the following years the number of Jews who left exceeded the number of Jews arriving, and by the end of 1933, after six years of colonization, the number of settled Jews amounted only to 8,000; of them only 1,500 lived in rural areas, i.e. worked in kolkhozes; that is, the Jews comprised less than one-fifth of all kolkhoz workers there. (There is also information that the land in the Jewish kolkhozes was fairly often tilled by hired Cossacks and Koreans). The oblast could not even provide enough agricultural products for its own needs.

Nevertheless, in May 1934, when the non-Jewish population had already reached 50,000, Birobidzhan was loudly declared a Jewish Autonomous Oblast. It still did not qualify for the status of a republic.

Thus, there was no national enthusiasm among the Jewish masses, which would ease the overcoming of the enormous difficulties inherent in such colonization. There was no industry in Birobidzhan, and the economic and social structure of the settlers resembled that of contemporary Jewish towns and *shtetls* in Ukraine and Belorussia. This was

particularly true for the city of Birobidzhan, especially considering the increased role of the Jews in the local administrative apparatus. Culture in Yiddish had certainly developed in the autonomous oblast – there were Jewish newspapers, radio, schools, a theater named after Kaganovich (its director was the future author E. Kazakevich), a library named after Sholem Aleichem, a museum of Jewish culture, and public reading facilities. Perets Markish had published the exultant article, *A People Reborn*, in the central press. (In connection with Birobidzhan, let's note the fate of the demographer Ilya Veitsblit. His position was that the policy of recruitment of poor urban Jews in order to settle them in rural areas should end; "There are no declassé individuals among the Jews, who could be suitable for Birobidzhan." He was arrested in 1933 and likely died in prison).

Yet the central authorities believed that that the colonization should be stimulated even further; and from 1934 they began a near compulsory recruitment among Jewish artisans and workers in the western regions, that is, among an urban population without a slightest knowledge of agriculture. The slogan rang out: "The entire USSR builds the Jewish Autonomous Oblast!" – meaning that recruitment of non-Jewish cadres is needed for quicker development. The ardent Yevsek Dimanshtein wrote that "we do not aim to create a Jewish majority in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast as soon as possible; this would contradict to the principles of internationalism."

But despite all these measures, during the next three years only another 11,000 were added to the eight or nine thousand Jews who were already living there; still, most of

newcomers preferred to stay in the oblast capital closer to its railroad station and looked-for opportunities to escape. Yet as we know, Bolsheviks may not be defeated or dispirited. So, because of dissatisfaction with the KomZET, in 1936 the Central Executive Committee of the USSR decided to partially delegate the overseeing of Jewish resettlement in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast to the resettlement department of the NKVD. In August of 1936, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR proclaimed that “For the first time in the history of the Jewish people, their ardent desire to have their own homeland has been realized and their own national statehood has been established.” And now they began planning the resettlement of 150,000 more Jews to Birobidzhan.

Looking back at it, the Soviet efforts to convert the Jews to agriculture suffered the same defeat as the Czarist efforts a century before.

In the meantime, the year 1938 approached. KomZET was closed, OZET was disbanded, and the main Yevseks in Moscow and the administrators of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast were arrested. Those Birobidzhan Jews who could left for the cities of the Far East or for Moscow. According to the 1939 Census, the general population of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast consisted of 108,000 people; however, the number of Jews there remained secret. The Jewish population of Birobidzhan was still low. Presumably, eighteen Jewish kolkhozes still existed, of 40-50 families each, but in those kolkhozes, they conversed and corresponded with the authorities in Russian. Yet what could Birobidzhan have become for Jews? Just forty-five years later, the Israeli General Beni Peled emphatically explained why neither Birobidzhan nor Uganda could give the Jewish

people a sense of connection with the land: “I simply feel that I am not ready to die for a piece of land in Russia, Uganda, or New Jersey!”

This sense of connection, after thousands of years of estrangement, was restored by Israel.

Jewish Demographics in the 1930s

The migration of Jews to the major cities did not slow down in the 1930s. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* reports that, according to the Census of 1926, there were 131,000 Jews in Moscow; in 1933, there were 226,500; and in 1939, there were 250,000 Jews. As a result of the massive resettlement of Ukrainian Jews, their share among Moscow Jewry increased to 80 percent. In the *Book on Russian Jewry* (1968), we find that in the 1930s up to a half-million Jews were counted among government workers, sometimes occupying prominent posts, primarily in the economy. The author also reports, that in the 1930s up to a half-million Jews became involved in industry, mainly in manual labor. On the other hand, Larin provides another figure, that among the industrial workers there were only 2.7 percent Jews or 200,000 or 2.5 times less than the first estimate. The flow of Jews into the ranks of office workers grew constantly. The reason for this was the mass migration to cities, and also the sharp increase of the educational level, especially of Jewish youth. The Jews predominantly lived in the major cities, did not experience artificial social restrictions so familiar to their Russian peers, and, it needs to be said, they studied devotedly, thus preparing masses of technical cadres for the Soviet future.

Let's glance into statistical data: in 1929 the Jews comprised 13.5 percent of all students in the higher

educational institutions in the USSR; in 1933—12.2 percent; in 1936—13.3 percent of all students, and 18 percent of graduate students (with their share of the total population being only 1.8 percent); from 1928 to 1935, the number of Jewish students per 1,000 of the Jewish population rose from 8.4 to 20.4 while per 1,000 Belorussians there were 2.4 students, and per 1,000 Ukrainians – 2.0; and by 1935 the percentage of Jewish students exceeded the percentage of Jews in the general population of the country by almost seven times, thus standing out from all other peoples of the Soviet Union.

G.V. Kostirchenko, who researched Stalin’s policies on Jews, comments on the results of the 1939 census: “After all, Stalin could not disregard the fact that at the start of 1939 out of every 1,000 Jews, 268 had a high school education, and 57 out of 1,000 had higher education.” Among Russians the figures were, respectively, 81 and six per 1,000. It is no secret that successful completion of higher education or doctoral studies allowed individuals to occupy socially prestigious positions in the robustly developing Soviet economy of the 1930s.

However, in *The Book on Russian Jewry* we find that “without exaggeration, after Ezhov’s purges, not a single prominent Jewish figure remained at liberty in Soviet Jewish society, journalism, culture, or even in the science.”

Well, it was absolutely not like that, and it is indeed a gross exaggeration. Still, the same author, Grigory Aronson, in the same book, only two pages later says summarily about the 1930s, that the Jews were not deprived of general civil rights. They continued to occupy posts in the state and party apparatus, and there were quite a few Jews in the diplomatic corps, in the general staff of the army, and among the

professors in the institutions of higher learning. Thus, we enter into the year 1939.

The voice of Moscow was that of the People's Artist, Yury Levitan – “the voice of the USSR,” that incorruptible prophet of our Truth, the main host of the radio station of the Comintern and a favorite of Stalin. Entire generations grew up, listening to his voice: he read Stalin's speeches and summaries of Sovinformburo [the Soviet Information Bureau], and the famous announcements about the beginning and the end of the war.

In 1936 Samuil Samosud became the main conductor of the Bolshoi Theatre and served on that post for many years. Mikhail Gnesin continued to produce music in the style of modern European music and in the style of the so-called New Jewish music; Gnesin's sisters successfully ran the music school, which developed into the outstanding Musical Institute. The ballet of Aleksandr Krein was performed in the Mariinsky and Bolshoi theatres. Well, Krein distinguished himself by his symphony *Rhapsody*, that is, a Stalin speech set to music. Krein's brother and nephew flourished also. A number of brilliant musicians rose to national and later to international fame: Grigory Ginzburg, Emil Gilels, Yakov Zak, Lev Oborin, David Oistrakh, Yakov Flier and many others. Many established theatre directors, theatre and literary critics, and music scholars continued to work without hindrance.

Examining the culture of the 1930s, it is impossible to miss the extraordinary achievements of the songwriter composers. Isaak Dunaevsky, a founder of genres of operetta and mass song in Soviet music, composed easily digestible songs routinely glorifying the Soviet way of life (*The March of Merry Lads*, 1933; *The Song of Kakhovka*, 1935; *The Song About Homeland*, 1936; *The Song of Stalin*, 1936,

etc.). Official propaganda on the arts declared these songs the embodiment of the thoughts and feelings of millions of Soviet people. Dunaevsky's tunes were used as the identifying melody of Moscow Radio. He was heavily decorated for his service: he was the first of all composers to be awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labour and elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in the notorious year 1937. Later he was also awarded the Order of Lenin. He used to preach to composers that the Soviet people do not need symphonies.

Matvey Blanter and the brothers Daniil and Dmitry Pokrass were famous for their complacent hit song *If War Strikes Tomorrow* ("we will instantly crush the enemy") and for their earlier hit the *Budyonny March*. There were many other famous Jewish songwriters and composers in 1930s and later: Oskar Feltsman, Solovyev-Sedoy, Ilya Frenkel, Mikhail Tanich, Igor Shaferan, Yan Frenkel and Vladimir Shainsky, etc. They enjoyed copy numbers in the millions, fame, royalties — come on, who dares to name those celebrities among the oppressed? And after all, alongside the skillfully written songs, how much blaring Soviet propaganda did they churn out, confusing, brainwashing, and deceiving the public and crippling good taste and feelings?

What about movie industry? The modern Israeli *Jewish Encyclopedia* states that in the 1930s "the main role of movies was to glorify the successes of socialism; a movie's entertainment value was minimal." Numerous Jewish filmmakers participated in the development of standards of a unified and openly ideological film industry, conservative in form and obsessively didactic. Many of them were already listed in the previous chapter; take, for example, D. Vertov's *Symphony of the Donbass*, 1931, released immediately after the Industrial Party Trial.

Here are a few of the then-celebrated names: F. Ermler (*The Coming, The Great Citizen, Virgin Soil Upturned*), S. Yutkevich (*The Coming, The Miners*), the famous Mikhail Romm (*Lenin in October, Lenin in 1918*), L. Arnshtam (*Girlfriends, Friends*), I. Trauberg (*The Son of Mongolia, The Year 1919*), A. Zarkhi and I. Kheifits (*Hot Days, Ambassador of the Baltic*).

Obviously, filmmakers were not persecuted in the 1930s, though many cinematography, production and film distribution managers were arrested; two high-ranking bosses of the central management of the cinema industry, B. Shumyatsky and S. Dukelsky, were even shot.

In the 1930s, Jews clearly comprised a majority among filmmakers. So, who was really the victim – deceived viewers, whose souls were steamrolled with lies and rude didactics, or the filmmakers, who forged documentaries, biographies and produced pseudo-historical and essentially unimportant propaganda films, characterized by phony monumentality and inner emptiness? The *Jewish Encyclopedia* adds sternly: “Huge numbers of Jewish operators and directors were engaged in making popular science, educational, and documentary films, in the most official sphere of the Soviet cinematography, where adroit editing helped to produce a “genuine documentary” out of a fraud.

For example, R. Karmen, did it regularly without scruples. (He was a glorified Soviet director, producer of many documentaries about the civil war in Spain and the Nuremberg Trials; he made the anniversary-glorifying film *The Great Patriotic War, Vietnam*, and a film about Cuba; he was a recipient of three USSR State Prizes, the Stalin Prize and the Lenin Prize; he held the titles of the People’s Artist of the USSR and the Hero of the Socialist Labor.

Let's not forget filmmaker Konrad Wolf, the brother of the famous Soviet spy, Marcus Wolf.

No, the official Soviet atmosphere of 1930s was absolutely free of ill will toward Jews. And until the war, the overwhelming majority of Soviet Jewry sympathized with the Soviet ideology and sided with the Soviet regime. "There was no Jewish Question indeed in the USSR before the war – or almost none"; then the "open anti-Semites were not yet in charge of newspapers and journals; they did not control personnel departments." (The truth is quite the opposite. Many much positions were occupied by Jews).

Sure, then Soviet culture consisted of Soviet patriotism, i.e., of producing art in accordance with directives from above. Unfortunately, many Jews were engaged in that pseudocultural sphere and some of them even rose to supervise the Russian language culture. In the early 1930s, we see B.M. Volin-Fradkin at the head of the Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs (GlavLit), the organ of official censorship, directing the development of the culture. Many of the GlavLit personnel were Jewish. For example, in GlavLit, from 1932 to 1941 we see A.I. Bendik, who would become the Director of the Book Palace during the war. Emma Kaganova, the spouse of Chekist Pavel Sudoplatov was trusted to manage the activities of informants among the Ukrainian intelligentsia. After private publishers were abolished, a significant contribution to the organization and management of Soviet government publishers was made by S. Alyansky, M. Volfson, I. Ionov (Bernshtein), A. Kantorovich, B. Malkin, I. Berite, B. Feldman, and many others. Soon all book publishing was centralized in the State Publishing House and there was no other place for an author to get his work published.

The Jewish presence was also apparent in all branches of the printed propaganda works of the clumsy caricaturist Boris Efimov could be found in the press everyday (he produced extremely filthy images of Western leaders; for instance, he had portrayed Nicholas II in a crown carrying a rifle, trampling corpses). Every two to three days, sketches of other dirty satirists, like G. Riklin, the piercingly caustic D. Zaslavsky, the adroit Radek, the persistent Sheinin and the brothers Tur, appeared in press. A future writer L. Kassil wrote essays for *Izvestia*. There were many others: R. Karmen, T. Tess, Kh. Rappoport, D. Chernomordikov, B. Levin, A. Kantorovich, and Ya. Perelman.

These names I found in *Izvestia* only, and there were two dozen more major newspapers feeding the public with blatant lies. In addition, there existed a whole sea of ignoble mass propaganda brochures saturated with lies. When they urgently needed a mass propaganda brochure devoted to the Industrial Party Trial (such things were in acute demand for all of the 1930s), one B. Izakson knocked it out under the title: "*Crush the Viper of Intervention!*" Diplomat E. Gnedin, the son of Parvus, wrote lying articles about the "incurable wounds of Europe" and the imminent death of the West. He also wrote a rebuttal article, Socialist Labor in the Forests of the Soviet North, in response to Western "slanders" about the allegedly forced labor of camp inmates felling timber. When in the 1950s Gnedin returned from a camp after a long term (though, it appears, not having experienced tree felling himself), he was accepted as a venerable sufferer and no one reminded him of his lies in the past.

In 1929-31 Russian, historical science was destroyed; the Archaeological Commission, the Northern Commission, Pushkin House, the Library of the Academy of Sciences were

all abolished, traditions were smashed, and prominent Russian historians were sent to rot in camps. (How much did we hear about that destruction?) Third and fourth-rate Russian historians then surged in to occupy the vacant posts and brainwash us for the next half a century. Sure, quite a few Russian slackers made their careers then, but Jewish ones did not miss their chance.

Already in the 1930s, Jews played a prominent role in Soviet science, especially in the most important and technologically-demanding frontiers, and their role was bound to become even more important in the future. By the end of 1920s, Jews comprised 13.6 percent of all scientists in the country; by 1937 their share increased to 17.6 percent; in 1939 there were more than 15,000 or 15.7 percent Jewish scientists and lecturers in the institutions of higher learning.

In physics, member of the Academy A. F. Ioffe nurtured a highly successful school. As early as 1918, he founded the Physical-Technical Institute in Petrograd. Later, fifteen affiliated scientific centers were created; they were headed by Ioffe's disciples. His former students worked in many other institutes, in many ways determining the scientific and technological potential of the Soviet Union.

(However, repressions did not bypass them. In 1938, in the Kharkov Physics Technological Institute, six out of eight heads of departments were arrested: Vaisberg, Gorsky, Landau, Leipunsky, Obreimov, Shubnikov; a seventh—Rueman—was exiled; only Slutskin remained).

The name of Semyon Aisikovich, the constructor of Lavochkin fighter aircraft, was long unknown to the public. Names of many other personalities in military industry were kept secret as well. Even now we do not know all of them. For instance, M. Shkud oversaw development of powerful radio stations, yet there were surely others, whom we do not

know, working on the development of no less powerful jammers.

Numerous Jewish names in technology, science and its applications prove that the flower of several Jewish generations went into these fields. Flipping through the pages of biographical tomes of the *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia*, which only lists the Jews who were born or lived in Russia, we see an abundance of successful and gifted people with real accomplishments (which also means the absence of obstacles to career entry and advancement in general).

Of course, scientists had to pay political tribute too. Take, for example, the First National Conference for the Planning of Science in 1931. Academician Ioffe stated that “modern capitalism is no longer capable of a technological revolution,” it is only possible as a result of a social revolution, which has “transformed the once barbaric and backward Russia into the Socialist Union of Republics.” He praised the leadership of the proletariat in science and said that science can be free only under Soviet stewardship. Militant philosopher E. Ya. Kolman (one of main ideologists of Soviet science in the 1930s; he fulminated against the Moscow school of mathematics) asserted that “We should introduce labor discipline in the sciences, adopt collective methods, socialist competition, and shock labor methods; he said that science advances “thanks to the proletarian dictatorship,” and that each scientist should study Lenin’s *Materialism and Empirico-criticism*.

Academician A.G. Goldman (Ukraine) enthusiastically chimed in: “The academy now became the leading force in the struggle for the Marxist dialectic in science!”

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* summarizes: “At the end of 1930s, the role of the Jews in the various spheres of the

Soviet life reached its apogee for the entire history of the Soviet regime.”

According to the 1939 census, 40 percent of all economically active Jews were state employees. Around 364,000 were categorized among the intelligentsia. Of them, 106,000 were engineers or technologists, representing 14 percent of all professionals of this category countrywide; 139,000 were managers at various levels, 7 percent of all administrators in the USSR; 39,000 doctors, or slightly less than 27 percent of all doctors; 38,000 teachers, or more than 3 percent of all teachers; more than 6,500 writers, journalists, and editors; more than 5,000 actors and filmmakers; more than 6,000 musicians; a little less than 3,000 artists and sculptors; and more than 5,000 lawyers.

In the opinion of the *Encyclopedia*, such impressive representation by a national minority, even in the context of official internationalism and brotherhood of the peoples of the USSR, created the prerequisites for the backlash by the state.

* * *

During his political career, Stalin often allied with Jewish leaders of the Communist Party and relied on many Jewish back-benchers. By the mid-1930s he saw in the example of Hitler all the disadvantages of being a self-declared enemy of the Jews. Yet he likely harbored hostility toward them (his daughter’s memoirs support this), though even his closest circle was probably unaware of it. However, struggling against the Trotskyites, he of course realized this aspect as well — his need to further get rid of the Jewish influence in the party. And sensing the war, he perhaps was also grasping that proletarian internationalism alone would

not be sufficient and that the notion of the homeland, and even the Homeland, would be much needed.

S. Schwartz lamented about anti-revolutionary transformation of the party as the “unprecedented purge of the ruling party, the virtual destruction of the old party and the establishment of a new Communist Party under the same name in its place – new in social composition and ideology.” From 1937 he also noted a “gradual displacement of Jews from the positions of power in all spheres of public life.” Among the old Bolsheviks who were involved in the activity before the party came to power, and especially among those with the prerevolutionary involvement, the percentage of Jews was noticeably higher than in the party on average; in younger generations, the Jewish representation became even smaller. As a result of the purge, almost all important Jewish communists left the scene.

Lazar Kaganovich was the exception. Still, in 1939, after all the massacres, the faithful communist Zemlyachka was made the deputy head of the Soviet of People’s Commissars, and S. Dridzo-Lozovsky was assigned the position of Deputy to the Narkom of Foreign Affairs. And yet, in the wider picture, Schwartz’s observations are reasonable as was demonstrated above.

S. Schwartz adds that in the second half of 1930s Jews were gradually barred from entering institutions of higher learning which were preparing specialists for foreign relations and foreign trade, and were barred from military educational institutions. The famous defector from the USSR, I. S. Guzenko, shared rumors about a secret percentage quota on Jewish admissions to the institutions of higher learning which was enforced from 1939. In the 1990s, they even wrote that

Molotov, taking over the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in the spring of 1939, publicly announced during the general meeting with the personnel that he "will deal with the synagogue here," and that he began firing Jews on the very same day. (Still, Litvinov was quite useful during the war in his role as Soviet ambassador to the U.S. They say that upon his departure from the U.S. in 1943 he even dared to pass a personal letter to Roosevelt suggesting that Stalin had unleashed an anti-Semitic campaign in the USSR).

By the mid-1930s the sympathy of European Jewry toward the USSR had further increased. Trotsky explained it in 1937 on his way to Mexico: "The Jewish intelligentsia turns to the

Comintern not because they are interested in Marxism or Communism, but in search of support against aggressive [German] anti-Semitism." Yet it was this same Comintern that approved the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the pact that dealt a mortal blow to the East European Jewry!

In September 1939, hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews fled from the advancing German armies, fleeing further and further east and trying to head for the territory occupied by the Red Army. For the first two months, they succeeded because of the favorable attitude of the Soviet authorities. The Germans quite often encouraged this flight. But at the end of November the Soviet government closed the border.

In different areas of the front things took shape differently. In some areas, the Soviets would not admit Jewish refugees at all; in other places, they were welcomed but later sometimes sent back to the Germans. Overall, it is believed that around 300,000 Jews managed to migrate from the Western to the Eastern Poland in the first months of the war, and later the Soviets evacuated them deeper into the USSR. They demanded that Polish Jews register as Soviet

citizens, but many of them did not rush to accept Soviet citizenship: after all, they thought, the war would soon be over, and they would return home, or go to America, or to Palestine. (Yet in the eyes of the Soviet regime they thereby immediately fell under the category of “suspected of espionage,” especially if they tried to correspond with relatives in Poland.) Still, we read in the *Chicago Sentinel* that the Soviet Union gave refuge to 90 percent of all European Jewish refugees fleeing from Hitler.

According to the January 1939 census, 3,020,000 Jews lived in the USSR. Now, after occupation of the Baltics, annexation of a part of Poland, and taking in Jewish refugees, approximately two million more Jews were added, giving a total of around 5 million. Before 1939, the Jews were the seventh largest people in the USSR number-wise; now, after annexation of all Western areas, they became the fourth largest people of the USSR, after the three Slavic peoples, Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian. The mutual non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939 between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union evoked serious fear about the future of Soviet Jewry, though the policy of the Soviet Union toward its Jewish citizens was not changed. And although there were some reverse deportations, overall, the legal status of Jewish population remained unchanged during the 20 months of the Soviet-German collaboration. With the start of war in Poland, Jewish sympathies finally crystallized and Polish Jews, and the Jewish youth in particular, met the advancing Red Army with exulting enthusiasm. Thus, according to many testimonies (including M. Agursky’s one), Polish Jews, like their co-ethnics in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Lithuania, became the main pillar of the Soviet regime, supporting it tooth and nail.

Yet how much did these East European Jews know about what was going on in the USSR?

They unerringly sensed that a catastrophe was rolling at them from Germany, though still not fully or clearly recognized, but undoubtedly a catastrophe. And so, the Soviet welcome appeared to them to embody certain salvation.

Chapter XX: In the Camps Of GULAG

If I hadn't been there, it wouldn't be possible for me to compose this chapter.

Before the camps I thought that "one should not notice nationalities," that there are no nationalities, there is only humankind.

But when you are sent into the camp, you find it out that if you are of a lucky nationality then you are a fortunate man. You are provided for. You have survived! But if you are of a *common* nationality – well then, no offence...

Because nationality is perhaps the most important trait that gives a prisoner a chance to be picked into the life-saving corps of "*Idiots*."

[Translator's note: from Russian "придурок" - a fool or idiot. This is an inmate slang term to denote other inmates who didn't do common labor but managed to obtain positions with easy duties, usually pretending to be incapable of doing hard work because of poor health.]

Every experienced camp inmate can confirm that ethnic proportions among *Idiots* were very different from those in the general camp population. Indeed, there were virtually no Pribalts among Idiots, regardless of their actual number in the camp (and there were many of them); there were always Russians, of course, but in incomparably smaller proportion than in the camp on average (and those

were often selected from *orthodox* members of the Party); on the other hand, some others were noticeably concentrated – Jews, Georgians, Armenians; and Azeris also ended there in higher proportions, and, to some extent, Caucasian mountaineers also.

Certainly, none of them can be blamed for that. Every nation in the Gulag did its best in crawling to achieve survival, and the smaller and nimbler it was, the easier it was to accomplish. And again, Russians were the very last nation in their own Russian camps, like they were in the German *Kriegsgefangenenlagern*.

Yet it is not us who could have blamed them, but it is they – Armenians, Georgians, highlanders, who would have been in their right to ask us: “Why did you establish these camps? Why do you force us to live in your state? Do not hold us and we will not land here and occupy these so-attractive *Idiotic* positions! But while we are your prisoners – *à la guerre comme à la guerre.*”

But what about Jews? For Fate interwove Russian and Jews, perhaps forever, which is why this book is being written.

Before that, before this very line, there will be readers who have been in the camps and who haven’t been, who will be quick to contest the truth of what I say here. They will claim that many Jews were forced to take part in *common* labor activities. They will deny that there were camps where Jews were the majority among *Idiots*. They will indignantly reject that nations in the camps were helping each other selectively, and, therefore, at the expense of others.

Some others will not consider themselves as distinct “*Jews*” at all, perceiving themselves as Russians in everything. Besides, even if there *was* overrepresentation of Jews on key camp positions, it was absolutely

unpremeditated, wasn't it? The selection was exclusively based on merit and personal talents and abilities to do business. Well, who is to blame if Russians lack business talents?

There will be also those who will passionately assert directly opposite: that it was Jews who suffered worst in the camps. This is exactly how it is understood in the West: in Soviet camps, nobody suffered as badly as Jews. Among the letters from readers of *Ivan Denisovich* there was one from an anonymous Jew: "You have met innocent Jews who languished in camps with you, and you obviously not once witnessed their suffering and persecution. They endured double oppression: imprisonment and enmity from the rest of inmates. Tell us about these people!"

And if I wished to *generalize* and state that the life of Jews in camps was especially difficult, then I would be allowed to do so and wouldn't be peppered with admonitions for unjust ethnic generalizations. But in the camps, where I was imprisoned, it was the other way around – the life of Jews, to the extent of possible generalization, *was* easier.

Semen Badash, my campmate from Ekibastuz, recounts in his memoirs how he had managed to settle – later, in a camp at Norilsk – in the medical unit: Max Minz asked a radiologist Laslo Newsbaum to solicit for Badash before a free head of the unit. He was accepted. But Badash at least finished three years of medical school before imprisonment. Compare that with other nurses – Genkin, Gorelik, Gurevich (like one of my pals, L. Kopelev from Unzlag) – who never before in their lives had anything to do with medicine.

Some people absolutely seriously write like this: A. Belinkov was thrown into the most despicable category of *Idiots* (and I am tempted inappropriately to add "and languishers" here, though the *Languishers* were the social

antipodes of *Idiots* and Belinkov never was among the *Languishers*). – To be thrown into the group of *Idiots!* – what’s an expression! To be diminished by being accepted into the ranks of gentlemen? And here goes the justification: “To dig soil? But at the age of 23 he not only never did it – he never saw a shovel in his life.” Well then, the little Jew had no other choice but to become an *Idiot*.

Or read what Levitin-Krasnov wrote about one Pinsky, a literature expert, that he was a nurse in the camp. Which means that he, on the camp scale, has landed on his feet. However, Levitin presents this as an example of the greatest humiliation possible for a professor of the humanities.

Or take prisoner who survived, Lev Razgon, a journalist and not a medic at all, who was heavily published afterwards. But from his story in *Ogonek* (1988) we find that he used to be a medic in the camp’s medical unit, and moreover an *unescorted* medic. (From other his stories we can figure out that he also worked as a senior controller at a horrible timber logging station. But there is not a single story from which we can conclude that he ever participated in *common* labor.) Or a story of Frank Dikler, a Jew from faraway Brazil: he was imprisoned and couldn’t speak Russian, of course, and guess what? He had pull in the camp, and he has become a chief of the medical unit’s kitchen – a truly magnificent treasure! Or Alexandr Voronel, who was a political youngster when he landed in the camps, says that immediately after getting in the camp, he was “readily assisted by other Jewish inmates, who had not a slightest idea about my political views.” A Jewish inmate, responsible for running the bathhouse (a very important *Idiot* as well) spotted him instantly and “ordered him to come if he needs any help”; a Jew from prisoner security (also an *Idiot*) told

another Jew, a brigadier: “There are two Jewish guys, Hakim, don’t allow them to get in trouble.” And the brigadier gave them strong protection. Other thieves, especially “elders,” approved of him: You are so right, Hakim! You support your own kin! Yet we, Russians, are like wolves to each other.

And let’s not forget that even during camp imprisonment, by virtue of a common stereotype regarding all Jews as businessmen, many of them were getting commercial offers, sometimes even when they didn’t actively look for such enterprises. Take, for instance, M. Hafez. He emphatically notes: “What a pity that I can’t describe you those camp situations. There are so many rich, beautiful stories! However, the ethical code of a reliable Jew seals my mouth. You know even the smallest commercial secret should be kept forever. That’s the law of the Tribe.”

A Lett, Ane Bernstein, one of my witnesses from *Archipelago*, thinks that he managed to survive in the camps only because in times of hardship he asked the Jews for help and that the Jews, judging by his last name and nimble manners, mistook him for their Tribesman and always provided assistance. He says that in all his camps Jews always constituted the upper crust, and that the most important free employees were also Jews (Shulman – head of special department, Greenberg – head of camp station, Kegels – chief mechanic of the factory), and, according to his recollections, they also preferred to select Jewish inmates to staff their units.

This particular Jewish national contract between free bosses and inmates is impossible to overlook. A free Jew was not so stupid to actually see an Enemy of the People or an evil character preying on the people’s property in an imprisoned Jew (unlike what a dumb-headed Russian saw in another Russian.) He in the first place saw a suffering

Tribesman – and I praise them for this sobriety! Those who know about the historic terrific Jewish mutual supportiveness would understand that a free Jewish boss simply could not indifferently watch Jewish prisoners flounder in starvation and die, and not help. But I am unable to imagine a free Russian employee who would save and promote his fellow Russian prisoners to the privileged positions only because of their nationality. Though we lost 15 million people during collectivization, we are still numerous. You can't care about everyone, and nobody would even think about it.

Sometimes, when such a team of Jewish inmates smoothly bands together and are no longer impeded by the ferocious struggle for survival, they can engage in extraordinary activities. An engineer named Abram Zisman tells us: "In Novo-Archangelsk camp, in our spare time, we decided to count how many Jewish pogroms occurred over the course of Russian history. We managed to excite the curiosity of our camp command on this question (they had a peaceful attitude toward us.) The *Nachlag* [camp commander] was captain Gremin (N. Gershel, a Jew, son of a tailor from Zhlobin.) He sent an inquiry to the archives of the former Interior Department requesting the necessary information, and after eight months we received an official reply that 76 Jewish pogroms occurred between 1811 and 1917 on the territory of Russia with the number of victims estimated at approximately 3,000. (That is, the total number of those who suffered in any way.) The author reminds us that during one six-month period in medieval Spain more than twenty thousand Jews were killed.

A plot-like atmosphere emanates from the recollections of Josef Berger, a communist, about a highly-placed snitch named Lev Ilyich Inzhir. A former Menshevik, arrested in 1930, he immediately began collaborating with

the GPU, fearing reprisals against his family and the loss of his apartment in the center of Moscow. He helped to prepare the Menshevik trial of 1931, falsely testified against his best friends, was absolved and immediately appointed as a chief accountant of Belomorstroi. During the *Yezhovschina* he was a chief accountant of the GULAG enjoying the complete trust of his superiors and with connections to the very top NKVD officials. (Inzhir recalled one Jewish NKVD veteran who interlarded his words with aphorisms from Talmud.) He was arrested later again, this time in the wave of anti-Yezhov purges following the Malignant Dwarf's fall. However, Inzhir's former colleagues from the GULAG favorably arranged his imprisonment. At this point he turned into an explicit snitch and provocateur, and other inmates suspected that the plentiful parcels he was receiving were not from his relatives but directly from the Third Department. Nevertheless, later in 1953 in the Tayshet camp, he was sentenced to an additional jail term, this time being accused of Trotskyism and of concealing his sympathies for the State of Israel from the Third Department.

Of worldwide infamy, BelBallag absorbed hundreds of thousands of Russians, Ukrainian and Middle Asian peasants between 1931 and 1932. Opening a newspaper issue from August 1933 dedicated to the completion of the canal between the White and Baltic seas, we find a list of awardees. Lower ranking orders and medals were awarded to concreters, steelfixers, etc, but the highest degree of decoration, the Order of Lenin, was awarded to eight men only, and we can see large photographs of each. Only two of them were actual engineers, the rest were the chief commanders of the canal (according to Stalin's understanding of personal contribution.) And whom do we see here? Genrikh Yagoda, head of NKVD. Matvei Berman,

head of GULAG. Semen Firin, commander of BelBaltlag (by that time he was already the commander of Dmitlag, where the story will later repeat itself), Lazar Kogan, head of construction (later he will serve the same function at Volgocanal.) Jacob Rapoport, deputy head of construction. Naftaly Frenkel, chief manager of the labor force of Belomorstroi (and the evil demon of the whole Archipelago).

And all their portraits were enlarged and reprinted again in the solemnly shameful book *Belomorcanal* – a book of huge Scriptural size, like some revelation anticipating advent of the Millenarian Kingdom.

And then I reproduced these six portraits of villains in *Archipelago*, borrowing them from their own exhibition and without any prior editing, showing everybody who was originally displayed. Oh my God, what a worldwide rage surged around me! *How dare I?! This is antiSemitism!* I am a branded and screwed anti-Semite. At best, to reproduce these portraits was

“national egotism” – i.e. Russian egotism! And they dared to say it despite what follows immediately on the next pages of *Archipelago*: how docilely Kulak lads were freezing to death under their barrows. One wonders, where were their eyes in 1933 when it was printed for the very first time? Why weren't they so indignant then?

Let me repeat what I professed once to the Bolsheviks: one should be ashamed of evil and hideous atrocity not when it is disclosed to public, but when it is done.

A particular conundrum exists with respect to the personality of Naftaly Frenkel, that tireless demon of *Archipelago*: how to explain his strange return from Turkey in 1920s? He successfully got away from Russia with all his capital after the first harbingers of revolution. In Turkey he attained a secure, rich and unconstrained social standing, and

he never harbored any Communist ideas. And yet he returned? To come back and become a toy for the GPU and for Stalin, to spend several years in imprisonment himself, but in return to accomplish the most ruthless oppression of imprisoned engineers and the extermination of hundreds of thousands of the deKulakized? What could have motivated his insatiable evil heart? I am unable to imagine any possible reason except vengeance toward Russia. If anyone can provide an alternative explanation, please do so.

What else could be revealed by someone with a thorough understanding of the structure of the camp command? The head of the First Department of Belomorstroi was one Wolf; the head of the Dmitrov section of Volgocanal was Bovshover. The finance division of Belomorstroi was headed by L. Berenzon, his deputies were A. Dorfman, the already mentioned Inzhir, Loevetsky, Kagner, Angert. And how many of the other humbler posts remain unmentioned? Is it really reasonable to suppose that Jews were digging soil with shovels and racing their handbarrows and dying under those barrows from exhaustion and emaciation? Well, view it as you wish. A. P. Skripnikova and D. P. Vitkovsky, who were there, told me that Jews were overrepresented among *Idiots* during construction of Belomorcanal, and they did not roll barrows and did not die under them.

And you could find highly-placed Jewish commanders not only at BelBaltlag. Construction of the Kotlas-Vorkuta railroad was headed by Moroz (his son married Svetlana Stalina); the special officer-in-charge of GULAG in the Far East was Grach. These are only a few of the names, which resurfaced accidentally. If former inmate Thomas Sgovio, an American national, didn't write to me, I wouldn't be aware of the head of the Chai-Uryinsk Mining Administration on Kolyma between 1943-44 (at the depths

of the Patriotic War): “Half-colonel Arm was a tall black-haired Jew with a terrible reputation... His orderly was selling ethanol to everybody, 50 grams for 50 rubles. Arm had his own personal tutor of English, a young American, arrested in Karelia. His wife was paid a salary for an accountant’s position, but she didn’t work. Her job was actually performed by an inmate in the office.” (A common practice revealing how families of GULAG commanders used to acquire additional incomes.)

Or take another case: during the age of *glasnost*, one Soviet newspaper published a story about the dreadful GULAG administration that built a tunnel between Sakhalin and the mainland. It was called the Trust of Arais. Who was that comrade Arais? I have no idea. But how many perished in his mines and in the unfinished tunnel?

Sure, I knew a number of Jews (they were my friends) who carried all the hardships of common labor. In *Archipelago*, I described a young man, Boris Gammerov, who quickly found his death in the camp. (While his friend, the writer Ingal, was made an accountant from the very first day in the camp, although his knowledge of arithmetic was very poor.) I knew Volodya Gershuni, an irreconcilable and incorruptible man. I knew Jog Masamed, who did common labor in the hard labor camp at Ekibastuz *on principle*, though he was called upon to join the *Idiots*. Besides, I would like to list here a teacher Tatyana Moiseevna Falike, who spent 10 years drudging, she said, like a beast of burden. And I also would like to name here a geneticist Vladimir Efrogimson, who spent 13 out of his 36 months of imprisonment (one out of his two terms) doing common labor. He also did it on principle, though he also had better options. Relying on parcels from home (one cannot blame him for that), he picked the hand-barrow precisely because

there were many Jews from Moscow in that Jezkazgan camp, and they were used to settling well, while Efroimson wanted to dispel any grudge toward Jews, which was naturally emerging among inmates. And what did his brigade think about his behavior? “He is a black sheep among Jews; would a real Jew roll a barrow?” He was similarly ridiculed by Jewish *Idiots* who felt annoyed that he “flaunted himself” to reproach them. In the same vein, another Jew, Jacov Davydovich Grodzenskiy, who also beavered in the common category, was judged by others: “Is he really a Jew?”

It is so symbolic! Both Efroimson and Grodzenskiy did those right and best things, which could be only motivated by the noblest of Jewish appeals, to honestly share the common lot, and they were not understood by either side! They are always difficult and derided – the paths of austerity and dedication, the only ones that can save humanity.

I try not to overlook such examples, because all my hopes depend on them.

Let’s add here a valiant Gersh Keller, one of the leaders of Kengir uprising in 1954 (he was 30 years old when executed). I also read about Yitzhak Kaganov, commander of an artillery squadron during the Soviet-German war. In 1948, he was sentenced to 25 years for Zionism. During 7 years of imprisonment he wrote 480 pieces of poetry in Hebrew, which he memorized without writing them down.

During his third trial (July 10, 1978), after already serving two terms, Alexander Ginsburg, was asked a question “What is your nationality?” and replied: “Inmate!” That was a worthy and serious response, and it angered the tribunal. But he deserved it for his work for the Russian Public Relief Fund, which provided assistance to families of political prisoners of *all nationalities*, and by his manly

vocation. This is what we are – a genuine breed of prisoners, regardless of nationality.

However, my camps were different, – spanning from the “great” Belomor to the tiny 121st camp district of the 15th OLP of Moscow’s UITLK (which left behind a not inconspicuous semicircular building at Kaluga’s gate in Moscow). Out there, our entire life was directed and trampled by three leading *Idiots*: Solomon Solomonov, a chief accountant; David Burstein, first an “educator” and later a work-assigning clerk; and Isaac Bershader. (Earlier, in exactly the same way, Solomonov and Bershader ruled over the camp at the Moscow Highway Institute, MHI.) Note that all this happened under auspices of a Russian camp commander, one ensign Mironov.

All three of them came up before my eyes, and to get positions for them, in each case their Russian predecessors were instantly removed from the posts. Solomonov was sent in first; he confidently seized a proper position and quickly got on the right side of the ensign. (I think, using food and money from outside.) Soon after that the wretched Bershader was sent in from MHI with an accompanying note “to use him only in the common labor category” (a quite unusual situation for a domestic criminal, which probably meant substantial delinquency). He was about fifty years old, short, fat, with a baleful glare. He walked around condescendingly inspecting our living quarters, with the look of a general from the head department.

The senior proctor asked him: “What is your specialty?” – “Storekeeper”. – “There is no such specialty” – “Well, I am a storekeeper”. – “Anyway, you are going to work in the common labor brigade”. For two days, he was sent there. Shrugging his shoulders, he went out, and, upon entering the work zone, he used to seat himself on a stone

and rest respectably. The brigadier would have hit him, but he quailed – the newcomer was so self-confident, that anyone could sense power behind him. The camp’s storekeeper, Sevastyanov, was depressed as well. For two years he was in charge of the combined provision and sundry store. He was firmly established and lived on good terms with the brass, but now he was chilled: everything is already settled! Bershader is a

“storekeeper by specialty”!

Then the medical unit discharged Bershader from the labor duties on grounds of “poor health” and after that he rested in the living quarters. Meanwhile, he probably got something from outside. And within less than a week Sevastyanov was removed from his post, and Bershader was made a storekeeper (with the assistance of Solomonov). However, at this point it was found that the physical labor of pouring grain and rearranging boots, which was done by Sevastyanov singlehandedly, was also contraindicated for Bershader. So he was given a henchman, and Solomonov’s bookkeeping office enlisted the latter as service personnel. But it was still not a sufficiently abundant life. The best looking proudest woman of the camp, the swan-like lieutenant-sniper M. was bent to his will and forced to visit him in his store-room in the evenings. After Burstein showed himself in the camp, he arranged to have another camp beauty, A. S., to come to his cubicle.

Is it difficult to read this? But they were by no means troubled how it looked from outside. It even seemed as if they thickened the impression on purpose. And how many such little camps with similar establishments were there all across the Archipelago?

And did Russian *Idiots* behave in the same way, unrestrained and insanely!? Yes. But within every other

nation it was perceived socially, like an eternal strain between rich and poor, lord and servant. However, when an alien emerges as a “master over life and death” it further adds to the heavy resentment. It might appear strange – isn’t it all the same for a worthless negligible, crushed, and doomed camp dweller surviving at one of his dying stages? Isn’t it all the same who exactly seizes the power inside the camp and celebrates crowd’s picnics over his trench-grave? As it turns out, it is not. These things have been etched into my memory inerasably.

In my play *Republic of Labor*, I presented some of the events that happened in that camp on Bolshaya Kaluzhskaya 30. Understanding the impossibility of depicting everything like it was in reality, because it would be inevitably considered as incitement of anti-Jewish sentiment (as if that trio of Jews was not inflaming it in real life, caring little about consequences) I withheld the abominably greedy Bershader. I concealed Burstein. I recomposed the profiteer Rosa Kalikman into an amorphous Bella of eastern origin, and retained the only Jew, accountant Solomonov, exactly like he was in life.

So, what about my loyal Jewish friends after they perused the play? The play aroused extraordinarily passionate protests from V. L. Teush. He read it not immediately but when *Sovremennik* had already decided to stage it in 1962, so the question was far from scholarly. The Teushes were deeply injured by the figure of Solomonov. They thought it was dishonest and unjust to show such a Jew (despite that in the real life, in the camp, he was exactly as I showed him) in the age of oppression of Jews. (But then, it appears to me that such age is *everlasting*? When have our Jews *not* been oppressed?) Teush was alarmed and extremely agitated, and put forward an ultimatum that if I did not

remove or at least soften up the image of Solomonov, then all our friendship will be ruined and he and his wife will no longer be able to keep my manuscripts. Moreover, they prophesized that my very name will be irretrievably lost and blemished if I leave Solomonov in the play. Why not make him a Russian? They were astonished. Is it so important that he be a Jew? (But if it doesn't matter, why did Solomonov select Jews to be *Idiots*?)

I took a chill pill: a sudden censorial ban, no less weighty than the official Soviet prohibition, had emerged from an unanticipated direction. However, the situation was soon resolved by the official prohibition forbidding *Sovremennik* to stage the piece.

And there was another objection from Teush: "Your Solomonov has anything but a Jewish personality. A Jew always behaves discreetly, cautiously, suppliantly, and even cunningly, but from whence comes this pushy impudence of jubilant force? This is not true, it cannot happen like this!"

However, I remember not this Solomonov alone, and it was *exactly* like that! I saw many things in the 1920s and 1930s in Rostov-on-Don. And Frenkel acted similarly, according to the recollections of surviving engineers. Such a slip of a triumphant power into insolence and arrogance is the most repelling thing for those around. Sure, it is usually the behavior of the worst and rudest – but this is what becomes imprinted in memory. (Likewise, the Russian image is soiled by the obscenities of our villains.)

All these blandishments and appeals to avoid writing about the things like they were are undistinguishable from what we heard from the highest Soviet tribunes: about anti-defamation, about socialist realism – to write like it should be, not like it was. As if a creator is capable of forgetting or

creating his past anew! As if the full truth can be written in parts, including only what is pleasing, secure and popular.

And how meticulously all the Jewish characters in my books were analyzed with every personal feature weighted on apothecary scales. But the astonishing story of Grigory M., who did not deliver the order to retreat to a dying regiment because he was frightened (*GULAG Archipelago*, v. 6, Ch. 6) – was not noticed. It was passed over without a single word! And *Ivan Denisovich* added insult to injury: there were such sophisticated sufferers but I put forward a boor! For instance, during Gorbachev's *glasnost*, the emboldened Asir Sandler published his camp memoirs. "After first perusal, I emphatically rejected *One Day In The Life Of Ivan Denisovich*... the main personage was Ivan Denisovich, a man with minimal spiritual needs, focused only on his mundane troubles, and Solzhenitsyn turned him into the national image." (Exactly like all wellmeaning communists were grumbling at that time!) While Solzhenitsyn preferred not to notice the true intelligentsia, the determinant of domestic culture and science. Sandler was discussing this with Miron Markovich Etlis (both of whom used to be *Idiots* in medical unit). And Etlis added:

"The story is significantly distorted, placed upside down."

"Solzhenitsyn failed to emphasize the intelligent part of our contingent. Self-centered reflections [of Ivan Denisovich] about himself... that patience... that pseudo-Christian attitude toward others." And in 1964 Sandler was lucky to relieve his feelings in conversation with Ehrenburg himself. And the latter affirmatively nodded when Sandler mentioned his "extremely negative" feeling toward my novelette.

However, not a single Jew reproached me that Ivan Denisovich, in essence, attends to Cesar Markovich as a servant, albeit with good feelings.

Chapter XXI: During the Soviet-German War

After Kristallnacht in November 1938 the German Jews lost their last illusions about the mortal danger they were facing. With Hitler's campaign in Poland, the deadly storm headed East. Yet nobody expected that the beginning of the Soviet-German War would move Nazi politics to a new level, toward total physical extermination of Jews.

While they naturally expected all kinds of hardship from the German conquest, Soviet Jews could not envision the indiscriminate mass killings of men and women of all ages – one cannot foresee such things. Thus, the terrible and inescapable fate befell those who remained in the German-occupied territories without a chance to resist. Lives ended abruptly. But before their death, they had to pass through either initial forced relocation to a Jewish ghetto, or a forced labor camp, or to gas vans, or through digging one's own grave and stripping before execution.

The Russian *Jewish Encyclopedia* gives many names of the Russian Jews who fell victims to the Jewish Catastrophe; it names those who perished in Rostov, Simferopol, Odessa, Minsk, Belostok, Kaunas, and Narva. There were prominent people among them. The famous historian S.M. Dubnov spent the entire inter-war period in exile. He left Berlin for Riga after Hitler took power. He was arrested during the German occupation and placed in a ghetto; in December 1941, he was included into a column of those to be executed. From Vilna, historian Dina Joffe and director of the Jewish Gymnasium Joseph Yashunskiy were sent to concentration camps (both were killed in Treblinka in 1943.)

Rabbi Shmuel Bepalov, head of the Hasidim movement in Bobruisk, was shot in 1941 when the city was

captured by the Germans. Cantor Gershon Sirota, whose performance had once caught the attention of Nicholas II and who performed yearly in St. Petersburg and Moscow, died in 1941 in Warsaw. There were two brothers Paul and Vladimir Mintz: Paul, the elder, was a prominent Latvian politician, the only Jew in the government of Latvia. Vladimir was a surgeon, who had been entrusted with the treatment of Lenin in 1918 after the assassination attempt. From 1920 he lived in Latvia.

In 1940 the Soviet occupation authorities arrested Paul Mintz and placed him in a camp in Krasnoyarsk Krai, where he died early on. The younger brother lived in Riga and was not touched. He died in 1945 at Büchenwald. Sabina Shpilreyn, a doctor of medicine, psychoanalyst and a close colleague of Carl Jung, returned to Russia in 1923 after working in clinics in Zurich, Munich, Berlin and Geneva; in 1942, she was shot along with other Jews by Germans in her native Rostov-on-Don. (In Chapter 19, we wrote about the deaths of her three scientist brothers during Stalin's terror.)

Yet many were saved from death by evacuation in 1941 and 1942. Various Jewish wartime and postwar sources do not doubt the dynamism of this evacuation. For example, in *The Jewish World*, a book written in 1944, one can read: "The Soviet authorities were fully aware that the Jews were the most endangered part of the population, and despite the acute military needs in transport, thousands of trains were provided for their evacuation." In many cities Jews were evacuated first, although the author believes that the statement of the Jewish writer David Bergelson that approximately 80 percent of Jews were successfully evacuated is an exaggeration. Bergelson wrote: "In Chernigov, the pre-war Jewish population was estimated at 70,000 people and only 10,000 of them remained by the

time the Germans arrived. In Dneipropetrovsk, out of the original Jewish population of 100,000 only 30,000 remained when the Germans took the city. In Zhitomir, out of 50,000 Jews, no less than 44,000 lefts”

In the Summer 1946 issue of the bulletin *Hayasa* E.M. Kulisher wrote: “There is no doubt that the Soviet authorities took special measures to evacuate the Jewish population or to facilitate its unassisted flight. Along with the state personnel and industrial workers, Jews were given priority in the evacuation. The Soviet authorities provided thousands of trains specifically for the evacuation of Jews.”

Also, as a safer measure to avoid bombing raids, Jews were evacuated by thousands of haywagons, taken from *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* [collective farms] and driven over to railway junctions in the rear. B.T. Goldberg, a son-in-law of Sholem Aleichem and then a correspondent for the Jewish newspaper *Der Tog* from New York, after a 1946-1947 winter trip to the Soviet Union wrote an article about the wartime evacuation of Jews (*Der Tog*, February 21, 1947). His sources in Ukraine, Jews and Christians, the military and evacuees, all stated that the policy of the authorities was to give the Jews a preference during evacuation, to save as many of them as possible so that the Nazis would not destroy them. And Moshe Kaganovich, a former Soviet partisan, in his by then foreign memoirs (1948) confirms that the Soviet government provided for the evacuation of Jews all available vehicles in addition to trains, including trains of haywagons – and the orders were “to evacuate first and foremost the citizens of Jewish nationality from the areas threatened by the enemy.” (Note that S. Schwartz and later researchers dispute the existence of such orders, as well as the general policy of Soviet authorities to evacuate Jews as such.)

Nevertheless, both earlier and later sources provide fairly consistent estimates of the number of Jews who were evacuated or fled without assistance from the German-occupied territories. Official Soviet figures are not available; all researchers complain that the contemporaneous statistics are at best approximate.

Let us rely then on the works of the last decade. A demographer M. Kupovetskiy, who used formerly unavailable archival materials and novel techniques of analysis, offers the following assessment. According to the 1939 census, 3,028,538 Jews lived in the USSR within its old (that is, pre-1939-1940) boundaries. With some corrections to this figure and taking into account the rate of natural increase of the Jewish population from September 1939 to June 1941 (he analyzed each territory separately), this researcher suggests that at the outbreak of the war approximately 3,080,000 Jews resided within the old USSR borders. Of these, 900,000 resided in the territories which would not be occupied by Germans, and at the beginning of the war 2,180,000 Jews (Eastern Jews) resided in the territories later occupied by the Germans. There is no exact data regarding the number of Jews who fled or were evacuated to the East before the German occupation. Though based on some studies we know that approximately 1,000,000 1,100,000 Jews managed to escape from the Eastern regions later occupied by Germans.

There was a different situation in the territories incorporated into the Soviet Union only in 1939-1940, and which were rapidly captured by the Germans at the start of the Blitzkrieg. The lightning-speed German attack allowed almost no chance for escape; meanwhile the Jewish population of these buffer zones numbered 1,885,000 (Western Jews) in June 1941. And only a small number of

these Jews managed to escape or were evacuated. It is believed that the number is about 10-12 percent. Thus, within the new borders of the USSR, by the most optimistic assessments, approximately 2,226,000 Jews (2,000,000 Eastern, 226,000 Western Jews) escaped the German occupation and 2,739,000 Jews (1,080,000 Easterners and 1,659,000 Westerners) remained in the occupied territories.

Evacuees and refugees from the occupied and threatened territories were sent deep into the rear, with the majority of Jews resettled beyond the Ural Mountains, in particular in Western Siberia and also in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The materials of the Jewish AntiFascist Committee (EAK) contain the following statement: “At the beginning of the Patriotic War about one and half million Jews were evacuated to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other Central Asian Republics.”

This figure does not include the Volga, the Ural and the Siberian regions. However, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* argues that a 1,500,000 figure is a great exaggeration. Still, there was no organized evacuation into Birobidzhan, and no individual refugees relocated there, although, because of the collapse of Jewish *kolkhozes*, the vacated housing there could accommodate up to 11,000 families. At the same time, the Jewish colonists in the Crimea were evacuated so much ahead of time that they were able to take with them all livestock and farm implements; moreover, it is well-known that in the spring of 1942, Jewish colonists from Ukraine established *kolkhozes* in the Volga region. How? Well, the author calls it the irony of Nemesis: they were installed in place of German colonists who were exiled from the German Republic of the Volga by Soviet government order starting on August 28, 1941.

As already noted, all the cited wartime and postwar sources agree in recognizing the energy and the scale of the organized evacuation of Jews from the advancing German army. But the later sources, from the end of the 1940s, began to challenge this. For example, we read in a 1960s source: “*a planned evacuation of Jews as the most endangered part of the population did not take place anywhere in Russia*” (italicized as in the source.) And twenty years later we read this: after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, “contrary to the rumors that the government allegedly evacuated Jews from the areas under imminent threat of German occupation, no such measures had ever taken place. The Jews were abandoned to their fate. When applied to the citizen of Jewish nationality, the celebrated proletarian internationalism was a dead letter.” This statement is inaccurate and completely unfair.

Still, even those Jewish writers, who deny the beneficence of the government with respect to Jewish evacuation, do recognize its magnitude. Due to the specific social structure of the Jewish population, the percentage of Jews among the evacuees should have been much higher than the percentage of Jews in the urban population. And indeed it was. The Evacuation Council was established on June 24, 1941, just two days after the German invasion (Shvernik was the chairman and Kosygin and Pervukhin were his deputies.) Its priorities were announced as the following: to evacuate first and foremost the state and party agencies with personnel, industries, and raw materials along with the workers of evacuated plants and their families, and young people of conscription age. Between the beginning of the war and November 1941, around 12 million people were evacuated from the threatened areas to the rear.

This number included, as we have seen, 1,000,000 to 1,100,000 Eastern Jews and more than 200,000 Western Jews from the soon-to-be-occupied areas. In addition, we must add to this figure a substantial number of Jews among the people evacuated from the cities and regions of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR, that is, Russia proper) that never fell to the Germans (in particular, those from Moscow and Leningrad).

Solomon Schwartz states: “The general evacuation of state agencies and industrial enterprises with a significant portion of their staff (often with families) was in many places very extensive. Thanks to the social structure of Ukrainian Jewry with a significant percentage of Jews among the middle and top civil servants, including the academic and technical intelligentsia and the substantial proportion of Jewish workers in Ukrainian heavy industry, the share of Jews among the evacuees was larger than their share in the urban (and even more than in the total) population.” The same was true for Byelorussia. In the 1920s and early 1930s it was almost exclusively Jews, both young and old, who studied at various courses, literacy classes, in day schools, evening schools and shift schools. This enabled the poor from Jewish villages to join the ranks of industrial workers. Constituting only 8.9 percent of the population of Byelorussia, Jews accounted for 36 percent of the industrial workers of the republic in 1930.

“The rise of the percentage of Jews among the evacuees,” continues S. Schwartz, “was also facilitated by the fact that for many employees and workers the evacuation was not mandatory. Therefore, many, mostly non-Jews, remained where they were.” Thus, even the Jews, who did not fit the criteria for mandatory evacuation had better chances to evacuate. However, the author also notes that “no

government orders or instructions on the evacuation specifically of Jews or reports about it ever appeared in the Soviet press. There simply were no orders regarding the evacuation of Jews specifically. It means that there was no purposeful evacuation of Jews.”

Keeping in mind the Soviet reality, this conclusion seems ill-grounded and, in any case, formalistic. Indeed, reports about mass evacuation of the Jews did not appear in the Soviet press. It is easy to understand why. First, after the pact with Germany, the Soviet Union suppressed information about Hitler’s policies towards Jews, and when the war broke out, the bulk of the Soviet population did not know about the mortal danger the German invasion posed for Jews. Second, and this was probably the more-important factor – German propaganda vigorously denounced Judæo-Bolshevism and the Soviet leadership undoubtedly realized that they gave a solid foundation to this propaganda during the 1920s and 1930s, so how could they now declare openly and loudly that the *foremost* government priority must be to save Jews? This could only have been seen as playing into Hitler’s hands.

Therefore, there were no public announcements that among the evacuees Jews were overrepresented. The evacuation orders did not mention Jews, yet during the evacuation the Jews were not discriminated against; on the contrary they were evacuated by all available means, but in silence, without press coverage inside the USSR. However, propaganda for foreign consumption was a different matter. For example, in December 1941, after repulsing the German onslaught on Moscow, Radio Moscow—not in the Russian language, of course, but in Polish, and on the next day, five more times in German, compared the successful Russian winter counteroffensive with the Maccabean miracle and told the German-speaking listeners repeatedly that “precisely

during Hanukkah week”, the 134th Nuremberg Division, named after the city where the racial legislation originated was destroyed. In 1941-42 the Soviet authorities readily permitted worshippers to overfill synagogues in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kharkov and to openly celebrate the Jewish Passover of 1942.

We cannot say that the domestic Soviet press treated German atrocities with silence. Ilya Ehrenburg and others (like the journalist Kriger) got the go-ahead to maintain and inflame hatred towards Germans throughout the entire war and not without mentioning the burning topic of Jewish suffering, yet without a special stress on it. Throughout the war Ehrenburg thundered, that “the German is a beast by nature”, calling for “sparing not even unborn Fascists” (meaning the murder of pregnant German women), and he was checked only at the very end, when the war reached the territory of Germany and it became clear that the Army had embraced only too well the party line of unbridled revenge against all Germans.

However, there is no doubt that the Nazi policy of extermination of the Jews, its predetermination and scope, was not sufficiently covered by the Soviet press, so that even the Jewish masses in the Soviet Union could hardly realize the extent of their danger. Indeed, during the entire war, there were few public statements about the fate of Jews under German occupation.

Stalin in his speech on Nov. 6, 1941 (the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution) said: “The Nazis are as eager to organize medieval Jewish pogroms as the Czarist regime was. The Nazi Party is the party of medieval reaction and the Black-Hundred pogroms.” “

As far as we know”, an Israeli historian writes, “it was the only case during the entire war when Stalin publicly

mentioned the Jews.” On January 6, 1942, in a note of the Narkomindel [People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs] composed by Molotov and addressed to all states that maintained diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the Jews are mentioned as one of many suffering Soviet nationalities, and shootings of Jews in Kiev, Lvov, Odessa, KamenetzPodolsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Mariupol, Kerch were highlighted and the numbers of victims listed. The terrible massacre and pogroms were inflicted by German invaders in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. A significant number of Jews, including women and children, were rounded up; before the execution all of them were stripped naked and beaten and then shot by sub-machine guns. Many mass murders occurred in other Ukrainian cities, and these bloody executions were directed in particular against unarmed and defenseless Jews from the working class. On December 19, 1942, the Soviet government issued a declaration that mentioned Hitler’s special plan for total extermination of the Jewish population in the occupied territories of Europe and in Germany itself; although relatively small, the Jewish minority of the Soviet population suffered particularly hard from the savage bloodthirstiness of the Nazi monsters. But some sources point out that this declaration was somewhat forced; it came out two days after a similar declaration was made by the western Allies, and it was not republished in the Soviet press as was always done during newspaper campaigns. In 1943, out of seven reports of the Extraordinary State Commission for investigation of Nazi atrocities (such as extermination of Soviet prisoners of war and the destruction of cultural artifacts of our country), only one report referred to murders of Jews – in the Stavropol region, near Mineralnye Vody.²⁹ And in March 1944 in Kiev, while

making a speech about the suffering endured by Ukrainians under occupation, Khrushchev *did not mention Jews at all*.

Probably this is true. Indeed, the Soviet masses did not realize the scale of the Jewish Catastrophe. Overall, this was our common fate – to live under the impenetrable shell of the USSR and be ignorant of what was happening in the outside world. However, Soviet Jews could not be all that unaware about the events in Germany.

In the mid-thirties the Soviet press wrote a lot about German anti-Semitism. A novel by Leon Feichtwanger, *The Oppenheim Family*, and the movie based on the book, as well as another movie, *Professor Mamlock*, clearly demonstrated the dangers that Jews were facing. Following the pogroms of Kristallnacht, *Pravda* published an editorial “The Fascist Butchers and Cannibals” in which it strongly condemned the Nazis: “The whole civilized world watches with disgust and indignation the vicious massacre of the defenseless Jewish population by German fascists. With the same feelings the Soviet people watch the dirty and bloody events in Germany. In the Soviet Union, along with the capitalists and landowners, all sources of anti-Semitism have been wiped out.”

Then, throughout the whole November, *Pravda* printed daily on its front pages reports such as Jewish pogroms in Germany, “Beastly vengeance on Jews”, “The wave of protests around the world against the atrocities of the fascist thugs.” Protest rallies against anti-Jewish policies of Hitler were held in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, Minsk, Sverdlovsk, and Stalin. *Pravda* published a detailed account of the town hall meeting of the Moscow intelligentsia in the Great Hall of the Conservatory, with speeches given by A.N. Tolstoy, A. Korneychuk, L. Sobolev; People’s Artists [a Soviet title signifying prominence in the

Arts] A.B. Goldenweiser and S.M. Mikhoels, and also the text of a resolution adopted at the meeting: “We, the representatives of the Moscow intelligentsia ... raise our voice in outrage and condemnation against the Nazi atrocities and inhuman acts of violence against the defenseless Jewish population of Germany. The fascists beat up, maim, rape, kill and burn alive in broad daylight people who are guilty only of belonging to the Jewish nation.” The next day, on November 29, under the headline “Soviet intelligentsia is outraged by Jewish pogroms in Germany”, *Pravda* produced the full coverage of rallies in other Soviet cities.

However, from the moment of the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact in August of 1939, not only criticism of Nazi policies but also any information about persecution of the Jews in European countries under German control vanished from the Soviet press. A lot of messages were reaching the Soviet Union through various channels—intelligence, embassies, Soviet journalists— An important source of information was Jewish refugees who managed to cross the Soviet border.

However, the Soviet media, including the Jewish press, maintained silence. When the Soviet-German War started and the topic of Nazi anti-Semitism was raised again, many Jews considered it to be propaganda, argues a modern scholar, relying on the testimonies of the Catastrophe survivors, gathered over a half of century. Many Jews relied on their own life experience rather than on radio, books and newspapers. The image of Germans did not change in the minds of most Jews since WWI. And back then the Jews considered the German regime to be one of the most tolerant to them.

Many Jews remembered that during the German occupation in 1918, the Germans treated Jews better than

they treated the rest of the local population, and so the Jews were reassured. As a result, in 1941, a significant number of Jews remained in the occupied territories voluntarily. And even in 1942, according to the stories of witnesses, the Jews in Voronezh, Rostov, Krasnodar, and other cities waited for the front to roll through their city and hoped to continue their work as doctors and teachers, tailors and cobblers, which they believed were always needed. The Jews could not or would not evacuate for purely material reasons as well.

While the Soviet press and radio censored the information about the atrocities committed by the occupiers against the Jews, the Yiddish newspaper *Einigkeit* (Unity), the official publication of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (EAK), was allowed to write about it openly from the summer of 1942. Apparently, the first step in the establishment of EAK was a radiomeeting in August 1941 of representatives of the Jewish people (S. Mikhoels, P. Marques, J. Ohrenburg, S. Marshak, S. Eisenstein and other celebrities participated.) For propaganda purposes, it was broadcast to the US and other Allied countries. The effect on the Western public surpassed the most optimistic expectations of Moscow. In the Allied countries the Jewish organizations sprang up to raise funds for the needs of the Red Army. Their success prompted the Kremlin to establish a permanent Jewish Committee in the Soviet Union. Thus began the seven-year-long cooperation of the Soviet authorities with global Zionism.

The development of the Committee was a difficult process, heavily dependent on the attitudes of government. In September 1941, an influential former member of the Bund, Henryk Ehrlich, was released from the prison to lead that organization. In 1917, Ehrlich had been a member of the notorious and then omnipotent Executive Committee of the

Petrograd Soviet. Later, he emigrated to Poland where he was captured by the Soviets in 1939.

He and his comrade, Alter, who also used to be a member of the Bund and was also a native of Poland, began preparing a project that aimed to mobilize international Jewish opinion, with heavier participation of foreign rather than Soviet Jews. Polish Bund members were intoxicated by their freedom and increasingly acted audaciously. Evacuated to Kuibyshev [Samara] along with the metropolitan bureaucracy, they contacted Western diplomatic representatives, who were relocated there as well, suggesting, in particular, to form a Jewish Legion in the USA to fight on the Soviet-German front. The things have gone so far that the members of the Polish Bund began planning a trip to the West on their own". In addition, both Bund activists presumptuously assumed (and did not hide it) that they could liberally reform the Soviet political system. In December 1941, both overreaching leaders of the Committee were arrested. Ehrlich hanged himself in prison; Alter was shot.

Yet during the spring of 1942, the project of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was revived, and a meeting of the representatives of Jewish people was called forth again. A Committee was elected, although this time exclusively from Soviet Jews. Solomon Mikhoels became its Chairman and Shakhno Epstein, Stalin's eye in Jewish affairs and a former fanatical Bundist and later a fanatical Chekist, became its Executive Secretary. Among others, its members were authors

David Bergelson, Peretz Markish, Leib Kvitko, and Der Nistor; scientists

Lina Shtern and Frumkin, a member of the Academy. Poet Itzik Fefer became the Vice President.

(The latter was a former Trotskyite who was pardoned because he composed odes dedicated to Stalin; he was an important NKVD agent, and, as a proven secret agent, he was entrusted with a trip to the West.)

The task of this Committee was the same: to influence international public opinion, and to appeal to the Jews all over the world but in practice it appealed primarily to the American Jews building up sympathy and raising financial aid for the Soviet Union. (And it was the main reason for Mikhoels' and Fefer's trip to the United States in summer 1943, which coincided with the dissolution of Comintern. It was a roaring success, triggering rallies in 14 cities across the US: 50,000 people rallied in New York City alone. Mikhoels and Fefer were received by former Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann and by Albert Einstein.⁴³) Yet behind the scenes the Committee was managed by Lozovskiy-Dridzo, the Deputy Head of the Soviet Information Bureau (Sovinformbureau); the Committee did not have offices in the Soviet Union and could not act independently; in fact, it was not so much a fundraising tool for the Red Army as an arm of proSoviet propaganda abroad.

Jews in the Soviet Military

Some Jewish authors argue that from the late 1930s there was a covert but persistent removal of Jews from the highest ranks of Soviet leadership in all spheres of administration. For instance, D. Shub writes that by 1943 not a single Jew remained among the top leadership of the NKVD, though there were still many Jews in the Commissariat of Trade, Industry and Foods. There were also quite a few Jews in the Commissariat of Public Education and in the Foreign Office. A modern researcher reaches a

different conclusion based on archival materials that became available in 1990s: during the 1940s, the role of Jews in punitive organs remained highly visible, coming to the end only in the postwar years during the campaign against cosmopolitanism.

However, there are no differences of opinion regarding the relatively large numbers of Jews in the top command positions in the Army. The *Jewish World* reported that in the Red Army now [during the war], there are over a hundred Jewish generals and it provided a small randomly picked list of such generals, not including generals from the infantry. There were 17 names (ironically, Major-General of Engineering Service Frenkel Naftaliy Aronovich of GULAG was also included). A quarter of a century later, another collection of documents confirmed that there were no less than a hundred Jewish generals in the middle of the war and provided additional names.

However, the volume unfortunately omitted the Super-General Lev Mekhlis—the closest and most trusted of Stalin’s henchmen from 1937 to 1940; from 1941, he was the Head of Political Administration of the Red Army. Ten days after the start of the war, Mekhlis arrested a dozen of the highest generals of the Western Front. He is also infamous for his punitive measures during the Soviet-Finnish War and then later at Kerch in the Crimea.

The *Short Jewish Encyclopedia* provides an additional list of fifteen Jewish generals. Recently, an Israeli researcher has published a list of Jewish generals and admirals (including those who obtained the rank during the war). Altogether, there were 270 generals and admirals! This is not only “not a few”—this is an immense number indeed. He also notes four wartime narkoms (people’s commissars): in addition to Kaganovich, these were Boris Vannikov

(ammunition), Semien Ginzburg (construction), Isaac Zaltzman (tank industry) and several heads of main military administrations of the Red Army; the list also contains the names of four Jewish army commanders, commanders of 23 corps, 72 divisions, and 103 brigades.

“In no army of the Allies, not even in the USA’s, did Jews occupy such high positions, as in the Soviet Army”, Dr. I. Arad writes. No, the displacement of Jews from the top posts during the war did not happen. Nor had any supplanting yet manifested itself in general aspects of Soviet life. In 1944 (in the USA) a famous Socialist, Mark Vishnyak, stated that “not even hardcore enemies of the USSR can say that its government cultivates anti-Semitism.” *Back then* it was undoubtedly true.

According to *Einigkeit* (from February 24, 1945, almost at the end of the war), 63,374 Jews were awarded orders and medals for courage and heroism in combat and 59 Jews became the Heroes of the Soviet Union. According to the Warsaw Yiddish language newspaper *Volksstimme* in 1963 the number of the Jews awarded military decorations in WWII was 160,772, with 108 Heroes of the Soviet Union among them. In the early 1990s, an Israeli author provided a list of names with dates of confirmation, in which 135 Jews are listed as Heroes of the Soviet Union and 12 Jews are listed as the full chevaliers of the Order of Glory. We find similar information in the three-volume *Essays on Jewish Heroism*. And finally, the latest archival research (2001) provides the following figures: “throughout the war 123,822 Jews were awarded military decorations”; thus, among all nationalities of the Soviet Union, the Jews are in fifth place among the recipients of decorations, after Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Tatars.

I. Arad states that “anti-Semitism as an obstacle for Jews in their military careers, in promotion to higher military ranks and insignia did not exist in the Soviet Army during the war.” Production on the home front for the needs of the war was also highly rewarded. A huge influx of Soviet Jews into science and technology during the 1930s had borne its fruit during the war. Many Jews worked on the design of new types of armaments and instrumentation, in the manufacturing of warplanes, tanks, and ships, in scientific research, construction and development of industrial enterprises, in power engineering, metallurgy, and transport. For their work from 1941 to 1945 in support of the front, 180,000 Jews were awarded decorations. Among them were scientists, engineers, administrators of various managerial levels and workers, including more than two hundred who were awarded the Order of Lenin; nearly three hundred Jews were awarded the Stalin Prize in science and technology. During the war, 12 Jews became Heroes of Socialist Labor, eight Jews became full members of the Academy of Science in physics and mathematics, chemistry and technology, and thirteen became MemberCorrespondents of the Academy.

* * *

Many authors, including S. Schwartz, note that “the role of Jews in the war was systematically concealed” along with a deliberate policy of “silence about the role of Jews in the war”. He cites as a proof the works of prominent Soviet writers such as K. Simonov (*Days and Nights*) and V. Grossman (*The People Is Immortal*) where “among a vast number of surnames of soldiers, officers, political officers and others, there is not a single Jewish name.” Of course, this was due to censoring restrictions, especially in case of

Grossman. (Later, military personnel with Jewish names re-appeared in Grossman's essays.) Another author notes that postcards depicting a distinguished submarine commander, Israel Fisanovich, were sold widely throughout the Soviet Union. Later, such publications were extended; and an Israeli researcher lists another 12 Jews, Heroes of the Soviet Union, whose portraits were mass reproduced on postal envelopes.

Even through I'm a veteran of that war, I have not researched it through books much, nor was I collecting materials or have written anything about it. But I saw Jews on the front. I knew brave men among them. For instance, I especially want to mention two fearless antitank fighters: one of them was my university friend Lieutenant Emanuel Mazin; another was young ex-student soldier Borya Gammerov (both were wounded in action.) In my battery among 60 people two were Jews. Sergeant Ilya Solomin, who fought very well through the whole war, and Private Pugatch, who soon slipped away to the Political Department. Among twenty officers of our division one was a Jew – Major Arzon, the head of the supply department. Poet Boris Slutsky was a real soldier. He used to say: "I'm full of bullet holes." Major Lev Kopelev, even though he served in the Political Department of the Army (responsible for counter-propaganda aimed at enemy troops,) fearlessly threw himself in every possible fighting melee.

A former "Mifliyetz" Semyon Freylih, a brave officer, remembers: "The war began. So I was off to the draft board and joined the army without graduating from the University, as we felt ashamed not to share the hardships of millions." Or take Lazar Lazarev, later a well-known literary critic, who as a young man fought at the front for two years until both his hands were mauled: "It was our duty and we would have been ashamed to evade it. It was life, the only

possible one under the circumstances, the only decent choice for the people of my age and education.”

Boris Izrailevich Feinerman wrote in 1989 in response to an article in *Book Review*, that as a 17-year-old, he volunteered in July 1941 for an infantry regiment; in October, his both legs were wounded and he was taken prisoner of war; he escaped and walked out of the enemy’s encirclement on crutches – then of course he was imprisoned for “treaso’” – but in 1943 he managed to get out of the Soviet camp by joining a penal platoon; he fought there and later became a machine gunner of the assault infantry unit in a tank regiment and was wounded two more times.

We can find many examples of combat sacrifice in the biographical volumes of the most recent *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia*. Shik Kordonskiy, a commander of a mine and torpedo regiment, smashed his burning plane into an enemy cargo ship; he was posthumously made a Hero of the Soviet Union. Wolf Korsunsky, navigator of an air regiment, became a Hero of the Soviet Union too. Victor Hasin, a Hero of the Soviet Union squadron commander participated in 257 air skirmishes, personally shot down a number of the enemy’s airplanes, destroyed another 10 on the ground; he was shot down over enemy occupied territory, and spent several days reaching and crossing the front lines. He died in hospital from his wounds. One cannot express it better! The *Encyclopedia* contains several dozens names of Jews who died in combat.

Yet, despite these examples of unquestioned courage, a Jewish scholar bitterly notes “the widespread belief in the army and in the rear that Jews avoided the combat units.” This is a noxious and painful spot. But, if you wish to ignore the painful spots, do not attempt to write a book about ordeals that were endured together. In history, mutual national

perceptions do count. During the last war, anti-Semitism within Russia increased significantly. Jews were accused of evasion of military service and in particular of evasion of front line service. It was often said about Jews that instead of fighting, they stormed the cities of Alma-Ata and Tashkent.

Here is a testimony of a Polish Jew who fought in the Red Army: “In the army, young and old had been trying to convince me that there was not a single Jew on the front. ‘We’ve got to fight for *them*.’ I was told in a friendly manner: ‘You’re crazy. All your people are safely sitting at home. How come you are here on the front?’”

I. Arad writes: “Expressions such as ‘we are at the front, and the Jews are in Tashkent’, ‘one never sees a Jew at the front line’ could be heard among soldiers and civilians alike.” I can personally testify that yes, one could hear this among the soldiers on the front. And right after the war—who has not experienced that?—a painful feeling remained among our Slavs that *our* Jews could have acted in that war in a more self-sacrificing manner, that among the lower ranks on the front the Jews could have been more represented. These feelings are easy to blame (and they are blamed indeed) on unwarranted Russian anti-Semitism. However, many sources blame that on the German propaganda digested by our public. What a people! They are good only to absorb propaganda, be it Stalin’s or Hitler’s, and they are good for nothing else! Now half a century passed. Isn’t it time to unscramble the issue?

There are no official data available on the ethnic composition of the Soviet Army during the Second World War. Therefore, most studies on Jewish participation in the war provide only estimates, often without citation of sources or explanation of the methods of calculation. However, we can say that the 500,000 figure had been firmly established

by 1990s through simple, bald assertion and constant repetition until the half-million Jewish soldiers figure has simply become accepted as fact. The Jewish people supplied the Red Army with nearly 500,000 soldiers. Of course they did. Or as is sometimes stated, “During World War II, 550,000 Jews served in the Red Army.” The *Short Jewish Encyclopedia* notes that “only in the field force of the Soviet Army alone there were over 500,000 Jews,” and “these figures do not include Jewish partisans who fought against Nazi Germany.” The same figures are cited in *Essays on Jewish Heroism*, in Abramovich’s book *In the Deciding War* and in other sources. No evidence of any kind is provided for this figure; it is simply accepted.

We came across only one author who attempted to justify his assessment by providing readers with details of his reasoning. It was an Israeli researcher, I. Arad, in his the above cited book on the Catastrophe.

Arad concludes that the total number of Jews who fought in the ranks of the Soviet Army against the German Nazis was no less than 420,000-430,000. He includes in this number the thousands of Jewish partisans who fought against the German invaders in the woods. They were later incorporated into the regular army in 1944 after the liberation of Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine. At the same time, Arad believes that during the war approximately 25,00030,000 Jewish partisans operated in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union.

The Israeli *Encyclopedia* in the article “Anti-Nazi Resistance” provides a lower estimate: in the Soviet Union, more than 15,000 Jews fought against the Nazis in the underground organizations and partisan units.

In his calculations, Arad assumes that the proportion of mobilized Jews was the same as the average percentage of mobilized for the entire population of USSR during the war, i.e., 13.013.5 percent. This would yield 390,000-405,000 Eastern Jews (out of the total of slightly more than 3 million), save for the fact that in certain areas of Ukraine and Byelorussia, the percentage of Jewish population was very high; these people were not mobilized because the region was quickly captured by the Germans.

However, the author assumes that in general the mobilization shortfall of the Eastern Jews was small and that before the Germans came, the majority of males of military age were still mobilized, and thus he settles on the number of 370,000-380,000 Eastern Jews who served in the army. Regarding Western Jews, Arad reminds us that in 1940 in Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine, during the mobilization of conscripts whose year of birth fell between of 1919 and 1922, approximately 30,000 Jewish youths were enlisted, but the Soviet government considered the soldiers from the newly annexed western regions as unreliable; therefore, almost all of them were transferred to the Labor Army after the war began.

By the end of 1943, the process of re-mobilization of those who were previously transferred into the Labor Army began, and there were Jews among them. The author mentions that 6,000 to 7,000 Western Jewish refugees fought in the national Baltic divisions. By adding the Jewish partisans incorporated into the army in 1944, the author concludes: "We can establish that at least 50,000 Jews from the territories annexed to the USSR, including those mobilized before the war, served in the Red Army." Thus I. Arad comes to the overall number of 420,000-430,000 Jews in military service between 1941 and 1944.

According to Arad, the number of 500,000 soldiers commonly used in the sources would imply a *general base* (500,000 conscripts taken out of the entire Jewish population) of 3,700,000, 3,850,000 people. According to the above-mentioned sources, the maximum estimate for the total number of Eastern and Western Jews who escaped the German occupation was 2,226,000, and even if we were to add to this *base* all 1,080,000 Eastern Jews who remained under the occupation, as though they had had time to supply the army with all the people of military age right before the arrival of the Germans – which was not the case – the base would still lack a half-million people. It would have also meant that the success of the evacuation, discussed above, was strongly underestimated.

There is no such contradiction in Arad's assessment. And though its individual components may require correction, overall, it surprisingly well matches with the hitherto unpublished data of the Institute of the Military History, derived from the sources of the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense. According to that data, the numbers of mobilized personnel during the Great Patriotic War were as follows:

Russians - 19,650,000 Ukrainians – 5,320,000

Byelorussians – 964,000 Tartars – 511,000

Jews – 434,000 Kazakhs – 341,000 Uzbeks – 330,000

Others – 2,500,000⁷⁷

Thus, contrary to the popular belief, the number of Jews in the Red Army in WWII was proportional to the size of mobilization base of the Jewish population. The fraction of Jews that participated in the war in general matches their proportion in the population.

So then, were the people's impressions of the war really prompted by anti-Semitic prejudice? Of course, by the

beginning of the war, a certain part of the older and middle-aged population still bore scars from the 1920s and 1930s. But a huge part of the soldiers were young men who were born at the turn of the revolution or after it; their perception of the world differed from that of their elders dramatically. Compare: during the First World War, in spite of the spy mania of the military authorities in 1915 against the Jews who resided near the front lines, there was no evidence of anti-Semitism in the Russian army. In 1914, out of 5 million Russian Jews, by the beginning of WWI, about 400,000 Jews were inducted into the Russian Imperial Army, and by the end of war in 1917 this number reached 500,000". This means that at the outbreak of the war *every twelfth* Russian Jew fought in the war, while by the end, one out of ten. And in World War II, every *eighth or seventh*.

So, what was the matter? It can be assumed that the new disparities inside the army played their role with their influences growing stronger and sharper as one moved closer to the deadly frontline. In 1874 Jews were granted equal rights with other Russian subjects regarding universal conscription, yet during WWI until the February Revolution, Czar Alexander II's law which stipulated that Jews could not advance above the rank of petty officer (though it did not apply to military medics) was still enforced. Under the Bolsheviks, the situation had changed radically, and during the WWII, as the Israeli *Encyclopedia* summarizes, compared to other nationalities of the Soviet Union, Jews were disproportionately represented among the senior officers, mainly because of the higher percentage of college graduates among them. According to I. Arad's evaluation, the number of Jews-commissars and political officers in various units during the war was relatively higher than number of Jews on other Army positions; at the very least,

the percentage of Jews in the political leadership of the army was three times higher than the overall percentage of Jews among the population of the USSR during that period.

In addition, of course, Jews were among the head professionals of military medicine among the heads of health departments on several fronts. Twenty-Six Jewish generals of the Medical Corps and nine generals of the Veterinary Corps were listed in the Red Army. Thirtythree Jewish generals served in the Engineering Corps. Of course, Jewish doctors and military engineers occupied not only high offices: among the military medical staff there were many Jews (doctors, nurses, orderlies). Let us recall that in 1926 the proportion of Jews among military doctors was 18.6 percent while their proportion in the male population was 1.7 percent, and this percentage could only increase during the war because of the large number of female Jewish military doctors: traditionally, a high percentage of Jews in the Soviet medicine and engineering professions naturally contributed to their large number in the military units.

However undeniably important and necessary for *final* victory these services were, what mattered is that not everybody could survive to see it. Meanwhile an ordinary soldier, glancing back from the frontline, saw all too clearly that even the second and third echelons behind the front were also considered participants in the war: all those deep-rear headquarters, suppliers, the whole Medical Corps from medical battalion to higher levels, numerous behind-the-lines technical units and, of course, all kinds of service personnel there, and, in addition, the entire army propaganda machine, including touring ensembles, entertainment troupes – they all were considered war veterans and, indeed, it was apparent to everyone that the concentration of Jews was much higher there than at the front lines.

Some write that among Leningrad's veteran-writers, the Jews comprised by most cautious and perhaps understated assessment 31 percent – that is, probably more. Yet how many of them were editorial staff? As a rule, editorial offices were situated 10-15 kilometers behind the frontline, and even if a correspondent happened to be at the front during hostilities, nobody would have forced him to hold the position, he could leave immediately, which is a completely different psychology. Many trumpeted their status as front-liners, but writers and journalists are guilty of it the most. Stories of prominent ones deserve a separate dedicated analysis. Yet how many others, not prominent and not famous *front-liners*, settled in various newspaper publishing offices at all levels – at fronts, armies, corps and divisions?

Here is one episode. After graduating from the machine gun school, Second Lieutenant Alexander Gershkowitz was sent to the front. But, after a spell at the hospital, while catching up with his unit, at a minor railroad station he sensed the familiar smell of printing ink, followed it – and arrived at the office of a division-level newspaper, which serendipitously was in need of a front-line correspondent. And his fate had changed. (But what about catching up with his infantry unit?) In this new position, he traveled thousands of kilometers of the war roads. Of course, military journalists perished in the war as well.

Musician Michael Goldstein, who “got the white ticket” (not fit) because of poor vision, writes of himself: “I always strove to be at the front, where I gave thousands of concerts, where I wrote a number of military songs and where I often dug trenches.”

Often? Really? A visiting musician and with a shovel in his hands? As a war veteran, I say—an absolutely incredible picture.

Or here is another amazing biography. Eugeni Gershuni in the summer of 1941 volunteered for a militia unit, where he soon organized a small pop ensemble. Those, who know about these unarmed and even non-uniformed columns marching to certain death, would be chilled. Ensemble, indeed! In September 1941, Gershuni with his group of artists from the militia was posted to Leningrad's Red Army Palace, where he organized and headed a troop entertainment circus. The story ends on May 9, 1945, when Gershuni's circus threw a show on the steps of the Reichstag in Berlin.

Of course, the Jews fought in the infantry and on the frontline. In the middle of the 1970s, a Soviet source provides data on the ethnic composition of two hundred infantry divisions between

January 1, 1943 and January 1, 1944 and compares it to the population share of each nationality within the pre-September 1939 borders of the USSR. During that period, Jews comprised respectively 1.5 percent and 1.28 percent in those divisions, while their proportion in the population in 1939 was 1.78 percent. Only by the middle of 1944, when mobilization began in the liberated areas, did the percentage of Jews fall to 1.14 percent because almost all Jews in those areas were exterminated.

It should be noted here that some audacious Jews took an even more fruitful and energetic part in the war outside of the front. For example, the famous "Red Orchestra" of Trepper and Gurevich spied on Hitler's regime from within until the fall of 1942, passing to the Soviets extremely important strategic and tactical information. Both spies were

arrested and held by the Gestapo until the end of the war; then, after liberation, they were arrested and imprisoned in the USSR—Trepper for 10 years and Gurevich for 15 years.

Here is another example: a Soviet spy, Lev Manevich, was ex-commander of a special detachment during the Civil War and later a long-term spy in Germany, Austria, and Italy. In 1936, he was arrested in Italy, but he managed to communicate with Soviet intelligence even from the prison. In 1943, while imprisoned in the Nazi camps under the name of Colonel Starostin, he participated in the anti-fascist underground. In 1945, he was liberated by the Americans but died before returning to the USSR (where he could have easily faced imprisonment.) Only 20 years later, in 1965, was he awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously.

One can also find very strange biographies, such as Mikhail Scheinman's. Since the 1920s he served as a provincial secretary of the Komsomol; during the most rampant years of the Union of Militant Atheists he was employed at its headquarters; then he graduated from the Institute of Red Professors and worked in the press department of the Central Committee of the VKPb. In 1941, he was captured by the Germans and survived the entire war in captivity – a Jew and a high-level commissar at that! And despite categorical evidence of his culpability from SMERSH's [Translator's note: a frontline counter-intelligence organization, literally, "Death to Spies"] point of view, how could he possibly survive if he was not a traitor? Others were imprisoned for a long time for lesser crimes. Yet nothing happened, and in 1946 he was already safely employed in the Museum of the History of Religion and then in the Institute of History at the Academy of Science.

Yet such anecdotal evidence cannot make up a convincing argument for either side and there are no reliable and specific statistics nor are they likely to surface in the future.

Recently, an Israeli periodical has published some interesting testimony. When a certain Jonas Degen decided to volunteer for a Komsomol platoon at the beginning of the war, another Jewish youth, Shulim Dain, whom Jonas invited to come and join him, replied “that it would be really fortunate if the Jews could just watch the battle from afar since this is not their war, though namely this war may inspire Jews and help them to rebuild Israel. When I am conscripted to the army, I’ll go to war. But to volunteer? Not a chance.”

And Dain was not the only one who thought like this; in particular, older and more experienced Jews may have had similar thoughts. And this attitude, especially among the Jews devoted to the eternal idea of Israel, is fully understandable. And yet it is baffling, because the advancing enemy was the arch enemy of the Jews, seeking above all else to annihilate them. How could Dain and like-minded individuals remain neutral? Did they think that the Russians had no other choice but to fight for their land anyway?

One modern commentator (I know him personally – he is a veteran and a former camp inmate) concludes: “Even among the older veterans these days I have not come across people with such clarity of thought and depth of understanding as Shulim Dain (who perished at Stalingrad) possessed: two fascist monsters interlocked in deadly embrace. Why should we participate in that?” Of course, Stalin’s regime was not any better than Hitler’s. But for the *wartime Jews*, these two monsters could not be equal! If *that other* monster won, what could then have happened to the

Soviet Jews? Wasn't *this* war the personal Jewish war? Wasn't it their *own Patriotic War* – to cross swords with the deadliest enemy in the entire Jewish history? And those Jews who perceived the war as their own and who did not separate their fate from that of Russians, those like Freylikh, Lazarev and Fainerman, whose thinking was opposite to Shulim Dain's, they fought selflessly.

God forbid, I do not explain Dain's position as Jewish cowardice. Yes, the Jews demonstrated survivalist prudence and caution throughout the entire history of the Diaspora, yet it is this history that explains these qualities. And during the Six-Day War and other Israeli wars, the Jews have proven their outstanding military courage.

Taking all that into consideration, Dain's position can only be explained by a relaxed feeling of dual citizenship – the very same that back in 1922, Professor Solomon Lurie from Petrograd considered as one of the main sources of anti-Semitism (and its explanation) – a Jew living in a particular country belongs *not only to that* country, and his loyalties become inevitably split in two. The Jews have always harbored nationalist attitudes, but the object of their nationalism was Jewry, not the country in which they lived. Their interest in *this* country is partial. After all, they – even if many of them only unconsciously – saw ahead looming in the future *their very own* nation of Israel.

* * *

And what about the rear? Researchers are certain about the growth of anti-Semitism during the war. The curve of anti-Semitism in those years rose sharply again, and anti-Semitic manifestations by their intensity and prevalence dwarfed the anti-Semitism of the second half of the 1920s.

During the war, anti-Semitism became commonplace in the domestic life in the Soviet deep hinterland.

During evacuation, so-called domestic anti-Semitism, which had been dormant since the establishment of the Stalinist dictatorship in the early 1930s, was revived against the background of general insecurity and breakdown and other hardships and deprivations, engendered by the war. This statement refers mainly to Central Asia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, especially when the masses of wounded and disabled veterans rushed there from the front, and exactly there the masses of the evacuated Jews lived, including Polish Jews, who were torn from their traditional environment by deportation and who had no experience of Soviet kolkhozes.

Here are the testimonies of Jewish evacuees to Central Asia recorded soon after the war: “The low labor productivity among evacuated Jews served in the eyes of the locals as a proof of allegedly characteristic Jewish reluctance to engage in physical labor. The intensification of [anti-Semitic] attitudes was fueled by the Polish refugees’ activity on the commodity markets. Soon they realized that their regular incomes from the employment in industrial enterprises, kolkhozes, and cooperatives would not save them from starvation and death. To survive, there was only one way

– trading on the market or speculation; therefore, it was the Soviet reality that drove Polish Jews to resort to market transactions whether they liked it or not. The non-Jewish population of Tashkent was ill-disposed toward the Jewish evacuees from Ukraine. Some said, ‘Look at these Jews. They always have a lot of money.’” Then there were incidents of harassment and insults of Jews, threats against them, throwing them out of bread queues. Another group of

Russian Jews, mostly bureaucrats with a considerable amount of cash, inspired the hostility of the locals for inflating the already high market prices.

The author proceeds confidently to explain these facts thus: Hitler's propaganda reaches even here, and he is not alone in reaching such conclusions.

What a staggering revelation! How could Hitler's propaganda victoriously reach and permeate all of Central Asia when it was barely noticeable at the front with all those rare and dangerous-to-touch leaflets thrown from airplanes, and when all private radio receiver sets were confiscated throughout the USSR?

No, the author realizes that there was yet another reason for the growth of anti-Semitic attitudes in the districts that absorbed evacuees *en masse*. There the antagonism between the general mass of the provincial population and the privileged bureaucrats from the country's central cities manifested itself in a subtle form. Evacuation of organizations from those centers into the hinterland provided the local population with an opportunity to fully appreciate the depth of social contrast.

Anti-Semitism in the German-Occupied Territories

Then there were those populations that experienced the German invasion and occupation, for instance, the Ukrainians. Here is testimony published in March 1945 in the bulletin of the Jewish Agency for Palestine: "The Ukrainians meet returning Jews with hostility. In Kharkov, a few weeks after the liberation, Jews do not dare to walk alone on the streets at night. There have been many cases of beating up Jews on the local markets. Upon returning to their homes,

Jews often found only a portion of their property, but when they complained in courts, Ukrainians often perjured themselves against them.” (The same thing happened everywhere; besides it was useless to complain in court anyway: many of the returning non-Jewish evacuees found their old places looted as well.) There are many testimonies about hostile attitudes towards Jews in Ukraine after its liberation from the Germans. As a result of the German occupation, anti-Semitism in all its forms has significantly increased in all social strata of Ukraine, Moldova and Lithuania.

Indeed, *here*, in these territories, Hitler’s anti-Jewish propaganda did work well during the years of occupation, and yet the main point was the same: that under the Soviet regime the Jews had merged with the ruling class – and so a secret German report from the occupied territories in October 1941 states that “the animosity of the Ukrainian population against Jews is enormous. They view the Jews as informants and agents of the NKVD, which organized the terror against the Ukrainian people.”

Generally speaking, early in the war, Germany’s plan was to create an impression that it was not Germans but the local population that began extermination of the Jews; S. Schwartz believes that, unlike the reports of the German propaganda press, “the German reports not intended for publication are reliable.” He profusely quotes a report by SS Standartenführer F. Shtoleker to Berlin on the activities of the SS units under his command (operating in the Baltic states, Byelorussia and in some parts of the RSFSR) for the period between the beginning of the war in the East and October 15, 1941: “Despite facing considerable difficulties, we were able to direct local anti-Semitic forces toward organization of anti-Jewish pogroms within several hours

after arrival of German troops. It was necessary to show that it was a natural reaction to the years of oppression by Jews and communist terror. It was equally important to establish for the future as an undisputed and provable fact that the local people have resorted to the most severe measures against Bolsheviks and Jews on their own initiative, without demonstrable evidence for any guidance from the German authorities.”

The willingness of the local population for such initiatives varied greatly in different occupied regions. In the tense atmosphere of the Baltics, the hatred of Jews reached a boiling point at the very moment of Hitler’s onslaught against Soviet Russia on June 22, 1941. The Jews were accused of collaboration with the NKVD in the deportation of Baltic citizens. The *Israeli Encyclopedia* quotes an entry from the diary of Lithuanian physician E. Budvidayte-Kutorgene:

“All Lithuanians, with few exceptions, are unanimous in their hatred of Jews.”

Yet, the Standartenführer reports that “to our surprise, it was not an easy task to induce a pogrom there.” This was achieved with the help of Lithuanian partisans, who exterminated 1,500 Jews in Kaunas during the night of June 26 and 2,300 more in the next few days; they also burned the Jewish quarter and several synagogues. Mass executions of the Jews were conducted by the SS and the Lithuanian police on October 29 and November 25, 1941. About 19,000 of the 36,000 Jews of Kaunas were shot in the Ninth Fort. In many Lithuanian cities and towns, all of the Jewish population was exterminated by local Lithuanian police under German control in the autumn of 1941. It was much harder to induce the same self-cleaning operations and pogroms in Latvia, reports the Standartenführer, because there the entire national

leadership, especially in Riga, was destroyed or deported by the Bolsheviks. Still, on July 4, 1941, Latvian activists in Riga set fire to several synagogues into which the Jews had been herded. About 2,000 died; in the first days of occupation, locals assisted in executions by the Germans of several thousand Jews in the Bikernieki forest near Riga, and in late October and in early November in the shootings of about 27,000 Jews at a nearby railway station Rumbula. In Estonia, with a small number of Jews in the country, it was not possible to induce pogroms, reports the officer.

Estonian Jews were destroyed without pogroms. In Estonia, about 2,000 Jews remained. Almost all male Jews were executed in the first weeks of the occupation by the Germans and their Estonian collaborators. The rest were interned in the concentration camp Harku near Tallinn, and by the end of 1941 all of them were killed.

But the German leadership was disappointed in Byelorussia. S. Schwartz: "The failure of the Germans to draw sympathy from the broad masses of locals to the cause of extermination of Jews is completely clear from secret German documents. The population invariably and consistently refrains from any independent action against the Jews. Still, according to eyewitnesses in Gorodok in the Vitebsk oblast, when the ghetto was liquidated on Oct. 14, 1941, the "*Polizei* were worse than the Germans"; and in Borisov, the Russian police (it follows in the report that they were actually imported from Berlin) destroyed within two days [October 20 and 21, 1941] 6,500 Jews. Importantly, the author of the report notes that the killings of Jews were not met with sympathy from the local population: Who ordered that. How is it possible? Now they kill the Jews, and when will be our turn? What have these poor Jews done? They

were just workers. The really guilty ones are, of course, long gone.'

And here is a report by a German trustee, a native Byelorussian from Latvia: "In Byelorussia, there is no Jewish question. For them, it's a purely German business, not Byelorussian. Everybody sympathizes with and pities the Jews, and they look at Germans as barbarians and murderers of the Jews [*Judenhenker*]: a Jew, they say, is a human being just like a Byelorussian."

In any case, S. Schwartz writes that "there were no national Byelorussian squads affiliated with the German punitive units, though there were Latvian, Lithuanian, and 'mixed' squads; the latter enlisted some Byelorussians as well."

The project was more successful in Ukraine. From the beginning of the war, Hitler's propaganda incited the Ukrainian nationalists (Bandera's Fighters) to take revenge on the Jews for the murder of Petliura by Schwartzbard. The organization of Ukrainian Nationalists of BanderaMelnik (OUN) did not need to be persuaded: even before the Soviet-German War, in April 1941, it adopted a resolution at its Second Congress in Krakow, in which paragraph 17 states: "The Yids in the Soviet Union are the most loyal supporters of the ruling Bolshevik regime and the vanguard of Moscow imperialism in Ukraine. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists considers the Yids as the pillar of the Moscow-Bolshevik regime, while educating the masses that Moscow is the main enemy."

Initially, the Bandera irregulars allied with the Germans against the Bolsheviks. During the whole of 1940 and the first half of 1941, the OUN leadership was preparing for a possible war between Germany and the USSR. Then the main base of the OUN was the

Generalgouvernement, i. e., the Nazi-occupied Poland. Ukrainian militias were being created there, and lists of suspicious persons, with Jews among them, were compiled. Later these lists were used by Ukrainian nationalists to exterminate Jews.

Mobile units for the East Ukraine were created and battalions of Ukrainian Nationalists, “Roland” and “Nakhtigal”, were formed in the German Army. The OUN arrived in the East [of Ukraine] together with the frontline German troops. During the summer of 1941 a wave of Jewish pogroms rolled over Western Ukraine with participation of both Melnyk’s and of Bandera’s troops. As a result of these pogroms, around 28,000 Jews were killed. Among OUN documents, there is a declaration by J. Stetzko (who in July 1941 was named the head of the Ukrainian government): “The Jews help Moscow to keep Ukraine in slavery, and therefore, I support extermination of the Yids and the need to adopt in Ukraine the German methods of extermination of Jewry.”

In July, a meeting of Bandera’s OUN leaders was held in Lvov, where, among other topics, policies toward Jews were discussed. There were various proposals: to build the policy on the principles of Nazi policy before 1939. There were proposals to isolate Jews in ghettos. But the most radical proposal was made by Stepan Lenkavskiy, who stated: “Concerning the Jews we will adopt all the measures that will lead to their eradication.” And until the relations between the OUN and the Germans deteriorated (because Germany did not recognize the self-proclaimed Ukrainian independence) there were many cases, especially in the first year when Ukrainians directly assisted the Germans in the extermination of Jews. Ukrainian auxiliary police, recruited by the Germans mainly in Galicia and Volhynia, played a

special role. In Uman in September 1941, Ukrainian city police under command of several officers and sergeants of the SS shot nearly 6,000 Jews; and in early November 6 km outside Rovno, the SS and Ukrainian police slaughtered 21,000 Jews from the ghetto.

However, S. Schwartz writes: “It is impossible to figure out which part of the Ukrainian population shared an active anti-Semitism with a predisposition toward pogroms. Probably quite a large part, particularly the more cultured strata, did not share these sentiments. As for the original part of the Soviet Ukraine within the pre-September 1939 Soviet borders, no evidence for the spontaneous pogroms by Ukrainians could be found in the secret German reports from those areas.” In addition, Tatar militia squads in the Crimea were exterminating Jews also.

Regarding indigenous Russian regions occupied by the Germans, the Germans could not exploit anti-Russian sentiments and the argument about Moscow’s imperialism was unsustainable; and the argument for any Judæo-Bolshevism, devoid of support in local nationalism, largely lost its appeal; among the local Russian population only relatively few people actively supported the Germans in their anti-Jewish policies of extermination.

A researcher on the fate of Soviet Jewry concludes: the Germans in Lithuania and Latvia had a tendency to mask their pogromist activities, bringing to the fore extermination squads made up of pogromists emerging under German patronage from the local population; but In Byelorussia, and to a considerable extent even in Ukraine and especially in the occupied areas of the RSFSR, the Germans did not succeed as the local population had mostly disappointed the hopes pinned on it - and there the Nazi exterminators had to proceed openly.

Einsatzgruppen

Hitler's plan for the military campaign against the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) included *special tasks* to prepare the ground for political rule, with the character of these tasks stemming from the all-out struggle between the two opposing political systems. In May and June 1941, the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht issued more specific directives, ordering execution without trial of persons suspected of hostile action against Germany (and of political commissars, partisans, saboteurs and Jews in any case) in the theater of Barbarossa.

To carry out *special tasks* in the territory of the USSR, four special groups (*Einsatzgruppen*) were established within the Security Service (SS) and the Secret Police (Gestapo), that had operational units (*Einsatzkommando*) numerically equal to companies. The *Einsatzgruppen* advanced along with the front units of the German Army, but reported directly to the Chief of Security of the Third Reich, Reinhard Heydrich.

Einsatzgruppe A (about 1000 soldiers and SS officers under the command of SS Standartenführer Dr. F. Shtoleker) of Army Group North operated in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and the Leningrad and Pskov oblasts. Group B (655 men, under the command of Brigadenführer A. Neveu) was attached to Army Group Centre, which was advancing through Byelorussia and the Smolensk Oblast toward Moscow. Group C (600, Standartenführer E. Rush) was attached to Army Group South and operated in the Western and Eastern Ukraine. Group D (600 men under the command of SS Standartenführer Prof. O. Ohlendorf) was attached to

the 11th Army and operated in Southern Ukraine, the Crimea, and in the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions.

Extermination of Jews and commissars (“carriers of the Judæo-Bolshevik ideology”) by the Germans began from the first days of the June 1941 invasion, though they did so somewhat chaotically and with an extremely broad scope. In other German-occupied countries, elimination of the Jewish population proceeded gradually and thoroughly. It usually started with legal restrictions, continued with the creation of ghettos and introduction of forced labor and culminated in deportation and mass extermination. In Soviet Russia, all these elements were strangely intermingled in time and place. In each region, sometimes even within one city, various methods of harassment were used. There was no uniform or standardized system. Shooting of Jewish prisoners of war could happen sometimes right upon capture and sometimes later in the concentration camps; civilian Jews were sometimes first confined in ghettos, sometimes in forced-labor camps, and in other places they were shot outright on the spot, and still in other places the gas vans were used. As a rule, the place of execution was an anti-tank ditch, or just a pit.

The numbers of those exterminated in the cities of the Western USSR by the winter of 1941 (the first period of extermination) are striking: according to the documents, in Vilnius out of 57,000 Jews who had lived there about 40,000 were killed; in Riga out of 33,000 – 27,000; in Minsk out of the 100,000-strong ghetto – 24,000 were killed (there the extermination continued until the end of occupation); in Rovno out of 27,000 Jews - 21,000 were killed; in Mogilev about 10,000 Jews were shot; in Vitebsk - up to 20,000; and near Kiselevich village nearly 20,000 Jews from Bobruisk were killed; in Berdichev - 15,000.

By late September, the Nazis staged a mass extermination of Jews in Kiev. On September 26, they distributed announcements around the city requiring all Jews, under the penalty of death, to report to various assembly points. And Jews, having no other option but to submit, gathered obediently, if not trustingly, altogether about 34,000; and on September 29 and 30, they were methodically shot at Babi Yar, putting layer upon layers of corpses in a large ravine. Hence there was no need to dig any graves—a giant hecatomb! According to the official German announcement, not questioned later, 33,771 Jews were shot over the course of two days. During the next two years of the Kiev occupation, the Germans continued shootings in their favorite and so *convenient* ravine. It is believed that the number of the executed – not only Jews – had reached, perhaps, 100,000.

The executions at Babi Yar have become a symbol in world history. People shrug at the cold-blooded calculation, the business-like organization, so typical for the 20th century that crowns humanistic civilization: during the savage Middle Ages people killed each other *en masse* only in a fit of rage or in the heat of battle.

It should be recalled that within a few kilometers from Babi Yar, in the enormous Darnitskiy camp, tens of thousands Soviet prisoners of war, soldiers and officers, died during the same months: yet we do not commemorate it properly, and many are not even aware of it. The same is true about the more than two million Soviet prisoners of war who perished during the first years of the war.

The Catastrophe persistently raked its victims from all the occupied Soviet territories.

In Odessa on October 17, 1941, on the second day of occupation by German and Romanian troops, several

thousand Jewish males were killed, and later, after the bombing of the Romanian Military Office, the total terror was unleashed: about 5,000 people, most of them Jews and thousands of others, were herded into a suburban village and executed there. In November, there was a mass deportation of people into the Domanevskiy District, where about 55,000 Jews were shot in December and January of 1942. In the first months of occupation, by the end of 1941, 22,464 Jews were killed in Kherson and Nikolayev; 11,000 in Dnepropetrovsk; 8,000 in Mariupol' and almost as many in Kremenchug; about 15,000 in Kharkov's Drobytsky Yar; and more than 20,000 in Simferopol' and Western Crimea.

By the end of 1941, the German High Command had realized that the blitz had failed and that a long war loomed ahead. The needs of the war economy demanded a different organization of the home front. In some places, the German administration slowed down the extermination of Jews in order to exploit their manpower and skills. As the result, ghettos survived in large cities like Riga, Vilnius, Kaunas, Baranovichi, Minsk, and in other, smaller ones, where many Jews worked for the needs of the German war economy.

Yet the demand for labor that prolonged the existence of these large ghettos did not prevent resumption of mass killings in other places in the spring of 1942: in Western Byelorussia, Western Ukraine, Southern Russia and the Crimea, 30,000 Jews were deported from the Grodno region to Treblinka and Auschwitz; Jews of Polesia, Pinsk, Brest-Litovsk, and Smolensk were eradicated. During the 1942 summer offensive, the Germans killed local Jews immediately upon arrival: the Jews of Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk and Essentuki were killed in antitank ditches near Mineralni'ye Vody; thus, died evacuees to Essentuki from Leningrad and Kishinev. Jews of Kerch and Stavropol were

exterminated as well. In Rostov-on-Don, recaptured by the Germans in late July 1942, all the remaining Jewish population was eradicated by August 11.

In 1943, after the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, the outcome of the war became clear. During their retreat, the Germans decided to exterminate all remaining Jews. On June 21, 1943

Himmler ordered the liquidation of the remaining ghettos. In June 1943, the ghettos of Lvov, Ternopol, and Drohobych were liquidated. After the liberation of Eastern Galicia in 1944, only 10,000 to 12,000 Jews were still alive, which constituted about 2 percent of all Jews who had remained under occupation. Able-bodied Jews from ghettos in Minsk, Lida, and Vilnius were transferred to concentration camps in Poland, Estonia, and Latvia, while the rest were shot. Later, during the summer, 1944 retreat from the Baltics, some of the Jews in those camps were shot, and some were moved into camps in Germany (Stutthof et al.).

Destined for extermination, Jews fought for survival: underground groups sprang up in many ghettos to organize escapes. Yet after a successful breakout, a lot depended on the local residents—that they not betray the Jews, provide them with non-Jewish papers, shelter and food. In the occupied areas, Germans sentenced those helping Jews to death. But everywhere, in all occupied territories, there were people who helped the Jews. Yet there were few of them. They risked their lives and the lives of their families. There were hundreds, maybe thousands of such people. But the majority of local populations just watched from a distance. In Byelorussia and the occupied territories of the RSFSR, where local populations were not hostile to the remaining

Jews and where no pogroms ever occurred, the local population provided still less assistance to Jews

than in Europe or even in Poland, the country of widespread, traditional, folk anti-Semitism. (Summaries of many similar testimonies can be found in books by S. Schwartz and I. Arad.) They plausibly attribute this not only to the fear of execution but also to the habit of obedience to authorities (developed over the years of Soviet rule) and to not meddling in the affairs of others.

Yes, we have been so downtrodden, so many millions have been torn away from our midst in previous decades, that any attempt at resistance to government power was foredoomed, so now Jews as well could not get the support of the population.

But even well-organized Soviet underground and guerrillas directed from Moscow did little to save the doomed Jews. Relations with the Soviet guerrillas were an especially acute problem for the Jews in the occupied territories. Going into the woods, i.e., joining up with a partisan unit, was a better lot for Jewish men than waiting to be exterminated by the Germans. Yet hostility to the Jews was widespread and often acute among partisans, and there were some Russian detachments that did not accept Jews on principle. They alleged that Jews cannot and do not want to fight", writes a former Jewish partisan Moshe Kaganovich. A non-Jewish guerilla recruit was supplied with weapons, but a Jew was required to provide his own, and sometimes it was traded down. There is pervasive enmity to Jews among partisans in some detachments anti-Semitism was so strong that the Jews felt compelled to flee from such units.

For instance, in 1942 some two hundred Jewish boys and girls fled into the woods from the ghetto in the shtetl of Mir in Grodno oblast, and there they encountered anti-

Semitism among Soviet guerrillas, which led to the death of many who fled; only some of them were able to join guerrilla squads. Or another case: A guerrilla squad under the command of Ganzenko operated near Minsk. It was replenished mainly with fugitives from the Minsk ghetto, but the growing number of Jews in the unit triggered anti-Semitic clashes – and then the Jewish part of the detachment broke away. Such actions on the part of the guerrillas were apparently spontaneous, not directed from the center. According to Moshe Kaganovich, from the end of 1943 the influence of more-disciplined personnel arriving from the Soviet Union had increased and the general situation for the Jews had somewhat improved. However, he complains that when a territory was liberated by the advancing regular Soviet troops and the partisans were sent to the front (which is true, and everybody was sent indiscriminately), it was primarily Jews who were sent – and that is incredible.

However, Kaganovich writes that Jews were sometimes directly assisted by the partisans. There were even partisan attacks on small towns in order to save Jews from ghettos and concentration camps, and the Russian partisan movement helping fleeing Jews to cross the front lines. And in this way they smuggled across the frontline many thousands of Jews who were hiding in the forests of Western Byelorussia escaping the carnage. A partisan force in the Chernigov region accepted more than five hundred children from Jewish family camps in the woods, protected them and took care of them.

After the Red Army liberated Sarny (on Volyn), several squads broke the front and sent Jewish children to Moscow. S. Schwartz believes that these reports are greatly exaggerated. But they are based on real facts, and they merit attention. Jewish family camps originated among the Jewish

masses fleeing into the woods and there were many thousands of such fugitives. Purely Jewish armed squads were formed specifically for the protection of these camps. (Weapons were purchased through third parties from German soldiers or policemen.) Yet how to feed them all? The only way was to take food as well as shoes and clothing, both male and female, by force from the peasants of surrounding villages. The peasant was placed between the hammer and the anvil. If he did not carry out his assigned production minimum, the Germans burned his household and killed him as a partisan. On the other hand, guerrillas took from him by force all they needed – and this naturally caused spite among the peasants: they are robbed by Germans and robbed by guerrillas—and now in addition even the Jews rob them? And the Jews even take away clothes from their women?

In the spring of 1943, partisan Baruch Levin came to one such family camp, hoping to get medicines for his sick comrades. He remembers: “Tuvia Belsky seemed like a legendary hero to me. Coming from the people, he managed to organize a 1,200-strong unit in the woods. In the worst days when a Jew could not even feed himself, he cared for the sick, elderly and for the babies born in the woods.”

Levin told Tuvia about Jewish partisans: “We, the few survivors, no longer value life. Now the only meaning of our lives is revenge. It is our duty – to fight the Germans, wipe out all of them to the last one. I talked for a long time; I offered to teach Belsky’s people how to work with explosives, and all other things I have myself learned. But my words, of course, could not change Tuvia’s mindset. ‘Baruch, I would like you to understand one thing. It is precisely because there are so few of us left, it is so important

for me that the Jews survive. And I see this as my purpose; it is the most important thing for me.”

And the very same Moshe Kaganovich, as late as in 1956, wrote in a book published in Buenos Aires, in peacetime, years after the devastating defeat of Nazism, shows, according to S. Schwartz, a really bloodthirsty attitude toward the Germans, an attitude that seems to be influenced by the Hitler plague. He glorifies putting German prisoners to Jewish death by Jewish partisans according to the horrible Nazi examples, or excitedly recalls the speech by a commander of a Jewish guerrilla unit given before the villagers of a Lithuanian village who were gathered and forced to kneel by partisans in the square after a punitive raid against that village whose population had actively assisted the Germans in the extermination of Jews (several dozen villagers were executed during that raid).” S. Schwartz writes about this with a restrained but clear condemnation.

Yes, a lot of things happened. Predatory killings call for revenge, but each act of revenge, tragically, plants the seeds of new retribution in the future.

Soviet Jewish Losses During the War

The different Jewish sources variously estimate the total losses among Soviet Jews during the Second World War (within the post-war borders). “How many Soviet Jews survived the war?” asks S. Schwartz and offers this calculation: 1,810,000-1,910,000 (excluding former refugees from the Western Poland and Romania, now repatriated.) The calculations imply that the number of Jews by the end of the war was markedly lower than two million and much lower than the almost universally accepted number of three

million. So, the *total* number of losses according to Schwarz was 2,800,000-2,900,000.

In 1990 I. Arad provided his estimate: “During the liberation of German-occupied territories the Soviet Army met almost no Jews. Out of the 2,750,000-2,900,000 Jews who remained under the Nazi rule in 1941 in the occupied Soviet territories, almost all died.” To this figure Arad suggests adding “about 120,000 Jews – Soviet Army soldiers who died on the front, and about 80,000 shot in the POW camps”, and “tens of thousands of Jews who died during the siege of Leningrad, Odessa and other cities, and in the deep rear because of harsh living conditions in the evacuation.”

Demographer M. Kupovetskiy published several studies in the 1990s, where he used newly available archival materials, made some corrections to older data and employed an improved technique for ethnodemographic analysis. His result was that the general losses of Jewish population within the postwar USSR borders in 1941-1945 amounted to 2,733,000 (1,112,000 Eastern and 1,621,000 Western Jews), or 55 percent of 4,965,000 - the total number of Jews in the USSR in June 1941. This figure, apart from the victims of Nazi extermination, includes the losses among the military and the guerrillas, among civilians near the front line, during evacuation and deportation, as well as the victims of Stalin’s camps during the war. (However, the author notes, that quantitative evaluation of each of these categories within the overall casualty figure is yet to be done.) Apparently, the *Short Jewish Encyclopedia* agrees with this assessment as it provides the same number.

The currently accepted figure for the total losses of the Soviet population during the Great Patriotic War is 27,000,000 (if the method of demographic balance is used, it is 26,600,000) and this may still be underestimated.

We must not overlook what that war was for the Russians. The war rescued not only their country, not only Soviet Jewry, but also the entire social system of the Western world from Hitler. This war exacted such sacrifice from the Russian people that its strength and health have never since fully recovered. That war overstrained the Russian people. It was yet another disaster on top of those of the Civil War and de-kulakization - and from which the Russian people have almost run dry.

The Jewish Catastrophe

The ruthless and unrelenting Catastrophe, which was gradually devouring Soviet Jewry in a multitude of exterminating events all over the occupied lands, was part of a greater Catastrophe designed to eradicate the entire European Jewry. As we examine only the events in Russia, the Catastrophe as a whole is not covered in this book. Yet the countless miseries having befallen on both our peoples, the Jewish and the Russian, in the 20th century, and the unbearable weight of the lessons of history and gnawing anxiety about the future, make it impossible not to share, if only briefly, some reflections about it, reflections of mine and others, and impossible not to examine how the high Jewish minds look at the Catastrophe from the historical perspective and how they attempt to encompass and comprehend it.

It is for a reason that the Catastrophe is always written with a capital letter. It was an epic event for such an ancient and historical people. It could not fail to arouse the strongest feelings and a wide variety of reflections and conclusions among the Jews. In many Jews, long ago assimilated and distanced from their own people, the Catastrophe reignited a

more distinct and intense sense of their Jewishness. Yet for many, the Catastrophe became a proof that God is dead. If He had existed, He certainly would never have allowed Auschwitz. Then there is an opposite reflection:

Recently, a former Auschwitz inmate said: “In the camps, we were given a new Torah, though we have not been able to read it yet.”

An Israeli author states with conviction: “The Catastrophe happened because we did not follow the Covenant and did not return to our land. We had to return to our land to rebuild the Temple.” Still, such an understanding is achieved only by a very few, although it does permeate the entire Old Testament.

Some have developed and still harbor a bitter feeling: “Once, humanity turned away from us. We weren’t a part of the West at the time of the Catastrophe. The West rejected us, cast us away. We are as upset by the nearly absolute indifference of the world and even of non-European Jewry to the plight of the Jews in the fascist countries as by the Catastrophe in Europe itself. What a great guilt lies on the democracies of the world in general and especially on the Jews in the democratic countries! The pogrom in Kishinev was an insignificant crime compared to the German atrocities, to the methodically implemented plan of extermination of millions of Jewish lives; and yet Kishinev pogrom triggered a bigger protest. Even the Beilis Trial in Kiev attracted more worldwide attention.”

But this is unfair. After the world realized the essence and the scale of the destruction, the Jews experienced consistent and energetic support and passionate compassion from many nations. Some contemporary Israelis recognize this and even warn their compatriots against any such

excesses: Gradually, the memory of the Catastrophe ceased to be just a memory. It has become the ideology of the Jewish state. The memory of the Catastrophe turned into a religious devotion, into the state cult. The State of Israel has assumed the role of an apostle of the cult of the Catastrophe, the role of a priest who collects routine tithes from other nations. And woe to those who refuse to pay that tithe! And in conclusion: The worst legacy of Nazism for Jews is the Jew's role of a supervictim.

Here is a similar excerpt from yet another author: "the cult of the Catastrophe has filled a void in the souls of secular Jews, from being a reaction to an event of the past, the trauma of the Catastrophe has evolved into a new national symbol, replacing all other symbols. And this mentality of the Catastrophe is growing with each passing year; if we do not recover from the trauma of Auschwitz, we will never become a normal nation."

Among the Jews, the sometimes-painful work of re-examining the Catastrophe never ceases. Here is the opinion of an Israeli historian, a former inmate of a Soviet camp: "I do not belong to those Jews who are inclined to blame the evil *goyim* for our national misfortunes while casting ourselves as poor lambs or toys in the hands of others. Anyway not in the 20th century! On the contrary, I fully agree with Hannah Arendt that the Jews of our century were equal participants in the historical games of the nations and the monstrous Catastrophe that befell them was the result of not only evil plots of the enemies of mankind, but also of the huge fatal miscalculations on the part of the Jewish people themselves, their leaders and activists."

Indeed, Hannah Arendt was "searching for the causes of the Catastrophe also in Jewry itself. Her main argument is that modern anti-Semitism was one of the consequences of

the particular attitudes of the Jews towards the state and society in Europe; the Jews turned out to be unable to evaluate power shifts in a nation state and growing social contradictions. In the late 1970s, we read in Dan Levin's book: "On this issue, I agree with Prof. Branover who believes that the Catastrophe was largely a punishment for our sins, including the sin of leading the communist movement. There is something in it."

Yet no such *noticeable* movement can be observed among world Jewry. To a great many contemporary Jews such conclusions appear insulting and blasphemous. To the contrary: the very fact of the Catastrophe served as a moral justification for Jewish chauvinism. Lessons of the Second World War have been learned exactly contrariwise. The ideology of Jewish nationalism has grown and strengthened on this soil. This is terribly sad. A feeling of guilt and compassion towards the nation-victim has become an indulgence, absolving the sin unforgivable for all others. It is hence coming the moral permissibility of public appeals not to mix one's own ancient blood with the alien blood.

In the late 1980s, a Jewish publicist from Germany wrote: "Today, the moral capital of Auschwitz is already spent." One year later, she stated: "Solid moral capital gained by the Jews because of Auschwitz seems to be depleted"; the Jews "can no longer proceed along the old way by raising pretensions to the world. Today, the world already has the right to converse with the Jews as it does with all others ... the struggle for the rights of Jews is no more progressive than a struggle for the rights of all other nations. It is high time to break the mirror and look around. We are not alone in this world."

It would have been equally great for Russian minds to elevate themselves to similarly decent and benevolent self-

criticism, especially in making judgments about Russian history of the 20th century – the brutality of the Revolutionary period, the cowed indifference of the Soviet times and the abominable plundering of the post-Soviet age. And to do it despite the unbearable burden of realization that it was we Russians who ruined our history – through our useless rulers but also through our own worthlessness – and despite the gnawing anxiety that this may be irredeemable – to perceive the Russian experience as possibly a punishment from the Supreme Power.

Chapter XXII: From the End of the War to Stalin’s Death

At the beginning of the 1920s the authors of a collection of articles titled *Russia and the Jews* foresaw that “all these bright perspectives” (for the Jews in the USSR) looked so bright only “if one supposes that the Bolsheviks would want to protect us. But will they? Can we assume that the people who in their struggle for power betrayed everything, from the Motherland to communism, would remain faithful to us even when it stops benefiting them?”

However, during so favorable a time to them as the 1920s and 1930s the great majority of Soviet Jews chose to ignore this sober warning or simply did not hear it. Yet the Jews with their contribution to the Russian Revolution should have expected that one day the inevitable recoil of revolution would hit even them, at least during its ebb. The postwar period became the years of deep disappointments and adversity for Soviet Jews. During Stalin’s last eight years, Soviet Jewry was tested by persecutions of “cosmopolitans,” the loss of positions in science, arts and press, the crushing of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

(EAK) with the execution of its leadership and, finally, by the Doctors' Plot.

By the nature of a totalitarian regime, only Stalin himself could initiate the campaign aimed at weakening the Jewish presence and influence in the Soviet system. Only he could make the first move. Yet because of the rigidity of Soviet propaganda and Stalin's craftiness, not a single sound could be uttered nor a single step made in the open. We have seen already that Soviet propaganda did not raise any alarm about the annihilation of Jews in Germany during the war; indeed, it covered up those things, obviously being afraid of appearing pro-Jewish in the eyes of its own citizens.

The disposition of the Soviet authorities towards Jews could evolve for years without ever really surfacing at the level of official propaganda. The first changes and shuffles in the bureaucracy began quite inconspicuously at the time of growing rapprochement between Stalin and Hitler in 1939. By then Litvinov, a Jewish Minister of Foreign Affairs, was replaced by Molotov (an ethnic Russian) and a cleansing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NKID) was underway. Simultaneously, Jews were barred from entrance into diplomatic schools and military academies. Still, it took many more years before the disappearance of Jews from the NKID and the sharp decline of their influence in the Ministry of Foreign Trade became apparent.

Because of the intrinsic secrecy of all Soviet inner party moves, only very few were aware of the presence of the subtle anti-Jewish undercurrents in the Agitprop apparatus by the end of 1942 that aimed to push out Jews from the major art centers such as the Bolshoi Theatre, the Moscow Conservatory, and the Moscow Philharmonic, where according to the note which Alexandrov, Head of Agitprop, presented to the Central Committee in the summer of 1942,

“everything was almost completely in the hands of non-Russians” and “Russians had become an ethnic minority” (accompanied by a detailed table to convey particulars.) Later, there had been attempts to begin national regulation of cadres from the top down, which essentially meant pushing out Jews from the managerial positions. By and large, Stalin regulated this process by either supporting or checking such efforts depending on the circumstances.

The wartime tension in the attitudes toward Jews was also manifested during post-war repatriation. In Siberia and Central Asia, wartime Jewish refugees were not welcomed by the local populace, so after the war they mostly settled in the capitals of Central Asian republics, except for those who moved back, not to their old *shtetls* and towns, but into the larger cities.

The largest returning stream of refugees went to Ukraine, where they were met with hostility by the local population, especially because of the return of Soviet officials and the owners of desirable residential property. This reaction in the formerly occupied territories was also fueled by Hitler’s incendiary propaganda during the Nazi occupation. Khrushchev, the head of Ukraine from 1943 (when he was First Secretary of the Communist Party and at the same time Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of Ukraine), not only said nothing on this topic in his public speeches, treating the fate of Jews during the occupation with silence, but he also upheld the secret instruction throughout Ukraine not to employ Jews in positions of authority.

According to the tale of an old Jewish Communist, Ruzha-Godes, who survived the entire Nazi occupation under a guise of being a Pole named Khelminskaya and was later denied employment by the long-awaited communists

because of her Jewishness, Khrushchev stated clearly and with his peculiar frankness: “In the past, the Jews committed many sins against the Ukrainian people. People hate them for that. We don’t need Jews in our Ukraine. It would be better if they didn’t return here. They would better go to Birobidzhan. This is Ukraine. And, we don’t want Ukrainian people to infer that the return of Soviet authority means the return of Jews.”

In the early September 1945, a Jewish major of the NKVD was brutally beaten in Kiev by two members of the military. He shot both of them dead. This incident caused a large-scale massacre of Jews with five fatalities. There are documented sources of other similar cases.

Sotsialistichesky Vestnik wrote that “Jewish national feelings (which were exacerbated during the war) overreacted to the numerous manifestations of anti-Semitism and to the even more common indifference to anti-Semitism.”

This motif is so typical — almost as much as anti-Semitism itself, the indifference to anti-Semitism was likely to cause outrage. Yes, preoccupied by their own miseries, people and nations often lose compassion for the troubles of others. And the Jews are not an exception here. A modern author justly notes: “I hope that I, as a Jew who found her roots and place in Israel, would not be accused of apostasy if I point out that in the years of our terrible disasters, the Jewish intellectuals did not raise their voices in defense of the deported nations of Crimea and the Caucasus.”

After the liberation of Crimea by the Red Army in 1943, talks started among circles of the Jewish élite in Moscow about a rebirth of the Crimean project of 1920s, i.e., about resettling Jews in Crimea. The Soviet government did

not discourage these aspirations, hoping that American Jews would be more generous in their donations for the Red Army. It is quite possible that Mikhoels and Feffer [heads of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, EAK], based on a verbal agreement with Molotov, negotiated with American Zionists about financial support of the project for Jewish relocation to Crimea during their triumphal tour of the USA in summer of 1943. The idea of a Crimean Jewish Republic was also backed by Lozovsky, the then-powerful Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The EAK had yet another project for a Jewish Republic—to establish it in the place of the former Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (where, as we have seen in previous chapters, Jewish settlements were established in the wake of the exile of the Germans). Ester Markish, widow of EAK member Perets Markish, confirms that he presented a letter concerning transferring the former German Republic to the Jews.

In the Politburo, Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov were the most positively disposed to the EAK. And, according to rumors, some members of the Politburo were inclined to support this Crimean idea. On February 15, 1944, Stalin was forwarded a memorandum about that plan which was signed by Mikhoels, Feffer and Epshtein. (According to P. Sudoplatov, although the decision to expel the Tatars from Crimea had been made by Stalin earlier, the order to carry it out reached Beria on February 14, so the memorandum was quite timely.

That was the high point of Jewish hopes. G. V. Kostirenko, a researcher of this period, writes: the leaders of the EAK plunged into euphoria. They imagined (especially after Mikhoels' and Feffer's trip to the West) that with the necessary pressure, they could influence and steer their

government's policy in the interests of the Soviet Jews, just like the American Jewish élite does it.

But Stalin did not approve the Crimean project. It did not appeal to him because of the strategic importance of the Crimea. The Soviet leaders expected a war with America and probably thought that in such case the entire Jewish population of Crimea would sympathize with the enemy. It is reported that at the beginning of the 1950s some Jews were arrested and told by their MGB [Ministry for State Security, a predecessor of KGB] investigators: "You are not going to stand against America, are you? So, you are our enemies." Khrushchev shared those doubts, and ten years later he stated to a delegation of the Canadian Communist Party that was expressing particular interest in the Jewish question in the USSR: "Crimea should not be a center of Jewish colonization, because in case of war it will become the enemy's bridgehead." Indeed, the petitions about Jewish settlement in Crimea were very soon used as a proof of "state treason" on the part of the members of the EAK.

By the end of WWII, the authorities again revived the idea of Jewish resettlement in Birobidzhan, particularly Ukrainian Jews. From 1946 to 1947 several organized echelons and a number of independent families were sent there, totaling up to 5-6 thousand persons. However, quite a few returned disillusioned. This relocation movement withered by 1948.

Later, with a general turn of Stalin's politics, arrests among the few Birobidjan Jewish activists started. (They were accused of artificial inculcation of Jewish culture into the nonJewish population and of course, espionage and of having planned Birobidzhan's secession in order to ally with Japan). This was the de facto end of the history of Jewish colonization in Birobidzhan. At the end of the 1920s there

were plans to re-settle 60,000 Jews there by the end of the first five-year planning period. By 1959 there were only 14,000 Jews in Birobidzhan, less than 9 percent of the population of the region.

However, in Ukraine the situation had markedly changed in favor of Jews. The government was engaged in the fierce struggle with Bandera's separatist fighters and no longer catered to the national feelings of Ukrainians. At the end of 1946, the Communist Party started a covert campaign against anti-Semitism, gradually conditioning the population to the presence of Jews among authorities in different spheres of the national economy. At the same time, in the beginning of

1947, Kaganovich took over for Khrushchev as the official leader of Ukrainian Communist Party.

The Jews were promoted in the party as well, of which a particular example was the appointment of a Jew as Secretary of Zhitomir Obkom.

However, the attitudes of many Jews towards this government and its new policies were justifiably cautious. Soon after the end of the war, when the former Polish citizens began returning to Poland, many non-Polish Jews hastily seized this opportunity and relocated there.

(What happened after that in Poland is yet another story: a great overrepresentation of Jews occurred in the post-war puppet Polish government, among managerial elites and in the Polish KGB, which would again result in miserable consequences for the Jews of Poland. After the war, other countries of Eastern Europe saw similar conflicts: the Jews had played a huge role in economic life of all these countries, and though they lost their possessions under Hitler, after the war when the restitution laws were introduced they affected very large numbers of new owners. Upon their return Jews

demanded the restoration of their property and enterprises that were not nationalized by Communists and this created a new wave of hostility towards them.)

Meanwhile, during these very years the biggest event in world Jewish history was happening — the state of Israel was coming into existence. In 1946-47, when the Zionists were at odds with Britain Stalin, perhaps out of anti-British calculation and or opportunistically hoping to get a foothold there, took the side of the former. During all of 1947 Stalin, acting through Gromyko in the UN, actively supported the idea of the creation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine and supplied the Zionists with a critical supply of Czechoslovak-made weapons. In May 1948, only two days after the Israeli declaration of nationhood, the USSR officially recognized that country and condemned hostile actions of Arabs.

However, Stalin miscalculated to what extent this support would reinvigorate the national spirit of Soviet Jews. Some of them implored the EAK to organize a fundraiser for the Israeli military, others wished to enlist as volunteers, while still others wanted to form a special Jewish military division.

Amid this burgeoning enthusiasm, Golda Meir arrived in Moscow in September of 1948 as the first ambassador of Israel and was met with unprecedented joy in Moscow's synagogues and by Moscow's Jewish population in general. Immediately, as the national spirit of Soviet Jews rose and grew tremendously because of the Catastrophe, many of them began applying for relocation to Israel. Apparently, Stalin had expected that. Yet it turned out that many of his citizens wished to run away en masse into, by all accounts, the pro-Western State of Israel. There the influence and prestige of the United States grew, while the USSR was

at the same time losing support of Arab countries. (Nevertheless, the cooling of relations with Israel was mutual. Israel more and more often turned towards American Jewry which became its main support.)

Probably because he was frightened by such a schism in the Jewish national feelings, Stalin drastically changed policies regarding Jews from the end of 1948 and for the rest of his remaining years. He began acting in his typical style — quietly but with determination, he struck to the core, but with only tiny movements visible on the surface.

Nevertheless, while the visible tiny ripples hardly mattered, Jewish leaders had many reasons to be concerned, as they felt the fear hanging in the air. The then editor of the Polish Jewish newspaper *Folkshtimme*, Girsh Smolyar, recalled the panic that seized Soviet communist Jews after the war. Emmanuel Kazakevitch and other Jewish writers were distressed. Smolyar had seen on Ehrenburg's table "a mountain of letters — literally a scream of pain about current anti-Jewish attitudes throughout the country."

Yet Ehrenburg knew his job very well and carried it out. (As became known much later, it was exactly then that the pre-publication copy of the *Black Book* compiled by I. Ehrenburg and B. Grossman, which described the mass killings and suffering of the Soviet Jews during the Soviet German war, was destroyed.) In addition, on September 21, 1948, as a counterbalance to Golda Meir's triumphal arrival, *Pravda* published a large article commissioned by Ehrenburg which stated that the Jews are not a nation at all and that they are doomed to assimilate. This article created dismay not only among Soviet Jews, but also in America. With the start of the Cold War, the discrimination against the Jews in the Soviet Union became one of the main antiSoviet trump cards of the West. As was

the inclination in the West towards various ethnic separatist movements in the USSR, a sympathy that had never previously gained support among Soviet Jews.

However, the EAK, which had been created to address war-time issues, continued gaining influence. By that time, it listed approximately 70 members, had its own administrative apparatus, a newspaper and a publishing house. It functioned as a kind of spiritual and physical agent of all Soviet Jews before the CK (Central Committee) of the VKPb (all-Russian Communist Party of Bolsheviks), as well as before the West. EAK executives were allowed to do and to have a lot — a decent salary, an opportunity to publish and collect royalties abroad, to receive and to redistribute gifts from abroad and, finally, to travel abroad. EAK became the crystallization center of an initially elitist and upper-echelon and then of a broadly growing Jewish national movement, a burgeoning symbol of Jewish national autonomy. For Stalin, the EAK became a problem which had to be dealt with.

He started with the most important figure, the Head of the Soviet Information Bureau (Sovinformburo), Lozovsky, who, according to Feffer (who was vice-chairman of EAK since July 1945), was the spiritual leader of the EAK and knew all about its activities and was its head for all practical purposes. In the summer of 1946, a special auditing commission from Agitprop of the CK [of the VKPb] inspected Sovinformburo and found that “the apparatus is polluted ... there is an intolerable concentration of Jews.” Lozovsky was ejected from his post of Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs (just as Litvinov and Maisky had been) and in summer of 1947 he also lost his post as of Head of the Sovinformburo.

After that, the fate of the EAK was sealed. In September of 1946, the auditing commission from the

Central Committee concluded that the EAK “instead of leading a rigorous offensive ideological war against the Western and above all Zionist propaganda supports the position of bourgeois Zionists and the Bund and in reality it fights for the reactionary idea of a united Jewish nation.” In 1947, the Central Committee stated, that “the work among the Jewish population of the Soviet Union is not a responsibility” of the EAK. The EAK’s job was to focus on the “decisive struggle against aggression by international reactionaries and their Zionist agents.” However, these events coincided with the pro-Israel stance of the USSR and the EAK was not dissolved.

On the other hand, EAK Chairman Mikhoels, who was the informal leader of Soviet Jewry, had to shed his illusions about the possibility of influencing the Kremlin’s national policy via influencing the Dictator’s relatives. Here, the suspicion fell mostly on Stalin’s son—in-law Grigory Morozov. However, the most active help to the EAK was provided by Molotov’s wife, P.S. Zhemchyzhina, who was arrested in the beginning of 1949, and Voroshilov’s wife, Ekaterina Davidovna (Golda Gorbman), a fanatic Bolshevik, who had been expelled from the synagogue in her youth.

Abakumov reported that Mikhoels was suspected of gathering private information about the Leader. Overall, according to the MGB he “demonstrated excessive interest in the private life of the Head of the Soviet Government,” while leaders of the EAK gathered materials about the personal life of J. Stalin and his family at the behest of U.S. Intelligence. However, Stalin could not risk an open trial of the tremendously influential Mikhoels, so Mikhoels was murdered in January 1948 under the guise of an accident. Soviet Jewry was shocked and terrified by the demise of their spiritual leader.

The EAK was gradually dismantled after that. By the end of 1948 its premises were locked up, all documents were taken to Lubyanka, and its newspaper and the publishing house were closed. Feffer and Zuskin, the key EAK figures, were secretly arrested soon afterwards and these arrests were denied for a long time. In January 1949 Lozovsky was arrested, followed by the arrests of a number of other notable members of the EAK in February. They were intensively interrogated during 1949, but in 1950 the investigation stalled. All this coincided in accord with Stalin's understanding of balance with the annihilation of the Russian nationalist tendencies in the leadership of the Leningrad government — the so-called “anti-party group of KuznetsovRodionovPopkov,” but those developments, their repression and the significance of those events were largely overlooked by historians even though about two thousand party functionaries were arrested and subsequently executed in 1950 in connection with the Leningrad Affair.

In January 1948, Stalin ordered Jews to be pushed out of Soviet culture. In his usual subtle and devious manner, the order came through a prominent editorial in *Pravda*, seemingly dealing with a petty issue, about one anti-Party group of theatrical critics. A more assertive article in *Kultura i Zhizn* followed on the next day. The key point was the decoding of the Russian pennames of Jewish celebrities. “In the USSR many Jews camouflage their Jewish origins with such artifice, so that it is impossible to figure out their real names,” explains the editor of a modern Jewish journal.

This article in *Pravda* had a long but obscure pre-history. In a 1946 report of the Central Committee it was already noted that out of twenty-eight highly publicized theatrical critics, only six were Russians. It implied that the majority of the rest were Jews. Smelling trouble, but still

supposing themselves to be vested with the highest trust of the Party, some theatrical critics, confident of victory, openly confronted Fadeev in November 1946. Fadeev was the all-powerful Head of the Union of Soviet Writers and Stalin's favorite. And so they suffered a defeat. Then the case stalled for a long time and only resurfaced in 1949.

The campaign rolled on through the newspapers and party meetings. G. Aronson, researching Jewish life in Stalin's era writes: "The goal of this campaign was to displace Jewish intellectuals from all niches of Soviet life. Informers were gloatingly revealing their pen-names. It turned out that E. Kholodov is actually Meyerovich, Jakovlev is Kholtsman, Melnikov is Millman, Jasny is Finkelstein, Vickorov is Zlochevsky, Svetov is Sheidman and so on. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* worked diligently on these disclosures."

Undeniably, Stalin hit the worst-offending spot, the one that highly annoyed the public. However, Stalin was not so simple as to just blurt out "the Jews." From the first push at the groups of theatrical critics flowed a broad and sustained campaign against the "cosmopolitans" (with their Soviet inertial dim-wittedness they overused this innocent term and spoiled it.) Without exception, all "cosmopolitans" under attack were Jews. They were being discovered everywhere. Because all of them were loyal Soviet citizens never suspected of anything antiSoviet, they survived the great purges by Yezhov and Yagoda. Some were very experienced and influential people, sometimes eminent in their fields of expertise. The exposure of "cosmopolitans" then turned into a ridiculous, even idiotic glorification of Russian primacy in all and every area of science, technology and culture. Yet the "cosmopolitans" usually were not being arrested but instead were publicly humiliated, fired from

publishing houses, ideological and cultural organizations, from TASS, from Glavlit, from literature schools, theaters, orchestras; some were expelled from the party and publication of their works was often discouraged.

And the public campaign was expanding, spreading into new fields and compromising new names. Anti-Jewish cleansing of “cosmopolitans” was conducted in the research institutes of the Academy of Science: Institute of Philosophy (with its long history of internecine feuding between different cliques), the institutes of Economy, Law, in the Academy of Social Sciences at the CK of the VKPb, in the School of Law, and then it spread to the office of Public Prosecutor.

Thus, in the Department of History at MGU (Moscow State University), even a longstanding faithful communist and falsifier, I. I. Minz, member of the Academy, who enjoyed Stalin’s personal trust and was awarded with Stalin Prizes and concurrently chaired historical departments in several universities, was labeled the head of cosmopolitans in Historical Science. After that numerous scientific posts at MGU were “liberated” from his former students and other Jewish professors. Purges of Jews from technical fields and the natural sciences were gradually gaining momentum. The end of 1945 and all of 1946 were relatively peaceful for the Jews of this particular social group.

L. Mininberg studied Jewish contributions in Soviet science and industry during the war:
“In 1946, the first serious blow since the end of the war was dealt to the administration and a big case was fabricated. Its principal victims were mainly Russians ... there were no Jews among them,” though investigation reports contained testaments against Israel Solomonovitch Levin, director of the Saratov Aviation Plant. He was accused on the charge

that during the Battle for Stalingrad, two aviation regiments were not able to take off because of manufacturing defects in the planes produced by the plant. The charge was real, not made-up by the investigators. However, Levin was neither fired nor arrested. In 1946, B.L. Vannikov, L.M. Kaganovich, S.Z. Ginzburg, L.Z. Mekhlis all kept their Ministry posts in the newly formed government. Almost all Jewish former deputy ministers also retained their positions as assistants to ministers. The first victims among the Jewish technical élite appeared only in 1947.

In 1950, academic A. F. Ioffe was forced to retire from the post of Director of the Physical Engineering Institute, which he organized and headed since its inception in 1918. In 1951, 34 directors and 31 principal engineers of aviation plants had been fired. This list contained mostly Jews. If in 1942 there were nearly forty Jewish directors and principal engineers in the Ministry of General Machine-Building (Ministry of Mortar Artillery) then only three remained by 1953. In the Soviet Army, the Soviet authorities persecuted not only Jewish generals, but lower ranking officers working on the development of military technology and weaponry were also removed.

Thus, the purging campaigns spread over to the defense, airplane construction, and automobile industries (though they did not affect the nuclear branch), primarily removing Jews from administrative, directorial and principal engineering positions; later purging was expanded onto various bureaucracies. Yet the genuine, ethnic denominator was never mentioned in the formal paperwork. Instead, the sacked officials faced charges of economic crimes or having relatives abroad at a time when conflict with the USA was expected, or other excuses were used.

The purging campaigns rolled over the central cities and across the provinces. The methods of these campaigns were notoriously Soviet, in the spirit of 1930s: a victim was inundated in a vicious atmosphere of terror and as a result often tried to deflect the threat to himself by accusing others.

By repeating the tide of 1937, albeit in a milder form, the display of Soviet power reminded the Jews that they had never become truly integrated and could be pushed aside at any moment. “We do not have indispensable people!” However, Lavrenti Beria was tolerant of Jews. At least, in appointments to positions in government.

Pushing Jews out of prestigious occupations that were crucial for the ruling élite in the spheres of manufacturing, administration, cultural and ideological activities, as well as limiting or completely barring the entrance of Jews into certain institutions of higher education, gained enormous momentum in 1948-1953. Positions of any importance in the KGB, party apparatus, and military were closed to the Jews, and quotas were in place for admission into certain educational institutions and cultural and scientific establishments. Through its fifth item [i.e., the question about nationality] Soviet Jews were oppressed by the very same method used in the Proletarian Questionnaire, other items of which were so instrumental in crushing the Russian nobility, clergy, intellectuals and all the rest of the “former people” since the 1920s.

“Although the highest echelon of the Jewish political elite suffered from administrative perturbations, surprisingly it was not as bad as it seemed,” concludes G. V. Kostyrchenko. “The main blow fell on the middle and the most numerous stratum of the Jewish élite, officials and also journalists, professors and other members of the creative intelligentsia. ... It was these, so to say, nominal Jews — the

individuals with nearly complete lack of ethnic ties — who suffered the brunt of the cleansing of bureaucracies after the war.”

However, speaking of scientific cadres, the statistics are these: at the end of the 1920s there were 13.6 percent Jews among scientific researchers in the country, in 1937 — 17.5 percent, and by 1950 their proportion slightly decreased to 15.4 percent (25,125 Jews among 162,508 Soviet researchers). S. Margolina, looking back from the end of the 1980s concludes that, despite the scale of the campaign, after the war, “the number of highly educated Jews in high positions always remained disproportionately high.” But, in contrast with the former times of happiness, it certainly had decreased. A.M. Kheifetz recalls a memoir article of a member of the Academy, Budker, one of the fathers of the Soviet A-bomb where he described how they were building the first Soviet Abomb — being exhausted from the lack of sleep and fainting from stress and overwork — and it is precisely those days of persecution of “cosmopolitans” that were the most inspired and the happiest in his life.

In 1949 among Stalin Prize laureates no less than 13 percent were Jews, just like in the previous years. By 1952 there were only 6 percent. Data on the number of Jewish students in USSR were not published for nearly a quarter of century, from the pre-war years until 1963. We will examine those in the next chapter.

The genuine Jewish culture that had been slowly reviving after the war was curtailed and suppressed in 1948-1951. Jewish theatres were no longer subsidized and the few remaining ones were closed, along with book publishing houses, newspapers and bookstores. In 1949, the international radio broadcasting in Yiddish was also discontinued.

In the military, by 1953 almost all Jewish generals and approximately 300 colonels and lieutenant colonels were forced to resign from their positions.

Overt Perscution of Jews Begins

As the incarcerated Jewish leaders remained jailed in Lubyanka for over three years, Stalin slowly and with great caution proceeded in dismantling the EAK. He was very well aware what kind of international storm would be triggered by using force. (Luckily, though, he acquired his first nuclear bomb in 1949.) On the other hand, he fully appreciated the significance of unbreakable ties between world Jewry and America, his enemy since his rejection of the Marshall Plan.

Investigation of EAK activities was reopened in January 1952. The accused were charged with connections to the Jewish nationalist organizations in America, with providing information regarding the economy of the USSR to those organizations and also with plans of repopulating Crimea and creating a Jewish Republic there. Thirteen defendants were found guilty and sentenced to death: S. A. Lozovsky, I. S. Ysefovich, B. A. Shimeliovich, V. L. Zuskin, leading Jewish writers D.R. Bergelson, P. D. Marshik, L. M. Kvitko, I. S. Feffer, D. N. Gofshtein, and also L. Y. Talmi, I. S. Vatenberg, C. S. Vatenberg — Ostrovsky, and E. I. Teumin. They were secretly executed in August.

Ehrenburg, who was also a member of the EAK, was not even arrested. (He assumed it was pure luck.) Similarly, the crafty David Zaslavsky survived also. And even after the execution of the Jewish writers, Ehrenburg continued to reassure the West that those writers were still alive and writing. The annihilation of the Jewish Antifascist Committee went along with similar secret “daughter” cases;

110 people were arrested, 10 of them were executed and five died during the investigation.

In autumn of 1952 Stalin went into the open as arrests among Jews began, such as arrests of Jewish professors of medicine and among members of literary circles in Kiev in October 1952. This information immediately spread among Soviet Jews and throughout the entire world. On October 17th, *Voice of America* broadcast about mass repressions among Soviet Jews. Soviet Jews were frozen by mortal fear.

Soon afterwards in November in Prague, a show trial of Slansky, the Jewish First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and several other top state and party leaders took place in a typically loud and populist Stalinist-type entourage. The trial was openly antiJewish with naming “world leading” Jews such as Ben Gurion and Morgenthau, and placing them in league with American leaders Truman and Acheson. The outcome was that eleven were hanged, eight Jews among them. Summing up the official version, K. Gotwald said: “This investigation and court trial disclosed a new channel through which treason and espionage permeated the Communist Party. This is Zionism.”

The “Doctors’ Plot”

At the same time, since summer of 1951, the development of the Doctors’ Plot was gaining momentum. The case included the accusation of prominent physicians, doctors to the Soviet leadership, for the criminal treatment of state leaders. For the secret services, such an accusation was nothing new, as similar accusations had been made against Professor D. D. Pletnev and physicians L. G. Levin and I. N. Kazakov already during the Bukharin trial in 1937. At that

time, the gullible Soviet public gasped at such utterly evil plots. No one had any qualms about repeating the same old scenario.

Now we know much more about the Doctors' Plot. Initially it was not entirely an anti-Jewish action; the prosecution list contained the names of several prominent Russian physicians as well. In essence, the affair was fueled by Stalin's generally psychotic state of mind, with his fear of plots and mistrust of the doctors, especially as his health deteriorated. By September 1952 prominent doctors were arrested in groups. Investigations unfolded with cruel beatings of suspects and wild accusations; slowly it turned into a version of a spying-terroristic plot connected with foreign intelligence organizations— "American hirelings," "saboteurs in white coats," "bourgeois nationalism" — all indicating that it was primarily aimed at Jews.

Robert Conquest in *The Great Terror* follows this particular tragic line of involvement of highly placed doctors. In 1935, the false death certificate of Kuibyshev was signed by doctors G. Kaminsky, I. Khodorovsky, and L. Levin. In 1937, they signed a similarly false death certificate of Ordzhonikidze. They knew so many deadly secrets — could they expect anything but their own death?

Conquest writes that Dr. Levin had cooperated with the Cheka since 1920. "Working with Dzerzhinsky, Menzhinsky, and Yagoda, he was trusted by the head of such an organization. It is factually correct to consider Levin a member of Yagoda's circle in the NKVD." Further, we read something sententious: "Among those outstanding doctors who in 1937 moved against [Professor of Medicine] Pletnev and who had signed fierce accusative resolutions against him, we find the names of M. Vovsi, B. Kogan and V. Zelenin, who in their turn were subjected to torture by the

MGB in 1952-53 in connection with the ‘case of doctor-saboteurs,’ as well as two other doctors, N. Shereshevky and V. Vinogradov who provided a pre-specified death certificate of Menzhinsky.”

On January 3, 1953 *Pravda* and *Izvestia* published an announcement by TASS about the arrest of a group of doctor-saboteurs. The accusation sounded like a grave threat for Soviet Jewry. At the same time, by a degrading Soviet custom, prominent Soviet Jews were forced to sign a letter to *Pravda* with the most severe condemnation of the wiles of the Jewish bourgeois nationalists and their approval of Stalin’s government. Several dozen signed the letter. (Among them were Mikhail Romm, D. Oistrakh, S. Marshak, L. Landau, B. Grossman, E. Gilels, I. Dunayevsky and others. Initially Ehrenburg did not sign it — he found the courage to write a letter to Stalin: “to ask your advice.” His resourcefulness was unsurpassed indeed. To Ehrenburg, it was clear that “there is no such thing as the Jewish nation” and that assimilation is the only way and that Jewish nationalism “inevitably leads to betrayal.” Yet the letter that was offered to him to sign could be invidiously inferred by the “enemies of our country.” He concluded that “I myself cannot resolve these questions,” but if “leading comrades will let me know that my signature is desired and useful for protecting our homeland and for peace in the world, I will sign it immediately.”

The draft of that statement of loyalty was painstakingly prepared in the administration of the Central Committee and eventually its style became softer and more respectful. However, this letter never appeared in the press. Possibly because of the international outrage, the Doctors’

Plot apparently began to slow down in the last days of Stalin. After the public announcement, the Doctors' Plot created a huge wave of repression of Jewish physicians all over the country. In many cities and towns, the offices of State Security began fabricating criminal cases against Jewish doctors. They were afraid to even go to work, and their patients were afraid to be treated by them.

After the "cosmopolitan" campaign, the menacing growl of "people's anger" in reaction to the Doctors' Plot utterly terrified many Soviet Jews, and a rumor arose (and then got rooted in the popular mind) that Stalin was planning a mass eviction of Jews to the remote parts of Siberia and North — a fear reinforced by the examples of postwar deportation of entire peoples. In his latest work G. Kostyrchenko, a historian and a scrupulous researcher of Stalin's Jewish policies, very thoroughly refutes this myth of deportation, proving that it had never been confirmed, either then or subsequently by any facts, and even in principle such a deportation would not have been possible.

But it is amazing how bewildered were those circles of Soviet Jews, who were unfailingly loyal to the Soviet-Communist ideology. Many years later, S. K. told me: "There is no single action in my life that I am as ashamed of as my belief in the genuineness of the Doctors' Plot of 1953! — that they, perhaps involuntarily, were involved a foreign conspiracy..."

An article from the 1960s states that "in spite of a pronounced anti-Semitism of Stalin's rule many Jews prayed that Stalin stayed alive, as they knew through experience that any period of weak power means a slaughter of Jews. We were well aware of the quite rowdy mood of the fraternal nations toward us."

On February 9th, a bomb exploded at the Soviet embassy in Tel Aviv. On February 11, 1953, the USSR broke off diplomatic relations with Israel. The conflict surrounding the Doctors' Plot intensified due to these events.

And then Stalin went wrong, and not for the first time, right? He did not understand how the thickening of the plot could threaten him personally, even within the secure quarters of his inaccessible political Olympus. The explosion of international anger coincided with the rapid action of internal forces, which may possibly have done away with Stalin. It could have happened through Beria (for example, according to Avtorhanov's version.)

After a public communiqué about the Doctors' Plot Stalin lived only 51 days. The release from custody and the acquittal of the doctors without trial were perceived by the older generation of Soviet Jews as a repetition of the Purim miracle: Stalin had perished on the day of Purim, when Esther saved the Jews of Persia from Haman.

On April 3, all the surviving accused in the Doctors' Plot were released. It was publicly announced the next day.

And yet again it was the Jews who pushed frozen history forward.

Chapter XXIII: Before the Six-Day War

On the next day after Stalin's death, on March 6, 1953, the MGB (Ministry of State Security) ceased to exist, albeit only formally, as Beria incorporated it into his own Ministry of Interior Affairs (MVD). This move allowed him to disclose the abuses by the MGB, including those of the still publicly unannounced MGB Minister, Ignatiev (who secretly replaced Abakumov.) It seems that after 1952 Beria

was losing Stalin's trust and had been gradually pushed out by Ignatiev-Ryumin during the Doctors' Plot. Thus, by force of circumstances, Beria became a magnet for the new anti-Stalin opposition. And now on April 4, just a month after Stalin's death, he enjoyed enough power to dismiss the Doctors' Plot and accuse Ryumin of its fabrication. Three months later diplomatic relations with Israel were restored.

All this reinvigorated hope among Soviet Jews that the rise of Beria could be very promising for them. However, Beria was soon ousted and executed. Yet because of the usual Soviet inertia, with the death of Stalin many of the previously fired Jews were reinstated in their former positions. During the period called the *thaw*, many old Zionists were released from the camps. During the post-Stalin period, the first Zionist groups started to emerge, initially at local levels.

The Khrushchev Period

Yet once again things began to turn unfavorably for the Jews. In March 1954, the Soviet Union vetoed the UN Security Council attempt to open the Suez Canal to Israeli ships. At the end of 1955, Khrushchev declared a pro-Arab, anti-Israel turn of Soviet foreign policy. In February 1956, in his famous report at the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev, while speaking profusely about the massacres of 1937-1938, did not point any attention to the fact that there were so many Jews among the victims; he did not name Jewish leaders executed in 1952; and when speaking of the Doctors' Plot, he did not stress that it was specifically directed against the Jews.

It is easy to imagine the bitter feelings this aroused among the Jews. They swept Jewish communist circles abroad and even the leadership of those Communist parties,

where Jews constituted a significant percentage of members (such as in the Canadian and U.S. Communist parties.) In April 1956 in Warsaw, under the communist régime (though with heavy Jewish influence), the Jewish newspaper *Volksstimme* published a sensational article, listing the names of Jewish cultural and social celebrities who perished from 1937-1938 and from 1948-1952. Yet at the same time the article also condemned the capitalist enemies, Beria's period and welcomed the return of Leninist national policy.

The article in *Volksstimme* had unleashed a storm. International communist organizations and Jewish social circles loudly began to demand an explanation from the Soviet leaders. Throughout 1956, foreign visitors to the Soviet Union openly asked about Jewish situation there, and particularly why the Soviet government had not yet abandoned the dark legacy of Stalinism on the Jewish question? It became a recurrent theme for the foreign correspondents and visiting delegations of fraternal communist parties. Actually, that could be the reason for the loud denunciation in the Soviet press of the betrayal of communism by Howard Fast, an American writer and former enthusiastic champion of communism. Meanwhile, hundreds of Soviet Jews from different cities in one form or another participated in meetings of resurgent Zionist groups and coteries; old Zionists with connections to relatives or friends in Israel were active in those groups.

In May 1956, a delegation from the French Socialist Party arrived in Moscow. Particular attention was paid to the situation of Jews in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev found himself in a hot corner – now he could not afford to ignore the questions, yet he knew, especially after experiencing postwar Ukraine, that the Jews were not likely to be returned to their high social standing like in 1920s and 1930s. He

replied: “In the beginning of the revolution, we had many Jews in executive bodies of party and government. After that, we have developed new cadres. If Jews wanted to occupy positions of leadership in our republics today, it would obviously cause discontent among the local people. If a Jew, appointed to a high office, surrounds himself with Jewish colleagues, it naturally provokes envy and hostility toward all Jews.” (The French publication *Socialist Herald* called Khrushchev’s point about surrounding himself with Jewish colleagues “strange and false.”) In the same discussion, when Jewish culture and schools were addressed, Khrushchev explained that “if Jewish schools were established, there probably would not be many prospective students. The Jews are scattered all over the country. If the Jews were required to attend a Jewish school, it certainly would cause outrage. It would be understood as a kind of a ghetto.”

Three months later, in August 1956, a delegation of the Canadian Communist Party visited the USSR, and it stated outright that it had a special mission to achieve clarity on the Jewish question. Thus, in the postwar years, the Jewish question was becoming a central concern of the western communists. Khrushchev rejected all accusations of anti-Semitism as a slander against him and the party. He named a number of Soviet Jews to important posts, he even mentioned his Jewish daughter-in-law, but then he quite suddenly switched to the issue of good and bad features of each nation and pointed out several negative features of Jews, among which he mentioned their political unreliability. Yet he neither mentioned any of their positive traits, nor did he talk about other nations.

In the same conversation, Khrushchev expressed his agreement with Stalin’s decision against establishing a Crimean Jewish Republic, stating that such Jewish

colonization of the Crimea would be a strategic military risk for the Soviet Union. This statement was particularly hurtful to the Jewish community. The Canadian delegation insisted on publication of a specific statement by the Central Committee of Communist Party of the Soviet Union about the sufferings of Jews, but it was met with firm refusal, since were such a pronouncement issued other nations and republics, which also suffered from Bolshevik crimes against their culture and intelligentsia, would ask with astonishment why this statement covers only Jews? (S. Schwartz dismissively comments: “The pettiness of this argumentation is striking.”)

Yet it did not end at that. Secretly, influential foreign Jewish communists tried to obtain explanations about the fate of the Jewish cultural élite, and in October of the same year, twentysix Western progressive Jewish leaders and writers appealed publicly to Prime-Minister Bulganin and President Voroshilov, asking them to issue a public statement about injustices committed against Jews and the measures the government had designed to restore the Jewish cultural institutions. Yet during both the interregnum of 1953-1957 and then in Khrushchev’s period, the Soviet policies toward Jews were inconsistent, wary, circumspect and ambivalent, thus sending signals in all directions.

In particular, the summer of 1956, which was filled with all kinds of social expectations in general, had also become the apogee of Jewish hopes. One Surkov, the head of the Union of Writers, in a conversation with a communist publisher from New York City mentioned plans to establish a new Jewish publishing house, theater, newspaper and quarterly literary magazine; there were also plans to organize a countrywide conference of Jewish writers and cultural celebrities. It also noted that a commission for reviving the

Jewish literature in Yiddish had been already established. In 1956, many Jewish writers and journalists gathered in Moscow again. The Jewish activists later recalled that the optimism inspired in all of us by the events of 1956 did not quickly fade away. Yet the Soviet government continued with its meaningless and aimless policies, discouraging any development of an independent Jewish culture. It is likely that Khrushchev himself was strongly opposed to it.

And then came new developments the Suez Crisis, where Israel, Britain and France allied in attacking Egypt (“Israel is heading to suicide,” formidably warned the Soviet press). After that came the Hungarian Uprising, with its anti-Jewish streak which has been nearly completely concealed by historians, resulting, perhaps from the overrepresentation of Jews in the Hungarian KGB. Could this be also one of the reasons, even if a minor one, for the complete absence of Western support for the rebellion? Of course, at this time the West was preoccupied with the Suez Crisis. And yet wasn’t it a signal to the Soviets suggesting that it would be better if the Jewish theme be kept hushed?

Then, a year later, Khrushchev finally overpowered his highly placed enemies within the party and, among others, Kaganovith was cast down.

Could it really be such a big deal? The latter was not the only one ousted and even then he was not the principal figure among the dethroned; and he was definitely not thrown out because of his Jewishness. Yet from the Jewish point of view, his departure symbolized the end of an era. Some looked around and counted the Jews who disappeared not only from the ruling sections of the party, but also from the leading governmental circles. It was time to pause and ponder thoroughly – what did the Jews really think about *such* new authorities?

David Burg, who emigrated from the USSR in 1956, came upon a formula on how the Jews should treat the Soviet rule. (It proved quite useful for the authorities): “To some, the danger of anti-Semitism from below seems greater than the danger of anti-Semitism from above. Though the government oppresses us, it nevertheless allows us to exist. If, however, a revolutionary change comes, then during the inevitable anarchy of the transition period we will simply be exterminated.

Therefore, let’s hold on to the government no matter how bad it is.”

We repeatedly encountered similar sentiments in the 1930s—that the Jews should support Bolshevik power in the USSR because without it their fate would be even worse. And now, even though the Soviet power had further deteriorated, the Jews had no other choice but hold on to it as before.

The Western world and particularly the United States always heeded such recommendations, even during the most strained years of the Cold War. In addition, socialist Israel was still full of communist sympathizers and could forgive the Soviet Union a lot for its role in the defeat of Hitler. Yet how then could Soviet anti-Semitism be interpreted? In this aspect, the recommendation of D. Burg stood up to the acute “social demand” – to move emphasis from the anti-Semitism of the Soviet government to the anti-Semitism of the Russian people – that everpresent curse. So now some Jews even fondly recalled the long-disbanded YevSek [the Jewish Section of the Central Committee, dismantled in 1930 when Dimanshtein and its other leaders were shot.] Even though back in the 1920s it seemed overly proCommunist, the YevSek was to certain extent a guardian of Jewish national interests an organ that produced some positive work as well.

A Mild Thaw

In the meantime, Khrushchev's policy remained equivocal; it is reasonable to assume that though Khrushchev himself did not like Jews, he did not want to fight against them, realizing the international political counter-productivity of such an effort. In 1957-1958, Jewish musical performances and public literary clubs were authorized and appeared in many cities countrywide. For example, in 1961, Jewish literary soirees and Jewish song performances were attended by about 300,000 people. Yet at the same time, the circulation of Warsaw's *Volksstimme* was discontinued in the Soviet Union, thus cutting the Soviet Jews off from an outside source of Jewish information.

In 1954, after a long break, Sholom Aleichem's *The Adventures of Mottel* was again published in Russian, followed by several editions of his other books and their translations into other languages; in 1959 a large edition of his collected works was produced as well. In 1961 in Moscow, the Yiddish magazine *Sovetish Heymland* was established (though it strictly followed the official policy line.) Publications of books by Jewish authors who were executed in Stalin's time were resumed in Yiddish and Russian, and one even could hear Jewish tunes on the broadcasts of the All-Soviet Union radio.

By 1966, about one hundred Jewish authors were writing in Yiddish in the Soviet Union, and almost all of the named authors simultaneously worked as Russian language journalists and translators, and many of them worked as teachers in the Russian schools. However, the Jewish theater did not re-open until 1966. In that year S. Schwartz defined the Jewish situation in the USSR as "cultural orphanhood."

Yet another author bitterly remarks: “The general lack of enthusiasm and interest from the wider Jewish population toward those cultural undertakings cannot be explained solely by official policies.” With rare exceptions, during those years the Jewish actors performed in half-empty halls. Books of Jewish writers were not selling well.

Similarly ambivalent, but more hostile policies of the Soviet authorities in Khrushchev’s period were implemented against the Jewish religion. It was a part of Khrushchev’s general antireligious assault; it is well known how devastating it was for the Russian Orthodox Church.

Since the 1930s, not a single theological school functioned in the USSR. In 1957 a yeshiva, a school for training rabbis, opened in Moscow. It accommodated only 35 students, and even those were being consistently pushed out under various pretexts such as withdrawal of residence registration in Moscow. Printing of prayer books and manufacturing of religious accessories was hindered. Up to 1956, before the Jewish Passover matzoh was baked by stateowned bakeries and then sold in stores. Beginning in 1957, however, baking of matzoh was obstructed and since 1961 it was banned outright almost everywhere. One day, the authorities would not interfere with receiving parcels with matzah from abroad, another day, they stopped the parcels at the customs, and even demanded recipients to express in the press their outrage against the senders. In many places, synagogues were closed down. In 1966, only 62 synagogues were functioning in the entire Soviet Union.

Yet the authorities did not dare to shut down the synagogues in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and in the capitals of the republics. In the 1960s, there used to be extensive worship services on high holidays with large crowds of 10,000 to 15,000 on the streets around synagogues. C.

Schwartz notes that in the 1960s Jewish religious life was in severe decline, yet he largemindedly reminds us that it was the result of the long process of secularization that began in Russian Jewry in the late 19th Century. (The process, which, he adds, has also succeeded in extremely non-communist Poland between the First and Second World Wars.) Judaism in the Soviet Union lacked a united control center; yet when the Soviet authorities wanted to squeeze out a political show from the leading rabbis for foreign policy purposes, be it about the wellbeing of Judaism in the USSR or outrage against the nuclear war, the government was perfectly able to stage it. The Soviet authorities had repeatedly used Jewish religious leaders for foreign policy goals. For example, in November 1956 a group of rabbis issued a protest against the actions of Israel during the Suez War.

Another factor, which aggravated the status of Judaism in the USSR after the Suez War, was the growing fashionability of what was termed the struggle against Zionism. Zionism, being, strictly speaking, a form of socialism, should naturally have been seen as a true brother to the party of Marx and Lenin. Yet after the mid-1950s, the decision to secure the friendship of the Arabs drove the Soviet leaders toward persecution of Israel.

However, for the Soviet masses Zionism was a distant, unfamiliar and abstract phenomenon. Therefore, to flesh out this struggle, to give it a distinct embodiment, the Soviet government presented Zionism as a caricature composed of the characteristic and eternal Jewish images. The books and pamphlets allegedly aimed against Zionism also contained explicit antiJudaic and anti-Jewish messages. If in the Soviet Union of 1920-1930s Judaism was not as brutally persecuted as the Russian Orthodox Christianity, then in 1957 a foreign socialist commentator noted how that

year signified a decisive intensification of the struggle against Judaism, the turning point in the struggle against the Jewish religion, and that the character of struggle betrays that it is directed not only against Judaism, but against the Jews in general.

There was one stirring episode: in 1963 in Kiev, the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences published 12,000 copies of a brochure *Unadorned Judaism* in Ukrainian, yet it was filled with such blatant anti-Jewish caricatures that it provoked a large-scale international outcry, joined even by the communist friends (who were financially supported by Moscow), such as the leaders of the American and British communist parties, newspapers *L'Humanite*, *L'Unita*, as well as a pro-Chinese communist newspaper from Brussels, and many others. The UN Human Rights Commission demanded an explanation from its Ukrainian representative. The World Jewish Cultural Association called for the prosecution of the author and the cartoonist. The Soviet side held on for awhile, insisting that except for the drawings, "the book deserves a generally positive assessment." Finally, even *Pravda* had to admit that it was indeed "an ill-prepared brochure" with "erroneous statements and illustrations that may offend feelings of religious people or be interpreted as anti-Semitic," a phenomenon that, "as is universally known, does not and cannot exist in our country." Yet at the same time *Izvestia* stated that although there were certain drawbacks to the brochure, "its main idea is no doubt right."

There were even several arrests of religious Jews from Moscow and Leningrad – accused of espionage [conversations during personal meetings in synagogues] for a capitalistic state [Israel] with synagogues allegedly used as

fronts for various criminal activities – to scare others more effectively.

* * *

Although there were already no longer any Jews in the most prominent positions, many still occupied influential and important second-tier posts (though there were exceptions. For example, Veniamin Dymshits smoothly ran Gosplan (the State Planning Committee) from 1962, while being at the same time the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of USSR and a member of Central Committee from 1961 to 1964). At one time Jews were joining NKVD and the MVD in such numbers that even now, after all purges of the 1930s, a few individuals miraculously remained, such as the famous Captain Joffe in a camp in Mordovia.

According to the USSR Census of 1959, 2,268,000 Jews lived in the Soviet Union. (Yet there were caveats regarding this figure: Everybody knows that there are more Jews in the Soviet Union than the Census ever showed, as on the Census day, a Jew states his nationality not according to his passport, but any nationality he wishes.) Of those, 2,162,000 Jews lived in the cities, i.e., 95.3 percent of total population – much more than 82 percent in 1926 or 87 percent in 1939.³⁷ And if we glance forward into the 1970 Census, the observed increase in the number of Jews in Moscow and Leningrad is apparently caused not by natural growth but by migration from other cities (in spite of all the residential restrictions). Over these 11 years, at least several thousand Jews relocated to Kiev. The concentration of Jews in the large cities had been increasing for many decades.

These figures are very telling for those who know about the differences in living standards between the urban

and the rural populations in the Soviet Union. G. Rosenblum, the editor of the prominent Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, recalls an almost anecdotal story by Israeli Ambassador to Moscow Dr. Harel about his tour of the USSR in the mid-1960s. In a large *kolkhoz* near Kishinev he was told that the Jews who work there want to meet him. The Israeli was very happy that there were Jews in the *kolkhoz* (love of agriculture - a good sign for Israel). He recounts:

“Three Jews came to meet me. One was a cashier, another the editor of the *kolkhoz*’s wall newspaper, and the third one was a kind of economic manager. I couldn’t find any other. So, what the Jews used to do [i.e. before], they are still doing.” In other words, avoiding any physical outdoor labor with their hands, just like they did for so many centuries under the Czars.

G. Rosenblum confirms this: “Indeed, the Soviet Jews in their masses did not take to the physical work.” L. Shapiro concludes, “Conversion of Jews to agriculture ended in failure despite all the efforts of public Jewish organizations and the assistance of the state.” What successive Czars failed to accomplish, to change the very heart and soul and personality of an entire people, the power of the Soviet state could never accomplish either.

In Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev – the cities enjoying the highest living and cultural standards in the country, the Jews, according to the 1959 Census, constituted 3.9 percent, 5.8 percent, and 13.9 percent of the population, respectively, which is quite a lot, considering that they accounted only for 1.1 percent of the entire population of the USSR.

So it was that this extremely high concentration of Jews in urban areas – 95 percent of all Soviet Jews lived in the cities – that made the system of prohibitions and

restrictions particularly painful for them. (As we mentioned in the previous chapter, this system was outlined back in the early 1940s.) And although the restrictive rules have never been officially acknowledged and officials stoutly denied their existence, these rules and restrictions very effectively barred the Jews from many spheres of action, professions and positions.

Some recall a disturbing rumor circulating then among the Jews: allegedly, Khrushchev said in one of his unpublished speeches that “as many Jews will be accepted into the institutions of higher education as work in the coal mines.” Perhaps, he really just blurted it out in his usual manner, because such balancing was never carried out. Yet by the beginning of 1960s, while the absolute number of Jewish students increased, their relative share decreased substantially when compared to the pre-war period: if in 1936 the share of Jews among students was 7.5 times higher than that in the total population, then by 1960s it was only 2.7 times higher. These new data on the distribution of students in higher and secondary education by nationality were published for the first time (in the post-war period) in 1963 in the statistical annual report, *The National Economy of the USSR*, and a similar table was annually produced up to 1972.

In terms of the absolute number of students in institutions of higher education and technical schools in the 1962-1963 academic year, Jews were fourth after the three Slavic nations (Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians), with 79,300 Jewish students in institutions of higher education out of a total 2,943,700 students (2.69 percent). In the next academic year 1963-1964, the number of Jewish students increased to 82,600, while the total number of students in the USSR reached 3,260,700 (2.53 percent). This share remained

almost constant until the 1969/1970 academic year; 101,000 Jewish students out of total 4,549,900. Then the Jewish share began to decline and in 1972-1973 it was 1.91 percent: 88,500 Jewish students out of total 4,630,246. (This decline coincided with the beginning of the Jewish immigration to Israel.)

The relative number of Jewish scientists also declined in 1960s, from 9.5 percent in 1960 to 6.1 percent in 1973. During those same years, there were tens of thousands Jewish names in the Soviet art and literature, including 8.5 percent of writers and journalists, 7.7 percent of actors and artists, more than 10 percent of judges and attorneys, and about 15 percent doctors. Traditionally, there were always many Jews in medicine, yet consider the accursed Soviet psychiatry, which in those years began locking up healthy people in mental institutions.

And who were those psychiatrists? Listing the Jewish occupations, M.I. Heifetz writes: “Psychiatry is a Jewish monopoly. A friend, a Jewish psychiatrist, told me just before my arrest; we began to get Russians only recently and even then as the result of an order.” *[Translator’s note: admission into medical residency training was regulated at local and central levels; here author indicates that admission of ethnically Russian doctors into advanced psychiatry training was mandated from the higher levels.]* He provides examples: the Head Psychiatrist of Leningrad, Professor Averbukh, who rendered his expertise to the KGB in the Big House; in Moscow there was famous Luntz; in the Kaluga Hospital there was Lifshitz and his Jewish gang. When Heifetz was arrested and his wife began looking for a lawyer with a clearance, that is with permission from the KGB to work on

political cases, she did not find a single Russian among them, as all such lawyers were Jews.

In 1956, Furtseva, then the First Secretary of Moscow Gorkom (the City's Party Committee), complained that in some offices Jews constitute more than half of the staff. I have to note for balance that *in those* years the presence of Jews in the Soviet apparatus was not detrimental. The Soviet legal machinery was in its essence stubbornly and hardheartedly antihuman, skewed against any man in need, be it a petitioner or just a visitor. So it often happened that the Russian officials in Soviet offices, petrified by their power, looked for any excuse triumphantly to turn away a visitor. In contrast, one could find much more understanding in a Jewish official and resolve an issue in a more humane way.

L. Shapiro provides examples of complaints that in the national republics, the Jews were pushed out and displaced from the bureaucratic apparatus by native intelligentsia – yet it was a common and officially-mandated system of preferences in the ethnic republics [to affirm the local cadres], and Russians were displaced just as well.

This reminds me of an example from contemporary American life. In 1965, the New York Division of the American Jewish Committee had conducted a four-months-long unofficial interview of more than a thousand top officials in New York City banks. Based on its results, the American Jewish Committee mounted a protest because less than 3 percent of those surveyed were Jews, though they constituted one quarter of the population of – that is, the Committee demanded *proportional representation*. Then the chairman of the Association of Banks of New York responded that banks, according to law, do not hire on the basis of race, creed, color or national origin and do not keep

records of such categories (that would be our accursed fifth article, the requirement in the Soviet internal passport - nationality.) Interestingly, the same American Jewish Committee had conducted a similar study about the ethnic composition of management of the fifty largest U.S. public utility services two years before, and in 1964 it in similar vein it studied industrial enterprises in the Philadelphia region.

Yet let us return to the Soviet Jews. Many Jewish emigrants loudly advertised their former activity in the periodical-publishing and film-making industries back in the USSR. In particular, we learn from a Jewish author that “it was due to his [Syrokomskiy’s] support that all top positions in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* became occupied by Jews.”

Yet twenty years later we read a different assessment of the time: “The new anti-Semitism grew stronger and by the second half of the 1960s it already amounted to a developed system of discreditation, humiliation and isolation of the entire people.”

So how can we reconcile such conflicting views? How can we reach a calm and balanced assessment?

Then from the high spheres inhabited by economic barons there came alarming signals, signals that made the Jews nervous. To a certain extent, Jewish activity in the Soviet Union concentrated in the specific fields of economy along a characteristic pattern, well-known to Jewish sociologists. By then, at the end of 1950s, Nikita [Khrushchev] suddenly realized that the key spheres of the Soviet economy were plagued by rampant theft and fraud. (“Suddenly realized” it. Yes, I wrote those words with a straight face.—AS) In 1961, an explicitly anti-Semitic campaign was initiated against the theft of socialist property. Beginning in 1961, a number of punitive decrees of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR were passed. The first one dealt

with foreign currency speculations, another – with bribes, and still another later introduced capital punishment for the aforementioned crimes, at the same time lawlessly applying the death penalty retroactively, for the crimes committed before those decrees were issued (as, for example, the case of J. Rokotov and B. Faybishenko.) Executions started in the very first year. During the first nine trials, eleven individuals were sentenced to death. Among them were perhaps, six Jews.

The Jewish Encyclopedia states it more specifically, In 1961-1964, thirty-nine Jews were executed for economic crimes in the RSFSR and seventy-nine – in Ukraine, and forty-three Jews in other republics. In these trials, the vast majority of defendants were Jews. (The publicity was such that the court reports indicated the names and patronymics of the defendants, which was the normal order of pleadings, yet it was getting absolutely clear from that that they were Jews.)

Next, in a large court trial in Frunze in 1962, nineteen out of forty-six defendants were apparently Jewish. There is no reason to think that this new policy was conceived as a system of anti-Jewish measures. Yet immediately upon enforcement, the new laws acquired distinct anti-Jewish flavor—the author of the quote obviously points out to the publication of the full names of defendants, including Jewish ones; other than that, neither the courts, nor the government, nor the media made any generalizations or direct accusations against the Jews. And even when *Sovetskaya Kyrgizia* wrote that “they occupied different posts, but they were closely linked to each other,” it never clarified the begged question *how* were they linked? The newspaper treated this issue with silence, thus pushing the reader to the thought that the nucleus of the criminal organization was composed of the closely linked individuals. Yet closely linked by what? By

their Jewishness. So the newspaper emphasized the Jews in this case. Yet people can be closely linked by any illegal transaction, greed, swindling or fraud. And, amazingly, nobody argued that those individuals could be innocent (though they could have been innocent). Yet to *name* them was equal to Jew-baiting.

Next, in January 1962, came the Vilnius case of speculators in foreign currency. *All* eight defendants were Jews (during the trial, non-Jewish members of the political establishment involved in the case escaped public naming – a usual Soviet trick). This time, there was an explicit anti-Jewish sentiment from the prosecution: The deals were struck in a synagogue, and the arguments were settled with the help of wine.

S. Schwartz is absolutely convinced that this legal and economic harassment was nothing else but rampant anti-Semitism, yet he completely disregards the tendency of Jews to concentrate their activity in the specific spheres of economy. Similarly, the entire Western media interpreted this as a brutal campaign against Jews, the *humiliation and isolation of the entire people*; Bertrand Russell sent a letter of protest to Khrushchev and got a personal response from the Soviet leader. After that, the Soviet authorities apparently had second thoughts when they handled the Jews.

In the West, the official Soviet anti-Semitism began to be referred to as the most pressing issue in the USSR, ignoring any number of more acute issues) and the most proscribed subject. (Though there were numerous other proscribed issues such as forced collectivization, or the surrender of three million Red Army soldiers in the year of 1941 alone, or the murderous nuclear experimentation on our own Soviet troops on the Totskoye range in 1954.) Of course, after Stalin's death, the Communist Party avoided explicit

anti-Jewish statements. Perhaps, they practiced incendiary invitation-only meetings and briefings; that would have been very much in the Soviet style. Solomon Schwartz rightly concludes: “Soviet anti-Jewish policy does not have any sound or rational foundation. The strangulation of Jewish cultural life appears puzzling. How can such bizarre policy be explained?”

Still, when all living things in the country were being choked, could one really expect that such vigorous and agile people would escape a similar lot? To that, the Soviet foreign policy agendas of 1960s added their weight: the USSR was designing an anti-Israel campaign. Thus, they came up with a convenient, ambiguous and indefinite term of anti-Zionism, which became a sword of Damocles hanging above the entire Jewish population of the country. Campaigning against Zionism in the press became a sort of impenetrable shield as its obvious anti-Semitic nature became unprovable. Moreover, it sounded menacing and dangerous – “Zionism is the instrument of the American imperialism.” So the Jews had to prove their loyalty in one way or other, to somehow convince the people around them that they had no connection to their own Jewishness, especially to Zionism.

The feelings of ordinary Jews in the Soviet Union became the feelings of the oppressed as vividly expressed by one of them: “Over the years of persecution and vilification, the Jews developed a certain psychological complex of suspicion to any contact coming from non-Jews. In everything they are ready to see implicit or explicit hints against their nationality. The Jews can never publicly declare their Jewishness, and it is formally accepted that this should be kept silent, as if it was a vice, or a past crime.”

An incident in Malakhovka in October 1959 added substantially to that atmosphere. On the night of October 4,

in Malakhovka, a settlement half an hour from Moscow with 30,000 inhabitants, about 10 percent of whom were Jews, the roof of the synagogue caught fire along with the house of the Jewish cemetery keeper, and the wife of the keeper died in the fire. On the same night, leaflets were scattered and posted across Malakhovka: “Away with the Jews in commerce! We saved them from the Germans yet they became arrogant so fast that the Russian people do not understand any longer who’s living on whose land.”

Growing depression drove some Jews to such an extreme state of mind as that described by D. Shturman: some Jewish philistines developed a hatred toward Israel, believing it to be the generator of anti-Semitism in Soviet politics. I remember the words of one successful Jewish teacher: “One good bomb dropped on Israel would make our life much easier.” Yet that was an ugly exception indeed. In general, the rampant anti-Zionist campaign triggered a consolidation of the sense of Jewishness in people and the growth of sympathy towards Israel as the outpost of the Jewish nation.

There is yet another explanation of the social situation in those years: yes, under Khrushchev, fear for their lives had become a thing of the past for Soviet Jews, but the foundations of new anti-Semitism had been laid, as the young generation of political establishment fought for caste privileges, seeking to occupy the leading positions in arts, science, commerce, finance, etc. There the new Soviet aristocracy encountered Jews, whose share in those fields was traditionally high. The social structure of the Jewish population, which was mainly concentrated in the major centers of the country, reminded the ruling élite of their own class structure.

Doubtless, such encounters did take place; it was an epic “crew change” in the Soviet ruling establishment, switching from a Jewish élite to the Russian one. It clearly resulted in antagonism, and I remember those conversations among the Jews during Khrushchev’s era— they were full of not only ridicule, but also of bad insults against the ex-villagers, the “muzhiks” who infiltrated the establishment.

Yet altogether all the various social influences combined with the great prudence of the Soviet authorities by 1965 led to a dramatic alleviation of both the prevalence and the acuteness of modern Soviet anti-Semitism, which became far diminished from what had been observed during the war and the first post-war years. It appears that a marked attenuation, maybe even a complete dying out of the attitude is happening. Overall, in the 1960s the Jewish world view was rather positive. This is what we consistently hear from different authors. (Contrast this to what we just read, that “the new anti-Semitism grew in strength in the 1960s.”) The same opinion was expressed again twenty years later – “Khrushchev’s era was one of the most peaceful periods of the Soviet history for the Jews.”

In 1956-1957, many new Zionist societies sprang up in the USSR, bringing together young Jews who previously did not show much interest in Jewish national problems or Zionism. An important impetus for the awakening of national consciousness among Soviet Jews and for the development of a sense of solidarity with the State of Israel was the Suez Crisis of 1956. Later, the International Youth Festival in Moscow, 1957 became a catalyst for the revival of the Zionist movement in the USSR among a certain portion of Soviet Jews. Between the festival and the Six-Day War [1967], Zionist activity in the Soviet Union was gradually expanding. Contacts between Soviet Jews and the Israeli Embassy

became more frequent and less dangerous. Also, the importance of Jewish *samisdats* increased dramatically.

During the so-called Khrushchev *thaw* period (the end of 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s) Soviet Jews were spiritually re-energized; they shook off the fears and distress of the previous age of the Doctors' Plot and the persecution of the "cosmopolitans." It even became *fashionable* in the metropolitan society to be a Jew; the Jewish motif entered *samisdats* and the poetic soirées then so popular among the young. Rimma Kazakova even ventured to declare her Jewish identity from the stage. Yevtushenko quickly caught the air and expressed it in 1961 in his *Babi Yar*, proclaiming himself a Jew in spirit. His poem (and the courage of *Literaturnaya Gazeta*) was a literary trumpet call for all of Soviet and world Jewry. Yevtushenko recited his poem during a huge number of poetic soirées, always accompanied by a roar of applause. After a while Shostakovich, who often ventured into Jewish themes, set Yevtushenko's poem into his 13th Symphony. Yet its public performance was limited by the authorities. *Babi Yar* spread among Soviet and foreign Jewries as a reinvigorating and healing blast of air, a truly revolutionary act in the development of the social consciousness in the Soviet Union; it became the most significant event since the dismissal of the Doctors' Plot. In 1964-65 Jewish themes returned into popular literature; take, for example, *Summer in Sosnyaki* by Anatoliy Rybakov or the *Diary of Masha Rolnik*, written apparently under heavy influence of *Diary of Anne Frank*.

After the ousting of Khrushchev from all his posts, the official policy towards Jews was softened somewhat. The struggle against Judaism abated and nearly all restrictions on baking matzoh were abolished. Gradually, the campaign against economic crimes faded away too. Yet the Soviet

press unleashed a propaganda campaign against Zionist activities among the Soviet Jews and their connections to the Israeli Embassy.

All these political fluctuations and changes in the Jewish policies in the Soviet Union did not pass unnoticed, but served to awaken the Jews.

In the 1959 Census, only 21 percent of Jews named Yiddish as their first language (in 1926 it was 72 percent.) Even in 1970s they used to say that Russian Jewry, which was in the past the most Jewish Jewry in the world, became the least Jewish. The current state of Soviet society is fraught with destruction of Jewish spiritual and intellectual potential. Or as another author put it: Jews in the Soviet Union were neither allowed to assimilate, nor were they allowed to be Jews.

Yet Jewish identity was never subdued during the entire Soviet period. In 1966 the official mouthpiece *Sovetish Heymland* claimed that “even assimilated Russian-speaking Jews still retain their unique character, distinct from that of any other segment of population.” Not to mention the Jews of Odessa, Kiev, and Kharkov, who sometimes were even snooty about their Jewishness to the extent that they did not want to befriend a *goy*.

Scientist Leo Tumerman (already in Israel in 1977) recalls the early Soviet period, when he used to reject any nationalism. Yet now, looking back at those years: “I am surprised to notice what I had overlooked then: despite what appeared to be my full assimilation into the Russian life, the entire circle of my close and intimate friends at that time was Jewish.” The sincerity of his statement is certain – the picture is clear. Such things were widespread and I witnessed similar situations quite a few times, and Russians people did not mind such behavior at all.

Another Jewish author notes: in the USSR non-religious Jews of all walks of life hand in hand defended the principle of racial purity. He adds: “Nothing could be more natural. People for whom the Jewishness is just an empty word are very rare, especially among the unassimilated Jews.”

Natan Sharansky’s testimonial, given shortly after his immigration to Israel, is also typical: “Much of my Jewishness was instilled into me by my family. Although our family was an assimilated one, it nevertheless was Jewish. My father, an ordinary Soviet journalist, was so fascinated with the revolutionary ideas of happiness for all and not just for the Jews, that he became an absolutely loyal Soviet citizen.” Yet in 1967 after the Six-Day War and later in 1968 after Czechoslovakia, “I suddenly realized an obvious difference between myself and non-Jews around me a kind of a sense of the fundamental difference between my Jewish consciousness and the national consciousness of the Russians.”

And here is another very thoughtful testimonial (1975): “The efforts spent over the last hundred years by Jewish intellectuals to reincarnate themselves into the Russian national form were truly titanic. Yet it did not give them balance of mind; on the contrary, it rather made them feel the bitterness of their bi-national existence more acutely. They have an answer to the tragic question of Aleksandr Blok: ‘My Russia, my life, are we to drudge through life together?’ To that question, to which a Russian as a rule gives an unambiguous answer, a member of Russian Jewish intelligentsia used to reply (sometimes after self-reflection): No, not together. For the time being, yes, side by side, but not together. A duty is no substitute for Motherland.”

And so the Jews felt free from obligations at all sharp turns of Russian history. Fair enough. One can only hope for all Russian Jews to get such clarity and acknowledge this dilemma.

Yet usually the problem in its entirety is blamed on anti-Semitism: excluding them from everything genuinely Russian, our anti-Semitism simultaneously bars them from all things Jewish. Anti-Semitism is terrible not because of what it *does to the Jews* (by imposing restrictions on them), but because of what it *does with the Jews* by turning them into neurotic, depressed, stressed, and defective human beings.

Still, those Jews, who had fully woken up to their identity, were very quickly, completely, and reliably cured from such a morbid condition. Jewish identity in the Soviet Union grew stronger as they went through the historical ordeals predestined for Jewry by the 20th Century. First, it was the Jewish Catastrophe during the Second World War, although as a result of official Soviet muffling and obscuring, Soviet Jewry only comprehended its full scope later.

Another push was given by the campaign against “cosmopolitans” in 1949-1950. Then there was a very serious threat of a massacre by Stalin, eliminated by his timely death. And with Khrushchev’s *thaw* and after it, later in the 1960s, Soviet Jewry quickly awoke spiritually, already sensing its unique identity.

During the second half of the 1950s, the growing sense of bitterness, spread over large segments of Soviet Jewry, lead to consolidation of the sense of national solidarity. But only in the late 1960s did a very small but committed group of scientists (Note: they were not humanitarians; the most colorful figure among them was Alexander Voronel) begin rebuilding of

Jewish national consciousness in Russia. And then against the nascent national consciousness of Soviet Jews, the Six-Day War suddenly broke out and instantly ended in what might have seemed a miraculous victory. Israel has ascended in their minds and Soviet Jews awoke to their spiritual and consanguineous kinship with Israel.

But the Soviet authorities, furious at Nasser's disgraceful defeat, immediately attacked Soviet Jews with the thundering campaign against the "Judeo-Zionist-Fascism," insinuating that all the Jews were Zionists and claiming that the global conspiracy of Zionism is the expected and *inevitable product of the entirety of Jewish history, Jewish religion, and the resultant Jewish national character*, and because of the consistent pursuit of the ideology of racial supremacy and apartheid, Judaism turned out to be a very convenient religion for securing world dominance. The campaign on television and in the press was accompanied by a dramatic termination of diplomatic relations with Israel. The Soviet Jews had many reasons to fear. It looked like it was going to come to calls for a pogrom.

But underneath this scare a new and already unstoppable explosion of Jewish national consciousness was growing and developing. Bitterness, resentment, anger, and the sense of social insecurity were accruing for a final break up which would lead to complete severing of all ties with this country and this society – to emigration.

The victory of the Israeli Army contributed to the awakening of national consciousness among the many thousands of almost completely assimilated Soviet Jews. The process of national revival has begun. The activity of Zionist groups in cities all across the country surged. In 1969, there were attempts to create a united Zionist Organization in the USSR. An increasing number of Jews applied to emigrate to

Israel. And the numerous refusals to grant exit visas led to the failed attempt to hijack an airplane on June 15, 1970. The following Dymshits-Kuznetsov hijacking affair can be considered a historic landmark in the fate of Soviet Jewry.

Chapter XXIV: Breaking Away From Bolshevism

At the beginning of the 20th century, Europe imagined itself to be on the threshold of worldwide enlightenment. No one could have predicted the strength with which nationalism would explode in that very century among all nations of the world. One hundred years later, it seems nationalist feelings are not about to die soon (the very message that international socialists have been trying to drum into our heads for the whole century,) but instead are gaining strength.

Yet, does not the multi-national nature of humanity provide variety and wealth? Erosion of nations surely would be an impoverishment for humanity, the entropy of the spirit. And centuries of the histories of national cultures would then turn into irredeemably dead and useless antics. The logic that it would be easier to manage such a uniform mankind fails by its petty reductionism.

However, the propaganda in the Soviet empire harped non-stop in an importunately triumphant manner about the imminent withering away and amalgamation of nations, proclaiming that no national question exists in our country, and that there is certainly no Jewish question.

Yet why should not the Jewish question exist — the question of the unprecedented three thousand-year-old existence of the nation, scattered all over the earth, yet spiritually soldered together despite all notions of the state and territoriality, and at the same time influencing the entire world history in the most lively and powerful way? Why should there not be a Jewish Question, given that all national questions come up at one time or other, even the Gagauz Question? [A small

Christian Turkic people who live in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.]

Of course, no such silly doubt could ever arise, if the Jewish Question were not the focus of many different political games.

The same was true for Russia, too. In pre-revolutionary Russian society, as we saw, it was the *omission* of the Jewish question that was considered anti-Semitic. In fact, in the mind of the Russian public the Jewish question — understood as the question of civil rights or civil equality — developed into perhaps the central question of the whole Russian public life of that period, and certainly into the central node of the conscience of every individual, its acid test.

With the growth of European socialism, all national issues were increasingly recognized as merely regrettable obstacles to that great doctrine; all the more was the Jewish question, directly attributed to capitalism by Marx, considered a bloated hindrance. Mommsen wrote that in the circles of “Western-Russian socialist Jewry,” as he put it, even the slightest attempt to discuss the Jewish question was branded as reactionary and anti-Semitic. (This was even before the Bund.)

Such was the iron standard of socialism inherited by the USSR. From 1918 the communists forbade (under threat of imprisonment or death) any separate treatment or consideration of the Jewish Question (except sympathy for their suffering under the Czars and positive attitudes for their active role in communism.) The intellectual class voluntarily and willingly adhered to the new canon while others were required to follow it.

This cast of thought persisted even through the Soviet-German war as if, even then, there was not any

particular Jewish question. And even up to the demise of the USSR under Gorbachev, the authorities used to repeat hard-headedly: no, there is no Jewish question, no, no, no! (It was replaced by the Zionist question.)

Yet already by the end of the World War II, when the extent of the destruction of the Jews under Hitler had dawned on the Soviet Jews, and then through Stalin's "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign of the late 1940s, the Soviet intelligentsia realized that the Jewish question in the USSR does exist! And the pre-revolutionary understanding — that it is central to Russian society and to the conscience of every individual and that it is the true measure of humanity — was also restored.

In the West it was only the leaders of Zionism who confidently talked from the late 19th century about the historical uniqueness and everlasting relevance of the Jewish question (and some of them at the same time maintained robust links with diehard European socialism.) And then the emergence of the state of Israel and the consequent storms around it added to the confusion of naive socialist minds of Europeans.

Here I offer two small but at the time quite stirring and typical examples. In one episode of the so-called "Dialogue Between the East and the West" show (a clever Cold-War-period programme, where Western debaters were opposed by Eastern-European officials or novices who played off official nonsense for their own sincere convictions), in the beginning of 1967 a Slovak writer, Ladislav Mnacko, properly representing the socialist East, wittily noted that he never in his life had any conflict with the communist authorities, except one case when his driver's license was suspended for a traffic violation. His French opponent angrily said that at least in one other case, surely

Mnacko should be in the opposition: when the uprising in neighboring Hungary was drowned in blood. But no, the suppression of Hungarian uprising neither violated the peace of Mnacko's mind, nor did it force him to say anything sharp or impudent. Then a few months passed after the "dialogue" and the Six-Day War broke out. At that point the Czechoslovak Government of Novotny, all loyal Communists, accused Israel of aggression and severed diplomatic relations with it. And what happened next? Mnacko — a Slovak married to a Jew — who had calmly disregarded the suppression of Hungary before, now was so outraged and agitated that he left his homeland and as a protest went to live in Israel.

The second example comes from the same year. A famous French socialist, Daniel Meyer, at the moment of the Six-Day War had written in *Le Monde*, that henceforth he is: 1) ashamed to be a *socialist* — because of the fact that the Soviet Union calls itself a socialist country (well, when the Soviet Union was exterminating not only its own people but also other *socialists* he was not ashamed); 2) ashamed of being French (obviously due to the wrong political position of de Gaulle); and, 3) ashamed to be a *human* (wasn't that too much?) and ashamed of all except being a Jew.

We are ready to accept both Mnacko's outrage and Meyer's anger, yet we would like to point out at the extreme intensity of their feelings — given the long history of their obsequious condoning of communism. Surely, the intensity of their feelings is also an aspect of the Jewish question in the 20th century.

So in what way did the Jewish question not exist?

If one listened to American radio broadcasts aimed at the Soviet Union from 1950 to the 1980s, one might conclude that there was no other issue in the Soviet Union as important

as the Jewish question. At the same time in the United States, where the Jews can be described as the most privileged minority and where they gained an unprecedented status, the majority of American Jews still claimed that hatred and discrimination by their Christian compatriots was a grim fact of modern life; yet because it would sound incredible if stated aloud, then the Jewish question does not exist and to notice it and talk about it is unnecessary and improper.

We have to get used to talking about Jewish question not in a hush and fearfully, but clearly, articulately and firmly. We should do so not overflowing with passion, but sympathetically aware of both the unusual and difficult Jewish world history and centuries of our Russian history that are also full of significant suffering. Then the mutual prejudices, sometimes very intense, would disappear and calm reason would reign.

Working on this book, I can't help but notice that the Jewish question has been omnipresent in world history and it never was a national question in the narrow sense like all other national questions, but was always — maybe because of the nature of Judaism? — interwoven into something much bigger.

The Jews Abandon Bolshevism

When in the late 1960s I mused about the fate of the communist regime and felt that yes, it is doomed, my impression was strongly supported by the observation that so many Jews had already abandoned it.

There was a period when they persistently and in unison supported the Soviet régime, and at that time the future definitely belonged to it. Yet now the Jews started to defect from it, first the thinking individuals and later the

Jewish masses. Was this not a sure sign that the years of the Soviet rule are numbered? Yes, it was.

So when exactly did it happen that the Jews, once such a reliable backbone of the regime, turned into almost its greatest adversary?

Can we say that the Jews always struggled for freedom? No, for too many of them were the most zealous communists. Yet now they turned their backs on it. And without them, the ageing Bolshevist fanaticism had not only lost some of its fervor, it actually ceased to be fanatical at all, rather it became lazy in the Russian way.

After the Soviet-German War, the Jews became disappointed by communist power: it turned out that they were worse off than before. We saw the main stages of this split. Initially, the support of the newborn state of Israel by the USSR had inspired the Soviet Jews. Then came the persecution of the “cosmopolitans” and the mainly Jewish intelligentsia (not the philistine masses yet) began to worry: communism pushes the Jews aside? Oppresses them? The terrible threat of massacre by Stalin overwhelmed them as well — but it was short-lived and miraculously disappeared very soon. During the interregnum, following Stalin’s death and then under Khrushchev, Jewish hopes were replaced by dissatisfaction and the promised stable improvement failed to materialize.

And then the Six-Day War broke out with truly biblical force, rocking both Soviet and world Jewry, and the Jewish national consciousness began to grow like an avalanche. After the Six-Day War, much was changed. The action acquired momentum. Letters and petitions began to flood Soviet and international organizations. National life was revived: during the holidays it became difficult to get

into a synagogue, underground societies sprang up to study Jewish history, culture and Hebrew.

And then there was that rising campaign against Zionism” already linked to imperialism, and so the resentment grew among the Jews toward that increasingly alien and abominable and dull Bolshevism — *where did such a monster come from?*

Indeed, for many educated Jews the departure from communism was painful as it is always difficult to part with an ideal — after all, was it not a great and perhaps inevitable planetary experiment initiated in Russia in 1917; an experiment, based on ancient attractive and obviously high ideas, not all of which were faulty and many still retain their beneficial effect to this day? Marxism requires educated minds.

Many Jewish political writers strongly favored the term Stalinism — a convenient form to justify the earlier Soviet régime. It is difficult to part with the old familiar and sweet things, if it is really possible at all.

There have been attempts to increase the influence of intellectuals on the ruling élite. Such was the *Letter to the XXIII Congress* (of the Communist Party) by G. Pomerants (1966). The letter asked the Communist Party to trust the “scientific and creative intelligentsia,” that “desires not anarchy but the rule of law ... that wants not to destroy the existing system but to make it more flexible, more rational, more humane” and proposed to establish an advisory think tank, which would *generally* consult the executive leadership of the country. The offer remained unanswered.

And many souls long ached for such a wasted opportunity with such a glorious past.

But there was no longer any choice . And so the Soviet Jews split away from communism. And now, while

deserting it, they turned against it. And that was such a perfect opportunity — they could themselves, with expurgatory repentance, acknowledge their formerly active and cruel role in the triumph of communism in Russia.

Yet almost none of them did (I discuss the few exceptions below.) The above-mentioned collection of essays, *Russia and the Jews*, so heartfelt, so much needed and so timely when published in 1924 was fiercely denounced by Jewry. And even today, according to the opinion of the erudite scholar, Shimon Markish: “these days, nobody dares to defend those hook-nosed and burry commissars because of fear of being branded pro-Soviet, a Chekist, a God-knows-what else.... Yet let me say in no uncertain terms: the behavior of those Jewish youths who joined the Reds is a thousand times more understandable than the reasons of the authors of that collection of works.”

Still, some Jewish authors began to recognize certain things of the past as they really were, though in the most cautious terms: “It was the end of the role of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia that developed in the prewar and early postwar years and that was — to some degree sincerely — a bearer of Marxist ideology and that professed, however timidly and implicitly and contrary to actual practice, the ideals of liberalism, internationalism and humanism.” A bearer of Marxist ideology? Yes, of course. The ideals of internationalism? Sure. Yet liberalism and humanism? True, but only after Stalin’s death, while coming to senses. However, very different things can be inferred from the writings of the majority of Jewish publicists in the late Soviet Union. Looking back to the very year of 1917, they find that under communism there was nothing but Jewish suffering! “Among the many nationalities of the Soviet Union, the Jews have *always* been stigmatized as the least reliable element.”

What an incredibly short memory one should have to state such things in 1983. *Always?* What about the 1920s? And the 1930s? To assert that they were *then* considered the *least reliable*?! Is it really possible to forget everything so completely?

“If one takes a bird’s-eye view of the entire history of the Soviet era, then the latter appears as one gradual process of destruction of the Jews.” Note — the *entire* history! We investigated this in the previous chapters and saw that even without taking into account Jewish over-representation in the top Soviet circles, there had been a period of well-being for many Jews with mass migration to cities, open access to higher education and the blossoming of Jewish culture. The author proceeds with a reservation: “Although there were certain fluctuations, the overall trend continued.

Soviet power, destroying all nationalities, generally dealt with the Jews in the most brutal way.” Another author considers a disaster even the early period when Lenin and the Communist Party called upon the Jews to help with state governance, and the call was heard, and the great masses of Jews from the *shtetls* of the hated Pale moved into the capital and the big cities, closer to the avant-garde of the Revolution; he states that “... the formation of the Bolshevik régime that had turned the greater part of Jews into déclassé, impoverished and exiled them and destroyed their families” was a catastrophe for the “majority of the Jewish population.”

Well, that depends on one’s point of view. And the author himself later notes: in the 1920s and 1930s, the “children of déclassé Jewish petty bourgeois were able to graduate from the technical institutes and metropolitan universities and to become commanders of the great developments.” Then his reasoning becomes vague: “in the

beginning of the century the main feature of Jewish activity was a fascination with the idea of building a new fair society”— yet the army of revolution “consisted of plain rabble — all those who were nothing, [a quote from *The Internationale*].” Then, after the consolidation of the régime “that rabble decided to implement their motto and to become all [also a quote from *The Internationale*, and finished off their own leaders.... And so in the kingdom of rabble unlimited totalitarianism was established.” And, in this context, the Jews had nothing to do with it, except that they were among the victimized leaders. And the purge continued for four decades until the mid-1950s; then the last bitter pill, according to the scenario of disappointments was prescribed to the remaining “charmed” Jews. Again we see the same angle: the entirety of Soviet history was one of unending oppression and exclusion of the Jews.

Yet now they wail in protest in unison: “We did not elect this régime!”

Or even “it is not possible to cultivate a loyal Soviet élite among them [the Jews].” Oh my God, was not this method working flawlessly for 30 years, and only later coming undone? So where did all those glorious and famous names whom we’ve seen in such numbers come from? And why were their eyes kept so tightly shut that they couldn’t see the essence of Soviet rule for thirty to forty years? How is it that that their eyes were opened only now? And what opened them?

Well, it was mostly because of the fact that now that power had suddenly turned around and began pushing the Jews not only out of its ruling and administrative circles, but out of cultural and scientific establishments also. “The disappointment was so fresh and sore, that we did not have the strength, nor the courage to tell even our children about

it.” And what about the children? For the great majority of them the main motivation was the same — graduate school, career, and so on. Yet soon they would have to examine their situation more closely.

* * *

In the 1970s we see examples of rather amazing agreement of opinion, unthinkable for the past half a century.

For instance, Shulgin wrote in 1929: “We must acknowledge our past. The flat denial claiming that the Jews are to blame for nothing — neither for the Russian Revolution, nor for the consolidation of Bolshevism, nor for the horrors of the communism — is the worst way possible.... It would be a great step forward if this groundless tendency to blame all the troubles of Russia on the Jews could be somewhat differentiated. It would be already great if any contrasts could be found.”

Fortunately, such contrasts, and even more — comprehension, and even remorse — were voiced by some Jews. And combined with honest mindx and rich life experience, they were quite clear. And this brings hope.

Here’s Dan Levin, an American intellectual who immigrated to Israel: “It is no accident, that none of the American writers who attempted to describe and explain what happened to Soviet

Jewry, has touched this important issue — the Jewish responsibility for the communism.... In Russia, the people’s anti-Semitism is largely due to the fact that the Russians perceive the Jews as the cause of all the evil of the revolution. Yet American writers — Jews and ex-Communists ... do not want to resurrect the ghosts of the past. However, oblivion is a terrible thing.”

Simultaneously, another Jewish writer, an émigré from the Soviet Union, published: “The experience of the Russian (Soviet) Jewry, in contrast to that of the European Jewry, whose historical background is the experience of a collision with the forces of *outer* evil, requires a look not from inside out but rather of introspection and inner self-examination. In this reality, we saw only one Jewish spirituality — that of the Commissar — and its name was Marxism.” Or he writes about “our young Zionists who demonstrate so much contempt toward Russia, her rudeness and savagery, contrasting all this with the worthiness of the ancient Jewish nation. I saw pretty clearly, that those who today sing hosanna to Jewry, glorifying it in its entirety (without the slightest sense of guilt or the slightest potential to look inside), yesterday were saying: ‘I wouldn’t be against the Soviet régime, if it was not anti-Semitic, ’ and two days ago they beat their breasts in ecstasy: ‘Long live the great brotherhood of nations! Eternal Glory to the Father and Friend, the genius Comrade Stalin! ’”

But today, when it is clear how many Jews were in the iron Bolshevik leadership, and how many more took part in the ideological guidance of a great country onto the wrong track — should the question not arise among modern Jews as to some sense of responsibility for the actions of *those* Jews? It should be asked in general: shouldn’t there be a kind of moral responsibility — not a joint liability, yet the responsibility *to remember and to acknowledge*? For example, modern Germans accept liability to Jews directly, both morally and materially, as perpetrators are liable to the victims: for many years they have paid compensation to Israel and personal compensation to surviving victims.

So what about Jews? When Mikhail Kheifets, whom I repeatedly cite in this work, after having been through labor camps, expressed the grandeur of his character by repenting on behalf of his people for the evil committed by the Jews in the Soviet Union in the name of communism, he was bitterly ridiculed.

The whole educated society, *the cultured circle*, had genuinely failed to notice any *Russian* grievances in the 1920s and 1930s; they didn't even assume that *such* could exist — yet they instantly recognized the Jewish grievances as soon as those emerged. Take, for example, Victor Perelman, who after emigrating published an anti-Soviet Jewish journal *Epoch and We* and who served the régime in the filthiest place, in Chakovsky's *Literaturnaya Gazeta* — until the Jewish question had entered his life. Then he opted out.

At a higher level, they generalized it as the crash of illusions about the integration of Jewry into the Russian social movements, about making any change in Russia.

Thus, as soon as the Jews recognized their explicit antagonism to the Soviet regime, they turned into its intellectual opposition — in accord to their social role. Of course, it was not them who rioted in Novocherkassk, or created unrest in Krasnodar, Alexandrov, Murom, or Kostroma. Yet the filmmaker Mikhail Romm plucked up his heart and, during a public speech, unambiguously denounced the “anti-cosmopolitan” campaign — and that became one of the first samisdat documents (and Romm himself, who in so timely a manner rid himself of his ideological impediments, became a kind of spiritual leader for the Soviet Jewry, despite his films *Lenin in October* (1937), *Lenin in 1918* (1939), and despite being a fivefold winner of the Stalin Prize.)

And after that the Jews had become reliable supporters and intrepid members of the “democratic” and “dissident” movements. Looking back from Israel at the din of Moscow, another witness reflected: “A large part of Russian democrats (if not the majority) are of Jewish origin.... Yet they do not identify themselves as Jews and do not realize that their audience is also mostly Jewish.” And so, the Jews once again became the Russian revolutionaries, shouldering the social duty of the Russian intelligentsia, which the Jewish Bolsheviks so zealously helped to exterminate during the first decade after the revolution; they had become the true and genuine nucleus of the new public opposition. And so, yet again no progressive movement was possible without Jews.

Who had halted the torrent of false political (and often semi-closed) court trials? Alexander Ginzburg, and then Pavel Litvinov and Larisa Bogoraz did. I would not exaggerate if I claim that their appeal to world public opinion in January 1968, delivered not through unreliable samisdat, but handed fearlessly to the West in front of Cheka cameras, had been a milestone of Soviet ideological history. Who were those seven brave souls who dragged their leaden feet to Lobnoye Mesto [a stone platform in Red Square] on Aug. 25, 1968? They did it not for the greater success of their protest, but to wash the name of Russia from the Czechoslovak disgrace by their sacrifice. Four out of the seven were Jews. (Remember, that the percentage of Jews in the population of the country then was less than 1%) We should also remember Semyon Gluzman, who sacrificed his freedom in the struggle against the “nuthouses” [dissidents were sometimes incarcerated in psychiatric clinics]. Many Jewish intellectuals from Moscow were among the first punished by the Soviet régime.

Yet very few dissidents ever regretted the past of their Jewish fathers. P. Litvinov never mentioned his grandfather's role in Soviet propaganda. Neither would we hear from V. Belotserkovsky how many innocents were slaughtered by his Mauser-toting father. Communist Raisa Lert, who became a dissident late in life, was proud of her membership in *that* party even after *The Gulag Archipelago*; the party she had joined in good faith and enthusiastically" in her youth; the party to which she had "wholly devoted herself" and from which she herself had suffered, yet nowadays it is "not the same" party anymore. Apparently she did not realize how appealing the early Soviet terror was for her.

After the events of 1968, Sakharov joined the dissident movement without a backward glance. Among his new dissident preoccupations were many individual cases; in particular, personal cases of Jewish refuseniks [those overwhelming Jewish dissidents who requested but were refused the right to emigrate from the Soviet Union.] Yet when he tried to expand the business (as he had innocently confided to me, not realizing all the glaring significance of what he said), Gelfand, a member of the Academy of Science, told him that "we are tired of helping these people to resolve their problems," while another member, Zeldovich, said: "I'm not going to sign any petition on behalf of victims of any injustice — I want to retain the ability to protect those who suffer for their nationality." Which means to protect the Jews only.

There was also a purely Jewish dissident movement, which was concerned only with the oppression of the Jews and Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union (more about it later.)

* * *

A transformation in public consciousness often pushes forward outstanding individuals as representatives, symbols and spokesmen of the age. So, in the 1960s Alexander Galich became such a typical and accurate representative of the processes and attitudes in the Soviet intellectual circles. (“Galich is a pen name, explains N. Rubinstein. It is made of syllables of his real name — *Ginsburg Alexander Arkadieovich*. Choosing a pen name is a serious thing. Actually, I assume that the author was aware that, apart from being just a combination of syllables, “Galich” is also the name of an ancient Russian city from the very heart of Slavic history.) Galich enjoyed the general support of Soviet intelligentsia; tape recordings of his guitar performances were widely disseminated; and they have almost become the symbol of the social revival of the 1960s expressing it powerfully and vehemently. The opinion of the *cultural circle* was unanimous: “the most popular people’s poet,” the “bard of modern Russia.”

Galich was 22 when the Soviet-German War broke out. He says that he was exempt from military service because of poor health; he then moved to Grozny, where he “unexpectedly and easily became the head of the literature section of the local Drama Theatre”; he also “organized a theater of political satire”; then he was evacuated through Krasnovodsk to Chirchik near Tashkent; in 1942, he moved from there to Moscow with a front-line theatrical company under formation and spent the rest of the war with that company.

He recalled how he worked on hospital trains, composing and performing couplets for wounded soldiers; how they were drinking spirits with a trainmaster. “All of us,

each in his own way, worked for the great common cause: we were defending our Motherland.” After the war, he became a well-known Soviet scriptwriter (he worked on many movies) and a playwright—ten of his plays were staged by many theaters in the Soviet Union and abroad. All that was in 1940s and 1950s, in the age of general spiritual stagnation, well, he could not step out of line, could he? He even made a movie about Chekists, and was awarded for his work.

Yet in the early 1960s, Galich abruptly changed his life. He found courage to forsake his successful and well-off life and “walk into the square.” It was after that that he began performing guitar-accompanied songs to people gathering in private Moscow apartments. He gave up open publishing, though it was of course not easy: “It was great to read a name on the cover, not just someone else’s, but mine!”

Surely, his anti-régime songs, keen, acidic, and and morally demanding, were of benefit to society, further destabilizing public attitudes. In his songs, he mainly addressed Stalin’s later years and beyond; he usually did not deplore the radiant past of the age of Lenin (except one instance:

At his best, he calls society to moral cleansing, to resistance (*Gold-Digger’s Waltz, I Choose Liberty, Ballad of the Clean Hands, Our Fingers Are Blotted from The Questionnaires, Every Day Silent Trumpets Glorify Thoughtful Vacuity.*) Sometimes he sang the hard truth about the past.

*In vain had our infantry
perished in 1943, to no
avail.*

sometimes Red myths, singing about poor persecuted communists

*There was a time —
Almost a third of the
inmates came from the
Central Committee, there
was a time when for the red
color They added ten years
[to the sentence.]*

Once he touched dekulakization:

*Disenfranchised ones
were summoned in first.*

Yet his main blow was against the current establishment:

*There are fences in the country; behind fences live
the leaders.*

He was justly harsh there; however, he oversimplified the charge by attacking their privileged way of life only: here they eat, drink, rejoice. The songs were embittering, but in a narrow-minded way, almost like the primitive Red Proletarian propaganda of the past. Yet when he was switching his focus from the leaders to “the people,” his characters were almost entirely boobies, fastidious men, rabble and rascals — a very limited selection.

He had found a precise point of perspective for himself, perfectly in accord with the spirit of the time: he

impersonalized himself with all those people who were suffering, persecuted and killed.

*I was a GI [Gulag inmate, which he was not]
And as a GI I'll die,
We, GIs, are dying in
battle.*

Yet with his many songs narrated from the first person of a former camp inmate, he made a strong impression that he was an inmate himself.

*And that other inmate was me myself.
I froze like a horseshoe in a sleigh trail
Into ice that I picked with a hammer pick.
After all, wasn't it me who spent
Twenty years in those camps.
As the numbers [personal inmate number tattooed on the
arm] We died, we died.
From the camp we were sent right to the front!*

Many believed that he was a former camp inmate and they have tried to find from Galich when and where he had been in camps.

So how did he address his past, his longstanding participation in the stupefying official Soviet lies? That's what had struck me the most: singing with such accusatory pathos, he had never expressed *a single word of his personal remorse, not a word of personal repentance*. Nowhere!

Didn't he realize that when he sang: "Oh Party's Iliad! What a giftwrapped groveling!", he sang about himself? And when he crooned: "If you sell the unction" as though referring to somebody else, did it occur to him that he himself was selling unction for half of his life. Why on earth would he not renounce his pro-official plays and films? No! "We did not sing glory to executioners!" Yet, as the matter of fact, he did. Perhaps he did realize it or he gradually came to the

realization, because later, no longer in Russia, he said: “I was a well-off screenwriter and playwright and a well-off Soviet flunky. And I have realized that I could no longer go on like that. Finally, I have to speak loudly, speak the truth.”

But then, in the Sixties, he intrepidly turned the pathos of civil rage, for instance, to the refutation of the Gospel commandments (do not judge, lest ye be judged):

*No, I have contempt for the very essence
Of this formula of existence!*

And then, relying on the sung miseries, he confidently tried on a prosecutor’s robe: “I was not elected. But I am the judge!” And so he grew so confident, that in the lengthy *Poem about Stalin (The Legend of Christmas)*, where he in bad taste imagined Stalin as Christ, and presented the key formula of his agnostic mindset — his really famous, the clichéd-quotes, and so harmful lines:

*Don't be afraid of fire and hell,
And fear only him who says:
I know the right way!*

But Christ *did* teach us the right way. What we see here in Galich's words is just boundless intellectual anarchism that muzzles any clear idea, any resolute offer. Well, we can always run as a thoughtless (but *pluralistic*) herd, and probably we'll get somewhere.

Yet the most heartrending and ubiquitous keynote in his lyrics was the sense of Jewish identity and Jewish pain (“Our train leaves for Auschwitz today and every day.”). Other good examples include the poems *By the Rivers of Babylon* and *Kadish*. Or take this: “My six-pointed star, burn it on my sleeve and on my chest.” Similar lyrical and passionate tones can be found in the *The Memory of Odessa* (“I wanted to unite Mandelstam and Chagall.”).

*Your kinsman and your cast-off
Your last singer of the Exodus.*

As he addressed the departing Jews.

The Jewish memory imbued him so deeply that even in his non-Jewish lyrics he casually added expressions such as: “Not a hook-nosed”; “not a Tatar, not a Yid”; “you are still not in Israel, dodderer?” and even Arina Rodionovna Pushkin’s nanny, immortalized by the poet in his works lulls him in Yiddish. Yet he doesn’t mention a single prosperous or non-oppressed Jew, a well-off Jew in a good position, for instance, in a research institute, editorial board, or in commerce — such characters didn’t even make a passing appearance in his poems. A Jew is always either humiliated, or suffering, or imprisoned and dying in a camp. Take his famous lines:

*You are not to be chamberlains, the
Jews ... Neither the Synod, nor the
Senate is for you You belong in
Solovki and Butyrki.*

[the latter two being political prisons]

What a short memory they have — not only Galich, but his whole audience who were sincerely, heartily taking in these sentimental lines! What about those twenty years, when Soviet Jewry was not nearly in the Solovki, when so many of them did parade as chamberlains and in the Senate!?

They have forgotten it. They have sincerely and completely forgotten it. Indeed, it is so difficult to remember bad things about yourself.

And inasmuch as among the successful people milking the régime there were supposedly no Jews left, but only Russians, Galich's satire, unconsciously or consciously, hit the Russians, all those Klim Petroviches and Paramonovs; all that social anger invoked by his songs targeted them, through the stressed "russopyaty" [derogatory term for Russians] images and details, presenting them as informers, prison guards, profligates, fools or drunks. Sometimes it was more like a caricature, sometimes more of a contemptuous pity (which we often indeed deserve, unfortunately):

*Greasy long hair hanging
down,*

*The guest started
"Yermak"*

[A song about the Cossack
leader and Russian folk hero]

*He cackles like a cock
Enough to make a
preacher swear*

*And he wants to chat
About the salvation of
Russia.*

Thus, he pictured the Russians as always drunk, not distinguishing kerosene from vodka, not interested in anything except drinking, idle, or simply lost, or foolish individuals. Yet he was considered a *folk* poet.

And he didn't image a single Russian hero-soldier, workman, or intellectual, not even a single decent camp inmate (he assigned the role of the main camp inmate to himself,) because, you know, all those "prison-guard seed"

camp bosses are Russians. And here he wrote about Russia directly:

*Every liar is a Messiah!
And just dare you to ask
Brothers, had there even been
Any Rus in Russia?
It is abrim with filth.*

And then, desperately:

*But Somewhere, perhaps,
She does exist!?
That invisible Russia,
Where under the tender skies
Everyone shares God's word and bread.
I pray there: Hold on!
Believe in decay, so in thereat, as in Kitezh
I could hear your bells!*

So, with the new opportunity and the lure of emigration, Galich was torn between the submerged Kitezh, a legendary Russian invisible city, and today's filth:

*It's the same vicious circle,
The same old story, the ring,
Which cannot be either closed,
or open!*

He left with the words: "I, a Russian poet, cannot be separated from Russia by the fifth article. [The requirement in the Soviet internal passport - "nationality"]

Yet some other departing Jews drew from his songs a seed of aversion and contempt for Russia, or at least, the confidence that it is right to break away from her. Heed a voice from

Israel: "We said goodbye to Russia. Not without pain, but forever. Russia still holds us tenaciously. But in a year, ten years, a hundred years we'll escape from her and find our own home. Listening to Galich, we once again recognize that it is the right way."

Chapter XXV: Accusing Russia

The Jewish break from the Soviet communism was doubtless a movement of historical significance. In the 1920s and 1930s, the fusion of the Soviet Jewry and Bolshevism seemed permanent. Then suddenly, they diverge? What a joy!

Of course, as is always true for both individuals and nations, it is unreasonable to expect words of remorse from Jews regarding their past involvement. But I absolutely could not expect that the Jews, while deserting Bolshevism, rather than expressing even a sign of repentance or at least some embarrassment, instead angrily turned on the Russian people: it is the Russians who had ruined democracy in Russia (i.e., in February 1917), it is the Russians who are guilty of support of this regime from 1918 on.

Sure, they claim, it is we (the Russian people) who are the guilty! Actually, it was earlier than 1918 – the dirty scenes of the radiant February Revolution were tale-telling. Yet the neophyte anti-communists were uncompromising – from now on everyone must accept that they have always fought against this regime, and no one should recall that it used to be their favorite and should not mention how well they had once served this tyranny. Because it was the “natives” who created, nurtured and cared for it: “The leaders of the October Coup were the followers rather than the leaders.”

Really? The New Iron Party was made up of the “followers?” They simply voiced the dormant wishes of the masses and worked to implement them. They did not break with the grassroots. “The October coup was a disaster for Russia. The country could evolve differently.... Then in the stormy anarchy of the February Revolution Russia saw the

signs of law, freedom and respect for human dignity by the state, but they all were swept away by the people's wrath." Here is a more recent dazzling treatment of Jewish participation in Bolshevism: "The Bolshevism of Lenin and Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party of Bolsheviks was just an intellectual and civilized form of plebian Bolshevism. Should the former fail, the latter, much more dreadful, would prevail." Therefore, "by widely participating in the Bolshevik Revolution, providing it with cadres of intellectuals and organizers, the Jews saved Russia from total mob rule. They came out with the most humane of possible forms of Bolshevism." Alas, "just as the rebellious people had used the Party of Lenin to overthrow the democracy of intellectuals [when did that exist?] the pacified people used Stalin's bureaucracy to get rid of everything still harboring free intellectual spirit."

Sure, sure: the guilt of the intelligentsia for the subsequent dismal events of Russian history is greatly exaggerated. And in the first place, the intelligentsia is liable to itself, and by no means to the people. On the contrary, it would be nice if the people realized their guilt before the intelligentsia. Indeed, the totalitarian rule in its essence and origin is that of the people. This is a totalitarian country because such was the choice of Russian people.

It is all because the "Tatar's wild spirit captured the soul of Orthodox Russia," that is, the "Asian social and spiritual structure, inherited by the Russians from the Mongols is stagnant and incapable of development and progress." (Well, Lev Gumilev also developed a theory that instead of the Tatar yoke, there was a friendly alliance of Russians and Tatars. However, Russian folklore, in its many proverbs referring to Tatars as to enemies and oppressors,

provided an unambiguous answer to that question. Folklore does not lie; it is not pliant like a scientific theory.) Therefore, “the October coup was an unprecedented breakthrough of the Asian essence of Russians.”

For those who want to tear and trample Russian history, Chaadayev is the favorite theoretician (although he is undoubtedly an outstanding thinker.) First samisdat and later émigré publications carefully selected and passionately quoted his published and unpublished texts which suited their purposes. As to the unsuitable quotations and to the fact that the main opponents of Chaadayev among his contemporaries were not Nicholas I and Benckendorff, but his friends – Pushkin, Vyazemsky, Karamzin, and Yazikov – these facts were ignored.

In the early 1970s, the hate against all things Russian was gathering steam. Derogatory expressions about Russian culture entered samisdat and contemporary slang. “Human pigsty” – so much contempt for Russia as being spoiled material was expressed in the anonymous samisdat article signed by “S. Telegin” (G. Kopylov)! Regarding the forest fires of 1972, the same Telegin cursed Russia in a samisdat leaflet: “So, the Russian forests burn? It serves Russia right for all her evil-doing!!”

“The entire people consolidate into the reactionary mass” (G. Pomerants). Take another sincere confession: “The sound of an accordion [the popular Russian national instrument] drives me berserk; the very contact with these masses irritates me.” Indeed, love cannot be forced. “Jews, Jewish destiny is just the rehash of the destiny of intelligentsia in this country, the destiny of her culture; the Jewish orphanage symbolizes loneliness because of the collapse of the traditional faith in the people. What a transformation happened between the 19th and mid-20th

century with the eternal Russian problem of “the people”! By now they view “the people” as an indigenous mass, apathetically satisfied with its existence and its leaders. And by the inscrutable providence of Fate, the Jews were forced to live and suffer in the cities of their country. To love these masses is impossible; to care about them – unnatural. The same Khazanov (by then still in the USSR) reasoned: “The Russia which I love is a Platonic idea that does not exist in reality. The Russia which I see around me is abhorrent. She is a unique kind of Augean stables with her mangy inhabitants. There will come a day of shattering reckoning for all she is today.

Indeed, there will be a day of reckoning, though not for the state of adversity that had fallen on Russia much earlier.

* * *

In the 1960s, many among intelligentsia began to think and talk about the situation in the USSR, about its future and about Russia itself. Due to strict government censorship, these arguments and ideas were mentioned only in private or in mostly pseudonymous samisdat articles. But when Jewish emigration began, the criticisms of Russia openly and venomously spilled across the free Western world, as it formed one of the favorite topics among the émigrés and was voiced so loudly that often nothing else could be heard.

In 1968, Arkady Belinkov fled abroad. He was supposedly a fierce enemy of the Soviet régime and not at all of the Russian people. Wasn't he? Well, consider his article *The Land of Slaves, The Land of Masters* in *The New Bell*, a collection he edited himself. And at what did he direct his

wrath? (It is worth considering that the article was written back in the USSR and the author did not have enough courage to accuse the régime itself.) Belinkov does not use the word *Soviet* even once, instead preferring a familiar theme: eternally enslaved Russia, “freedom for our homeland is worse than gobbling broken glass” and in Russia “they sometimes hang the wrong people, sometimes the wrong way, and never enough.”

Even in the 1820s “it was much evident that in the process of evolution, the population of Russia would turn into a herd of traitors, informers, and torturers. It was the Russian fear to prepare warm clothes and to wait for a knock at the door” – note that even here it was not the “Soviet fear.” (Yet who before the Bolshevik revolution had ever waited for a knock on the door in the middle of the night?) “The court in Russia does not judge, it already knows everything. Therefore, in

Russia, it only condemns.” (Was it like that even during the Alexandrine reforms?

And what about juries and magistrates? Hardly a responsible, balanced judgment!)

Indeed, so overwhelming is the author’s hate and so bitter his bile that he vilifies such great Russian writers as Karamzin, Zhukovsky, Tyutchev and even Pushkin, not to mention Russian society in general for its insufficient revolutionary spirit: “A pathetic society of slaves, descendants of slaves and ancestors of slaves ... the cattle trembling from fear and anger, Rectum-pipers, shuddering at the thought of possible consequences ... the Russian intelligentsia always been willing to help stifle freedom.”

Well, if, for Belinkov, it was all masked anti-Soviet sentiments, a sly wink, then why did he not rewrite it abroad?

If Belinkov actually thought differently, then why print it in this form?

No, that is the way he thought and what he hated.

So was this how dissident Jews repudiated Bolshevism?

Around the same time, at the end of the 1960s, a Jewish collection about the USSR was published in London. It included a letter from the USSR: "In the depths of the inner labyrinths of the Russian soul, there is always a pogromist.... A slave and a thug dwell there too." Belotserkovsky happily repeats someone else's joke: "The Russians are a strong nation, except for their heads. Let all these Russians, and Ukrainians growl drunkenly with their wives, gobble vodka and get happily misled by communist lies without us. They were crawling on all fours worshipping wood and stone when we gave them the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

"Oh, if only you would have held your peace! This would have been regarded as your wisdom." (Job 13:5).

(Let us note that any insulting judgment about the Russian soul in general or about the Russian character generally does not give rise to the slightest protest or doubt among civilized people. The question of daring to judge nations as one uniform and faceless whole does not arise. If someone does not like all things Russian or feels contempt for them, or even expresses in progressive circles the belief that "Russia is a cesspool," this is no sin in Russia and it does not appear reactionary or backward. And no one immediately appeals to presidents, prime ministers, senators, or members of Congress with a reverent cry, "What do you think of such incitement of ethnic hatred?" We've said worse of ourselves since the 19th century and right up to the revolution. We have a rich tradition of this.)

Then we learn of “semi-literate preachers of their religion,” and that “Russian Orthodoxy hasn’t earned the credence of intellectuals” (from Telegin.) The Russians “so easily abandoned the faith of their forefathers, indifferently watched how their temples were destroyed in front of their eyes.” Oh, here is a guess: “Perhaps, the Russian people only temporarily submitted to the power of Christianity?” (That is for 950 years!) “And they only waited for the moment to get rid of it,”— that is, for the revolution? How much ill will must accumulate in someone’s heart to utter something like that!

Even Russian publicists often slipped into this trap of distorted consciousness. The eminent early emigrant journalist S. Rafalsky, perhaps even a priest’s son, wrote that “Orthodox Holy Russia allowed its holy sites to be easily crushed.” Of course, the groans of those mowed down by Chekists’ machine guns during Church riots in 1918 were not heard in Paris. There have been no uprisings since. I would like to have seen this priest’s son try to save the sacred sites in the 1920s himself.

Sometimes it is stated bluntly: “Russian Orthodoxy is a Hottentot religion.” (Grobman). Or, “idiocy perfumed by Rublev, Dionysius and Berdyaev”; the idea of the restoration”of traditional Russian historical orthodoxy “scares many.... This is the darkest future possible for the country and for Christianity.” Or, as novelist F. Gorenshtein said: “Jesus Christ was the Honorary Chairman of the Union of the Russian People [pre-revolutionary Russian Nationalist organization], whom they perceived as a kind of universal ataman [Cossack chieftain].” Don’t make it too sharp – you might chip the blade!

However, one must distinguish from such open rudeness that velvet-soft samisdat philosopher-essayist

Grigory Pomerants who worked in those years. Presumably, he rose above all controversies – he wrote about the fates of nations in general, about the fate of the intelligentsia generally; he suggested that nowadays no such thing as the people exists, save perhaps Bushmen.

I read him in 1960s samisdat saying: “The people are becoming more and more vapid broth and only we, the intelligentsia, remain the salt of the earth ... Solidarity of the intelligentsia across the borders is a more real thing than the solidarity of the intelligentsia and its people.”

It sounded very modern and wise. And yet, in Czechoslovakia in 1968 it was precisely the unity of the intelligentsia with the “vapid broth” of its non-existent people that created a spiritual stronghold long unheard of in Europe. The presence of two-thirds of a million Soviet troops couldn't break their spirit; it was their communist leaders who eventually gave in. And 12 years later, the same thing happened in Poland.

In his typically ambiguous manner of constructing endless parallel arguments that never merge into a clear logical construct, Pomerants never explicitly addressed the national question. He extensively dwelt on the Diaspora question, in the most abstract and general manner, not specifying any nation, hovering aloft in relativism and agnosticism. He glorified the Diaspora:

“Everywhere, we are not exactly strangers. Everywhere, we are not exactly natives ... An appeal to one faith, tradition and nation flies in the face of another.” He complained: “According to the rules established for the Warsaw students, one can love only one nation, but what if I am related by blood to this country, but love others as well?”

This is a sophisticated bait-and-switch. Of course, you can love not only one, but ten or more countries and

nations. However, you can belong to and be a son of only one motherland, just as you can only have one mother.

To make the subject clearer, I want to describe the letter exchange I had with the Pomerants couple in 1967. By that year, my banned novel *The First Circle* circulated among the samisdat – and among the first who had sent me their objections were G. S. Pomerants and his wife, Z. A. Mirkin. They said that I hurt them by my inept and faulty handling of the Jewish question, and that I had irreparably damaged the image of Jews in the novel – and thus my own image. How did I damage it? I thought I had managed to avoid showing those cruel Jews who reached the heights of power during the early Soviet years. But Pomerants' letters abounded with undertones and nuances, and they accused me of insensitivity to Jewish pain.

I replied to them, and they replied to me. In these letters we also discussed the right to judge entire nations, even though I had done no such thing in my novel.

Pomerants suggested to me then – and to every writer in general as well as to anyone who offers any personal, psychological or social judgment – that we should behave and reason as if no nation has ever existed in the world, not only to abstain from judging them as a whole but to ignore every man's nationality. What is natural and excusable for Ivan Denisovich (to see Cesar Markovich as a non-Russian) – is a disgrace for an intellectual, and for a Christian (not a baptized person but a

Christian) is a great sin: “There is no Hellene and no Jew for me.”

What an elevated point of view. May God help us all reach it one day. After all, without it, would not the meaning of united humanity, and so Christinaity, have been useless?

Yet we have already been aggressively convinced once that there are no nations, and were instructed to quickly destroy our own, and we madly did it back then. In addition, regardless of the argument, how can we portray specific people without referring to their nationality? And if there are no nations, are there no languages? But no writer can write in any language other than his native one. If nations would wither away, languages would die also.

One cannot eat from an empty bowl.

I noticed that it was more often Jews than any others who insisted that we pay no attention to nationality! What does nationality have to do with anything? What national characteristics, what national character are you talking about?

And I was ready to shake hands on that: “I agree! Let’s ignore it from now on....”

But we live in our unfortunate century, when perhaps the first feature people notice in others for some reason is exactly their nationality. And I swear, Jews are the ones who distinguish and closely monitor it most jealously and carefully. Their own nation....

Then, what should we do with the fact – you have read about it above – that Jews so often judge Russians precisely in generalized terms, and almost always to condemn? The same

Pomerants writes about “the pathological features of the Russian character,” including their “internal instability.” And he is not concerned that he judges the entire nation. Imagine if someone spoke of “pathological features of the Jewish character?” What would happen then?

The Russian “masses” allowed all the horrors of Oprichnina to happen just as they later allowed Stalin’s death camps. (See, the Soviet internationalist bureaucratic élite

would have stopped them if not for this dull mas.) More sharply still, “Russian Nationalism will inevitably end in an aggressive pogrom,” meaning that every Russian who loves his nation already has the potential for being a pogromist.

We can but repeat the words of that Chekhov character: “Too early!”

Most remarkable was how Pomerants’s second letter to me ended. Despite his previously having so insistently demanded that it is not proper to distinguish between nations, in that large and emotionally charged letter, (written in a very angry, heavy hand), he delivered an ultimatum on how I could still save my disgusting *The First Circle*. The offered remedy was this: to turn Gerasimovich [the hero] into a Jew! So a Jew would commit the novel’s greatest act of spiritual heroism! “It is absolutely not important that Gerasimovich had been drawn from a Russian prototype,” says our indifferent-to-nations author (*italics added*). In truth, he did give me an alternative: if I still insisted on leaving Gerasimovich Russian, then I must add an equally powerful image of a noble, self-sacrificing Jew to my story. And if I would not follow any of his advice, Pomerants threatened to open a public campaign against me. (I ignored it at this point.)

Notably, he conducted this one-sided battle (calling it “our polemic”) first in foreign journals, and when it became possible in the Soviet magazines, often repeating and reprinting the same articles, although taking care each time to exorcise the blemishes his critics had picked up the last time. In the course of this he uttered another pearl of wisdom: there was only one Absolute Evil in the world and it was Hitlerism – in this regard, our philosopher was not a relativist, not at all. But as to communism, this former prisoner of the camps and by no means a communist himself,

suddenly proclaims that communism is *not* an unquestionable evil (and even “some spirit of democracy surrounded the early Cheka”) and he does so harder and harder over the years, reacting to my intransigence towards communism. On the other hand, hard core anticommunism is undoubtedly evil, especially if it builds upon the Russian nationalism (which, as he had reminded us earlier, cannot be separated from pogroms.)

That is where Pomerants’s smooth high-minded and “non-national” principles led. Given such a skewed bias, can mutual understanding between Russians and Jews be achieved?

“You mark the speck in your brother’s eye, but ignore the plank in your own.”

In those same months when I corresponded with Pomerants, some liberal hand in the Leningrad Regional Party Committee copied a secret memorandum signed by Shcherbakov, Smirnov, and Utekhin on the matter of alleged “destructive Zionist activity in the city” with “subtle forms of ideological subversion.” My Jewish friends asked me “How should we deal with this?”

“It is clear, how,” I replied before even reading the paper. Openness! Publish it in *samisdat*! Our strength is transparency and publicity! But my friends hesitated: “We cannot do it just like that because it would be misunderstood.”

After reading the documents, I understood their anxiety. From the reports, it was clear that the youth’s literary evening at the Writers’ House on January 30, 1968 had been politically honest and brave – the government with its politics and ideology had been both openly and covertly ridiculed. On the other hand, the speeches had clear national emphases (perhaps, the youth there were mostly Jewish);

they contained explicit resentment and hostility, and even perhaps contempt for Russians and longing for Jewish spirituality. It was because of this that my friends were wary of publishing the document in samisdat.

I was suddenly struck by how true these Jewish sentiments were. “Russia is reflected in the window glass of a beer stand,” the poet Ufland had supposedly said there. How horrifyingly true! It seemed that the speakers accused the Russians, not directly but by allusions, of crawling under counters of beer pubs and of being dragged from the mud by their wives; that they drink vodka until unconscious, they squabble and steal....

We must see ourselves objectively, see our fatal shortcomings. Suddenly, I grasped the Jewish point of view; I looked around and I was horrified as well: Dear God, where we, the Jews? Cards, dominoes, gazing at TV? What cattle, what animals surround us! They have neither God nor spiritual interests. And so much feeling of hurt from past oppression rises in your soul.

Only it is forgotten that the real Russians were killed, slaughtered and suppressed, and the rest were stupefied, embittered, and driven to the extremes by Bolshevik thugs, and not without the zealous participation of the fathers of today’s young Jewish intellectuals. Modern-day Jews are irritated by those mugs who have become the Soviet leadership since the 1940s, but they irritate us as well. However, the best among us were killed, not spared.

“Do not look back!” – Pomerants lectured us later in his samisdat essays; do not look back like Orpheus who lost Eurydice this way.

Yet we have already lost more than Eurydice. We were taught since the 1920s to throw away the past and jump

on board modernity. But the old Russian proverb advises – go ahead but always look back.

We must look back. Otherwise, we would never understand anything.

* * *

Even if we had tried not to look back, we would always be reminded that the core Russian issue is in fact the inferiority complex of the spiritless leaders of the people that has persisted throughout its long history, and this very complex pushed the Russian Czarist government towards military conquests. An inferiority complex is disease of mediocrity. Do you want to know why the Revolution of 1917 happened in Russia? Can you guess? Yes, the same inferiority complex caused a revolution in Russia. (Oh, immortal Freud, is there nothing he hasn't explained?)

They even stated that Russian socialism was a direct heir of Russian autocracy – precisely a direct one, it goes without saying. And, almost in unison, “there is direct continuity between the Czarist government and communism ... there is qualitative similarity. What else could you expect from Russian history, founded on blood and provocations?”

In a review of Agursky's interesting book, *Ideology of National Bolshevism*, we find that “in reality, traditional, fundamental ideas of the Russian national consciousness began to penetrate into the practice and ideology of the ruling party very early. The party ideology was transformed as early as the mid-1920s.”

Really? Already in the mid-1920s? How come we missed it at the time? Wasn't it the same mid-1920s when the very words “Russian,” and “I am Russian” had been

considered counterrevolutionary? I remember it well. But, you see, even back then, in the midst of persecution against all that was Russian and Orthodox, the party ideology “began in practice to be persistently guided by the national idea; outwardly preserving its internationalist disguise, Soviet authorities actually engaged in the consolidation of the Russian state.” Of course!

“Contrary to its internationalist declarations, the revolution in Russia has remained a national affair. This Russia, upturned by revolution, continued to build the people’s state.”

People’s state? How dare they say that, knowing of the Red Terror, of the millions of peasants killed during collectivization, and of the insatiable GULAG?

No, Russia is irrevocably condemned for all her history and in all her forms. Russia is always under suspicion, the Russian idea without anti-Semitism seems to be no longer an idea and not even the Russian one. Indeed, “hostility towards culture is a specific Russian phenomenon; how many times have we heard that they are supposedly the only ones in the whole world who have preserved purity and chastity, respecting God in the middle of their native wilderness?” The greatest soulful sincerity has supposedly found shelter in this crippled land. This soulful sincerity is being presented to us as a kind of national treasure, a unique product like caviar.

Yes, make fun of us Russians; it is for our own good. Unfortunately, there is some truth to these words. But while expressing them, do not lapse into such hatred. Having long been aware of the terrifying decline of our nation under the communists, it was precisely during those 1970s that we gingerly wrote about a hope of revival of our morals and culture. But strangely enough, the contemporary Jewish

authors attacked the idea of Russian revival with a relentless fury, as if (or because?) they feared that Soviet culture would be replaced by the Russian one. “I am afraid that the new dawn of this doomed country would be even more repugnant than its current [1970-1980s] decline.”

Looking back from the “democratic” 1990s, we can agree that it was a prophetic declaration. Still, was it said with compassion or with malice?

And here is even more: “Beware, when someone tells you to love your homeland: such love is charged with hatred.... Beware of stories that tell you that in Russia, Russians are the worst off, that Russians suffered the most, and that the Russian population is dwindling” – sure, as we all know, this is a lie! “Be careful when someone tells you about that great statesman ... who was assassinated.” (i.e. Stolypin) Is that also a deception? No, it is not a deception: “Not because the facts are incorrect” – nevertheless, do not accept even these true facts: “Be careful, be aware!”

There is something extraordinary in this stream of passionate accusations. Who would have guessed during the fiery 1920s that after the enfeeblement and downfall of that “beautiful” (i.e., communist) regime in Russia, those Jews, who themselves had suffered much from communism, who seemingly cursed it and ran away from it, would curse and kick not communism, but Russia itself – blast her from Israel and from Europe, and from across the ocean? There are so many, such confident voices ready to judge Russia’s many crimes and failings, her inexhaustible guilt towards the Jews – and they so sincerely believe this guilt to be inexhaustible almost all of them believe it! Meanwhile, their own people are coyly cleared of any responsibility for their participation in Cheka shootings, for sinking the barges and their doomed human cargo in the White and Caspian seas, for their role in

collectivization, the Ukrainian famine and in all the abominations of the Soviet administration, for their talented zeal in brainwashing the “natives.” This is not contrition. We, brothers or strangers, need to share that responsibility.

It would have been cleanest and healthiest to exchange
contrition for everything committed.

I will not stop calling on the Russians to do that. And I am inviting the Jews to do the same. To repent not for Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev; they are known and anyway can be brushed aside, with “they were not real Jews!” Instead, I invite Jews to look honestly into the oppressive depths of the early Soviet system, at all those “invisible” characters such as Isai Davidovich Berg, who created the infamous gas wagon which later brought so much affliction on the Jews themselves, and I call on them to look honestly on those many much more obscure bureaucrats who had pushed papers in the Soviet apparatus, and who had never appeared in light.

However, the Jews would not be Jews if they all behaved the same. So other voices were heard.

As soon as the great exodus of Jews from the USSR began there were Jews who – fortunately for all, and to their honor – while remaining faithful to Judaism, went above their own feelings and looked at history from that vantage point. It was a joy to hear them, and we hear them still. What hope for the future it gives! Their understanding and support are especially valuable in the face of the violently thinned and drastically depleted ranks of Russian intelligentsia.

A melancholy view, expressed at end of 19th century, comes to mind: “Every country deserves the Jews it has.”

It depends where you look.

If it were not for voices from the third wave of emigration and from Israel, one would despair of dialogue

and of possibility for mutual understanding between Russians and Jews. Roman Rutman, a cybernetics worker, had his first article published in the émigré samisdat in 1973. It was a bright, warm story of how he first decided to emigrate and how it turned out – and even then he showed distinct warmth towards Russia. The title was illustrative: “A bow to those who has gone and my brotherhood to those who remain.” Among his very first thoughts during his awakening was “Are we Jews or Russians?”; and among his thoughts on departure there was “Russia, crucified for mankind.”

Next year, in 1974, in an article *The Ring of Grievances*, he proposed to revise some established ideas on the Jewish question and “to recognize the risk of overemphasizing these ideas. There were three:

(1) “The unusual fate of the Jewish people made them a symbol of human suffering”;

(2) “A Jew in Russia has always been a victim of unilateral persecution”; and (3) “Russian society is indebted to the Jewish people.” He quoted a phrase from *The Gulag Archipelago*: “During this war we discovered that the worst thing on earth is to be a Russian,” and recognized that the phrase is not artificial or empty, that it is based on war losses, on the revolutionary terror before that, on hunger, on the wanton destruction of both the nation’s head – its cognitive élite, and its feet, the peasantry. Although modern Russian literature and democratic movements preach about the guilt of Russian society before Jews, the author himself prefers to see the circle of grievances instead of the saccharine sentimentality about the troubles and talents of the Jewish people. To break this circle of grievances one must pull at it from both sides.

Here it is – a thoughtful, friendly and calm voice.

And over these years, we many times heard the firm voice of Michael Kheifetz, a recent GULAG prisoner. “A champion of my people, I cannot but sympathize with the nationalists of other peoples.” He had the courage to call for Jewish repentance: “The experience of the German people, who have not turned away from their horrifying and criminal past, and who never tried to lay the blame for Nazism on some other culprits, on strangers, etc. but, instead constantly cleansed itself in the fire of national repentance, and thus created a German state that for the first time was admired and respected by all mankind; this experience should, in my opinion, become a paragon for the peoples that participated in the crimes of Bolshevism, including the Jews. We Jews must honestly analyze the role we played in other nations’ affairs, the role so extraordinarily foretold by Z. Jabotinsky.” M. Kheifetz demonstrated a truly noble soul when he spoke of “the genuine guilt of assimilated Jews before the native peoples of those countries where they live, the guilt, which cannot and must not allow them to live comfortably in the Diaspora.” About Soviet Jewry of the 1920s and 1930s he said: “Who if not us, their bitterly remorseful descendants, has the right to condemn them for this historic mistake [zealous participation in building communism] and the settling of historical scores with Russia for the Pale of Settlement and the pogroms?” (Kheifetz also mentioned that B. Penson and M. Korenblit, who had served labor camp terms along with him, shared his views.) Almost simultaneously with the words of Kheifetz, by then already an emigrant, Feliks Svetov vividly called out for Jewish repentance from inside the Soviet Union in a samisdat novel *Open The Doors To Me*. It was no accident that F. Svetov, due to his Jewish perceptivity and intelligence, was one of

the first to recognize the beginning of Russian religious revival.

Later, during a passionate discourse surrounding the dispute between Astafiev and Edelman, Yuri Shtein described “our Ashkenazi-specific personality traits, formed on the basis of our belief of belonging to the chosen people and an insular, small town mentality. Hence, there is a belief in the infallibility of our nation and our claim to a monopoly on suffering. It is time for us to see ourselves as a normal nation, worthy but not faultless, like all the other peoples of the world. Especially now, that we have our own independent state and have already proved to the world that Jews can fight and plow better than some more populous ethnic groups.”

During the left liberal campaign against V. Astafiev, V. Belov, and V. Rasputin, literary historian Maria Shneyerson, who after emigrating continued to love Russia dearly and appreciate Russian problems, offered these writers her enthusiastic support.

In the 1970s, a serious, competent, and forewarning book on the destruction of the environment in the USSR under communism was published in the West. Written by a Soviet author, it was naturally published under a pseudonym, B. Komarov. After some time, the author emigrated and we learned his name – Zeev Wolfson. We discovered even more: that he was among the compilers of the album of destroyed and desecrated churches in Central Russia.

Few active intellectuals remained in the defeated Russia, but friendly, sympathetic Jewish forces supported them. With this shortage of people and under the most severe persecution by the authorities, our Russian Public Foundation was established to help victims of persecution; I

donated all my royalties for *The Gulag Archipelago* to this fund; and, starting with its first talented and dedicated manager, Alexander Ginzburg, there were many Jews and half-Jews among the Fund's volunteers. (This gave certain intellectually blind extreme Russian nationalists sufficient reason to brand our Foundation as being "Jewish.")

Similarly, M. Bernshtam, then Y. Felshtinsky and D.Shturman were involved in our study of modern Russian history.

In the fight against communist lies, M. Agursky, D.Shturman, A. Nekrich, M. Geller, and A. Serebrennikov distinguished themselves by their brilliant, fresh, and fair-minded journalism. We can also recall the heroism of the American professor Julius Epstein and his service to Russia. In self-centered, always self-righteous, and never regretful of any wrongdoings America, he single-handedly revealed the mystery of Operation Keelhaul, how after the end of the war and from their own continent, Americans handed over to Stalinist agents and therefore certain death hundreds and thousands of Russian Cossacks, who had naively believed that since they reached the "land of the free they had been saved.

All these examples should encourage sincere and mutual understanding between Russians and Jews, if only we would not shut it out by intolerance and anger.

Alas, even the mildest remembrance, repentance, and talk of justice elicits severe outcries from the self-appointed guardians of extreme nationalism, both Russian and Jewish. "As soon as Solzhenitsyn had called for national repentance" – meaning among Russians, and the author didn't mind that – "here we are! Our own people are right there in the front line." He did not mention any name specifically but he

probably referred to M. Kheifetz. “See, it turns out that we are more to blame, we helped to install ... no, not helped, but simply established the Soviet régime ourselves. We were disproportionately present in various organs.”

Those who began to speak in a voice of remorse were furiously attacked in an instant. “They prefer to extract from their hurrah-patriotic gut a mouthful of saliva” – what a style and nobility of expression! – “and to thoroughly spit on all ancestors, to curse Trotsky and Bagritsky, Kogan, and Dunaevsky.” “M. Kheifetz invites us to purge ourselves in the fire of national repentance.”

And what a thrashing F. Svetov received for the autobiographical hero of his novel: “A book about conversion to Christianity will contribute not to an abstract search for repentance, but to a very specific anti-Semitism. This book is anti-Semitic.” Yes, and what is there to repent? the indefatigable David Markish angrily exclaims. Svetov’s hero sees a betrayal in the fact that “we desert the country, leaving behind a deplorable condition which is entirely our handiwork: it is we, as it turns out, who staged a bloody revolution, shot the father-czar, befouled and raped the Orthodox Church and in addition, founded the GULAG Archipelago,” isn’t that right? First, these comrades Trotsky, Sverdlov, Berman, and Frenkel are not at all related to the Jews. Second, the very question about someone’s collective guilt is wrong. (As to blaming Russians, you see, it is a different thing altogether: it was always acceptable to blame them *en masse*, from the times of the elder Philotheus.)

David’s brother, Sh. Markish reasons as follows, “as to the latest wave of immigrants from Russia, whether in Israel or in the U.S., they do not exhibit real Russophobia, but a selfhatred that grows into direct anti-Semitism is obvious in them only too often.”

See, if Jews repent – it is anti-Semitism. (This is yet another new manifestation of that prejudice.)

“The Russians should realize their national guilt. The idea of national repentance cannot be implemented without a clear understanding of national guilt. The guilt is enormous, and there is no way to shift it on to others. This guilt is not only about the things of past, it is also about the vile things Russia commits now, and will probably continue committing in the future,” as Shragin wrote in the early 1970s.

Well, we too tirelessly call the Russians to repent; without penitence, we will not have a future. After all, only those who were directly affected by communism recognized its evils. Those who were not affected tried not to notice the atrocities and later on to forget and forgive them, to the extent that now they do not even understand what to repent of. (Even more so those who themselves committed the crimes.)

Every day we are burning with shame for our unsettled people.

And we love it too. And we do not envision our lives without it.

And yet, for some reason, we have not lost all faith in it.

Still, is it absolutely certain that you had no part in our great guilt, in our unsuccessful history? Here, Shimon Markish referred to Jabotinsky’s 1920s article. “Jabotinsky several times on different occasions observed that Russia is a foreign country to us, our interest in her should be detached, cool, though sympathetic; her anxiety, grief and joy are not ours, and our feelings are foreign to her too.” Markish added: “That’s also my attitude towards Russian worries.” And he invites us to “call a spade a spade. However, regarding this delicate point even free western

Russians are not awesomely courageous.... I prefer to deal with enemies.”

Yet this sentence should be divided into two: is it the case that to call a spade a spade and to speak frankly mean being an enemy? Well, there is a Russian proverb: do not love the agreeable; love the disputers.

I invite all, including Jews, to abandon this fear of bluntness, to stop perceiving honesty as hostility. We must abandon it historically! Abandon it forever!

In this book, I call a spade a spade. And at no time do I feel that in doing so it is being hostile to the Jews. I have written more sympathetically than many Jews write about Russians.

The purpose of this book, reflected even in its title, is this: we should understand each other, we should recognize each other’s standpoint and feelings. With this book, I want to extend a handshake of understanding – for all our future. But we must do so mutually!

This interweaving of Jewish and Russian destinies since the 18th century which has so explosively manifested itself in the 20th century, has a profound historical meaning, and we should not lose it in the future. Here, perhaps, lies the Divine Intent which we must strive to unravel – to discern its mystery and to do what must be done.

And it seems obvious that to know the truth about our shared past is a moral imperative for Jews and Russians alike.

Chapter XXVI: The Beginning of Exodus

The Age of Exodus, as Jews themselves would soon name it, began rather silently. Its start can be traced to a December 1966 article in *Izvestia*, where the Soviet authorities magnanimously approved “family reunification,” and under this banner the Jews were given the right to leave the USSR. And then, half a year later, the historic Six-Day War broke out. Like any epic, this Exodus began with a miracle. And as it should be in an epic, three miracles were revealed to the Jews of Russia – to the Exodus generation: the miracle of the foundation of Israel, “the miracle of the Purim 1953” (that is, Stalin’s death), and the miracle of the joyous, brilliant, intoxicating victory of 1967. The Six-Day War gave a strong and irreversible push to the ethnic consciousness of the Soviet Jews and delivered a blow to the desire of many to assimilate. It created among Jews a powerful motivation for national self-education and the study of Hebrew (within a framework of makeshift centers) and gave rise to pro-emigration attitudes.

How did the majority of Soviet Jews perceive themselves by the end of the 1960s, on the eve of Exodus? No, those who retrospectively write of a constant feeling of oppression and stress do not distort their memories: “Hearing the word *Jew*, they cringe, as if expecting a blow. They themselves use this sacramental word as rarely as possible, and when they do have to say it, they force the word out as quickly as possible and in a suppressed voice, as if they were seized by the throat. Among such people there are those who are gripped by the eternal incurable fear ingrained in their mentality.” Or take a Jewish author who wrote of spending her entire professional life worrying that her work would be rejected only because of her nationality. Despite having an

apparently higher standard of living than the general population, many Jews still harbored this sense of oppression.

Indeed, cultivated Jews complained more of cultural rather than economic oppression. Dora Shturman wrote: “The Soviet Jews are trying to retain their presence in the Russian culture. They struggle to retain the Russian culture in their inner selves. When the Russian Jews, whose interests are chained to Russia, are suddenly deprived – even if only on paper or in words – of their right to engage in the Russian life, to participate in the Russian history, as if they were interlopers or strangers, they feel offended and bewildered. With the appearance of Tamisdat [a Russian neologism for dissident self-published (samisdat) literature, published outside the USSR, from the Russian word, ‘tam’, meaning ‘there’ or ‘out there’) and samisdat, the xenophobia felt by some Russian authors toward Jews who sincerely identified themselves as Russians manifested itself for the first time in many years, not only on the street level and on the level of state bureaucracy, but appeared on the élite intellectual level, even among dissidents. Naturally, this surprised Jews who identified with Russians. Galich: “Many people brought up in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s used to regard themselves as Russians from their earliest years, in fact from birth, and indeed they share all their values and thoughts with the Russian culture.”

Another author drew the portrait of “the average modern Russian Jew,” who “would serve this country with good faith and fidelity. He had carefully examined and identified his own flaws. He had become aware of them, and now he tries to get rid of them. He has stopped arms flourishing. (?) He has gotten rid of his national peculiarities of speech which were carried over into Russian, At some

point he would aspire to become equal with the Russians, to be indistinguishable from them.” And so: “You might not hear the word ‘Jew’ for years on end. Perhaps, many have even forgotten that you are a Jew. Yet you can never forget it yourself. It is this silence that always reminds you who you are. It creates such an explosive tension inside you, that when you do hear the word ‘Jew,’ it sounds like fate’s blow.”

This is a very telling account. The same author describes the cost of this transformation into a Russian. “He had left behind too much” and become spiritually impoverished. “Now, when he needs those capacious, rich and flexible words, he can’t find them. When he looks for but can’t find the right word, something dies inside him,” he had lost “the melodic intonation of Jewish speech” with all its “gaiety, playfulness, mirth, tenacity, and irony.”

Of course, these exquisite feelings did not worry each Soviet Jew; it was the lot of the tiniest minority among them, the top cultural stratum, those who genuinely and persistently tried to identify with Russians. It was them who G. Pomeranz spoke about (though he made a generalization for the whole intelligentsia): “Everywhere, we are not quite out of place. Everywhere, we are not quite in our place. We have become something like non-Israeli Jews, the people of the air, who lost all their roots in their mundane existence.” Very well put.

A. Voronel develops the same theme: “I clearly see all the sham of their [Jews’] existence in Russia today.”

If there’s no merging, there will always be alienation. Nathan Sharansky often mentioned that from a certain point he started to feel being different from the others in Russia. During the Dymshits–Kuznetsov hijacking affair trial in December 1970, L. Hnosh openly stated what he had apparently nurtured for quite a while: “It became unbearable for me to live in a country I don’t regard as my own.”

What integrity of mind and courage of word!

So it was this feeling that grew among the Soviet Jews, and now increasingly among the broad Jewish masses. Later, in 1982, another Jewish journalist put it like this: “I am a stranger. I am a stranger in my own country which I love abstractly but fear in reality.”

In the beginning of the 1970s, in a conversation with L.K. Chukovskaya she told me (I made a note at the time): “This Exodus was forced on Jewry. I pity those whom the Russians made feel Jewish. The Soviet Jews have already lost their sense of Jewishness and I consider this artificial awakening of their national sense to be specious.”

This was far from the truth. Despite the fact that she socialized with many Jews from both capitals, Chukovskaya was mistaken. This Jewish national awakening was not artificial or forced; it was an absolutely natural and even necessary milestone of Jewish history. It was the sudden realization that “one can say ‘Jew’ proudly!”

Another Jewish publicist reflected on the experience of his generation of young people in the USSR: “So what are we – the grandchildren and heirs of that cruel experiment, who broke through the shell and hatched here in Israel – what are we to say about our fathers and grandfathers? Should we blame them that they didn’t raise us in Jewish way? Yet our very sense of Jewishness was in great part the result of their (as well as our) failures, catastrophes and despair. So let us appreciate this past. Is it up to us to throw stones at the shattered skulls of the romantics of yesterday?”

This sincerely and honestly expressed intergenerational connection to the fathers and grandfathers, who were so enthusiastic in the early Soviet years, greatly supplements the whole picture. (You can read between the

lines the author's rejection of the benefits and advantages of the new class that has replaced those 'romantics.')

A samisdat article properly pointed out: "The opinion that the current rise in Jewish ethnic consciousness among assimilated Soviet Jews is just a reaction to the re-emergence of anti-

Semitism seems deeply mistaken. What we have here is more likely a coincidence."

Different contemporaries described the development of their Jewish self-identification somewhat differently. Some wrote that "nearly everyone agreed that nothing was happening in the 1960s" in the sense of national revival, though "after the war of 1967 things began to change." Yet it was the plane hijacking incident that led to the breakthrough. Others suggest that Jewish groups were already forming in the mid-1960s in Leningrad, Moscow, and Riga, and that by the end of the decade a Jewish underground center was established in Leningrad. Yet what kind of conspiracy could it be? Makeshift centers to study Hebrew and Jewish history were formed, and not really for study of Hebrew, but rather for the socialization of people who wished to study it. The actual language usually was learnt not beyond two to three hundred words. As a rule, all participants were state functionaries, and, like their entire milieu, far removed from the Jewish religion and national traditions alike.

The Jews of the 1960s had only a vague conception of Zionism. And yet, "we felt ourselves to be sufficiently Jewish, and saw no need whatsoever for any sort of additional Jewish educational remedy." In response to the barrage of anti-Israeli propaganda, the inner sympathy towards Jewry and to Israel grew. "Even if we were told then that Israel had abandoned Judaism, it would make no

difference for us.” And then the movement began to transform from an underground to a mass, open parlour phenomenon. Still, then nobody believed in the possibility of emigration, at least in our time, yet everyone considered a quite real possibility of ending up in a camp. Alas, it is too short a step from conspiracy to devilry. I saw this in the Jewish movement of the 1970s, after the trials in Leningrad.

Thus, the return to Jewish culture started and continued without counting on emigration and initially did not affect the everyday life of the participants. I’m not sure that Aliyah [return to Israel] began because of Zionists, as those first Zionist groups were too weak for this. To a certain extent, it was the Soviet government that triggered the process by raising a tremendous noise around the Six-Day War. The Soviet press painted the image of a warlike invincible Jew, and this image successfully offset the inferiority complex of the Soviet Jews.

But “hide your ‘Judaic terror’ from your co-workers’ eyes, from your neighbors’ ears!” At first, there was a deep fear: “these scraps of paper, bearing your contact details, were as if you were signing a sentence for yourself, for your children, for your relatives.” Yet soon “we ceased whispering, we began to speak aloud, to prepare and celebrate the Jewish holidays and study history and Hebrew.” And already from the end of 1969 the Jews by the tens and hundreds began signing open letters to the public abroad. They demanded to be “released” to Israel. Soviet Jewry, separated from world Jewry, trapped in the melting pot of the despotic Stalinist empire was seemingly irredeemably lost for Jewry – and yet suddenly the Zionist movement was reborn and the ancient Moses’ appeal trumpeted again: “Let my people go!”

In 1970 the whole world began to talk about Russian Jews. They rose, they became determined. There is only one barrier separating them from their dream – the barrier of governmental prohibition. To break through, to breach it, to fly through it was their only wish. “Flee from Northern Babylon!” was the behest of the arrested plane hijackers, the group led by E. Kuznetsov and M. Dymshits. In December 1970 during their trial in Leningrad they weren’t silent, they didn’t evade, they openly declared that they wanted to steal a plane to fly it across the border to Israel. Remember, they faced the death sentence! Their confessions were in essence the declarations of Zionism. A few months later in May 1971, there was a trial of the Zionist organizations of Leningrad, soon followed by similar trials in Riga and Kishinev.

These trials, especially the two Leningrad trials, became the new powerful stimulus for the development of the Jewish ethnic consciousness. A new samisdat journal, *The Jews in the USSR*, began to circulate soon afterwards, in October 1972. It vividly reported on the struggle for the legalization of emigration to Israel and covered the struggle for the right to freely develop Jewish culture in the USSR.

But even at this point only a minority of Jews were involved in the nascent emigration movement. It seems that the life was easier for the Soviet Jews when they knew that they had no choice, that they only could persevere and adapt, than now, when they’ve got a choice of where to live and what to do. The first wave that fled from Russia at the end of the 1960s was motivated only by the goal of spending the rest of their lives in the only country without anti-Semitism, Israel. (This does not include those who emigrated for personal enrichment.)

And a part of Soviet Jewry would have happily repudiated their national identity, if they were allowed to do so – so scared they were. This section included those Jews who cursed “that Israel,” claiming that it is because of Israel that law-abiding Jews are often being prevented from career advancement: “Because of those leaving, we too will suffer.”

The Soviet government could not but be alarmed by this unexpected (for them as for the whole world) awakening of ethnic consciousness among Soviet Jews. It stepped up propaganda efforts against Israel and Zionism, to scare away the newly conscious. In March 1970 it made use of that well-worn Soviet trick, to get the denunciation from the mouths of the people themselves, in this case from the people of Jewish nationality.

So the authorities staged a denunciatory public press-conference and it was dutifully attended not only by the most hypocritical “official Jews” such as Vergelis, Dragunsky, Chakovsky, Bezymensky, Dolmatovsky, the film director Donsky, the propagandists Mitin and Mintz, but also by prominent people who could easily refuse to participate in the spectacle and in signing the Declaration without significant repercussions for themselves. Among the latter were: Byalik: the members of Academy, Frumkin and Kassirsky: the internationally renowned musicians, Fliyer and Zak; the actors, Plisetskaya, Bystritskaya, and Pluchek. But sign it they did. The Declaration heaped scorn on the aggression carried by the Israeli ruling circles which “resurrects the barbarism of the Hitlerites. Zionism has always been an expression of the chauvinist views of the Jewish bourgeois and its Jewish raving”; and the signatories intend “to open the eyes of the gullible victims of Zionist propaganda. Under the guidance of the Leninist party, working Jews have gained full freedom from the hated

Czarism.” Amazing! See who was the real oppressor? The one already dead for half a century?

But times had changed by this point. The “official Jews” were publicly rebuked by I. Zilberberg, a young engineer who had decided to irrevocably cut ties with this country and leave.

He circulated an open letter in response to the Declaration in samizdat, calling its signatories

“lackey souls”, and repudiated his former faith in communism: “We naively placed our hopes in ‘our’ Jews – the Kaganovichs, the Ehenburgs, etc.” (So, after all, they had once indeed placed their hopes there?) At the same time he criticised Russians: after the 1950s, “Did Russians repent and were they contrite? And after spilling a meagre few tears about the past, did they swear love and commitment to their new-found brothers?”

In his mind there was no doubt that Russian guilt against Jews was entirely one-sided. Such events continued. Another samizdat open letter became famous a year later, this one by the hitherto successful film director Mikhail Kalik, who had now been expelled from the Union of Soviet filmmakers because he declared his intention to leave for Israel. Kalik unexpectedly addressed a letter about his loyalty to Jewish culture to the Russian intelligentsia. It looked as if he had spent his life in the USSR not among the successful, but had suffered for years among the oppressed, striving for freedom. And now, leaving, he lectured this sluggish Russian intelligentsia from the moral high ground of his victimhood. “So you will stay with your silence, with your obedient enthusiasm? Who then will take care for the moral health of the nation, the country, the society?”

Six months later there was another open letter, this time from the Soviet writer Grigory Svirsky. He was driven

to this by the fact that he hadn't been published for several years and even his name had been removed from the *Encyclopaedia of Literature* in punishment for speaking out against anti-Semitism at the Central Literary House in 1968. This punishment he termed "murder," with understandable fire, though he forgot to glance back and to see how many others suffered in this regard.

"I do not know how to live from now on," he wrote to the Union of Writers. (This was a sentiment common to all 6,000 members of the union: they all believed that the government was bound to feed them for their literary work). These were "the reasons which made me, a man of Russian culture, what is more a Russian writer and an expert on Russian literature, feel myself to be a Jew and to come to the irrevocable decision to leave with my family to Israel. I wish to become an Israeli writer." (But he achieved no such transformation of his profession from one nation to another. Svirsky, like many previous emigrants, had not realized how difficult he would find adjusting to Israel, and chose to leave there too.)

The hostile anti-Russian feelings and claims we find in so many voices of the awakened Jewish consciousness surprise and bewilder us, making our hearts bleed. Yet in these feelings of the mature ferocity we do not hear any apology proffered by our Jewish brothers for at least the events of 1920s. There isn't a shadow of appreciation that Russians too are a wronged people. However, we heard some other voices among the "ferocious" in the previous chapter. Looking back on those times when they were already in Israel, they sometimes gave a more sober account: "We spent too much time settling debts with Russia when we were Jews in the USSR" at the expense even of devoting "too

little to Israel and our life there, and thinking too little about the future.”

* * *

For the ordinary mundane and unarmed living, the prospect of breaking the steel shell that had enveloped the USSR seemed an impossible and hopeless task. But then they despaired – they had to try – and something gave! The struggle for the right to emigrate to Israel was characterised throughout by both determination and inventiveness: issuing complaints to the Supreme Soviet, demonstrations and hunger strikes by the “refuseniks” (as Jews who had been refused exit to Israel called themselves); seminars by fired Jewish professors on the pretext of wanting to “maintain their professional qualifications”; the organization in Moscow of an international symposium of scientists (at the end of 1976); finally, refusal to undergo national service.

Of course, this struggle could only be successful with strong support from Jewish communities abroad. “For us the existence in the world of Jewish solidarity was a startling discovery and the only glimmer of hope in that dark time” remembers one of the first refuseniks.

There was also substantial material assistance: among refuseniks in Moscow there was born a particular sort of independence, founded on powerful economic support from Jews abroad. And so they attached even more hopes to assistance from the West, now expecting similarly powerful public and even political help.

This support had its first test in 1972. Somebody in the higher echelons of the Soviet government reasoned as follows: here we have the Jewish intelligentsia, educated for free in the Soviet system and then provided with

opportunities to pursue their academic careers, and now they just leave for abroad to work there with all these benefits subsidized by the Soviet state. Would it not be just to institute a tax on this? Why should the country prepare for free educated specialists, taking up the places loyal citizens might have had, only to have them use their skills in other countries? And so they started to prepare a law to institute this tax. This plan was no secret, and quickly became known and widely discussed in Jewish circles. It became law on August 3, 1972 in the Order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR “On the compensation by citizens of the USSR, who are leaving to permanently live abroad, of the government expenditure on their education.” The amount proscribed was between 3,600 and 9,800 roubles, depending on the rank of the university (3,600 was in those days the yearly salary of an ordinary senior researcher without a doctorate).

A storm of international indignation erupted. During the 55 years of its existence, none of the monstrous list of the USSR’s crimes had caused as united an international protest as this tax on educated emigrants. American academics, 5,000 in number, signed a protest (Autumn 1972); and two thirds of American senators worked together to stop an expected favorable trade agreement with the USSR. European parliamentarians behaved similarly. For their part, 500 Soviet Jews sent an open letter to UN General Secretary Kurt Waldheim (nobody yet suspected that he too would soon be damned) describing “serfdom for those with a higher education.” (In reaching for a phrase they failed to realize how this would sound in a country which had genuine *kolkhoz* serfdom.) The Soviet government buckled, and consigned the order to the scrapheap.

As to the agreement on trade? In April 1973, union leader George Meany argued that the agreement was neither in the interest of the USA nor would it ease international tensions, but the senators were concerned only about Soviet Jews and ignored these arguments. They passed the agreement but adding the “Jackson amendment,” which stated that it would only be agreed to once Jews were allowed to leave the USSR freely. And so the whole world heard the message coming from the American capital: we will help the Soviet government if they release from their country, not everyone, but specifically and only Jews.

Nobody declared loud and clear: gentlemen, for 55 years it has been but a dream to escape from under the hated Soviet regime, not for hundreds of thousands but for millions of our fellow citizens; but nobody, ever had the right to leave. And yet the political and social leaders of the West never showed surprise, never protested, never moved to punish the Soviet government with trade restrictions. (There was one unsuccessful attempt in 1931 to organise a campaign against Soviet dumping of lumber, a practise made possible only by the use of cheap convict labour, but even this campaign was apparently motivated by commercial competition).

15 million peasants were destroyed in the “dekulakisation,” 6 million peasants were starved to death in 1932, not even to mention the mass executions and millions who died in the camps; and at the same time it was fine to politely sign agreements with Soviet leaders, to lend them money, to shake their “honest hands”, to seek their support, and to boast of all this in front of your parliaments. But once it was specifically *Jews* that became the target, then a spark of sympathy ran through the West and it became clear just what sort of regime this was. In 1972 I made a note on a scrap of paper: “You’ve realized what’s going on, thank God.

But for how long will your realisation last? All it takes is for the problems Jews had with emigrating to be resolved, and you'll become deaf, blind and uncomprehending again to the entirety of what is going on, to the problems of Russia and of communism.”

You cannot imagine the enthusiasm with which it [the Jackson amendment] was met by Jews in Russia. Finally a lever strong enough to shift the powers in the USSR is discovered. Yet suddenly in 1975 the Jackson amendment became an irrelevance, as the Soviet government unexpectedly turned down the offer of the trade agreement with the U.S. (Or it rather calculated that it could get more advantages from other competing countries).

The Soviet refusal made an impression on Jewish activists in the USSR and abroad, but not for long. Both in America and Europe support for Jewish emigration out of the USSR became louder. “he National Conference in Defence of Soviet Jews. The Union on Solidarity with Soviet Jewry. The Student Committee of Struggle for Soviet Jewry. On the Day of National Solidarity with Soviet Jews more than 100,000 demonstrated in Manhattan, including Senators Jackson and Humphrey (both were running for the Democratic nomination for President.) Hundreds different protests took place. The largest of these were the yearly Solidarity Sundays – demonstrations and rallies in New York which were attended by up to 250,000 people (these ran from 1974-1987).

A three-day meeting of 18 Nobel laureates in support of the Corresponding Member of Academy Levich took place in Oxford. Another 650 academics from across the world gave their support – and Levich was allowed to emigrate. In January 1978 more than a hundred American academics sent a telegram to Brezhnev demanding that he

allow professor Meiman to go abroad. Another worldwide campaign ended in another success: the mathematician Chudnovsky received permission to leave for a medical procedure unavailable in the USSR. It was not just the famous: often a name until then unheard of would be trumpeted across the world and then returned to obscurity.

For example, we heard it especially loudly in May 1978, when the world press told us a heart-rending story: a seven year old Moscow girl Jessica Katz had an incurable illness, and her parents were not allowed to go to the States! A personal intervention from Senator Edward Kennedy followed, and presto! Success! The press rejoiced. The main news on every television channel broadcast the meeting at the airport, the tears of happiness, the girl held aloft. The Russian Voice of America devoted a whole broadcast to how Jessica Katz was saved (failing to notice that Russian families with sick children still faced the same impenetrable wall.) A medical examination later showed that Jessica wasn't ill at all, and that her cunning parents had fooled the whole world to ensure her leaving. (A fact acknowledged through gritted teeth on the radio, and then buried. Who else would be forgiven such a lie?)

Similarly, the hunger strike of V. Borisov (December 1976) who had already spent nine years in a 'mental asylum' was reported by the Voice of America no differently from the 15 days of imprisonment of Ilya Levin, and if anything, more attention was given to the latter. All a few refuseniks had to do was sign a declaration about their inability to leave the USSR and it was immediately reported by the Freedom, Voice of America, the BBC and by the other most important sources of mass information, so much so that it is hard now to believe how loudly they were trumpeted.

Of course it has to be noted that all the pomp surrounding the appearance of a Soviet Jewish movement served to awaken among worldwide Jewry, including those in America, an exciting conception of themselves as a nation. Prophetic obsession of the first Zionists in the USSR induced exulting sympathy among the Western Jews. The Western Jews saw their own ideals in action. They began to believe in Russian Jews. That meant, for them, believing in their own best qualities. All that which Western Jews wanted to see around themselves and didn't see. The offered product, an insurrectionary Jewish spirit, found a delighted buyer in American Jews. Neither America nor American Jews are at all interested in Jews from the USSR in themselves. The product bought was precisely the spirit of Jewish revolt. The Jews of America (and with them the Jews of London, Amsterdam, Paris, etc.) whose sense of Jewishness had been excited by the Six-Day War triumph saw the chance to participate. It was a comfortable "struggle" that moreover did not involve any great exertion.

However, it cannot be denied that these inspirations both here and there merged, and worked together to destabilise the walls of the steel shell of the old Soviet Union.

* * *

It is the general opinion that mass Jewish emigration from the USSR began in 1971, when 13,000 people left (98 percent to Israel). It was 32,000 in 1972, 35,000 in 1973, the proportion going to Israel varying from 85 percent to 100 percent. However these were for the most part not from the ethnically Russian areas, but from Georgia and the Baltic. (A Jewish delegate to an international congress declared that "Georgia is a country without anti-Semitism"; many

Georgian Jews later became disappointed with their move to Israel and wanted to go back.) There was no mass movement from the central part of the USSR. Later, when leaving was made more difficult, some expressed a serious regret R. Nudelman: “The tardy courage of future refuseniks might have, perhaps, been unnecessary if they had taken advantage of the breach made when they’d had the chance.” Someone disagrees: “But people need time to mature! ... See how long it took before we understood that we must not stay, that it is simply a crime against your own children.” “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD.” (Zech 2:6)

Nonetheless, the excitement of Jewish emigration took root in Russian and Ukrainian towns too. By March 1973, 700,000 requests to emigrate had been registered. However, autumn 1973 saw the Yom Kippur War, and the desire of many to emigrate suddenly diminished. Israel’s image changed sharply after the Yom Kippur War. Instead of a secure and brave rich country, with confidence in tomorrow and a united leadership, Israel unexpectedly appeared before the world as confused, flabby, ripped apart by internal contradictions. The standard of living of the population fell sharply.

As a result only 20,000 Jews left the USSR in 1974. In 1975-76, up to 50 percent of emigrating Soviet Jews once in the stopover point of Vienna went past Israel. This period saw the birth of the term “directists” – that is to say those who went directly to the United States. After 1977, their numbers varied from 70 to 98 percent.

Frankly, this is understandable. The Jewish state had been conceived as a national refuge for Jews of the whole world, the refuge which, to begin with, guarantees them a

safe existence. But this did not transpire. The country was in the line of fire for many years.

What is more “it soon became clear that Israel needed not intellectual Soviet Jews, but a national Jewish intelligentsia. At this point thinking Jews realised with a horror that in the way they had defined themselves their whole life, they had no place in Israel, because as it turned out for Israel you had to be immersed in Jewish national culture – and so only then the arrivals realised their tragic mistake: there had been no point to leaving Russia (although this was also due to the loss of social position) – and letters back warned those who hadn’t left yet of this. Their tone and content at that time was almost universally negative. Israel was presented as a country where the government intervenes in and seeks to act paternally in all aspects of a citizen’s life.

A prejudice against emigration to Israel began to form among many as early as the mid 1970s. The firm opinion of Israel that the Moscow and Leningrad intelligentsia began to acquire was of a closed, spiritually impoverished society, buried in its own narrow national problems and letting today’s ideological demands have control over the culture. At best it is a cultural backwater, at worst yet another totalitarian government, lacking only a coercive apparatus. Many Soviet Jews gained the impression, not without reason, that in leaving the USSR for Israel they were exchanging one authoritarian regime for another.

When in 1972-73 more than 30,000 Soviet Jews had left for Israel per year, Golda Meir used to meet them personally at the airport and wept, and the Israeli press called their mass arrivals “the Miracle of the 20th century.” Back then everyone left for Israel. Those who took the road to Rome, that is to say not to Israel, were pointed out. But then the number of arrivals started to fall from year to year. It

decreased from tens of thousands to thousands, from thousands to hundreds, from hundreds to a few lone individuals. In Vienna, it was no longer those taking the road to Rome [the next stop on the road to the final desired destination, usually the U.S.] who were pointed out, it was those loners, those clowns, those nuts, who still left for Israel. Back then Israel used to be the norm and you had to explain why you were going “past” it, but it was the other way round now: it was those planning to leave for Israel that often had to explain their decision.

Only the first wave was idealistic; starting with 1974, so to speak the second echelon of Jews began to leave the USSR, and for those Israel might have been attractive, but mainly from a distance. Another’s consideration: perhaps the phenomenon of *neshira* [*neshira* – dispersal on the way to Israel; *noshrim* – the dispersed ones] is somehow connected to the fact that initial emigration used to be from the hinterlands of the USSR, where Jewish traditions were strong, and now it was more from the centre, where Jews have substantially sundered themselves from their traditions.

Anyway, the more open were the doors into Israel, the less Jewish was the efflux, the majority of activists barely knowing the Hebrew alphabet. Not to find their Jewishness, but to get rid of it was now the main reason for emigration. They joked in Israel that “the world has not been filled with the clatter of Jewish feet running to settle in their own home.” Subsequent waves quickly took into account the mistake of the vanguard, and instead enthusiastically leapt *en masse* to where others’ hands had already built their own life. *En masse*, it should be noted, for here finally was that much spoken of Jewish unity. But of course these people left the USSR in search of intellectual freedom, and so must live in Germany or England or more simply in the United States.

And a popular excuse was that the Diaspora is needed as somebody has to give money to resource-less Israel and to make noise when it is being bullied! But on the other hand, the Diaspora perpetuates anti-Semitism.

A. Voronel made a broader point here: “The situation of Russian Jews and the problem of their liberation is a reflection of the all-Jewish crisis.... The problems of Soviet Jews help us to see the disarray in our own ranks. The cynicism of Soviet Jews in using calls from made up relatives in Israel instead of accepting their fate, the Way of Honour, is nothing more than a reflection of the cynicism and the rot affecting the whole Jewish (and non-Jewish) world. Questions of conscience move further and further into background under the influence of the business, the competition and the unlimited possibilities of the Free World.”

So it’s all quite simple – it was just a mass escape from the harsh Soviet life to the easy Western one, quite understandable on a human level. But then what about repatriation? And what is the spiritual superiority of those who dared to leave over those who stayed in the “country of slaves?” In fighting in those days for emigration Soviet Jews loudly demanded: “Let my people go!” But that was a truncated quote. The Bible said: “Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.” (Ex. 5:1) Yet somehow too many of those released went not into the desert, but to the abundance of America.

* * *

Can we nonetheless say that in the early years of sudden and successful emigration to Israel, it was the Zionists’ beliefs and ambitions that acted as the prime

stimulus for Jews to leave? The testimony of various Jewish writers would suggest not.

The Soviet situation of the end of the 1960s was one of *aliyah*, not of a Zionist movement. There were many people psychologically ready to flee the USSR. What can be called a Zionist movement was entirely subsidiary to this group of people. Those who joined makeshift centres dedicated to the actual study of Jewish history and culture were mostly characterised by a complete lack of the careerism so common among the Soviet-Jewish intelligentsia. This was why they dedicated the entirety of their free time to Jewish affairs. For them the era of the Hebrew teachers had started even as early as the end of the 1970s, and by the beginning of the 1980s these Torah teachers were the only ones who still influenced the minds.

The motives of many others who emigrated are explained as follows: “The Soviet government has placed obstacles in the way of achieving the most important things – professional advancement,” and so “Jewry is in danger of degradation.” They were driven into Jewishness, and then into Zionism by their faceless bureaucratic nemesis. Many had never encountered anti-Semitism or political persecution. What burdened them was the dead end that their lives as Soviet Jews had become as bearers of a contradiction from which they could free themselves neither by assimilation nor by their Jewishness. There was a growing sense of incompatibility and sorrow; dozens and dozens of dolts are dragging you into insignificance are pushing you to the bottom. So came the longing to escape the Soviet Union. This bright hope, when a man under the complete control of the Soviet government could in three months become free was genuinely exhilarating.

Of course, a complex emotional environment developed around the act of departure. A writer says: the majority of Soviet Jews are “using the same Zionist door. They sadly leave that familiar, that tolerant Russia” (a slip, but one that is closer to the truth, as the author had meant to say “tolerated by” Jews). Or said thusly: “The vast majority decided to emigrate with their heads, while their insides,” that is to say concern with being part of a country and its traditions, “were against.”

No one can judge to what extent this was a majority. But as we’ve seen the mood varied from the good poetry of Liya Vladimorova:

*But for you, my beloved, for you the proud,
I bequest the memories and the departure
To the then-popular joke:
“Could the last person to leave please turn off the light.”*

This growing desire to emigrate among Soviet Jews coincided with the beginning of the dissident movement in the USSR. These developments were not entirely independent: for some Jewish intellectuals Jewish, ethnic consciousness in the USSR was a new vector of intellectual development, a new form of heterodoxy, and they regarded their own impatient escape from the country as also a desperately important political cause.

In essence, the dilemma facing the Zionists at the start of the 20th century was repeated: if it is your aim to leave Russia, should you at the same time maintain a political struggle within it? Back then, most had answered “yes” to the struggle; now, most answered “no.” But an increasingly daredevil attitude to emigration could not but feed a similarly daredevil attitude to politics, and sometimes the daredevils were one and the same.

So, for example (in 1976) several activists in the Jewish movement — V. Rubin, A. Sharansky, V. Slepak — together made an independent decision to support the Helsinki Group of dissidents, but this was regarded in Jewish circles as an unjustifiable and unreasonable risk, as it would lead to the immediate and total escalation of the government’s repression of Jewish activism, and would moreover turn the Jewish movement into the property of dissidents.

On the other side, many dissidents took advantage of the synchronicity of the two movements, and used emigration as a means of escape from their political

battlefield for their own safety. They found theoretical justifications for this: “Any honest man in the USSR is an eternal debtor to Israel, and here is why.... The emigration breach was made in the Iron Curtain thanks to Israel. It protects the rear of those few people willing to oppose the tyranny of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU] and to fight for human rights in the USSR. The absence of this

“emergency exit” would be deadly to the current democratic movement.”

It has to be admitted that this is a very cynical justification, and that it says little good of the dissident movement as a whole. A hostile critic then noted: “These opponents [of the CPSU] are playing an odd game: they become involved in the democratic movement, already sure of an emergency exit for themselves. But by this they demonstrate the temporary and inconsequential character of their activity. Do potential emigrants have the right to speak of changing Russia, or especially on behalf of Russia?”

One dissident science fiction author (and later, after emigration, a Russian Orthodox priest) suggested this formulation, that Jewish emigration creates a revolution in the mind of Soviet man; the Jews, in fighting for the right to leave, become transformed into fighters for freedom in general. The Jewish movement serves as a social gland that begins to secrete the hormones of rights awareness; it has become a sort of ferment perpetuating dissidence. Russia is becoming deserted.

That “abroad,” so mythical before, is becoming populated by our own people. The Jewish Exodus is gradually leading totalitarian Soviet Moscow to the plains of freedom.”

This view was readily accepted, and in the coming years came to be loudly trumpeted: “The right to emigrate is

the primary human right.” It was repeated often and in unison that this was an enforced escape, and talk about the privileged position Jews occupy with regards to emigration is slander.

Yes, taking a lifeboat from a sinking ship is indeed an act of necessity. But to own a lifeboat is a great privilege, and after the gruelling ordeals of half a century in the USSR Jews owned one, while the rest did not. Those more perceptive expressed a more conscientious feeling: “It is fine to fight for the repatriation of Jews, it is understandable, and it is fine to fight for the right to emigrate for everyone – that too is understandable; but you cannot fight for the right to emigrate but, for some reason, only for Jews.”

Contrary to the self-satisfied theoreticians of emigration, and their belief that it brought all Soviet people closer to emigrating abroad and so partly freed them, in reality those unable to emigrate came to feel more hopeless, to an even greater extent fooled and enslaved. There were emigrants who understood this: “What is cruellest about this situation is that it is Jews who are leaving. It has bizarrely become a question of something akin to a certificate of authenticity.” Precisely. But they chose to blind themselves to this.

What could the remaining residents of totalitarian Moscow think? There was a great variety of responses, from grievance (“You, Jews, are allowed to leave and we aren’t...”) to the despair of intellectuals. L.K Chukovksaya expressed it in conversation to me: “Dozens of valuable people are leaving, and as a result human bonds vital for the country are ripped apart.

The knots that hold together the
fabric of culture are being
undone.” To repeat the

lesson: “Russia is becoming deserted.”

We can read the thoughtful comments of an emigrant Jewish author about this Departure: “Russian Jewry were pathfinders in their experiment to merge with the Russian people and Russian culture, they became involved in Russia’s fate and history, and, repulsed away as if by a similarly charged body, left.” (What an accurate and penetrating comparison!) “What is most stunning about this Departure is how voluntary it was, at the moment of greatest assimilation. The pathetic character of the Russian Aliyah of the 1970s was that we were not exiled from the country on a king’s order or by the decision of party and parliament, and we were not fleeing to save ourselves from the whips of an enraged popular pogrom. This fact is not immediately obvious to the participants in this historical event.”

No doubt the Jewish emigration from the USSR ushered in a great historical shift. The beginning of the Exodus drew a line under an epoch lasting two centuries of coerced coexistence between Jews and Russians. From that point, every Soviet Jew was free to choose for himself — to live in Russia or outside it. By the second half of the 1980s each was entirely free to leave for Israel without struggle.

The events that took place over two centuries of Jewish life in Russia – the Pale of Settlement, the escape from its stultifying confines, the flowering, the ascension to the ruling circles of Russia, then the new constraints, and finally the Exodus – none of these are random streams on the outskirts of history. Jewry had completed its spread from its origin on the Mediterranean Sea to as far away as Eastern Europe, and it was now returning back to its point of origin.

We can see in both this spread and in its reversal a supra-human design. Perhaps those that come after us will

have the opportunity to see it more clearly and to solve its mystery.

Chapter XXVII: On Assimilation

When and how did this extraordinary Jewish status of “guests everywhere” begin? The conventional wisdom suggests that the centuries-old Jewish diaspora should be dated from the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70; and that after being thrown out of their native land, the Jews began wandering around the world. However, it is not true because the great majority of the Jews were already dispersed by that time; hardly more than one-eighth of the nation lived in Palestine. The Jewish Diaspora had begun much earlier: The Jews were mainly a dispersed nation by the time of the Babylonian captivity [6th century B.C.] and, possibly, even earlier; Palestine was only a religious and, to certain extent, a cultural center.

Scattering of the Jews was already foretold in the Pentateuch. “I will scatter you among the nations” (Leviticus 26:33). “Yahweh will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations” (Deuteronomy 4:27).

Only a small part of the Jews had returned from the Babylonian captivity; many had remained in Babylon as they did not want to abandon their property. Large settlements were established outside of Palestine; large numbers of Jews concentrated in major trade and industrial centers of the ancient world. (For example, in Alexandria under Ptolemaic dynasty, Jews accounted for two-fifth of the population.) They were mainly traders and craftsmen. The JewishHellenistic philosopher Philo Judaeus (who died in the middle of the 1st century, 20 years before the destruction of the Temple) states: “The Jews regard the Holy City as their

metropolis because the Holy Temple of Almighty God is situated there, and they call homeland the countries where they live, and where their fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers and ancient forebears lived, and where they were born and brought up.”

Mikhail Gershenzon mused on the fates of the Jewish nation after the Babylonian captivity:

“The Jews took root in foreign lands and contrary to expectations, didn’t aspire to return to their old homeland. Just recall: The Kingdom of Judah was still there, yet most of the Jews were already scattered across the whole Middle East; the Second Temple still stood in all its splendor, but the Language of the Bible was no longer heard on the streets and in the houses of Jerusalem; everybody spoke either Syrian or Greek there. Even back then the Jews were inclined to think: “We should not hold dear our national independence, we should learn to live without it, under foreign rule; we should not become attached to a land or to a single language.”

Modern Jewish authors agree: “The Jews in the ancient world were scattered and established large centers in the Diaspora even before the collapse of Jewish nationhood.” The nation which was given the Law did not want to return to its native country. There is some very profound and still not understood meaning in it. It is much easier to chat about Jewish values and about the preservation of Jewry than to explain the true reasons for such a long Galut. (Even in the mid-20th century the Hebrew language still had no word for Diaspora as for the living in the voluntary scattering, there was only *Galut*, referring to the forced exile.)

From the historical evidence, we see that the scattering of the Jews was not solely their unfortunate fate, but also a voluntary quest. Indeed, it was a bemoaned disaster, but could it also be a method of making life easier?

This is an important question in attempting to understand the Diaspora.

The Jews still do not have a generally accepted view on the Diaspora, whether it has been blessing for them or a bane.

Zionism, from the very moment of its birth, responded to this question firmly (and fully in line with its essence): “Our scattering is our biggest curse; it brings us no good, and no advantages and no peace to others as well. We are guests everywhere, and we are still unwanted, everybody wants to get rid of us.”

To be a homeless man, feeling as a guest everywhere — this is the true curse of exile, its real bitterness! Some say that having several homes improves chances to survive for the Jews. In my view, a nation staying in many other’s homes and not caring about its own cannot expect security. The availability of many homes corrupts.

Yet the opposite opinion is even more prevalent, and it seems to be more credible. Perhaps, the Jewish nation had survived and persevered not in spite of its exile, but because of it; the Jewish Diaspora is not an episode, but the organic ingredient of Jewish history.

Was the Jewish nation preserved in all its uniqueness in spite of the exile and scattering or because of it? The tragedy of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 destroyed the state, yet it was necessary to save the people; the extraordinarily intensified instinct of national self-preservation” prompted Jews toward salvation through Diaspora.

Jewry was never able to fully comprehend its situation and the causes for it. They saw exile as the punishment for their sins, yet time and time again it turned out to be the dispensation by which the Lord has distinguished his nation. Through the Diaspora, the Jew

worked out the mark of the Chosen he foresaw on his brow. The scattered state of the nation is not unnatural for him. Already in the periods of the most comfortable existence in their own state, Jewry was stationing garrisons on its route and spearheading vanguards in all directions, as if sensing its future dispersion and getting ready to retreat to the positions it had prepared in advance. Thus, the Diaspora is a special form of Jewish existence in space and time of this world. And look how awesomely mobile are the Jews in Diaspora. The Jewish people never strike root in one place, even after several generations.

But after they were so widely scattered and had become small minorities among other nations, the Jews had to develop a clear position toward those nations — how to behave among them and how to relate to them, to seek ultimate bonding and merging with those nations, or to reject them and separate from them? The Holy Scripture contains quite a few covenants of isolation. The Jews avoided even their closest kindred neighbors, the Samaritans and Israelites, so irreconcilably that it was not permitted to even take a piece of bread from them. Mixed marriages were very strictly forbidden. “We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.” (Nehemiah 10:30) And Ezra had ordered them to dissolve the existing marriages, even those with children.

Thus, living in Diaspora for thousands of years, the Jews did not mix with other nations, just as butter does not mix with water, but comes to the surface and floats. During all those long centuries, they perceived themselves as something distinct, and until the 18th century the Jews as a nation have never shown any inclination for assimilation. The pre-revolutionary *Jewish Encyclopedia*, while quoting Marx’s assertion that “the Jews had not assimilated, because

they represented the highest economic class, that is the class of capitalists amidst the agricultural and petty bourgeois nations,” objects, saying that the economy was secondary: “The Jews of the Diaspora have consciously established their own economy which protected them from assimilation. They did it because they were conscious of their cultural superiority,” which, for its part, was created by the spiritual meaning of Judaism in its most complete form. The latter protected them from imitation.

But from the mid-18th century the Jews started to believe in assimilation, and that becomes the ferment of decomposition of the Jewish nation in Western Europe of the 19th century. Assimilation begins when the surrounding culture reaches the height held by the Jewish culture, or when the Jewry ceases to create new values. The national will of the European Jews was weakened by the end of the 18th century; it had lost ground because of extremely long waiting. Other nations began creating brilliant cultures that eclipsed Jewish culture. And exactly then Napoleon launched the Pan-European emancipation; in one country after another, the roads to social equality were opening before the Jews, and that facilitated assimilation. There is an important caveat here: There is no unilateral assimilation, and the assimilating Jews supplemented the host cultures with Jewish national traits. Heine and Börne, Ricardo and Marx, Beaconsfield-Disraeli and Lassalle, Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn — during their assimilation into the host cultures, they added Jewish elements to them.)

In some cases, assimilation leads to a brighter creative personal self-fulfillment. But, overall, “assimilation was the price paid by the Jews for the benefit of having access to the European culture. Educated Jews convinced themselves that the Jews are not a nation, but only a religious group. The

Jewish nation, after it joined the realm of European nations, began to lose its national uniqueness. Only the Jew from the ghetto retained pronounced national traits, while the intelligent Jew tried with all his strength to look unlike a typical Jew. Thus spread the theory that there is no Jewish nation, but only the Poles, Frenchmen and Germans of Mosaic Law.

Marx, and then Lenin saw the solution of Jewish question in the full assimilation of the Jews in the countries of their residence.

In contrast to the clumsiness of those ideologues, the ideas of M.O. Gershenzon are much more interesting. He put them forward late in life, in 1920, and they are all the more interesting because the lofty thinker Gershenzon was a completely assimilated Russian Jew. Nevertheless, the Jewish question was alive and well in his mind. He explored it in his article *The Destinies of the Jewish Nation*.

Unlike the contemporary *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Gershenzon believes that Jewish assimilation is the ancient phenomenon, from time immemorial. One voice constantly “tempted the Jew to blend with the environment — hence comes this ineradicable and ancient Jewish aspiration to assimilate.” Yet another voice demanded “above all things to preserve his national uniqueness. The whole story of scattering is the never-ending struggle of two wills within Jewry: the human will against the superhuman one, the individual against the collective.... The requirements of the national will towards the individual were so ruthless and almost beyond human power, that without having a great hope common to all Jewry, the Jew would succumb to despair every now and then, and would be tempted to fall away from his brethren and desert that strange and painful common cause.”

Contrary to the view that it is not difficult to explain why assimilation began precisely at the end of the 18th century, Gershenzon is rather surprised: “Is it not strange that assimilation so unexpectedly accelerated exactly during the last one hundred years and it continues to intensify with each passing hour? Shouldn’t the temptation to fall apart be diminished greatly nowadays, when the Jews obtained equal rights everywhere?”

No, he replies: “It is not the external force that splits the Jews; Jewry disintegrates from the inside. The main pillar of Jewry, the religious unity of the Jewish nation, is decayed and rotten.” So, what about assimilation, where does it lead to? “At first sight, it appears that ... [the Jews] are imbued, to the marrow of their bones, with the cosmopolitan spirit or, at least, with the spirit of the local culture; they share beliefs and fixations of the people around them.”

Yet it is not exactly like that: “They love the same things, but not in the same way.... They indeed crave to embrace the alien gods... They strive to accept the way of life of modern culture.... They pretend that they already love all that — truly love, and they are even able to convince themselves of that. Alas! One can only love his own faith, the one born in the throes from the depths of the soul.”

Jewish authors genuinely express the spiritual torment experienced by the assimilating Jew. “If you decided to pretend that you are not a Jew, or to change your religion, you are doomed to unending internal struggle with your Jewish identity.... You live in terrible tension.... In a way, this is immoral, a sort of spiritual self-violation.” (This inner conflict was amazingly described by Chekhov in his essay *Tumbleweed*.) “This evil stepmother assimilation forced the individual to adapt to everything: to the meaning of life and human relations, to demands and needs, to the way

of life and habits. It crippled the psychology of the nation in general and that of the national intelligentsia in particular.” It compelled people “to renounce their own identity, and, ultimately, led to self-destruction. It is a painful and humiliating search of identity.” But even the most complete assimilation is ephemeral: it never becomes natural, it does not liberate from the need to be on guard all the time.

In addition to the lack of trust on the part of surrounding native people, assimilating Jews come under fire from their fellow Jews; they are accused of consumerism and conformism, of the desire to desert their people, to dispose of their Jewish identity, and of the national defection.

Nevertheless, during the 19th century everything indicated that assimilation was feasible and necessary, that it was predetermined and even inevitable. Yet the emergence of Zionism cast a completely new light on this problem. Before Zionism, every Jew suffered from painful duality, the dissonance between the religious tradition and the surrounding external world.

In the early 20th century Jabotinsky wrote: “When the Jew adopts a foreign culture one should not trust the depth and strength of such conversion. The assimilated Jew cannot withstand a single onslaught, he abandons the adopted culture without any resistance whatsoever, as soon as he sees that the power of that culture is over. He cannot be the pillar for such a culture.” He provided a shining example in the Germanized Austria-Hungary, when with the growth of Czech, Hungarian and Polish cultures, Germanized Jews actively conformed to new ways of life. “It is all about certain hard realities of the natural relationship between a man and his culture, the culture created by his ancestors.” This observation is true, of course, though “hard realities” sounds somewhat dry. (Jabotinsky not only objected to assimilation

fiercely, he also insistently warned the Jews to avoid Russian politics, literature and art, cautioning that after a while the Russians would inevitably turn down such service.)

Many individual and collective examples, both in Europe and Russia, in the past and nowadays, illustrate the fragility of Jewish assimilation.

Consider Benjamin Disraeli, the son of a non-religious father. He was baptized in adolescence and he did not just display the English way of life, he became no less than the symbol of the British Empire. So, what did he dream about at leisure, while riding his novelwriting hobbyhorse? He wrote about exceptional merits and messianism of the Jews, expressed his ardent love for Palestine, and dreamt of restoring the Israeli homeland!

And what's about Gershenzon? He was a prominent historian of Russian culture and an expert on Pushkin. He was even criticized for his Slavophilism. But, nevertheless, at the end of his life, he wrote: "Accustomed to European culture from a tender age, I deeply imbibed its spirit and I truly love many things in it. But deep in my mind I live differently. For many years a secret voice from within appeals to me persistently and incessantly: This is not yours! This is not yours! A strange will inside me sorrowfully turns away from Russian culture, from everything happening and spoken around me. I live like a stranger who has adapted to a foreign country; the natives love me, and I love them too; I zealously work for their benefit, yet I feel I am a stranger, and I secretly yearn for the fields of my homeland."

After this confession of Gershenzon, it is appropriate to formulate the key thesis of this chapter. There are different types of assimilation: civil and domestic assimilation, when

the assimilated individual is completely immersed in the surrounding life and accepts the interests of the native nation (in that sense, the overwhelming majority of Russian, European and American Jews would perhaps consider themselves assimilated); cultural assimilation; and, at the extreme, spiritual assimilation, which also happens, albeit rarely. The latter is more complex and does not result from the former two types of assimilation. (In the opinion of a critic, *The Correspondence Between Two Corners* by Vyacheslav Ivanov and M.O. Gershenzon, that small book of tremendous importance, serves as a proof of the inadequacy of Jewish assimilation, even in the case of apparently complete cultural assimilation.)

Or take another individual, M. Krol, a revolutionary in his youth and a “converted” émigré after the revolution. He marvels that the Russian Jews even in their new countries of emigration demonstrated “a huge amount of national energy” and were building an “original Jewish culture” there. Even in London the Jews had their own Yiddish schools, their own social organizations, and their own solid economics; they did not merge with the English way of life, but only accommodated to its demands and reinforced the original English Jewry. (The latter even had their own British Council of Jews, and called themselves the Jewish community of the Great Britain — note that all this was in England, where Jewish assimilation was considered all but complete.) He witnessed the same thing in France, and was particularly impressed by the similar feat in the United States.

And there is also that unfailing and reliable Jewish mutual support, that truly outstanding ability that preserves the Jewish people. Yet it further weakens the stability of assimilation.

It was not only the rise of Zionism that prompted the Jews to reject assimilation. The very course of the 20th century was not conducive to assimilation.

On the eve of World War II in 1939, a true Zionist, Max Brod, wrote: “It was possible to argue in support of the theory of assimilation in the days of far less advanced statehood of the 19th century,” but “this theory lost any meaning in the era when the peoples increasingly consolidate. We, the Jews, will be inevitably crushed by bellicose nationalistic peoples, unless we take our fate into our hands and retreat in time.”

Martin Buber had a very stern opinion on this in 1941: “So far, our existence had served only to shake the thrones of idols, but not to erect the throne of God. This is exactly why our existence among other nations is so mysterious. We purport to teach others about the absolute, but in reality we just say no to other nations, or perhaps we are actually nothing more than just the embodiment of such negation. This is why we have turned into the nightmare of the nations.”

Then, two deep furrows, the Catastrophe and the emergence of Israel soon afterwards, crossed the course of Jewish history, shedding new and very bright light on the problem of assimilation.

Arthur Koestler clearly formulated and expressed his thoughts on the significance of the state of Israel for world Jewry in his book *Promise and Fulfillment: Palestine 1917-1949* and in an article, *Judah at the Crossroads*.

An ardent Zionist in his youth, Koestler left Vienna for a Palestinian kibbutz in 1926; he worked for a few years in Jerusalem as a Hebrew-writing columnist for Jabotinsky’s newspaper; he also reported for several German newspapers. And then he wrote: “If we exclude from the Jewish religion

the mystical craving for the Promised Land, then the very basis and essence of this religion would disappear.” And further, “after the restoration of the Jewish state, most of the Jewish prayers, rites and symbols lost their meaning. The God of Israel has abided by the treaty; he had returned the land of Canaan to Abraham’s seed. If, however, the religious Jew defies the order to return to the land of his ancestors and thus violates the treaty, he consequently anathematizes himself and loses his Jewishness.

“On the other hand, it may be difficult for not very religious Jews to understand why they should make sacrifices to preserve Jewish values, not included in the religious doctrine. The Jewish religion loses any sense if you continue to pray about the return to Zion even after you have grimly determined not to go there. A painful choice, yes, but the choice that must be made immediately, for the sake of the next generation.... Do I want to move to Israel? If I do not, then what right do I have to continue calling myself a Jew and thus to mark my children with the stigma of isolation? The whole world would sincerely welcome the assimilation of the Jews, and after three generations or so, the Jewish question would fade away.”

The London newspaper *Jewish Chronicle* objected to Koestler: perhaps, “it is much better, much more reasonable and proper for a Jew from the Diaspora to live as before, at the same time helping to build the State of Israel?” Yet Koestler remained adamant: “They want both to have their cake and eat it. This is the route to disaster.”

Yet all previous attempts at assimilation ended in failure; so why it should be different this time? argued the newspaper. Koestler replied: “Because all previous attempts of assimilation were based on the wrong assumption that the Jews could be adequate sons of the host nation, while at the

same time preserving their religion and remaining the Chosen People.” But “ethnic assimilation is impossible if Judaism is preserved; and conversely Judaism collapses in case of ethnic assimilation. Jewish religion perpetuates the national isolation — there is nothing you can do about this fact.” Therefore, “before the restoration of Israel, the renunciation of one’s Jewish identity was equivalent to refusal to support the persecuted and could be regarded as a cowardly surrender.”

But “now, we are talking not about surrender, but about a free choice.”

Thus, Koestler offered a tough choice to the Diaspora Jews: to become Israelis or to stop being Jews. He himself took the latter path. (Needless to say, Jews in the Diaspora met Koestler’s conclusions mainly with angry criticism.)

Yet those who had chosen the first option, the citizens of the State of Israel, obtained a new support and, from that, a new view at this eternal problem. For instance, a modern Israeli author writes sharply: “The Galut Jew is an immoral creature. He uses all the benefits of his host country but at the same time he does not fully identify with it. These people demand the status which no other nation in the world has — to be allowed to have two homelands: the one, where they currently live, and another one, where their heart lives. And after that they still wonder why they are hated!”

And they do wonder a lot: Why, why are the Jews so disliked? True, the Jews are disliked, this is fact; otherwise, why strive for liberation? And from what? Apparently, not from Jewishness. We know very well that we should liberate ourselves, it is absolutely necessary, though we still cannot tell exactly what from.

A natural question — what should we do to be loved? — is seldom asked. Jewish authors usually see the whole world as

hostile to them, and so they give way to grief: The world is now split into those who sympathize with the Jewish people, and those seeking to destroy the Jewish people. Sometimes, there is proud despair: “It is humiliating to rely on the authorities for the protection from the nation which dislikes you; it is humiliating to thank ingratiatingly the best and worthiest of this nation, who put in a good word for you.”

Another Israeli disagrees: “In reality, this world is not solely divided on the grounds of one’s attitude toward Jews, as we sometimes think owing to our excessive sensitivity.” A. Voronel agrees: “The Jews pay too much attention to anti-Semites, and too little — to themselves.”

Israel, the Jewish state, must become the center that secures the future of world Jewry. As early as in the 1920s no other than Albert Einstein wrote to no other than Pyotr Rutenberg, a former Social Revolutionary and possibly the main author of the revolutionary demands of January 9, 1905 (he accompanied Orthodox Father Gapon during the workers’ procession on that date but was later one of his executioners; still later, Rutenberg left Russia to rebuild Palestine): “First of all, your [Palestinian settlers’] lives must be protected, because you sacrifice yourselves for the sake of the Spirit and in the name the entire Jewish nation. We must demonstrate that we are a nation with the will to live, and that we are strong enough for the great accomplishment that would consolidate our people and protect our future generations. For us and for our posterity, the State must become as precious as the Temple was for our ancestors.”

Jewish authors support this conviction in many ways: “The Jewish problem, apparently, has no reliable solution without the Jewish state.” “Israel is the center that guarantees

the future of the Jews of the whole world.” Israel is the only correct place for Jews, one where their “historical activity does not result in historical fiasco.”

And only a rumble coming from that tiny and endlessly beleaguered country betrays the phantom of the Catastrophe, permanently imprinted in the collective unconscious of the Israelis.

* * *

And what is the status of assimilation, the Diaspora, and Israel today?

By the 1990s, assimilation had advanced very far. For example, for 80-90 percent of the American Jews, the modern tendencies of Jewish life promise gradual assimilation. This holds true not only for the United States: Jewish life is gradually disappearing from most of the Diaspora communities. Most modern-day Jews do not have painful memories of the Catastrophe. They identify with Israel much less than their parents. Doubtlessly, the role of the Diaspora is shrinking disastrously, and this is fraught with inevitable loss of its essential characteristics.

“Will our grandchildren remain Jews...? Will the Diaspora survive the end of this millennium and, if so, for how long?” asked Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, one of the greatest teachers of our time. He warns that the Jews of the Diaspora are no longer a group “whose survival is guaranteed by being in jeopardy.” And because of that, they paradoxically, are already on the road to extinction, participating in the “Catastrophe of self-destruction.” Moreover, anti-Semitism in Western countries cannot be anymore considered as the element that strengthens Jewish identity. Anti-Semitic

discrimination in politics, business, universities, private clubs, etc. is for all practical purposes eliminated.

In present-day Europe there are many Jews who do not identify as Jews and who react idiosyncratically to any attempt to connect them with that artificial community. The assimilated Jew does not want to feel like a Jew; he casts away the traits of his race (according to Sartre). The same author offers a scorching assessment: European Jews reject their Jewishness; they think it is anti-Semitism that compels them to be the Jews. Yet that is a contradiction: A Jew identifies as a Jew only when he is in danger. Then he escapes as a Jew. But when he himself becomes the source of danger, he is not a Jew.

Thus, the contours of the collapse of the Diaspora take shape exactly when the Western Jews enjoy freedom and wealth unprecedented in Jewish history, and when they are, or appear to be, stronger than ever. And if the current trends do not change, most of the Diaspora will simply disappear. We have to admit a real possibility of the humiliating, though voluntary, gradual degradation of the Diaspora. Arthur Koestler, the advocate of assimilation who in the 1950s predicted the death of the Diaspora, might prove to be right after all. Meanwhile, the Jews of the world, sometimes even to their own surprise, feel like they are personally involved in the destiny of Israel. "If, God forbid, Israel is destroyed, then the Jews in other countries will disappear too." I cannot explain why, but the Jews will not survive the second Catastrophe in this century.

Another author attributes the Jewish mythology of the imminent Catastrophe precisely to life in the Diaspora, and this is why American (and Soviet) Jews often express such opinions. They prepare for the Catastrophe: should Israel fall, it will be they who will carry on the Jewish nation. Thus,

almost all of many hypotheses attempting to explain the purpose of Jewish Diaspora recognize that it makes Jewry nearly indestructible; it guarantees Jewry eternal life within the limits of the existence of mankind.

We also encounter quite a bellicose defense of the principle of Diaspora. American professor Leonard Fayne said: “We oppose the historical demand to make aliyah. We do not feel like we are in exile.” In June 1994 the President of the World Jewish Congress, Shoshana S. Cardin, aggressively announced to the Israelis: “We are not going to become the forage for aliyah to Israel, and we doubt you have any idea about the richness and harmony of American Jewish life.”

Others state: “We are interesting for the peoples of the world not because of peculiarities of our statehood, but because of our Diaspora which is widely recognized as one of the greatest wonders of world history.” Others are rather ironic: “One rogue came up with the elegant excuse that the ‘chosenness’ of the Jews is allegedly nothing else but to be eternally scattered. The miracle of the restoration of Israel *post factum* gave new meaning to the Diaspora; simultaneously, it had brilliantly concluded the story that could otherwise drag on. In short, it had crowned the miracle of the Diaspora. It crowned it, but did not abolish it.” Yet “it is ironic too, as the goals for which we struggled so hard and which filled us with such pride and feeling of difference, are already achieved.”

Understanding the fate of the Diaspora and any successful prediction of its future largely depends on the issue of mixed marriages. Intermarriage is the most powerful and irreversible mechanism of assimilation. It is no accident that such unions are so absolutely forbidden in the Old Testament: “They have dealt faithlessly with the Lord; for

they have borne alien children.” (Hosea 5:7) When Arnold J. Toynbee proposed intermarriage as a means to fight anti-Semitism, hundreds of rabbis opposed him: “Mass mixed marriage means the end of Jewry.”

A dramatic growth of mixed marriages is observed in the Western countries: Data documenting the statistics of dissolution are chilling. In the 1960s mixed marriages accounted for approximately 6 percent of Jewish marriages in the United States, the home of the largest Jewish community in the world. Today in 1990s,, only one generation later, this number reached 60 percent — a ten-fold increase. The share of mixed marriages in Europe and Latin America is approximately the same. Moreover, apart from the orthodox Jews, almost all Jewish families in Western countries have an extremely low birth rate. In addition, only a small minority of children from mixed families are willing to adopt a distinctly Jewish way of life.

And what about Russia? The *Shorter Jewish Encyclopedia* provides the following statistics:

in 1988, still under the Soviet regime, in the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic), 73 percent of married Jewish men, and 63 percent of married Jewish women had non-Jewish spouses. In 1978 these numbers were lower: 13 percent for men, and 20 percent for women. Actually, Jews in such marriages tend to lose their Jewish self-consciousness much faster; they more often identify themselves with other nationalities during census.

Thus, almost everywhere, to a greater or lesser degree, we have the erosion of Jewish life, dilution of racial, religious and ethnic borders that, until recently, served as the barriers for assimilation and intermarriage. Today, when common anti-Semitism declined so abruptly, the Jews have lost a

many great principles that in past used to be strong pillars of self-identification.

The Jews of the Diaspora are often attacked by the Israelis. Thirty and forty years after the creation of the State of Israel, the Israelis ask Diaspora Jews mockingly and sometimes angrily: “So, what about modern Jews? Most likely, they will always remain in their true historical home, in the Galuth.” The Algerian Jews had preferred France to Israel, and then the majority of the Iranian Jews, who left Khomeini’s rule, gave a wide berth to Israel. By pulling up stakes, they search for countries with higher standards of living, and a higher level of civilization. The love of Zion is not sufficient in itself.

The eternal image of a classical imminent catastrophe does not attract the Jews to Israel anymore. The Jews are a nation corrupted by their stateless and ahistoric existence. The Jews did not pass the test. They still do not want to return to their homeland. They prefer to stay in Galut and complain about anti-Semitism every time they are criticized. And nobody may say a bad word about Israel, because to criticize Israel is anti-Semitism! If they are so concerned about Israel, why do they not move there to live? But no, this is exactly what they try to avoid!

Most of the Jews of the world have already decided that they do not want to be independent. Look at the Russian Jews. Some of them wanted independence, while others preferred to continue the life of a mite on the Russian dog. And when the Russian dog had become somewhat sick and angry, they turned to the American dog. After all, the Jews lived that way for two thousand years. And now, the the Diaspora Jew is often nervous when confronted by an Israeli; he would rather feel guilty than share his fate with Israel. This sense of inferiority is compensated by intensely

maintaining his Jewish identity through deliberate over-emphasizing of petty Jewish symbolism.

At the same time, the Jew from the Diaspora alone shoulders the specific risk of confronting surrounding anti-Semitism. Yet, no matter how the Israel behaves, the Diaspora has no choice: it will quietly stand behind the Israelis like an unloved but faithful wife. It was forecasted that by 2021, the Diaspora will probably shrink by another million souls. The interior workings of Jewish history indicate that most likely the size of world Jewry will further decrease with the gradual concentration of a Jewish majority in Zion and not in the Diaspora.

Yet couldn't it be the other way around? Maybe, after all, the Russian Jew Josef Bikerman was right when he confidently claimed that the Diaspora is indestructible? "I accept Galut, where we have lived for two thousand years, where we have developed strong cohesion, and where we must live henceforth, to live and prove ourselves." Could it be that those two voices which, according to Gershenzon, always sound in Jewish ears — one calling to mix with the surroundings, and another demanding to preserve Jewish national uniqueness, — will sound forever?

A reputable historian noted after World War II a paradox in the life of modern Jewry: "evergrowing immersion of Jews in the life of other nations does not diminish their national identity and sometimes even intensifies it."

Below are few testimonies made by Russian Jews during the Soviet ("internationalist") period. "I always had an acute perception of my Jewishness.... From the age of 17, when I left the cradle of high school, I mixed in circles where the Jewish question was central. My father had a very strong Jewish spirit; despite that, he never observed traditions,

Mitzvoth, did not know the language, and yet everything that he, a Jew, knew was somehow subordinated to his Jewish identity.”

A writer from Odessa, Arkady Lvov, remembers: “When I was a 10-year old boy, I searched for the Jews among scientists, writers, politicians, and first of all, as a Young Pioneer [a communist youth group in the former Soviet Union], I looked for them among the members of government.” Lazar Kaganovich was in third place, ahead of Voroshilov and Kalinin, “and I was proud of Stalin’s minister Kaganovich. I was proud of Sverdlov, I was proud of Uritsky. And I was proud of Trotsky — yes, yes, of Trotsky!” He thought that Ostermann (the adviser of Peter the Great) was a Jew, and when he found that Ostermann actually was German, he had “a feeling of disappointment, a feeling of loss,” but he “was openly proud that Shafirov was a Jew.”

Yet there were many Jews in Russia who were not afraid to merge with the bulk of the assimilating body, who devotedly espoused Russian culture.

In the old days, only a handful of Jews experienced this: Antokolsky, Levitan, Rubinstein, and a few others. Later there were more of them. Oh, they’ve fathomed Russia so deeply with their ancient and refined intuition of heart and mind! They’ve perceived her shimmering, her enigmatic play of light and darkness, her struggles and sufferings. Russia attracted their hearts with her dramatic fight between good and evil, with her thunderstorms and weaknesses, with her strengths and charms. But several decades ago, not a mere handful, but thousands of Jews entered Russian culture. And many of them began to identify sincerely as Russians in their souls, thoughts, tastes and habits. Yet there is still something in the Jewish soul, a sound, a dissonance, a small crack — something very small, but through it eventually distrust,

mockery and hostility leaks from the outside, while from the inside some ancient memory works away.

So, who am I? Who am I? Am I Russian?

No, no. I am a Russian Jew.

Indeed, assimilation apparently has some insurmountable limits. That explains the difference between full spiritual assimilation and cultural assimilation, and all the more so, between the former and widespread civic and social assimilation. Jews — fatefully for Jewry — preserve their identity despite all outward signs of successful assimilation, they preserve “the inner Jewish character” (Solomon Lurie).

The wish to fully merge with the rest of mankind, in spite of all strict barriers of the Law seems natural and vivid. But is it possible? Even in the 20th century some Jews believed that the unification of the mankind is the ideal of Judaic Messianism.

But is it really so? Did such an ideal ever exist?

Far more often, we hear vigorous objections to it: “Nobody will convince or compel me to renounce my Jewish point of view, or to sacrifice my Jewish interests for the sake of some universal idea, be it proletarian internationalism, (the one we idiots believed in the 1920s) or Great Russia, or the triumph of Christianity, or the benefit of all mankind, and so on.”

Nearly assimilated non-Zionist and non-religious Jewish intellectuals often demonstrate a totally different attitude. For instance, one highly educated woman with broad political interests, T.M.L., imparted to me in Moscow in 1967 that “it would be horrible to live in an entirely Jewish milieu. The most precious trait of our nation is cosmopolitanism. It would be horrible if all Jews would gather in one militarist state. It is totally incomprehensible for assimilated Jews.”

I objected timidly: “But it cannot be a problem for the assimilated Jews as they are not Jews anymore.” She replied: “No, we still have some Jewish genes in us.”

Yet it is not about the fatality of origin, blood or genes, it is about which pain — Jewish pain or that of the host nation — is closer to one’s heart. Alas, nationality is more than just knowledge of language, or an introduction to the culture, or even an attachment to the nature and way of life of the country. There is another dimension in it — that of the commonality of historic destiny, determined for each individual by his involvement in the history and destiny of his own people. While for others this involvement is predetermined by birth, for the Jew it is largely a question of personal choice, that of a hard choice. So far, assimilation has not been very convincing. All those who proposed various ways for universal assimilation have failed. The difficult problem of assimilation persists. And though on a global scale the process of assimilation has advanced very far, it by no means foredooms the Diaspora.

Even Soviet life could not produce a fully assimilated Jew, the one who would be assimilated at the deepest, psychological level. And, as a Jewish author concludes, “Wherever you look, you will find insoluble Jewish residue in the assimilated liquid.”

Yet individual cases of deep assimilation with bright life histories do occur. And we in Russia welcome them wholeheartedly.

* * *

“A Russian Jew ... A Jew, a Russian.... So much blood and tears have been shed around this boundary, so much unspeakable torment with no end in sight piled up. Yet, at

the same time, we have also witnessed much joy of spiritual and cultural growth.... There were and still are numerous Jews who decide to shoulder that heavy cross: to be a Russian Jew, and at the same time, a Russian. Two affections, two passions, two struggles.... Isn't it too much for one heart? Yes, it is too much. But this is exactly where the fatal tragedy of this dual identity is. Dual identity is not really an identity. The balance here is not an innate but rather an acquired entity.”

That reflection on the pre-revolutionary Russia was written in 1927 in the Paris emigration.

Some fifty years later, another Jew, who lived in Soviet Russia and later emigrated to Israel, looked back and wrote: “We, the Jews who grew up in Russia, are a weird cross — the Russian Jews.... Others say that we are Jews by nationality and Russians by culture. Yet is it possible to change your culture and nationality like a garment? When an enormous press drives one metal into another, they cannot be separated, not even by cutting. For decades, we were pressed together under a huge pressure. My national identity is expressed in my culture. My culture coalesced with my nationality. Please separate one from another. I am also curious which cells of my soul are of the Russian color and which are of the Jewish one. Yet there was not only pressure, not only a forced fusion. There was also an unexpected affinity between these intercrossing origins, at some deep spiritual layers. It was as if they supplemented each other to a new completeness: like space supplements time, the spiritual breadth supplements the spiritual depth, and the acceptance supplements the negation; and there was a mutual jealousy about chosenness. Therefore, I do not have two souls, which quarrel with each other, weaken each other, and split

me in two. I have one soul, and it is not two-faced, not divided in two, and not mixed. It is just one.”

And the response from Russia: “I believe that the contact of the Jewish and Slavic souls in Russia was not a coincidence; there was some purpose in it.”



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