

**A DECADE
OF DESTRUCTION**

**Jewish Culture in the USSR
1948—1958**

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CONGRESS FOR JEWISH CULTURE
25 East 78th Street
New York 21, N. Y.

Your meeting celebrated the 10th anniversary of the death of the heroes and martyrs who gave their lives in opposition to a tyranny whose totalitarian demands make it impossible to preserve intellectual and artistic integrity, and the traditions of a great people. Any observance that will keep alive the memory of these heroes will contribute to the vitality of a great spiritual inheritance. My greetings to all the people who are dedicated to this cause.

Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr

Introduction and Dedication

ON JANUARY 18, 1958, the Congress for Jewish Culture organized a meeting in New York which was attended by more than one thousand persons. The date was particularly significant, for it marked the day, ten years earlier, when Solomon Michoels, Director of the Yiddish State Theater in Moscow, was brutally murdered by the Soviets. The planned slaying of Michoels, in turn, was the signal for the deliberate program of extermination of Jewish culture and of its spokesmen throughout the USSR. In the decade from 1948 to 1958, Yiddish writers, poets, dramatists, journalists, artists and actors were physically liquidated, and their media of expression eliminated from the Russian scene.

The Congress for Jewish Culture, which had frequently called public attention to this cultural genocide, and had demanded an accounting from the Soviet authorities for their actions, sought through the meeting to present to the world the record of havoc wreaked on Jewish cultural life by the Soviet terror, to re-establish identity with the three million Jews who remain in the USSR, and to reassert the human right of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union to express itself through its own cultural media.

Among the speakers at the meeting, at which H. Bass, Executive Secretary of the Congress for Jewish Culture was chairman, were Jacob Pat, chairman of the Administrative Committee of the Congress, H. Leivick, well-known Jewish poet, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Congress, Ephraim Auerbach, poet and columnist of the *Jewish Day-Morning Journal*, Chaim Grade, poet and representative of the Yiddish Pen Club, Leon Crystal, staff writer for the *Jewish Daily Forward*, and former president of the New York Yiddish Writers Union, Mrs. Miriam

Broderson, widow of the late poet, Moshe Broderson, and Meyer Levin, the American author and playwright.

The talks given at the meeting are included in this pamphlet.

A number of distinguished public figures added their voices in protest. These included Governor Averell Harriman of New York, Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary, Prof. Sidney Hook of New York University, and Herman Wouk, the novelist. Their messages are given in these pages.

In January the popular New York television program "Night Beat," presented a discussion on the fate of the Jews in the Soviet Union. The participants included Dr. J. L. Teller, author of a number of books on Jewish questions, Harrison Salisbury, former head of the Moscow bureau of the *New York Times*, Rabbi Gilbert Klapperman, a member of an American rabbinical delegation which visited Russia, and Mrs. Broderson, a Yiddish actress whose late husband had been imprisoned and later sent to a Soviet concentration camp during the purge of Yiddish writers in Russia.

The meeting adopted the following resolution:

"The voice of three million Jews in Soviet Russia has been muted. Every expression of Jewish national life has been destroyed. Jewish culture in both languages has disappeared.

"In deep pain and anger we again express our protest against this liquidation. Assembled here in the Biltmore Hotel on the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the liquidation, we mark the historic murder upon the Jewish spirit and the Yiddish language committed by the Soviet regime. Through us the whole Jewish world is speaking. The democratic world demands an accounting from the Soviet Union.

"In full consciousness of our responsibility, we demand that the Soviet Union grant to Soviet Jewry the freedom to live creatively, that it be given the right to develop its own literature, schools and theaters in the Yiddish language.

"For the lives that have been destroyed there can be no reparation. But we demand that the decree of annihilation be revoked. Soviet Jewry should be given the opportunity to live a communal and cultural life in accordance with its spirit and desire.

"We also demand that Soviet Jews be accorded the right of contact with their brethren throughout the world, that the forcible separation of Jews from one another be abolished. The mass murder of the Soviet Yiddish writers, the destruction of Yiddish culture, should never and will never be forgotten."

The Congress for Jewish Culture dedicates this pamphlet to those who perished because they spoke in the tradition of their own cultural heritage.

The Annihilation of a Culture

A Report of the Congress for Jewish Culture

THIS YEAR 1958 marks a sad anniversary—it has been a decade since the Communist regime of Soviet Russia brutally annihilated Jewish culture in that country. For many years the full story of that annihilation was not revealed to the free world; It was kept as a secret behind the Iron Curtain, though occasional details leaked out.

However, about two years ago, the Kremlin's present rulers confirmed the worst fears of those who were long convinced that the Stalin regime had carried out a series of ruthless pogroms designed to stamp out Jewish culture in the Soviet Union. Mr. Harrison Salisbury reported in the *New York Times* of April 12, 1956 that the Warsaw Communist Yiddish-language newspaper, *Folks-shtime*, admitted on April 4th "that Soviet authorities liquidated a large number of Jews in literary, cultural and political fields in the years before Stalin's death in 1953..." The picture was one of excesses even more extensive than previously described. The list of Jewish victims published in Warsaw was longer than any that had been reported by anti-Communist groups!

Stalin's murder, imprisonment or exile of great numbers of Jewish writers coincided with the suspension of all Yiddish books, periodicals and newspapers, and with the closing of Jewish schools and theatres. Even those Yiddish writers who supported Stalin were silenced. He was not, therefore, merely attacking a group of individuals or a specific political or religious organization. He was lashing out against an entire people—against its culture, its language and every phase of its spiritual activity.

November 20, 1948, may be regarded as the date when the fate of Jewish culture was sealed. On that day the newspaper *Einikeit* appeared for the last time, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Com-

mittee was dissolved and the book publishing house "Emes" was closed. All other Jewish institutions were liquidated, except the Michoels Theatre, which survived for another year, although the name of Michoels had previously been erased from it. We now know that Solomon Michoels was murdered on January, 1948, ten months before the fate of Jewish culture was sealed.

Nearly 30 of the most famous and most talented Soviet Jewish writers, among them bearers of state decorations, were shot to death on August 12, 1952. Among those killed were Itzik Fefer, Peretz Markish, David Bergelson, Laib Kvitko, Dr. Elyahu Spivak, Sh. Persov, as well as Benjamin Zuskin of the Michoels Theatre, A Lozovsky, former leader of the Profintern and Director of the Soviet Information Bureau during the war against Hitler, and other active workers in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Hundreds of others underwent torture in Soviet prison camps.

Soviet Jewish culture was destroyed, not by a process of free, voluntary assimilation which, in previous years, Soviet Jewish writers had feared as a "kiss of death" which might bring about that culture's disappearance. It was destroyed by force and violence, by arrests, exile, shootings, by the closing of newspapers and publishing houses, of schools, theatres and scientific institutes, by quotas in higher education, etc.

There are some three million Jews in the USSR, almost one-third of world Jewry, second in number only to the American Jewish community. Ironically, under Soviet law Jews are still recognized as a distinct nationality. Their identity cards bear the legend "*Nationality: Jewish,*" just as the identity cards of Ukrainians bear the designation: "*Nationality: Ukrainian.*"

The plight of the Jews in the Soviet Union is unlike that of any other nationality. The others have their own republics; Jews do not. But under Lenin, and in the first decade of Stalin's rule, Soviet Jews did enjoy the prerogatives of other Soviet nationalities: They had their own Yiddish-language theatre, press, schools, colleges, scientific associations, and literary and research periodicals. It is true that all these institutions and instrumentalities were Communist-dominated, they were tied closely to Communist doctrine, and advocated a negative attitude toward Jewish his-

tory, tradition and culture. Yet the fate of the Jews did not differ, in this respect, from that of the other Soviet nationalities.

This changed in 1937, when the Soviet Union began the liquidation of all Yiddish cultural institutions, a liquidation which was complete by 1948. There are statistics which are sadly illustrative of this process of annihilation: In 1933-34 there were 18 Jewish theatres in the USSR; after the great purges in 1937-38, only 12 were left. By mid-1949, the Moscow Jewish State Theatre, the last Soviet Yiddish theatre, was shut down. The Jewish press suffered similarly. In 1918 there were 11 Yiddish dailies in the USSR; in 1935, only 4 dailies. Today a single 4 page newspaper, with a circulation of 1,500, an exact replica of the local Russian-language newspaper and devoid of all news relating to Jews, is published thrice-weekly in distant Biro-Bidjan. The Soviet authorities, have even barred admission of the Warsaw Communist Yiddish daily, *Folksstimme*, which does concern itself with Jewish news, however slanted and biased its presentation.

Since the elimination of Jewish activity in the Soviet Union a decade ago, the Congress for Jewish Culture, an international organization representing Jewish cultural institutions, writers, teachers and artists, had been attempting to determine the fate of the Jewish community there. A special research committee set up by the Congress for Jewish Culture prepared a list of 450 Jewish writers, painters, actors, musicians and other prominent cultural leaders who had been openly active in Soviet Russia until 1948. On numerous occasions, specific queries were forwarded to Soviet Government officials concerning the whereabouts of Jewish intellectuals who had disappeared from public view.

Queries on the Martyrs

The frequency of these queries was accelerated during the years following Stalin's death. On September 16, 1955, for example, the Congress for Jewish Culture sent a detailed memorandum to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Georgi N. Zaroubin, asking for information about Jewish writers and the status of Yiddish literature and the Yiddish press in the Soviet Union. A

few weeks later, the inquiry was repeated in a telegram to the Soviet Ambassador. No replies were received.

Again, on April 5, 1956, a memorandum was sent to Mr. Zaroubin which read in part: "Jewish public opinion has the right and the duty to demand official and concrete information as to the fate of the Jewish writers and their families—and especially as to what measures your Government is taking to re-establish the right to exist of the Jewish press, Jewish theatre, the Jewish school, Yiddish literature and public assembly." It also stressed that while books and newspapers appear in the Soviet Union in the language of other minority nationalities, Yiddish remains outlawed. This memorandum, too, remained unanswered.

Not until last year did a leading member of the Soviet Government issue a statement on this vital matter. Pressed on the issue of a revival of Soviet Jewish culture, Mikhail A. Suslov, member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and recently described in the *New York Times* as the "number two man" in the USSR, told a delegation of visiting Canadian Communists: "We have no intention to call back to life a dead culture."

Several volumes by Yiddish writers, liquidated in 1948-52, have recently been published in the USSR. They appeared in Russian translation, however, with no indication that their authors had been executed. No public apology has been made to this day to the families of the liquidated Yiddish writers and artists. Very little has been done for the survivors to redress the wrong committed against them as individuals, and nothing at all to restore the status of their culture. Nowhere in his address to the 20th Communist Party Congress did Khrushchev make any reference to the Jews, although he cited by name a long list of minorities persecuted in the last years of Stalin's rule.

On July 11, 1956, the Congress for Jewish Culture issued a public protest against the destruction of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union. This protest was signed by thirty-six leading American intellectuals, including Dr. George N. Shuster, Upton Sinclair, Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr, Prof. Sidney Hook, Edgar Ansel Mowrer and Prof. Horace M. Kallen. The Statement urged "freedom-loving individuals throughout the world to raise their

voices in protest against these acts of brutality and discrimination inflicted on an entire people. We want to register a vigorous denunciation of the frightful acts of genocide perpetrated, and apparently still condoned, by the Soviet regime."

The Congress for Jewish Culture is certain that it echoes the sentiments of Jews everywhere in calling upon the Soviet Union to restore the rights of the Jewish community in Russia. We demand of that Government: 1) A full report on the fate of the Jewish community. 2) An end to the policy of liquidation. 3) Liberation and rehabilitation of imprisoned Jewish writers and artists.

H. B. BASS

The Voices of Protest

WE ARE ASSEMBLED here as representatives of the American Jewish Community at the call of the Congress for Jewish Culture, an American and international organization which was established a decade ago for the furtherance of Jewish culture, literature, art, and education; and for the protection of cultural freedom and expression.

Participating in this gathering are Jewish writers, artists, educators and representatives of Jewish cultural, labor and fraternal organizations.

We are gathered here as free men in a democratic society to protest the liquidation of Jewish cultural institutions, of Jewish writers and cultural leaders in the Soviet Union. It is the historic right of our people to rise in defense of our co-religionists and brethren. For eighteen hundred years we have never broken our ties as a spiritual family. While participating fully in the social, economic and spiritual affairs of the countries, in which we were destined to live, we maintained the historic unity of our people, rising against oppression and surviving under the most adverse circumstances. This right to exist was denied for the first time only by the advent of totalitarianism. Even the Soviet Union in its basic social and legal structure recognized Soviet Jewry as a distinct nationality. There existed in the U.S.S.R. Jewish schools, theatres, publishing houses and research institutions. This represented the result of a half-century of Jewish political struggle for cultural self-determination and cultural survival.

This situation changed drastically 10 years ago. The process of extermination was at first sporadic, revealing itself in the disappearance, arrest and trial of individual writers and scholars, such as the late Dr. Zinberg, the Poets Izzy Charik and Moshe Kulbak. Beginning in January 1948 the liquidation of Jewish cultural institutions, writers, scholars, and cultural leaders took

place en masse. Over 450 Jewish intellectuals were involved in these persecutions.

There are some three million Jews in the U.S.S.R., almost one-fourth of world Jewry. Today this fourth of our nation is marked for cultural annihilation and destruction. It is our responsibility to come to the defense of our people. We are gathered in sorrow at the death of those who perished in prisons and labor camps, who vanished in the night after being taken from their homes. They died bravely defending the dignity of free men.

JACOB PAT

The Names of the Martyrs

I WANT TO PRESENT important details concerning the liquidation within the Soviet Union of Jewish cultural personalities and institutions. Since, to this day, the Soviet Government has issued no official statements on the matter, it has been necessary to assemble the facts on the basis of our own investigation and the gathering of testimony. We have also assembled a list of Yiddish writers, artists, actors and musicians who were alive during the middle of 1947 but of whom nothing was heard afterwards, as well as the list of Yiddish theatres which existed until their curtains were forcibly lowered.

Thus there vanished from the scene 238 Yiddish writers, 87 Jewish artists, 94 Yiddish actors and 19 Jewish musicians.

The destruction of Yiddish culture and the murder of the Yiddish writers was not an accident, but a result of a premeditated anti-Jewish policy. We start with the year 1936, though we could start earlier.

In 1936—A general wave of arrest of Yiddish writers and artists, among them Izzy Charik, Lev, Dunetz, Bronstein.

In 1937—The liquidation of Yiddish elementary, secondary and high schools. Arrest of Yiddish teachers and writers, among them Moshe Litvakov, Esther Frumkin, Moshe Kulbak, Max

Erick, Rachmiel Weinstein, Moshe Rafess, Buchbinder, Friedland, and others.

In 1938—Liquidation of the Jewish Kolvirts and the arrest of Professor Liberberg, Halkin, Heller, Dimentstein, Israel Zinberg, and others.

In 1939—Arrest of Henrich Ehrlich and Victor Alter, Zalman Reisin, Anna Rosenthal, Attorney Chernichov-Danieli.

(Soviet Russia was drawn into the war. The destruction of Jewish cultural life was temporarily halted.)

1948—The beginning of mass liquidation, of which this is the tenth anniversary.

During this decade we have been able to learn various details regarding the writers and artists who perished. Here is a report on some of these men:

The mass murder commenced in 1948 with the killing of the famous Yiddish actor, Professor Solomon Michoels, former chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, who was regarded as the leader of the Jewish community in Russia. He was murdered on a street in Minsk in a terrible manner—an automobile of the N.K.V.D. purposely ran him down. Details of this assassination were described some time ago by a Yiddish writer, Mendel Mann, in the Yiddish magazine *Goldene Kait*, and in October 1957, in the magazine *Mir Veln Lebn*, issued by a group of dissident Jewish Communists in Montevideo. In a battered condition, the body of Michoels was brought to Moscow for burial and there was a funeral with official ceremonies, arranged for the purpose of covering up the murder.

Those Who Died

David Bergelson was killed in prison, along with other Yiddish writers.

Peretz Markish was killed in prison. Before dying, he boldly challenged his executioners, saying: "You are Hitlerites. You are barbarians."

David Hoffstein died in an insane asylum.

Moshe Kulbak was killed in a concentration camp.

Der Nistor perished in a concentration camp.

Laib Kvitko was shot dead on August 12, 1952, along with several of his comrades.

One of the oldest and most prominent newspapers of Israel, *Haaretz*, on January 24, 1958, published information on the liquidation of Yiddish writers in Soviet Russia.

Following are some of the details:

A trial of 25 Jewish writers, artists and cultural leaders were held between the 11th and 18th of July, 1952. As a result of the trial, death sentences were pronounced a month later on 24 of the 25 accused. The death sentence pronounced on academician Lena Stern, a famous chemical scientist, was commuted to life imprisonment.

This group included Solomon Lozovsky, who was well-known in the international Socialist world. He had joined the Bolsheviks many years before. He had been the head of the Soviet Information Bureau during the period of World War II. After that he was Deputy Minister of the Interior. Four years after the liquidation, Khrushchev, in a conversation with a Canadian Communist editor, Salzman, said that this old devoted Bolshevik comrade, Solomon Lozovsky, had been innocently executed, after he was dragged into the "Crimean Affair."

The Heroism of Markish

During the trial, the poet Peretz Markish spoke. According to a report circulating among the Jewish intelligentsia in Moscow, his speech carried more weight and was more important than anything he had written throughout his life. His name should be remembered, if only because of this speech.

These are only a few examples. In the same manner, many other Yiddish writers and artists were shot, tortured, perished in prisons and concentration camps, or lost their minds and became invalids in Siberia.

Reports and rumors of this mass destruction of Yiddish culture and its creators began to reach us in 1948. In the beginning it was hard to believe. In the Jewish Labor Committee, a group of staff members was actively engaged in gathering the facts by various means. On the basis of such facts, demands for explanations were sent to the Soviet Government in Moscow and

the Soviet Ambassador in Washington. But there was no reply—only a dead silence. Material on this subject was transmitted from time to time by the Jewish Labor Committee to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. Appeals and resolutions on this matter were adopted by the Congress of Free Trade Unions, by the AFL and CIO. There were demonstrations in front of the Soviet Embassy and the Soviet Delegation to the U.N.

Besides the Jewish Labor Committee, action was also taken by the World Congress for Jewish Culture, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee and a number of other organizations. The I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers Union and the Yiddish Pen Club uttered protests and asked for an accounting from the Soviet leaders. The Yiddish press devoted articles and published material on this subject. A number of writers from America and Europe wrote and demanded explanations: "Cain, where are our brethren?"

To all this there was no reply. It was like crying in the wilderness.

During the first weeks of 1956, at the 20th Conference of the Communist Party in Moscow, when Khrushchev started the campaign to obliterate Stalin's and Beria's memories, there appeared semi-official confirmations of the murders—in Communist publications in Warsaw and later in New York, Paris and Buenos Aires.

During the last ten years we have demanded of Moscow:

1. Give us an official statement of the facts.
2. Let us know where their graves are located. Perhaps one is still rotting in lonely imprisonment or is wandering half-crazed in a concentration camp.

But to this very day there has been a shameless silence.

Three million Jews have been silenced and made spiritually desolate.

These are the brutal facts. We demand a reply. Once more we raise our voices in protest and call for an accounting.

LEON CRYSTAL

A Correspondent's Report

WHEN I WAS in Soviet Russia early in 1956, I made a number of attempts to obtain information from Soviet officials and from Soviet writers regarding the Yiddish writers, actors and cultural leaders who had vanished. It became my duty to bring the news from Russia that on August 12, 1952, twenty-six Yiddish writers were shot, and that among those executed were David Bergelson, Peretz Markish and Itzik Fefer.

Those who gave me that information told me too that the wives and grown-up children of the executed Yiddish writers were summoned to the office of the Chief Prosecutor in Moscow, where they were informed that their husbands (or fathers, had perished innocently, and that the traitor Beria was to blame for this. It was promised that those who had perished would be publicly exonerated. The Soviet Prosecutor also promised the widows of the executed writers that they would be given employment.

The local Communists at first called me a liar and assured their followers that my reports were a libel upon the Soviet Union. A few weeks later the Jewish Communists in Poland published information which confirmed my reports and brought additional facts regarding the extermination of the Yiddish writers and cultural leaders in Soviet Russia.

What Really Happened

As for myself, I was from the first convinced that the people from whom I got my information were among the most trustworthy and honest persons with whom I was able to get in touch regarding this tragic affair.

But I did not receive this information from the Soviet writers, though a few had promised to help me find out what happened to the vanished Yiddish writers and cultural leaders.

One of those who had promised me help was Boris Polyevoy, a Soviet writer who was an important official of the Soviet Writers

Union. I had become acquainted with Polyevoy in New York in 1955, when he visited America as head of a delegation of Soviet writers. At the time I was president of the I. L. Peretz Yiddish Writers Union. I was also president of the Writers' Union when, as correspondent of the *Forward*, I made a tour of the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1956.

Boris Polyevoy told me in New York that I could telephone or write him in care of *Pravda*, of which he is a member of the staff. I was in Moscow twice during my visit to the Soviet Union. Several times I telephoned *Pravda* and asked to be connected with Boris Polyevoy. I was asked to wait, and then was told that Polyevoy was not in office.

I left my name and the phone number of Moscow's Hotel National where I was stopping. No word came from Polyevoy. I wrote him a number of times and got no reply. A couple of weeks after my return to New York I received a letter in Russian from Boris Polyevoy in which he apologized for not answering me while I was in Moscow. His excuse was that he was then on a tour. This was mere camouflage, since several other well-known Soviet writers whom I met—including some who visited me at my hotel—told me that they had seen Polyevoy in Moscow during those days.

Other Soviet writers I met, either privately or during my visit to the Moscow Writers Club, gave no information whatsoever regarding the vanished Yiddish writers. This was not because the Soviet writers knew nothing, but because they were afraid to talk on forbidden subjects. One of these forbidden topics was the matter of the Yiddish writers.

In Moscow, I phoned the famous physician, Professor Vofsy, who was the major defendant among the accused Jewish doctors, and was exonerated after Stalin's death. The executed Yiddish actor and head of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, Solomon Michoels, was an uncle of Professor Vofsy. When I phoned Vofsy, a woman answered the telephone. I told her that I was a member of the New York *Forward* and president of the Yiddish Writers' Union in America, and that I would like to talk with Professor Vofsy, not about himself nor any political question, but about his late uncle Solomon Michoels, particularly about Michoels' legacy as an actor. I wanted to know whether

Michoels had left anything in writing regarding the theatre, and to learn about his last few months' work in connection with the stage.

The woman replied that this was interesting and that she would give the message to Professor Vofsy. Since I phoned in the morning, the woman asked me to call again in the evening; in the interim, she would discuss the matter with the Professor.

When I phoned that evening the same woman told me that, unfortunately, Professor Vofsy could not receive me, since he had to leave for Leningrad.

I had a similar experience in Kiev, where the well-known Jewish Ukrainian writer, Rybak, lives. One morning I phoned him. Again a woman's voice answered. I described myself and requested a talk with Rybak regarding literature in the Soviet Union, particularly present-day writing in the Ukraine. Again, the woman asked me to call in the evening; in the evening I was told that, regretfully, Rybak could not receive me, since he was leaving immediately for Kharkov.

The Interim Requests

American correspondents told me later that whenever a request is made to interview a prominent person in the Soviet Union one is told, if an immediate refusal is not forthcoming, to call again—which means that the interviewee wants to inquire of the proper government official as to whether he may grant an interview. Everyone does what he is told to do because he is afraid of the consequences of disobedience.

But despite the continual fear in the land of the Soviets, February, 1956 was a period when the entire population was hoping for better times. That was the period of the now historic 20th Conference of the All-Union Communist Party, at which Khrushchev made his famous anti-Stalin speech and laid bare the crimes of the Stalin era.

The three million Jews of the Soviet Union were then hoping for better times. There was even talk at that time that the Soviet Government would permit the publication of Yiddish books, a great literary anthology in Yiddish would be issued, that a Yiddish theatre would be revived, and that a theological seminary

would be opened where Jewish young men could study for the rabbinate. The Jews in the Soviet Union also hoped that anti-Semitism, which had become pronounced during Stalin's last years, would be combated by the new Soviet leaders.

These hopes came to naught. The only thing which the Soviet Government permitted was the opening of a small Yeshiva in Moscow for young men wishing to become rabbis. A few books by Yiddish writers—in Russian translation—were also issued.

As regards the question of anti-Semitism in countries having Communist regimes, I believe it is a libel on the peoples of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Russia to state that they are so violently anti-Semitic that their Communist governments are helpless against anti-Semitism and cannot combat it. These countries do not lack anti-Semites, but this does not mean that the Communist governments cannot fight anti-Semitism. If restrictions against Jews have been adopted in those countries, it is because Communist governments want it so.

The One Jewish General

In his interview with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Nikita Khrushchev protested against the accusation that the Soviet Government discriminates against Jews, pointing out that in the Soviet Union there is even a Jewish General. *One* Jewish General in the Soviet armies, in which so many Jews in the war against Hitler's Germany distinguished themselves in all ranks. *One* Jewish General in the armed forces of the Soviet Union! This alone is sufficient evidence that severe restrictions against Jews exists in the USSR.

In the same interview with Mrs. Roosevelt, Khrushchev also said that in time the Soviet Union would permit Jews to emigrate. But he did not say when, and under what circumstances, this could be expected.

The Soviet Government has permitted a considerable number of Jews, who are Polish citizens, and who went to Russia during the years of war against Hitler, to return to Poland. But as yet there are no indications that the Soviet Government intends to restore to the Jews even a small portion of the cultural-national rights to which they are entitled under the Soviet Con-

stitution, and under the Soviet laws which recognize Jews as a nationality.

But this does not mean that there are no prospects at all for an improvement in the condition of the Jews in the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders may pretend to be unconcerned about public opinion. In reality, they are sensitive to opinion in other countries.

Public opinion must be mobilized for the defense of the Jewish population in the Soviet Union, not only by means of such gatherings as this one but also by day-in and day-out efforts to enlighten progressive people in all civilized countries as to the anti-Semitic deeds of the present Communist regimes.

If the truth about anti-Semitism in the Communist countries becomes widely known in all civilized lands, it will blacken the reputation of Communist regimes in the eyes of that progressive intelligentsia, upon whom the Communists are very anxious to make an impression. And intellectuals here know that movements and regimes which are anti-Semitic cannot be other than reactionary.

Hope for Jews in Soviet Russia lies in an aroused and protesting world public opinion. Meetings such as this represent part of the work that is necessary to defend human rights, and the national rights of the three million Jews in Soviet Russia.

CHAIM GRADE

The Anti-Jewish Tradition In the USSR

THE LIQUIDATION OF JEWISH CULTURE in Russia began many years before the publication of Yiddish books was stopped and Yiddish writers were executed. The liquidation of Jewish culture started during the period when the "Yevsektzia," the Yiddish-language section of the Communist Party, flourished, when Hebrew-language culture was persecuted,

when traditional Jewish education and Jewish communal organizations were forbidden, when there developed a literature in Yiddish but not a Yiddish literature, a literature which was Jewish in form and language, but not in content.

The decline of Yiddish culture began through forced, as well as voluntary, assimilation, when Stalin declared that Jews were not a nationality, since they had no territory, no separate economic life and no separate language. On the pretext of liquidating Trotskyism, in the years 1936-38, Stalin liquidated the most important elements of Soviet Jewish culture. From Minsk to Biro-Bidjan, all schools, most newspapers, all scientific institutions, Jewish clubs were liquidated and many Yiddish writers and cultural leaders were sent to concentration camps or executed. After the German-Polish war, when Russia took western Ukraine and western White Russia, Soviet Yiddish writers came to Lemberg, Bialystock and Vilna and pleaded with the Soviet government officials to permit the preservation in those areas of the cultural institutions still in existence. But within one year the Russian commissars liquidated ninety per cent of the cultural institutions. Because he issued a plea for a Yiddish school in Vilna, Zelig Axelrod, a Yiddish writer of Minsk, was shot.

During the war years Jews were forced out of high posts in the civilian and military administrations. Jewish soldiers were accused of cowardice, even though they had fought bravely on all fronts; frequently Jews were murdered by the Soviet commanders of Partisan divisions. After the war the Soviets put the finishing touch to what the Germans had started. When I was in Vilna in 1945 I knew that the Moscow commissar, Suslov, who is today a member of the Politbureau, would not permit the opening of an orphanage for Jewish children who had been rescued. Moreover, great collections of books from the 110 Vilna synagogues, the YIVO and other libraries were rotting in a cellar which, during the German occupation, served as the Ghetto prison.

Fitting Jews to the Soviet Ideology

Even during the so-called good years, Yiddish writers were forced to depict in a purely negative manner the rabbi, merchant, intellectual, tradesman, Jewish villager, even the non-factory worker—all the groups which comprised the Jewish population and which constituted the Jewish way of life. The Jewish economic system, as well as spiritual visage, was painted in dark colors and sentenced to death.

"I am the man who saw the pain through the rod of his anger." During the war years I saw the voluntary or forced martyrdom of Yiddish writers in Moscow, their suffering as they attempted to fit themselves into the Communist ideology. On orders of the Communist Party Yiddish writers were forced to sing the praises of "the brotherhood of the Soviet peoples," though they were aware of the participation of the Ukrainians and Byelorussians in the German mass-extermiation of Jews. Yiddish writers were forced to laud Soviet patriotism; later they were afraid to mourn the mass-murder of Jews, lest they be accused of Jewish nationalism. Still, Yiddish writers made every effort to remain loyal to the regime. I have told elsewhere how Bergelson tried to dissuade me from leaving Russia and comforted himself with the phrase: "It pays to make sacrifices for Socialism." Peretz Markish insisted that he was free, and Laib Kvitko, who was later shot, in bidding me good-by, admonished, "Don't slander the Soviet Union!"

During the years I spent in Russia I came to the conclusion that there were many factors which caused Soviet Yiddish writers to accept Bolshevism and to betray their own conscience, whether knowingly or unknowingly. First, there was the perennial fear of talking differently, even of thinking differently. Then there was the isolation from the entire Jewish world, and the impact of Soviet propaganda to the effect that everywhere outside Russia Jews were being pogromized. Third, there was the "Yevseksia" war on Jewish spiritual values. But the loyalty of the Yiddish writers to the Soviet regime did not help—even when they were supposedly free and creative. They were insulted and discriminated against, as compared with the writers of other Soviet nationalities.

But let no one conclude that because these writers in Russia were adherents of the Communist regime we need not mourn them and protest their extermination. We dare not judge them, since we were not in their situation. We cannot know how much they suffered in silence, nor need we be more pious than were our grandparents. There is a Judaic law and a Jewish tradition to the effect that a Jew who perishes because he is a Jew is a martyr for Judaism, even though he did not wish to die for his Jewishness. The Yiddish writers in Russia were brutally tortured and destroyed only because they were Jewish writers.

EPHRAIM AUERBACH

Liberation Will Come

ON THIS TENTH ANNIVERSARY of the beginning of the physical extermination of Yiddish and Hebrew literature and Jewish culture and communal life in the Soviet Union, we stand in tragic, painful wonderment and ask: *How did it happen?* There are events which oppress you with their incomprehensibility, they are beyond human understanding, one cannot find the words for rage and protest. Even the Soviet regime, which during four decades tried constantly to convince us that everything was possible there, that it regards the most senseless idiocy as "revolutionary logic," even the Soviet regime, I say, did not prepare us psychologically for the extermination of dozens of Yiddish writers, actors, cultural leaders.

We were aware that the regime had placed a strait-jacket on Jewish creativity, and certainly the hymns in praise of Stalin in Soviet Yiddish poetry were repugnant to us. We certainly couldn't forget the nightmare of insults which were continually hurled against Yiddish writers in America and other countries by Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union. Yet we remembered the strait-jacket in which the regime had placed Jewish creativity. And so we were often inclined to forgive.

We knew also that non-Jewish writers were working under duress, that Russian writers and Russian creativity in general were chained to the Soviet machine. But the physical extermination of Yiddish writers and artists is so senseless that to this day we don't understand it.

The physical extermination began in January, 1948, when the Stalin regime murdered Solomon Michoels in the most brutal manner, in a method by which gangsters get rid of an opponent. What then is it that we don't understand? We don't understand why it was necessary to torture and murder for the purpose of exterminating Yiddish literature and culture. Woudn't it have been sufficient to issue a decree to stop the publication of Yiddish books, to close Yiddish schools and theatres? Who would have dared to open his mouth against such a decree by the Kremlin?

That is why I said that we still stand in tragic amazement at the phenomenon of the extermination of Yiddish literature, culture and communal life in the Soviet Union.

I confess that often I awake in the middle of the night in a sweat. In sleep I hear the tortured cries of a David Bergelson, a Peretz Markish, a Nistor. Out of the dark N.K.V.D. basements came their cries filled with the pain that comes from the senselessness of their lives and their eventual deaths! The utter senselessness of being loyal to the Soviet regime and then paying with their lives for this loyalty. The senselessness of looking into one's own face—into the distorted, pain-wracked face—and not being able to understand the reason for it all.

Our imagination falters in trying to picture the nightmares—spiritual and physical—which the Yiddish writers, artists and cultural leaders had to endure on the brink of death.

We have received detailed reports of the Yiddish writers, in prison. They had been totally degraded. That was the real aim of the Soviet regime. That is always the aim of a dictatorial regime—to degrade the human being, to break his resistance, to insult him, so that others might learn not to raise their voices against the regime. After the prisoner is deprived of his humanity, he is murdered.

In the depths of our people the wound of Jewish slaughter is never healed. We have historic memories. We are historic

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expropriated and bathed in the blood and tears of innumerable innocent victims, the bandits who engage in immoral orgies on the pretext that they are working for the salvation of mankind.

Yes, the human being whose soul they would save they torture and maim in prison, in concentration camps, in exile, while they praise the dog, paint him and will probably erect monuments to him as to a new idol.

They shoot down Peretz Markish, they murder Moshe Kulbak, they destroy David Bergelson. They bring David Hoffstein to madness through a death-sentence. They permit Der Nistor to die in jail. They lead Moshe Broderson to a heart attack brought on by long years of torture in a slave labor camp. Our entire Yiddish culture they denigrate and bespatter. So it was during Stalin's era; it remains so after Stalin.

They trample upon our people, as a people. They sink their poisonous fangs on the State of Israel, desiring to destroy it. They want to push our people off the arena of history, to throw it into the dark void of non-existence. Jews are not a nation, proclaims their court-lackey Ilya Ehrenburg. They wish to finish what Hitler had no time to carry out.

Just draw this picture, and you will feel the shudder, the fright, enveloping your brain. Draw the picture of Peretz Markish, who dedicated all his talent to the Stalin idol, who, cornered by Stalin torturers, the so-called judges, cried out: "You are partners of Hitler. Cains!" And they, the Cains, do what the Cains have always done—they shoot their Stalinist bullets, into the tortured Markish.

Who did it? It wasn't only Stalin who did it. The present-day Soviet rulers had, and still have, a hand in it. Their hands, too, are smeared with the blood of innocent victims, no less than Stalin's hands.

And it's not only the official rulers—the hands of all Soviet writers are smeared with the blood of these abased and tortured Yiddish writers. Soviet literature is guilty of murder and treason toward their fellow-writers—all of it! No false excuses—all of them are guilty! Among the guilty are a number of Yiddish writers in America and in other lands who were silent and who,

even today, accept without protest the extermination of Yiddish and Hebrew literatures and their writers in Russia. Even today they live under one roof and are at peace with the exterminators—all of them are dark-souled Ehrenburgs. Their hands too are smeared with blood. Let this be made clear.

Their flirtation with culture, with literature, with art will not help them, whether it is done here, or in Argentina, or in Paris. They are living under the same roof with the exterminators, they are blasphemers of tortured Yiddish literature, because they are resting upon the blood of a Markish, a Nistor, a Kulbak, a Broderson, a Hoffstein, a Charik, a Dobruzhin, a Zinberg, a Bergelson, a Kvitko, a Michoels, a Zuskin.

Soviet literature, Soviet art and science are guilty, as are all those who, after the Stalinist pogrom, still remain comrades of the pogromists. (Those who leave the gang should be welcomed.)

Find the grave of every innocent tortured victim of the Soviet prisons and Soviet torture camps. Find the grave and raise the tortured victim from the depths of the earth. Lift him high, not through a rocket to void, but lift him and carry him over the heads of all the Kremlin rulers, over the heads of all the writers who were partners in murder or were silent about murder. Carry the victim over their heads and cry out: *The trial is now commencing. The trial is only now commencing.*

MIRIAM BRODERSON

An Eyewitness to Terror

I AM NO HEROINE and don't want to pose as one. But neither do I wish to live as a coward. That is why I want to reveal to you, and to the entire world, the truth about the murder of the Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union.

It began in 1948. The first victim was Michoels. He was murdered on the 13th of January. On the 14th of January we received a telephone call at the theatre which informed us that Michoels had been killed. Five minutes later a second telephone call carried the threat: "Your leading Jew has been murdered and now we'll get after all of you."

So it begin. Newspapers were closed. The Yiddish State Theatre, the Anti-Fascist Committee, the dramatic school named after Michoels, were closed too. Later the arrests began.

The first to be arrested was Fefer, then that great actor of the Yiddish State Theatre in Moscow, Benjamin Zuskin. He was followed by Bergelson, Der Nistor, Halkin, Hoffstein, Dobruzhin, Shneuer.

My husband was arrested 16 months afterward. But the intervening year was a terrible one. Every minute, every second we kept thinking we were being followed.

I would meet the wives of the arrested writers where I worked. But each meeting was a painful one. They would greet me, but none of them would speak to me. I would somehow feel guilty. I was ashamed that my husband was free. But in the end my husband too was arrested. And so now I became a member of their wretched family.

After my husband had spent 10 months in prison, I was called to the M.G.B., the Ministry of Security, and I was told that my husband had been sentenced to 10 years in a concentration camp.

I begged to be allowed to see my husband. I was told with a smile to run as quickly as possible to the Butirskaya Prison, where I would be permitted to see him. And I really did run to the prison! But when I got there I was told that my husband had been removed from the prison a week before.

We, the wives of the arrested writers, were permitted to bring 200 rubles to the prison every month. When our husbands were transferred to the concentration camp, we were told that those who got 10-year sentences were permitted to receive a letter once a month, while they in turn were permitted to write twice a year.

Even after August 12, 1952, when Markish, Kvitko, Bergelson, Fefer, Zuskin and others were killed, their wives still kept bringing 200 rubles a month to the prison. Later on the widows were exiled into the interior of Russia.

During the same year, toward the end of 1952, the arrests of the Jewish doctors and professors began. As I recollect, on the 5th, 6th and 7th of March, 1953 a public trial of these people was scheduled to be held in the House of the Trade Unions. The indictment was to be read by Ilya Ehrenburg. But a miracle took place. On the 5th, 6th and 7th of March Stalin was lying in state in the same place.

After Khrushchev's speech, the authorities began to free people from the concentration camps, and to rehabilitate them. Our husbands, those who were still alive, returned home.

Der Nistor died in the concentration camp. Dobruzhin died in the camp. Shneuer died in the camp. David Hoffstein, on learning that he was sentenced to death, became unbalanced. But in Russia they don't shoot sick people. He was sent to a prison mental ward. When he recovered he was shot.

After our husbands' return, the wives of the executed writers were also rehabilitated and returned to Moscow. Why they were exiled and rehabilitated no one knows; no one will probably ever know.

When the wives returned to Moscow they begged the government prosecutors for news of the fate of their husbands. In reply they were told: "We don't know where they are. The documents have become lost. They have to be found."

They were put off from week to week, from month to month. In 1956 they were finally informed that their husbands had been executed.

Now we demand that those who came into power after Beria and Stalin state publicly where in the Soviet Union are the graves of the murdered Yiddish writers.

Comments from the Press

Letter to a Dead Writer

Wolf Mankowitz

Yesterday was the tenth anniversary of the beginning of Stalin's program of extermination of Jewish writers and artists in the Soviet Union, signaled by the murder of actor-director Solomon Michoels. It was followed by the extermination of all leading Jewish writers, and subsequently by the persecution of the 3,000,000 Jews in the Soviet Union, a policy which Khrushchev continues to this day.

The Jews have always been a thorn in the side of the Communists because under Marxist-Leninist doctrine they are a residual primitive tribe which, under socialism, will be assimilated into the general culture. In order to "assimilate" them, the Soviets had to set up Yiddish schools and universities to indoctrinate them in their own language. After thirty-odd years they suddenly realized that what had been created was a Yiddish culture which stubbornly insisted on preserving its own identity and nationality. The persecution has gone on ever since. World Jewish leaders are seeking to get the Soviets to allow Soviet

Jews to leave the country and emigrate to Israel.

The following memorial to the dead Jewish writers of the Soviet Union was written by Wolf Mankowitz, noted British author ("A Kid for Two Farthings" and "Laugh Till You Cry").

DON'T LET this letter give you the impression that you are remembered. Along with other Soviet novelists like your friends Bergelson, Der Nistor, Markish, Hoffstein, Dobruzhin — together with the poets Fefer, Kvitko, Moshe Kulbak, Kushnirov and Ezra Fininberg you were forgotten as soon as you were executed and buried.

You are all as dead as the authoritarian tyrant Stalin who caused you to die. But more forgotten.

Why then should I suddenly remember you? Especially why on an occasion from which you are so carefully excluded? Why, as I walk around the Soviet Book Exhibition (where not a single one of your books is present) should you be the Soviet author of whom I am most aware?

All the Tongues

There are plenty of books for the people here, inexpensive well produced books in Armenian and Byelo-Russian. There are novels in Georgian, poems in Azerbidjanian, history in Estonian. There is great literature of the Buriat Mongols—and there are important works in the Kazakhian tongue.

All the tongues of the Soviet Union are heard here, even the strange rare ones of the few thousands who speak Vigary and Tadziki.

Perhaps you weren't a good enough writer to be represented. Maybe your poet and novelist friends didn't produce work of sufficient merit to justify the continued interest of the State Publishing houses. Only the best is good enough for the people. Maybe none of you wrote anything good enough to survive.

And yet, up to 1930 there were at least 500 professional writers working in the same language as you. Between 1917 and 1948 three thousand authors in your mother tongue were published within the U.S.S.R. None of them are here either.

Could you all have been so bad? Was nothing of them worth keeping in print? Was there nothing worth preserving of all that laughter, the fury of your protests against injustice, the passion of your suffering, and the dignity of your labor?

We know that between 1948 and 1952 Stalinism and Stalinist bureaucracy wiped your culture off the pages of the not always glorious history that followed the glorious October.

Your newspapers and publishing houses, your theaters, discussion groups, your actors, authors, poets and journalists were extinguished.

Your language became an invisible one without legal existence. Authority didn't recognize it—so it wasn't there.

Officially there was no interest in your books any more—so they disappeared.

But Stalin is as dead as you are. Today the Soviet Union leaders call for peaceful co-existence, for cultural co-operation between peoples, for the right of minority peoples to their freedom and to their own autonomous national cultures.

So where is your language, your culture, your autonomy? Where is Yiddish?

The official explanation is no doubt similar to that heard often in the capitalist West. "There is no demand and therefore no need to supply it."

But there are 3,000,000 Jews in the Soviet Union and more than a third of them speak Yiddish—a language as expressive, as poetic, as warm and as vital as you and your dead comrades once were.

At the same time as Russian was being used by revolutionary writers to convey the unfamiliar truths of freedom to the people, Yiddish also was a weapon in the pen and mouths of fighters whose suffering and deprivation, whose knowledge for the need for revolt and whose sense of the dignity of human existence were profound.

What happened to the voice of the people? Was it suddenly struck dumb? Did they, the 3,000,000

alive in Russia after the Hitlerite and the Stalinist insanities had passed, all suddenly in one voice begin to speak Russian or Armenian or Kazakhian?

Not Very Clear

I addressed this inquiry in the first place to various Soviet friends who are unable to give me a very clear explanation.

I am asking the same question of the Soviet officials who (like all officials) must necessarily take a long time to reply.

I now put the query to you because being a Soviet writer, and being a Yiddish writer, and being

a dead one, you may be able to tell me whether, in those shades of obscurity to which the practice of your national culture resulted in your being condemned, you have seen somewhere around the place a dead language answering to the name of Yiddish.

Suddenly, after not remembering you for so long, I walk around this polite civilized book exhibition at the innocuous Tea Center in Regent Street, and ask myself is it possible that you, who were a Soviet writer by profession, were also, in the end a Jew by extinction. (*N. Y. Herald-Tribune, January 14, 1958*).

Commemorating a Mass Murder

Dr. S. Margoshes

Next week marks the tenth anniversary of the ruthless destruction by the Soviet government of the last vestiges of Jewish culture along with the remaining Jewish writers in the Soviet Union. In a manner strongly reminiscent of Nazi tactics, the last Jewish newspapers and publishing houses were closed down and the Yiddish writers, among them poets and novelists of distinction, such as Itzik Fefer, David Bergelson and Der Nistor, were rushed to the G.P.U. dungeons and put to death. Indeed, one has to go back to the darkest days of Nazi barbarism to find a parallel to these unspeakable atrocities perpetrated upon Jewish culture and its creators by the Soviet rulers.

Shall these heinous crimes

against the Jewish people and its culture go unremembered? There is a tendency in some Jewish circles to forget the recent past and its horrors. However, even if this tendency might be defended on the ground that there has been definite indications of a change of heart on the part of some section of the German people, there is certainly no justification for forgetfulness, let alone forgiveness, in the case of the Soviet Union, where the culture of the Jewish people alone among the cultures of all other peoples inhabiting the Soviet territory, is banned and under virtual sentence of death. The fact is that officially and publicly the Soviet government has never confessed the murder of the Jewish writers, has never cleared

their names, and thus far has not removed the ban on Jewish newspapers, the publication of Jewish books, the Jewish theater, Jewish schools, Jewish association, or any other manifestation of Jewish culture. To all purposes and intents, Comrade Khrushchev has been continuing the anti-Jewish policies of Comrade Stalin.

One can readily see why the tenth anniversary of the liquidation of Jewish culture, along with the Jewish cultural leaders, by the Soviet government should be widely observed both as a day of deep mourning and flaming protest against the inhumanity of a regime of tyranny and murder which has the effrontery to speak, in and out of season, in the name of justice and humanity and peace. The world must not be permitted to forget what the Soviet tyrants did to Jewish culture and Jewish writers, and the Soviet masters must be on notice that the world's eyes will continue to be centered on the injustices even

now meted out to the Jewish population, which is singled out for cultural genocide by the Soviet Union.

In this connection it is noteworthy that the Congress of Jewish Culture has arranged a great protest meeting in commemoration of the mass murder of Jewish writers by the Soviet government this coming Sunday, January 12th at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City. Outstanding Yiddish writers, together with some of the leading American intellectuals, among them Reinhold Niebuhr, will deliver addresses, speaking out of the heart and mind of the American people and American Jewry. Those who value humanity and cherish Jewish culture, will, I am sure, be there. It is important to make the demonstration as impressive as possible. See you next Sunday afternoon at the Biltmore Hotel. (*Jewish Day-Morning Journal*, January 9, 1958).

Other Press Comment

Other press comments during the anniversary of the liquidation of Jewish culture in Soviet Russia included news stories, editorial comment and letters published in leading newspapers.

In a letter to the *New York Times*, seven prominent American writers (Saul Bellow, Leslie Fiedler, Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin, Philip Rahv, Lionel Trilling and Robert Penn Warren) appealed to the Soviet Government to permit its Jews to emigrate. Noting

the persecution to which Soviet Jews were exposed, the writers pointed out that the State of Israel is ready to receive Soviet Jews and that other countries too would be happy to make use of their talents.

* * *

Jacob Glatstein, in the *Day-Journal*, January 12, 1958:

"We should above everything else call attention to the dire situation of all Soviet Jews, who have simply been robbed of their

elementary rights to live as Jews. It is said that they wish to assimilate. But they themselves are not allowed to utter their desires, either in Yiddish or in Hebrew, while in the Russian language they are dumb and panicky. This forced assimilation is such as must give a signal to all sorts of anti-Semites that Jews are isolated and without protection, without their own cultural base. And in their panic the Soviet Jews are thrown into an iron trap, since they are not allowed to escape from such an impossible life."

* * *

S. Dingol in the *Day-Journal*, January 18, 1958:

"The Yiddish language and culture in Soviet Russia have not died. They live in the hearts of three million Jews who still remember the days when the EMES was a Yiddish-language PRAVDA, but still a newspaper and a literature which was published in Jewish script. It is therefore well that last Sunday's meeting did not bear the character of a memorial but rather of a protest. It wasn't only the dead that were mourned. Demands were made upon the living as well, upon the wielders of power in Soviet Russia, to return the loot, the spiritual wealth of which they robbed us and the world in which they wish to be recognized as the leaders of a civilized country."

* * *

Moshe Elbaum in the *Forward*, January 13, 1958:

"The few surviving Yiddish writers are now walking around

like shadows. Such writers as S. Halkin and Itzik Kipnis are very ill. Others must engage in all sorts of occupations to earn their bread. Auslander and Wendorf are lying in hospitals. The most terrible thing about this tragedy is that even the liberated and miraculously surviving writers have up to now not been exonerated of their accusations of espionage and treason. They were released from the forced-labor camps and prisons out of a motive of pity, since they were old and sick and unfit for work, but the marks of shame have not been erased. Neither have the dead been rehabilitated; all efforts of their widows and orphans to exonerate their husbands and fathers of the shameful accusations have remained unanswered—up to now, in the days of Khrushchev."

* * *

A. Glantz in the *Day-Journal*, January 15, 1948:

"For this brutality there is only one parallel during the past 1,800 years—Hitler's masacre of our people. This parallel indicates the sort of accounting we have to ask of Communism. It is certainly in order to demand—always, every day—that all restrictions upon the functioning of the Jewish spirit should cease in Russia, that the Jewish word over there be permitted to catch its breath, to flourish again. But even long before 1948 innumerable Jewish educational institutions were closed and hundreds of Jewish writers, cultural and social workers were imprisoned and murdered."

Messages

GOVERNOR AVERELL HARRIMAN
NEW YORK

Free people everywhere are with you in spirit as you again meet to protest the execution of prominent Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union and the continued suppression of Jewish culture in the USSR. The brutal and summary execution of the Yiddish writers shocked the entire civilized world, and was another example of the horrors that prevail in the iron cage of communism.

You do well to keep green in memory the names of others who died heroically defending the cause of free thought and free speech, the essential base upon which men build lives of human decency and dignity.

We must all continue working closely together—men and women of all groups and creeds, of all tongues and colors—to hasten the day when the people behind the Iron Curtain will again enjoy their God-given rights to individual liberty, cultural entity, and national independence.

HERMAN WOUK

The world looks anxiously to Soviet Russia for signs that the harsh excesses of the Salin regime belong wholly to the past and that the Soviet wish for peaceful co-existence is earnest.

The status of its Jewish community has always been a strong clue to a nation's general intentions. A most dramatic sign of Soviet recognition of the principle of peaceful diversity would be the restoring to Russian Jews of complete freedom to follow their ancient religion and to teach it to their children; and to emigrate to Israel, those who wanted to help in re-building the traditional homeland.

Everyone knows that the Communists believe the preservation of religion to be a useless waste of human energy; also that they strongly disagree with many policies of the State of Israel. That

is why these measures would so greatly raise international hopes. Until the world really believes that those who disagree with the Communists have a chance to go their ways peacefully, there will be no disarmament, no lessening of the horrible precariousness of life.

When some Soviet leaders recently fell from power and yet were not executed, this fact spoke more strongly to the hearts of men and to their hopes for peace than all the formal declarations of the government since the death of Stalin. The restoration of unqualified freedom to the large Russian Jewish Community would be a development just as major and just as striking in the eyes of the nations.

SIDNEY HOOK

The suppression of a free Jewish culture and the liquidation of its chief representatives are not unique phenomena in the Soviet Union. The free culture of every ethnic minority lies under the same ban. Could it be any different in view of the fact that the culture of the Russian people is itself shackled, and affairs of the mind administered by the police?

The propaganda about ethnic democracy in the Soviet Union, so widely distributed in previous years, turns out to be a ghastly lie. The truth is that where genuine cultural and political democracy are absent, where there is no recognition of the right to be different and to develop authentic and autonomous forms of culture, "ethnic democracy" is a hoax, really a contradiction in terms.

What exists in the Soviet Union is not "ethnic democracy," but an "ethnic equality," an equality in bondage, not an equality in freedom. All peoples have the equal right to praise the Kremlin dictatorship in their own language—with the exception of Hebrew.

Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union wears many masks. The Kremlin dictators, like despots before them, are showing a tendency to use the Jews as scapegoats wherever possible to draw from themselves the indignation and resentment of a people deprived of their freedoms. That is why freedom for the Jewish and other ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union is part of the basic struggle of the Soviet peoples to liberate themselves from the suppression of the police state.

A R E Q U E S T

May we of the Congress for Jewish Culture ask that you join us in making this a nation-wide protest against the cultural genocide that is now being perpetrated upon the Jewish people in Soviet Russia? We would appreciate it highly if you would communicate with us on this matter.

We trust you will make an effort to bring this problem to the attention of the particular public you are able to reach through your particular media. The Congress for Jewish Culture is anxious to get as wide a response as possible from American intellectual and spiritual leaders.

We hope to hear from you.

HAS SOVIET RUSSIA CHANGED ?

SOVIET RUSSIA HAS FINALLY ADMITTED THE LIQUIDATION OF
JEWISH CULTURE AND THE EXECUTION OF JEWISH ARTISTS AND
WRITERS . . . THE SUPPRESSION OF THE YIDDISH PRESS AND
PUBLICATIONS.

WE PROTEST

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN RUSSIA
THE LIQUIDATION OF JEWISH WRITERS AND ARTISTS
THE SUPPRESSION OF THE YIDDISH PRESS AND PUBLICATIONS

WE DEMAND

A FULL REPORT ON THE FATE OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY
AN END TO THE POLICY OF LIQUIDATION
LIBERATION OF IMPRISONED JEWISH WRITERS AND ARTISTS
FREEDOM FOR JEWISH CULTURAL ACTIVITIES
FREEDOM FOR THE YIDDISH PRESS

RIGHTS FOR THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN RUSSIA

Congress for Jewish Culture

25 EAST 78th STREET

NEW YORK 21, N. Y.

HAS SOVIET RUSSIA CHANGED?

The question of whether or not the Soviet Union has changed since the end of the Second World War is a subject of great interest to the American people. This book is a study of the changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union since 1945.

WE PROTEST

The American people have a right to know the truth about the Soviet Union. We protest against the policy of appeasement which has been followed by the United States government since the end of the Second World War.

WE DEMAND

A more active role for the United States in the world. We demand that the United States government should stand up for the principles of democracy and freedom which it claims to cherish.

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