

but he gave no sign of recognition. It was as though we had never met. And once again the prayer at the Kiev synagogue came to mind. "Our brethren, all the Children of Israel, distress, captivity . . ." The words hovered—might they not embrace this diplomat going down the gangplank?

Chapter Two •

RUSSIA, 1946 — RUIN AND HOPE

Twelve years elapsed between my first visit to the Soviet Union and the second. And much transpired during this period. The Locust had been over the land—trumped-up trials, brutal purges, Nazi Pact—and had stripped the Kremlin towers of their golden varnish. Then came the Flood, the Second World War, which washed away all that was before, including the shock of the purges and the anger at the pact. The Western world was willing to forgive and forget. The man who had maneuvered the intervention in Russia when the Bolsheviks took power, Winston Churchill, went on the radio on June 22, 1941, to give the Communist leaders, in their darkest hour, moral support and a promise of all-out aid.

Clouds of distrust hung over the heads of both the Allied states and the Soviet Union even as they tried to work as one against the common deadly enemy. One side suspected the other of machinations behind its back, betrayal of the common cause, and possibly seeking a separate peace at the other's expense. But the hearts of the people in the West went out to the suffering Russians. Everywhere throughout the Allied world there were organizations for Russian war relief, to aid the civilian population of the Soviet Union. American people to whom Communism was the devil incarnate took coats off their backs to send to the freezing Russians, and removed watches

from their wrists for the use of Red soldiers on the battlefield. And such sentiments were by no means one-sided.

In the Soviet Union there was a ground swell of gratitude and good will toward the American people such as had not existed since the famine of 1920, when peasants burned incense before a picture of Herbert Hoover, the director of American Relief, alongside that of the Virgin Mary. Out of the fortress of isolation and hostility in the East began coming harbingers of friendship and amity. Primarily, these were in the nature of like unto like. To effectuate contacts, groups were organized in Russia that corresponded, more or less, to existing groups in the United States and elsewhere—an All-Slav Congress for contacts with friendly Slav groups abroad, an Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Women to get in touch with women's organizations abroad, an Anti-Fascist Committee of Soviet Scientists for contacts with scientists everywhere, and a Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee for contacts with Jews abroad. Soviet citizens who had not dared communicate with relatives in the United States for many years now began writing to them. An agency was opened in Moscow to seek out, in the Soviet Union, long-lost relatives and friends of American citizens. Racial and national minorities in the Soviet Union were encouraged to communicate with their kin in the United States, appealing to common national origin or adherence to the same faith—both heretofore regarded as antisocial superstition. Thus, these two human weaknesses, race and religion, were tapped as new sources of comfort, resistance, and courage in the desperate struggle. Priest and minister, rabbi and mullah, were now seen, even exhibited, at state functions.

The fraternal enthusiasm here in the United States and its reflection in the Soviet Union, the contacts and visits, were, of course, the effervescence of an emotional state generated by the war and given expression by the exigencies of the war. Practical people did not expect the new attitude to go on forever. Indeed, there were some in America who had already thought of a possible round with the Russians after the first round, with the Germans, had been brought to a successful conclusion. And there were experienced people in the Soviet Union who were avoiding Western contacts even then, fearing a day of reckoning after

the war. But the doubters were far out on the fringe of the world stage. The people, both here and in Russia, hoped that much of the new spirit and many of the established contacts would carry over into the era of peace. And the political leaders, the policy makers, of the Allied nations shared this hope. They looked forward to years of good feeling toward, or at least reconciliation with, the Russians. Even Winston Churchill expected a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union. A friendly visitor to Russia at the conclusion of hostilities, he was touched by the evidence of the terrible ordeal the Russians had endured during the war. The "blood and tears" of which he spoke were nowhere more literal than in Russia. He was also impressed by the great sacrifices the Russians were making to rebuild their country. The Visitors' Book of Stalingrad contains his glowing tribute to the people of that heroic city, in radiant words only he could conjure up.

The new currents of the war years did not bypass the Jewish community in the Soviet Union. Leading Jewish personalities who had avoided identification with their people now returned to the fold, or were advised to do so. Names of ancient Jewish personalities seldom mentioned before, like the Maccabees, Rabbi Akiba, Yehudah Halevi, were on many lips at the front. On August 24, 1941, world Jewry was happily astonished to hear over the radio a voice from Moscow, in Yiddish, addressing itself to the Jews the world over as *brider yiden*, Jewish brethren. The voice was that of the Jewish Communists, but no such salutation had ever come from them before. In fact, there had never come even an indirect suggestion of fraternal relationship with Jews elsewhere. Previously, Soviet Communist Jewish leaders had taken cognizance of the existence of Jews in other parts of the world only to fulminate against them. Even Jewish Communist groups in other lands had rarely received a kind word or a favorable comment. Then suddenly all Jews everywhere became to them *brider yiden*, brother Jews.

The assimilated Ilya Ehrenburg, who in 1948 was to deny for all Soviet Jews any relationship to Jews in other lands, strode over to the microphone to tell the world that the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union reminded him of his Jewish origin, that his mother's name was Hannah, and that he took pride in being

a Jew. He told the Jews in Nazi captivity to wear the yellow patch "Jude" as a mark of glory, and called on his *brider yiden* in Britain to redouble their war effort and his *brider yiden* in the Americas to give all possible aid to the embattled nations in their deadly struggle with the Nazi beast. The poet Peretz Markish, who was to be arrested in 1949 and martyred in 1952, but whose poems were then being published in translation in *Pravda*, declared in the same broadcast to the *brider yiden* that all Jews were now one nation and one army, and that no longer would the ocean divide them. The spilled blood and the defiled honor of the Jewish people in the war, he said, called out to the *brider yiden* and waited for their response.

The response was instantaneous and overwhelming. The words *brider yiden* were a magic key that opened the hearts of Jews everywhere. It was like finding a long-lost brother at a time of bereavement. On the saddest day of the long centuries of Diaspora, a lost tribe of Israel had returned to the House of Jacob. In a last battle for survival, the estranged and alienated Soviet Jewry, the largest left in Europe, had rejoined the *brider yiden*! In Palestine, the venerable Zionist leader, co-worker with Dr. Herzl and president of the Jewish National Fund, Menahem Usishkin, rose from his deathbed to broadcast his warmhearted reply to his *brider yiden* in the Soviet Union. Joining him in the broadcast were other leaders of the Jewish community in Palestine—among them Chief Rabbi Herzog, Isaac Ben-Zvi, the chairman of the Jewish Community Council (Vaad Leumi), now president of the State of Israel, Berl Katzenelson, the intellectual leader of the labor movement, and the famous poet Saul Tshernichovsky. Similar responses came from Jews in all parts of the world. In New York, an American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists, with Albert Einstein as honorary president, was organized to issue a formal reply in the name of the Jewish intellectuals of the United States, and to continue the contact with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow that had issued the call. Once the brotherly hand was clasped it must not slip.

At the joint invitation of the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists and the Jewish Division of American Russian War Relief, the officers of the Jewish Anti-Fascist

Committee of Moscow—the renowned actor and director of the Jewish State Theatre, Solomon Mikhoels, and the noted Yiddish poet Itzik Fefer (both later to meet with violent death)—came to visit the Jewish community of the United States. Theirs was definitely a Jewish mission, for they came exclusively to organized Jewry and addressed the public only in Yiddish. And it was the Kremlin that sent them on this Jewish mission. Before leaving Moscow, as the two delegates were taking leave of President Kalinin, who had always taken an interest in matters Jewish, Stalin himself came in by a side door to pat the prodigals on the back and wish them success. In the United States, Mikhoels and Fefer were under the supervision of the Soviet consul general in New York, Evgueni Kisselev, who later, as ambassador to Egypt, negotiated the Moscow-Cairo pact.

The American Jewish community gave the Soviet Jewish visitors an unprecedentedly enthusiastic welcome. As president of the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists, I happened to preside over the first welcoming meeting, which was held at New York's Polo Grounds. There was a registered attendance of 46,000. Outstanding Jewish leaders, like Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, president of the American Jewish Congress, and Dr. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, addressed the vast assemblage and called for Jewish unity in this fateful hour. The city government of New York was represented by Newbold Morris, president of the City Council. Messages were read from Wendell L. Willkie, former Governor Herbert H. Lehman (then director of the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations and later of UNNRA), Professor Albert Einstein, and other notables. The fervor of the audience at the introduction of the visitors was soul-stirring. Record throngs turned out to greet the guests in every major city in the United States, and in other countries they visited—Canada, Mexico, Britain.

As the time for their departure drew near, the Soviet visitors and their American hosts decided to join forces in working toward their common purpose and in preserving the contacts the visit had brought about. Their first joint effort was to be a Black Book which would embody the case of the Jews against the Nazis, for the day of reckoning which it was hoped would

come. Co-operating in the enterprise with the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists were representative Jewish bodies in several countries: the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the Soviet Union, the National Jewish Council (*Vaad Leumi*) of Palestine, and the World Jewish Congress. The Black Book would appear in Russian in the Soviet Union, in Hebrew in Palestine, in English and Yiddish in the United States, and translations in other languages were to follow.

This development quickened the contacts between the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and Jewish communities and bodies in many parts of the world. At the Third Plenum of the Representatives of the Jewish People and of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow, on April 2, 1944, fifty greetings were read from representative Jewish bodies in a dozen countries. Among them were cables from the World Jewish Congress, signed by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Dr. Nahum Goldmann; from the ultra-orthodox international religious organization, Agudas Israel, signed by Rabbi Jacob Rosenheim, and from the National Jewish Council in Palestine, signed by Ben-Zvi. In long speeches aglow with the pride of achievement, Mikhoels and Fefer gave all details of their triumphal tour, stressing the importance of the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists and concluding with the declaration that they had forged a world anti-Fascist Jewish unity. The delegates were enthusiastic about the report. Mikhoels and Fefer had served their Soviet fatherland well, and had also broken the long isolation from the brethren abroad. The distinction between the "representatives" of the Jewish people and the delegates from the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was not clear. Certainly there were no bodies of Jewish people to elect representatives. The Jewish greetings from eight centers within the Soviet Union were from informal groups, such as "a group of Jewish writers in Ufa," or a group of Jewish young men and women workers at a certain factory, and from prominent individuals. But the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee had deemed it necessary to invite a number of Jews prominent in Soviet life—Jewish notables, so to speak—to "represent" the Jewish public.

It was in this atmosphere that I made my second visit to the Soviet Union—shortly after the great victory.

No nation in defeat, not even Nazi Germany, had suffered such utter destruction over so large an area. Smolensk was a ghastly sight even to one who had arrived from Warsaw, as I had. We got there at dusk. All I could see at first were huge, dark heaps of snow-flecked rubble and an occasional narrow strip of wall with part of a chimney on top, like a cap of mockery—a grotesque headstone for a dead city, a fitting monument to human savagery. But out of the mass of rubble came tiny glimmers of light, feeble signs of life that reaffirmed the indestructible spirit of the indomitable, tenacious men and women who were living in caves in the ruins while they rebuilt their beloved city.

Smolensk could be taken as the pattern of existence at that time for much of European Russia. Other Soviet cities could have served as well, Minsk, for example, and Stalingrad. Everywhere the ruins were depressing, the poverty appalling, but the spirit of the people—their patient perseverance and unflagging industry, their hope and faith—was inspiring.

The picture was not all black. The Soviet Union is a vast land. Large stretches of it had not been touched by the war. Mother Nature had never been too generous to her Russian children, but she never turned her face away from them entirely. If the peasant went off to battle, his wife remained behind to do his chores. No sooner was the siege of Stalingrad lifted than its factories were repaired and put in operation. The Russians could take a lot in their stride. Adversity had been their fate for centuries, and hard labor their daily bread. It was now worse than ever, to be sure, but there were also redeeming features. There had been a let-up in the oppression during the war years, and a genuine community spirit had emerged. There was promise of a new day. It is after the heavy rains that the grass is greenest. Flowers would be blooming in the blood-drenched fields.

The situation of the Jewish community in the Soviet Union was much darker, and the rays of hope fewer.

I found an emaciated, ragged, crumbled Jewry, almost no longer a people, just stray individuals, harried and gloomy,

haunted by shadows of death and hate and abuse. Some looked as though they had lived for decades in dark caves with beasts and had just emerged into the light and the world of humans.

"Tell me, what happened to us?" a man with a young, gray, terribly wrinkled face said to me, wincing as though he was both pained and puzzled.

"Look," I said, "what happened to Russia? What happened to the world? To the Jews of Poland? You should be thankful you are alive."

"Yes, I suppose so, I suppose so," he replied in a low voice, looking down at the ground. Then he raised his pale, weary eyes. "But I wonder if it was worth it all—the ordeal, the torment, I mean—just to remain alive. I haven't a soul left in the world, and no world, either. Nobody wants me; nobody wanted me there, nobody wants me here. Do you know what I read in their eyes? I read, 'Look who's here! How did he escape? Too bad he did.'"

He was a lone man on a raft on a sea of hate.

There were 3,000,000 Jews in the Soviet Union in 1938. Their number increased to 5,000,000 by 1941 through Stalin's annexation of the adjacent lands, most of which had been previously held by the Czars—the Baltic states, Bessarabia, parts of Poland, and Bucovina. More than half of them lived directly in the path of the Nazi invaders. Only those survived who managed to evacuate into the Far East and Central Asia or to escape into the woods to join the Partisans. Perhaps more than 2,000,000 perished.

Most of these Nazi victims had no chance of escape. The Nazi attack came as a surprise despite the repeated Allied warnings. The army casualties during the first days of the war were enormous. The pace of the invasion was so swift that the civilian population had no time to flee, and the Jews were doomed. Where evacuation was possible, some were victims of their own hesitation, others of their incredible ignorance of the Nazi treatment of Jews. They actually believed they might go unharmed.

A Lvov (Lemberg) Jew, who survived by fleeing to Central Asia, told me he could have taken along his wife and children, but they preferred to remain behind, and ended in the gas chamber. How could it be that they *preferred* to remain be-

hind? Jews who arrived in Lvov from the border towns reported the Nazis were after Jewish men, but did not molest Jewish women and children. The martyred poet David Hofstein told me his uncle in Kerostin, near Kiev, along with a few other elders of the town, went forth to meet the invading Nazis with the traditional bread and salt. They were shot on the spot.

This ignorance astounded even the Nazis themselves. A Nazi military document of the occupation forces in White Russia in July, 1941, reads:

The Jews are strikingly ill-informed about our attitude toward them and about the treatment Jews are receiving in Germany or in Warsaw, places after all not too remote from them. If they were not, they could scarcely ask whether we in Germany treat Jews differently from other citizens. Although they do not expect to be granted equal rights with the Russians under the German administration, they do believe that we will let them alone if they apply themselves diligently to their work.

How could Jews anywhere, as late as 1941, have been ignorant about the Nazi persecutions and the sinister designs against Jews?

It cannot be said that the Soviet Jews had no means of knowing. Anti-Nazi articles and books appeared in the Soviet Union from time to time, and most such books had special chapters on the Nazi persecutions of Jews. There was at least one book in Yiddish translation that dealt entirely with that subject. There were also a few public meetings of protest, and in 1936 Molotov made a speech at the Eighth Party Congress in which he described Fascist anti-Semitism as present-day cannibalism. But all these things apparently made only a slight impact upon the Soviet Jewish masses. Perhaps the books and articles reached too few people. More likely, it was the desultory and ambivalent official reaction to this tragic situation that led to their ignorance of the facts.

We may assume that the Soviet leaders were as shocked by the Nazi atrocities against the Jews as were other decent people in other lands. But in the absence of the pressure of a free public opinion, and with the avowed cynical policy of the end's justifying the means, the Soviet leaders did not hesitate to

suppress the news and withhold comment on the Nazi crimes against the Jews whenever they thought it served their purpose. Indeed, Nazism itself became a "matter of taste," as Molotov was quoted to have said, when a deal with Hitler was deemed necessary. The Nazi persecution of Jews was fully reported and condemned when Moscow and Berlin were at loggerheads, but even then only as part of the general Fascist picture. It was rarely mentioned when Stalin was striving for a pact with Hitler, and of course was entirely suppressed during the existence of the pact. Strange as it may seem, after the Nazi attack the Soviet leaders found novel reasons for minimizing the Jewish tragedy. So it is no wonder that the image of the Nazi beast was blurred, and that to many Jews the Nazis were merely another set of anti-Semites.

This fatal, immoral policy caused a great many innocent people to be caught in the trap of a superimposed ignorance. It was also the primary cause of the resurging anti-Semitism which still poisons the air in many areas of Soviet life.

In 1946, Soviet officials did not deny having underrated the Nazi atrocities, but they offered excuses: It was dire necessity. Russia needed badly to avoid war with Nazi Germany. The two states being antithetical, Soviet policy was to steer clear of any possible strain on their delicate relations, and since the Soviet Union was an authoritative state, the Nazis would have charged any expression of criticism or protest by civilians to the Soviet government itself. However, other neighbor states of Germany's, smaller and weaker than Russia, who likewise walked the tightrope in their relations with the Nazis, fearlessly expressed sympathy for the persecuted Jews. They regarded this as a matter of conscience. Besides, the Soviet authorities could easily have managed to give the people the facts without expressing protests, since the authorities themselves had full control of the means of communication. It was certainly toadying unnecessarily to the Nazis to keep the news out when all the other countries in the world were printing it.

Even Yiddish literature had to observe the Nazi taboo. Late in 1939, a collection of literary contributions by twenty Yiddish writers from the newly acquired territories appeared in Moscow under the title *The Liberated Brothers*. The "liberation" of the

"brothers" did not extend to so much as a mention of the word Nazi, despite the fact that all of these "brothers" had lived under the Nazi shadow and had full knowledge of the Nazi persecutions of Jews. In 1940, a book of poetry by a "liberated brother" appeared in Minsk, with one poem bearing the title "The Hangman." However, this did not refer to Hitler, but to Marshal von Mannerheim of Finland, one of the few countries that saved its Jews from the Nazis.

After the Nazi attack, Soviet war propaganda naturally exposed all the Nazi cruelties. The enemy had to be depicted to the people in all his blood-thirsty bestiality. But a distinction was drawn in respect to the Jews. The news broadcast to the outside world gave details of Nazi atrocities against Jews, occasionally featuring items dealing specifically with Jews, but in the news for the home front, no special case was made of the Jews. They were merely included among other victims of Nazism. There seemed to be a studied effort to reduce the crime against them to just another item on a general bill. Only on rare occasions were they singled out, usually in cases involving Jews from Western and Central Europe brought east for extermination.

Solomon Mikhoels brought a cake of *Judenseife*, soap made—and so openly labeled by the Nazis—of the fat of their Jewish victims, to exhibit on his visit to the United States. But the Soviet people in general knew nothing about atrocities like this. A brochure entitled *German Fascism Brings Enslavement to Peoples* was written by the Jewish Communist publicist David Zaslavsky. (It was also translated into Yiddish.) The brochure devoted a long chapter to Fascism as the "Deadly Enemy of the Slavs," but it contained only a few lines on the plight of the Jews under Nazism. The author's heart bled for the Poles. After telling about the tortures of the Polish people, he referred to the Jews' being inclosed in a ghetto and "condemned to a slow starvation death," and then he went directly back to the tragedy of the Poles' being limited to certain quarters of the cities and special sections of the tramways.

The victims of the Nazis on the territory of the Soviet Union were generally referred to as "Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and other peoples of the Soviet Union." Where Jews were mentioned, it was along with other small nationalities—"Jews,

Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanians, Tajiks and others of the Soviet peoples." Only rarely did a couple of extra lines appear about the special plight of the Jews; for instance, when enumerating the lesser nationalities who had suffered at the hands of the Nazis, "Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Moldavians, and Karel-Finns," the statement added: "Considering its small numbers, the Jewish minority in the Soviet population . . . has suffered particularly heavily from the bestial blood-thirstiness of the Hitlerite degenerates." Or there might be such a remark as, "The intensification of terror against the Ukrainian population last summer and fall was accompanied by a number of bloody anti-Jewish pogroms in several places in the Ukrainian SSR." No more than this—when the entire Jewish population of hundreds of thousands of souls had been exterminated in Occupied Ukraine!

On the basis of Soviet sources alone, one might think that the Nazis were only a little bit harder on Jews, that the Jews were merely another people exposed to the Nazi scourge. The facts, of course, were to the contrary. The Nazis killed many people of all races—but on an individual basis. Being a Ukrainian under Nazi rule did not necessarily seal one's fate. Hitler had not vowed to annihilate the Ukrainian people. But Hitler had committed his regime to exterminating the entire Jewish race; the mere fact that one was a Jew by race marked him for death if he fell into Nazi hands, no matter who he was or how he acted, or even if he was a Christian by faith, or a half-Jew. The Jews made up only 7 per cent of the Ukrainian population, but the overwhelming majority of the people the Nazis murdered in the entire Ukraine were Jews. These facts were kept from the Russian people. So were the facts about the ghettos and the courageous revolts in them. The revolt of the Warsaw ghetto in April, 1943, which has since become a symbol of heroic resistance to all forces of evil and particularly to Fascism and war, could have been presented as an inspiring example for the Soviet resisters to emulate. But in Russia the story was never told.

What sense could there have been in minimizing the Nazi atrocities against the Jews during the war?

Once again they pleaded dire necessity. The Nazi propaganda,

which reached millions of Soviet citizens on the home front as well as on the field of battle, kept hammering away that the Germans and the Russians had no ground for fighting, that the quarrel was between the Germans and the Jews, that the Jews had brought on the war but did no fighting themselves, making others, like the Russians, do the fighting for them. Addressing the soldiers of a specific section of the front by name and the number of their division and their territorial origin, a Nazi voice would blare a pertinent question across No Man's Land, or over the radio. These soldiers had known Jews at least by name, in their native places, and the Nazi voice would call the names of those Jews which the soldiers could recognize. Now, the voice would continue, the soldiers should look about to see whether any of those Jews were present. No, none of them were about. Were many Jews next to them in the bloody mire? No. Why not? Because the Jews had made the war for others, not for themselves. They let the Russians shed their blood, while they themselves remained in the comfort of their homes, making huge fortunes by speculation. Under such circumstances, the Soviet explanation ran, for the authorities to stress the Nazi crimes against the Jews, or to indicate that the Nazis were out to destroy the Jewish people in particular, would only lend substance to the Nazi charges.

For all its seeming plausibility, this argument was specious and a counsel of defeat. The ugly facts were there, and closing the eyes would not efface them. On the contrary, an unchallenged lie would only gather strength. There was no voice at the front to refute the Nazi mendacity. No one explained to the soldiers that the Jewish names they happened to know—and now heard from the Nazis—were necessarily those of prominent people who were kept from the front by urgent work without which the soldiers themselves could not function. For instance, the Jewish director or engineer of a factory producing ammunition had to remain on his job. And no one pointed out that since Jews made up only 2 per cent of the population, it could not be expected that they would be found everywhere over the immense front, and that far from avoiding battle, an unusually large number of Jews distinguished themselves in the fighting; as many as 32,000 of them received medals and other military

decorations for valor, the Jews ranking fourth among the Soviet nations in the number of their nationals decorated for bravery. So the Nazi lie prevailed by default of the truth.

In Odessa, on Pushkin Boulevard, I came across a Russian peasant girl of about sixteen who must have just come from her village—ruddy complexion, rough hands, flaxen hair, homespun clothes, heavy wool boots in May weather. Answering my question about conditions in her village, she said that things had been very bad on account of the war. The Jews had got into a fight with the Germans, and the Russians had to enter the war to save the Jews. She spoke in a matter-of-fact manner, without resentment and acrimony. This had brought all the trouble, she concluded, and now Stalin was setting things right again.

If the racial issue had been met honestly and courageously, the dismay at the Nazi atrocities against the Jews would have added zest to the war effort. The moral issue would have given another dimension to the struggle, arousing the religious fervor which is embedded in the Russian character. In addition, the Soviet people would have seen in the plight of the Jews a fate that might be theirs if they lost the war. This last is corroborated by a Nazi military document reporting the massacre of 6,500 Jews in the city of Borisov. It tells of the reaction of the native population, who had been called out to see the slaughter. The Russians were shocked, and cried: "Who ordered such a thing? How is it possible to kill 6,500 Jews all at once? Now it is the Jews' turn; when will it be ours? What had these poor Jews done? The really guilty ones are surely in safety." If this was the instinctive reaction of the Christian population, how much stronger—and perhaps more decisive—might their reaction have been if they had known all the facts and been given a call to conscience?

Evasion of the moral issue was, of course, an appeasement of the bigots in the land. And like all appeasement of evil, it brought disastrous results.

Russia was the only country in the Grand Coalition to have an emergence of anti-Semitism during the war. In the other countries of the Coalition, the process was reversed. The anti-Jewish elements which had become vociferous in the middle thirties were, after the outbreak of the war, silenced and sup-

pressed in the United States, Britain, and other countries, anti-Semitism being equated with Nazism and Nazism with treason. In Russia, anti-Semites who had not dared raise their heads in decades now publicly insulted Jews, often threatened physical harm, occasionally actually resorted to assault, and usually went unpunished. The statute making anti-Semitism a crime against the state was still on the books, but the police now looked the other way or manifested reluctance to bother about such trifles in these difficult times. To the Soviet Jews, all this was not a trifling matter. It struck at the basis of their status in the land.

True statesmanship should have dictated special vigilance with regard to the position of the Jews, for new factors had entered the situation that might undermine their equal status. The newly acquired territories (the Baltic states, Bessarabia, Eastern Poland, and Bucovina) had a long and recent record of anti-Semitism. They had been openly Fascist and anti-Semitic down to the outbreak of the Second World War. After two years under Soviet rule they were occupied by the Nazi armies, and many of the population wholeheartedly co-operated with the occupation forces. Four years later, when these territories were re-incorporated into the Soviet Union, their peoples were more anti-Jewish than ever. The Nazi occupation of traditionally anti-Semitic regions of Russia, like the Ukraine, naturally re-activated the old virus. For more than a score of years a tight lid had been kept on anti-Semitic manifestations. Then, suddenly it was lifted and the populace invited to participate in the persecution, torture, and savage murder of Jews, and many of them responded. These same parts of Russia produced Nazi collaborators on a large scale, like the Vlasovs.

Nor did the unoccupied parts of the Soviet Union escape the noxious contagion. In Central Asia, hostility toward the Jews was generated largely in the "classical" manner. Most Central Asians had had hardly any personal contacts with Jews. All they knew about them was what Mohammed had said, and that the Christians claimed Jews had killed their Christ. All of a sudden, large numbers of evacuees appeared in the poor, backward villages and towns—smart city-folk with a haughty manner, well dressed, well supplied with rubles. The arrival of so many evacuees—non-Jews as well as Jews—at once disrupted the fixed,

old-fangled native way of life, causing scarcity and inflation, engendering resentment and envy. The fact that not all the evacuees were Jews, and that the non-Jews behaved no better and were just as rich, or that there were many poor Jewish evacuees suffering deprivation worse than that of the natives, did not mitigate the feeling against the Jews. They were conspicuous enough in the group to be loaded with all the blame.

In the unoccupied parts of European Russia, people had receptive ears for the Nazi hate propaganda for reasons of their own. They had much to gripe about: frustration in the seemingly unending war, deprivation and bereavement, speculation and other evils on the home front. But no one dared to complain publicly. Then a finger was pointed to a scapegoat made to order for all the ills. People could inveigh against the Jews and really mean the authorities, and the authorities did not seem to mind. There was need for a social safety valve—and the Jews were, in military parlance, expendable. It was convenient to let them take the rap.

Soviet Jews were thrown to the wolves. They were at the mercy of the angry, embittered bigots. The old, ugly nickname *zhid*, taboo for so many years, was again heard in the streets. More polite people dubbed every Jew *Abrasha* and every Jewess *Sarah*. *Abrasha* and *Sarah* were told to their faces that they were not wanted and did not belong, that they were not fighting the war like the rest but sat behind and speculated, that they were at the root of all the evil in the land. In some cities Jews avoided being seen in public places. A Jewish engineer in Leningrad, who had lost three brothers in the war, told me of accompanying his feeble old mother on a crowded bus. When he asked one of the passengers to yield his seat to the old lady, the man yelled, "Why should I?" This *Sarah* had done nothing for the country, she and her brood were only parasites, war speculators. Nobody in the bus said a word. The engineer raised his hand and gave the man a good smack on the face. "I was fined twenty rubles," the engineer told me, "but it was worth it."

By 1946, the run on Jews had subsided. The lid was on again, but not too tightly. The ugly word *zhid* was rarely heard; *Abrasha* was only whispered, but the hostility, like cold air, lay beneath.

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

I found the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee a big undertaking. It occupied the entire ground floor of a sizable building and parts of the floor above. There was a considerable staff of workers—receptionists, stenographers, secretaries, messengers, researchers, writers, specialists, heads of departments. All in all, it was a busy place. On the one hand, the committee was geared to function on an international basis, like a miniature Vatican foreign office; individuals who were especially qualified handled the contacts with particular parts of the world—North America, South America, South Africa, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Australia. On the other hand, the committee operated like the civilian organ of the Soviet Jewish community. Soviet Jews had begun to regard the committee as their representative body, big brother, adviser, defender. All sorts of Jews came to the committee with personal problems involving real or imaginary discrimination, lack of pull, or any matters relating to Jewish cultural or religious life, much as individual Jews go to a Jewish agency in a Capitalist country.

After observing the activities of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee for several days, I happened to call upon the sponsor of the committee, Solomon A. Lozovsky, Deputy Chief of the Soviet Information Bureau and Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. I told him that the committee seemed to be developing into a sort of Soviet Jewish Congress, like the American Jewish Congress, and it might as well assume this function formally, even change its name accordingly, now that the war was over. Lozovsky made no reply. Like other Soviet officials, he had a way, without giving offense, of ignoring remarks calling for a response. After some experience with Soviet officials, you learn to read into this posture more than a no. His silence was an alibi for a future denial that he had ever heard such a heretical remark. Ironically, one of the charges brought against him only a few years later, which led to his execution in 1952, was that the committee had, in fact, assumed the function of a general Jewish body.

Heading the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee were the before-

mentioned Solomon Mikhoels and Itzik Fefer, who would gladly have presided over a Soviet Jewish Congress. In fact, the mantle of Jewish leadership already hung on their shoulders. It was easier for Mikhoels to assume that role than for Fefer. Mikhoels was not a member of the Party. He enjoyed great prestige as one of the intellectual lights of Moscow, a recognized authority on Shakespeare, a holder of the Order of Lenin, a member of the award committee for the Stalin Prize in Dramatic Art. He also had a scholarly Jewish background. He knew Hebrew well and retained some of his Talmudic learning. In his desk he kept a tiny Hebrew Bible, and he carried this in his pocket on his mission to the United States.

Itzik Fefer, who had grown up in the Communist movement, had been a minor lash on the Party whip in the Jewish community. A gifted poet with a genius for colorful idiom, Fefer used his talent lavishly to adulate and edify or defile and bedevil—whichever the Party hacks called for. His Jewish education was slight, no more than a boy picked up at the local Talmud Torah, the shabby free-school for underprivileged children. He sought to fill in the hollow with reading and self-instruction, but the fare came mostly from the Jewish Communist scullery. He was to redeem himself, however, as secretary of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, where he functioned on a higher plane and measured up morally. He had been friendly and generous to the Jewish writers, many of them refugees from Poland and Romania, for whom he created work during the difficult war years. "Itzikel has a heart of gold," the wise old Yiddish writer Z. Vendroff told me. Fefer went along with the new current of Jewish nationalism, enjoying the newly won freedom, writing in the vein of Frug and Bialik, the national poets of an earlier age. He now boasted not of his proletarian origin but of his rabbinic ancestry, claiming to be a "grandson" of the "Shpoler grandfather."

Both Mikhoels and Fefer were aware that the avowed purpose of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was just to mobilize the Jews of the world for the war effort—in the words of Solomon A. Lozovsky, "to help the Soviet Union, England, and the United States put an end to the bloodthirsty rage of Hitler and the other Fascist apes who fancy themselves a master race." Now

that the war was over, the *raison d'être* of the committee might possibly lie in the field of international Jewish public relations. Having been a weapon in the anti-Fascist war, the committee might now try to be an instrument in establishing the anti-Fascist peace. Once again the job would concern international contacts and the creation of good will toward the Soviet Union. Any local Jewish activity was irrelevant to the purpose for which the committee was organized, except where a local situation might affect public attitude abroad. Nevertheless, so strong was the current of Jewish life in the Soviet Union, so urgent the need for a central Jewish body, that the greater part of the activity of the committee was, in actuality, concerned with local Jewish matters.

Take the case of the demobilized Jewish lawyer in Kiev. He had been a prosecuting attorney before he went to war. On his return, he was not given back his job but was assigned to the counsel for defense. Feeling that his talents lay in prosecution, he regarded the change as a demotion. He was certain he was being discriminated against because he was a Jew, and he complained to the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. The lawyer was, of course, entitled to his former job, and Fefer took up his case personally, going to Kiev to make an on-the-spot check. He found there was discrimination in the case, and as the lawyer had insisted, because of his Jewishness. But the lawyer's postwar assignment was to be temporary and for the general good. The Kiev authorities explained the matter as follows: The cases coming up in court would be largely those of former Nazi collaborators and other offenders against the state. The Ukrainian people had been infected with anti-Semitism during the Nazi occupation, particularly with the propaganda that the Jews had brought on the war and that they domineered over the Ukraine. If a Jew were now to be the prosecutor, the accused and their relatives and friends would say: "See? The Nazis were right. The Jew is getting even with us." But if the prosecutor were to be a Ukrainian and the defense attorney a Jew, this would nail the Nazi lie. The relationship between Ukrainians and Jews would be improved rather than worsened. In time, as the aftermath of the war subsided, the Jewish lawyer would go back to his former post.

Fefer was happy over the disposition of the case. What had seemed a flagrant case of anti-Semitism turned out to be only a stratagem in the direction of better race relations. I told Fefer I did not see the thing in that rosy light; I regarded it as an act of appeasement—a retreat, in fact, in the hope of an illusory improvement in attitude. No compromise with prejudice ever advances the cause of tolerance. The Nazi collaborators would not be converted, but the Gentile lawyers in Kiev would learn that under certain conditions discrimination against Jews was tolerable. “You think so?” Fefer said, but he did not argue the point. It must have been painful for him to lose that morsel of comfort. So many cases of discrimination were coming to his office, and there was always a supposedly mitigating circumstance.

Another case was that of the Jewish tailor of Zhitomir. He had been evacuated to Tashkent. When he returned to his native city, the house he had lived in was intact but his apartment was occupied by a non-Jew. He knocked at the apartment door and identified himself, but the tenant, who was still using the tailor’s furniture, did not even invite him inside. The tailor complained to the local authorities, who agreed that he was entitled to his apartment. However, they could not throw the tenant out in the street. Although they promised to see to the matter, they did nothing. The tailor remained roofless, and spent his last savings on a ticket to Moscow to put his case before the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

“That’s what you’re up against,” Fefer said to me. “The Ukrainian occupying the tailor’s apartment may have been bombed out of his own apartment during the war, or have come to town for a very good reason. Can you throw him out in the street? Such cases aggravate the relations between Jews and Ukrainians. On the other hand, where is the tailor to go?”

“Why shouldn’t he go to Birobidjan?” I asked facetiously.

Fefer laughed, and said, “If he’d only go to Birobidjan! He, and others like him.” After musing for a moment, he added, “There are other places where he could go and find an apartment.”

“Why should that tailor go to Birobidjan or another place?” I argued. “Doesn’t he belong in Zhitomir? What happens when

a Ukrainian evacuee returns to Zhitomir and finds *his* apartment occupied? All the apartments of all the evacuees were occupied by others during the war.”

A wry smile appeared on Fefer’s face. The case of a Ukrainian evacuee was different. He would have relatives in town who might put him up temporarily, or the tenant might take the evacuee in and double up for a time in the apartment. And if worst came to worst, the quarrel was between Ukrainian and Ukrainian, not between Ukrainian and Jew.

So this was the sort of thing the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was up against. The Jewish situation was different from the non-Jewish, yet there was no provision for it since it was not supposed to exist. Actually, the problem was outside the purview of the committee, but in the emergency the committee willy-nilly filled the vacuum. Fefer was preoccupied with what would, in other countries, be called social work and case work, knowing that he was out of bounds. However, the Gentile officials whom he approached saw no incongruity. They felt the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was a Jewish committee, and quite properly took care of Jews; in other words, in the eyes of people who dealt with the facts of life, the committee was a Jewish social agency.

A similar situation prevailed in other spheres of Jewish life. There was no direct connection between the struggle against Fascism abroad and Yiddish culture or Jewish religion within the Soviet Union. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee had no connection with any other organized Jewish group in the Soviet Union. Nor did it have any function or program of activity for the Jews there. Yet it became the focal point of the entire spiritual life of the Soviet Jews. The Association of Jewish Writers was an autonomous body connected only with the Union of Soviet Writers. The Yiddish theatres were autonomous enterprises under the general supervision and financial support of the local theatre trust. The Jewish “Cabinet” of Kiev was a section of the Ukrainian Academy of Science. Every synagogue was an independent body registered with the Ministry of Cults. None of these institutions or similar ones had any affiliation, connection, or relationship with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Nevertheless, none of them would move a step

without consulting with the officers of the committee in Moscow. All of them were only too happy to put themselves under the spreading wings of the committee in the belief that its officers were close to the Kremlin and would guide them through the uncertainties of the postwar period. The *Aynikite*, which was set up as the organ of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, came to reflect the entire Soviet Jewish community. Running in Yiddish much the same copy that appeared a day earlier in the Russian newspapers, it conserved enough space to chronicle briefly the cultural activities of the Jews in the Soviet Union, and comment upon them.

With a poet as secretary and an intellectual actor as president, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee naturally took a special interest in the literary arts. Moreover, Yiddish culture was the only bridge acceptable to Soviet authorities that could be thrown across the chasm between the Soviet Jewry and the Jews of the world. Yiddish literature, Yiddish writing generally, was therefore regarded as vital to the structure of anti-Fascist Jewish unity. During the war the committee employed a large staff of Yiddish writers—poets, novelists, critics, and journalists, both native and refugee. They were to carry on their creative work and also do special assignments, all of their writings to be sent abroad, since there was no outlet for them within the Soviet Union. Some of their material was outright propaganda, some good literature, but only a small portion of it actually appeared in print in the publications abroad to which it was sent. The writers were paid in advance, however, and so they had a subsistence they might not have had otherwise.

Most of these writers were still on the job when I arrived in January, 1946, some forty or fifty of them, the refugees among them looking forward to repatriation to their native lands, the Soviet citizens eager to return to their prewar literary life. Fefer hoped to be able to retain those who might want to remain on his staff. Since his superiors had cooled to the Black Book project, now reaching completion in New York, Fefer had a couple of other projects up his sleeve. One was a book, *Jewish Heroes in the Struggle Against Fascism*, to be prepared and issued jointly with the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists. The Moscow committee was to provide the ma-

terial for the East and the American committee for the West. The book was to appear in Russian in Moscow and in Yiddish and English in New York. Another project was a Yiddish literary quarterly to be published simultaneously in Moscow, New York, and Tel Aviv, carrying the imprint of the three cities as an indication of Jewish national unity. Understandably, it was to represent "progressive Yiddish culture" within the framework of anti-Fascist unity.

Those were great projects, opening vistas of co-operation with world Jewry for years ahead. The book about Jewish heroes seemed to have an auspicious start. A special committee for the project, appointed by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, had, in addition to the officers of the Anti-Fascist Committee and famous Yiddish writers, such important figures as General Katz, Vice-Minister of Control S. Bregman, Director of Munitions L. Honor, and Vassili Grossman, a popular Russian writer. But the shadow of the fate of the Black Book hung over this project too, and, indeed, over any co-operative effort between the Moscow Anti-Fascist Committee and Jewish bodies abroad.

As already indicated, the Black Book was to have been published jointly by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, the World Jewish Congress, the National Jewish Council (Vaad Leumi) of Palestine, and the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists. Both in New York and Moscow special committees had been set up for the execution of that project also. The Moscow committee consisted of the prominent people mentioned above, plus Ilya Ehrenburg and Lina Shtern, affectionately called "Albert Einstein in a skirt," the only woman member of the Soviet Academy of Science. In New York, the Black Book committee contained representatives from the other three Jewish bodies participating in the project: Joseph Brainin, Dr. Nahum Goldmann, Dr. Raphael Mahler, Rubin Saltzman, Dr. A. Tartakower, and Baruch Zuckerman. Co-chairmen were B. Z. Goldberg and Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig.

The Moscow committee had co-operated wholeheartedly with the New York committee in assembling data. Ilya Ehrenburg had sent in a mass of eyewitness reports collected by him personally, more than could possibly go in the book. In this introduction, dated August, 1944, he wrote: "I have collected here

documents telling of the annihilation of defenseless Jews by the Nazi invaders. Here is no literature. These are genuine, candid stories, letters to relatives, diaries . . . Let all know that defenseless Jews died manfully, with words of contempt and revenge . . . Let all know that Jews, when they could, killed their executioners . . . Let this book burn like fire. Let it call for retribution."

The interest of the Moscow Black Book committee in the project extended to rejecting a preface written by Albert Einstein, honorary president of the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists, because of "ideology"—the American representatives of the Moscow committee charged it had a Zionist angle. (The great man accepted the rejection gracefully, "realizing the circumstances." Years later, that piece appeared in a collection of his essays under the title "A Preface That Was Not Used," with no indication as to where or why.) But the Moscow committee lost all interest in the Black Book when it reached publication stage. In New York, the appearance of the book was marked by a mass meeting of some 15,000 people in Madison Square Garden, with the illustrious Jewish leader Stephen S. Wise as chairman and the mayor of the city and other dignitaries participating. In Moscow, where it was to have been issued in Russian, there was not even a mention of it in the Yiddish organ of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. In retrospect, I am inclined to believe that Mikhoels and Fefer entered into the commitment on the Black Book in good faith, and that it was a power above them that dictated the default, having from the first meant the book for consumption abroad only.

With this flagrant failure, what reliance could be placed in the new projects proffered by Fefer? I avoided committing the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Artists and Scientists to either of the two new projects. The Moscow committee did go ahead on its own with the preparation of *Jewish Heroes*, but it was never published. Before it reached the printer, the ax had come down.

The greatest public cultural achievement of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee inside Russia, which turned out to be the last cultural event in the life of the Soviet Jewish community—

the swan song of Yiddish culture—was the observance of the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Sholom Aleichem. It was held in the Hall of Columns, the large, imposing meeting place near Red Square. Posters (partly in Russian but mostly in Yiddish) announcing the meeting appeared all over the city. They bore the names of the participants: Russian and Yiddish writers, actors who would read stories from Sholom Aleichem, and, quite prominently, my own name with the identification "from America," despite the fact that the cold war had already been officially inaugurated by Winston Churchill at Fulton, Missouri. Although a public announcement earlier in the day had said that all tickets were sold out, the turnout was overwhelming. Traffic on wide Gorki Street was stopped, the entrance to the Okhotny Ryad subway station was blocked. Mounted traffic police, a rare sight in Moscow at any time, were struggling to clear a passage. The crowd did not disperse until word was passed around that a repeat program would be given the next week on the same day at the same place. The following week, without posters, with only a few lines in the newspaper in the column listing the cultural events of the day, the Hall of Columns was filled long before the program was to start, and the crowds in the street were large enough to warrant a suggestion for a second repeat performance. I refused to go along with the idea. For myself, I could not participate in a Sholom Aleichem memorial that ran like a show.

Except for the customary references to Stalin and socialism, the program—speeches and readings—could well have been given on such an occasion in New York, London, or Tel Aviv. I was pleasantly surprised that neither Fefer nor Mikhoels asked to see my speech before delivery. The audience responded with enthusiasm to the speeches and readings in Russian, but was literally in rapture during the reading in Yiddish. The audience was made up of people from all walks of life: humble folk, poorly dressed, with drawn, tired faces; prosperous-looking, well-fed bureaucrats; and no fewer than four full generals, big and fat, with several slimmer colonels, in the first row on the crowded stage. The atmosphere was filled with exultation. The ingredients were overpowering—Sholom Aleichem, the mother tongue Yiddish, and last but not least, the feeling of being to-

gether. Jews, so many Jews, crowded together like a family at Seder. Little did they know, both on stage and in the audience, that in two short years the sun would set for them; the big freeze would overtake them, and they would be declared nonexistent!

Men About the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee

The patron saint of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was a man who had had least to do with it, who was neither identified with the committee nor connected with its work. He hardly ever met the officers of the committee, not to speak of being present at a meeting. Yet the leaders of the committee pinned their hopes on him and felt more secure because of his existence. He was the one Jew remaining among the eleven men wearing the crown—the members of the Politbureau. He was one of the few who had managed to stand with Stalin from the first and still remained standing: Lazar Moiseyevich Kaganovich.

Kaganovich was a shoemaker's helper when he joined the Party, but he advanced through the ranks, perhaps because he was never a politician but always a good executive, a trouble-shooter. Wherever anything went wrong, whether it was with the Party machine or an electrical plant or a railroad, Lazar Moiseyevich was sent out to take over temporarily and set it aright. And generally he did. In the matter of his Jewishness, Kaganovich was not unlike Jews in ruling positions in bourgeois countries. He never concealed being a Jew, never disowned his origin and past, but also he never associated himself with things Jewish. At most, he evinced the benign attitude of a Joseph who did not deny himself to his brethren, but would not join them either. He had become a pharaoh to the bone, but to his brethren he was Joseph all the same.

Various stories were current about Kaganovich and Jews. Often the same story had two versions, one presenting him favorably, the other unfavorably. Whatever truth there was in either version, the stories were characteristic of the Jewish situation. One was about a religious Jewish community in a small town. The local official ordered the synagogue requisitioned for a warehouse. The Jews appealed to Kaganovich, and he had the order stayed for two years. The other version of the story says

that there were two synagogues in town, and one was about to be requisitioned. The Jews appealed to Kaganovich, and he told the local official to requisition both synagogues. This action was disapproved by the office dealing with religious matters, and the affair was brought before Stalin. Stalin ordered that the Jews be allowed to have their two synagogues, saying that taking them away was bound to create a bad impression abroad, and was not worth while.

Another story concerned a production of the State Jewish Theatre in Moscow, which represented low-caste Jews, uncouth, criminal. Kaganovich happened to attend a performance, and asked the director: "Why present Jews as bizarre, farcical, unpleasant people? Can't you find nice, good, pleasant Jewish characters whom Jewish youth might take pride in?" The second version has it that this production was a play (*Boitra Robber*) by a Jewish writer who had been arrested, but the theatre director and the literary community had not heard about his arrest. Kaganovich wanted the production stopped, but unable to give the real reason, he cited the argument we have mentioned. Whatever the motive, the Yiddish theatre never again presented sinister or unpleasant characters. Even a Goldfaden villain was pleasant to look at and basically kind.

Other stories dealt with Birobidjan. On his visit there, Kaganovich asked for gefilte fish at the station restaurant. They had none. Perhaps the dish had been banned by the local Jewish Communists as smelling of religion. "What is this?" Kaganovich asked in amazement. "A Jewish autonomous region without gefilte fish?" He may have spoken in jest, but there has been gefilte fish on the menu of the restaurant ever since. In 1936 in Birobidjan was about the only time Kaganovich took a positive stand on matters Jewish. He spoke of the region's becoming a center of Jewish culture, national in form and Socialist in content, with the Yiddish language permeating all phases of existence. This was the Party line at the time, of course, but the hearts of the Soviet Jews were gladdened to hear it also from Lazar Moiseyevich.

The top Soviet official who was a sponsor of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, and was directly responsible for it—and went under with it—was Solomon A. Lozovsky. His background

was the Jewish Socialist movement, but he joined the Communist Party early and specialized in international public relations. He was the head of the trade union international sponsored by the Soviet Union, and during the war and thereafter was deputy chief of *Sovinform*, the Soviet information bureau, and vice-minister of foreign affairs for the Far East under Molotov. Shorter than Kaganovich, who was rather short himself (Stalin kept tall men away from him, not wanting to look up to anyone), of slight build, with a small, trim, grayish beard, he looked more like the international revolutionary of Lenin's day than the Soviet bureaucrat of the time; Kaganovich, on the other hand, appeared more like a Western business executive. When you talked to Kaganovich you had the feeling that the sky came down at the Soviet border. Presumably there was more of the world beyond, but it was of limited consequence. But talking to Lozovsky, you had the feeling he was in the midst of things in all parts of the world. He knew Yiddish, but preferred to speak Russian. Like most Soviet officials he was a good listener, but the measure of his interest was the relation of the subject to the Soviet Union. When we discussed Jewish matters, I would get the impression that his interest was Jewish or general; then he would make a remark which indicated that he had been thinking of the Soviet Union all the while.

At one of our meetings we discussed the *briha*, the flight of Jews who had survived the Nazi holocaust, from Eastern Europe to the West in order to reach Palestine. They came from evacuation centers in Russia, partisan groups in the woods, or concentration camps the Nazis, leaving hurriedly, did not manage to liquidate. I had met some of these refugees in West Berlin late in 1945, where they slept in the corridors and open courtyard of the Jewish communal building on Fasanen Strasse, and in the makeshift shelters of Warsaw and Lodz. I told Lozovsky the reason one refugee gave me for his urge to get out of the East "while the getting was good," and force his way to Palestine, even though Britain kept the gate to that Land of Promise closed. It was his being "tired of living among goyim"; he had had too much of the Gentile world and wanted to live in a Jewish country. Lozovsky did not bat an eye. My own view was, as I had cabled earlier to my newspaper, that all aid in reaching

their destination must be given these unfortunates. Fefer regarded the *briha* as an act of desperation by people hardly aware of what they were doing, which should by all means be discouraged. To him, the flight of Jews from Eastern Europe was well nigh a betrayal of the newly won anti-Fascist peace. Jews should remain where they belonged and build their new life under Socialism. Surprisingly, Lozovsky sided with me. He could understand the temper of these people—returning to the ruins of their shattered lives, finding their nearest and dearest brutally murdered. It was inhuman, he said, to stop them from going where they wished to go. I was beginning to admire the unexpected milk of human kindness in the old Bolshevik, when he added a philosophical thought: In history, it may happen that a reactionary act brings a progressive result. The progressive result here was the undermining of the British hold on the Near East.

The membership of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was all that was left of Jewish communal leadership in the Soviet Union. It consisted of several elements. First and most active were the Yiddish writers, who were not unlike their kind in America or other parts of the world. They rightly regarded themselves as the spiritual leaders of the Soviet Jewish community, and as creative artists of an international literature with readers and followers wherever Yiddish was spoken. During the inevitable toasts of the farewell dinner tendered me on my departure, I endeavored to console them by comparing their position favorably with that of Yiddish writers elsewhere. In America no Yiddish author, and most certainly no Yiddish poet, could live on his writing. But in their country, Yiddish writers were living comfortably, in full economic security, even the poets among them, solely on their writing. In reply, one Yiddish writer said that all that might be true, yet there I was visiting them for the second time, while they could not think of repaying my visit even once.

Another element in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee consisted of Jewish intellectuals and professionals occupying important positions in Soviet society. These people had a Jewish background or were otherwise interested in Jewish life. They took it for granted that Jews were Jews the world over, the Soviet

Jews being separated from the rest by the force of circumstances. Now a passage had been broken through the barrier, and Jews met Jews as in olden times. They realized that they and the Jews of the West were still on the opposite sides of the fence in regard to Socialism, and hence it was best not to discuss politics or anything that might lead to political disagreement. In their minds, however, was a common Jewish basis outside the social political field. And they were glad to co-operate in such a world Jewish effort as the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

Such a man was Dr. B. A. Shimelovich, the director of Botkin Hospital, the largest in number of beds in the Soviet Union and one of the largest hospitals in the world. During my stay in Moscow he was awarded a prize for distinguished medical service, and at the reception following the ceremony the most prominent people of Moscow came to greet him. Another such professional was General Aaron Katz. An engineer by training, he headed the faculty for motorized forces at the Stalin Military Academy. During the war he was vice-commander of a motor corps, and was awarded the Order of War for the Fatherland, first degree. He came from a small town, Ryasne, the son of a poor painter and grandson of a Hebrew teacher.

Both Dr. Shimelovich and General Katz spoke Yiddish well. The doctor enjoyed injecting idiomatic expressions and talmudic phrases into his talk, and General Katz liked humming Chassidic tunes. Both came often to the meetings of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. After one meeting the two took me for a ride in Dr. Shimelovich's chauffeur-driven limousine. The conversation was forced at first, since the most obvious topics had to be avoided. We all felt better when Dr. Shimelovich began singing liturgical pieces—he had sung in a synagogue choir in his youth—General Katz joining him in the refrain. I thought to myself: Where in the world today would you find a top medical officer of a great nation and a general of the army of a mighty state singing Yiddish songs as their chauffeur drives them through the capital of their great country? Then I thought: Where in the world today would you find two such prominent people, who happen to be Jews, traveling with a third Jew from another land, thirsting to hear about Jewish life

in his country yet fearing to ask a word about it even in the privacy of their own car?

There was a third category of members in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee who had neither Jewish background nor Jewish interests. They were there by accident—some because of *noblesse oblige*, others sent in by the Party to help with their prestige or advice; still others were old Party hacks who happened to need jobs. A charming, kind little lady like Lina Shtern was happy to help with the prestige of her name and her occasional presence, in a good Jewish cause. Ilya Ehrenburg and David Zaslavsky were doubtless sent in by the Party; Ehrenburg may have also been led by a pluck at the heart. He did write feelingly about the Jewish tragedy in his contribution to the Jewish Black Book. A man like S. Bregman, Vice-Minister of Control, must have been there to keep an eye on things. He never said a word—that is, openly. Pathetic were the Party hacks who had once occupied positions of importance but now were reduced to hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

One of these was a man by the name of Kotliar who once had a Cossack town named for him. Now he was a cross between valet and office boy for the committee. He and Voroshilov had been sent out by Stalin to collectivize the Cossack country. At one village Kotliar did so well that the local leaders decided to honor him by induction into their tribe. This called for elaborate ceremonies, the climax of which was for the inductee to mount a spirited horse, which would be whipped into a fiery race, and then to slide down exactly at a flagpole at the other end of the village. Voroshilov had a similar honor in his village, but the ceremony was no problem for him; he was a good horseman. Kotliar, however, had never been on a horse before. What was he to do? Explain, and decline the honor? He would lose their respect and disgrace Stalin. Go through with the race, and be thrown off? That too would bring disgrace, and possible injury as well. Kotliar had a favorite expression: The head will roll. He figured his head would roll anyway, and so he might as well go through with the ceremony. He mounted the horse, and the next thing he knew, he was being carried aloft by Cossack

youths—a hero! He had happened to roll off at just the right spot.

There was another occasion when Kotliar's head nearly rolled. It was during the purges of the middle 1930's, when he headed a local soviet on the Volga. Late one evening he was called to the Secret Police. He knew this was a cabal, with fabricated charges and summary trial, and he declined to go. They sent a soldier with a rifle to fetch him. Taking out his revolver, he killed the soldier and then made away. By morning he had managed to reach a higher authority and save himself. If he had complied, he would not have survived that night. He told this story coldly, without regret at having killed the poor soldier.

Kotliar was a short, stocky man with high cheekbones and shiny, light blue eyes like narrow slits. His shaven head made him look more Tatar than Jew. He liked to talk of his past escapades, but not of his comedown. Only once did he refer to it, and then indirectly, by saying: "In our country it takes time to climb up, but you slide down fast, so fast." He seemed to possess no education of any kind; he never talked about ideas, ideology, problems, cultural matters. He had been a tiny cog in a huge, mechanized, human piece of engineering. He spoke Yiddish but never dropped a word about Jews or things Jewish. He might have been working for a Chinese anti-Fascist committee.

Another has-been, but of higher caliber and therefore a more tragic figure, was a man by the name of Spiegelglass, my companion on some of my trips. He was a most unusual man, and deserves a biography, which will of course never be written. He was fortunate to die a natural death before the arrest of the others on the committee. It would have been the height of irony if he had ended up facing a Communist firing squad.

Spiegelglass was a young student at the University of Moscow when the Revolution came, too young to be drafted into the army and too apolitical to leave to join the Revolution. One day a short shrimp of a girl, homely, with thick eyeglasses, speaking Russian with a Jewish accent, appeared on a balcony of a college building overlooking the campus, and began haranguing the students below: The Fatherland was in danger; the old

regime had collapsed and the Revolution had taken over; typhus had broken out at the front; if it was permitted to extend inland—woe to all! What were they doing there with their books? Why didn't they go out to help? Why didn't they join the Revolution?

The students jeered. Who was this ugly Jewish duckling to lecture them? But Spiegelglass was taken by her simple words. He climbed up to her perch and, in better Russian, made his own appeal to his fellow students. What was there to jeer at? Had she not spoken the truth? If their country ever needed them it was now. They were not children. They must accept the challenge of the historic hour. He would respond to the call. Who would go along with him? A few students raised their hands. By the time he was down among them, there were more. They followed the ugly duckling to the district office of what they came to call The Revolution.

Spiegelglass' first job was to help stop the typhus epidemic at the front. He headed a brigade that inspected every train arriving at the first stop from the front, removed the typhus dead, and piled them up like logs along the tracks, for burning. The sick they took to a makeshift barracks. Occasionally, Spiegelglass noticed one of the human logs stirring in the pile, and pulled it out to be revived and sent to the barracks. He was then eighteen years old.

His second job likewise had to do with trains—working directly under Lenin. The head of the Russian railways at the time of the Revolution was an old Czarist general, arrogant, insolent, irascible. He knew he had a genius for railroading and that there was not another man who could then handle the job. He told Lenin to his face that he hated his guts and the entire Bolshevik gang, but he would keep the trains running if Lenin wanted him. Railroads were railroads, whatever thugs ruled the land. Lenin kept the general on the job, but he realized that this man could wreck his regime. Needing someone to check on the general, he appointed young Spiegelglass as commissar over him. Spiegelglass was to countersign every order the general issued, after consulting with members of the staff to make sure that there could be no sabotage in it.

When Spiegelglass first entered the general's office to present

himself, the old man looked at him with open disgust and shouted, "You dirty Jew, get the hell out of here!" Spiegelglass went back to Lenin, who was not surprised. "We need that man on that job," he said. "Take his abuse, don't talk back, and humor him. Get him whatever he wants—tobacco, vodka, wine—but keep an eye on him. Check and double check his every move."

The general continued to abuse and curse the young commissar, but as Spiegelglass learned more about railroading the general condescended to talk to him. In time they learned to work together. Only they two, besides Lenin, knew about and managed the secret project of bringing back to Moscow from Siberia the gold bullion of the Czarist treasury, shipped there by the Czarist government on the eve of the Revolution.

Lenin had plans for Spiegelglass. He sent him to a Party school, where he applied himself to the study of Marxism. Then Lenin gave him a note to the editor of *Pravda*. Spiegelglass became a contributor to the Party organ, and in time wrote a Party primer that was printed in millions of copies. He was a big man in his day, but his day was short. He had been catapulted upward in his prime; now, in his fifties, he was pretty much at the bottom—in a minor sinecure with the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

Formally, he was an administrator, planning and editing the work of the Yiddish writers on the staff of the committee. But since he had no knowledge of Yiddish and had never been abroad to know the interests of Yiddish readers in other lands, someone else did the work for him—under his general guidance. He was probably given the post to justify a higher salary. But it still was not much. In the cold Russian winter he wore light shoes without rubbers; his socks were of lisle and his worn coat was of medium weight. In all the days and nights we spent together on our trips, he never touched on his demotion nor complained of his plight. He bore his lot with the grace of an aristocrat. I had to struggle with him to prevent him from carrying my suitcase—to keep him from being a valet as well as a companion. When we called on an official, as we did so often, he never identified himself with his past. He was just someone from the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. As an individual there

was no Spiegelglass. There was only a shadow of a man executing missions. He referred to his personal life only twice—once when I gave him a pair of long woolen socks (he said he was accepting them because he suffered from varicose veins), and a second time as an overflow of his own thinking. His wife was ill, he said, very ill, and she was a fine woman, a good soul.

Spiegelglass was a stranger in a strange land in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. He had had no Jewish education, and had spent his entire life outside the Jewish field. He evinced no interest in Jewish life. He also avoided discussing Soviet conditions and problems, although they were the purpose of our trips. Perhaps he feared I might mention Stalin, the Kremlin, or the Party, and he was conditioned to a taboo on these words. Spiegelglass was not a silent man—he was a man broken into silence.

Traveling with Fefer

I traveled a good deal during the several months I spent in the Soviet Union in 1946. Since there was no Intourist service, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee managed my visits to the various places, arranging the transportation, the living quarters, the interviews, and providing the traveling companion. This was one time a visitor actually needed a traveling companion, for the transportation was irregular and overcrowded and hotels were nonexistent in most places. Fefer himself usually accompanied me, but on several minor trips Spiegelglass was my companion.

It did not take me long to realize that there was more than personal regard or friendship in the committee's managing my trips. There was too much ado about them locally, more than I needed or wanted. The local radio broadcast the news of our arrival. There were courtesy calls on the local bigwigs—the mayor, the Party secretary, the directors of the major enterprises—and less formal meetings with the literati and other celebrities. The Jewish community seemed to be of secondary consideration. Visits to the synagogue, the rabbi, the Yiddish cultural institution, where there was one, were made at my request and were squeezed in between the other calls. Tactfully, Fefer

kept out of the picture there. It was the local Jewish leaders who sought out Fefer to discuss their problems with him. I got the impression that rather than showing Russia to me, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was interested in showing me to the Russians—not me, personally, of course, but as Exhibit A of Jews abroad who fought in the war and helped the Soviet Union in her dark hour. Inelegantly put, my visit to a city became an exercise in public relations by the committee, an effort indirectly to counteract the anti-Jewish fall-out still in the air from the Nazi occupation.

After the first couple of trips, a protocol evolved that became the pattern for all that followed. On our arrival in a city, my companion got busy on the telephone. Our first visit was to the mayor, who was well prepared for us—clean-shaven, dressed in his Sunday clothes, ready to give us lots of time; a table laden with drinks, sweets, fruit, and crackers was usually set up in the reception room back of his office. My companion introduced me in exaggerated, flattering terms, to which I would have objected if I had not realized I was playing a role. I heard myself presented as a top American anti-Fascist, whose words were followed by most Jews in all the Americas, who was instrumental in raising \$60,000,000 for American Russian War Relief, who was now exerting his influence toward attaining an anti-Fascist peace and maintaining friendship with the Soviet people. Then I made my little speech, which was spontaneous at first but became routine with repetition. I told of the great sacrifices the American people had made to help achieve the common victory, reciting the number of Americans fallen in battle and of those who returned permanently crippled, and of the many Jews among them; I told how the Americans had felt for the Russians during those terrible years, not waiting for appeals or prompting, but instinctively taking up all possible aid for the heroic Russian people, and of the role American Jews had played in this endeavor. Analyzing my own statements, I found they added up to identifying the American Jews with America and America with the war effort, with assistance to the Russians, and with friendship for the Russian people, although they did not accept the Russian social system. The sum total was good will to all.

The reaction of the local official was more facial than verbal. You could see his eyes lighting up, the smile rising on his face. But with reference to the war days he said not a word. Perhaps he found himself in an awkward position. What could he be expected to say? Thank you? Perhaps the Party line on this issue had not yet been laid down; certainly he could not venture out by himself on the uncharted sea of foreign affairs. Only in Minsk did the officials enter into a discussion of American relief, the reason being that the committee which had received the clothing and other articles from the American Russian War Relief was still in existence. There was only one Jew among the four Byelorussian officials we met with, but we spoke Yiddish. Two of the three Gentiles spoke it fluently and the third understood it quite well. I was told that many Byelorussians knew Yiddish because of their close association with the Jews in the towns and villages.

The local official was a happy man when he reached home base and could begin telling about reconstruction and progress in his city or district. After giving a general outline he would call in his staff expert, who was often a Jew, to fill in the details. The ice broken, we were then ready to file into the reception chamber. Other local officials and dignitaries joined us around the table, and the ceremonial toasts began. Even on a non-festive occasion Russians do not simply take a drink. They drink a toast. This means standing up and making a little speech, or listening to one, before gulping down the drink. There is one advantage in this custom. With the audience on its feet, filled glasses in hand, a toast cannot be unduly long. Certain toasts had to be drunk bottoms-up—the toast to Stalin, for instance, to the memory of Franklin Roosevelt, and the inevitable toast to *druzhba narodov*, friendship of the nations. By then you realized that if wine rejoiceth the heart of man, vodka warms it up, and both loosen the tongue. Soon we were talking freely about all sorts of things, important and trivial, personal and general. Then I would bring up the subject of Jews: Jews enjoyed full freedom and equality in the United States, and we had Jews in all walks of life, some in very prominent positions. American Jews were naturally interested in the status of Jews in the Soviet Union. We in America were glad to hear that in the Soviet

Union Jews likewise enjoyed freedom and equality with the other peoples. The local official, who may have expected worse, would then be visibly delighted, and would give positive assurance that in the Soviet Union no distinction whatever was made between people belonging to different nations or adhering to different religions. He would point to some of the people at the table, officials or dignitaries, as Jews, and read off a list of Jewish names among the officials holding top positions in the town or district. All was well with his world—and the situation between the non-Jews and the Jews could not be better.

On the way back from such a meeting Fefer was always in good spirits, like a man with a job well done. He was highly pleased with my closing remarks. He did not say it in so many words, but I could see that he wanted the local official to know that Jews were influential in the United States and that they were interested in the fate of the Jews in the Soviet Union. Consciously or subconsciously, Fefer seemed to feel the interest of American Jewry in the Jews of the Soviet Union as an asset, an additional element of security. Referring to a top official we had just visited, I said to Fefer: "That yokel seems to be proud of his Jews." Fefer laughed, and I added, "But they are still 'his' Jews; he was not 'their' goy." Fefer had a habit of looking up above his eyeglasses, as though in surprise, but saying nothing. Often he would begin to hum an old Jewish folk song after such a look. He did that now.

What was the general impression left by those trips?

Fefer once told me a fable of an old lion, king of the forest, who wished to retire and put someone else in his place. A whimsical old codger, he picked the hare to be ruler of the forest. He placed the hare on his throne and lumbered off into the background. Word of the succession passed around, and the animals of the forest came to make their obeisance. The fox arrived first. Prostrating himself before the hare, he said: "Hail to thee, bold and mighty ruler of us all." The wolf followed him. Bowing before the hare, he said: "I humble myself before thee, wise and almighty ruler of the forest." And so came and bowed all the animals. The tiger had not heard what had happened. Passing by, he noticed the hare on the lion's throne, and

stretched out his paw, picked up the hare, and swallowed him. All the animals stood aghast. "What have you done? What have you done?" animal voices called to the tiger. "Haven't you heard the lion made the hare the ruler of the forest?" "Did he?" the tiger asked in horror, and slumped to the ground. He placed his paws on the sides of his head, and yowled: "Woe is me, woe is me, that I did not divine the latest switch of the lion's tail!"

The lion was still king of the forest when I was there in 1946. And the forest was a jungle. The hares were on the run, and the foxes and wolves, and the tiger, too, were competing among themselves to be the first to follow the turn of the line. It was a serious business, for everyone was for himself and the devil took the hindmost. But the forest was a small area, out of bounds for 99 per cent of the people. They did not know what had happened even after it happened. You were better off if you did not know, and safer certainly. Time and again I heard from a minor official the expression *ye tsheloviek malenki* (I am a little man), which meant it was not for him to reason why or to make decisions—however small—or possibly to stretch a point. All directives, even the most minute, must come from that fountain of wisdom and power, the pudgy little man with the pock-marked face, who had the gait of a bear.

I saw that man once sitting on the platform at the opening session of the Supreme Soviet. All the Party elite were there in the gaudy Czarist hall in the Kremlin, each reciting his piece in the presence of the Boss. The newspapermen in the press gallery did not listen to the speeches. They were checking on who was sitting where, the order in which the speakers appeared, and how long the Boss applauded each one. That was more important. The platform contained rows of pews, as in a church. Each pew seated six, and contained at least four. Only the Boss sat alone in a pew. It was not the first pew, but he was alone in it. The next day I asked Fefer why the Boss sat all by himself. Fefer was surprised at the question. What did I mean? Nobody would want to crowd him. Certainly two or three in a pew for six would not have crowded him, but you did not ask such questions about the Boss.

The people were not concerned about what went on at the Supreme Soviet. They would find it all in the papers the next

morning: a quarter-page picture of the Boss on the front page, another picture of the Supreme Soviet applauding the Boss on an inside page, with the full texts of the speeches. But only a few read any of this. The people were concerned with two things: a roof over the head and fill for the stomach. They knew they would have to work hard for these things, but they did not mind. After all, they were working for themselves, not for anyone else. And if things improved, it would be for them. Yet the land lay in ruins, and although you had to put in so much, you got out so little. "You should have come to us in 1941," the plain people often told me. "Things were looking up then. After all the hard years since the Revolution, the fruit of our labor began to show. You could go to a store and find what you needed. Then the war came, and you see where we are."

Yes, I saw where they were, but I hated to think of the sweat and tears and blood it would require to get away. The "scorched earth" area that Stalin asked them to lay waste on retreating at the outbreak of the war was large—and waste indeed. The occupied land, devastated and plundered, comprised a territory that had a prewar population of 88,000,000, and contained one-half of the sown area and nearly one-half of all the farm animals, as well as one-third of the industrial potential, of the entire Soviet Union. The vast stretch of the country was now being slowly (most painfully and not very efficiently) restored, replenished, and reconstructed. All the fruits of the people's labor were going into the reconstruction. How long would it be before some of their own needs were filled? Most shops were closed. Those that kept open had meager supplies. Housewives complained of standing in line for hours outside a store, only to find when they finally got inside that the provisions were sold out. One store window exhibited a couple of thick salamis, some corned beef, and a ham. I tried the door—it was locked. I looked into the window again—the exhibits were of papier-mâché. "What is the sense in keeping those things in the window?" I asked a Soviet friend. He grinned, and replied in a jingle which could be rendered into English as, "In order to show our successors what was eaten by our predecessors."

There was one place, however, where the salamis were real, and real also were the smoked meats, salted fish, and a host of

other delicacies. And the supplies were plentiful—mountains of food piled up on tables and shelves, and all for sale. This was at the luxurious *gastronom*, a food shop on a principal street near Red Square. There was no line outside, and not many shoppers inside. The catch was the price. That was sky-high, far above the reach of at least 90 per cent of the people. I saw the furtive glances of the passersby as they hurried on their way, knowing that these things were not for them. I turned to a Russian friend and said: "If you must have such a store, why locate it on a central street for all to see?" His reply was: "We want the people to see all this. Let them see what may be had by all; what they, too, could have, if they only worked hard enough."

The *gastronom*, like the other specialty shops displaying luxury articles priced beyond reach, was the carrot in front of the donkey even as it was being whipped from behind. The Russian leaders did not want their people to accept their poverty, to acquiesce in their destitution. Rather, they were out to whet the appetites of the masses as an incentive to greater effort and higher productivity. You heard a lot about maneuvering, manipulation, finagling, and even plain thievery in stores and factories. One executive confided to me that he was hoping to skip. Why? Did he not have a good job and live in comfort? He had a sense of humor. He grinned as he explained: There were 379 statutes in their criminal code under which a person could be arrested; he himself could be arrested under 377 of them.

The malfeasance could not have been as common as some tried to make the visitor believe. Actually, it was the backwash of the surge of industrial enterprise, which was like a national gold rush, with the people being driven like mules over an impassable wilderness. The sustaining idea, like the strike in a gold rush, was the morrow, the better life to come. The new Five-Year Plan called not only for rehabilitation and restoration of the prewar level, but also for advances far beyond that point. Total production in 1950 was to be 48 per cent above 1940; the manufacture of consumer goods, down one-third from the 1940 level, was to rise 23 per cent above that level in 1950.

In the Soviet system the Plan is all-pervasive. Along with the rise in industrial production must come an increase in agricultural production, and an accompanying advance in all phases

of living. School attendance, academic research, the publication of books and newspapers, the production of plays, musical performances, all must move ahead at a commensurate pace. Even creative artists were exhorted to fall into line and compose better works of literature. The urge, the drive, of the postwar spirit permeated the whole cultural field. An artist at his easel said to me: "Gee, I've got to do something big now, really good . . ."

The Jewish Community

My general impression of the inner life of the Jewish communities I visited was not unlike my impression of the country as a whole. In regard to Jewish culture, I also heard the words: "You should have come to us in 1941 . . . things were looking up then." In the Jewish communities too, I saw people conscious of the uphill struggle ahead of them, tired and harried men and women tugging away against all odds out of the sheer will to survive spiritually. There seemed to be one difference, however—all doors opened automatically for the general cultural effort, but the hinges on the gate to Yiddish culture were rusty, and the gate opened reluctantly and only slightly.

I remember a tall, redheaded, haggard Jew in Riga who knocked on my door at the hotel. He had heard over the radio of our arrival in town, and called to invite me to give a public lecture. I was delighted to accept the invitation, and suggested that he also invite my companion, Itzik Fefer, who was well known and liked in the city. As I was directing the visitor to Fefer's room on the same floor, Fefer happened to come to my room. I said to him: "Look, we're invited to give a public lecture here. Isn't that wonderful?" Looking at my visitor, Fefer asked laughingly: "What do you mean by inviting us? Have you spoken to anyone about it?" The man squinted as though trying to hold on to the dream from which he was being awakened. No, he had not spoken to anyone, but he would. Yes, he would have to. We never heard from him again—and we had no public appearance in Riga.

Of course, there was no such thing as a public meeting privately arranged—in Riga, or elsewhere in the Soviet Union. But if I had been a Latvian coming to visit with Latvians in

Riga under similar circumstances, there would have been some official body to arrange the public lecture. I am sure the Jewish community of Riga would have been happy to have me speak at their synagogue. And the several Yiddish writers we met in Riga would have been delighted to have a public meeting with us. Perhaps they would have been given the permission if they had asked for it. But they did not dare ask. Time and again, as I traveled through the country, it seemed to me that the Jews were not making use of the rights which they possessed like the others in the population. Too timid, I would think to myself. Then the thought would occur: Perhaps they know better. Only years after a young Polish rabbi called on me at my hotel in Moscow, did I learn that he had been picked up by the police as he left the hotel. He had had a perfect right to visit me, but apparently it was still hazardous to do what you had the full right to do.

I saw a sad example of this in Rabbi Shlieffer's office at a Moscow synagogue. I had had a long talk with the chairman of the Council for Religious Cults, Ivan Polyansky. He explained his function as helping the religious sects realize their freedom under the Constitution, and he cited actual examples. There was a Muslim community in Central Asia that had needed a primer of their faith in Arabic. Finding difficulty in getting it printed, they turned to him. He advised them to send him the text and the printing costs, and he would have it done for them. He did, and now here was the printed primer right on his desk. He had helped to issue another religious publication, a theological magazine in Russian, also on his desk. Then he showed me a telegram from Riga. The director of a Catholic theological seminary was thanking him for his assistance in obtaining an additional building for the seminary. The local authorities were not always as understanding and co-operative as they might be, he said. I asked if the Jews could likewise avail themselves of his services. Naturally, he replied. No distinctions were made between religions. I asked him specifically if the Jews could have a yeshiva, a theological school, for the training of rabbis, if they could have prayer books published through his office, and if it would be permissible for the rabbis of the Soviet Union to meet in conference to plan these steps and to form a central

body. His answer was a definite yes to all three questions. To make it official I cabled his words to my newspaper in New York, thus necessitating their passing censorship. I then called on Rabbi Shlieffer at the synagogue to report the glad tidings.

Whether it was by chance or because I had advised Rabbi Shlieffer of my coming, there were eleven rabbis in his office on my arrival. (That many synagogues were then functioning in Moscow.) A few of them were quite well known outside Russia, like the noted "Makover Rabbi." With the exception of Rabbi Shlieffer they were shabbily dressed and miserably shod; only their high foreheads, delicate faces, and pensive eyes suggested their calling. Rabbi Shlieffer introduced me, and we shook hands. Not a word came from them, not a smile. I reported every word exchanged between Mr. Polyansky and myself. They listened intently, but still said nothing. Rabbi Shlieffer looked at each one of the rabbis and then at me, as if to say: "You saw—can you also understand?" There was a painful silence. Then I made a presumably irrelevant remark: I told them that on my visit to Kiev I had happened to hear a prayer in the synagogue that was not used in the United States (which was not so) that ran like this: Our brethren, the Children of Israel, who find themselves in distress and captivity, on land or sea—surely they knew the rest. The rabbis lowered their eyes—in shame at their helplessness, or in fear of being called to account. I shook hands again, and left.

Eventually, the Soviet Jews did get their yeshiva and one small edition of the prayer book. But these things came to them as a small consolation for the suppression of their entire secular culture and the brutal execution of their intellectual leaders and creative writers. It was a crumb thrown to a starved, emaciated man hardly able to digest anything.

What was so good about the year 1941?

A veritable renaissance occurred in the cultural life of Soviet Jewry in the years 1939–41. This came after the steady decline of the preceding three years, which had largely been the result of the purges and terror of the middle 1930's, but there had also been a general trend toward Russification brought about by assimilation, or disapproval of the content of the Yiddish culture, or both. In the Byelorussian purge of the middle 1930's,

two leading Yiddish writers and several educators were caught in the net. The Yiddish schools, like most institutions whose directors had been seized, were closed. But the Yiddish schools were not reopened. In the terror that followed, a man would have to be bold indeed to round up people to join him in requesting the reopening of schools that the authorities had closed. The natural reaction was that the authorities would reopen the schools themselves when they saw fit. They never saw fit.

In the Ukraine, the Yiddish schools were dying a natural death. The upper classes managed to move ahead with only a slight decrease in enrollment, but there was increasing difficulty in forming new beginners' classes. Again and again the Yiddish newspaper *Emes* reported growing crises in the Yiddish schools. Typical was an item about the merger of two schools because of the shortage of students, and one short year later the merged school had no more than four pupils for its beginning class. The crisis indicated that Jewish parents were letting their children continue in Yiddish schools when it was too late or inconvenient to make a change, but preferred to start them in a non-Jewish school. The basic motive was the child's future. He would do better in the institute or university if he came from a general school. There were contributory factors as well: a feeling that the children were not bringing back much Jewish knowledge from the Yiddish school, a sense that the Party line was changing on minority cultures generally. A corresponding decline could be noticed in the other minority schools in the Ukraine—i.e., the German, Polish, and Bulgarian schools. There was also a noticeable decline in the hold Yiddish literature had on its readers. Three Yiddish publishing houses (in Moscow, Kiev, and Minsk) were still operating, and three major literary journals were still published, but the circulation of the journals was dropping and the sale of books had decreased. Greater declines were anticipated. People began thinking of the non-Yiddish-reading Jew, and feeling there should be more translations from the Yiddish for him.

Then came the shot in the arm. Between September, 1939, and July, 1940, some 2,000,000 Jews came under Soviet rule. They were the Jews of the newly acquired territories, the Baltic

states, Bessarabia, Eastern Poland, and Bucovina. These Jews had led an intense religious, cultural, and national communal life between the two world wars. They had had their own schools, newspapers, book publishing houses, political parties, communal organizations. Like the nations among whom they lived, these Jews were to be assimilated into the Soviet civilization. This assimilation required the suppression of the capitalist system and bourgeois institutions, but also the establishment of new, proletarian institutions in the languages of the peoples. Soviet Jewish writers went to meet their colleagues in the new territories to help them take over the cultural leadership in their respective provinces and to co-ordinate the local activities with their own. The result was an infusion of new blood, an addition of deeper national feeling and greater historical content, culminating in the good old days of 1941 which the people were still talking about in 1946.

To the three major Jewish centers—Moscow, Kiev, and Minsk—and the minor one in Birobidjan, were now added quite a few centers that had been metropolises in these countries and provinces: Riga, Vilno, Kovno, Chernovtsy, Lvov, Bialystok. To the one existing Yiddish newspaper were added four new ones which appeared in these centers. Yiddish books for children had all but disappeared by 1939, but now they began to be published again. Literary journals doubled their circulation. The sale of books climbed to new heights. Of no less significance was the Jewish content of the new current. The Party hacks sifted and screened, but the tide was too powerful. And besides, the bars were now lowered generally. Under the frightful clouds of war the Kremlin was currying favor with the peoples of its domain. It opened a safety valve and sought to direct the force of the pent-up national emotions into the channel of Soviet patriotism.

Then came the war, and swept all away—the culture, the towns, and most of the people. The remnant who managed to escape were scattered over the vast expanse of Eastern Russia and Central Asia. Religious Jews had their rallying point in their Rock of Ages, the omnipresent light and salvation. Secular culture Jews were limited to the Yiddish word, spoken and printed. But there was, in the new diaspora, little of the former

and none of the latter. For a time it seemed that the pulverization was complete. Unexpectedly, a phoenix rose from the ashes, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. Of small significance at its emergence, it soon grew into the central focus of a stricken, scattered people. The secular culture Jews, striving for Jewish unity, now had a big brother. The big brother could not do much for them, but at least they had someone to turn to. In time, the committee became a sustaining force. With their Father in heaven, their brethren abroad, and a brother in Moscow, the Soviet Jews over the steppes and deserts were not alone.

The seventy-eight Yiddish books published during the war years were less than one-third of the number appearing annually before. The skeleton player groups were a mere shadow of the theatres they had been at home base. But these things were a light in the window. Someday the refugee would be back. The house would be relit brightly and a fire would crackle in the hearth. In 1946 the refugees *were* back, or on the way. As I traveled through the length and breadth of the land I found nothing of the old and only a little started anew, but everywhere there was hope and ambition and dogged determination. The Jewish State Theatre of Moscow produced a musical entitled *Frailekhs*, which meant *Cheer Up* or *Jollity*. Itzik Fefer turned poet laureate of the new age with a poem entitled *Anew*, the gist of which was: "Now that the sword is at rest and the lead no longer seething, the blossoms in the field are bursting anew . . . then let us gather our strength anew, unite the old and the young anew, to raise edifices out of the ruins anew, in friendship that is waiting on the roads anew, to rock children in cradles anew, and to live and fight and win anew."

Anew, to live and fight and win again—this was the dictum of the day. In Kovno I found a small Jewish orphanage in a rickety building that was being renovated. Two Jewish teachers, one of them the noted Yiddish educator Helena Hatzkeles, were struggling with an institution that required at least a half dozen more people. They had collected little waifs whose parents had succumbed under the Nazis, and they tried hard to keep them alive and cheerful. That was all the Jews had in Kovno, outside of the synagogue. But there would be more. Jews were only beginning to return to the city. In Vilno they had a Yiddish school

and a dramatic circle—in addition to the ubiquitous synagogue, of course. But that was not enough, not for Vilno. The “Jerusalem of Lithuania” would be a Jerusalem again. In Odessa I found nothing but a wretched little synagogue, with its members thinking of their dead—their cemetery had been desecrated, the gravestones broken or removed, and they were raising funds for the restoration. But the younger people talked of the living and the life to be. They would have a Yiddish theatre and a choral society. They could not conceive of Odessa without a Yiddish theatre. Odessa had always been associated with fun and pleasure-seeking. A *bon vivant* was said to “live like God in Odessa.” Minsk was living entirely in the future; it was still in ruins. But there would be a Yiddish theatre and a Yiddish literary journal, the Communist leader told me. Minsk would be Minsk.

There were no Yiddish schools in Kiev, but they had the Yiddish Scientific Cabinet, a section of the Ukrainian Academy of Science. It occupied seven rooms, had a staff of sixteen, and operated on a budget of 300,000 rubles provided by the Ukrainian Academy from its own budget. The Cabinet arranged weekly public literary meetings, but they were primarily engaged in research. They had just received ten cases of Yiddish type and would soon set up to publish their own studies; some of their major works would appear in Moscow. They seemed to have a special interest in Jewish folk music. Ready for the printer were two volumes on Purim plays, one devoted to the texts, the other to the music. Nearly done was a book on *klezmer* music, the generally improvised folk melodies played by itinerant fiddlers at Jewish weddings—they had various records of the tunes. They were also preparing a historical grammar of the Yiddish language and working on a Yiddish-Russian dictionary of 40,000 words. The poet David Hofstein took me to his Ukrainian translator, the famous Ukrainian poet Tichina, a non-Jew who knew Yiddish. Tichina was then Minister of Culture, and Hofstein urged him to speed the publication of a projected Yiddish almanac. Tichina promised. It was all promise. The tense was the future.

In Moscow there was a great present as well as a hopeful future. In addition to the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee itself,

there were two major Yiddish cultural institutions. One was the Jewish State Theatre, a huge enterprise occupying its own three buildings and running on a budget of 3,000,000 rubles a year. It employed three hundred persons, among them sixty actors, thirty-six musicians, thirty-five stagehands, twelve tailors, six carpenters, and four shoemakers. The house was always sold out in advance. I had to reserve my seat a few days beforehand, and when I failed to do so, I had to be accommodated by an extra chair in the aisle. Backstage, the atmosphere was devotional as well as theatrical. The actors were votaries in a service. They spent from six to ten months rehearsing and studying a new play. I was present at one such study session; it might have been a graduate seminar in dramatic art, where professor and students analyzed the inner meaning of every line and movement. The theatre also had a Yiddish dramatic school with the same curriculum as the Russian schools of dramatic art, except that the language was Yiddish and Yiddish drama was studied. There were sixty students in the school. Why so many? Well, they were training actors not only for their own theatre but for other Jewish theatres to be.

The *Emes* publishing house was a similarly large enterprise. Their list for 1946 contained 150 new titles in addition to reprints of old favorites. Their five-year plan—all enterprises had to have a five-year plan—ran into several hundred new titles, most of them already arranged for. Among them were several major undertakings of special significance, such as a comprehensive history of Yiddish literature to mark the four hundredth anniversary of Eliahu Bakhur, the Yiddish Chaucer, and three extensive anthologies, one of biblical literature, another of talmudic and midrashic literature, and a third of the medieval Hebrew literature. Every new title involved a large outlay for the writing, besides the cost of production. By Soviet custom the author received his royalty, at a set rate, for the entire edition on the delivery of the manuscript. During my stay the poet Peretz Markish delivered a manuscript of a large collection of his poems to the editor of *Emes*. It contained 20,000 lines. At the set rate of ten rubles per line, he at once received 200,000 rubles, quite a fortune in Russia even today. The Yiddish writers had it good there, better than anywhere.

It was difficult to leave the Soviet Union in 1946. The kind, hospitable people of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee grew on me. I had not meant to stay so long, but whenever I was about to leave, Mikhoels came up with a new project for a trip somewhere. It was obvious that they were seeking to delay my departure as long as possible. For a time the reason was Birobidjan. In connection with the revival of emigration to the Jewish Autonomous Region, Fefer and I were to make a promotion visit there, with due ceremonies on our departure and arrival, and with committees meeting us at various stops en route. A film of these ceremonies would subsequently be shown in the Jewish communities. Lozovsky liked the idea, but Siberia was closed territory then and only Molotov personally could grant the permission. Molotov was out of the country most of the time, and when he returned briefly he was too busy with other matters. Possibly he refused the permission, but they did not tell me. When the trip to Birobidjan seemed hopeless, they suggested new side trips. Finally I asked Mikhoels: "Why do you want me to stay on? Tell me the truth. I have been here so long already."

He replied, confidentially, "We expect news from the Kremlin about Jews. A decision is about to be made, and I would like you to cable it first to the world—as you were the first to cable the news about the new status of Birobidjan in 1934."

What the news might be he did not say, and I did not ask. In Russia, you learn that it is both embarrassing and pointless to ask for what you are not told. Like the permission to go to Birobidjan, the awaited news from the Kremlin failed to arrive. Could it have had to do with the Crimean plan for which Mikhoels and the others paid with their lives?