

JEWES IN THE SOVIET UNION

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THE question of the situation of Soviet Jews has been the subject of controversy, with one side charging the regime with active antisemitic policies, while in a number of statements the Soviet leadership emphatically deny the charge and assert that Jews have religious and civic freedoms on a par with all other nationalities of the U.S.S.R. It is therefore worthwhile inquiring as carefully as possible into the real situation, bearing in mind the inevitable imperfections of the evidence.

Before describing the situation as it is, it is necessary to make a brief historic excursion. In doing so, the reader should bear in mind an essential distinction, which is often overlooked, between *governmental policies* on the one hand and *folk attitudes* on the other. These may, of course, interact. Thus the government may embark on antisemitic policies because it wishes to play up to popular prejudices, or because the government itself reflects these prejudices, through the fact that its members are people who share folk attitudes to Jews. None the less, a distinction must be made between these two kinds of antisemitism. For example, any serious student of Poland between the wars would have to note that the Polish governments of the period tended to be markedly *less* antisemitic than their citizens.

Antisemitism runs deep in Eastern Europe, and, alas, it has not been cured by the massacre of most of the Jews resident there. Its basic causes lie outside the purview of this article. However, in the U.S.S.R. they have been contributed to by several special features of Soviet history. Thus Jews played an important role in all the revolutionary parties and were prominent among the Bolshevik leadership and in local officialdom. The majority of the Jewish population were not in sympathy with Bolshevism, and indeed suffered economically from the measures against private trade and handicrafts. But in the public mind opposition to Communists or just 'the authorities' became linked with opposition to Jews. Partly for this reason, and partly because the Communists in the early days were genuinely internationalist, vigorous measures were taken against manifestations of folk antisemitism, especially in the twenties and early thirties.

Apart from purely folk attitudes, there also gradually developed a

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species of antisemitic prejudice among many Communist party members. This can be traced to three causes. One is simply that they imbibed folk attitudes with their mothers' milk. The second arose from the high proportion of Jews among oppositionist party intellectuals, who were victims in the Great Purge. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, and a host of lesser lights were among them, and this led to some feeling about the unreliability of Jews, which could be used in the inner-party struggles, especially as the new Stalinist party cadres were increasingly tough men-of-the-people, with no patience for intellectuals (and, incidentally, *because* they were genuinely 'of the people', they were more likely to be influenced unconsciously by folk attitudes): Thirdly, Jews were prominent as traders, legal and illegal, which helped to fan traditional attitudes towards 'Jewish speculators' (or Jews as 'incurable petty-bourgeois') among those whose ideology was against trading as such.¹

The line taken by Jewish Communists on Jewish questions was mixed. They were strongly anti-Zionist and anti-religious, but the attitudes of 'party Jews' were complicated by a difference of opinion between those who favoured the preservation of Jewish consciousness and specifically Jewish cultural organizations, and the assimilationists whose aim and desire was to merge the Jewish masses as quickly as possible into the peoples among whom they lived. However, Yiddish schools, theatres, and newspapers were allowed as much freedom (however much that was) as were those of other nationalities, and synagogues were no more repressed than were churches, though at some periods repression was applied to both. Yiddish was deliberately supported against Hebrew, as an anti-Zionist measure. In this respect no major changes occurred in the thirties. The Purges removed many Jews from official posts and thereby greatly diminished their weight in the party hierarchy, but large numbers attained eminence in science, the arts, and other fields less directly political. It is generally conceded that folk antisemitism was in decline at this period.

During the war, in an effort to rally public opinion to the Soviet cause, a Jewish anti-fascist committee was formed, and its representatives toured England and America. Jews played their part in the Soviet Army, while millions of their parents, relatives, and children ended their lives in mass graves on the outskirts of Kiev, Minsk, Vilna, and hundreds of smaller places. Unfortunately the war also greatly stimulated antisemitism, especially in the Ukraine. This was apparently due partly to German propaganda, and partly to the general consequences of hardships on popular temper in traditionally antisemitic areas.

Two other aspects of wartime history should be mentioned. One is the question of the failure to evacuate Jews from areas overrun by the Germans. Here, in my view, the Soviet authorities have an effective

reply to make. The speed of the German advance was such as to cause utter confusion, in the course of which the army lost several million prisoners in 1941 alone. Means of transport were desperately lacking and in the circumstances it was surely altogether too much to expect an adequate organization of an evacuation of Jews in that year. The other point concerns the sinister episode of the shooting, on ridiculous charges, of the Polish-Jewish leaders Erlich and Alter in 1941, shortly after they had begun to undertake, apparently with Soviet official help, work analogous to that of the Soviet Jewish anti-fascist committee. This was evidence of an attitude to Jewish organizations which was to show itself with disastrous effect in the years 1948-53.

After the war there was a brief period of respite, and then came the 'antisemitism from above' of 1948-53, the remarkable period of persecution. The Jewish anti-fascist committee was broken up and almost all its members shot. Prominent Yiddish poets, novelists and actors vanished and the most eminent of them were shot. Many jobs were barred to Jews. Attacks on so-called 'homeless cosmopolitans' assumed strong antisemitic overtones. It became harder and harder for Jews to get into universities. The theatres were closed, the schools were closed, the Jewish press was liquidated.² This whole process culminated in the 'doctors' plot' with its open anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist features, and eye-witnesses tell of the antisemitic responses to the 'doctors' plot' on the part of many citizens.³ Worse seemed likely to follow.

Why did all this happen? There seem to have been several reasons. One was the creation of the state of Israel, with its consequence of suspicion of possible disloyalty. It may be no coincidence that the anti-Jewish measures followed the open demonstration by Jews in greeting Israel's first ambassador in Moscow. The suggestion reportedly made to Stalin to allow Jews to settle in the Crimea,⁴ instead of the remote and unpopular Birobidzhan, was seized upon as evidence of some obscure treason, and the authors of this suggestion are thought to have been shot. Then the security-mad officials of Stalin's police regarded the possession of relatives abroad as evidence of doubtful loyalty, and whatever qualities the Jews do or do not possess, they do certainly tend to have relatives abroad. However, the repression was above all directed at those who desired to behave *as Jews*. Thus while many writers in Yiddish were shot, Jews who wrote in Russian suffered little or no penalty, except in so far as many Jewish literary critics were under attack as 'cosmopolitans'.

Then, fortunately for many other people apart from Jews, Stalin died. Those doctors who survived their 'interrogation' were released with apologies. The persecutions of the 1948-53 era were dropped, and successive amnesties emptied the concentration camps of Jewish and other survivors of past repressions. In 1955 Jewish musical evenings were again permitted. Gradually it became known that many of those

shot in the 1948-53 repression were individually rehabilitated, and in some instances (e.g. Bergelson, Markish, Kvitko) their works were published again, in Russian translation. This was, of course, part of the general 'thaw' which affected virtually all aspects of Soviet life, and from which the Jews certainly benefited and still benefit. In 1958, the hundredth anniversary of Sholom Aleichem's birth was celebrated with a big edition of his works in Russian translation, and a small edition in Yiddish, the latter being the first Yiddish printing (outside Birobidzhan) for ten years (it is a bibliographical rarity in Moscow, but can be bought readily in Paris and London). In 1959 limited editions of two more (long-dead) Yiddish writers appeared in their native language (Peretz and Mendele Mocher Seforim). In the last few months there have been reports that some poems by living poets will be published in the Yiddish language, and, as these lines are being written, news has come of a Yiddish literary magazine which should shortly appear.

However, the situation, though certainly better, remains deeply unsatisfactory.

First of all, there is no non-religious Jewish organization of any kind in the entire U.S.S.R. Jews cannot meet to discuss their problems or their interests. If they happen not to be religious, or have no synagogue in their place of residence, they have nowhere to gather and no means of expressing their collective views on any topic whatsoever. The Yiddish cultural institutions which were banned in 1948 have not been restored, and the 'evenings of Jewish song' (of which more in a moment) are a poor substitute.

Secondly, religious freedom is severely restricted. True, synagogues exist, and anybody is free to worship in them. But there is no link between synagogues, no chief rabbinate (despite the title of Chief Rabbi of Moscow), no possibility of coming together to discuss religious issues, no contact with religious Jews abroad. Bibles and religious requisites (e.g. prayer-shawls) are apt to be returned to their senders if posted from abroad to a Soviet destination. There are difficulties in obtaining *kosher* food, matzos and prayer-books. All this represents discrimination. Thus the Orthodox church is fully organized with its own hierarchy and its own monthly journal, and, like the Baptist church, it maintains regular contacts with churches outside the U.S.S.R., has supplies of newly-printed prayer-books and so on. The position has been made worse by the tendency to close certain small provincial synagogues and not to permit the opening of new ones, even where, as in the city of Kharkov, there are many Jews and no house of prayer. When religious Jews gather to pray together 'unofficially', forming a *minyan* as required by religious teaching, local authorities are apt to take measures against them. Denunciations of *minyanim* have appeared in the provincial press from time to time.

Thirdly, there are continuing allegations of discrimination in

university entrance, the barring of certain types of jobs to Jews, and so on. These allegations are by no means of equal reliability. Thus the absence of Jews from the diplomatic service is very noticeable, but, as will be shown, there seems still to be a substantial number of Jewish students. It may well be that there is now no *ruling* concerning university admission, and that discrimination reflects the prejudices of the local authorities; this could explain the fact that the complaints on this score often originate from the Ukraine and Belorussia, areas of traditionally strong antisemitism. On the other hand, statements made to foreign visitors by both Khrushchev and Furtseva suggest that they consciously wish to avoid having too many Jews in the professions, and that they may well have imposed or encouraged a species of *numerus clausus*, which could masquerade beneath an insistence that children of 'workers' should be given preferential treatment.

Fourthly, there are disturbing reports of overt antisemitic behaviour by ordinary people. There is strong evidence of a synagogue being set on fire in a small town near Moscow, though this is an extreme case; and some desecration of graves in western areas. No one, of course, could seriously suggest that official policy was directly responsible; the Soviet government or Party as such does not organize pogroms or acts of hooliganism against Jews. However, one form of indirect stimulation of antisemitic attitudes is the newspaper article (the so-called *felyeton*) or radio talk, which attacks individuals by name. Such articles are common enough, but when, as often happens, a disproportionate number of the 'victims' have Jewish names, it must be expected to have deplorable results. This is particularly evident in areas traditionally antisemitic, and so the local press and radio in these areas may well indirectly contribute to the behaviour of the hooligan element.⁵ It is also possible that local police officials are less than diligent in tracking down the perpetrators. The Soviet press has been silent about these episodes.

Soviet officials deny some of the above assertions and explain away others. If compelled to do so, they would admit that repression was wrongly applied to Jewish artists and writers in 1948-53—though there had been no *public* admission of antisemitic policies at this period, as distinct from rehabilitation of individual victims—but they claim that there is now no demand for publication in Yiddish, that Yiddish writers reach a much larger public (both Jewish and non-Jewish) by being translated into Russian, that there is no need for Jewish schools or a Yiddish theatre, and that if Jews wish to live a national-cultural life they could move to Birobidzhan. (The Jewish population of this remote corner of East Siberia is not published, but is thought to be a few thousand.) In this connexion, it is interesting that the results of the 1959 census show that just over 20 per cent of the 2,268,000 persons who claim Jewish nationality say that Yiddish is their native language.⁶ Discrimination against Jews in public life and in education is always

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emphatically denied, and Jewish prominence in science and the arts is cited as proof of this. No limitation on Jewish religious observances is admitted. The elimination of antisemitism has often been claimed by propagandists, but can hardly be seriously maintained in serious conversation; however, antisemitic hooliganism or propaganda are said to be illegal and stamped on if they occur.

How can we judge the truth? What is in fact the present situation of Russian Jews, and what is their attitude to the regime?

In evaluating sometimes contradictory evidence, we must consider the reliability and nature of the sources from which information can be derived. Obviously, not every rumour or complaint about discrimination, even if made sincerely by a Russian Jew, is necessarily true. On the other hand, Soviet statements have so often been misleading that official denials cannot be taken at face value—though, naturally, official statements about Jews are not necessarily false. Evidence must be sought where it can be found. Thus circumstantial and well-based accounts of the synagogue-burning episode, the closure of synagogues, or actions against *minyanim* in some small towns come from travellers who see or hear these things, or from references in the provincial press. Antisemitic folk-attitudes are all too easy to notice, even by a casual traveller.

My own belief is that the evidence of centrally-ordered discrimination in education and employment is somewhat ambiguous, though, as already suggested, it may find expression through the prejudices of those charged with the selection of students. Certainly there are some impressive statistics about Jews in learned professions. This shows that Jews were the second biggest nationality among scientific workers (*nauchnye rabotniki*—the term includes learning other than science in the English sense of the word).

TABLE I
Scientists ('learned persons') by nationality

		1955	1958	1959
Total	U.S.S.R..	223,893	284,038	310,022
of which:	Russians	144,285	182,567	199,997
	Jews	24,620	28,966	30,633
	Ukrainians	21,762	27,803	30,252

Sources: *Kul'turnoe Stroitel'stvo SSSR* (Moscow, 1957), p. 254, and *Narodnoe Khozyaistvo SSSR v 1959 godu* (Moscow, 1960), p. 757.

The Jews clearly provide a disproportionately large number of scientific personnel, as may be seen from the fact that they are ahead of the Ukrainians, though there are over fifteen times as many Ukrainians in the U.S.S.R. as there are Jews. Not very surprisingly, the proportion of Jews in the total is in decline; though in absolute terms their numbers show a considerable increase, the total increases faster still.

Similarly, at the second congress of writers of the U.S.S.R., held in 1954, the breakdown of delegates by nationality showed the Jews to be second only to the Russians, and ahead of the Ukrainians. No report of a conference of economists, to take another example, can fail to mention many Jewish names, though leading *official* posts in the academic and scientific world are seldom held by Jews. Thus, while diplomacy and high party and government posts are now almost wholly *Judenfrei*, intellectual and scientific life is another matter. Doctors' name-plates in Moscow show a large number of Jewish names, and Jewish engineers may be encountered all over the place, from Leningrad to the Urals and beyond. This does not disprove the existence of discrimination in university recruitment as of today, of course. It may well exist, and some Russian Jews certainly believe it to exist; but there is some doubt about the facts.⁷ Only one figure relating to numbers of students has become available from Soviet sources. This appeared in the statistical compendium, *Kul'turnoe Stroitel'stvo v RSFSR* (Moscow, 1958). The figures which it contains are confined to the Russian Federal Republic only, in which, according to the census, there live 875,000 Jews. On page 381 of this compendium there is a table giving students by nationality for the academic year 1956/7. The figures are as follows:

Jewish students, Russian republic (RSFSR)

	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Percentage of total students</i>
Higher educational institutions	51,563	4.1
Secondary specialized institutions	21,490	1.7

The percentages look very low to those who are used to educational statistics in Eastern Europe. However, a closer examination of the figures puts a different complexion on things. It seems improbable that there are even as many as 85,000 Jews in the Russian Republic who are in the age-groups from which university students are drawn. If this is so, it follows that the maximum percentage conceivable, if every Jew without exception went to the university, would only be about 7 per cent, since the total number of students in the Russian Republic in that year was 1,266,000. The high percentages achieved by Jews in earlier decades were a by-product of the comparatively low numbers of other nationalities. Even now, the percentage of Jews proceeding to higher education in the total Jewish population of this republic (nearly 6 per cent) is over five times as high as the average for all nationalities in the Russian Republic (1.1 per cent). Adding together higher and 'secondary specialist' education, one accounts for the very large majority of 'educatable' Jewish youth. It is perfectly true that this in no way disproves the existence of a *numerus clausus* in particular universities or other places of learning, nor does it in any way affect allegations of discrimination in republics other than the Russian (notably, the

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Ukraine and Belorussia). Perhaps a high proportion of the Jews take examinations as external students.⁸ It is also important to note that the large majority of Jews of the Russian Republic live in the two cities of Moscow and Leningrad, where the general cultural level is far above the all-union average, and it is also possible that some Jewish students come to Russian universities from other republics. But when all is said and done, it would be absurd to base on the statistics just quoted any allegation of discrimination.

This relates, of course, to discrimination against Jews only by reason of nationality. It does not extend to their rights to act, or write, or organize themselves as Jews. Here there is no doubt whatever that restrictions are severe, and official explanations are lame and unconvincing. Even if only a fifth of the Jews claim Yiddish as a native language, this is nearly half a million people, and many a smaller nationality has the right to publish in its language. Besides, many Russian-speaking Jews also understand Yiddish and may wish to read (for instance) Yiddish poetry in the original. They must, for that matter, wish to discuss or write about Jewish questions in Russian, but that too is hardly possible. For instance, some Jewish writer or historian may have something to say about the terrible war years. But these events as they concern Jews are seldom referred to, save very briefly in formal state documents about Nazi atrocities. In recent years, one recalls the Sholokhov film, 'The Destiny of Man', and also a first-rate piece of concentration-camp reportage entitled 'This must not happen again' (published in 1957); both refer to massacres of Jews, both were written by non-Jews. Both are exceptions to the general policy line of 'the less said, the better'. One cannot find more than a few isolated lines devoted to these events in a literary work by a Jew (since 1948). I do not include journalistic references in connexion with attacks on Adenauer's Germany, which occur from time to time. It is known that at least one major work on the subject exists. The writer, Markish, who was shot in 1952 and is now 'rehabilitated', wrote a novel, *Footsteps of Generations*, dealing with the fate of Polish-Jewish refugees in the U.S.S.R. and 'the heroic struggle of the Warsaw ghetto rising'; it appears on the list of his works in the article on him in Volume 51 of *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, accompanied by the word 'unpublished'. Unavoidably, Jews must feel bitter about this comparative silence on their national tragedy.⁹ To take another example, in such places as Babi Yar, the ravine outside Kiev which was the scene of one of the biggest massacres, there is no monument or any mark of commemoration of the victims. Then, despite widespread disparaging 'folk' remarks about the Jewish war record, Jews as such cannot publicly 'answer back' with a list of the many Russian-Jewish war heroes. Again, the official line seems to be 'the less said, the better', although it is agreeable to be able to welcome positive references to the war record of Russian Jews in the newspaper *Trud*.

One may surmise that the extent to which individual Jews feel this policy depends on the store they set on being Jews. But the many who wish to merge with their fellow-citizens are also affected by the selective and indeed illogical nature of official policy. When Jews perform good acts, they are generally described as 'Russians' (for instance, see the *Encyclopaedia* entry for the painter Levitan, and many others). Yet the description 'Jew' still appears on the passport of Soviet citizens of Jewish 'nationality', the cultural facilities given to other 'nationalities' in the U.S.S.R. are not available, and the press silence on 'good' Jews does not extend to press stories about the socially undesirable acts of some local Isaak Israelevich. This is neither one thing nor the other, it is a semi-assimilation when it suits the authorities, but not when it suits even the assimilationist Jew.

A story heard in Russia goes like this. 'Suppose the Jews were allowed to leave Russia, what proportion would wish to leave?' Answer: '120 per cent, the other 20 per cent being non-Jews who would say they were Jews in order to leave Russia.' The implication behind this story is certainly false. A great many more or less assimilated Jews, especially those with good jobs, would not wish to leave. But among those who wish to be Jews, there must be many who would emigrate, especially to Israel. This may be judged indirectly by the publicity given in the Soviet press to anti-Israeli stories by a few Jews who have returned from there, and also by the reception enjoyed by Israelis who attended the Moscow Youth Festival of 1957. At present the Soviet authorities can argue, with some reason, that they cannot allow Jewish citizens to leave Russia merely because they wish to do so, when that right is denied to other citizens. Soviet Jews' attitudes to Israel are hard to assess, because open expression of Zionist sympathies is still dangerous. I shall never forget one of these 'evenings of Jewish song', which are at present the only form of non-religious Jewish public gathering which can exist in Russia. There was one harmless-sounding song about 'Home' which stopped the show; it had to be sung again, and many members of the audience were in tears. Of course some of the tears may have been for their homes destroyed in the war, but the demand for an encore had more to it than that. They would never have dared give such expression to their views a few years earlier, but the 'thaw' has progressed. The audience was predominantly Russian-speaking, but their very presence at the concert involved an active interest in things Jewish.

The 'thaw', of course, has the effect not only of making some Jews more willing to give vent to their feelings, but also emboldens anti-semites, just as the increased powers being given to local officials provides them with more opportunities, in areas of traditional antisemitism, to express their prejudices. It should not be lightly assumed that greater freedom of expression in Eastern Europe is an unmixed advantage for Jews. If anyone has this delusion, a short discussion with typical

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Ukrainian or Hungarian refugees may quickly disabuse him. Naturally, this is no argument against freedom. Only we must see realistically that, where there is widespread 'folk antisemitism', more opportunities for expressions of opinion will be used, *inter alia*, to make antisemitic remarks and, in extreme cases, even to set fire to a synagogue. Sad, but true.

The real attitude of the Soviet leadership appears to be compounded of several elements. They are genuinely wedded to a 'territorial' theory of nationality into which the Jews do not fit. They claim to favour the solution of assimilation, and react negatively to anything which helps the survival of Jewish consciousness, the more so because of the links which Jews often have with Israel and with relatives in the 'capitalist' world. They are probably quite honestly indignant if accused of anti-semitism, and certainly do not behave in anything like the manner of 1948-53. If Jewish theatres and newspapers existed now, it is most unlikely that Khrushchev would order them to be closed. However, seeing that they are closed, and that (under Soviet conditions) it requires a positive political decision to allow them to open again, they refrain from taking that decision. Their reluctance to publicize anything Jewish can have two explanations, one of them by no means to their discredit. Their reasons may be of an antisemitic kind, or they may wish to avoid stirring up feeling against Jews. The lack of press publicity about the synagogue-burning episode need have no sinister reason behind it; the publicity given to swastika-scrawling in this country had the unintended effect of *encourager les autres*. However, one cannot ignore the wide range of Khrushchev's *obiter dicta* on the subject. Apart from a number of off-guard utterances, one can cite the comparatively mild example of his statement to the French socialist party delegation in 1956, to the effect that; while in the early years of the regime there were many Jews in the party and government, 'we developed our own cadres'. To some extent this is a statistical statement of the obvious: no reasonable person would expect the percentage of Jews in high places of these early years to continue indefinitely. But his formulations suggest a mental attitude which, though nominally internationalist and assimilationist, is in fact nationalist and sharply distinguishes between Jews and 'us Russians'. It is very noticeable that Jewish party officials are almost wholly non-existent, which can hardly be due to accident. Private statements by Russian officials are not seldom rather sharply anti-semitic, and it is hardly possible to imagine that this does not influence their everyday behaviour as far as Jews are concerned, whatever may be the content of the ideology to which they nominally subscribe. This is but one of many examples of the long-term effect of the folk background of Russia on the beliefs and actions of her rulers,¹⁰ and it does seem that the top leaders do to some extent share the popular prejudice about Jews, but to represent them as 'racially' antisemitic in the positive sense,

of spreading the poison themselves or of leading public opinion in this direction, would be neither fair nor accurate. The true situation is unsatisfactory enough; there is no call for exaggerated epithets.

How many Soviet Jews feel themselves to be Jews? To some extent, the recent census provides the answer, because, as the census rules clearly stated, the recording of nationality was based solely on the declarations of the persons concerned. Thus it is quite probable that the number of people registered as Jews on their passports exceeds by a considerable margin those who admitted to this nationality on the census questionnaire. This could well be the reason for the surprisingly small number of Jews reported by the census (2,268,000, instead of the widely expected 3 million). The motives for Jews reporting themselves to be Russians can be many and varied. For instance, some genuinely feel themselves to be Russian and wish to be assimilated if possible. Others react as did a number of British Jews when asked to give their religion in the Army; some wrote 'Church of England' in order not to be 'different'. Then there are the many children of mixed marriages. Thus, a sizeable disparity in figures based on administrative and on 'subjective' definitions of a Jew would be hardly very surprising, though perhaps the expectation of 3 million was exaggerated; wartime losses were so immense.

The territorial distribution of Jews in the 1959 census is as follows:

	<i>(Thousands)</i>
Total	2,268
of which: Russia proper	875
Ukraine	840
Latvia	37
Lithuania	25
Estonia	5
Belorussia	150
Georgia	52
Uzbekistan	94
Moldavia	95

The total in 1939 was 3.02 million in the 'old' territory of the U.S.S.R., but roughly 5 million within its present territory.

The small numbers resident in the Baltic states, Moldavia (i.e. Bessarabia) and Belorussia, which were overrun in the very first days of the war, testifies to the efficiency of the Nazi extermination squads.¹¹ There were perhaps as many as 300,000 Jews in Lithuania alone (in its present boundaries, i.e. including Vilna) in 1939. Many in at least the eastern Ukraine were able to get away. Some of the refugees settled in Central Asia, which accounts for the considerable numbers in Uzbekistan. No further geographical particulars are available at present.

The national spirit among the young was greatly reinforced by the persecutions of the late-Stalin period, and is inevitably strengthened by every new manifestation of discrimination. Thus the official restrictions

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may well defeat their own object. The realization that this is so, the pressure of world opinion, and the support of a portion of the Russian intelligentsia, may well lead in the near future to some small extension of the permitted area of Jewish cultural self-expression. But unfortunately it is also possible that Jewish national self-assertion would be regarded as proof of disloyalty and therefore serve to justify further restrictions and discrimination.

All in all, the picture is far from encouraging. Jewish secular activities are virtually confined to evenings of Jewish song and recitations of Sholom Aleichem. Religious activities are tolerated within limits, but appear to be regarded as inherently connected with bourgeois nationalism and with Israel ('next year in Jerusalem') and so are obstructed in a variety of ways. It appears to be the government's hope that Yiddish will completely die out, and they are reluctant to do anything to encourage or preserve it. All this would be consistent with a straightforward denial of Jewish nationality, and with a policy of assimilation such as was in fact advocated by many Jewish revolutionaries, repugnant as this may be to those for whom Jewish religious and secular survival has a high value (and indeed to those who value the rights of people to retain their identity if they wish). However, under the influence of folk traditions and of strong feelings of Russian nationalism, this simple assimilationist policy is not carried out. Nor, in a sense, in a consciously multi-national state, would it be an easy matter to do so. Yakov Greenberg is not a 'Russian' (or Ukrainian, or Georgian), any more than an imaginary Hyman Cohen of Glasgow would be a Scotsman. So when it comes to the point, the Soviet authorities do treat Jews as a separate nationality, and thereby stand in the way of assimilation; they insist that the nationality always appears on documents, application forms for all jobs, and so on, and thereby facilitate discrimination which arises out of 'grass-roots' antisemitic tradition and the pursuit of advancement by other nationalities. To repeat the point made earlier, this is neither one thing nor the other. It is not very hard to see why and how this anomalous situation arose, but this does not make it any more defensible.

NOTES

¹ For a good example of these attitudes, see the interesting short story by A. Tertz, 'The Trial Begins', published in *Encounter*, January 1960, and by Collins and Harvill Press.

² Except for an insignificant news-sheet in remote Birobidzhan, where an insignificant 'Jewish autonomous region' survived.

³ This is referred to, cautiously, in Ehrenburg's novel *The Thaw*.

⁴ The deportation, in 1945, of the Crimean Tartars left vacant spaces for settlement.

⁵ An extraordinary and fortunately unique example was the publication in Daghestan (a Moslem area) of blood-libel accusations. It is believed that those responsible were dismissed, but it is significant that such a thing could have happened at all.

⁶ Of course, many more understand it.

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The figure of 20 per cent is thought by some analysts to represent an understatement, but this seems unlikely. The traditional Yiddish-speaking areas suffered most from the holocaust of wartime years.

⁷ It may not be irrelevant to add that parents endeavouring to get boys into certain well-known London schools have encountered discrimination somewhat nearer home.

⁸ All the figures cited include external students.

⁹ Since these lines were written, several

forthright references to this subject have appeared in Ehrenburg's serialized autobiography.

¹⁰ One sees it also in their views on such diverse subjects as painting, architecture and sex, which contrast greatly with the attitudes on these matters of the Communists in the 'twenties.

¹¹ Though some were deported by the Soviet authorities as 'socially undesirable elements' in 1940-41, with the result that their lives were saved, though this was hardly the object of the deportation.