

“There Go Our Little Jews”

David G. Roskies

ON JANUARY 7 of this year, Christmas day in the Eastern Orthodox calendar, a group of young Evangelicals dressed in native Ukrainian costume gave a spirited performance of religious folk songs right under Lenin's stony gaze in the Plaza of the October Revolution in Kiev. The crowd assembled there was clearly enjoying the first public performance of these carols in over sixty years. Here, in the City of a Thousand Churches, where only a dozen or so actually serve the faithful, Ukrainian nationalists were finally, if tentatively, reclaiming their Christian roots.

The young Ukrainian Jews who accompanied me on that day seemed to take it all in stride because their culture too was enjoying a remarkable efflorescence, and the signs of Ukrainian-Jewish brotherhood were everywhere to be seen. Thus, in Moscow only two weeks before, when the delegates to the first All-Russian Conference of Jewish Organizations emerged from their deliberations, there to protect them from the anti-Semitic heckling and banners of the Pamyat movement was a group of Ukrainian nationalists with their distinctive yellow-and-blue armbands. They had traveled all the way from Lvov to forge this human chain of ethnic solidarity.

My own presence in Kiev was testimony to the Ukrainian government's genuine desire to foster a Jewish cultural revival. Under the auspices of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education, I and Pey-sakh Fizman had been invited from the United States to lead a two-week-long seminar for the training of Yiddish teachers. While the New York-based Committee for the Revitalization of Yiddish and Yiddish Culture in the Soviet Union had paid our plane fares, and while our local accommodations (spartan, to be sure) were being provided by the spanking new Republican Society for Jewish Culture, the 38 officially registered participants could expect the Ministry of Education itself to reimburse their travel and living expenses.

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Nothing like this had occurred in the Ukraine, or in the entire USSR for that matter, since 1939.

Another first was the official opening of the Osher Shvartsman Library in Kiev. The few thousand Jewish books in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English that formed the nucleus of this fledgling collection would soon be greatly augmented by private donations once word got around of the library's existence. Meanwhile, the sixty-odd people crammed into the tiny auditorium on the seventh night of Hanukkah thrilled to the lighting of the candles, courtesy of their guests from America. Though none of the assembled local Jews responded “Amen” to the blessings, it was surely out of ignorance, not hostility. For when later I distributed *dreydlekh*, the miniature tops used in holiday games, as well as chocolate Hanukkah *gelt* and even Simhat Torah flags to the children of the Pintelekh Choir who had just performed for us, the adults in the audience broke with official decorum to beg gifts for their own children and grandchildren.

Our hosts were drunk on *glasnost*. Besides the government-sponsored seminar and library; besides the theatrical ensembles from Moscow and the successful season enjoyed by the Kiev Yiddish Theater, Mazel Tov; besides the spate of recent concerts by Shlomo Carlebach and members of the Israel Philharmonic; besides the ambitious plans for new seminars, new books and periodicals, there was also a wealth of unofficial activities: Hebrew courses galore, Jewish *samizdat* in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, and even—I saw it with my own eyes—the opening of an Israeli video library.

Predictably, this feverish activity above and below ground was accompanied by fierce infighting. Indeed, seventy years of Bolshevik terror had done little to alter the structure of internal Jewish politics. On the Zionist end of the spectrum, the *Iggud Hamorim*, or Union of Hebrew Teachers, had split into rival factions. In the meantime, a breakaway group from the Republican Society for Jewish Culture—a kind of latter-day Bund committed to cultural autonomy—had just been formed the week before we arrived. The elite group of young Zionists preferred to go it alone, and seemed to enjoy the romance of semi-clandestine

meetings. In addition, they now had an unbroken supply of funds, electronic equipment, and accessories which were the envy of the "Republicans." The latter, for all their official sanction and much larger membership, had to rely on Ukrainian institutions that were also starving for a ruble.

Contributing to a profound sense of *déjà-vu* was a gallery of Jewish activists who seemed to be recruited from central casting. The Republican Society for Jewish Culture, for instance, was headed by an old-guard bureaucrat named Ilya Levitas who looked very Stalinist indeed. Lean and muscular (he is a former gym instructor), Levitas never cracked a smile. He also could not speak Yiddish. Opinions on the man were wildly divergent. Some painted him as a *Judenrat*-style collaborator out to further only himself and his group of sycophants. Others argued that he alone had the contacts and political savvy to organize a common Jewish-Ukrainian front. It was a measure of *glasnost*, however, that no one was afraid of him. The students of our seminar let him have it for the terrible accommodations and other indignities they suffered.

A more lovable type was Igor Kuperberg, who ran the day-to-day activities of the Society. He was one of the few middle-aged men active in Jewish politics, though his bad eye and paunch belly made his exact age inscrutable. Kuperberg took his marching orders from Levitas, yet he was thick with the Zionists as well. They, in turn, were young and handsome with fiery eyes and healthy heads of hair. The bearded ones betrayed a religious leaning. In addition to their sex appeal, the Zionists also boasted a membership half of whom were young women, a constituency sorely lacking among their rivals. The "Republicans" were mostly pensioners: archetypal Jewish mothers; fathers who always displayed their war ribbons and medals; Holocaust survivors.

But no matter who they were, young or old, male or female, they talked and talked and talked. Never have I so understood the loquaciousness of Sholem Aleichem's fictional characters. Talkativeness here in Kiev was a surrogate for political power, for happiness, for the truth. Some of the monologues were in fact so close to Sholem Aleichem that the boundary between literature and life broke down completely. A father from Odessa recounted the Via Dolorosa of his son from one institution of higher learning to another, as each time the son was rejected on account of his Jewish name, his Jewish pride, his Jewish brain. It was Sholem Aleichem's story "Gymnasium" almost to the word. More tragic still was when a daughter recounted the trials of her father, a purged Yiddish writer. "I saw everything," she said: how a whole housing complex of Yiddish writers, journalists, and scholars was arrested one by one—the good, the bad, and the indifferent.

The loss of her father meant the loss of his language, too. Though she sat in on our seminar

from 10:00 to 4:00 every day, she could not read, write, or speak Yiddish. Otherwise, the spoken Yiddish of our informants was just a bit more corrupt than the recorded monologues in Sholem Aleichem's *Railroad Stories*. But the pent-up energy of their speech, not to mention their self-deprecating humor, more than compensated for the mishmash of languages. Hardly a story could be told without circling back to a joke, either political or anti-Semitic, or both.

OF ALL the hundreds of Yiddish writers who once made Kiev their home, Sholem Aleichem is the only one still enshrined, and only his repertoire is still performed. The hottest tickets in town were for the Ukrainian production of *Tevey*, a polished three-and-a-half hour performance that borrowed heavily from *Fiddler on the Roof* but thoroughly exploited the native Ukrainian setting. In this version, Pertchik the revolutionary is caught waving the red flag through the streets of neighboring Kiev (the audience laughed appreciatively). That the Jews are an integral part of the Ukrainian landscape was the message driven home in almost every scene. A more lovable *uryadnik*, or Ukrainian village policeman, could hardly be imagined. Unwilling accomplice of the czar, this cop passes Tevey some extra pocket money for the long road of exile ahead. As if that were not brotherhood enough, a new character, Stepan the *Shabbes-goy*, had been invented to exemplify the indivisible bond between the peasants and the Jews.

However idealized, the relevance of *Tevey* to the present situation of Jews in the Ukraine cannot be overstated. The work deals with the subject that was on everybody's mind: the Jews of Anatevke and Kiev and Moscow and Leningrad and Tashkent are leaving, this time in the absence of a ukase from the czar. But the full propaganda point of the play became apparent at the end when Fedor, the Ukrainian intellectual, joins his beloved Chava in exile and Tevey is fully reconciled both to a *goy* for a son-in-law and an apostate for a daughter. The couple's immediate destination is Berdichev, the trading capital of the Ukraine. Only Leyzer-Volf the corpulent butcher sets out for America, awkwardly uttering his first English word, "Goodbye."

Sholem Aleichem's enduring popularity among all sectors of the Ukrainian population provides an accurate measure of how much and how little historical awareness has weathered the Soviet campaign of cultural genocide. Across from the equestrian statue of Bogdan Chmielnitsky, the notorious 17th-century pogromist, is the building where the infamous blood-libel trial of Mendel Beilis took place in 1913. Yet when the Kiev Yiddish Theater drew up a full-color poster for its latest production, Sholem Aleichem's *It's Hard to Be a Jew*, which is loosely based on the events of the trial, the local censor expunged from the upper-

left-hand corner a representation of the Chmielnitsky statue. There has not been nor will there ever be a moral reckoning for the Jewish blood spilled by Ukrainian hands.

The memorial plaque to Sholem Aleichem at 27 Saksanovska Street was the only official sign I could find that Jews had ever lived, worked, and died in this ancient capital. The one remaining synagogue, in the historic Podol district of town, did not appear in any guidebook. To be sure, every Soviet Jew knows much more than the official publications allow, but local memory alone cannot compensate for the systematic destruction of Jewish nationhood and Jewish faith. My Jewish activist friends took pride in pointing out the sculpture of Samson fighting the lion, now restored in the center of Podol. Ukrainian wags, they hastened to add, call it "The *Zhid* [Kike] Torturing the Dog."

Since my friends had never studied the Bible, none knew much about another biblical hero named Elijah the Prophet. Never having attended a Passover seder, either, they did not know that Elijah is supposed to taste of the wine set aside for him in a special cup. One who did remember the custom of opening the door for Elijah was thirty-four-year-old Boris (Boruch) Kimelfeld. He had played the rabbi in *It's Hard to Be a Jew*, the climactic scene of which takes place at the seder table. Never could Sholem Aleichem have imagined that some day in the Ukraine his writings would be the sole preserve of the world's first monotheistic religion.

IN 1971, during my first trip to the Soviet Union, I had met a very different element, for then to be a Soviet Jewish activist meant forfeiting one's job and sometimes even one's freedom. It took a great deal of daring for Esther Markish to greet Westerners in front of the Arkhipova Street synagogue in Moscow or to invite them to lecture at her home. Lev Navrozov would tell visitors in perfect English that since the life of a Soviet Jew began anew from the day he applied for a visa, he himself was at that time no more than a babe in arms. The remarkable Ilya Essas, meanwhile, pumped the Jewish tourist for precise information on the difference between Moses Hess and Leo Pinsker, *Midstream* and COMMENTARY.

That pioneering group of fearless, urbane Jews had long since emigrated and new generations had also followed suit. But here in the Ukraine, off the beaten track, and in the third year of *perestroika*, it was *amkha*, ordinary Jews, ranging in age from eighteen to eighty, who attended the Yiddish Teachers' Seminar. There was not one among them whose Jewish learning and sophistication were even remotely on a par with their general training. While the younger students could barely read or write Yiddish, the older ones had all attended Soviet Yiddish schools. But since

the last of these were closed down in 1939 and the purge of Soviet Yiddish culture was completed by 1952, even the native Yiddish speakers had had little access to the mother tongue for almost half a century. I was astonished by how much they still remembered. I was heartsick at how much they had never learned.

To be sure, I had often read the Communist slogan, "national in form, cosmopolitan in content." But what I had never fully understood was that under the guise of creating a proletarian Yiddish culture, the Jewish Communists had produced two generations of functional illiterates. They had produced someone who could still recite, in Yiddish, Newton's law of universal gravitation, but who had never read of God's covenant with Abraham. How diabolically clever it had been to introduce a new spelling system as well, one that rendered all the Hebraisms in Yiddish phonetically and abolished the "superfluous" letters: the *vet*, the *het*, the *sin*, and the *taf*. As a result, Soviet Jews cannot decipher the simplest non-Soviet text. They cannot even recognize Sholem Aleichem's name in its standard (Hebraic) spelling. After two weeks of constant drilling, Fiszman and I had barely brought our students' fear of Hebraisms under control. And even so, once they made out the words there was no guarantee they understood them.

It was painful to watch the older students—whose life for socialism lay behind them and whose life for Judaism would hardly be lived—as they discovered that they had been duped. It was so late in the game to savor the writings of the "bourgeois reactionaries," all mention of whom had been expunged: to hear, for the first time, about the poet-playwright-ethnographer S. Ansky, who fled the Bolsheviks in 1918; to read, for the first time, the poetry of Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, blacklisted by *American Jewish Communists* as early as 1926; to sing, for the first time, the ballads of Itsik Manger, written only a few hundred kilometers away, in Poland. So too were they belatedly exposed to the ghetto poems of Abraham Sutzkever that told of a life-and-death struggle they knew nothing about.

Who had compiled the blacklist? It is easy to blame the faceless shock troops of the *Yeuseksia*, the Jewish section of the Communist party. It is harder to face the truth, as Esther Rosenthal-Schneiderman recently did in an extraordinary jeremiad for Soviet Yiddish culture: it was the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia itself that was guilty of the crime. With breathtaking candor, she included herself as one of the willing accomplices.

To wean the Jewish masses away from the Zionist vision of the future, the Communists offered them Birobidzhan. (I missed a half-hour television special on this "Jewish Autonomous Region" in eastern Siberia allocated under Stalin in 1928. "A couple of *goyim* speaking bad Yiddish" is how one of my students described it.) To

counter the thirst of ordinary Jews for metaphysics, for God, the Communists gave them historical determinism. Instead of Moses they got Stalin.

OF COURSE, other modern Jewish movements also renounced God and His Torah. Where else but on a kibbutz would Jews serve a visitor ham with so much visible pride? But even the old-time members of left-wing kibbutzim studied the Hebrew Bible, observed the "historical" and "agricultural" Jewish holidays, and settled a Jewish land. Moreover, the chief rabbi of pre-state Palestine sanctified their marriages *ex-post-facto* so that their children would not be certifiably illegitimate. Here in the Soviet Union, by contrast, one could neither live as a Jew nor die as one. My young male friends would not stand next to me in the urinal for fear I would see that they were not (yet) circumcised. In class, when we talked about the folk beliefs surrounding death, Elena the seventy-year-old atheist proclaimed that she would gladly forfeit resurrection in the Land of Israel in order to be cremated in Kiev instead. "I don't want to lie among *them*."

Robbed of their historical memory, their prayers silenced, and cut off for so long from other Jews, my students did not even know how to mourn. On Sunday, January 7, we organized an outing to the newly erected memorial at Babi Yar, where more than 30,000 Jews were machine-gunned by the Nazis on a single day in 1941, and where many thousands more were later dumped into a mass grave. For reasons I will never understand, our hosts brought along a professional tour guide as well. This man, a Jew, lectured us for twenty minutes in the freezing cold on the great achievements of the Red Army, and although his voice cracked when he came to the slaughter of the Jews, in his carefully rehearsed speech they were not permitted to be murdered alone. We had to be told about the Soviet sports team that was killed here, and about the sailors, lest chauvinism, God forbid, take root in our hearts. Finally, unable to take it anymore, we pushed our way to the memorial. One of the three plaques is in Yiddish, imperfectly executed, and is dedicated, like the other two, to the "over 100,000 citizens of Kiev" who were slaughtered here. For these "citizens"—the majority of whom were Jews—I chanted the memorial prayer *El Male Rachamim* and Peysakh Fiszman led us, phrase by phrase, through the mourners' Kaddish. Then we sang the Partisans' Hymn, learned in class only the day before.

That evening I attended the opening of the Israeli video library under the auspices of the Hebrew teachers' group, called Lavie. I was among the first to arrive at this hard-to-locate apartment in a bedroom suburb of Kiev. On the television screen the Israeli rock star Shlomo Artzi was performing in front of 1,500 screaming fans and, for the first time since my arrival, I burst out crying. The discrepancy between the morning,

when we had been robbed even of our dead, and the evening, when the renewal of Jewish life was so palpably real, was more than I could bear.

The room was decorated with posters of Jerusalem and of the fruits of Israel, and texts of the various blessings to be made after eating. The fruits were especially appealing, given the chronic shortages in the Ukraine, still identified in my *Fodor's Guide* as the "breadbasket of the USSR." All in all, eighteen young people arrived for the opening, and while fourteen of them were busy watching a dramatization of the Entebbe raid, I sat with the remainder in the adjoining kitchen, giving a Hebrew dictation. For these were the newest crop of Hebrew teachers in Kiev and most of them had only begun studying the language a few months ago.

Sandwiched between the video screening and the spelling lesson was a meeting with Igor Kuperberg, representing the powers that be. Kuperberg brought news that the Ministry of Education was willing to take over the administration of the extension courses in Hebrew. Six hundred Kievites had already signed up for elementary Hebrew and many more were waiting on the sidelines. (Last year at this time it was impossible to get into an English class. Now these courses were being left high and dry.) The Ministry was offering a one-year contract, but Shaul Kotlarsky, the brilliant and charismatic leader of Lavie, cut short the discussion to ask: "Who in this room knows for certain that he will still be here a year from now?" Not a single person raised his hand.

So all this activity, it seemed, was but a temporary stopgap, a way of establishing a Jewish national presence before taking leave of Russia forever. And it made no difference whether one was studying Hebrew or Yiddish. At a Friday night gathering that Fiszman and I organized for our students, someone turned to me and said: "Do you see these people? Not one of them will still be here ten years from now." Indeed, the conundrum "To Go or Not to Go" had now been replaced by "Whether to Leave Sooner or Later" and "Whether to Pay Through the Nose Via Moscow or Take the Train to Budapest and Let the Jewish Agency Foot the Bill." The porters at Moscow International Airport had already gone on strike: they were sick of carrying baggage for the *Zhids*, though they would agree to do it for 100 rubles instead of the usual four. Even the Russian Karaites, for centuries set apart from the main body of the Jewish community by their rejection of the rabbinic Oral Law, were leaving en masse.

THE knowledge of foresight added a dimension of unreality, if not of outright self-deception, to all our meetings with Ukrainians. As anxious as our hosts were to show us off to local officials, the latter were eager to make contact with us as Americans and as Jews.

Our first meeting was with the director of Pedagogical Institute No. 1 on Borovskovo Street. On her table she had chocolates (a rare treat), and she was disappointed that we would not share a glass of champagne. To our suggestions for introducing a Yiddish- and Hebrew-language component into the school's curriculum she replied, "Today, everything is possible." After all, she told us, there were plans afoot to allow all the languages of the Ukraine's multiethnic population to be taught as well. Perhaps, she suggested half-earnestly, we could find an American sugar daddy willing to upgrade the school's pitiful computer room. Meanwhile, it was she who showered us with gifts—lavish art books from her private library for both Fizman and myself.

The second meeting, with university English teachers, was more spontaneous. One of them nabbed me in the corridor of the Institute where our seminar met daily and asked whether I would address his colleagues on problems of higher education in the United States—for despite their subject, they had had little direct contact with Americans. So I threw together a one-hour talk on (1) the ills brought about by affirmative action; (2) the campaign for cultural literacy following the collapse of the core curriculum; and (3) the birth of Jewish Studies on campus (a bit of special pleading, I admit). Having themselves been raised on blatant discrimination for now-discredited ends, they readily agreed with me about affirmative action. But when I described the phenomenal rise of women's studies, following the earlier growth of Afro-American studies, they were incredulous. That conferences of the Modern Language Association could be staging grounds for militant interest groups was simply beyond their imagination. Finally, we got to the matter of the Jews. One teacher wanted to know if I ever had to hide my Jewish identity. Another asked about higher education in Israel (she turned out to be a Jew from Vilna, clearly contemplating *aliyah*). Later I learned that only recently had Jewish teachers come out of the closet; two of their number had already emigrated.

THIS candid and open-ended exchange left us all wishing for more, in contrast to my meeting the next day at the Ukrainian Writers Union. It is no small irony that the Union is housed in the former mansion of Lev Brodsky, the great Jewish sugar magnate of pre-revolutionary times, with its magnificent inlaid woods, huge ceramic stoves, and ceilings thirty feet high. In the room where his private synagogue was situated, the ceiling is removable, presumably to allow for a *sukkah*. All this our hosts—three Ukrainian writers and a professor from Kiev University—were eager to point out. Seated opposite us, they waxed eloquent over the past, and over the wonderful depictions of Jewish life in the works of

famous Ukrainian authors. "If only there were young Yiddish writers here in the Ukraine," said Yuri Serdyuk, general secretary of the Union, wistfully. "We would gladly accept them into the Union and help them publish their work." Anti-Semitism in the Ukraine, he assured us, was dead; it survived only among the barbaric Russians to the north. On my side of the table sat Levitas and Kuperberg, each one there to foster the illusion of Jewish cultural achievements present and future.

After two weeks of endless talk, with one more day to my visit and nothing to lose, I interrupted the grandstanding. Jews and Ukrainians, I reminded our hosts, were not equal partners. Jewish culture, as I had come to see, was doubly crippled. Whatever had been achieved in the 20's and 30's was utterly destroyed by Stalin. But that culture too had been sick beyond recall. There simply was nothing left to resurrect. The greatest achievement of Ukrainian Jews—Hasidism—was no more than a *rebbe's* tombstone visited by the faithful from abroad. It was bad enough that in the Ukrainian production I attended, Tevye blessed the Sabbath wine wearing a prayershawl. Worse was that not a single person in the predominantly Jewish audience could recognize the blatant error.

They did not hear me, these men of letters. They were too intent on planning the brave new world of a sovereign Ukraine in which the Jews would be the first among national minorities. They could not acknowledge that their putative Jewish allies feared that very independence and, because they feared it as much as they feared Gorbachev's demise, were leaving. I had come to Kiev with a letter of introduction to Volodymyr Yavorivsky, a deputy to the Supreme Soviet and a noted writer. "He's a friend of the Jews," I was told on arrival. "He'll tip us off two days before the pogrom."

OUR actual leavetaking was fraught with emotion. Our students had written poems, presented us with certificates, and spent a lot of money on gifts and refreshments. They took down our addresses as if they were some magic charm. Meanwhile, Levitas announced a follow-up seminar from mid-June to mid-July and Kuperberg spoke about a Jewish elementary school opening up in Kiev in the fall of 1991. My friend Boruch Kimelfeld was drawing up plans for a new alphabet chart with all 22 letters of the alphabet and new graded readers with real Jewish content. Before leaving for Israel, where his goal was to teach Yiddish in a high school, he hoped to revive Jewish culture on Ukrainian soil.

As Kimelfeld and I left the Institute for the last time, the Ukrainian peasant woman who watched the door turned to her companion and said: "There go our little Jews." She said it with real affection and Boruch burst out laughing.

Hutchins was also right in seeing the necessity of integrative studies in a core curriculum. Again, many university presidents have talked about such a program. But Hutchins was the only one to put such a program into effect as a mandatory curriculum for all undergraduates in a major university that had the quality of faculty to make the integrative core curriculum maximally effective. Hutchins also saw that the only way such a program could be conducted was to give a large measure of autonomy to the college in hiring and retention of faculty, separate from the resources of the baronial departments at the university in graduate school and at the research level.

It was the diversion of resources to the undergraduate college at Chicago, away from the traditional academic baronies, that vehemently aroused many faculty against Hutchins, much more than his educational philosophy. Mr. Epstein fails to mention this key point of Chicago academic politics.

Hutchins also saw clearly more than a half-century ago what has become evident in the past fifteen-to-twenty years—the intellectual stagnation and moral bankruptcy of the social sciences, particularly sociology and social anthropology. Again Mr. Epstein misses Hutchins's astonishing foresight. Hutchins realized in the 1930's that once the sociologists had gathered a full set of data on industrial society, and once social anthropology had done the same for pre-modern societies, there would be very little left for these then-exalted disciplines, in which the University of Chicago had invested so heavily, to do. He has been proved right over time. Now obsolete as useful data-gatherers, the social scientists spend their time in ideological polemics. . . .

I would like to add a brief memoir of my one personal encounter with Hutchins—in the summer of 1967, when I was teaching history at Brandeis University. For reasons I do not know, Hutchins hired me as a consultant to the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that was then being planned by him and Mortimer Adler. He had me read my way through all the major history articles in the then-existing edition of the *Encyclopaedia* (many of which went back to the famous eleventh British edition early in the century) and fly out to Santa Barbara for two days and give

him an assessment of their quality and usefulness in the prospective new edition.

At the time I had the same arrogant and cynical attitude to Hutchins that most academics held and which is unfortunately perpetuated in Mr. Epstein's article. My preconceptions about Hutchins were shattered after a few minutes of conversation with him. It turned out he too had read those articles and wanted to compare notes with a professional historian. I was astounded by the depth of his historical learning and the insightful precision and persuasiveness of his judgment. He had separately come to the conclusion that nearly all the history articles were obsolete and had to be replaced. I came away from Santa Barbara . . . with the conviction that Hutchins was as brilliant and learned a person as I had ever encountered.

The supercilious tone of Mr. Epstein's article, trailing the aroma of long-dead academic politics in Hyde Park, does not do justice to this great educator and academic leader who was, along with Charles Eliot of Harvard, the finest and most courageous university president this country ever had before 1950.

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Epstein's "The Sad Story of the Boy Wonder" brought back many memories, some warm and others painful. No record of Hutchins's life, however, should omit mentioning his greatest single achievement: bringing Leo Strauss to the University of Chicago in 1949. . . . If Hutchins's life was one of sadly unfulfilled promise, he was at least instrumental in forwarding at a vital moment the career of a man of whom it might be said that he fulfilled promises of which none of his contemporaries had even dreamed.

The work of Leo Strauss—the Robert M. Hutchins Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago—is today attracting more attention than it did in his lifetime. The unparalleled venom with which Strauss has been attacked—e.g., in the pages of the *New York Review of Books* and in the (London) *Times Literary Supplement*—is a measure of how profoundly he has challenged the un-

examined premises underlying the received opinions of our times. He has challenged the idea of progress—the idea of the superiority of modernity to antiquity—as profoundly as Rousseau or Nietzsche or Heidegger. Unlike them, however, he did not end by radicalizing the claims he had challenged. If Strauss does not always dazzle us, it is because he taught us to learn to listen to the still small voices of the wise men of old, and to avoid being deafened by loud-speakers.

It is one of the supreme ironies of our time that Hutchins went on in the years after 1949 to become the advocate of some of the wildest kinds of modern utopianism, and especially that of world government. But the Hutchins Professor, in these same years, taught us that the cultivation of wisdom—the highest human good—is not the same thing as the radical reform of society, and that the soberest and most moderate politics is the best politics. He was, therefore, the enemy of every kind of political utopianism, and especially of world government.

Since COMMENTARY had the high honor in June 1967 of publishing a version of Strauss's lectures on "Jerusalem and Athens," I thought that his relationship—however spare—with the late Robert Maynard Hutchins ought not to go unmentioned here.

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Russia's New Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with interest your recent article, "There Go Our Little Jews" by David G. Roskies [April]. . . . Both the American and the Russian Jewish communities know little about each other's real lives. Only recently, with the increased openness in Soviet-American relations, has there been a certain amount of progress in this area. One indicator of such progress was the visit to Kiev this past January of the two American Jewish educators, David G. Roskies and Peysach Fiszman, which is so vividly described by Mr. Roskies in his article. I would like to look at that remarkable event from the perspective not of New York but of Moscow.

For the past twenty years the American view of the problems of Soviet Jews (a view which more or less corresponded to the real situation) has been rather one-dimen-

sional: a small group of heroes fighting the Communist leviathan for the right to emigrate, since only through emigration could they maintain their Jewish identity; all Jews who remained in Russia were doomed, sooner or later, to disappear as a national group. There was no question what Jewish identity meant; it would manifest itself in one of the ways familiar to Western Jewry. Soviet Jewish activists therefore strove to adopt one of the Western models of such identity, either religious or secular. . . .

Be that as it may, we now face a situation different from the one of twenty, ten, five years ago. There are now new leaders and new activists in numerous Jewish cultural societies who come from a different background and have a different orientation in their Jewish activities. It is not the refusenik who is now the central figure in Soviet Jewry but the cultural activist. Though he may not be quite so attractive a figure as his predecessor was to Western eyes, nevertheless, he and his fellows have succeeded in achieving great progress over the last two years. It would have been impossible, for example, to organize the visit of the two teachers described by Mr. Roskies in his article without the efforts of these Kiev activists. On its own, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education would not have cared so much about training Yiddish teachers.

These new activists are not as grounded in and receptive to Western ideas and values—in both the general and the Jewish senses—as the former leaders were, but I dare say they represent a truer mirror of the views and values of the 1.5 million Jewish population in the Soviet Union than the previous small group of refuseniks did.

Their shortcomings are evident, but what about their virtues? As Mr. Roskies remarks, Kiev Jews remind him of the world of Sholem Aleichem's stories. And indeed one of the most obvious features of Sholem Aleichem's heroes was perhaps their creativity and ability to respond to a changing situation. (This creativity does not necessarily always achieve positive results, but that is another problem.) In my opinion this new generation of Soviet Jewish activists has more of that vivid Jewish creative spirit than did the former one, whose outlook was determined primarily by Western examples and stand-

ards. Today, Jews in the Soviet Union must be especially active and inventive because they face a serious challenge. Their future depends on their ability to find a right way *now*.

This does not mean, of course, that Soviet Jews have nothing to learn from their American cousins. On the contrary, we need to use every possible opportunity to acquire more knowledge about Judaism in all of its aspects, but we must keep in mind that nobody has an immediate recipe for solving our problems. I believe that the solution is to be found only by collaborating with the West, but not by copying Western models. In these endeavors we may not neglect any kind of Jewish experience—whether positive or negative. Perhaps American Jews are only now beginning to get acquainted with the true life and history of Russian Jewry. Mr. Roskies's article is a first step in this direction.

MICHAEL KRUTIKOV
Moscow, USSR

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

I sympathize with Michael Krutikov's distaste for a McDonald's Judaism—mass-produced, prepackaged, and utterly foreign to the native palate. Yet what alternative is there when Jewish communal life has been destroyed in the Soviet Union, when Jewish creativity in Russian and Hebrew has been stifled for sixty years, and when God, the Torah, and all national aspirations have been expunged from Yiddish books, songs, and plays? One alternative is to translate into Russian the best of the East European Jewish cultural heritage, which is precisely what Mr. Krutikov and his friends have been doing since April 1989 in the journal *VEK*, published in Riga. But in the Ukraine, where an estimated half-a-million Jews still live, Ukrainian nationalists are eager to foster Jewish creativity in any language *other than* Russian. As the sovereignty movement gains ground throughout the USSR, a journal like *VEK* would then have to appear in about a dozen different "national" languages.

All things being equal (which of course they aren't), such inter-ethnic rivalries might advance the position of Yiddish as the unifying language of the Jews. I shall not repeat here how saddened my experience teaching Yiddish in Kiev left me on that score. Since Yiddish

without *Yiddishkayt* is a doomed enterprise (even if its main exponents had not been murdered by Stalin), the massive reeducation of Soviet Jews in classical and modern Hebrew remains the only untried possibility. Were such a messianic project to be carried out, it would require thousands of trained teachers from the West and Israel, millions of imported texts and textbooks (how many Hebrew typesetters are currently employed in the Soviet publishing industry?). In short, all available resources would have to be imported.

Meanwhile, of course, large numbers of Soviet Jews will continue voting with their feet, in much the same way as did the Jews in Sholem Aleichem's fiction before them. They are choosing their guaranteed freedoms in the brave new world over fighting for a cultural, political, and economic foothold in the old.

Middle East Options

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Can the Palestinians Make Peace?" [April], Daniel Pipes comes to the unavoidable conclusion that there can be only one state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. In fact, he goes even farther, by stating that to think otherwise is "either naive or duplicitous."

I certainly agree with Mr. Pipes's cogent and well-reasoned arguments, but if one follows his logic, all present and putative negotiations that could lead to a binational solution are naive or duplicitous. What is more, any argument for territorial withdrawal by Israel falls into these categories. Mr. Pipes, however, like many of Israel's most articulate and realistic supporters, stops short of using the "A" word—annexation of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

The objection most often cited to the annexation of these territories is the so-called "demographic time bomb"—the argument that the Arab population is growing so fast that by the end of the century, Arabs will no longer be a minority in Israel. From this argument, the naive and the duplicitous conjure visions ranging from Israel's loss of its Jewish character, to the specter of "apartheid and fascism." Fortunately, two facts easily dispose of this argument. First, the census of Arabs in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza

evidence available, some more favorable and some less favorable to affirmative action, and excellent analyses of such evidence in the works of many scholars (e.g., Marc Galanter, J. Leonard, Myron Weiner, and William J. Wilson). All that is evident in Mr. Sowell's article and reply is his passionate hostility to affirmative action.

DEVANESAN NESIAH
Colombo, Sri Lanka

THOMAS SOWELL writes:

If Devanesan Nesiiah had any real arguments, then it might be worthwhile to have yet another round of debate with him. But sweeping assertions, arbitrary definitions, or a list of people whose studies (with specifics omitted) supposedly support his conclusion are simply not serious arguments.

Ukrainians, Jews, Russians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have just read David G. Roskies's "There Go Our Little Jews" [April] and the letters that followed it [Letters from Readers, July and August]. I would like to comment on some of the points Mr. Roskies raises in his interesting and spirited report on his two-week visit to Kiev, where he led a seminar for the training of Yiddish teachers. . . .

The creation of an Osher Shvartsman Library for Jewish books in Kiev is a healthy step forward and deserves help, but I wonder how many Kievites, let alone foreigners, are aware of the sizable collection of Soviet Yiddish books, bibliographies, etc., going back to the 20's, that are also available in the Kiev Shevchenko University library. Even fewer, I suspect, have tried to use the invaluable files contained in the archives of the library of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences of Yiddish newspapers published in the Ukraine almost to the moment of Nazi occupation. The collection even includes some from the then-thriving Jewish national districts in the southeast. . . .

The new memorial plaque to Sholem Aleichem is not on Saksanovskaya Street, as Mr. Roskies writes, but on Saksaganskogo Street. There is a much older one, too (though it called him a "famous writer" and not a "famous Yiddish writer"), on Krasnoarmeiskaya Street, almost in the center of Kiev. In 1987, I also saw the brand new Sholem Aleichem Boulevard

in another part of the city. And, of course, the new Shvartsman Library now adds further to "official signs" of the Jewish presence in Kiev.

While the Babi Yar Memorial is not exactly "new," I am personally gratified to learn that a Yiddish plaque has finally been added to what in 1987 was still a single plaque in Ukrainian. . . . Since the Jewish massacre there lasted for three consecutive days in 1941, Mr. Roskies's mention of the "more than 30,000 Jews [who] were machine-gunned . . . on a single day" cannot but stir up the morbid "numbers" question all over again. And why the reluctance to acknowledge that others also shared in the carnage pit that was Babi Yar? The horror of Kiev's champion soccer team being marched directly from the stadium to Babi Yar is not just propaganda. . . .

The transcription of words of Hebrew origin into phonetic Yiddish was not some diabolical Soviet trick, as Mr. Roskies seems to imply. During the Yiddish "golden age" of the 20's, similar attempts were also made in other parts of the world. And linguistically, whatever the orthography, all real speakers of Yiddish understand such Yiddishized Hebraisms as *yomteiv*, *khaverim*, *mazltov*, *l'khaim*, *maskim*, *oilem*—to cite just a few. After all, were Mr. Roskies and his colleague Peysakh Fizman teaching Yiddish or Hebrew? . . .

The tendency of Soviet Jews (and I daresay, of Soviet people in general) not to pay attention to what is published and available in their own country is an old phenomenon, but they did not have to wait for the poet Abraham Sutzkever to learn the full story of the Holocaust (incidentally, during the war, he was published in Moscow). Numerous Soviet Yiddish works on this topic have been published all along—and some have enjoyed Russian and Ukrainian success as well. I. Falikman's 1962 novel about the Warsaw saga, *The Sun Is From the East*, for example, sold well in Russian translation; . . . then there was also Ilya Ehrenburg's and Vasily Grossman's searing reportage in Russian about the ghettos and camps.

In referring to the "faceless shock troops of the *Yevsektzia*," Mr. Roskies bandies about a term that had vanished by the early 30's. The Soviet Jewish tragedy, however, is all the more paradoxical in that Yid-

dish culture was always led (misled?) by most of the Soviet Yiddish intelligentsia—including Solomon Mikhoels, Itzik Feffer, etc.

Mr. Roskies's denigration of Birobidzhan is also unseemly, though I can well believe it was a Kievite who described Birobidzhan as "A couple of *goyim* speaking bad Yiddish." I should think Yiddish in the USSR has enough *tsores* without casting aspersions on this or that center, particularly a city that on June 3 of this year posted its new logo all over public buildings and the railway station: a blue-and-white banner showing a huge menorah with the Yiddish word for peace, "*sholem*," on top, and the Russian equivalent ("*mir*") at the bottom. In fact, there was a delegation from Birobidzhan of serious would-be teachers of Yiddish at the Yiddish teachers' seminar in Moscow, one of whom was studying . . . at the Kiev Teachers' College of Foreign Languages during Mr. Roskies's visit.

As is often the case, Mr. Roskies mistakenly locates Birobidzhan in "eastern Siberia." Actually, it is in the Amur Basin of the Soviet Far East, just two hours' train ride from Khabarovsk. The latter, a metropolis of 800,000, is now considered a "Pacific rim" city—along with its sister-city Portland, Oregon. (Birobidzhan itself has just become a sister-city of Beaverton, a suburb of Portland.) Siberia proper is well to the north and west of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

As for the alphabet question, the 1988 *Alefbeis* [alphabet] published in Khabarovsk for Birobidzhan's Yiddish classes carries an excellent chart with all the final letters included. And Mr. Roskies's description of the valiant plans now under way for a "new alphabet chart with all 22 letters of the alphabet and new graded readers with real Jewish content" seems to ignore Sandler's best-selling *Yiddish Self-Study*, published in 1989, and already in its second printing—complete with all the possible letters to be found in Yiddish. Nor does Mr. Roskies show any awareness of the quantities of "real Jewish content" from all over the world in the new journal for beginners, *Yungvald*, replete with Western-style Hebraisms in Hebrew. Its parent journal, *Sovetish Heimland*, has been carrying installments of Dubnow's *History of the Jews*, along with biblical tales, in modified orthography which includes final letters.

(The last outpost of "purist" Soviet Yiddish orthography is the *Birobidzhaner shtern*. . .)

As for the university English teachers in Kiev, supposedly starved for contact with Americans, that city happens to have an unusually high number of English teachers visiting on the annual IREX exchange program every summer. And both IREX and Fulbright scholars are regularly to be found on Kiev University's campus—for varying lengths of time. (I myself was the first IREX graduate scholar there in 1962.)

I am not versed in the enrollment figures for "extension" courses in Hebrew or other languages, but in the full-time academic system, English is overwhelmingly *the* foreign language at all levels, throughout the USSR.

Of one thing I am certain: if present trends continue, the Jewish zest for (1) English and (2) Hebrew will grow in preparation for the future, particularly if Kiev Jews encounter more such remarks like "There go our little Jews"—hardly an "affectionate" expression in English, let alone if the Russian term "*evreichiki*" was used!

BERNARD CHOSEED

Professor Emeritus
Georgetown University
Gifu, Japan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ukrainian dissidents, whether Christians, nonbelievers, or Jews have worked together for many decades on human-rights issues. But this is evidently a sideshow in the view of COMMENTARY, which has recently published some of the meanest, most historically simplistic, indeed libelous, words ever used to characterize an entire people, the Ukrainians, an ethnic group (of those who are left) of over 50,000,000 worldwide. I refer to the article by David G. Roskies.

Mr. Roskies's contribution to reconciliation is the following grenade, lobbed no doubt from the fragile shelter of a greenhouse: "There has not been nor will there ever be a moral reckoning for the Jewish blood spilled by Ukrainian hands." And that is as friendly as he gets, since elsewhere he tosses Ivan the Terrible (*sic*) into his poisonous stew of Ukrainian hetmen, evil peasants, and Nazi-lovers. . . .

I have agonized over writing this letter. My wife and her family, refugees from Lvov, . . . urged me not to write but they are truly Christian

and actually pray for reconciliation between Christians and Jews. Mr. Roskies has almost convinced me that no such coming together as human beings is possible. Perhaps he is right that "there will never be a moral reckoning" for what I will paraphrase as "Ukrainian blood spilled by Jewish hands." Allow me my own list of culpable or at least complicit Jews without further historical explanation, just as Mr. Roskies made his list. Will he grant me the historical facts that there were evil overseers in the 17th century, that Marx, Engels, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Kaganovich, Ehrenburg, Litvinov, Walter Duranty's employers, *et al.* did actually exist and had a lethally adverse effect on the Ukrainian people?

Ukrainians as well as Jews will bleed when cut.

MICHAEL W. CUNNINGHAM
Darien, Connecticut

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

By now, the exchange of letters surrounding my "spirited report" has turned sinister. These last bear witness to old habits of the mind and perversions of the heart that fester and grow even outside the Ukrainian heartland. Michael W. Cunningham reminds us that Ukrainians have a score to settle with their "little Jews" going all the way back to the 17th century. In their name he is keeping a careful tally of every Jew, half-Jew, and Jew-by-association who ever "collaborated" with the Polish, Great Russian, or Bolshevik enemy. In Mr. Cunningham's balance sheet of moral turpitude, Marx (of Jewish ancestry but baptized), Engels (who was not Jewish at all), and the rest of that revolutionary cohort are as culpable as the butcher of the Treblinka death camp nicknamed Ivan the Terrible who now awaits sentencing in Israel. I pity the liberal intellectuals of the Ukrainian Rukh movement whose bid for national reconciliation will find precious little support from at least some in the émigré community, let alone at home.

Sustaining the legacy of lies are the Old Guard apologists like Bernard Choseed who still labor to prop up the Potemkin village of Birobidzhan, who parade the latest exemplars of Yiddish Communist culture like Sandler's "best-selling *Yiddish Self-Study*" that managed to survive the *Yevsektzia*, the

purges, the Khrushchev thaw, the period of stagnation, and now, *glasnost*. But the undeniable signs of a Jewish cultural revival seem to have escaped Mr. Choseed's eyes, trained since 1962 to look only where bidden. The liveliest samples of Yiddish journalism I brought back from my trip were three issues of the Moscow-based *Mame-loshn* (Mother Tongue). Each typewritten issue of this *samizdat* bulletin not only adopted the so-called YIVO orthography but also carried a special "anti-Dehebraization" column designed to reacquaint Soviet Jews with the correct spelling and meaning of Hebraisms in Yiddish. *Mame-loshn* was typed in the offices of *Sovetish Heimland* after hours by its defiant young editor, the poet Velvl Chernin. When Chernin left, to pursue graduate Yiddish studies at Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan University, his bulletin folded.

I also returned with a collection of pins—a favorite form of Soviet popular culture. The official display set of pins celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan (1934-84) was executed in Russian. The self-issued pins of the Jewish Cultural Society of Lithuania, of Tekumah, of the Conference of Soviet Jewish Organizations and Communities, all carried Hebrew inscriptions. The medium is their message.

The "sizable collections" of Yiddish books and archival materials scattered about Kiev and elsewhere are so inaccessible that the Moscow State Historical and Archival Institute has just entered into a five-year agreement with the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the YIVO Institute for the training of archivists and the preparation of a guide to Jewish archival collections in the USSR. It will prove to be a gargantuan and costly effort. Soviet Jews can indeed enjoy easy access to "the full story of the Holocaust," provided that they move to Israel where, in 1980, Ilya Ehrenburg's and Vasily Grossman's "searing reportage in Russian about the ghettos and camps" (the famous *Black Book*) was finally published from a smuggled copy of the confiscated manuscript.

Years from now, when students of 20th-century history will want to know what prompted the mass migration of Jews from the former Soviet empire, they would do well to begin with these two letters.

etc. But as I pointed out in my article, AIDS research has essentially just taken over from other areas of research—much to the detriment of the victims of those diseases.

Mr. Shapiro is wrong about teenagers: they have *lower* levels of AIDS cases and infections per capita than any other sexually active risk group because, as my book *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* points out, the main risk factor for heterosexual acquisition of AIDS is not promiscuity but contact with intravenous drug abusers. Heterosexual teenagers appear to have relatively little such contact.

Mr. Shapiro is also wrong when he says that “no one would dispute that government should be induced to spend more *carefully*. . . .” A new book, *The AIDS Disaster*, argues that waste in AIDS spending should be completely ignored in the name of the greater cause, and in any case this is exactly what has happened. The reporters who are busily filing story number 10,387 on Pentagon or S & L waste simply refuse to go after the thorny question of AIDS spending.

I did not connect the drop in the estimates of AIDS patients to AIDS education because there is no connection. As I documented in my book, new HIV infections in cities around the country peaked and declined several years before the federal government or any other public body spent a penny on AIDS education.

AIDS infection is related almost *exclusively* to life-style. While smokers greatly increase their risk of heart disease and cancer, the statement that the major *cause* of heart disease and cancer is smoking is unsubstantiated.

Finally, as to the rest of the world, my arguments are much the same. Do Messrs. Shapiro and Bornstein think that a cure for AIDS found in the U.S. will benefit the rest of the world but treatments for cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's won't? By robbing these illnesses of funds and researchers, we hurt not only Americans but people of every nation. The U.S. does have an obligation to the world, and part of that obligation is to allocate our researchers—the world's finest—on an equitable basis and without regard to squeaky wheels.

The problem with Robert Carlen's suggestion is evident in

his letter. More and more, diseases are being linked to behaviors of some sort, but at the same time it is rarely the case that these illnesses occur only in the presence of specific behaviors. That is, there is a clear link between smoking and lung and heart disease, but no one can say whether a person with lung cancer or a diseased heart might not have developed the disease anyway. Cervical cancer is an example of this. Yes, the papilloma virus which causes genital warts has been linked to this type of cancer and promiscuous women are likely to get these warts. But most cervical cancers appear to occur in the absence of papilloma and the only reason no virgins (or very few) get cervical cancer is that by the time one reaches the age where these cancers are occurring, there are almost no virgins left.

One cause of death and injury that is always linked to specific behavior is automobile accidents. Would Dr. Carlen therefore suggest that we should conduct no research on how to prevent automobile accidents?

Yiddish in the USSR

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although I have already written one letter concerning David G. Roskies's article, “There Go Our Little Jews” [April 1990], I feel it necessary to make some further remarks on the sinister exchange of attacks between Mr. Roskies and Bernard Choseed in your November 1990 issue [Letters from Readers]. As one who is deeply involved in several activities dealing with the problem of the survival of Yiddish in the Soviet Union (I am an editor of *Yungvald* magazine, a student of Shimon Sander, the author of *Yiddish Self-Taught*, and am also active in a joint Soviet-American educational and archival project), I see the problem being discussed in a different light. Unfortunately, both Mr. Choseed and Mr. Roskies are wrong in their treatment—the one fervently defending, the other fervently accusing—of the Communist Yiddish cultural model in the Soviet Union, simply because that model has already ceased to exist. Mr. Choseed's advocacy of Birobidzhan cannot help to restore even that level of Jewish culture which ex-

isted there until 1948, and in any case it is clear now that Birobidzhan as a Jewish Autonomous Region is doomed due to the present wave of emigration. Nor is Mr. Roskies right in his completely derogatory evaluation of Birobidzhan as a Potemkin village. Such a judgment is incorrect in light of the culture that did exist there until it was cruelly exterminated by Stalin in 1948 (almost all Jewish activists were imprisoned, books were burned, schools closed down, etc.).

I was really troubled by this harsh polemic, the more so insofar as both writers could be of practical help in attempts to keep what remains of Yiddish culture in the USSR alive. I think few languages have suffered as much as Yiddish has in our century from the destructive power of ideologies: Fascism denied Yiddish speakers the right to live, Communism first deprived Yiddish of Jewish content and then condemned it to death. And even Zionism (not to compare it to the other two) was not too favorable to Yiddish. I cannot understand why we need to continue this old struggle now, a struggle which could be fatal for Yiddish. I think that only the de-ideologization of Yiddish and tolerant cooperation on the part of all its adherents (not least among them Mr. Choseed and Mr. Roskies) can prolong its life and help it to die with dignity when the time comes. . . .

MICHAEL KRUTIKOV
Moscow, USSR

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

Soviet-Yiddish orthography was designed to cut Soviet Jews off from their religious heritage and from anything published in Yiddish west of the Soviet border. Birobidzhan was designed to derail and subvert all Jewish national aspirations. The postwar Soviet press, publishing industry, and academic establishment did everything they could to erase all memory of the Holocaust and thus rob the Jews even of the right to mourn. Soviet Jews who wish to begin again are faced with a legacy of moral abomination. Should they lay ideology aside and let bygones be bygones in order to give their language a proper burial, they would be the only oppressed nationality in the USSR to do so.