

British Labor leader Aneurin Bevan, speaking for his party in Parliament, criticized the Tory government for refusing to accept the Soviet offer to negotiate. And Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has repeatedly urged top level negotiations between the U.S. and USSR to deal with the crisis. On March 19 once again Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev "called for a Middle East conference as an immediate step toward relaxing tensions" (*N.Y. Times*, March 20). Persistent refusal of the State Department to consider such a conference is a major obstacle to peace.

This Ninth Anniversary of the founding of Israel could not be celebrated more fruitfully than by a call for neutralism and Big Power negotiations for a Middle Eastern settle-

ment. Such a policy is advocated by the Mapam Party and many within Israel. Nothing would be a greater boon to the harassed people of Israel. The group of 17 presidents of major U.S. Jewish organizations, who so frequently call on the Eisenhower administration for action in support of Israel, could not do better than to urge the President to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union on the whole crisis. Nor could the large membership of these organizations help Israel any more decisively than by urging our government to initiate such negotiations. If one faces up to the realities of the Middle Eastern crisis, no other course will ensure peace and a secure future for the people of Israel.

What Gromyko Said in 1948

FROM the historic speech made by Soviet UN Delegate Andrei Gromyko before the UN General Assembly on May 14, 1947: "As is well known, the aspirations of an important part of the Jewish people are bound up with the question of Palestine and with the future of that country. It is not surprising, therefore, that . . . in the General Assembly . . . a great deal of attention was given to this aspect of the matter. This interest is comprehensible and completely justified. The Jewish people suffered extreme misery and deprivation during the last war. It can be said without exaggeration that the sufferings and miseries of the Jewish people are beyond description. It would be difficult to express by mere dry figures the losses and sacrifices of the Jewish people at the hands of the Fascist occupiers. . . . The fact that not a single Western European state has been in a position to guarantee the defense of the elementary rights of the Jewish people or to compensate them for the violence they suffered at the hands of the Fascist hangmen explains the aspiration of the Jews for the creation of a state of their own. It would be unjust not to take this into account and to deny the right of the Jewish people to the realization of this aspiration."

CP Resolution on Jews of the USSR

For the information of our readers we publish the following resolution on the Jewish question in the Soviet Union adopted on March 31 by several hundred delegates with five dissenting votes and 12 abstentions by the New York State Convention of the Communist Party.
—Eds.

1. The Soviet Union with three million Jews and the USA with five million Jews present the Communist Parties of these countries with the responsibility and opportunity to add to the scientific socialist analysis of the Jewish question.

One of the cornerstones of the historic achievements of the Soviet Union since the October Revolution was its implementation of Marxist-Leninist principles on the national question. This implementation was decisive in the welding of the political unity of the Soviet peoples. This approach to the solution of the national question helped make possible the Soviet industrial and agricultural advances and helped the flowering of Soviet cultures—socialist in content, multi-national in form. On this anvil was smashed the Nazi cult of racial superiority and military invincibility. The Soviet approach to the national question won for the Soviet Union the sympathy of oppressed peoples the world over and inspired the vast struggles for national liberation among colonial and semi-colonial peoples that have changed the face of the world and altered the international political climate.

For the Jewish nationality in the Soviet Union the Leninist policy on the national question produced unprecedented results. Anti-Semitism was outlawed and the Communist Party of

the Soviet Union and Soviet Government waged an active struggle to stamp it out and to destroy its roots in the class relations of the tsarist social system. Jews as individuals won equal rights as citizens and unparalleled opportunity in all spheres of Soviet life.

Jews entered all phases of economic life, industrial, agricultural, professional, cultural and administrative. On their merits under these new conditions of equality, Jews advanced rapidly and made extensive contributions in industry, the professions, the sciences, the arts and in the general cultural life of the Soviet Union, as well as in the fields of government and military work. Thousands have won the highest honors the party and government of the Soviet Union can award.

Simultaneously, the Leninist policy on the Jewish question encouraged the Jewish people to develop their Jewish culture in the Yiddish language (as well as in Russian and other languages), resulting in the establishment of Jewish educational institutions, of a Yiddish literature and press, Yiddish theaters and other channels of expression, all of which won for the Soviet Union the admiration and devotion of millions of people throughout the world. For those Jews who wished to attempt to build a Jewish state on socialist foundations, the Soviet Government set aside the area of



The Yiddish choral group of Vilna at its first performance in December 1956

Biro-Bidjan and late in the 1920's began to assist Jews who wished to undertake this project.

When World War II began in 1939, the Soviet government took in many hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees that flocked across its borders and rescued them from Hitler's extermination program. In 1951, when Hitler attacked the USSR, Soviet authorities helped evacuate Jews from territories overrun and threatened by nazi armies. Despite great war-time losses, therefore, Jewish population in the Soviet Union is now the largest in Europe, numbering more than two and a half million. In 1947, the Soviet Union's policy and work in the United Nations was a decisive factor in the passing of the United Nations resolution providing for a Jewish state in Palestine.

2. *At and after* the XXth Congress of the CPSU it was revealed that the

Leninist policy on the national question had been seriously distorted in the direction of Great Russian chauvinism. Many peoples, nationalities and even nations in the USSR became the victims of this distortion. Hard hit was the Jewish nationality. Administrative actions that go back so far as the mid-1930's led, after World War II, to the liquidation of all Jewish secular institutions, organizations and channels of cultural expression, outside of Biro-Bidjan, whose Jewish cultural life, however, was also adversely affected by these administrative actions. Jewish schools were shut down. Yiddish and Russian-Jewish newspapers ceased publication. The Yiddish publishing houses stopped functioning. The Yiddish theaters were disbanded. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was in 1948 abruptly ordered to disband. Jewish cultural figures, many of them with worldwide reputations and following, were

unjustly and secretly executed. Many others were persecuted and imprisoned. We who were incredulous when enemies of socialism rumored such events, were horrified when unimpeachable Communist sources since the XXth Congress corroborated them.

3. *Heartening* amid the agony caused by the revelations at the XXth Congress, was the fact that the CPSU had itself finally uncovered the errors and crimes, branded them as violations of socialism, and resolved to return to the Leninist policy on all questions, including the national question. Even before the XXth Congress changes in some fields had begun to be made. Shortly after Stalin's death the Soviet Government had itself revealed and condemned the attempt to frame-up the Doctor's Case and to use it for anti-Semitic purposes and severely punished those in government and party responsible for this crime. After the XXth Congress signs of improvement began to be reported and were received by us with relief as confirming our confidence in the basic principles of socialism and with eagerness for further news of the return to a Leninist policy on the Jewish question and the restoration of Jewish cultural life. It was reported in the Communist press outside the Soviet Union that the reputations of those unjustly executed had begun to be rehabilitated. Variety concerts of Jewish music and of dramatizations, recitations and readings of Jewish literary works were held in various cities and attracted capacity audiences that demonstrated their enthusiastic desire for the rebuilding of Jewish cultural institutions. Translations of the poems of some of the executed writers began to appear in literary journals, sometimes with appreciative introductions, but

with no indication of what had happened to the late authors. In Vilna a Yiddish section was set up in the city library and an amateur Yiddish chorus and dramatic group have begun to rehearse Yiddish songs and sketches. In the field of religion, it may be added, a rabbinical seminary with ten pupils has been opened in Moscow and the Hebrew Prayer-Book has been reissued.

4. *In June, 1956*, an American progressive Jewish cultural leader was informed by the head of the Union of Soviet Writers that there was a plan to 1) establish a Yiddish publishing house; 2) open a Yiddish theater, to begin as a travelling company; 3) publish a bi-monthly literary periodical; 5) call a conference of Yiddish writers and cultural workers of the Soviet Union. He was also assured that a government statement on the fight against anti-Semitism would soon be forthcoming. Some of these plans were to be fulfilled in 1956; others not until 1957. Thus far, by the end of March 1957, not one of these projects had been carried to fruition. The fact that there was no publicly proclaimed program for the restoration and reestablishment of Jewish cultural life, including the Jewish press, publishing house, theater and other educational and cultural institutions, has increased the anxiety of the Jewish people and other democratically minded Americans and sections of the working class.

More recently, official delegations of the Canadian and British Communist Parties, as well as French and American progressives, have visited the Soviet Union and held discussions of the Jewish question with authoritative bodies there. They have publicly confirmed the fact that Jews are notably active in government positions,



Students at the new Moscow Yeshiva. The late Rabbi S. Shlifer is at left.

in all aspects of the economic, administrative, scientific, cultural and political work of the Soviet Union. We reject the slander of anti-Soviet elements accusing the Soviet Union of anti-Semitism. There is no official state policy of anti-Semitism. However, remnants of anti-Semitism, implanted by generations of former tsarist rule and revived to a certain degree among backward elements by the Hitlerite war-time occupation, apparently remain.

These delegations have also publicly expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction with the fact that Jewish cultural life has not yet been restored and with the lack of speed, energy and Communist determination made necessary by the gravity of the situation, with which the CPSU and the government are tackling the expected reparation of damage done and the restoration of Jewish culture and cultural institutions. One delegation was told by a spokesman of the Soviet Party that Yiddish works would be published and translated into Russian and other languages. However the Yiddish newspaper and theater would not be reinstated unless "there is a specific demand for them from Soviet Jewry." Among the reasons given for this position is that integration has advanced

so far as to make their revival unnecessary. The delegations report that whatever the rate of language assimilation has been, there exists among Soviet Jews a substantial desire for the reconstruction of Jewish cultural life and institutions and increasing concern with the delay in this work.

5. *Enemies* of socialism try to make capital out of both reporting and distorting the situation for their cold war purposes. International attention has been fixed on the Jewish question in the USSR. All those in many lands concerned with the matter would be heartened by the Soviet Government's issuing a statement on what happened to Jewish culture and on how the errors on the Leninist policy on the questions are being and would be overcome. Such a statement would help release the initiative of those Soviet Jews who desire Jewish cultural expression to speak for it.

We are confident that the Soviet party, which is steadily correcting the errors of the Stalin period, will, in the process it has begun of examining the Jewish question and the Leninist solutions to it, give full expression to the cultural needs and desires of the Jewish people. This would enhance the role of the Soviet Union as a beacon not only for the Jewish masses but for the Negro people and all the oppressed. We believe that the historic role of the Soviet Union in outlawing anti-Semitism, the earlier encouragement of national and nationality group life, including that of the Jewish people and the whole vitalizing effect of the self-criticism initiated by the XXth Congress, give the basic guarantees that the CPSU will fully carry out the return to the Leninist policy on the Jewish question in which its contributions have been historic.

FROM THE JEWISH PAST

An Early Jewish Troubador

By S. LAKS

BENJAMIN WOLF EHRENKRANTZ, or as the people used to call him, Velvl Zbarzher, was one of the first troubadors of Jewish song in Rumania; the most talented and most original of his time, both as poet and as folksinger.

The exact date of his birth has not been determined by his biographers. According to the inscription on his tombstone in the Jewish cemetery at Constantinople, he was born in the town of Zbarzh (Galicia) in 1826. We know little of his youth. His father was *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] and Velvl received a strict, traditional upbringing. As a child he displayed an acute mind and was known in the town as an exceptional student.

Under the influence of the Galician Haskalah [Enlightenment] movement, which vigorously fought against fanaticism and superstition

and propagated secularism and education among the Jewish youth, Velvl Zbarzher strayed from "the path of righteousness." His father quickly arranged for him to be married, hoping that the burden of making a living would keep him away from the ideas of Haskalah.

But this did not help.

When the town of Zbarzh became aware of Velvl's "heresies," it began to persecute him. He left his young wife and fled to Rumania, which at that time had attracted a number of Jewish writers and cultural figures.

We do not know whether or not his wife was aware of his plans. Opinions are divided on this point. One biographer says that he did not love his wife. Another says that his wife helped him carry out his plan and that he fled to Rumania with her approval. At any rate, he arrived in Rumania about 1856 and settled