

meet the criteria for an ethnic group or a nationality for any one of a number of reasons, although certain individual groups among them may meet these criteria. Some of these groups, in fact, like the Iranian-speaking Mountain Jews of Dagestan or the Tatar-speaking Karaim of the Crimea, are treated by the Soviet government as separate ethnic groups as far as their size permits. To begin with, Jews as a whole have never within recent times had political or territorial unity; some Soviet Jews apparently still speak Yiddish while others do not; most of the peculiar culture of the East European Jewish pale, I would contend, is the product of centuries of oppression and caste status—as is shown by its rather rapid disappearance in this country, and in general, where the caste status of Jews no longer applies.

We have no reliable information on how many Soviet Jews would care to preserve the remnants of the peculiar *shtetl* Jewish culture of Eastern Europe if given an opportunity. Judging by the eagerness with which the Jewish younger generation abandoned it during the 1920s, my guess would be that the number is not large.

One final point: Soviet census figures show that a considerable number of people in the last census designated Yiddish as their “native language.” I have recently been told that in Soviet usage this expression means “the language spoken in the home when they were children”—which, in the case of people of middle age or over, obviously need not coincide with any language now used by the individual. This point remains undocumented at the moment, but it fits well with the distinction drawn in the Soviet ethnographic and demographic literature between “native language” (*rodnoi iazyk*) and “vernacular language” (*razgovornyi iazyk*); the sources I have seen fail to explain this distinction. The citation of Soviet census figures on native language may easily confuse the American reader, if he is unaware of the special sense in which Soviet people use this term.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Professor Weinryb's statement that “Soviet Jews are discouraged from having any contact with Western Jews” (“A Note on Anti-Semitism in Soviet Russia [Post-Stalin Period],” *Slavic Review*, September 1966, page 526) is a remarkable illustration of the Editor's comment in the same issue on a manuscript he had received: “What else, besides these rather drab sources, has this author been looking at in recent years?”

This summer I made my fourth visit to the USSR. Contact with Soviet Jews came both on their initiative and my own, and in two instances might be described as having come on the initiative of the authorities, as both the guide-interpreter assigned to my random group of tourists (British, French, American) and the Intourist man in charge of the Volga River tour I took (on which West Germans were the most numerous group) were Jewish, the former most distinctly so both by name and appearance.

In Kiev, as my wife and I were riding by bus to the University to look up an exchange researcher there who had just returned home after a year at Berkeley, a ruggedly handsome man in his mid-fifties asked, in Hebrew and in the hearing of the other passengers, whether my wife spoke that language. She replied, in Russian,

that neither of us did, and I asked if he could guide us to the University. He accompanied us off the bus, and we had an extensive conversation, quite alone, in Yiddish, as Mrs. Mandel's Russian is poor. He was a carpenter, responded to our probing questions about the Jews and their culture in a manner differing in no way from official Soviet contentions, and closed the conversation with a remark summarizing his satisfaction with the opportunities open to him: "I don't know how many suits you have, but I have six!"

In the same city my wife had a similar encounter with a woman met in equally accidental fashion, who offered the same views. I myself had an experience of unusual interest. Happening upon a minor Young Pioneer festival in the central Park of Culture and Rest, I asked the man directing it with a bullhorn whether I might interview him. He suggested that it would make more sense to talk to the park director, who was the young, blond, very athletic individual alongside. The director agreed, toured me through the park, explained its cultural and political activities most frankly, informed me that he was in charge of a staff of 180, that his salary was 150 rubles (50 percent above the average industrial wage), that he was twenty-nine, had spent six months in the virgin-soil country in 1956, served three years in the army, and gained the skills necessary for his present position by attending a USSR-wide higher educational institution run by the trade unions. At the end of half an hour I asked his name. It was Abramovich, which identifies its bearer to all as Jewish as surely as does Cohen or Levy. I then turned to the "Jewish question," and he responded that it was obvious that no one had stood in his way. Asked about Jewish culture, he gave the standard Soviet reply, which associates culture with geographic ethnic entity: Birobidjan in the case of the Jews.

In Leningrad the taxi-driver who toured us round the city (having been there before, I deliberately told him to show us what he thought would be of most interest to foreign tourists) turned out to be named Turick, a Jew, and twenty-eight years of age. Asked about the status of Jews, he said no one bothered him, and as proof showed us the excellent watch he had won in a city-wide taxi-drivers' contest for knowledge of Leningrad's streets and history. He certainly demonstrated both to us. He is married to a Russian girl. Her parents had been opposed to the marriage before it took place, but now that they have been blessed by a grandchild, are delighted.

In Moscow an old friend, Jewish and married to a Russian, offered an interesting response to my comment that there must be a substantial demand for Yiddish-language culture in view of the fact that 450,000 listed it as mother tongue at the last census. He said he himself had done so, because that is biographically true, but that today he neither speaks nor seeks to read it. And I was reminded of my own father, here, who also spoke Yiddish before any other language but, not untypically, never speaks it today, reads it on only the rarest of occasions, and did not teach either Yiddish or Hebrew to his children.

Among non-Jews I heard two comments on the subject. One was classically anti-Semitic: "It's all the fault of the Jews." The second was humanist internationalist. Both came from workers, the former an oil-driller, the second the Ukrainian porter on a train, a man in his sixties. Describing to a non-Jewish, nonradical Russian émigré revisiting his native land for the first time since the Revolution the things that had happened during the Civil War, the porter said: "And among the counter-revolutionaries there were people like Makhno. The things they did to Jews! They cut them down like cabbages, from the littlest to the eldest!"

The foregoing does not speak to the indubitable validity of some of the points Dr. Weinryb makes. But when one of the components of his speculations is the belief that contact between Soviet and Western Jews is discouraged—"any contact"—one must be skeptical about the soundness of conclusions based in any part upon such a notion. Shouldn't at least a tourist trip to the USSR be a minimal requirement for any writing on contemporary Soviet society?

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TO THE EDITOR:

Mr. Dunn was good enough to mail me a copy of his "Letter to the Editor" [appearing in this issue]. I would like here to make a few brief comments.

(1) When I mentioned in my "Note" (*Slavic Review*, September 1966) that one should define what he means by anti-Semitism, I did not mean to say: anti-Semitism "to each according to his needs." I am afraid that Mr. Dunn's contention is neither historically nor sociologically correct. After all, "anti-Semitism" is a "branch" of prejudice and may, as such, take both covert and overt forms and may be "acted out" (using Gordon W. Allport's categories) by antilocution and avoidance as well as discrimination, physical attack, and extermination (either form is regarded as prejudice, or, in our connection, as anti-Semitism).

(2) Nor can Mr. Dunn's contentions about Jewish "nationality" (or "ethnic group") be of any value in the Soviet context. In this connection attitudes (Mr. Dunn's, mine, etc.), or even the official recognition of "Jewish nationality" in the Versailles Minority Treaties following World War I, are irrelevant. The decisive factor here is the recognition of Jewish nationality in law and official pronouncements in Soviet Russia. These range from a speech by Mikhail I. Kalinin, chief of state, in November 1926 about the task of preserving the Jewish "nationality" to a decree of 1924 and the Constitution of the Belorussian SSR in 1927 about publication of important legislative acts in Yiddish (as one of the four official languages), the founding of Jewish schools and publications, Jewish municipal soviets, sections in the academies in Minsk and Kiev, departments at the universities in Odessa and Moscow, and many other acts along these lines.

Even that which was carried over to the post-Stalin era clearly designates Jews in Russia as a "nationality":

(a) Official classification of Jews in their internal passports (fifth paragraph) as of Jewish nationality in accordance with the passport regulations of 1932, which required indication of the bearer's nationality. This classification is compulsory except in cases of individuals born of mixed marriages, who may choose the nationality of whichever parent they wish.

(b) Officially there still exists a "Jewish Autonomous Region" (*Oblast'*), which was established in Birobidzhan in 1934.

(c) In the publications of the results of the 1959 census (the various *Itogi* and others) the Jews are classified as a nationality along with the other nationalities (*natsional'nosti*) of the USSR. The general category of "native language" (*rodnoi iazyk*) is divided into "language of their own nationality" and "language not of their own nationality." Of the nearly 2.27 million Jews, 487,786 gave the "language of their own nationality" (meaning mainly Yiddish) as their "native language," and