

The board's action was precipitated by protests over the showing of two works by the Spanish artist, Pablo Picasso, who is a member of the French Communist Party. Library Director James D. Meeks removed the works following the public protests and was upheld by the board's decision to ban all such exhibits. Unaccountably, the president of the board, Boude Storey, Sr., stated that the rule will not apply to books. Mr. Storey was quoted as saying that "books are a different field entirely."

In addition to the removal of Picasso's works, library officials refused to permit photographs of any of the paintings. Mr. Storey stated that "we have taken them

to New York. The president of the group said that when the exhibition was arranged, there had been no thought whatsoever of any "political overtone."

The library board's resolution read in part: "Since a mistake was made in displaying the controversial works in the library, we feel that the controversial items should have been withdrawn from the exhibit."

Dallas was the center of another controversy last year when efforts were made to ban the works of four artists from the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. The artists had come under attack for alleged Communist ties from the Dallas Patriotic Council. The exhibition went on as scheduled.

# The Outlook for Jewish Culture in USSR

(Third of a Series)

(We are offering below a third article on Jewish culture in the Soviet Union by J. Gersham, a Canadian Jew who recently visited the Soviet Union. It is reprinted, as were the others (on Jan. 30 and Feb. 18) from the Canadian Jewish Weekly, a progressive journal published in Toronto.)

By J. GERSHAM

I have already pointed out, along general lines, that any attempt to accuse the Soviet government and Communist Party of following an anti-Semitic policy is a criminal distortion of the truth. This is so, I believe, not only because thousands of Jews hold important positions in Soviet government, industry, science and the arts, but also because, despite distortions, there is recognition given to the specific status of Jews in the USSR.

As the writer Abraham Morevski wrote recently in the Warsaw *Folksshtimme*: "Let's stop labeling as anti-Semitism any attempt to deal with the complicated questions and problems concerning us and around us in a way contrary to what we want done. Anti-Semitism is the theory and practice of liquidation, of social destruction and discrimination against people of Jewish origin—that was Hitler and his heirs. All other opinions, pro and con, we should take up with the proper humane dignity, listen to them and answer them."

Yes, the whole issue must be tackled with dignity and seriousness.

I discussed with a representative of the Central Committee, of the Soviet Communist Party the question of the declaration published in *Pravda* on Nov. 6, signed by Soviet Jewish personalities, about the invasion of Egypt.

I said to him the following (leaving aside the question of the contents of that declaration): "Do you know how the Jewish communities in other countries, not to speak of the anti-Soviet press, will react to this statement?"

Firstly, they will say—justifiably—that while in general the Soviet government does not consider the Jews as a separate entity, when it

comes to Soviet Jewish expression on a matter concerning Israel, there suddenly appears a sort-of organized opinion. Secondly, they will ask, also with justification, why among all the names signing the statement there is not a single person connected with Jewish creative work?"

His answer was that the Jewish citizens have now and always had the opportunity to express themselves on matters affecting Jews anywhere. As to the second point, he felt this was a serious error; the undersigned should have included Jewish writers, composers, actors, etc.

"But wouldn't it have been better, if there were again to be a Jewish organization to serve the cultural and other social needs of Jewish people, as there was until 1948?" I asked. (I added that Rabbi Shleifer's address could not serve as a contact point for secular Jews abroad). Such a body could deal with all questions affecting Jews in general and could be a link of friendship between the USSR and other lands. His answer was the same as to my query regarding the theatre, newspaper and other projects: the question is still being examined, and the whole issue discussed.

Now take the question of "Yevrei" (Jew) on the Soviet passports. Not only Dr. Shoskes of the N.Y. *Day-Journal* wrote about this question saying that every Jew's passport is marked with the word "Jew" on it. Unfortunately, J. B. Salsberg left an incorrect impression on the same issue. The *Veker* in New York has already written on this: "... the only country in the world with a Jewish stamp on the passports. . ."

From my own investigations I have found that the whole issue is a false one. Firstly, on no passport, whether belonging to a Jew or a non-Jew is there any stamp of any sort. It is an ordinary document where, among other questions, one is asked his nationality. It is not obligatory for a Jew to write in "Jewish" to this question. There are Jewish citizens from the Ukraine, for example, who during the census gave their nationality as Ukrainian, and are so indicated in their passports. (Just as we, Ca-

nadian Jews, often fill out official applications and documents when asked our nationality, by writing "Canadian" and not Hebrew or Jewish).

I asked several Jews whom I met to show me their passports. One of these had written in, (there was no "stamp"). "Yevrei." In answer to my question why he had written so, he said: "I did this consciously. It is my way of identifying myself with the Jewish nationality." He also said quite definitely that it was not obligatory to sign his passport thus. As a citizen of the Russian Federated Republic, he could have given his nationality as Russian.

Yet, the whole issue is not so simple. Because there should be some way of knowing how many Jews there are in the USSR. I personally would have nothing against marking in official documents Jews as such—so long as the full status of the Jewish nationality would be restored, according to Lenin's postulates as applied between 1917 and 1936.

How can anyone speak of official anti-Semitism when in so many Soviet publications you find works by Jewish writers, both living and dead? In the short period of September-October, three important literary journals published stories and poems by Markish, Halkin, Kvitko, Introductions to the pieces were written by prominent Soviet writers who warmly evaluated the work of the Jewish writers and their contributions as Jewish creative workers.

In the magazine *Days of Poetry*, for example, the well-known Soviet writer Alexei Surkov wrote recently: "Everyone who loves Soviet poetry has read with great interest, after an interruption of many years, new translations of the Soviet Jewish writer Peretz Markish, who was so prematurely torn from our ranks. (\*Ed note: Markish was executed in 1952.) The creative work of Markish has become an integral and significant chapter of the living history of Soviet-Jewish literature. Peretz Markish, as writer, dramatist, poet, as one of the most prominent Jewish authors, was very popular among readers of Jewish literature far beyond the borders of the USSR. Those who know Jewish writing and the Jewish language speak with pride of Markish, as one of the most prominent Jewish writers of our era."

It is precisely because of such a warm approach to Jewish writers, because Soviet scientists and institutes are concerning themselves with Jewish history, and are studying the treasures of Yiddish and Hebrew culture—because of all this, it is so regrettable that the cultural institutions that were taken away by administrative measures in 1948 have not been restored.

But I am not among those who has given up hope. As many things of the past are being corrected, I believe that distortions of the national question, including the approach to the Jewish people, will also be made good.

—Translated and abridged.

## Classified Ads

FOR SALE