JEWISH DISSENT IN THE USSR

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THE JEWISH population of the USSR, which numbered about 2,150,000 people when the last Soviet census was held in 1970, is not homogenous. It consists of three different groups, each one having its specific Jewish experience and hence its own specific pattern of Jewish identity.

The smallest among these three groups is that of the Oriental Jews, composed of the Jews of Georgia, the Bukharan Jews of Central Asia, and the Mountain Jews of the Caucasus. In 1970 the group numbered about 120,000 members, i.e., about 6% of Soviet Jewry, yet of the entire Jewish exodus from the Soviet Union during the years 1971–1977 comprised about 37% and close to 40% of the group have already left the USSR. Among the Georgian Jewish community the percentage of those who left even approaches 70%. About 97% of the members of this group who left the USSR have settled in Israel.

The second Jewish group resides in the territories occupied by the USSR during the Second World War, that is, the Baltic republics of the Carpatho-Ukraine of Northern Bukovina and of Bessarabia, and the Carpatho-Ukraine. In 1970 it numbered 270,000 members, i.e., 13% of the Soviet Jewish population as a whole. About 46% of the Jewish exodus during the years 1971–1977 come from this group. About 25% of its membbers have left the USSR, and approximately 90% of these have settled in Israel.

The third and largest group consists of European (or, in the accepted Jewish terminology, Ashkenazi) Jews of the *authentic* Soviet territories, i.e., of the USSR within the 1939 borders. In 1970 this group numbered 1,663,000 members, i.e., 81% of the Soviet Jewry. This 81% has contributed only 17% to the Jewish exodus; only 2% of the group has left the USSR; 50%, for Israel, and 50%, for other countries, mainly the USA.

What is the meaning of these statistical data? To arrive at an answer, we must view these figures and to try to interpret them against the background of the different Jewish identity patterns of each respective group.

The Jewish Experience

According to Eliezer Schweid, the contemporary Jew experiences his Jewishness either as a sense of belonging to the Jewish religion, or as a cultural experience, or as a chance occurrence. The first two patterns lie within the framework of the Jewish civilization in accordance

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with its classical definition by Mordecai Kaplan: "Judaism as otherness is thus something far more comprehensive than Jewish religion. It includes that nexus of a history, literature, language, social organization, folk sanctions, standards of contact, social and spiritual ideas, esthetic values, which in their totality form a civilization." The third pattern, i.e., Jewishness as an act of fate only, cannot be defined in terms of the Jewish civilization, hence it is to be defined as being outside the framework of this civilization.

The Oriental Jews of the USSR live in areas where the Soviet regime, during its first decade of existence, had to struggle bitterly—sometimes using its military forces in a most brutal way-against the will of the population to gain independence from Russia. To lessen resistance in these areas to Soviet rule, which was seen by the population there as a new version of Russian colonialism, the Communist Party used, during the twenties, carefully elaborated methods and rules of behavior which are known by the general name, "the oriental policy of the Communist Party of the USSR." One of the most important facets of this policy was a demonstration of respect for local traditions, including tolerance of religion. As a result, the position of religion has been undermined less in these areas than in the Slav parts of the USSR, and this is true also for the Jewish religion. It would be an exaggeration to say that the oriental group of Soviet Jewry has retained its religious tradition and habits in full. Nevertheless, it can be stated that the religious basis is still very strong and that the religious pattern is still the main pattern of Jewish self-identification among the members of this group. One of the most important components of the Jewish religious tradition is the longing for the Holy Land.

For the oriental group of Soviet Jews, the intense longing for the Holy Land has been the main incentive for participation in the Jewish dissent movement in the USSR. Returning to the statistical data given at the beginning of this paper, we note that, apparently, it is the religious incentive which results in the highest percentage of emigration among this group; this same factor also appears to result in the highest percentage, among these emigrees, of settlers in Israel—who thereby become part of their people in their own land—and in the lowest percentage of those emigrees who prefer to settle for other countries.

As for the second group of Soviet Jewry, namely the Jews of the areas taken by the Soviets during the Second World War, a few historical data need brief mention here to enable us to define their main pattern of Jewish self-identification.

Between the First and the Second World War, these areas were centers of very intense Jewish political and cultural life. Jewish political parties, from ultra-religious ("Agudat Yisrael") and extreme right ("Betar") to Zionist left ("Poale-Zion-left") and anti-Zionist left ("Bund"), actively functioned in all these areas. A dense network of Jewish educational institutions in Yiddish and in Hebrew operated in Latvia (989 elementary, 18 high schools 45 professional schools, teachers seminaries, etc.), Lithuania (108 elementary and 60 high schools), and Bessarabia (37 elementary and 11 high schools). Vilna was the main world center of Yiddish culture and learning. Jewish press appeared in these

areas mainly in Yiddish and in Hebrew, but also in German (in Czernowitz), in Romanian (in Bessarabia) and in Hungarian (in the Carpatho-Ukraine). Although there was a religious trend in all these activities (especially in Lituania and in the Transcarpathian Ukraine), they were predominately of an explicitly secular character.

Already in 1940 the Soviets attempted to paralyze Jewish public and cultural life in their new territories, through massive arrests of Jewish intellectuals. Following massive extermination of Jews in these areas in 1941–1944 by the Nazis and their collaborators, the Soviet authorities renewed their efforts to exterminate every kind of Jewish self-expression after the end of the Second World War and especially during "the black years of Soviet Jewry" (1948–1953). The blow which this struck to the Jewish public and cultural life of this group of Soviet Jewry was nearly mortal. Nevertheless, the feeling of belonging to the Jewish people as a group with its own socio-cultural, predominately secular experience, has survived until the end of the 60's—early 70's—when a large-scale Jewish dissent got underway in the USSR and up to the present day.

Kishinev and Vilna became the first places in the USSR where Yiddish amateur performances were resumed—despite manifold obstacles thrown in the way of this initiative by the authorities, and Riga became the main center of revived Zionist activities. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that this pattern of Jewish experience has survived undamaged. Its form in the period under discussion appears to have been that of a residual socio-cultural, secular self-identification. The statistical data presented at the beginning of this paper—the percentage which this group has contributed to the exodus, and the percentage of those who have settled in Israel rather than immigrate to other countries—may be interpreted as an authentic reflection of the relatively high potency even of such incentive, and under such conditions as then prevailed in the Soviet Union.

As for the third and the largest group of Soviet Jews—the "authentically Soviet" Ashkenazi Jewry—its sorrowful history is well-known. I would like to briefly survey that history here, however, from the point of view of what has happened to the Jewish identity of the members.

Before 1917, the majority of the group experienced its Jewishness as a belonging to a specific civilization characterized by all the components given in the above-quoted definition, with religiousness its leading feature. Among some of the members there existed side by side with this main pattern a socio-cultural secular pattern, which found its expression in production created in three languages—Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian. During the first decade of Soviet statehood, all Jewish socio-cultural activities, except those performed within the framework or under the guidelines of the Communist Bolshevik party, were gradually forbidden. Toward the end of that decade any kind of cultural activity in Hebrew became outlawed. During the second decade of the Soviet State, the last efforts to sustain the tradition of the specific Jewish culture (especially writing) in Russian practically ceased. Yiddish had been at first contra-distinguished to Hebrew and given momentum, but already during the second decade of the existence of the USSR, the number of Yiddish

schools and cultural institutions began to decrease rapidly from year to year. Big efforts were invested into the secularization of the group. Synagogues were closed down, religious leaders and believers persecuted. On the eve of the Second World War the majority of the members of the group were already completely secularized. A large part of the group used Russian as their only language of communication and/or as their only language of culture. The overwhelming majority of the younger generation was educated in Russian, and the Russian language and culture became theirs. The Jewish civilization was already largely demolished, while Jewishness had become rather a biological than a lingual or cultural fact, and surely not a religious one. Most of the members of this group who still clung to various facets of the Jewish civilization, inhabited what had been the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Bielorussia prior to the fall of 1939. Many of them were exterminated by the Nazis and their collaborators. Jewish civilization was thereby greatly depleted of its bearers, and its demolition became almost complete. What remained of it was brutally liquidated by the Soviet authorities in 1948: the last Yiddish publications stopped, poets, writers, journalists and actors arrested, put to death or transferred to Gulag. This was a deliberate policy of eliminating Yiddish culture and the Jewish cultural elite in the USSR. About 600 people participated in Jewish cultural activities between 1946–48 in the USSR. Only about 100 of them survived the camps and returned to their homes in the mid-50's. From the end of the '50's-early 60's, permission was granted for very limited cultural activities: one magazine in Moscow and one small-sized newspaper in Birobidzhan, a yearly average of 2–3 Yiddish books, one travelling theatrical company, few amateur ensembles and single performers; broadly publicized beyond the borders of the USSR, this actually has been a fraudulently appeasing show for the outside world: a third generation of Jews was growing up for whom Yiddish was a dead language or at least not theirs —the de-Yiddishized Jews are now the overwhelming majority, of this group of Soviet Jewry in particular, and hence of Soviet Jewry in general.

Already at the beginning of the post-Stalin period the overwhelming majority of this group were beyond the framework of Jewish civilization and experienced their Jewishness as an occurrence of fate alone.

Three sub-patterns of experience of Jewishness-as-fate might be isolated: fate as a source of pride; fate as curse; apathetic reconciliation to fate. The two former call for action, the latter presupposes passiveness.

Fate: Differential Responses

Those who saw in their fate of being Jewish a source of pride, had sooner or later to draw the only possible logical conclusion, namely, that their place was not in the USSR, where the Jews are a governmentally discriminated minority, subject to *numerus clausus* in various branches of higher education and in various professions, discrimination in career advancement, complete inaccessibility of several branches of scientific career and of governmental service, etc., and everyday anti-semitism. This was a clear-cut incentive, both by the bearers of this subpattern and by the

members of the two above-mentioned groups, toward a common goal.

Those who saw their Jewish fate as a curse had to draw their logical conclusion too, namely, that they had to rid themselves of their Jewishness, i.e., to become assimilated. But complete assimilation in the Soviet Union means that one can legitimately state in his identity from that neither he nor either of his parents are Jewish. In other words, only the third generation of an assimilationist can really file and function as a non-Jew. Hence, Jews who saw their Jewishness as a curse and tried to get rid of it, had to come to a further conclusion, namely, that the only possible way to achieve this goal for themselves (and not only for their grandchildren) was to leave the USSR for countries where their ethnic affiliation is not fixed officially and need not play an essential part in their life if they do not wish it to. Naturally such an incentive could not lead to Israel. The aim was primarily a multi-ethnic immigrant country of good ability to absorb and assimlate, and the USA took top priority.

As for those who reconciled apathetically to their fate to be Jewish and nevertheless have left the USSR or are about to do so, it seems that, for them, the main incentive has been that preference for various structural features of western democracies, either political (freedom of speech, multipartiality, free elections, etc.), or juridical (personal immunity, freedom to leave the country of inhabitancy and to return to it, etc), or economic (free enterprise) or all of them together—over the respective structural features of Soviet society.

It seems that this latter incentive in its political and juridical aspects has been, in the final analysis, the main incentive also for those Jewish participants of the general dissent movement of Soviet intellectuals who have emigrated from the USSR.

This incentive is not so clear-cut as the two former ones. Nor do its bearers have a clearly defined positive (as in the case of the first subpattern) or negative (as in the case of the second subpattern) attitude to their Jewishness. What did prevail, however, was their impetus to leave, and so they used to go along with the mainstream of the exodus.

The statistics cited at the beginning of this paper, on the exodus of the members of this, the largest group of Soviet Jewry, show, to my mind, that the experience of Jewishness as no more than fate, even if fate is the source of pride, has a far more limited power as an incentive. The equal distribution within the group of those who have come to Israel and those who preferred to go to other countries shows further, that among the members of this group who have left the USSR the assimilationist tendency is at least as strong as the tendency to full national integrity. As for the bearers of the third subpattern (apathetic reconciliation to fate)—when the main flow was towards Israel they came to Israel, and now, following the present-day mainstream, they go to other countries. The annual statistics of distribution between those who left for Israel and those who went to other countries, during the first years of the massive exodus (1971–1972) and its rapid growth beginning from 1973, shows almost absolute absence of the latter tendency among this group: 1971—more than 99.5% to Israel, about 0.4% to other countries; 1973—more than 80% to Israel, about 20% to other countries, 1976—about 20% to Israel, about 80% to other coun-

tries. It must also be added, that evidently those belonging to the third subpattern constituted, within this group, the majority of those who first came to Israel and then went on to other countries (approximately 3000 people, i.e., about 17% of all members of the group who came to Israel, or about 0.2% of the group as a whole). The Jewish dissent has till now led to the exodus from the Soviet Union of approximately 140,000 people, about 115,000 of this total having settled in Israel and 25,000 in other countries, mainly the USA. The dynamics of this dissent can be seen through its periodization.

The Dynamics of Chronology

The period which begins with the end of the Second World War and continues up to the Six-Day War might be called the period of the prehistory of the Jewish dissent. Chronologically, the Holocaust was the first catalyst of what later became the Jewish national movement in the Soviet Union. Jews of all areas taken over by the USSR in 1939–1940, and of part of the Soviet Union in its pre-'39 borders, were victims of the Holocaust. The survivors, as well as Jews who themselves were not victims yet who felt emotionally involved in what had happened, saw themselves as remnants of a people now homeless and rootless, and often unwelcomed in places where they had been residing for hundreds of years.

In 1944, thousands of Jews who had survived the ghettos and the extermination camps began to move through Europe to a number of Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, from which they tried to reach the Jewish national homeland, the Jewish State underway in what was then Palestine. Jewish survivors—former citizens of Poland and particularly of Romania (only the former inhabitants of the North Bukovine) —were permitted to leave the territories taken over by the USSR and thousands of them took part in the massive move toward Palestine, known as the *Briha* (Flight). Jewish survivors from the now Soviet Baltic republics and Bessarabia, and of course the Jews of the main Soviet territories, were cut off from this move. Nevertheless many of them tried then to fulfill their desire to settle in the Jewish homeland, and a group of young Jewish survivors of several Baltic ghettos, which named itself *Nezah* (Eternity—abbreviation for "No'ar Ziyyoni Haluzi"—Pioneer Zionist Youth) succeeded in 1945–46 to bring out from the USSR to Poland several hundreds of Jews who had joined the Briha. Almost all of the Nezah group were arrested by the middle of 1946 and sent to the Gulag camps.

The establishment of the Jewish State in 1948 gave a tremendous push to national feelings both among the older and the younger generation of Soviet Jewry. It would be an exaggeration to say that all of Soviet Jewry was involved in this outburst of enthusiasm, but surely a tenth, maybe even hundreds of thousands, were overtaken by it. Yet those who dared to try to realize their enthusiasm in deeds, were few. Petitions were sent to the Soviet authorities and to Stalin himself, asking that young Soviet Jews be allowed to volunteer for the Israel army; a few underground groups came into existence which occupied themselves mainly in Jewish self-education and distribution of hand-written and typed materials on Jewish history, the Holocaust, Israel, etc.; some former Hebrew writers

tried to renew their literary activities and organized themselves as an underground group, too; some youngsters tried, without success, to cross the Soviet borders illegally, with the intention of reaching Israel. Almost all participants of these activities were spotted out—often with the help of provocateurs—by the Soviet Security Service and were sentenced to long terms in prisons and camps. There they met veteran Jewish POC's—members of Jewish political and cultural organizations of areas taken over by the Soviet Union in 1939–1940, who had been arrested immediately upon the take-over, and also members of the Nezah group. They were joined by some Jewish intellectuals, sent as "cosmopolities" to the Gulag beginning with 1948, and by some participants of Yiddish Soviet cultural activities, who also had been exiled during "the black years" (1948–1953). From this Gulag school there emerged some of the initial leaders and many of the active participants of the future Jewish dissent.

Of far less, but nevertheless significant importance, was the meeting between the Jewish youth of the Soviet Union and the youth of Israel during the World Democratic Youth Festival in Moscow in the summer of 1957. Young Jews came to Moscow to meet their Israeli peers, and the Soviets were not completely successful in their attempts to keep them from making contact. The impact of conversations with youth who were proud of their Jewishness, proud of their Jewish state, speaking the language of the Bible, free of Diaspora complexes, was tremendous. Some of the Soviet Jewish youth, spotted out by the KGB-men during their meetings with Israelis, were, after the festival, interrogated, and some were even arrested, sentenced to various terms and sent to camps. From this first post-Stalin generation of Jewish POC's, too, there later emerged some leaders and many active participants of the first period of the Jewish dissent movement.

This first period of the Jewish dissent movement began with the Six-Day War of June 1967, and ended with the first Jewish sit-ins in February–March 1971.

The Six-Day War sharpened the Jewish feelings of those who defined their Jewishness mainly in religious terms, as well as of those who experienced their Jewishness within the remains of the framework of social and cultural Jewish activities, and of those who experienced it only as a fate yet were proud of it. It also turned into proud Jews a considerable number of those who, until then, had only apathetically reconciled themselves to their fate of being Jewish; and it transmuted the perception by some Jews of their Jewishness as a curse into its perception as the source of pride. The victory of the Jewish state over its enemies, some of whose leaders had openly proclaimed that their aim was to wipe it off the face of the earth, was seen as a removal of the gravest threat to the existence of Jews as a prople since the Holocaust. As for the behavior of the Soviet authorities and the Soviet mass media before, during and immediately after the Six-Day War, it was as if they had spit in the faces of their Jewish citizens. Moreover, by inciting the Arabs against the Jewish State, and by helping them so generously with weapons and military instructors, the Soviet State showed itself as a collaborator and ally of those who had so loudly proclaimed a new Judeocide. For Jews with national consciousness to live in such a state, under

such a government became, therefore, completely unbearable.

An Iceberg Melts

Toward the end of 1968 the Soviet Government suddenly permitted some 2,00 Jews, mainly elderly people from the western peripheries who had asked for (and partially even received) exit visas before the Six-Day War to leave for Israel. It immediately became a precedent which the Soviet authorities could not deny, and a torrent of requests for permits to leave for Israel began to flow to OVIT's (visa departments). Though the Soviet authorities continued during 1969 to renew the previously cancelled visas and to give visas to pre-'67 applicants (about 3,000 of them, mainly elderly people from western areas), new applicants, most of them young and middle-aged people from almost all over the USSR, were totally refused. By the end of 1968 and during 1969, the Jewish dissent was joined by a number of Jewish participants of the democratic movement (as the general Soviet dissent was then called), who brought with them experience in various techniques of dissident activities. During the same years a relatively broad network of *ulpanim*—Hebrew classes—was established. All of them were in fact underground or semi-underground.

Letters of Soviet Jews demanding to be permitted to leave for Israel were broadly circulated in Samizdat copies, and by the end of 1969 they began to reach the mass media in the west and hence to occupy world public opinion. In 1970 there appeared two first Jewish Samizdat journals, "Iskhod" and "Iton." The latter was an organ of the VKK (Vsesoyuzny Koordinatsionny Komitet), All-Soviet Coordinating Committee—a committee of activists of the Jewish dissent groups from various towns, which tried to coordinate their local activities. Both journals appeared anonymously and the VKK too did not acknowledge Iton's existence; at any rate, it ceased to exist in the beginning of 1971, when the majority of its members left for Israel).

The attempt of the authorities to intimidate Jewish dissidents through a wave of arrests in the summer of 1970 and the first Leningrad trial in December of that year was a failure. The trial demonstrated this in two ways. First, within the USSR it was answered not only by picketing outside the court buildings in Leningrad where the trial was held and in Moscow where the appeal against the first court's decision was heard, but also by an increase of applications for exit permits during and immediately after the trial. Secondly, there was a vast wave of very sharp protests from abroad, not anticipated by the Soviet authorities.

Shortly thereafter, in February 1971, the Jewish dissidents began to use tactics unused until then by any dissident group or movement in the USSR: the tactics of sit-ins. The sit-ins rapidly gathered momentum in March, and from this month on relatively large groups of Jews, began to receive permission to leave for Israel, many of them in a relatively short time (two-three months) after application for exist visas. For the first time in the history of Soviet dissent the authorities yielded and the dissidents, backed by world public opinion, gained the upper hand.

The second period of Jewish dissent began in March 1971, and it continued until the end of 1973. The main cha-

racteristic of this period was a very rapid increase in numbers of people given permission to leave for Israel. Only about 1,000 Jews were given exist visas in 1970, while in 1971 their number reached 12,800; the following year this number more than doubled, to 31,700, and in 1973 it rose to about 35,000.

The majority of applicants received their exit permits relatively quickly, within 2.5—3 months on the average, especially in areas taken over by the Soviets during the Second World War and in oriental republics, so their involvement in the dissent was expressed mainly in the act itself of applying for an exist visa to Israel, and in sporadic participation in some activities before applying and during the short waiting period. Nevertheless, even such kind of participation of relatively large numbers of peoples in the Jewish dissent made it the most massive dissent movement of the '70s.

During this period a specific stratum of Jewish dissidents emerged, which provided the movement with its leaders. This was the stratum of otkazniki (the refused), mainly intellectuals, who were refused permission to leave the Soviet Union, usually under the pretext that they had access to classified information. If, during the first period of Jewish dissent, to be refused was a rule, now it had become an exception. According to various estimations, there were between 1000 to 1200 "refuseniks" and their number almost constantly remained the same.

In 1971, three trials took place of people arrested during the intimidation wave of 1970, and from time to time during this period, other individual trials took place. Therey were held mainly in the provinces, were the dissent was not so widespread, and their purpose was obvious: to intimidate the local Jewish population and thereby prevent the spread of dissent there. In August 1972, the authorities introduced new emigration fees. According to this new regulation, the more educated the potential emigree was, the more he had to pay. This was intended to make emigration impossible, because of the inability of the average, even well-paid professional to accumulate the necessary sums. But in this case too, mainly because of an outraged reaction abroad, the Soviet authorities had to yield and suspend—though only de facto, and not de jure—the regulation. They did so in March 1973.

The Jewish Samizdat activities continued. In place of the above-mentioned journals of the previous period, new ones came into existence: "Vestnik Iskhoda," actually a continuation of the "Ishkhod", in 1971; and then "Yerrei—SSSR." Two new tactics were introduced-collective hunger strikes and seminars of fired scientists and scholars; both proved to be useful.

The third period of dissent began in 1974 and continues now.

Three main characteristics of this period can be singled out:

First of all, there is a continuous decrease in the numbers of emigrees from the USSR. While in 1973 their number was 35,000, in 1974 it went down to 20,700; in 1975 it was 13,600, in 1976 a little bit more—14,600, and in 1977 (January–October), 11,400. Various suggestions as to the reason(s) of this decrease have been proposed, and this is not the place to discuss them one by one. Nevertheless, one aspect is clear: the potential of Jewish emigration, to the complete contrary of what the Soviet authorities are trying

to prove, has not yet been exhausted. One proof of this might be enough: there are still in the hands of Soviet Jews valid, (i.e., sent not more than a year ago) "vyzovs," or affidavits from Israel, needed for application in the USSR for about 180,000 persons, and requests for "vyzovs" are still reaching Israel in large numbers.

Secondly, strictly speaking, the homogeneous Jewish dissent of the two previous periods is now split into two different dissents. The first is a continuation of the previous Israel-orientated Jewish dissent, the second is characterized not by a desire to reach Israel but to go out from the Soviet Union. In 1971, out of a total of 12,800 only 54 persons, i.e., 0.4%, preferred countries other than Israel; in 1973, out of 35,000 1,451 persons, i.e., 4.2%, showed this preference. During the last two years, the distribution has been almost 50–50: 1976 — Israel about 7,300, other countries 7,000; 1977 (January–October) Israel 5,500, other countries 5,900. Here, too, various explanations have been proposed and in this case as well I cannot possibly list and analyze them. May I only state that, to my mind, the most important cause of the split is that now the percentage of Jews of the central parts of the USSR taking part in the exodus is much higher than in previous periods; and, as stated in the first part of this paper, these Jews are not homogeneous in terms of their attitude to their Jewishness and hence have different incentives for leaving the Soviet Union.

The third characteristic of this period is the deep concern on the part of the leaders of the Israel-oriented dissent for dissemination of Jewish culture among the Jews who are still in the USSR, as a means of returning them at least partially to the framework of Jewish civilization, and thereby saving them from disappearing as Jews within a few generations. The long-term goal is to bring them to their national home.

The trend in the Jewish dissent which has emerged during this third perid has, to the best of my knowledge, not yet elaborated or even defined its ideology.

As for the ideology of the Israel-orientated Jewish dissent, its main principles were laid down already during its first period and they remain the same, as follows:

Four Principles

Its first principle is formulated by an exact quotation from the Bible "Let my people go". In the context of the Book of Exodus this formula has only one meaning: the demand that Pharaoh give the children of Israel the right to return to the land of their fathers. Demanding the same right more than three millenia after the events depicted in the Book of Exodus, the Jewish national movement in Russia in the late '60s chose as its first principle the same formula and this became the slogan of the supporters of this movement throughout the free world. In the anthem of the movement, the formula has very explicit additions: "Let my people go in the path of God; Let my people go to its homeland; Let my people go home." Thus, what the Jewish dissent movement in the USSR has demanded—and, with the help of its supporters in the free world, to some extent has won—is the right of an ethnic group which lives outside its national territory to return to that territory. In inter-

national terminology this is called the "right of repatriation".

The second principle is that the Jewish dissent movement has no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. It is not the aim of the Jewish movement to introduce changes or improvements into Soviet life and the Soviet regime, however much its participants would like to see the USSR a truly free, democratic country. The Jewish dissidents have great respect for the Rusian culture and democratic tradition, and for the Russian people and other peoples of the USSR among whom they were born and raised. Yet they want to return to the homeland of their own people, and do not feel that they have any moral right to instruct the Russian people and other peoples of the Soviet Union what to do in their lands. That is to say, the Jewish dissidents do not intervene in the internal affairs of the USSR because they do not consider the Soviet Union their country.

The third principle is that the struggle the Jewish dissent is waging is completely legal. The movement violates no Soviet law, nor any international law signed by the Soviet government and therefore to be implemented with in the USSR. Rather, it is the authorities who are violating these laws. It is paradox of the struggle that precisely the Jews who want to leave the USSR for the land of their own people, must struggle within the Soviet Union for implementation of Soviet law and of international law signed by the government of the USSR.

The fourth principle, stated as such only during the last period of the dissent, might be formulated in the following way: the Jews who live in the USSR constitute a fragment of the Jewish people, with its own language and its own civilization. Therefore, they have the essential right to study and speak Hebrew, to study and practice the Jewish religion, to learn and know every aspect of the Jewish civilization, and to feel that it is theirs.

The Jewish dissent movement is but one of many national dissement movements in the Soviet Union. All of the others, however, are movements of minorities who have their own territory in the Soviet Union, or who did have it and were deprived of it. The former are struggling for true independence within the borders of the USSR and, possibly, in the long run, for independent statehood. The latter, represented now by the Crimean Tarters and the Meskhis, struggle to regain their territory within the Soviet Union.

The uniqueness of the Jewish dissent lies in the fact that it is the only national movement of a minority whose national territory is beyond the borders of the USSR and therefore whose aim as well lies beyond these borders—the aim to leave the Soviet Union for the own national homeland. (The Germans are the other minority whose national territory lies beyond the borders of the USSR, but, although they took some steps to found their own dissent movement, they appear for some reason to have dropped the idea.)

As for the correlation between the Jewish dissent and the Russian democratic dissent, it must first be said that to a certain extent the Jewish dissent movement began as a copy of what was then called the "demoeratic movement." The Jewish dissent started its struggle on patterns given by the democrats, with the same means—petitions, letters of protest to the Soviet

authorities, and so on. During its first years the Jewish Samizdat was closely modelled after the democratic Samizdat (a considerable part of the Jewish Samizdat consisted of translations of works of Jewish interest from Hebrew and European languages).

Secondly, the Jewish dissent was greatly helped by the democrats, mainly by the Soviet Human Rights Committee. The noble role played by Prof. Sakharov and his closest co-workers in this committee regarding the Jewish question in the USSR and the Jewish dissent movement is broadly known. It can be disclosed, that Jewish dissidents consulted, from the legalistic point of view, with participants of the Human Rights group on a number of documents before they were circulated. This help can not and will not be forgotten.

Finally, a few words about the part of the Jewish dissent in Soviet dissent in general. To my mind, the Jewish dissent has proven that, if a dissent movement has clearly defined principles, if it is relatively large and it can achieve strong backing by world public opinion, and if its struggle goes on against a background of an auspicious internal and international situation —it can achieve its goals even if it challenges an autocratic and oppressive regime such as the Soviet regime. This lesson, in my opinion, should be learned well.